

**MINUTES of the meeting of the LONSDALE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held on 27 January 2021 online.**

**Present:** T Andrews (Chair), M Sweet (DC), S Landles (Treasurer), A S Hague (Secretary), L Ash, J Carbert, B Goldsworthy, H Greenwood, S Mather, L Maun, R Parker.

**Apologies Received:** C Kellett.

**Not Present:** D Bateman.

**Chair's 'Thought for the Day':**

"The only people worthy to be in your life are the ones that help you through the hard times and laugh with you after the hard times pass."

- Ziad K. Abdelnour.

He added some personal thoughts on our local Scouting during the current pandemic. Online Scouting and, where possible, face-to-face activities had continued but he felt it was also timely to reflect on the Executive's work during this period. Quorate meetings of the Executive and its sub-Committees had continued online, a situation that had not occurred to his knowledge in other spheres. Achievements had included holding a first, virtual AGM. Members had become accustomed to a whole new language in using the Zoom App. This app had also been particularly useful in helping to clear a backlog of appointment interviews. Consideration might usefully be given post-lockdown to the possibility of adopting a 'blended' approach to meeting formats – some continuing online, some benefitting from face-to-face interaction; This might involve taking out a Zoom subscription once the current free offer expired. He extended thanks to all concerned in keeping our side of the organisation going through this difficult period.

He also took the opportunity to remind members that it was common practice to maintain confidentiality with some parts of the Executive business.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

**Matters Arising:**

i. Trustee Declarations outstanding:

Some declarations were still outstanding. The Secretary requested that these be sent to him as soon as possible. The Chair confirmed that it had been decided previously that these be completed annually.

ii. Payment for use of SilverHelme by Silverhelme ESU

As reported at the previous meeting the DESComm had been in touch with Silverhelme ESU regarding their payment for the use of the Mortimer Centre. The Unit had agreed to make the payment in respect of 2019. It had been agreed to write-off any requests for payments for earlier years.

The Chair believed that the payment was still outstanding when last checked. Howard Greenwood reported a discussion with one of the Unit's leaders. They were anticipating some financial difficulty with meeting the bill for the membership fees this year owing to receiving no subs resulting from the Covid-19 lockdown. Discussion took place on a proposal that the payment be waived but the Chair indicated that he had previously had sight of an email from the ESL where he had agreed to pay the sum in question. The Treasurer felt that sight should not be lost of the fact that the Unit should make a contribution to the cost of maintaining the property. A suggestion from the Chair that the matter be referred back to the ACMB for a decision, was accepted. It was felt appropriate that the Unit should contact the ACMB Treasurer direct to discuss any difficulties with the payment.

**E970 Secretary's Report / Correspondence:**

**i. Valuation Office Agency**

Correspondence had been received from the VOA requesting completion of an online questionnaire concerning rent and lease details for 3/4 Moor Street. This had been completed and submitted with the assistance of the Chair. In response to a question the Chair confirmed that the District received rate relief of 80% as a charity and 20% discretionary relief from the City Council.

**ii. Annual Census of Membership**

This was presently in train and results were awaited with some trepidation in view of the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 outbreak and its negative effect on face-to-face Scouting. GSLs had experienced some problems in determining how many members they still had and various methods had been utilised to clarify numbers. Howard Greenwood once again expressed his annoyance and displeasure with having to provide additional information to County over and above that required nationally.

The Treasurer requested sight of results as soon as possible in order to assess the financial impact for the District. Any problems arising from any Groups' inability to meet their members bill would be dealt with as and when (initially in discussions between the DC and District Chair).

**E971 Governance:**

**i. District Expenses Policy**

The Chair presented this paper (apologising for the delay in doing so), the mileage rate (unchanged) within which had been approved by the Finance Sub-committee. It had been agreed that the policy would be reviewed each year at the time of the preparation of the budget [for the District]. The next review would be due in November 2021.

**i. Membership of Finance sub-Committee**

Daniel Coulthard and Callum Seton (18-25 member) had agreed to become members of the committee. These appointments were approved.

**ii. Awards Advisory Committee**

The Chair reported that the AAC had met in December and recommended to the DC a number of proposed awards. All adult members of the District were reviewed in the process. Recommendations for Chief Scout's Commendations for Good Service had been submitted to TSA and had been recently approved. Further higher awards had been submitted to County for consideration.

Lack of required training had been a stumbling block to progressing nominations in a number of cases.

**iii. 14-25 Finance and Support Group**

The composition and terms of reference for this Group had recently been reviewed by interested parties. Relative responsibilities had been considered and once these had been clarified it would enable terms of reference to be written. The Chair indicated that he was in the process of writing up the notes of the meeting and formulating some terms of reference and these would be circulated in due course for consideration and approval.

**iv. Lancaster Business Improvement District (BID)**

The Chair presented his paper outlining that the District had been contacted before Christmas by the Development Manager of Lancaster BID. With a review of the Rateable Value of District Headquarters (£10,250, July 2017) we now fell into the active category of business properties within the Lancaster BID area. Following exchanges of e-mails involving the DC, the Manager and himself, he had recently met online with the latter to discover more.

The discussion had clarified what a BID was and what it could deliver, the possibility of opt out, and the payment of a levy (1.5% of RV). A number of possibilities would exist to benefit the District, which were outlined. Both the DC and himself felt that this would be a positive step forward in advancing the profile of Lonsdale Scouting.

Payment of the levy was mandatory and Lancaster did not currently exempt charities from payment of the levy. It was the Chair's opinion that the District would gain far more from participation than was reflected in the levy.

The current BID set up ended on 31 March 2021 and businesses in Lancaster were being invited to take part in a ballot as to whether it should continue for a further 5 years.

Approval was sought from the Executive for the Chair to vote in favour of continuation. Howard Greenwood commented that he opposed the vote in principle that a charitable organisation should be mandatorily asked to pay a levy but that the practical output might be worth the money.

Louise Ash agreed that the levy was an issue but from personal association with the BID Manager she felt that participation would have solid benefits. The Treasurer was not averse in principle but pointed out that none of BID's stated objectives, whilst being good for the City, directly met our objectives. The only value that we might get would be in networking with them and getting any marketing through them. It would be important for us therefore to have direct access to the organisation.

Accepting these reservations, members agreed that the Chair vote in favour of continuation of Lancaster BID. An offer to act as liaison with BID by Louise Ash was accepted.

#### **v. Annual Report for AGM 2021**

The Chair shared a slide outlining some initial thoughts on the proposed content for this report. With the absence of many aspects of active and outdoor Scouting in 2020 owing to the Covid-19 restrictions this would require a rethink from previous reports.

His suggestion was to include content on Scouting in a Covid pandemic (by the DC) and the responsibilities and work of the various District committees, alongside the usual introduction and accounts.

The DC wished to add something on Groups' activities during lockdown. Comments were, to include a selection of Groups etc. and perhaps for each to highlight one activity in particular. One view was that highlighting the work of the Executive might also help in recruiting members. The DC, as a further thought, suggested that approaching youth members, via the Youth Commissioner, to write about their experiences might be more thought-provoking and interesting to readers.

#### **vi. Phishing Email**

The West Lancs email system had recently been subject to a phishing scam from executivecommitte176@gmail.com. The County Digital and Data Chair had been made aware and had reminded users to remain cautious of any suspicious content.

### **E972 Finance Sub-Committee:**

#### **i Finance Officer's Report**

The Treasurer wished to highlight the following (some of which had been progressed since the circulated report was prepared): -

##### **a. DHQ Electricity**

Thanks were expressed to the Finance Officer who continues to go to great lengths to ensure the best deal possible.

##### **b. Draft accounts year ended 31 December 2020**

Ray Salisbury and Steve Clarke have balanced the combined account, so the main figure work has been completed and a first draft had been completed. The two major outstanding items were the Trustees' report and the accounts of the Scout & Guide Shop for the year to 31 March 2020.

**c. Gift Aid Claims**

In this time of financial hardship for many it was opportune to raise this issue again. In order to promote greater take up by Groups it was proposed to compile a 'Gift Aid' kit as a way to help people find a way through the process with some practical guidance. The Chair reported that as far as the District was concerned the Explorer Scout Administrator had agreed to place this matter on her to do list. This would require Units to maintain accurate records of members and their subscriptions.

**d. Spreadsheet**

There was nothing exceptional to highlight since the last report. Core unrestricted reserve funds totalled some £50k, which it was considered was sufficient to carry the District through the present situation. It was anticipated that funds would be needed once lockdown ceased for marketing and promotion to help in restoring lost member numbers.

**e. Scout & Guide Shop**

The Chair reported that he had now received the accounts for the year to 31 March 2020. A meeting of the Management Committee was being arranged for mid-February when it was anticipated that the accounts would be approved. The question of the stock check being as accurate as it could be would be raised also.

**f. HQ insurance - plate glass windows**

This had now been arranged with a premium of less than £10 for £4,500 cover.

**ii Fidelity Investment Application**

At the October meeting members had approved the Investment sub-committee's recommendation that the investment programme specified in the circulated paper be commenced as soon as practical.

It had been agreed that this would be through the CAF Bank investment adviser service. The application had subsequently hit a problem in that CAF Bank had decided to withdraw from investment management. The Finance sub-committee had concluded that the District should now use Fidelity International instead.

To make that application the Treasurer needed:

- A copy of the resolution authorising the setup of an account.
- A list of current trustees.
- A list of officers authorised to operate the account together with their signatures.

To facilitate the process, he had put together a composite paper as follows:

"The following is an extract from the minutes of a meeting of the trustees of Lonsdale District Scout Council held on the 27 January 2021:

Resolved to:

- a. authorise the establishment of an investment account with Fidelity

- b. authorise Stephen Landles and Howard Greenwood to sign any documents necessary to open such an account
- c. authorise Stephen Landles, Howard Greenwood, Stephen Clarke and Ray Salisbury to operate such an account.”

Members approved the resolution without abstention.

**E973 Appointments Advisory Committee Report**

No report available on this occasion. However, the DC reported that the committee was meeting regularly and at the meeting the previous week 5 applicants had been recommended for appointment.

**E974 Activity Centres Management Board:**

The SilverHelme and Littledale Activity Centres are again closed in line with current COVID-19 guidance. The Wardens, supported by a small team of volunteers, are carrying out scheduled visits to ensure the sites are maintained in a safe and secure manner.

The ACMB Treasurer has recently (20 January 2021) reported receipt of a further Covid-19 Government grant of £12,478.42, via Lancaster City Council. This was equally split between both Centres.

The District Chair advised that TSA was currently stating that residential activities would not be permitted before June 2021. This was due to reviewed, in the near future, in conjunction with the National Youth Agency

**E975 Explorer Report**

Jamie Carbert reported that in the short time before Christmas when the ‘Amber’ readiness level had been instituted, in that period some Units had got back together for face-to-face activities. A successful District Explorer Scout Christmas quiz was also run in that period. Returning to ‘Red’ readiness level in January, as most Units were getting better attendance for their own Zoom meetings it had been decided that the District ones would be parked. Some Units were also thinking about organising joint activities.

There was concern for some Units surrounding the payment of the annual membership subscriptions where unknown numbers from the Scout section might be moving up to Units. Members gave some examples from their own experiences of how this was being managed in Groups. It was important to recognise that the annual subscription was a membership fee and not a pay-to-play amount. This fact had been and was being communicated to all concerned.

**E976 Network Report**

Courtney Kellett reported by email that County and DNCs were working on a network programme for 2021/22. The first County-wide event this year (Feb) would be a competition for who could do the most activities on an A-Z list. She had messaged the DESComm about opening it out to Explorers in our District; She was thinking they could have Network vs Explorers.

#### **E977 District Commissioner's Report**

The **Christmas quiz** organised by the Network Commissioner had been enjoyed.

At their recent meeting the **District Team** had started to have a look at the programme ahead once lockdown was over. Opportunities for programme sharing in the District were being considered, probably via social media.

The **Strategy 2023** had been reviewed and despite the lockdown a number of targets had been achieved. County had extended theirs to 2025 and Lonsdale would probably follow suit and would hold a review meeting in due course to reassess priorities.

**Wear Their Necker** was a fun, exciting and empowering project to celebrate Youth Shaped Scouting. The aim of the project being for Groups across the UK to give their young people the opportunity to take over adult volunteer roles. One Explorer Scout had attended the recent appointments meeting shadowing the DC and had also joined in the District Team meeting.

There was a **GSL meeting** coming up organised by County. Also, **WLSHape 2021**, an opportunity for all Scouts, Explorers and Explorer Young Leaders to share views and ideas to shape the future of our County. We are also looking to identify and recognise **Community Heroes** that have gone the extra mile to make a difference.

From the recent national webinar, the Chair highlighted that in a poll of the 350 who participated the most important area for work suggested for national attention 74% said recruiting and motivating volunteers was the key. HQ were working on material for publication for later in Spring. Howard Greenwood felt that "HQ communicated too often and said not enough."

#### **E978 Health and Safety Report**

Nothing to report.

#### **E979 Any Other Business**

Nil.

Final thought for the day: "The future is not cancelled."

Date of Next Meeting: 25 March 2021.