



1st MERROW SCOUT GROUP

Trustees' Annual Report For the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

A. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

Charity name: 1st Merrow Scout Group
Charity number: 305753
Charity's principal address: Browell Memorial Hall, Bushy Hill Drive, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 2SH

The Trustees who served from 1 April 2023 and up to the Annual General Meeting on the 27th September 2024 ⁽¹⁾ were:

Trustee Name	Office	Dates acted if not for whole year
Gemma Gregson	Secretary	
David Johnson	Building Project Lead	Resigned 1 October 2023
Martin Jones	Joint Lead Volunteer ⁽¹⁾ and Roughs Explorers Team Leader ⁽³⁾	
Sandy Jones	Joint Lead Volunteer ⁽²⁾	
Chris Ney	Scout Leader (Thunder)	
Iain Robertson	Cub Scout Leader (Explorers)	
Samantha Ritchie	Treasurer	
Denise Stafford	Asst. Beaver Scout Leader (Aspen)	
Cheryl de Suys-Shrubb	Beaver Scout Leader (Willow)	
Donald Tournier	Cub Scout Leader (Adventurers)	
Mark Watson	Cub Scout Leader (Discoverers)	Resigned 31 July 2023
Andrew Whitcombe	Chair	

⁽¹⁾Due to a family bereavement the September 27th AGM did not include the formal receipt of the accounts or the financial review. These were approved by the Trustees in January 2025 and presented at a short additional AGM on the 10th January 2025.

⁽²⁾The role of Joint Lead Volunteer was previously known as 'Joint Group Scout Leader'.

⁽³⁾The Roughs Explorer Scout Unit is legally part of Guildford East District Scout Council and does not form part of the 1st Merrow Scout Group (the Group). However, the Explorer Scout Unit shares the facilities and equipment of the Group, participates fully in Group activities and events and operates in most aspects as though it is a section of the Group for practical purposes.

B.STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing Document

The Group's governing documents are those of The Scout Association. They consist of a Royal Charter, which in turn gives authority to the Bye Laws of the Association and The Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR) of The Scout Association.

Constitution and Governance

The Group is a trust established under the rules of The Scout Association, which are common to all Scout groups.

The Trustees are appointed in accordance with the Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association.

The Group is managed by the Group Trustee Board, the members of which are the 'Charity Trustees' of the Scout Group which is an educational charity. As charity trustees, they are responsible for complying with legislation applicable to charities. This includes the registration, keeping proper accounts and making returns to the Charity Commission as appropriate.

The Trustee Board consists of three representatives (Chair, Treasurer and Group Lead Volunteer) together with co-opted members and elected parents' representation and meets four to six times per year.

Members of the Trustee Board complete "Being a Scouts Trustee" learning within the first six months of joining the Board.

This Group Trustee Board exists to make sure the charity is well-managed, risks are assessed and mitigated, buildings and equipment are in good working order, and everyone follows legal requirements and the organisation's policies and rules. Their support helps other volunteers run high-quality and safe programmes that give young people skills for life.

Risk and Internal Control

The Group Trustee Board has identified the major risks to which they believe the Group is exposed. These have been reviewed and systems have been established to mitigate against them. The main areas of concern that have been identified are:

- Damage to the building, property and equipment. In the event of loss of use, the Group would request the temporary use of buildings, property and equipment from neighbouring organisations such as local churches, community centres and other Scout Groups. Similar reciprocal arrangements exist with these organisations. The building is periodically surveyed to ensure the asbestos present in some of the building materials is properly managed. Department for Education guidelines for identifying RAAC have been followed and the result was that we do not suspect there is any RAAC in our huts.
- Injury to leaders, helpers, supporters or members. The Group, through the annual subscriptions, contributes to The Scout Association's national accident insurance policy. Risk Assessments are undertaken before all activities. The Group subscribes to the additional personal accident insurance policy taken out by the Scout District.
- Reduced income from fundraising. The Group is primarily reliant upon income from subscriptions and fundraising. The Group does hold a reserve to ensure the continuity of activities should there be a major reduction in income. The Board could raise the value of subscriptions to increase the income to the Group on an ongoing basis, either temporarily or permanently.
- Reduction or loss of leaders. The Group is totally reliant upon volunteers to run and administer the activities of the Group. If there was a reduction in the number of leaders to

an unacceptable level in a particular section or the Group as a whole, then there would have to be a contraction, consolidation or closure of a section. In the worst case scenario the temporary or permanent complete closure of the Group would be necessary, but the Guildford East Scout District would also endeavour to provide support to individual sections and/or the Group as necessary to prevent this from happening, at least in the short term.

- Reduction or loss of members. The Group provides activities for all young people aged 6 to 18. If there was a reduction in membership in a particular section or the Group as a whole, then there would have to be a contraction, consolidation or closure of a section. In the worst case scenario the complete closure of the Group would be necessary. The Group and Guildford East District would work together to try and ensure that existing members could transfer and continue their Scouting in another local Scout Group. The Group currently has a large waiting list for membership at all ages so this risk is very unlikely to crystallise.
- Reduction or loss of trustees. To operate according to the constitution we need between 5-12 trustees, including a chair and a treasurer. In 2024 the Scout Association POR changes increased this risk, with our section leaders no longer forming part of the Trustee Board going forward. To mitigate this we have engaged with the Group Council to identify new trustees from the parent and carer community. Going forward we will ensure trustee terms are staggered to reduce the risk of trustee numbers falling below the minimum of five.
- Fraudulent or accidental payments. As the Group has grown to such a size, the finances are becoming increasingly complex, with more people involved in the management thereof. To help mitigate the risk of payments being made fraudulently in error, two approvers are required for all payments from all First Merrow accounts, and the annual accounts are reviewed by an external examiner. We also have a financial policy that defines the parameters under which Trustee Board approval is required for larger payments

The Group has in place systems of internal controls that are designed to provide reasonable assurance against material mismanagement or loss; these include mandatory training for leaders, two signatories for all payments and comprehensive insurance policies to ensure that insurable risks are covered.

C.OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Purpose of Scouting

Scouting exists to engage actively and support young people in their personal development, empowering them to make a positive contribution to society.

The Values of Scouting.

Scouts are guided by these values:

- Integrity - We act with integrity; we are honest, trustworthy and loyal.
- Respect - We have self-respect and respect for others.
- Care - We support others and take care of the world in which we live.
- Belief - We explore our faiths, beliefs and attitudes.
- Co-operation - We make a positive difference; we co-operate with others and make friends.

Scouting takes place when young people, in partnership with adults, work together based on the values of Scouting and:

- Enjoy what they are doing and have fun
- Take part in activities indoors and outdoors
- Learn by doing
- Share in spiritual reflection
- Take responsibility and make choices
- Undertake new and challenging activities
- Make and live by their Scout Promise.

Subscriptions are charged for membership to cover immediate running costs of the Group plus subscriptions payable to Guildford East District Scout Council, Surrey County Scout Council and The Scout Association. These do not unduly restrict membership. The Group follows the principle that no one should be excluded because of their inability to pay membership subscriptions and has arrangements to provide bursaries or waive fees where appropriate to ensure Scouting is available to all.

Public Benefit

The Group meets the Charity Commission's public benefit criteria under both the advancement of education and the advancement of citizenship or community development headings.

D.ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The 1st Merrow Scout Group has enjoyed another successful year with increased membership and increased adult leadership enabling the provision of a full and varied programme, both during and outside regular meetings, and resulting in the continued achievement of top awards in every section.

All sections achieved the Scout Association's minimum standard with every member being offered the opportunity of at least one night away during the year and the vast majority achieving more than that. The camping highlight for the Group was Group Camp held at Polyapes Scout campsite in July 2023 with over 200 young people and adults from the Group participating in a wide variety of activities. In summer 2023 two former Merrow Scouts, now in the linked Roughs Explorer Scout Unit, attended the World Scout Jamboree in South Korea while six other Explorer Scouts earned their Explorer Belt in Galacia, Spain and two were members of a Surrey County contingent attending a Belgian jamboree. In February 2024, over 40 Scouts from the Group attended the Frost Camp weekend at Bentley Copse Scout Activity Centre.

Support for, and engagement in, the local community was evident in several events during the year. The Group hosted another Easter Tea with members from across all sections baking cakes and preparing sandwiches which they then served to older or lonely members of the community before providing them with musical entertainment. The Scouts spent a morning weeding and tidying the churchyard at St John's parish church, Merrow, as well as serving tea and cake to worshippers after the new vicar's first Sunday services. There was a large turnout from all sections for the annual act of remembrance at the Merrow war memorial where the Group joined the community before attending a special remembrance service for the Group inside the church. Some of the older Scouts joined the Explorer Scouts in providing car park marshalling services at the Guildford Lions annual Firework Fiesta in November.

To meet demand from progression within the Group and to provide Scouting opportunities to some of those on the waiting list, a fourth cub pack and a fourth Scout troop were opened during the year with support from new parent leaders. The Group now operates 3 Beaver colonies

(Aspen, Maple and Willow), 4 Cub packs (Adventurers, Discoverers, Explorers and Pioneers) and 4 Scout troops (Cyclone, Hurricane, Lightning and Thunder) with 273 young people and 55 adults recorded on the annual census return in January 2024, making 1st Merrow the largest Scout Group, by membership, within Surrey County Scouts.

The varied, ambitious and balanced Scouting programme offered to young people during 2023/24 resulted not only in them learning skills for life whilst having fun, but also resulted in a total of 2,397 badges being awarded to members of the Group:

- 20 Beaver Scouts earned the **Bronze** Chief Scout's Challenge badge (the top award available in the Beaver section) and 660 other badges were gained.
- 33 Cub Scouts earned the **Silver** Chief Scout's Challenge badge (the top award available in the Cub section) and 887 other badges were gained.
- 13 Scouts earned the **Gold** Chief Scout's Challenge badge (the top award available in the Scout section) and 784 other badges were gained.

In the partner Explorer Scout Unit that meets in the Merrow Scout headquarters and to which most Merrow Scouts progress:

- 13 Explorer Scouts earned the **Platinum** Chief Scout's Challenge badge, 4 gained the **Diamond** Chief Scout's Challenge badge (the top Chief Scout's Challenge badge available in Scouting), 6 earned their Explorer Belt and 292 other badges were gained.

The Group Trustee Board expresses its huge appreciation to all the leaders for enabling all these activities and achievements to take place and recognises the substantial time and effort required to plan and deliver them safely, all on a voluntary basis. The Board was delighted to welcome new volunteers to the teams during the year and also to celebrate the input and achievements of those who stood down from leadership for a variety of reasons.

E. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Annual performance

The Group had total receipts for the year to 31 March 2024 of £45,748 and total payments of £47,351, giving an excess of expenditure over income for the year of £1,603. This compares to 2023 receipts of £52,889, payments of £47,278 and excess income over expenditure for the year of £5,611. However, the accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis so the figures do not necessarily provide a fair representation of the underlying annual financial performance or year-on-year trends. For example, we changed from charging membership subscriptions annually to termly at the start of 2024, which means that the majority of the receipts for the 2024 calendar year are in the 2024/25 accounts whereas the majority of the receipts for the 2023 calendar year are in the 2022/23 accounts.

The majority of the receipts and payments in the year related to unrestricted funds and activities, however we are holding £3,500 of restricted funds at the end of the financial year after receiving a new section startup grant.

Reserves Policy

The Group Trustee Board has determined that the Group should hold sufficient readily accessible cash reserves to enable the central charitable activities to continue for a period of nine months and sections to be funded for regular activities for one year if regular income and fundraising ceased. This is estimated as £9,000 for central costs and £1,300 per section for each of the 11 sections. Thus, the Group should hold £23,300 of liquid cash reserves on top of routine working capital.

At 31 March 2024 the Group held retained cash funds of £222,960 (2023: £224,563). These amounts are substantially above the level identified in the reserves policy above as the Group is actively seeking to generate surpluses and build up sufficient cash to enable replacement of its

current buildings which are in poor condition, inefficient to run and do not meet the standards desirable for modern Scouting.

Investment Strategy

Although the excess reserves are held with the intention of procuring a replacement building, they have not been formally designated as such and so continue to be held as unrestricted reserves. Approximately £60,000 of the funds are held in a Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF), a further £130,000 are in an interest bearing deposit account and the balance held in current account at the Group's bankers. Given the need to access the funds for building works in the foreseeable future, the Group Trustee Board has determined that only short term, very liquid investments are appropriate.

F.FUTURE PLANNING

The Group recognises that the current buildings are at the end of their useful lives and in need of replacement with facilities more fit for current and foreseeable future Scouting. It is planning to redevelop the site as early as funds permit and intends to continue actively raising funds for this building project. This is now a priority for the Group to ensure adequate, fit for purpose facilities are available for current and future generations of Scouts.

We were delighted to be able to broaden access to Scouting by opening a new Cub Pack and another new Scout Troop during the year. We will continue to develop volunteer leadership teams for these sections and all existing sections, encouraging and supporting the provision of exciting, inspirational and inclusive programmes that equip all our young people with skills for life.

The Group Trustee Board will continue to consider whether and when it might be appropriate to introduce a Squirrel section (for 4 and 5 year olds) to the Group.

DECLARATION

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees



Andrew Whitcombe
Chair of Trustees

4th January 2025