

## 1<sup>st</sup> Wetherden and Haughley Scout Group Report for Parish Council Meeting May 2022

This report is to cover two years, from April 2020. For reasons that we are all too aware I haven't much to say about most of 2020 as we were not meeting. The Scout Association encouraged us to gather on-line, but after a couple of attempts we abandoned that as nothing beats face to face. It's worth noting that our Leaders had their own challenges to contend with at this time, facing changes in their employment practises and dealing with home schooling. Our situation did not differ much from the experiences of other Groups in our District. The exception to this was the Beaver Section. Karen, our Leader, was able to carry on remotely with various craft based activities, a different one each week, which were very enthusiastically embraced by the young people.

For the remainder of that year, meetings followed whatever the National guidance was at the time. The Scout Troop aimed to meet outside whenever possible, making great use of the wonderful facility at Gallowfield Woods, which we are so fortunate to be able to access. Thank you for that. The Cubs met in our Hall as were able, but some parents were understandably reticent for their children to participate. At this time we had placed extra infection control measures in the hall to secure everyone's safety.

Scouting life returned to the new normal in April 2021. I find it hard to describe the thrill of our first Cub meeting at Haughley Park just before Easter, with sunshine, new-born lambs and chocolate eggs. It was great to be back.

On-going, we have tried to keep outdoors as much as is practical. Both the Scout and Cub sections discovered kayaking and were surprisingly good. We are lucky to be able to use the facilities at Lackford Lake for this, and will be back this year. The Scouts held their summer camp at Two Mile Bottom in Thetford in July, and in the autumn of last year we were able to run our Group Camp at Bradfield Combust, which ended in a spectacular rain storm after a glorious weekend.

We missed out on our usual fundraising opportunities over the last two years, but have benefitted from Grant money. The plan has always been to spend it to benefit those who have missed out on Scouting during this time. We have and will run free events, and have invested in a new storage facility, to be followed by new equipment to fill it! The hall now has a new more efficient heating which is much quieter, and this helps our neuro diverse members feel more comfortable during meetings. We also have an on-going project to improve our kitchen.

The physical break in formal meetings presented a challenge that we didn't anticipate. The usual continuum of children passing through the different sections was broken and we ended up with young sections without the older ones to provide help, guidance and a role model, as they had moved on. We also had to support children trying to achieve the highest level award in each section in a very small amount of time. Thankfully we have managed this with the help of motivated parents. Looking forward, we are delighted that the Explorer Unit will be reformed. This is a District based Unit, but will use our hall and facilities from time to time. This is great news for our older Scouts who will now have that natural progression locally in order to continue their Scouting up to the age of 18

Now we come to our volunteers. We have lost some along the way, but gained some great parent help in the Beaver and Scout Sections. We are still short of a leader for the Cub section, which will present a real problem going forward as it is unsustainable that I can keep running it, together with other commitments I have, long term. This comes at a time when we have an unprecedented interest in places within the Group fuelled by the local new builds, and this is a presenting problem for the District as a whole. Over our three sections we are providing for just under 70 local young people. So, may I take this opportunity to send out a plea to anyone who thinks that they would like to be involved in the world's biggest voluntary youth organisation. Together we can help young people achieve and experience so many things that will make memories that will stay with them for life, and you may have some fun along the way too!

Catherine Winter. Group Scout Leader 1st Wetherden and Haughley Scout Group.