

A GUIDE FOR...

THE GROUP SECRETARY.

Role, duties and key information



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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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This booklet is designed to help the role of Group Secretary.

It should not be seen as a technical guide, but should point you in the right direction when getting started in the role.

Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association is referred to as POR. POR contains the up-to-date rules of The Scout Association. Updates may also be published on www.scouts.org.uk

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CHAPTER 1

ABOUT THE ROLE.

SUPPORTING THE GROUP SECRETARY: INTRODUCTION

This booklet 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. This booklet 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 booklet 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 book). If you are new to Scouting 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 Chairman.
- 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 22 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 Secretary of the Group Scout Council and the Group Executive Committee for the following year.

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

In reality the Group Scout Council meets just once a year. This meeting, the Annual General Meeting, is usually held in May, 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.

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 possible, in fact 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 Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Chairman 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:

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 Chairman
- 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 Chairman have the right of attendance at meetings of the Group Executive Committee.

NOMINATED MEMBERS:

- 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.

ELECTED MEMBERS:

- Persons elected from the Group Scout Council at the Group's Annual General Meeting

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

- 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 believes are suitable for a specific function are 'co-opted' on to the Group Executive Committee.

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?

The Group Executive Committee exists to support the Group Scout Leader and ensure the effective administration of the Scout Group. It is responsible for:

- the maintenance of Group's property and equipment
- the raising of funds and the administration of Group's finance
- the insurance of persons, property and equipment
- Group public occasions – and ensuring the Group is well regarded in public
- assisting with the recruitment of leaders and other adult support
- the local management of the Safety Policy.

The Group Executive Committee may establish any sub-committees which it deems necessary and is also responsible for the appointment of co-opted Executive Members, Group Administrators and Group Advisers.

Members of the Group Executive Committee are the charity trustees of the Scout Group. As such they are responsible for complying with all the legislation applicable to charities. As a Group Chair, and member of the Group Executive Committee, you are a trustee of the Group. As a committee you share the responsibility for ensuring that the business of the charity is carried out according to its own rules and within the rules of The Charity Commission.

WHO CAN HELP YOU GET STARTED?

The Group Chairman

The Group Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Chairman's priorities
- the Group Chairman's preferred way of working.

The Group Chairman needs to understand:

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

The Group Chairman is there to provide you with the support you need to do your role. They will be able to provide you with a copy of POR. This document recognises that Scouting happens mostly in Scout Groups and so emphasises the importance of your role as Group Secretary.

The retiring Group Secretary

Hopefully your predecessor is available to do a proper hand-over 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 hand-over can be smooth for you and all the other people involved. Ask them for any relevant paperwork and information. There will be

some records that you will need to collect from them. These might be minute books or folders, or records of those people involved in the Group.

The first few months in your new role is one 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 hand over 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

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.

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.

The District Secretary is also in a position to introduce you to other Group Secretaries in the District, providing you with another source of support.

An experienced Group Secretary

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.

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 Chairman

The Group Chairman 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 Chairman
- 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 coordinate 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 Group 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 Chairman to ensure the effective running of the Scout Group.

Although your contact will mostly be with the Group Chairman 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 Chairman, the Group Secretary, the Group Treasurer and other members of the Group Executive Committee can help 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 you can work best together.

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

CHAPTER 2

KEY PARTS OF THE ROLE.

KEY ELEMENTS 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 in the next two chapters.

The Group Secretary should:

- provide sound administrative support to the Group
- make available to members of the Group information received into the Group (Chapter 3)
- keep in contact with the District Secretary (Chapter 3)
- keep such records as the Group Scout Leader and Group Chairman require (Chapter 3).

PROVIDE SOUND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO THE GROUP

You are likely to start 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 Chairman 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 Chairman 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 Chairman to give them appropriate time in the meeting.

At this stage, the Chairman may decide that there is no need for a meeting and it can be rearranged for a future date. Assist the Chairman 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 Chairman.

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 15 September 2010

Location: Village hall

Time: 7.30pm, to finish by 9.30pm

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

(led by Group Chairman)

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

6B: Two Scouts have now had their Chief Scout's Gold Award confirmed.

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)

- a) Review of the web campaign for funds for Headquarters repairs
- b) Update on funds for new tents and equipment for the Cub Pack
- c) Update on future plans
 - District fun day
 - Group sports day
 - Village fete

8. GROUP SCOUT LEADERS' REPORT

Including details on:

- a) Report on sections – activities, aims and achievements
- b) Report on any Group activities and review the Group Development plan

9. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ISSUES

- a) Report to be led by the Scout Leader, GSL and Group Chairman
- b) Youth and adult membership
- c) Joining list figures
- d) Want to Join enquiries – appointment of Membership Enquiries role
- e) Followed by a general discussion

10. FUTURE MEETINGS

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

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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, someone's home 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 Chairman if others should receive them on a regular basis or if there are special reasons for someone to receive a one-off copy.

At a 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 Chairman 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 Chairman 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 10 September 2010

- 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 15 SEPTEMBER

6) The situation will be reviewed at the next meeting on the 10/10/10

Gillian Walker (Chair of the Fundraising sub-Committee)

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.

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, be it the householder if you have been at someone's house or the caretaker or key holder responsible for a meeting room.
- The Chairman, 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 15 September 2010 at 7.30 pm in the village hall

PRESENT:

Derek Thompson (Group Chairman, 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) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6A: It was reported that the online recruitment campaign has begun and has been a resounding success. Congratulations to the team involved were noted.

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.

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 fore 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 12 January 2013
- Wednesday 13 April 2013
- Wednesday 13 July 2013.

- 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 Chairman
- 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

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 Chairman before they are circulated. Agree with the Chairman 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

'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 Chairman, 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).

The meeting is to:

- Receive and consider the annual report of the Group Executive Committee, including the annual statement of accounts.
- Approve the Group Scout Leader's nomination of Group Chairman 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.

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 Chairman 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 to 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 Chairman, 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 for the report and accounts to be circulated in writing or made available for view. This means that the Group Chairman 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.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

Meeting agenda for Wednesday 15 May 2013

Location: Village hall

Time: 6pm, to finish by 8pm (tea and coffee to follow) **1**

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

(led by Group Chairman)

2: Apologies for absence.

3: Minutes of the previous meeting of the Group Scout Council.

4: Approval of the annual report and Accounts (presented by the Group Chairman)

Members of the Group Executive Committee will be available to answer questions.

5: Approval of the Group Scout Leader's nomination of the Group Chairman.

6: Approval of the Group Scout Leader's nomination of members of the Group Executive Committee.

7: Election of the Group Secretary.

8: Election of the Group Treasurer.

9: Election of members of the Group Scout Council to the Group Executive Committee.

10: Appointment of independent auditor, examiner or scrutineer.

Options

11a: 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.

11b: Presentation: The Patrol Leaders and Sixers – our Scouting year.

11c: 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.

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNICATION.

As Secretary, you will be the central point of information and communication within the Group. This chapter 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 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 Chairman 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 CHAIRMAN REQUIRE

Group records

The details of every member in the Group should be on their record on 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 may well be others. As Group Secretary, it is useful to have a copy of their details in a directory and make sure that everyone has a copy. This might save you a lot of time in the future.

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 Chairman's requirements.

The Group should also have a list of all its youth members. Membership records, as with adults, are also kept on www.scouts.org.uk.

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 Act. Guidance can be found in the resources listed on page 19 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.

CHAPTER 4

OTHER TOPICS.

There are a number of other things you should be aware of as Group Secretary. In this chapter, we explain some key information and direct you to other sources of support.

OTHER TOPICS

Membership of The Scout Association

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

MEMBERS:

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 and pay a membership subscription.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Some adults may choose to become Associate Members. This involves signing a declaration, paying the membership subscription but not having to make the Scout Promise.

Please note: Group Chairmen, Group Secretaries, Group Treasurers and other members of the Group Executive Committee are not required to be Associate Members but are encouraged to become 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

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

Trusteeship and the Charities Act

Members of the Group Executive Committee are the charity trustees of the Scout Group. This places responsibilities on them to comply with the law in this respect.

The Charity Commission provides useful supporting information to help explain the role of a charity trustee. You might consider obtaining (through their website at www.charity-commission.gov.uk) the following useful publications:

- CC3 – The Essential Trustee: What you need to know
- CC3a – The Essential Trustee: An introduction

These resources clarify what the charity trustee must know, the responsibilities placed upon them and their commitment to acting properly.

The Group Executive Committee has an ongoing and personal responsibility to act properly on behalf of the Scout Group. They must not, for example, decide to take

a chance and save money by not insuring Group property. POR sets out the details and must be referred to. Up-to-date information is available from the Scout Information Centre.

Group bank accounts

A Group bank account is the best practical way to ensure that the activities of the Scout Group can be paid for and expenses reimbursed. A bank account held in the name of the Scout Group is appropriate; as 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 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) to include the Group Chairman and Group Secretary.

The requirement for two signatures for any withdrawals exists to safeguard you the individual, the Scout Group and Scouting in general. This requirement is defined in POR, and in Charity Commission instructions. 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 Chairman 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

Resources to support the role of the Group Secretary are available at www.scouts.org.uk or via the Scout Information Centre.

The main resources to support your role are:

- Role Description for a Group Secretary (FS330064)
- The Group Executive Committee (FS330007)
- Guidelines for the Appointment of Group/District/County/Area Honorary Presidents (FS330080)
- Keys to Success for Group Scout Leaders
- Data Protection and the Data Protection Act 1998

You may also find these resources helpful:

- POR
- Guidance for the Storing and Destroying of Adult appointment forms (FS310610)
- Guide for Appointments Secretaries
- Guide to Appointing Adults
- A Guide for the Group Treasurer
- A Guide for the Group Secretary

The Adult Support team can provide guidance.

Email executive.committees@scouts.org.uk for queries relating to Executive Committees.

www.scouts.org.uk

Sign up to www.scouts.org.uk to access your personal and Scouting record, including training, awards and Programmes Online (POL). You can use your details to receive Scouting magazine and tailored email communications. The website is a starting point for resources, information and advice.

Contact

The Scout Information Centre:

The Scout Association

Gilwell Park

Chingford

London

E4 7QW

Tel: 0845 300 1818

Email: info.centre@scouts.org.uk

UNDERSTANDING SCOUTING LANGUAGE

Scouting language 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 Scouting terms for the newcomer.

Group

The local unit of Scouting 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 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 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).

Scout Network

The Scout Network is for people aged 18–25. They are based in Scout Districts or Scout Counties.

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 Scouting, 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 Scouting

Most adults in Scouting will hold an appointment, which means they have a defined role within Scouting that they have been appointed to. Their role will be recognised by an appointment card. 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).

- 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 Chairman chairs the Committee and works in partnership with the GSL.
- 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.

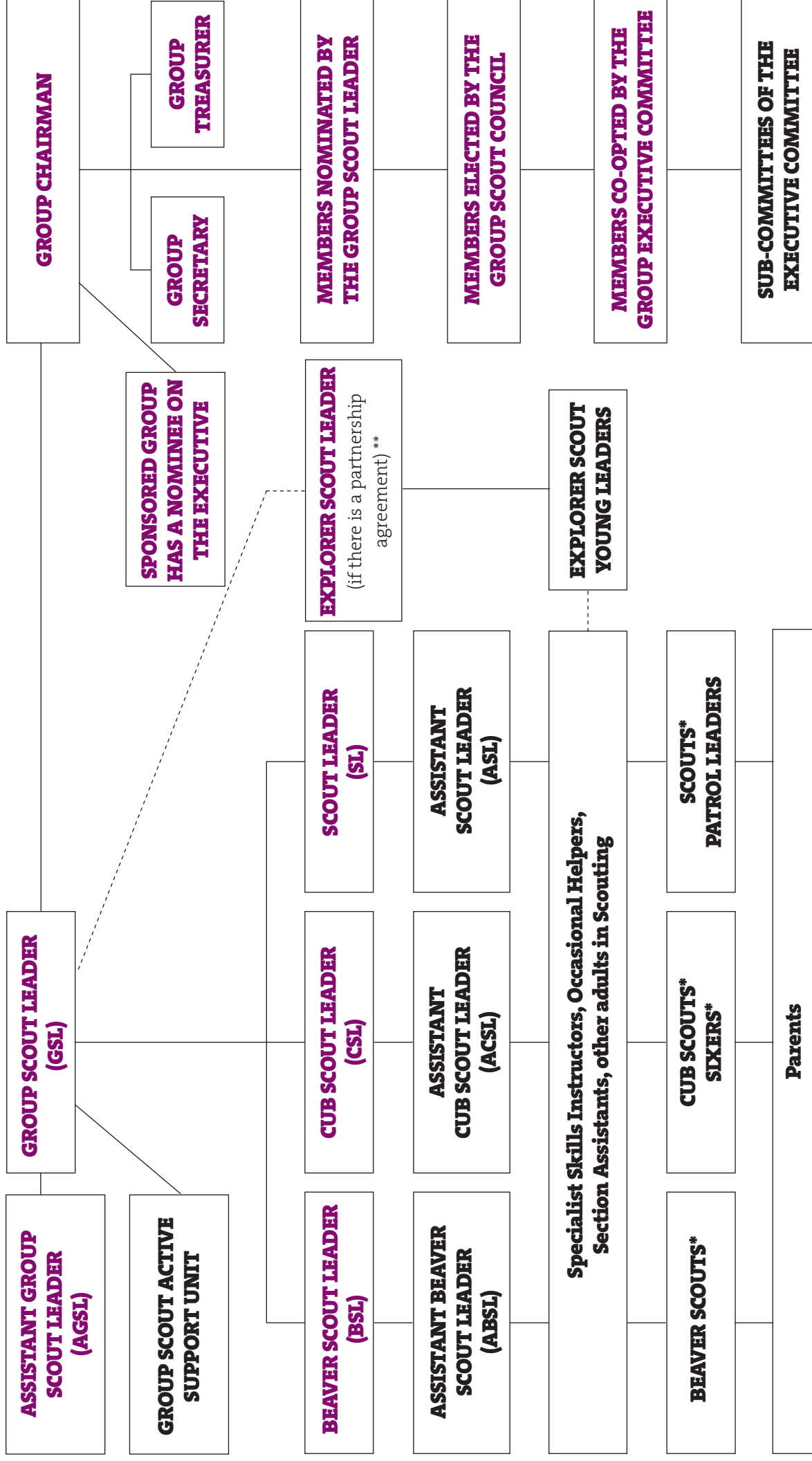
County

Your Scout District and Group will also be part of a Scout County, which is managed by a County Commissioner (CC). They will be supported by a team of Assistant County Commissioners.

Scout Active Support

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

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 **this colour**.


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

A GUIDE FOR...
THE GROUP TREASURER.
Role, duties and key information




scouts.org.uk

A GUIDE FOR...
THE GROUP SUPPORTER.
Role, duties and key information




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A GUIDE FOR...
THE GROUP CHAIRMAN.
Role, duties and key information



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A GUIDE TO
SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE ON COMMITTEES.



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