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1st Stoke Gifford Scout Group

REPORT TO GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, MARCH 2021 (FINANCIAL YR 19/20)

Group Overview – by Ian Butcher, Executive Committee Chairman

It has, by any measure, been an extraordinarily difficult year for all but there is, at last, 'light at the end of the tunnel' regarding COVID. Scouting activity understandably stopped abruptly in the Spring, but I am grateful to the Leadership team for working so hard to establish 'virtual' scouting activities and limited amounts of face-to-face activity. I know that a lot of work went in to ensuring safe conditions for the latter and am grateful to those involved. I am also grateful to the members of our sections (and their parents/carers) for remaining engaged with Scouting despite the challenges that you have faced over the past year.

This AGM marks the end of my time as Group Chairman as I am stepping back from scouting (after just over 19 years) as I prepare to retire and move away from Bristol next year. My work has been mostly in the background, working with the Executive Committee and Paul Smith overseeing operation of the Group at a strategic level, whilst the uniformed leaders (and helpers) run the sections. I will undoubtedly miss scouting but leave you in safe hands.

Finance Report – Jenny Webb, Treasurer

Main Account

The figures for 2019/20 are shown below (the full audited accounts can be made available on request). The financial year reflects the school year (1 Sept to 31 Aug). A comparison with the previous year is presented but, due to the pandemic, it is not a fair comparison. The main bank account balance is healthy at the moment, but a couple of points to note from last year.

- We forgot to claim Gift Aid but have claimed and been paid recently, so that income will be reflected in the FY20/21 accounts.
- Due to the pandemic, we only had the school fireworks BBQ which reduced income.
- Subs payments are down on FY18/19 given the decision to halt collection of subs when COVID hit. In simple terms we lost the whole of the summer term's subs income.
- Operating costs also fell from Spring onward, as we stopped paying rent and section activity costs also dropped though spend on badges has remained very significant.

Camp account

The camp account was slightly overspent. This is partly because GoCardless charges us a small percentage of each transaction processed.

Looking ahead (COVID financial impact)

Whilst in some ways it is outside the remit of this AGM report it would be inappropriate not to make some comment on how COVID is likely to have affected our finances looking ahead.

We started the COVID crisis with healthy reserves, built up over many years. Many other Groups have been much less fortunate, and Scouts HQ has been hit hard despite furloughing employed staff. We are grateful to parents/carers for resuming half-rate subs payments in the Autumn even though scouting remained a (mostly) virtual activity; that was essential to protect the Group's longer-term financial stability. We nevertheless expect to further reduce reserves over the coming year since outgoings won't have dropped in line with reduced income (for example, the Scouts HQ 'capitation' payment due March 2021 is still around £5800, despite a one-off subsidy by District from their reserves; a charge closer to £6800 would seem likely in March 2022).

<u>Main Account</u>	2019/2020	2018/2019
<i>Receipts/Debits</i>		
Receipts	£14,192.99	£27,184.32
Payments	<u>£15,466.39</u>	<u>£23,150.89</u>
Surplus (Deficit) for year	(£1273.40)	£4033.43
Amount in account	£7,243.03	£8,516.43
<i>Income</i>		
Gift Aid	£0	£4,729.37
Subscriptions	£10751.65	£13,863.74
BBQ takings	£982.61	£1153.24
Donations/Fundraising	£48.46	£154.89
<i>Outgoings</i>		
Rent	£3,583.00	£4,428
Capitation to district	£6,190	£6,380
Insurance	£193.93	£38.00
Consumables	£0	£25.98
Equipment	£247.23	£480.86
Activities	£2894.26	£5,549.89
Leader training	£54.00	£332.00
Leaders Uniforms	£145.00	£772.18
Manuals/Badges	£1224.98	£2,091.51

Camp account (includes defibrillator money, the balance from the funds raised are treated as 'reserved funds' set aside for repair and/or towards eventual replacement costs)

Receipts	£3988.24	£5243.38
Payments	£4395.06	£18,733.95
Surplus (Deficit) for year	(£406.82)	(£13490.57)
Amount in account	£2776.60	£3,183.42
Defib money in camp account	£2,471	£2,471

Group Scout Leader's (GSL) Report – Paul Smith

The lockdown that started on 26th March 2020 changed Scouting nationally and the way Scouting could be offered to our young people. At that time we were flourishing as a Group, supporting two Scout Troops, two Cub packs and two Beaver colonies.

Strict guidelines for Scouting under COVID-19 were published by the Scout Association and then adapted by District level and Group to reflect local circumstances. This resulted in us having to produce risk assessments for both the Old School Rooms and St. Michaels School. Marcus, Phelpsie, and Ian produced draft documents for both venues and these were approved by the District to allow face to face meetings. Those meetings only lasted a short time before the next lockdown and with both venues closing we could only offer limited scouting via Zoom which we did, more successfully with Scouts and Cubs than Beavers given the age differences.

Covid-19 guidelines and the National Youth Agency guidance resulted in lots of changes for face-to-face meetings. As we current restrictions ease, we will need to comply with any new recommendations issued by the National Youth Agency and the Scout Association, which may require an amendment to our risk assessments.

It would have been reasonable for the Group to have completely suspended scouting during this pandemic but the fact that we have continued to operate is testament to the strength of leadership team and their hard work.

Whilst COVID has overshadowed so much of what we've done, there has been a steady flow of 'normal' stuff such as DBS submissions, First Aid training and updated online training courses for Safety Safeguarding and First Aid and others. Training requirements also changed in

September 2020 for Executive Committee members who now have to complete three online training modules: Essential information; Trustee Introduction; GDPR, Safety & Safeguarding. We are now receiving requests from the new District training manager (Gemma Oram) for those who need to update their training. Note we have approx. 12 Leaders who need to renew training which is done via a mix of online courses and Zoom meetings.

Zoom meetings have affected both our young people and Leaders. We've just done the annual census which shows that the Group has shrunk slightly with currently 131 young people and 29 Leaders (vs 142 and 33 last year). We suspect that there may be further losses later in the year post COVID, and we are likely to have to merge our Beaver Colonies given Leader shortages.

Our current challenges are to support our leaders and executive members in completing the required training as soon as possible, to implement any changes required to continue to offering scouting to all despite COVID, and to instigate a recruitment campaign for new leaders.

My thanks go out to all Leaders and the Executive committee members for their support over since the last AGM. I look forward to moving into the next phase of Scouting with you all.

Reports on individual sections

Scout Troop (St Michaels School) – Marcus Booth

At present we have 19 young people (15 boys and 4 girls). Attendance has certainly been affected by our inability to do face to face scouting and also the limits on numbers allowed in any one venue (15 children) as well as a lack of suitable venues (see below).

Leaders wise we have Marcus, Kathie, Peter, Chris, Emily and Adam. Michele finally retired at Easter, and Laura joined the RAF in March, ending her long association with the Group.

We were delighted that Michele had her service to the Group and Solar Explorers recognised with the award of a Medal of Merit, which was presented to her just before Christmas. At the same time Sue Baker was presented with a Bar to the Medal of Merit, in recognition of her continued service to our Beavers and the wider Group activities. Well done to both.

The last year has been punctuated with stop/ start scouting activities. Most of the time has been spent online and we have concentrated on keeping the scouts engaged and entertained, with many 'traditional' activities and badge work achieved over the web. We have encouraged and supported badges which can be achieved at home, such as hiking, model making, creativity and cooking, as well as encouraging the scouts to camp out in some form and also do a minimum 3 mile walk to earn hike badges or to get on their bikes for long cycle rides.

When we have been able to meet face to face, we have rented the Poplar Rooms (and on one occasion the Trust Hall on North Road for a film night) as we have been unable to use St Michaels School. We have also got out and about, using local walks and parks and one night hired the Mafeking Hall at Ram Hill for a campfire. This was a lovely evening and felt like a small part of normal life, even though we had to largely wear masks when in close proximity.

Our planned camp in May was cancelled and we have encouraged a number of sleep outs and seen some scouts earning their first "Nights Away" badge as a result.

We retain a good group of children, who enjoy the interaction and change from schoolwork. We've only been doing fortnightly meetings in the latest lockdown as we are conscious of the large amount of time children (and leaders) are spending on screens. Our programme is focused on getting away from the computer and encouraging cooking and creative activity as well as outdoor exercise and exploration where possible. As soon as we can meet again face to face, we will do so, as we've seen the pleasure in being able to meet again, albeit socially distanced.

It has been a "funny old year", but through the hard work and support of my leaders and parents we have managed to deliver a programme of activities and entertainment and retain the support of parents and scouts alike. Here's to a better 2021.

Scout Troop (Old School Rooms) – Andy Phelps

The OSR troop has 34 scouts (20 boys and 14 girls), with 6 adult leaders and 4 young leaders plus several parent helpers. The troop is made up of 2 senior patrol leaders and 5 patrols.

We have been in lockdown for most of the spring term and all of the summer term but instead of not providing scouting to our scouts we quickly transferred to online zoom sessions (54 sessions to date) where we have completed lots of fun and games, overnight camps in our own gardens and several National and International competitions and weekly challenges.

We did manage to briefly return to face to face scouting in October where we fitted in 5 sessions before being locked down again and returning to online zoom sessions.

We get around half the troop regularly tuning in every Wednesday; absence reflects a variety of reasons but mostly school homework, but some nevertheless get involved with some of our weekly challenges - DIY projects or baking/ cooking to name but a few.

In the spring term we made an effort to fit in even more activity badge work getting outside speakers to join in and educate the troop on things like homelessness, model making and the weather. We have taken the homelessness awareness further and slept out rough using cardboard bivouacs at sub-zero temperatures and to raise money for this cause the troop have decided to walk virtually from Lands End to John O'Groats via our daily exercise (people can donate to crowd funding. <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/osr-scouts/backers#start>).

We regularly have our activities recorded in the local Journal and Stokes Matters free publications, and we use the scout website weekly to record all of our activities. We've presented 3 Gold Chief Scouts Awards during lockdown and a few others are nearly complete.

Finally, 2 of our leaders (Kathryn and Alison) were awarded their Chief Scouts Commendations. Well done to them both.

Cubs – Carl Shaw

OSR Cubs currently has 30 children (8 girls) and 6 leaders.

We managed to meet twice in person (outdoors) before the current lockdown started and all Cubs attended those events. Unfortunately, we have been restricted to Zoom for most meetings since last March and these generally result in a lower turnout of typically 15 Cubs and 3 leaders. We have tried to maintain a varied programme on and off Zoom, and have recently covered the Air Activities staged badge, Astronomy activity badge, Fire safety badge. We have also undertaken a range of other non-badge activities such as Origami making, Zoom Pictionary, World Book Day charades, general knowledge quiz, drawing competition, Minecraft evening, etc. We have also arranged outdoor activities such as a Stoke Gifford treasure hunt walk and geocaching for families to do together.

The OSM "Badges at Home" feature has also been useful and many of the Cubs have gained additional badges that way. However, we are all looking forward to meeting in person again soon and expect to run a mostly outdoor programme for the rest of the year once this happens.

Cubs – Chris Evans

Currently we have 17 cubs of which two are girls and four leaders.

For the school year 19/20, we started the year with a well-attended joint Camp at Botany Bay where the Cubs enjoyed the hikes, paddle sports and pioneering. As the nights closed in, we did our usual activities of a Bonfire night, Christmas cake making and ice skating. Our older Cubs also went to the local care home to carol sing.

In the spring we focused on the DIY badge, with cubs building a mug tree, and we visited the local fire station where Cubs learnt about being a firefighter, trying on uniform & using the hose.

Our lockdown term focused on the digital citizen and maker badge. We mixed this in with lots of games and chances for the Cubs just to talk and say what they had been doing, making, playing with. Sessions were shorter to keep the Cubs engaged.

In the Autumn term, we started the next phase of digital citizen badge and looks at disability awareness. When we were allowed to meet face-to-face we took the opportunity to play some wide games, have a socially distanced monster night, and just enjoy face to face scouting. We finished the term with a Minecraft night which was very popular.

This latest half term, we've been learning about our democracy system and last week had a visit by our local MP, Jack Lopresti. To balance the learning, we had a week making Bum butties and armpit fudge 😊.

Beavers – Monday - Sue Baker

I think this has to go down as the most challenging year ever, but we are still trying to engage the Beavers as much as we can. It is hard to believe that a year ago we went on a sleepover at Woodhouse on the Friday night and went into lockdown on the Monday.

Throughout the year we have run a variety of Zoom sessions, about 4 outdoor face to face meetings and we managed 1 indoor face to face meeting. At present we run Zoom sessions alternate Mondays and set the Beavers tasks to do in between which go towards one of the Challenge Badges. On average we have a maximum of 50% attend, but sadly we've not seen some since our face-to-face meetings last year. This seems to be because children have either spent all day in front of a laptop and don't want to do more, or they are just too shy to attend.

In March last year we were running with 30 Beavers and 11 leaders and at present we have 18 Beavers and 6 leaders. The decrease in leaders is due to either moving away or transfers to other sections (Helen D to Carl's Cubs and Chris and Helen M to Chris's Cubs) and the decrease in Beavers is because we've not admitted any new ones to the COVID situation and the decrease in leaders. When we get back to some sort of normality, we will review the numbers and hopefully start to grow again.

A big thank you to all the leaders for the past year, and a huge thank you to Chris Smith for the 2 years he was with us. He has left a big hole and we look forward to the day he comes back with Eddie. Lastly, thank you to the current leaders who are still keeping it going.

Beavers – Wednesday – Janet Porteous

We currently have 14 beaver scouts.

During zoom sessions we have recently had between 1 and 3 attend our meetings which were held bi-weekly. For our pre-Christmas activities we had approximately 7 out of 18 attend.

We have continued to carry out Zoom sessions where possible, completing craft activities as Christmas cards & Christmas cakes. We have made 'mug cakes' via Zoom, looked at e-safety, and also the phonetic alphabet and morse code.

We also carried out a walk around 40 acres and had a 'moving up' session in the school grounds for several of our Beavers, with a number of socially distanced games and a cake.

Those that have taken part have enjoyed what we have done.