

It has been another busy and rewarding year for the Group Executive Committee (GEC). The GEC exists to support the Group Scout Leader in meeting the responsibilities of their appointment and plays a vital role in the running of the Scout Group by making decisions and carrying out administrative tasks to ensure that the best quality Scouting can be delivered to the young people in the 89th Reading Scout Group.

It is now 4 years since we opened the new Scout Halls and Activity Centre after rebuilding the 89th HQ and making more of the fantastic outdoor space that we are blessed with. This has not only provided a better, more interesting and challenging environment for our own Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers but also for other local groups. And the word is spreading with visits and weekend camps with Groups from London and Basingstoke among the 47 Scout and Guide Groups who have benefited from our facilities in the past year.

When we opened the new Centre it was with the realisation that such a massive fundraising effort is a once in a generation opportunity and one of the key responsibilities of the GEC is the effective stewardship of the building, grounds and activity equipment. The building and grounds are cleaned and maintained by Branching Up who provide work experience for adults with learning disabilities. This currently gives 8 adults the opportunity to learn new skills and experience work-related tasks in a rewarding community environment. They are doing a wonderful job for us and whilst much of what they do passes unnoticed the fact that even with daily use the building and grounds look as great today as when we opened 4 years ago is testament to how good they are at what they do.

Last summer we had all of the activity equipment inspected and tested and took the decision to upgrade it to the latest EN15567 (part 1) standard. Although this standard is primarily designed for high ropes courses, it is equally applied to low ropes courses and the GEC decided that we should upgrade the overall construction of our activities to conform. This additional expenditure for the maintenance and upgrade is reflected in the accounts. We will now have the equipment inspected to this standard on a yearly basis.

All members of the GEC are Trustees and those responsibilities have been emphasised with the help of the trustee support and resources provided by the County. The GEC continues to monitor and review risks. These include not just the building, grounds and activities and their usage but also financial and other external risks to the Group. At the moment the areas that the GEC are particularly looking at are Insurance, Land Registry and GDPR.

The Treasurer's report and accounts covers the finances but it is worth mentioning that we repaid £5k of the District loan for the new building in the past year and within two months we will make the final £5k repayment, making us debt free.

The review of our insurances is looking at both our cover and the premiums we pay.

We own the freehold of our site and this is not in any doubt but not all of our land is registered with the Land Registry. There have been changes and addition over the years that are registered but the original site is not. We thought a solicitor had sorted this out a number of years ago but on closer inspection this has proved not to be the case and the complete registration of all of our land will now be concluded within the coming months.

GDPR provides many challenges to an organisation such as ours but with the help, support and tools provided by the Scout Association the Group and all Sections are working to ensure that we are compliant with the new rules. To assist us in GDPR compliance we are moving the administration of

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the Group – emails, file storage etc. – to Office365. This project has started and will be completed by the end of the year.

We have started a major sort out of our stores this year and are building a new inventory of all of our equipment. We really need a Quartermaster to maintain this on an ongoing basis. To volunteer for this important role my contact details are below.

Our new web site www.89th.org.uk which was launched this time last year has proved very popular and we are also trying to produce a newsletter each term with the key upcoming dates and events. For both the web site and the newsletter to work we need words and pictures from not just the Leaders but also our Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers and their parents and carers.

In the coming year the Group would like to appoint a number of administrators to help the Sections with their admin. It will only take 20 minutes or so once or at the most twice, a month and the tasks can easily be performed when you drop your kids off on their Section night. This is a great way to volunteer to help the Group without making a big, additional, time commitment. My contact details are below.

The Christmas Post continues to raise funds for the Group and provide a great community service. Despite a national drop in the sending of physical Christmas cards we still sorted and delivered 2,645 cards and raised £800 for the 89th Scout Group.

My thanks to Roy Gordon, Deputy Group Chair, who also filled in as temporary Treasurer this past year, Anne Mace and Joy Blount our Group Secretary and Administrator, Jo Wilkinson for all her work on the Christmas Post and the newsletter, Paul Haigh for the new web site and its ongoing maintenance and to all GEC members for their work and support during the past year. Thank you everyone for everything you all do for Scouting in general and the 89th in particular.

At this AGM we are saying goodbye to Brent Smith who has been a GEC member for over 10 years and Anne Mace has given notice that this will be her last year as Group Secretary so we need to find a volunteer to replace her in the coming year. We welcome Alan Skeates as our new Treasurer.

Last but not least a quick reminder of the roles we need volunteers for:

- Section Administrators – just 20 minutes once or twice a month in term time
- Quartermaster – keeping our stores tidy, the equipment in good repair and the inventory up to date.
- Group Secretary – providing administrative support to the GEC by taking minutes of the meetings and distributing agendas, minutes and supporting documents for GEC meetings

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