

**MINUTES of the meeting of the LONSDALE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held on 5 October 2020 online.**

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

**Apologies Received:** Nil.

**Not Present:** D Bateman. S Mather.

**Chair's Introduction / Meeting Procedures:**

Owing to the ongoing 'Covid-19' pandemic restrictions on social distancing the meeting was again being held online. The Chair detailed some associated domestic issues with this. He also welcomed to their first meeting Louise Ash and Ben Goldsworthy as newly elected members. By way of induction, and for members' general information, he indicated that he would circulate a Charity Commission publication 'Welcome, you are a Charity Trustee'. He also shared some information on the District's monetary and other assets at the end of 2019, prior to discussion later in the meeting on investment proposals. These totalled more than £1m, - a daunting sum. New trustees would require to undertake some specific training for their role and the Chair advised that this could be found online at <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/learning-development-and-awards/getting-started-training/trustee-introduction/>

**Action: Chair**

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

"Stop worrying about the potholes in the road and celebrate the journey"  
(Barbara Hoffman - quoted by Tom Kevill-Davis in *The Hungry Cyclist*).

**Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

**Matters Arising:**

Nil.

**E947 Secretary's Report / Correspondence**

- i. Lease, Moor Street premises  
The landlord's solicitors had sent a letter dated 25 June enclosing draft lease in response to a request for renewal. Minute E948 below refers.
- ii. Remembrance Sunday 8 November 2020

The City Council had sent a communication advising that because of Covid-19 restrictions the usual Remembrance Sunday Service and parade would not take place. The Council would be encouraging people to observe the two minutes' silence on their doorsteps this year. With regard to the laying of wreaths by organisations / individuals, a decision on this was to be made nearer the time. The Secretary advised that the poppy wreaths for Lancaster and Morecambe had been ordered as usual and he asked the DC to consider what suitable arrangements might be made to lay these.

**Action: DC**

**E948 Governance:**

i. Trustee Declaration

The Charity Commission recommend that each trustee should sign a declaration. Locally, a decision had been made that these be signed annually and a pro-forma had been circulated for members to sign. These were requested to be returned to the Secretary.

ii. Sub-Committees of District Executive

Membership of these required to be confirmed annually and a list of proposed committees, Chairs and members had been circulated. One exception was the 14-25 Finance & Support Group where following discussions, it was proposed to convene a meeting of interested parties to reconsider the committee's role and its composition. The proposals were accepted.

iii. Lease Renewal 3-4 Moor Street

The Chair highlighted that this was the third lease to be entered into for the premises starting from 2008. All the leases were virtually identical but one point requiring attention was that the District were required to have insured the window glass. This was never done and so enquiries were presently being made by the Secretary to obtain a quotation for replacement should this be necessary. The rent proposed remained the same as stated in the previous lease viz. £6615 pa. From investigations carried out (independently by the DC and Chair) this amount represented a fair and reasonable sum.

The Chair reminded members that under statutory rules the District did not have security of tenure.

**It was agreed that:**

- The new lease be accepted, including the exclusion of security of tenure.
- That the District Chair for the time being be authorised to sign the statutory declaration in accordance with the requirements of Section 38A(3)(b) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.
- That the District Chair and the District Secretary for the time being be authorised to sign the new lease.

**Action: Chair, Secretary**

iv. Chair's Action

By way of information for new members, the Chair explained that in certain circumstances if action was required quickly on a particular issue and he believed that if he made a decision that the trustees would subsequently support him, he was authorised to do so. He cited a recent case concerning the signing (on behalf of the District Executive) of a new Sponsorship Agreement for the 16th Lancaster Group, which members approved.

v. Lease - Telecommunications mast at SilverHelme AC

The Chair presented his paper on the proposed lease in this matter including the Chartered Surveyor's report that had had to be commissioned at the request of the Custodian Trustees (The Scout Association Trust Corporation (SATC)). He gave a detailed report on previous actions and discussions (see previous minutes) following the former lease having expired in 2015.

The Chartered Surveyor's recommendation was that The Scout Association Trust Corporation enter into the lease under the terms stated which, in her opinion, were fair and reasonable based on recent leases for clients in the Lake District National Park and Yorkshire Dales.

The proposed lease replaced the previous lease which was for a term of 15 years commencing on the 1st of April, 2000. The proposed lease runs for a term of 15 years with a break clause in favour of the tenant, exercisable at any time following the fifth anniversary of the date of the lease. There is also a break clause in favour of the landlord on the fifth and tenth anniversary.

The initial rent is £4950 per annum.

Commenting on the proposed rental amount the Chair outlined that he felt that this was a fair and reasonable sum based on discussions. The Electronic Communication Code came into effect in December 2017 and any agreement which is assessed for rent under the Code will result in a lower rent as the telecom use is disregarded under the Code. Where an agreement for telecommunications apparatus was in place which began prior to the 28th December 2017, the agreement will have been protected by the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 and a Upper Tribunal Decision had confirmed that the procedure for renewal was through the County Court and the terms decided in accordance with the provisions of the 1954 Act including rent would be assessed on an open market basis.

- The Surveyor's recommendation was accepted.
- It was agreed that the District Chair and the District Secretary for the time being be authorised to sign the new lease.

The Chair highlighted that he had requested that the District should be included as a party to the lease to ensure that we were aware of any developments. Also, the SATC had also revised their procedures and introduced the 'Deed of Liability' relating to activity centres that made the District responsible for any actions on the sites. The Chair felt that recent amendments to procedural documents should cover this and demonstrate that the District had acted in a fair and reasonable way.

#### **E949 Finance Sub-Committee:**

- i. Minutes of Meeting held on 9 July 2020 - taken as read.
- ii. Minutes of Meeting held on 9 September 2020 - taken as read.
- iii. Finance Officer's Report

The report and minutes were received for information. The Treasurer highlighted that the Finance Officer had agreed to compile a cash flow forecast for a 'poor case' outcome and recommend a cash deposit strategy to give us operational flexibility resulting from Covid-19.

Following recently announced reductions in interest rates, the 60-day notice account with Hampshire Trust Bank [HTB] (present balance £84,000) was no longer competitive. However, following the agreement of the Finance sub-Committee £50,000 of this had been deposited with HTB in a one-year fixed rate deposit paying 1% and notice had been given to withdraw the remaining balance of £34,000, which would be available to fund the first tranche of equity investment.

#### **Scout & Guide Shop:**

The Chair reported that he had been struggling for some time to convene a meeting with the two Guide Division Commissioners. He had put this off for now pending a Covid-19 risk assessment being approved for the shop opening.

#### **Grants to Individuals:**

Regarding the Finance Officer's concern about support given to an individual taking part in a County trip that hadn't taken place, the Chair advised that this was not the case. He had been in touch with the member participating in the (now postponed) Croatia trip and she was still hoping to go next year. Similarly, County had rolled forward the Iceland trip and again the member was hoping to go in 2021.

The Chair also reported a change in our procedures to pay over funds approved only when they were requested by the grantee; this would be later than at present. Also, the value of grant amounts was being changed and more information was to be requested in future on self-fundraising proposals.

#### **Annual Membership Fees:**

The comment made in the FO's report was incorrect. The additional £1.50 for Groups suffering financial hardship would be collected with the National Membership Fees (totalling £36.50). Monies would be distributed by HQ in consultation with CCs and DCs - exact methodology yet to be advised.

#### **iv. Investment Proposals**

Presenting his paper, the Treasurer outlined that the aim of the investment policy was to achieve significantly better returns from the Sharpe Bequest and thus increase the funding available for distribution to Scout Groups in the District. At the same time, to seek to preserve the value of the fund in real terms over the medium term (5 to 10 years) so that future generations would have equivalent amounts to distribute.

He had highlighted in his paper the issues, timing and risks associated with the proposal. The proposal was to invest in pooled investments rather than individual companies and invest not just in the UK. In terms of timing the proposal was to spread investment over 6 months.

The Investment sub-committee recommendation that the investment programme specified in the paper is commenced as soon as practical **was approved**

It was agreed that the ISC should consider further proposals for the balance of £50,000 available in the Sharpe Bequest. The DC thanked members of the Investment sub-committee for all their work in this matter.

**Action: ISC**

**E950 14-25 Finance and Support Group**

Chair's Proposal – discussed previously, see minute E948 ii above

**E951 Appointments Advisory Committee Report**

The DC reported that the Committee had not met over the summer holidays. At the last count there were only a handful of interviews outstanding, following a concerted effort to clear the backlog (using Zoom) during the lockdown.

**E952 Activity Centres Management Board:**

- i. Minutes of Meetings held 8 July 2020, 23 September 2020 - both taken as read. The DESComm raised the issue of whether the correct governance procedures had been followed in respect of the toilet block refurbishment at Littledale. Howard Greenwood indicated that in his view they had not in terms of the ACMB's decision following the overspending situation at SilverHelme on that toilet block that in these cases involving capital expenditure that a Project Manager should have been appointed, an accurate budget should have been submitted with firm written quotations, and any budget deviations authorised. The project, as originally envisaged was seen as an operational one but had developed and more had had to be spent than initially foreseen. It was not on the same scale as SilverHelme but it did cost more and perhaps the Operational Committee should have come back to the ACMB for approval. The Chair felt that the budget cost had perhaps not been sufficiently robustly constructed and once the job had started other work became apparent and desirable and had been included; this would have been authorised (as Chair's action, if necessary). The lesson had been taken on board and tighter control was promised in future. Discussion took place on whether these procedures should be instituted for work costing over a certain figure but the Secretary suggested that the distinction was not so much based on value but whether the work was to be funded from the maintenance budget or from the capital budget. He felt that all capital work by definition should have a Project Manager appointed.

**E953 Explorer Report**

Jamie Carbert reported that all Explorer Units, with the exception of the Young Leader Unit, had met up for face to face Scouting recently. Some had operated online during the summer Covid-19 restrictions with in some cases District input. Leaders were looking at the possibility of arranging progress on top awards and D of E in a Covid secure way.

**E954 Network Report**

Members had been involved in County events over the last few months. A District event was organised on Zoom but not many had joined this. Courtney had recently

contacted members to suggest a socially distanced walk. Progress on top awards was continuing in association with County.

#### **E955 Return to Face-to-Face Scouting**

The Chair presented his report outlining the number of Covid-19 risk assessments that had been approved. He expressed thanks to Howard Greenwood who had been involved in approving the majority of these. Highlighting that it was a group effort, Howard gave some details of issues that had arisen during the process and why some RAs had had to be returned for more information particularly lacking approval signatures. However, once leaders had gone through the process once the RAs were generally of a very good quality.

The purpose of the report was to provide an analysis of risk assessments that had been approved, up to and including 26 September 2020, under the delegated authority given by the Executive Committee.

In total 78 RAs had been approved. 10 out of 24 Groups had submitted RAs for one or more sections. 5 out of 9 Explorer Units had submitted ones. Howard reported that there were a very small number of RAs that had not been approved for reasons that he stated. The report also analysed the number of sections within each Group for which RAs had been approved.

A decision had been made to publish all the approved RAs in a protected area on the District website so that leaders might use these as a basis for their own RAs. Howard outlined that the RAs submitted varied in detail, some leaders using a generic approach some submitting RAs for every event. In summary, he felt that the District had a very robust system that was proving acceptable to leaders submitting RAs and would stand external scrutiny.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the District Secretary for his work on redesigning the District website.

#### **E956 District Commissioner's Report**

Face to face Scouting:

Commenting on the number of Groups that had so far submitted RAs the DC reported that of those who had not yet done so she was aware of 4 who had been in touch with her and were in the process of compiling them. In a small number of instances activities proposed had not come within guidelines and had been indicated thus to leaders. With regard to the number of Explorer Units (9) quoted in the report her view was that there were 7 active Units plus the YL Unit at present. She expressed her thanks to all concerned for their work on this.

Website:

The DC also thanked the Secretary for his work redesigning the website, which was now more user friendly and attractive.

Development:

The Westgate Group had no access to their meeting place at present. The DC had suggested they might consider temporarily joining up with 3rd Morecambe and Heysham who were currently struggling. Several leaders and supporters had left there. She had met up with the Group, and the new Scout Leader, who was very

keen. She had arranged some support from 2 leaders from other Groups. The DC had talked to the County Development Officer and he had agreed to look to help the Group.

She had attended (virtually) a number of Group AGMs, of varying quality, and finally wished to thank all concerned in setting up and running the excellent District AGM. The Chair also recounted some of his AGM experiences for the benefit of members.

#### **E957 District Executive Objectives 2020-21**

The Chair shared a slide presentation suggesting an outline for District Executive Objectives for the forthcoming year. One area for attention was a review of the District Constitution. Also, as previously discussed the role and composition of the 14-25 Group, and the Youth Commissioner was looking to recruit youth members for the various sub-committees. Very little work had been done on our compliance as a Data Controller pending advice from County who were now progressing this. Review of our Trustee Governance Document had been deferred owing to Covid. For the benefit of new members it was explained that this document listed all our responsibilities as trustees and progress was graded on a RAG basis.

The DC indicated that she was also proposing to review the District Strategy in the light of Covid.

Other 'operational' objectives proposed were how to recruit to and develop the effectiveness of Group Executive Committees and what role should the District Executive have in supporting the DC in her job.

The Treasurer suggested it might be preferable to concentrate our attention on 3 major tasks: surviving Covid, supporting Groups in a more efficient and more effective way and developing the reach of Scouting in the District, rather than trying to address a host of other smaller objectives. The Chair noted that many of the latter were routine ones which, in the main, necessitated an input from himself.

The Chair indicated that the Finance sub-committee would soon be looking at membership fees for 2021. He invited members to indicate what percentage loss of youth members they felt might be incurred following the effects of the Covid restrictions.

Views ranged from 15% to 35% down - an average of around 25%. Loss of leaders might also be a big problem. Howard Greenwood felt finance would also be an issue for some Groups. Perhaps the District might consider reducing the District levy?

#### **E958 Health and Safety Report**

No incidents this time.

#### **E959 Any Other Business**

Members agreed to a request from the 3rd Hornby & Wray Group for a change of name to Hornby & Wray Scout Group.

Date of Next Meeting: 1 December 2020.