



# A guide for...

## The Group Secretary

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## **Editor's notes**

Although in some parts of the British Isles Scout Counties are known as Areas or Islands – or in one case Bailiwick – for ease of reading this publication simply refers to County/Counties. In Scotland there is no direct equivalent for County or Area. In Scotland, Scouting is organised into Districts and Regions, each with distinct responsibilities. Some 'County' functions are the responsibility of Scottish Regions, while others lie with Scottish Districts.

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# About the role

## Introduction

This resource is designed to help explain the role of the Group Secretary. If you are reading this, you have probably taken on (or are considering taking on) this role and are looking for guidance and further information. The resource aims to provide you with advice and support for you in your role. Other members of the Group (such as the Group Scout Leader, or adults who wish to understand the role of the Group Secretary) may also find it useful.

This resource should be treated as a guide and read in conjunction with other resources (including The Scout Association's Policy, Organisation and Rules referred to as POR throughout this resource). If you are new to the Scouts or the role you may find it useful to read the 'Understanding scouting language' section at the end of this publication.

## The Group Secretary's Role

The role description will vary but the following are the key duties of the Group Secretary:

- Act as Secretary to the Group Scout Council.
- Act as Secretary to the Group Executive Committee.
- Work closely with and support the Group Chair.
- Provide sound administration in respect of the obligations according to POR, including inventories of Group equipment.
- Ensure completion of the Group annual census return.
- Maintain records and lists of members and associate members as required for the effective administration of the Scout Group.
- Ensure documents relating to the ownership of property and equipment and all other legal and official documents are kept in a safe place and there is a full recovery of all files stored electronically.
- Maintain effective communication with the District Secretary.
- Be a full and active member of the Group Executive Committee.
- Work alongside the Group Executive Committee in producing the Scout Group's Annual Report.

Note: The diagram on page 25 shows the structure of the Scout Group, the Group Scout Council and the Group Executive Committee.

## How did you become the Group Secretary?

In functional terms:

- You were elected as Group Secretary by members of the Group Scout Council.
- The election was approved by the Group Scout Council at its Annual General Meeting.

## What are you Secretary of?

You are the Secretary of the Group Scout Council and the Group Executive Committee.

The Group Scout Council is the electoral body which supports Scouting in the Scout Group. The Group Executive Committee are accountable to the Group Scout Council.

In reality the Group Scout Council meets just once year. In most Scout Groups this meeting, the Annual General Meeting, is usually held in May or June, but must be held within six months of the Group's financial year end. It receives annual reports and sets up the Group Executive Committee for the following year. More detailed information about the Annual General Meeting is covered later in this resource.

Membership of the Group Scout Council is open to all adults with appointments in the Group, as well as the parents of youth members in the Group and Patrol Leaders. Other supporters, including former Scouts and their parents, may be admitted to the Group Scout Council. It is highly desirable, to include all of those who support the Group.

## **How does the Scout Group work?**

The Group Scout Leader manages the Group and is responsible for its support and development and the programme of activities it offers to young people.

The Group Chair and the Group Executive Committee support the Group Scout Leader and ensure the effective administration of the Scout Group. The Group Scout Leader nominates the Group Chair and the relationship should be one of partnership and mutual support.

The Group Executive Committee aims to make sure that the Scout Group has the facilities and resources needed to deliver good Scouting in the Group.

The leaders in the Group work with their team of adults (who perform a variety of roles) to deliver an exciting and attractive programme of activities for young people in the Group. Their work is co-ordinated through the Group Scouters' meeting (chaired by the Group Scout Leader), which includes the Section Leaders and Assistants.

The Group Secretary works closely with the Group Chair and the Group Scout Leader to ensure the successful running of the Group Scout Council and the Group Executive Committee.

# **Who are members of the Group Executive Committee?**

## **Ex-officio members**

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These sit on the committee because of their appointment. If they resign the role they cease being an Executive Committee Member and a trustee.

- The Group Chair
- The Group Secretary
- The Group Treasurer
- The Group Scout Leader
- The Assistant Group Scout Leader
- All Section Leaders, ie individuals holding a Beaver Scout Leader, Cub Scout Leader or Scout Leader role, subject to that Section Leader expressly indicating to the AGM (in writing or orally at the meeting) that they are willing to perform such a function
- The Explorer Scout Leader, if stated in a partnership agreement and subject to that Explorer Scout Leader expressly indicating to the AGM (in writing or orally at the meeting) that they are willing to perform such a function
- The sponsoring authority (or its nominee).

The District Commissioner and the District Chair have the right of attendance at meetings of the Group Executive Committee.

## Elected Members

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- Persons elected from the Group Scout Council at the Group's Annual General Meeting (Note: these should normally be four to six in number, however the actual number is subject to resolution by the Group Scout Council).

## Nominated Members

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- Persons nominated by the Group Scout Leader and approved at the Group's Annual General Meeting (Note: nominated members are not required to be members of the Group Scout Council before nomination, but may well be).
- The number of nominated members must not exceed the number of elected members.

## Co-opted Members

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- Are chosen annually by the Group Executive Committee for their skills to be on the Committee.
- The number of co-opted members must not exceed the number of elected members.
- Other people who the Group Executive Committee believes are suitable for a specific function are 'co-opted' on to the Group Executive Committee. Co-Opted members can be appointed by the Group Executive Committee mid-year if required.

Ideally, between the nominated members, elected members and co-opted members, the Group Executive Committee should include a parent of at least one Member of each of the sections in the Group.

## Why do we need a Group Executive Committee?

Members of the Executive Committee must act collectively as charity trustees of the Scout Group, and in the best interests of its members to:

- Comply with the Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association
- Protect and maintain any property and equipment owned by and/or used by the Group
- Manage the Group finances
- Provide insurance for people, property and equipment
- Provide sufficient resources for scouting to operate. This includes, but is not limited to, supporting recruitment, other adult support, and fundraising activities
- Promote and support the development of the Scouts in the local area
- Manage and implement the Safety Policy locally
- Ensure that a positive image of the Scouts exists in the local community
- Appoint and manage the operation of any sub-committees, including appointing Chairs to lead the sub-committees
- Ensure that young people are meaningfully involved in decision making at all levels within the Group
- The opening, closure and amalgamation of Sections in the Group as necessary.

The Executive Committee must also:

- Appoint Administrators, Advisers, and Co-opted members of the Executive Committee
- Approve the Annual Report and Annual Accounts after their examination by an appropriate auditor, independent examiner or scrutineer
- Present the Annual Report and Annual Accounts to the Scout Council at the Annual General Meeting; file a copy with the District Executive Committee; and if a registered charity, appropriate charity regulator
- Maintain confidentiality with regard to appropriate Executive Committee business
- Where staff are employed, act as a responsible employer in accordance with scouting's values and relevant legislation
- Ensure line management responsibilities for employed staff are clearly established and communicated.

All members of the Group Executive Committee are charity trustees of the Scout Group. Only persons aged 18 and over may be full voting members of the Group Executive Committee because of their status as charity trustees (however the views of young people in the Group must be taken into consideration). Certain people are disqualified from being charity trustees by virtue of the Charities Acts.

Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation including data protection. Some Groups may also need to register as a charity with the relevant Charity regulator:

## England & Wales

Scout Groups must register with the Charity Commission for England & Wales if;

- the annual income is over £100,000, and/or
- has a permanent endowment, and/or
- owns land or buildings, or
- has a permanent endowment or owns a building with annual income over £5,000.

## Scotland

Scout Groups can choose to register with Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator if they pass the Scottish Charity Test. More guidance can be found online from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations; <https://scvo.org.uk/setting-up-a-charity/decide-on-charitable-status>

## Northern Ireland

All Scout Groups must register as a charity with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

# Who can help you get started?

## Support and training

When starting out as an Executive Committee Member with the Scouts, you will need to complete some basic Essential Information training for Executive Committee Members and GDPR. This essential training can be done in a variety of ways, ensuring you have a good basic knowledge about volunteering in the Scouts, the role and responsibilities of a charity trustee and some of the key policies you will need to follow while as a member of the Scouts. More information can be found online; [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk)

The County Training Manager locally to you will also be able to advise who from their team of trainers can support your Executive Committee with some additional in depth support.

## The Group Chair

The Group Chair has the responsibility to lead the Group Executive Committee to provide the administrative and financial support for the Group. Developing a positive working relationship with the Group Chair is crucial to the success of both of your roles. Arranging a meeting to talk through how it will work is very important. You both need to understand the responsibilities of your own and each other's role.

You, as Group Secretary, need to understand:

- how the Scout Group is structured and how it operates
- the Group Chair's priorities
- the Group Chair's preferred way of working.

The Group Chair needs to understand:

- your need for information in a timely manner
- your ideas about how you intend to do the role
- how they can support you.

## The retiring Group Secretary

Hopefully your predecessor is available to do a proper handover of the role. Whether their appointment was long or short term, they will have valuable experience about the role and a useful insight into recent issues, challenges and opportunities for further development. Make effective use of this knowledge to give yourself the best possible start.

Arrange to meet with them so that the handover can be smooth for you and all the other people involved. Ask them for any relevant paperwork and information. They might be the best person to introduce you to the key people within the Scout Group and the local community.

The first few months in your new role is a period in which you need to be supported, but remember that others will also need time to get used to a change in the team. Making sure you have a firm understanding of the current situation is essential to work out the best way to move forward. Remember that one day you will handover to someone else, so keeping notes, records and other details of your time in the role will make the transfer to a future successor much easier – they won't need to start from scratch.

## **The District Secretary**

Making contact with the District Secretary is a good way to learn more about your own role and about the Scouts locally. The District Secretary will have useful local information and will be an ongoing source of support and help to you.

It is important to establish a good working relationship, so that you know what is expected of you not just by the Scout Group but also by the District and can work together effectively.

One of the main responsibilities of the District Executive Committee is to 'supervise the administration of Groups'. The District specialist in administration is the District Secretary, so this is very much someone with an interest in helping you fulfil your role. They should be in a position to introduce you to other Group Secretaries in the District.

## **An experienced Group Secretary or Executive Committee Member**

The experience of a Group Secretary (and other members of Group Executive Committees) can make all the difference during good and bad times. It can be invaluable to have someone to talk to who:

- understands your situation
- has experience of similar situations
- is not directly involved in the situation.

Being able to communicate, by email, phone or in person, can be a source of ideas, inspiration and support. While every Scout Group might have a different way of doing things, they are likely to have come across similar situations before.

Other Group Secretaries in your District can also provide this support. Try to meet as many as possible and find someone you can relate to.

They will have been new to the role at some point, so draw from their experience and benefit from it. It is likely that you will have something to offer them too.

# **Your key colleagues**

## **The Group Chair**

The Group Chair is nominated to:

- work closely with and support the Group Scout Leader
- lead the Group Executive Committee, to provide sound administrative and financial support to the Group
- maintain and develop the Group as part of the community
- keep in touch with the Scout District.

## **The Group Treasurer**

The Group Treasurer is elected at the Annual General Meeting by the Group Scout Council. They advise the Group Executive Committee on financial control and expenditure and co-ordinate the Group's budget. The key tasks are to:

- collect and forward the membership subscription to the District Treasurer
- work closely to support the Group Chair
- produce an annual budget following consultation with the Group Scouters' meeting\*
- monitor the Group's income and expenditure against the approved budget
- receive and account for all monies in the Group (including from sections), making payment as authorised by the Group Executive Committee

- advise on expenses for adults in the Scout Group
- produce sound administration for the Scout Group – including advising on insurance, fundraising and maintenance of Group property
- ensure that all money held by others is properly accounted for
- ensure that proper inventories and insurance of Group property and equipment are maintained
- comply with the rules of The Scout Association and the laws of the land relating to finance
- keep in contact with the District Treasurer.

\* The Group Scouters' meeting is a meeting of all the Section Leaders and Assistants within the Scout Group. It meets to plan and co-ordinate all the Group's activities and the development and delivery of the programme to each member. It is tasked with keeping the Group Executive Committee advised of the financial and other resource requirements of the training and activity programmes.

## Other Executive Committee Members

Other members of the Group Executive Committee will have different functions, skills and strengths. Establishing a good method of working is very important, so try to meet them as soon as possible.

## The Group Scout Leader

The Group Scout Leader develops the programme of activities for the Scout Group. They work with the Group Chair to ensure the effective running of the Scout Group.

Although your contact will mostly be with the Group Chair and the Group Executive Committee, it is important to know and be in regular contact with the Group Scout Leader.

You should be aware of their priorities and preferred working methods. You should keep them informed of your dealings with the sections.

## Working relationships

The Group Executive Committee will function most effectively when you work as a team, with a good understanding between you all.

Arranging an introductory meeting of the Group Scout Leader, the Group Secretary, the Group Treasurer and other members of the Group Executive Committee would help to start to build a good and effective working relationship.

An introductory meeting with each member, might also be a good idea. It gives you the opportunity to:

- be clear about each other's role
- decide how best you can work together.

Remember that by working together and combining strengths, you are all supported to do a better job.



# Key parts of the role

We've already listed the role description for the Group Secretary. The following are some of the key elements that we will explore in more detail.

The Group Secretary should:

- provide sound administrative support to the Group
- make available to members of the Group information received into the Group
- keep in contact with the District Secretary
- keep such records as the Group Scout Leader and Group Chair require.

## Provide sound administrative support to the Group

You are likely to start to receive correspondence soon after your election as Group Secretary. There will also be an ongoing need for you to send things to other people.

In both cases it is essential to be organised. It is also necessary to ensure that you communicate with people using an appropriate method. Most people communicate by email, but phone and letter are also common ways to keep in touch.

A log of telephone calls taken, letters received and an email folder for enquiries will allow you to be organised. Keep a note (or log) of the communication you have with others, in case you need to go back and check your records. This log will allow you to see how much time (and money) you are spending on communicating with others.

When you receive correspondence, you will need to decide what action to take. It is likely that:

- you will be able to answer some yourself
- some will need to be forwarded on to someone else on the Group Executive Committee
- some will require a decision by the Group Executive Committee
- some will contain information that needs to be distributed to others.

In any event you should try to take action as soon as is practical and to keep people informed as necessary. If it is likely to take some time before the actions can be completed, you should let people know.

# Preparing for meetings

There are three key steps to preparing for a meeting:

## 1. Meet with the Group Chair to agree the agenda

The starting point for each meeting must be the outcomes from the previous meeting. In preparation for your discussion with the Group Chair you should review progress from previous meetings.

These ongoing issues, together with anything new, will form the key elements of the agenda. There are also likely to be some routine topics due to the time of the year (eg the Annual General Meeting), although it helps to keep these to a minimum.

It is important to encourage all committee members to tell you about anything that they may wish to raise. This ensures that the meeting can be planned and that issues are included in the agenda. Having items in the agenda allows people to think ahead and for the Chair to give them appropriate time in the meeting.

At this stage, the Chair may decide that there is no need for a meeting and it can be rearranged for a future date. Assist the Chair in their decision once all the facts are known. If the meeting is cancelled, you should let everyone know as soon as possible.

When planning the agenda you need to consider:

- **The information that members will need in order to come to the meeting prepared.**  
Discussion can focus on the issues if members start with a common understanding. A full explanation either as part of the agenda or in a supporting paper is essential.
- **The venue of the meeting.**  
Doing some advance thinking about the meeting venue is worthwhile. The meeting is more likely to be a success if everyone is comfortable, the room is an appropriate temperature and there is sufficient space. Meeting round a table is preferable as it gives everyone somewhere to put their papers and people can gain eye contact with the Chair.

The following is a sample agenda for a Group Executive meeting. Treat this as an example and make copies that are relevant for your Scout Group and situation.

### Group Executive Committee

**Meeting agenda for Wednesday 4 September 2019**

**Location: Village hall**

**Time: 7.30pm, to finish by 9.30pm**

- 1. Welcome and introductions** (led by Group Chair)
- 2. Apologies for absence**
- 3. Declaration of interests – Minutes of the previous meeting**
- 4. Review of action points from the previous meeting**
- 5. Financial report** (led by the Group Treasurer)
  - a. Current balances
  - b. Review of Group budget (copy enclosed)
  - c. Payment of membership subscriptions to the District
  - d. Renewal of equipment insurance
- 6. Safety Updates**
  - a. Review of the fire risk assessment and evacuation plans
  - b. Schedule for portable appliance testing of electrical equipment
  - c. Review of recent accident/near-miss reports
- 7. Fundraising sub-committee report** (led by Chair of the Fundraising sub-committee)
- 8. Review of the web campaign for funds for Headquarters repairs**
- 9. Update on funds for new tents and equipment for the Cub Pack**
- 10. Update on future plans**
  - a. District fun day
  - b. Group sports day
  - c. Village fete
- 11. Group Scout Leaders' report**
  - a. Including details on:
    - i. Report on sections – activities, aims and achievements.
    - ii. Report on any Group activities and review the Group Development plan.

## **12. Recruitment and retention issues** (led by the Scout Troop Leader, GSL and Group Chair)

- a. Report to be led by the Scout Troop Leader, GSL and Group Chair
- b. Youth and adult membership
- c. Joining list figures
- d. Want to join enquiries – appointment of Membership enquiries role followed by a general discussion

## **13. Future meetings**

- a. Agree meeting dates for the next 12 months – please bring your diaries!

## **14. Any other business**

- a. Please advise the Secretary at least 48 hours before the start of the meeting of any other business, so that appropriate time can be reserved.

## **2. Make the arrangements**

Whether the venue is to be the Group Headquarters, or another venue, there are things to do.

- Book the date and time
- Check that the facilities will be available (eg kitchen facilities if you plan to provide refreshment)
- Check how to gain access (eg who will let you in or where to collect the key)
- Make arrangements with anyone who you need to help you set up the room (eg to arrange the furniture).

Good venues get booked up quickly and so you may find it easier to set meeting dates well in advance and to book everything for a year at a time.

## **3. Send out the papers**

Make sure the agenda and any papers are sent out in good time. People need to read them, digest the information and to think about the issues. About two weeks before the meeting makes sense.

Sending out the papers too far in advance of a meeting usually means that the situation changes, late items crop up but are too late to be included. This means that people will not be prepared to discuss them at the meeting. Remember that some people are prone to losing things that come out too early.

Arranging the most suitable way to send the meeting papers (eg paper copies or by email) means people are more likely to read them.

Only send the details (and any minutes) to those who are members of the Committee. You should agree with the Chair if others should receive them on a regular basis or if there are special reasons for someone to receive a one-off copy.

# **At the meeting**

At a meeting there is a great deal for the Secretary to do and so you need to be well prepared and to arrive in good time.

## **1. On arrival**

Check that everything is as you had arranged and set up the things you have responsibility for. Remember to make sure that all newcomers will be able to park their car and find the meeting room.

## 2. Before the meeting starts

This is a time when you need to be fully aware of what you need to do and not be distracted. You may need to speak to some members before the meeting gets underway. Some people will use the opportunity of meeting you to deal with issues unconnected to the meeting. You, on the other hand, will wish to get yourself fully prepared for your role during the meeting itself.

Don't be afraid to make a simple note and arrange to contact people on another occasion. It's all too easy to be distracted from the meeting, especially when you are new.

## 3. During the meeting

Some people will, inevitably, have forgotten their papers so be prepared and have a few spare sets available. Remember to have a set for yourself.

You will need a record of who is present and of any apologies for absence received. It helps to have a list of names against which those attending just initial their name. You can also use the same list to record apologies.

At the start of the meeting when the minutes of previous meetings are agreed remember to have the record copy available for the Chair to sign and date.

Your role is to record what happens during the meeting. This does not mean everything that is said, but the key facts. You should record:

- the topic being discussed
- the key facts or issues (you can refer to papers presented without having to record all the detail, so long as a copy is kept on file)
- the key points from any discussion
- the decision reached or the matter reported
- what action is to be taken by whom and by when.

If you are not sure what has been agreed at any stage ask the Chair to restate or clarify the position. Similarly, they may ask you to remind the Committee what has been agreed so far. There are likely to be some items on the agenda on which you will need to report. This will happen when you were responsible for actions from the last meeting.

### Fundraising Sub-committee

Ongoing review of the web campaign for funds for Headquarters 4 September 2019

- 1) An online campaign has been set up on the Group website
- 2) The web team is monitoring responses and has made some text changes based on feedback
- 3) Expenses so far amount to: Web development: £10
- 4) Amount raised so far is £567, over 50% of the way towards the target of £1000
- 5) It was suggested that an email reminder to the Group might prompt a fresh response

**ACTION: TO SEND AN EMAIL TO ALL CONTACTS BEFORE THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON 6 NOVEMBER**

- 6) The situation will be reviewed at the next meeting on the 06/11/19

Gillian Walker (Chair of the Fundraising sub-Committee)

## 4. At the end of the meeting

Make sure that you have a clear understanding of all that has been agreed. Check that you have a copy of any papers that were brought to the meeting by others.

You will particularly need to know that the arrangements for the next meeting have been agreed. It can be an extremely arduous task to telephone or email all the Committee members to agree a date. It is far easier to agree a date when they are all together.

## 5. Before going home

Before leaving, there are several people you need to speak to:

- Those who helped to set up the meeting
- Your host for the meeting, (the caretaker or key holder responsible for a meeting room.)
- The Chair, to agree the work that needs to take place, and to confirm when they will be available to discuss the draft minutes.

### Group Executive Committee Minutes

#### Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 September 2019 at 7.30pm in the Village hall

##### Present:

Derek Thompson (Group Chair, chairing the meeting), Nigel Brittain (Group Secretary), Sally Smith (Group Treasurer), Sam Mason (GSL), Graham Brown (ESL), Daragh Green (Scout Leader), Mike Evans, James Fairbrother, Gillian Walker (Chair of the Fundraising sub-Committee)

- 1) **Welcome and introductions for newcomers**  
Graham Brown, the Explorer Scout Leader (of the Unit attached to the Scout Group) was welcomed to the meeting and introduced.
- 2) **Apologies for absence were received from:**  
Vikram Sandhu, Roger Craybourne
- 3) **The Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record**
- 4) **Reviewing the actions from the last meeting**
- 5) **Financial report**  
(Led by the Group Treasurer)

##### **A: Current balances**

Current account: £550

Deposit account: £1789

High interest account: £4530

##### **B: Review of Group budget**

The Treasurer reported that the Group Budget was consistent with expectations, although the rising price in fuel might make an impact in the next year's budget.

##### **C: Payment of membership subscriptions to the District**

The amount payable will be £780.40 (after deducting the prompt payment rebate).

It was agreed that the Treasurer will transfer these funds as requested by the District.

##### **D: Renewal of equipment insurance**

The cheapest of the quotes received was from the existing insurer at £199.

The Treasurer was authorised to pay the premium.

[Continued]

**6) Fundraising sub-committee report**

(Led by the Chair of the Fundraising sub-committee)

**A: Review of the web campaign for funds for Headquarters:**

It reported that the web campaign had begun and 50% of the projected funds had been received. A full report will follow at the next meeting.

**B: Update on funds for new tents and equipment for the Cub Pack**

It reported that £1000 had been raised and was available to spend.

It was agreed that the Group Treasurer would work with the Cub Scout Leader to organise the purchase of equipment.

**C: Future plans**

It was agreed that the Group sports day would happen at the village fete.

**7) Safety updates****A: Review of the fire risk assessment and evacuation plans**

The Executive Committee were satisfied that the fire risk assessment and evacuation plans were sufficient for the current state of the building. The section leaders reported no problems with the fire evacuation plans at their most recent fire drill. The fire risk assessment and evaluation plans were adopted, with a review due a year from now.

**B: Schedule for portable appliance testing of electrical equipment**

The Chair reported that the scheduled PAT testing will take place over the coming weekend. Results will be reported at the next meeting.

**C: Review of recent accident/near-miss reports**

The two accident reports considered were both for minor injuries requiring basic first aid. These reports did not raise any issues that required further action from the Executive Committee.

**8) Future Meetings**

The following meeting dates were agreed:

- Wednesday 6 November 2019
- Wednesday 8 January 2020
- Wednesday 4 March 2020

# After and in between meetings

## 1. The minutes

Prepare the draft minutes while the meeting is still fresh in your mind. You will probably have made notes but the support of your recent memory could be invaluable.

It is the Secretary's job to produce the minutes but you need to agree them with the Chair before they are circulated. Agree with the Chair when the minutes will be ready and when they will be available to go through them. This is best arranged in advance.

Minutes should be no longer than necessary and include:

- the topic being discussed
- the key facts or issues

- the key points from any discussion
- the decision reached or the matter reported
- what action is to be taken, by whom and when.

Minutes should be sent out as soon as practical following the meeting and certainly within two weeks. Sending is normally done by email and/or post. Don't be tempted to wait until the next agenda is ready before sending them out. Actions are more likely to happen when the meeting has happened recently.

## 2. Taking action

It goes with the role that you are responsible for a good deal of the actions following a meeting. You may need to take some action even before you prepare the minutes. It makes sense to note these items at the time they are decided.

Preparing the minutes will give you your own action list. Be prepared to place the items in order of priority and then work methodically through the list.

- Some things may need direct action from you which means you can control the timing
- Some things may need action by others who were not at the meeting and they need to be informed
- Some things require you to involve others and so you may need to be flexible when it comes to timing.

## 3. Follow up

In between meetings there is still plenty to do. We have already stressed the importance of relationships with the:

- Group Chair
- Group Treasurer
- Group Scout Leader
- Group Executive Committee members.

A regular update from you is essential. You may find it useful to make contact (by email, phone or in person, depending on the situation) with each of them individually but it may be useful to occasionally meet as a group.

Those who have taken action points from the Group Executive meeting deserve your support as well. They may wish to seek clarification about what they agreed to do. You, on the other hand, will want to be sure that they understand what they agreed to do and, most importantly, when it was agreed to be done by.

You will need to learn how to work with each individual. Some will view a telephone call to check progress as 'nagging' whilst others will welcome the reminder. Be sensitive to people's feelings and communicate with them in a suitable way.

It is sensible to impress upon them your need to be kept informed so that you are able to track progress, keep things co-ordinated and arrange for help if problems arise.

Your support in this way helps the Group Chair, in particular, as they know their Group Secretary is on top of the details of the minute actions.

# The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

**You should read the relevant sections of POR before you even start to plan the meeting.**

A Scout Group is required to hold an Annual General Meeting within six months of the end of the financial year. The invitation should be to all members of the Group Scout Council (see Scout Group structure diagram at end) with a recommended 21 clear days before the meeting.

The meeting is to:

- receive and consider the annual report of the Group Executive Committee, including the annual statement of accounts, that have previously been externally checked and then approved by the Executive Committee
- approve the Group Scout Leader's nomination of Group Chair and nominated members of the Group Executive Committee
- elect a Group Secretary and Group Treasurer
- elect certain members of the Group Executive Committee
- appoint an auditor or independent examiner or scrutineer, as required by POR
- set a quorum for Executive Committee meetings (the number of members required for decisions made in the meeting to be binding).

Although the AGM has a formal function, it is an ideal opportunity to:

- promote the Group – to current members and the wider community
- highlight the successes of the past year
- plan for the future activities of the Scout Group
- meet and communicate with other members of the Group Scout Council
- have an exciting, inclusive meeting that may lead to the recruitment of adults to the Scout Group.

The Group Chair should work closely with the Group Scout Leader and other members of the Group Executive Committee to ensure the event achieves its aims.

The biggest challenge is often getting people to turn up. The formal part of the meeting needs to be conducted properly and achieve the aims above. However, it does not need to put people off attending.

The Group Secretary's role is the same as at any other meeting and has the usual three stages:

- preparing for the meeting
- at the meeting
- after the meeting.

You are likely to have gained some experience of other meetings before you get to your first AGM and so you will be able to apply some tried and tested routines.

There are some issues that you should, with the Group Chair consider well before the meeting:

- Will there be outside guests, or even a guest speaker, and if so who will look after them?
- Who will arrange this part of the meeting (as several parts of the Group Scout Council may be involved)?
- Are there any long standing traditions that need to be included?

It is a good idea to circulate paper copies of the report and accounts to the meeting. This means that the Group Chair can concentrate on the highlights or points of particular interest.

You may choose to send out the report and accounts in advance. In any event a written report is useful to send to those who were not at the AGM (such as schools in the area, or parents who couldn't make it) to let them know how active the Group has been.

You should also remember that if you are to continue in the role of Group Secretary the meeting will have to re-elect you.



## Group Annual General Meeting

Meeting agenda for Wednesday 12 June 2019

Location: Village hall

Time: 6pm, to finish by 8pm (tea and coffee to follow)

1. **Welcome and introductions**  
(led by Group Chair)
2. **Apologies for absence**
3. **Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Group Scout Council.**
4. **The Group Scout Council to receive and consider the annual report and Accounts**  
(led by the Group Chair)  
Members of the Group Executive Committee will be available to answer questions.
5. **Approval of the Group Scout Leader's nomination of the Group Chair**
6. **Election of the Group Secretary**
7. **Election of the Group Treasurer**
8. **Election of members of the Group Scout Council to the Group Executive Committee**
9. **Approval of the Group Scout Leader's nomination of members of the Group Executive Committee**
10. **Appointment of independent auditor, examiner or scrutineer**  
  
(Optional)
  - 11.A) **Guest Speaker: Tom Baker**  
(former member of the Scout Group and local football coach) Tom will speak about the Scout Group and how it has changed.
  - 11.B) **Presentation: The Patrol Leaders and Sixers – our Scouting year**
  - 11.C) **Voice of the Group**  
A discussion topic, led by Cub scouts, to determine how we can make the next year a success for the Group.
12. **Close of meeting**  
The meeting will be followed by refreshments, sporting activities (for the young people – but anyone welcome) and opportunities to speak to other members of the Group.

# Communication

As Secretary, you will be the central point of information and communication within the Group. This section details the other key elements of the role as well as some of the main factors with keeping people informed and communicated with.

## Make available to members of the Group information received into the Group

### Distributing information

You will often be the person who receives information required by others in the Group.

As we've mentioned elsewhere, you will need to distribute information in a variety of ways. Too many paper versions reduce the likelihood of people reading them. So be selective about which papers you choose to print and which to distribute in other ways.

For those items that you do send, you will need to establish a system for distributing information. The system needs to be simple and reliable. It might include:

- pigeon holes at the Group Headquarters (or another place used by members of the Group)
- regular postal or personal delivery
- delivery to the section meetings.

You also need a system for distributing information electronically. Many Groups have a website that information can be published on.

Email information as necessary but try to avoid including the whole Executive Committee every time. Only send information to those who need it.

### Group diary

Many Groups find it useful to publish a Group diary. This ensures that everyone involved has a clear idea of what is planned and can organise their time accordingly.

In a very active Group it also ensures that the Group's facilities are not double-booked.

The Group Secretary is well placed, as a central point of contact, to co-ordinate the information that needs to be included in the diary. Production of the diary could be delegated to someone else.

Having dates planned a year ahead is not uncommon in Scouting. Having a 'rolling diary' for the next 12 months that is published every quarter gives good advanced warning.

### Group newsletter and website

Keeping people in the Group up to date with what is happening and with future events is essential if everyone is to feel involved. It is a significant task and one that should not be the sole responsibility of the Group Secretary.

A Group website or social media page is an excellent central point of information and some Groups will be able to actively involve young people in its development. A website can be used to publish news, events and updates for everyone to see.

Similarly, a Group newsletter provides a regular opportunity to update the whole Group and you can involve young people in creating it.

The Secretary may well contribute content to the website or newsletter but these tasks need to be shared. Discuss with the Group Chair if a Group website co-ordinator and Group magazine editor can be appointed.

## Keep in contact with the District Secretary

An open dialogue with the District Secretary means that the Group will be well informed. Situations can be identified early and fixed before they turn into problems. It also makes it easier to ask for help if you are in regular contact.

You might also be in contact with the District Appointments Secretary. They help to make appointments in the Scout District. You may be asked for information on members of your Scout Group, so knowing them in advance is helpful.

## Keep such records as the Group Scout Leader and Group Chair require

### Group records

The details of every member in the Group should be on their record on [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk). Liaising with the District Appointments Secretary makes it much easier to record everyone in the Group.

As a matter of course, you should also keep a more immediate record of all those in the Scout Group. This includes, for example:

- the Leaders, Assistant Leaders, Young Leaders and Instructors
- members of the Group Executive Committee
- Group Advisors
- Occasional Helpers
- others who fulfil specialist roles for the Group eg quartermaster or caretaker.

There will be some records that you will need to keep securely. Minute books or folders and records of those involved in the Group have already been mentioned. There may well be others and you need to make sure you are fully aware of the Group Scout Leader's and Group Chair's requirements.

A contact list may be kept by the Section Leaders, but many Groups keep it centrally (with the Secretary) to enable communication direct to parents.

Some of the information may be sensitive or confidential and you need to agree who has access to what. Holding information about members requires compliance with the data protection laws. Data protection best practice and guidance can be found in the resources listed on page 22 or online at [www.scouts.org.uk/dataprotection](http://www.scouts.org.uk/dataprotection) or from the Scout Information Centre.

### Legal documents

The Group Secretary is responsible for ensuring that all documents relating to the ownership of property and equipment and all other legal and official documents, together with any documents of historical importance or interest are kept in a safe place.

# Other topics

There are a number of other things you should be aware of as Group Chair. We explain some key information and direct you to other sources of support.

## Membership of The Scout Association

There are two types of membership of The Scout Association – Member or Associate Member.

### Members

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Young people who join a section make the Scout Promise and become Members of The Scout Association.

Adults who, by choice or because of the requirements of their appointment, become Members of The Scout Association, make the Scout Promise.

### Associate Members

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Some adults may choose to become Associate Members. This involves agreeing to the same declaration as Members, but not having to make the Scout Promise.

Please note: Group Chairs, Group Secretaries, Group Treasurers and other members of the Group Executive Committee can choose either to be Members or Associate Members.

## Annual registration and census

The Scout Association carries out a census every year in January. It does so in order to establish the number of young people and adults in Scouting – by section, Group, District and County.

The numbers identified in the census are used as the basis for the renewal of the Group's registration and payments of the annual membership subscription.

It is important that the census is accurate as it forms the basis of many decisions and the insurance of the Association's members.

The co-ordination of the census for the Scout Group falls to the Group Secretary. You do not have to count all the Members yourself and you should liaise with the Group Scout Leader and each of the Section Leaders to complete it. Guidance is available at [www.scouts.org.uk/census](http://www.scouts.org.uk/census)

It is important that the census is returned in time to the District and in turn the County to meet the deadlines.

## Group bank accounts

A Group bank account is the most practical way to ensure that the activities of the Scout Group can be paid for and expenses reimbursed. All bank accounts for the Scout Group must be held in the same name of the Scout Group. It is forbidden for money to be held in the private bank accounts of individuals.

The Group account(s) must be operated by the Group Treasurer and other persons authorised by the Group Executive Committee and a minimum of two signatories (or dual authorisation for online transactions) must be required for any withdrawals.

It is normally the case that the other people authorised by the Group Executive Committee to operate the bank account(s) will include the Group Chair and Group Secretary.

The requirement for two signatures for any withdrawals exists to safeguard you the individual, the Scout Group and the Scouts in general. This requirement is defined in POR, and in charity regulation. Members of the Group Executive Committee are charity trustees and failing to operate the system correctly may mean they are personally liable for any losses.

A common cause of large embezzlements of Scout Group funds is trustees not using the two signature system sensibly or honestly.

## Other sources of help

### People

As Group Secretary, you are part of the Group Executive Committee and can use them as a source of support. The Group Chair in particular can be a helpful person to be in regular contact with.

There will be other people in your District or County who will be able to help. Other Group Secretaries in your District, Appointments Secretaries and District/County Secretaries are all people who can advise and assist you in your role.

### Resources for a Group Secretary

For further information, contact the Scout Information Centre by: 0345 300 1818 or [info.centre@scouts.org.uk](mailto:info.centre@scouts.org.uk)

Resources to support the role of the Group Secretary are available at [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk)

The main resources to support your role are:

- Role Description for a Group Secretary (FS330064)
- The Group Executive Committee (FS330007)
- Role Description for a Group Scout Leader (FS330063)
- Guidelines for the Appointment of Group/District/County/Area Honorary Presidents (FS330080)
- The Appointment Process: Guide to Appointing Adults
- Keys to Success for Group Scout Leaders
- Data protection laws and Scouting specific guidance [www.scouts.org.uk/dataprotection](http://www.scouts.org.uk/dataprotection)

You may also find these resources helpful:

- Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR)
- Guidance for the Storing and Destroying of Adult Appointment Forms (FS310610)
- A Guide for the Group Treasurer
- A Guide for the Group Chair
- A Guide for the Group Executive Committee member
- A Guide for Supporting Young People on Executive Committees
- A Guide to Executive Committees for Young People

### Online

Sign up to Compass on [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk) to access your personal and scouting record, including training and awards. You can use your details to receive the Scouting magazine and tailored email communications. The website is a starting point for resources, information and advice. Use the online tools at [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk) to assist you with your role.

### External resources

The Charity regulators have a number of resources, guidance and policies.

- The Charity Commission for England & Wales - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>
- The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator - <https://www.oscr.org.uk/>
- The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland - <http://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/>

- The Charity Governance Code - <https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en>
- NCVO - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/>
- Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations - <https://scvo.org.uk/>
- Small Charities Coalition - <http://www.smallcharities.org.uk/>

## Understanding scouting language

Language used in the Scouts can be confusing and off-putting for newcomers, with a range of terms, abbreviations and jargon to contend with. This basic guide is intended to explain some common terms for the newcomer.

### Group

The local unit of the Scouts that is managed by a Group Scout Leader (GSL).

### Section

Each Group will include one or more Scout sections, eg the Beaver Scout section, for a specific age range of young people.

#### Beaver Scout section

The Beaver Scout section is for young people aged 6 – 8. Each Beaver Scout section is known as a Colony. The Colony may be divided into small groups of young people called Lodges.

#### Cub Scout section

The Cub Scout section is for young people aged 8 – 10½. Each Cub Scout section is known as a Pack. The Pack may be divided into small groups of young people called Sixes, each led by a Sixer.

#### Scout section

The Scout section is for young people aged 10½ – 14. Each Scout section is known as a Troop. The Troop may be divided into small groups of young people called Patrols, each led by a Patrol Leader.

#### Explorer Scout section

The Explorer Scout section is for young people aged 14 – 18. Each Explorer Scout section is known as a Unit. Most Explorer Scout Units will be based within the Scout District (with a few attached to Scout Groups through a partnership agreement).

#### Scout Network section

The Scout Network is for people aged 18 – 25. Each Scout Network section is known as a Unit. Almost all Scout Network Units are based within the Scout District. There is also the UK Scout Network that members between the ages of 18 and 25 will automatically be part of enabling them to gain the Scouts Top Awards while volunteering locally.

### Active Support

For adults, Active Support Units are based in Scout Groups, Districts, Counties and nationally and provide direct support to the Scouts locally.

### Leaders

Each section will have a group of adults who run it, usually led by a Section Leader, who will be supported by other adults in the Scouts, including Assistant Section Leaders, Section Assistants, Instructors and Occasional Helpers. Some of these voluntary roles may be described in a couple of different ways, for example:

**DC:** District Commissioner

**GSL:** Group Scout Leader

**ABSL:** Assistant Beaver Scout Leader

**SL:** Scout Leader

## Adults in the Scouts

Most adults in the Scouts will hold an appointment, which means they have a defined role that they have been appointed to. Group appointments are approved by the Scout District.

## Scout Group

The Group Scout Leader is the manager of the Scout Group and leads a team of adult volunteers. Scout Groups are made up of Beaver Scout Colonies, Cub Scout Packs and Scout Troops (some also include Explorer Scout Units using a partnership agreement).

- The Group Executive Committee exists to support the Group Scout Leader with the role and to ensure the effective administration and running of the Scout Group.
- The Group Chair, chairs the Committee and works in partnership with the Group Scout Leader.
- The Group Scout Council comprises a variety of adults and young people in the Group and is the body to which the Group Executive Committee is accountable.

## District

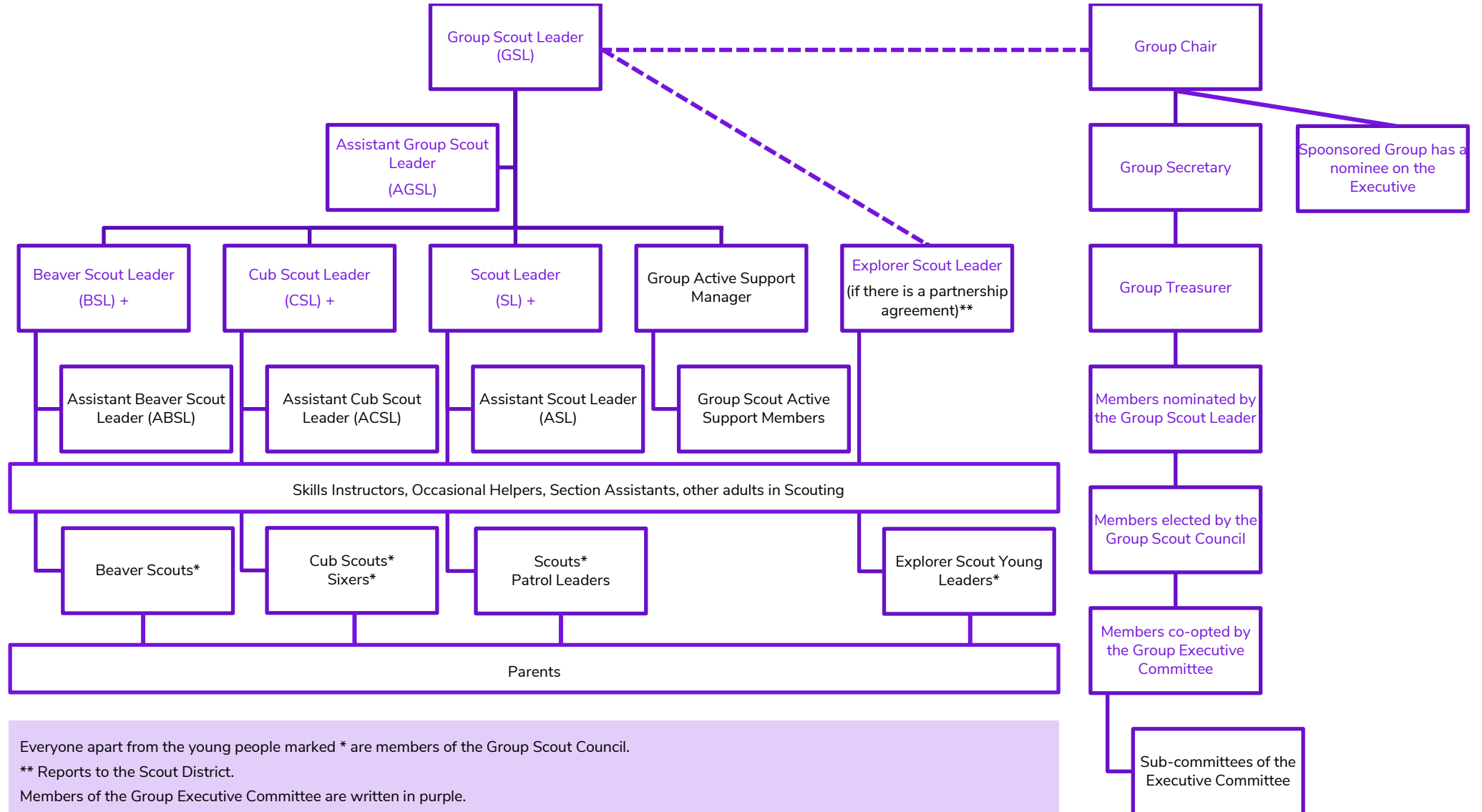
Your Scout Group will be part of a Scout District, which provides support to Scout Groups and encourages them to work together.

- The District will be managed by a District Commissioner (DC).
- They are likely to be supported by a team of Assistant District Commissioners (ADC). They will often hold a specific appointment such as ADC (Cub Scouts), with responsibility to develop this particular area of Scouting.

## County

Your Scout District and Group will also be part of a Scout County, which is managed by a County Commissioner (CC). Among other things, the Scout County are responsible for ensuring there is the provision of training locally for all adult volunteers.

# The Scout Group Structure



Everyone apart from the young people marked \* are members of the Group Scout Council.

\*\* Reports to the Scout District.

Members of the Group Executive Committee are written in purple.

+ Section Leaders must state at the Annual General Meeting that they wish to take up the ex-officio role on the Group Executive Committee.

The District Commissioner and District Chair have the right of attendance at Group Executive Committee meetings and are ex-officio members of the Group Scout Council.