



Scouts

Oxford Spires

District Report 2024

OXFORD SPIRES SCOUT DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 28th OXFORD (Littlemore) Headquarters
Wednesday 5th July 2023

In Attendance:

Rebecca Thomas, Val Butcher, Bill Butcher, Naomi Heydon, James Haydon, Wendy Tatham, Sarah Thompson, Amy Walter, Camile Kalaja, Anna Bishop, Pietam Owen, Amber Hodges, James Wynne, Pip Doling, Pop Doling, Liam O'Lughlin, Justin Temple, Dave Smith, Stuart Weekes, Kevin Heydon, Lucy Webster, Sue Spriggett, Shelagh Hutson, Jim Ellis, Brian Carvell, Tony Wigley, Maria Chaundy, Anthony Morris, Mark Coughlan.

Apologies were received from: - Andy Dawson - Thame Beavers, Mark Walker - Wheatley Beavers, David Eyles - DDC Programme, Adrian Edwards - GSL 10th Oxford, Phil Earl - County Chairman, Giles Puleston - GSL 33rd Oxford, Linda Phillips - District Scout Advisor, Claire Rylatt - District Cub Advisor, Bernie Harris - Chairman 15th Oxford, Andrew Frawley - DGSL 22nd Oxford, Lorraine Crowther - GSL 22nd Oxford, Hannah Berrie - District Youth Commissioner, Michelle Cox - County Administrator, Lucy Theobald, Chris Rogers.

These were taken as read.

Chairman's Welcome

The chairman, Val Butcher, opened the meeting at 19:40 hours and welcomed all those in attendance. She went on to give a brief overview of the governance transition which converts Executive Committees to boards of Trustees and refers to members of that board as Trustees. It was to be minuted that the financial year is to be 1st April to 31st March. A board of Trustees is said to be quorate when a third of its members plus one are present.

Minutes of the AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on ??? were approved and signed by the chairman.

District Commissioner's report

Anthony Morris presented his report during which he made a presentation to Tony Wigley who is retiring as Appointments' subcommittee chairman. A post he has held since the formation of the District in 1998.

District Accounts

The District Accounts were presented and approved. The Independent Examiner is Mrs Caroline Heirp.

Nomination of Chairman.

Val Butcher stood aside and Anthony Morris took over the meeting. He nominated Val Butcher to be chairman for the forthcoming year. This was approved and Val Butcher resumed the chair.

Election of Officers

Jackie Parker has resigned as secretary. Bill Butcher was proposed by Rebecca Thomas to take on the role this was seconded by Sarah Thompson and carried unanimously.

Mark Coughlan agreed to continue as treasurer. Proposed by Maria Chaundy and seconded by Kevin Heydon. Carried unanimously.

Nominations for election to the board.

The following were nominated for election to the Board of Trustees.

Jim Ellis, Becca Thomas, Shane Clarke, Colin Doling, Tony Wigley, Brian Carvell.

They were voted for en bloc and carried unanimously.

District Commissioner's Nominations.

The District Commissioner nominated the following to sit on the Board of Trustees.

Maria Chaundy, David Eyles, Kevin Heydon, Kate Wilson, Margaret Boggs. Their nominations were accepted unanimously.

The under 25 representative is yet to be appointed.

The visiting dignitary, Wendy Tatham, County Commissioner then addressed the meeting.

The Chairman then closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 20:10 hours.

Oxford Spires District Scout Council

Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2024

	2023/24	2022/23
	£	£
Total Income	52,065.23	3,716.40
Total Expenditure	(18,837.61)	(2717.92)
Surplus/Deficit	33,227.62	998.48
Balance Sheet		
District Current Accounts	123,822.27	42,535.87
District Reserve Account	3.19	6,098.97
District ESU Accounts Total	32,179.17	9,637.64
Total for the District	156,001.44	58,272.48

The total income for the year of £52,065.23 includes some District Membership Fees from 2023 and more or less all District Membership Fees for 2024. The reason for some Groups paying two sets of membership fees in one financial year is that the payment deadline moved from mid April for 2023 to 31st March for 2024 so this has increased the income. Also there is payments from Groups for District Camp showing in this balance. District Camp took place in May 2024. The District has also taken over the running of the 3rd Oxford Scout HQ and the Groups Bank Account has been closed and monies transferred to the District Account.

District Expenditure this year has increased mainly due to the District Camp in May as deposits have had to be paid for activities and Yowlbury Scout Adventures. The District has also helped with grants supporting young people, Leaders and Groups and a donation to the last years Jamboree Unit

For full copies of the accounts please email treasurer@oxfordspires.org.uk and ask for them.

Oxford Spires Scout District					
Final 2023-2024 accounts					
Income			Expenditure		
Activities			Activities		
Cub boating	£490.00		Cub boating	-£340.03	
Cub sixer and seconder	£395.00		Cub sixer and seconder	-£470.41	
Cub Sports	£168.00		Cub Sports	-£78.00	
District Camp	£22,990.00		District Camp	-£2,990.75	
Scout Patrol Leaders training weekend	£409.27		Scout Patrol Leaders training weekend	£0.00	
Scout cooking competition	£180.00		Scout cooking competition	-£283.53	
		£24,632.27			-£4,162.72
			District team and exec expenses		-£932.62
			Insurance and Licences		-£576.16
			Appointments committee		£0.00
Grants and Transfers		£19,012.51	Grants		-£11,120.00
Badge sales		£585.95	Badge purchases/expenses		-£953.73
3rd Oxford Hall		£1,045.00	3rd Oxford Hall		-£1,092.38
District Membership Fee		£6,789.50			
Total for District accounts		£52,065.23			-£18,837.61
Total for District		£52,065.23			-£18,837.61
					£33,227.62
Balances					
Date					
District Current Account	£10,147.19	Nat West			
District Reserve Account	£3.19				
District Lloyds	£113,675.08	inc mem + dc			
Amadeus ESU - bank account	£ 4,422.31				
Angelmead ESU - bank account	£ 3,770.34				
Angelmead ESU - saving account	£ -				
Acquistion ESU	£ 5,311.06				
Buzz ESU - bank account	£ 2,239.71				
Falcon ESU - bank account	£ 3,554.05				
Falcon ESU - cash	£ -				
Felix ESU - bank account	£ 2,343.59				
Felix ESU - cash	£ 3.21				
Gordo ESU - bank account	£ 4,566.26				
Red Kite ESU - bank account	£ 833.43				
Red Kite ESU - cash	£ -				
Wanderers ESU	£ 5,132.02				
Total for District		£156,001.44			
			Carried forward		
Audit Queries					
Outstanding					

Template for the scrutineer's report to the trustees

Scrutineer's Report to the Trustees of Oxford Spires Scout District

I report on the accounts of the Group/District for the year ended2023 -2024

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Scrutineer

As the Group's/District's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that neither the audit nor independent examination requirements of the Charities Act 2011 apply. It is my responsibility without carrying out an audit or independent examination to scrutinise the accounts and to report to you.

Basis of Scrutineer's Statement

In accordance with the directions given in the Group's/District's constitution, I have scrutinised the records and the accounts set out on pages to

Scrutineer's Statement

In my opinion the accounts are in accordance with the records produced to me and comply with the constitution.

Name: CAROLINE WIELD
Address: BARN COTTAGE
OLD BOARS HILL
OXFORD
OX1 5SQ
Date: 10/06/2024

District Chairman

Another year has passed and what an interesting year it has proved to be.

The Scout Association has introduced many changes, whether they are good or bad remains to be seen. Most of the changes are administrative to bring us in line with Charity Commission rules, to streamline our committees and how we appoint trustees and officers. It will take some getting used to but I do see the benefits. Then there are the role title changes, I think we all have our own opinion regards this although I do see the point that we must seek to destroy the myth that we are paid employees and not volunteers. I'm sure many groups will, at least internally, keep the old names.

These changes have not affected the brilliant practical Scouting that Oxford Spires has offered and continues to offer but in light of recent events, we must not be complacent. It is absolutely essential that careful consideration is given when organising events, that all relevant training must be done so that the person holding the specific qualification is present.

The District continues to offer activities and support to groups the most significant this year being the District camp which was a huge success even the weather was good. These events don't just happen so my grateful thanks to Anthony and all his team for making Oxford Spires the dynamic district that it is. My thanks too, to the board of Trustees who made sure all the behind-the-scenes work is correct and legal. This year the way we appoint and elect our Trustees is different so some may no longer have a role. So, thank to those who are standing down.

Finally, my big thanks to all of you. You provide the grass root scouting to the young people of Oxford Spires. Without you and all your hard work we wouldn't be here.

Val Butcher BEM

District Chairman

Programme Team

Below are the reports from the District Section ADCs and Advisors. A huge thank you to them for all their hard work.

The District had a large contingent of about 120 at the Oxford City Remembrance Day Parade. Many Groups supported town and village Remembrance Day Ceremonies and it was great to see large turn outs there.

As a District we all gathered at Youlbury for District Camp in May. The weekend was a huge success the activities and the weather were great! Thanks to all the Leaders and Helpers for getting your young people there and giving them such a great time. Thank you to the Camp Team for all your hard work and enthusiasm making it a really brilliant camp!

David Eyles

DDC Programme



Currently 18 colonies quite a few changes in leaders and not all taking part in district events '

September sports day attended by 10 colonies approx. 80 beavers and siblings [aged 4.5- 8.75years], we used the playing field by Cherwell school south site, as we had a staff contact that organised and got us a good discount. Parent of 8th Oxford .

It's a great site as accessibly by public transport both from Headington and Banbury road also has safe cycle path into Marston . It has toilets and kitchen.

Sports day colonies are mixed up in advance and they play 8 bases ie welly wanging , football goals water pipes and other bases using different skills so each team has chance of succeeding. Alongside the points for sports achievements there are team bonus points [different per base ie sportsmanship, encouragement , team work and this gives 2 opportunities for being in a winning team, whilst final scores are totalled we have some team races and also refreshments .

March funday at Thame was attended by 8 colonies about 50 beavers. We have two games that all join in together, Then each colony supplies a base which beavers go to when spaces available . We earned the paw prints time traveller badge which also links with many challenges and activity badges thanks Susie for doing list of available badge components earnt. This year there was really nice atmosphere and Beavers were well behaved and occupied themselves for full session. Best fun day for a long time.

Bronze awards: Sue gave out about 60 but at Awards day there were over 85 on list as some colonies get GSLs or other District Team to present. Congratulations to the top colonies for achieving CSBA are 8th, 33rd, 28th. Some other colonies have had a lull year due to having younger colonies so I expect next year will be high levels of awards.

Thanks to Amber, also Susie (booking events, badge criteria and certificates) and Lucy for being minute secretary at the District meetings.

Sue Springett

ADC Beavers



The pencil game with all attendees at District beaver fun day

Exhausted beavers after sports day waiting for results



cubs

The District Cub Programme is spread out over 2 academic years with some events being run annually while others are in either Year 1 or Year 2. 2023-24 was Year 2 in the District Cub

Programme.

It was agreed that the 2023 Scuba Diving event would not be arranged this year due to timing and the cost in addition to District Camp.

The Sixer and Seconder Weekend was held in March as an outdoor camp at the 28th Oxford, with 25 Cubs attending from four Packs. The programme focussed on Scouting skills such as backwoods cooking, shelter building, fire building, meal planning and budgeting, we also took the Cubs on a hike. The Cubs and leaders mixed and worked well together. A big thank you to the 28th for hosting us again.

The 2024 Boating Day again saw us able to offer 50 places per session (2 sessions offered - morning and afternoon) thanks to the number of instructors who volunteered. We had 100 Cubs sign up with 98 attending on the day. This event is always popular with the Cubs and gives them a great opportunity to try out both canoeing and kayaking.





At our September 2023 meeting it was agreed that the District Cub programme would be reduced to one event per term to make it more manageable for both District Cub Advisors and section leaders. The events we have kept target badge criteria or experiences that would be difficult for leaders to cover or provide themselves, while also being cost effective. We will keep all the plans and documentation needed for past events but would encourage other volunteers to take the lead on additional events if they would like them to be held.

Old District Cub programme:

Year 1 - even-odd years			Year 2 - odd-even years		
Event	When	Term	Event	When	Term
Scrapheap Challenge	Biannual Y1	Autumn	Scuba Diving	Biannual Y2?	Autumn
Castle Sleepover	Biannual Y1	Autumn	Kub Kar	Biannual Y2	Autumn
Sixer and Seconder Weekend	Annual	Spring	Sixer and Seconder Weekend	Annual	Spring
Boot and Compass	Biannual Y1	Spring	Orienteering	Biannual Y2	Spring
Sports Taster Day	Biannual Y1	Summer	Athletics Day	Biannual Y2	Summer
Boating	Annual	Summer	Boating	Annual	Summer

New District Cub programme:

Year 1 - even-odd years			Year 2 - odd-even years		
Event	When	Term	Event	When	Term
Boot and Compass	Biannual Y1	Autumn	Scuba Diving	Biannual Y2	Autumn
Sixer and Seconder Weekend	Annual	Spring	Sixer and Seconder Weekend	Annual	Spring
Boating	Annual	Summer	Boating	Annual	Summer

It was agreed that the following events would be removed from the programme:

- Castle Sleepover - too expensive for such a short stay. Max of 50 people, inc adults, all paying £25 each + extra for snacks and breakfast.
- Kub Kar - doesn't go towards a lot of badgework and what it does cover is easily covered by section nights, also kits have to be ordered from Canada so also not environmentally friendly.
- Scrapheap Challenge - doesn't go towards a lot of badge work and what it does cover is easily covered by section nights; event could even be run on a section night.
- Sports Taster Day - This was difficult to arrange as it relies on trained volunteers to run sports activities, and although all leaders were asked to help find or share contact details for instructors they may know, there were very few suggestions meaning not all bases were sports which defeated the objective of the day.
- Athletics Day - The Athletics badge is not a difficult one to cover on a section night depending on the criteria used; a version that can be covered in 1 evening will be shared on OSM.
- Orienteering - This hasn't run yet as we're reliant on the Thames Valley Orienteering Club (TVOC) to have suitable events we can tag along to; however, it would likely be easier for individual sections to sign up to their events at a time and place that suits the Pack and leaders concerned. This would also likely be easier for TVOC as they may not need to have the hassle of running 2 simultaneous events which they would likely need to do if we encouraged all the Packs in the District to take part at a single event.

Claire Rylatt has decided to step down as a District Cub Advisor from July 2024 to focus more on her various roles at the 40th Oxford.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped make Cub events happen this year.

Claire Rylatt and Tom Plant

District Cub Advisors

SCOUTS

The scout section as had another busy year, as displayed with the number of scouts attending the county awards day and receiving recognition of their efforts in gaining the chief scouts gold award.

4 troops attended County Patrol Camping Weekend at Horley

At district level we made a conscious effort to keep costs as low as possible to allow as many scouts and troops as possible to attend

For the first time the scout section ran a district JOTI / JOTA weekend in October where scouts could not only get in contact and speak with other scouts from round the world but also worked on their international activity badge at the same time.

To this end we ran a free district wide game at Youlbury in November and had about 200 scouts running about in the dark getting nice and muddy.

The troops were well represented at Remembrance parades though out the district either in Oxford city, or surrounding villages and parishes.

In January we ran a patrol leader training day with approx 40 scouts participating, this worked really well and we were able to cover many skills such as first aid, knotting, navigation, fire lighting, running games and the inevitable learning to look at risk assessments.

February saw the ever popular cooking competition, here a team of 4 scouts must produce a 3 course meal from previously unseen ingredients, prizes were awarded for best starter, best main and best pudding along with most hygienic and best teamwork.

March was another new event we ran Quest Oxford a large scale treasure hunt in the city on a Sunday - this was well attended and even the leaders ended up in parts of Oxford they had never been in before, thanks to St Edmund Hall for hosting us.

The support for events has been good and many thanks go to the team of leaders who willingly help run these along side running their own troops, we love to see new events and hope more leaders will come forward with suggestions.

Naomi Heydon

ADC Scouts

EXPLORERS

There are nine Explorer Units in the District and all of them continue to offer great Scouting programmes including Chief Scouts Awards, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and Explorer Belt. The Census for in January showed that Explorer numbers were up 13% with some units now having 40+ members.



All the units completed Summer Camps last year of various shapes and sizes and Looking forward we have summer camps and Acquisition Unit are planing an Explorerbelt trip to Slovenia , Slovakia , Budapest and Vienna.

Notable events include Angelmead winning Raidox a county weekend long scavenger

hunt, Falcon, Amadeus, Wanderers and Buzz also took part.



One highlight of the year included all nine units attending District Camp in May, enjoying Explorer only events in the evenings.

Now that Network is up and running we are working hard to get the link between Explorers and Network established with visits from Amy our District Scout Network Commissioner to Explorer Units with young people nearing the top age of eighteen.

I wish to say thanks to all the Explorer Leaders, Assistants and Helpers for their hard work.

Stuart Weekes

District Explorer Scout Commissioner (DESC)

network

Network have been meeting for the last few months, with about 12 regular attendees and additional who are currently away at uni but interested in joining in the summer. There is so much potential for what can be achieved in this section, and the priority being having a smooth transition process from Explorers into Network. I look forward to continuing to develop & grow this section, with many more pancake & scavenger hunt evenings to come! (photos of pancake day & 'find the smallest' in Oxford)



Amy Walter

District Scout Network Commissioner

Growth & Development

The Census in January showed that Growth in the District was static with the number of Adults not changing from Census 2023 and the young people numbers being down by ten. It is likely that this has changed since January but not by much as most of our sections are full and the waiting list for young people in the District still numbers about five hundred.

The reasons for the membership total not going are probably numerous but three of the main ones are: lack of Adult Volunteers; lack of space the meeting places so sections can't expand; lack time slots in the buildings. These are all things that we as a District need to try and tackle over the next few years if the District is to grow.

For various reasons we are still looking to get 3rd Oxford (Wolvercote), 27th Oxford (Barton) open and running and maybe get some new sections open at other Groups to try and reduce our overall waiting list.

We know Groups are struggling with the recruitment to various volunteer posts, this is not just for appointed leaders but also new Trustees to be on the Board of the Scout Group. We also know this is a huge barrier to enabling Groups to expand and meet demand. Unfortunately, this is the picture nationally for all voluntary sectors. The Scout Association continues to support groups with recruitment and retention of volunteers. If you have not already seen it, do go and have a look at the many resources and ideas for recruitment provided by The Scout Association. Further information can be found here: <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/growing-scouts/>

Kate Wilson

DDC Growth and Development

Appointments Committee Annual Report

The Appointments Committee has held 11 meetings during the last year – 10 on ZOOM and 1 face to face at the District Camp – and 30 appointments were confirmed.

Squirrel Scout Section Assistant	3
Beaver Scout Section Assistant	2
Assistant Cub Scout Leader	4
Cub Scout Section Assistant	2
Scout Leader	2
Assistant Scout Leader	4
Scout Section Assistant	8
Group Skills	1

Group Scout Leader	1
Explorer Section Assistant	2
District Scout Network Commissioner	1

Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS)

This is still a cause for concern. District and Group Officials have done an excellent job in making the applications but some members have to be prompted to do part 2 of the DBS which causes delays in getting them cleared. There does not appear to be any order system at Atlantic Data/HQ with some cleared the next day and others taking weeks.

The District has been running with a membership of between 600 to 620 over the last year and has been 99% and no lower than 96% compliant during that time. In all, 125 DBS have been cleared in the last 12 months.

Reviews

We have 77 historic ones outstanding but, in some cases, no GSL to do them. Another 9 review forms are to be raised for the rest of 2024.

Future

When all the changes for the future of Scouting take place, come November time the Appointments Committee will cease to exist. It will be replaced by the **Welcome Conversation** where the new volunteer will be made welcome, told about learning etc. Taking part in the conversation will be the New Volunteer, the Person responsible for recruiting the volunteer and a volunteer with the Welcome Conversation Volunteer Accreditation who is independent (not the same Group as the new volunteer).

The Welcome Conversation Volunteer must have had an active role for 5 years in scouting and complete a training course.

A new Membership System, coming online later this year, will be used with the disclosure check by a mobile self-service process (via Atlantic Data) and for references the applicants enter details and if responses are clear they are automatically approved.

In charge will be the **District Volunteering Development Team Leader**.

Margaret Boggs
Appointments Chair

Brian Carvell
Appointments Secretary

Training

Oxford Spires continue to see many new Leader appointments and these new Leaders are getting on with their mandatory training and making contact to push on with their Wood Badges and other training.

The County continue to make courses available on the website although some of them may not be as plentiful as is needed. The First Aid courses in particular have filled up very quickly.

We have seen a few Leaders from Oxford Spires gain their Wood Badge and four more completed over the last month which is excellent news.

We should still be following the current training programme until the new system comes into action. Later in the year. When the new Membership system does come on line the mandatory training once completed will update automatically on the system, cutting out the need for downloading and sending certificates for different e-learning. With the new system Training will be referred to as learning, this is to make it “more friendly”.

As always a big thank you to current TA's for all they do! I shall be meeting with them over the coming weeks to complete reviews looking at roles under the new scheme to come.

Maria Chaundy

Local Training Manager for Oxford Spires

District Commissioner

Another year has past and it has been a pleasure and privilege to be the District Commissioner of such a vibrant and friendly District. As many of you know a lot of changes are due to happen in the next year and by the time we get to next year's AGM things will be similar but look different!

The Census in January indicated we were 10 young people down on the 2023 Census, however the District has maintained it's numbers and has grown since January providing great Scouting to over 1500 young people. This is absolutely brilliant and a testament to the dedication and enthusiasm from our entire Leadership Team across the District.

Our Adult numbers remain static and this along with venues and time slot allocations is the main reason for the us not being able to reduce the waiting list significantly. We hope to be able to push forward with recruitment and the opening of more sections and Groups during the next year.

The changes in learning talked about last year are coming on line along with how we recruit adults. By this time next year our Appointment Advisory Committee will be a thing of the past and I would like to say a huge THANK YOU to all those who have been members of this group and the brilliant work that they have done over the years. We will of course be looking to ask these people to still help us in providing great Scouting in the District.

I am always in awe of the great Scouting that our Leaders, Helpers and Supporters provide through out the year for the Young People. This year this culminated in May with District Camp at Youlbury. The whole site was booked for the weekend and about 750 young people and 150 Adults joined together to produce what I think was the best District Camp we have done as Oxford Spires. It was the first time since the pandemic the whole District had been together at one activity and I believe we all had a blast. A huge THANK YOU to David Eyles for his hours of hard work, planning, liaising, chasing and the team that helped him to put on a brilliant camp. I would also mention the Youlbury team

who worked really hard to make their end the best it could be. A great weekend, doing brilliant Scouting, THANK YOU to all involved.

Every year people move on from their roles and this year is no exception and I want to say a huge THANK YOU to Shelagh Hutson for her time, work and enthusiasm over the last three years as GSL in Thame. Shelagh will be staying as one of the Cub Leaders but has decided to step down from the GSL role at the end of term.

Claire Rylatt has been one of the District Cub Team since 2018 but has decided to step down from this role at the end of term but is continuing with her role(s) at 40th Oxford. A huge THANK YOU to Claire for everything she has done for District Cubs in the last 6 years, we will miss you on the team!

Lastly a huge THANK YOU to the District Team and the District Board of Trustees for keeping me and the District on the right path. Also to all the Leaders, Assistants, Supporters who are out “in the field” delivering Scouting in many different ways and giving the young people of the District brilliant Scouting.

Anthony Morris

District Commissioner