

# The Scout Association of Malta

## General Assembly Meeting Minutes

12<sup>th</sup> April 2011



### Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome by the Chief Scout
2. Approval of proposed Agenda
3. Approval of previous meeting minutes and matters arising
4. Address by the Chief Commissioner
5. Presentation of Registered Topics
6. QA Session
7. Closing address by the Chief Scout

### Attendees

69 Eligible Attendees. 52 Attendees to the meeting excluding the observers on the strangers gallery.

The meeting started at 6:00pm with a prayer and the Scout Promise.

#### 1. Welcome by the Chief Scout

The Chief Scout welcomed and thanked all those present and reminded all attendees that this meeting was not the annual general meeting of the Association as that meeting is scheduled for later in the year and that is when the National Council will present the annual reports.

This meeting is an opportunity for all members to present their ideas/feedback in order for the national scout council to have points upon which to work and possibly present feedback at the General Assembly.

#### 2. Approval of the proposed Agenda

The agenda for the meeting had been sent to all the General Assembly (GA) members prior to the meeting. The Chief Scout then proceeded to request the approval of proposed agenda and also the proposal to allow members to address the assembly. There being no objections for any members the Agenda was confirmed as proposed.

#### 3. Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes had been distributed to all the General Assembly members prior to the meeting and were taken as read. The Chief Scout asked for any corrections. There being no corrections and no matters arising, the Chief Scout asked for members to second the minutes. Seconded by Mr. John Micallef Engerer (Asst. Comm. Training); Vince Vella (GSL Xaghra) and Edward Vella (GSL Mosta).

#### **4. Address by the Chief Commissioner**

The Chief Commissioner proceeded to list the current projects, efforts being undertaken by each national department and pointed out the following:

##### *Admin*

- New filing system
- Partnership agreement with Nestle and prospective similar agreements
- Membership/Loyalty card in progress
- Up lifting of IHQ facilities and grounds
- The possibility of building the IHQ annex
- Update of the website
- Prospective car park upgrade at IHQ

##### *Finance*

- Accounts of 2010 are drafted but have to wait for a number of Groups to send their financial report to consolidate the 2010 accounts.
- A new Scout Shop agreement which now gives a control to us of certain aspects
- Projected budget to all departments
- Property filing, updating of contract and vetting to ensure Groups' security

##### *Training*

- Continuation and improvement of the Training System
- Introduction of the Coffee to Go for all the sections which are to all members inc. GSLs
- Continuation in reviewing the Venture and Rover Programme following the completion of the other 3 sections
- Preparation for the core group regarding the Holistic Programme
- Direct assistance to various groups in understanding and implementation of the sectional programmes
- Participation in local and European seminars and Forums
- Application with the Qualification Council for recognition of our training system

##### *International Desk*

- Improving on the co-operation with and support from the European region
- Youth in Action programme
- Application for MUESAC funds and success in a number of occasions
- Representation and participation in core groups at European level

##### *Districts*

- Giving more support to the DCs in carrying out their jobs in the Districts and offering customised support to groups from IHQ departments whenever requested.

##### *New Scout Groups*

- Two new Scout Groups are in-formation – Mtarfa Scout Group
- Marian Al Batul – newly formed Scout Group still in its formation process with the help of other South District Leaders

##### *Year of the Volunteer*

- Everyone is a volunteer in this Association however there still need to be better degree of commitment. We still need to concentrate on our core business i.e. the youth programme. He said that whilst understanding that commitment is hard for everyone we must make sure that we are focusing on our youth programme or else we risk to be running a youth club rather than a Scout Group.
- Reminder re the 1<sup>st</sup> of May event.

The Chief Commissioner then proceeded to highlight some important questions which have their weight on the quality of scouting and invited the GSLs to ponder on these:

- When was the last time that the Groups went out for a hike?
- When was the last time that the Troop went out for a Troop camp – run entirely by the patrol leaders and the troop?
- When was the last Patrol Leader’s Council held?
- Do we let the patrol to meet and discuss and come out with new ideas – ‘Patrol in Council’?
  
- Do you have a group council?
- Do you let the group council function or you dictate what needs to be done?
- And if you do not have a group council is it because you are afraid that the council takes over?
- When was the last time you have called the Scouters’ Meeting – and is this done on a monthly basis?

The Chief Commissioner then addressed the issue of membership in regards to other organisations, such as the St. Lazarus Organisation and the Baden Powel Scouts. He pointed out that whilst every individual is free to associate him/her self with any organisation, the Chief Commissioner made it very clear that Scout Groups and their members do not belong to any individual, but to the Scout Association of Malta and therefore cannot be enrolled or associated to any other organisation.

The Chief Commissioner closed his address by thanking all the volunteers that through personal sacrifice continue to make scouting a reality for the benefit of all our young members.

## **5. Presentation of Registered Topics**

### *Informal and Non Formal learning Process (By Adrian Farrugia)*

Adrian emphasised the importance of the training programme which aims to deliver a quality training journey to all members and also the importance of a progressive and holistic approach to compliment the training achieved at each stage of growth.

He also pointed out that he was in constant discussions with the MSQ further to the recent launch of the new certification which the GSLs were being asked to sign off from a number of Members. Adrian assured all present all the information will be made available as soon as this is finalised by the department.

Further more all attendees were informed that further talks were being held between the Scout Association and the authorities in order to try to have the Woodbadge Adult Training recognised as an Academic qualification. Adrian pointed out that this will entail tweaks to the current training framework in order to be accepted but all efforts will be put in place to achieve this.

### *Youth Representation in Our Structures (By Kevin Camilleri)*

Kevin pointed out that whilst we are a youth movement with the vast majority of the members being between the age of 7 and 16, he very much doubts that their voice is reaching the General Assembly, being the highest representative body of the Scout Association.

He also questioned if our young members were actually being facilitated and helped to put forward their ideas. Patrol Leaders and Sixer Council? Feedback within their Group? Feedback at District Level? Does their voice reach the Executive or National Scout Council?

Why is it important that we listen to our young members?:

- ❑ Because they are our quality and success measure
- ❑ Because they are our 'clients'
- ❑ Because they are already doing this elsewhere (e.g. school) and we must be in the forefront

How can we achieve this?:

- ❑ Promoting ideas and feedback through PLs and Sixer Councils and the likes
- ❑ Youth Forum – On the likes of the General Assembly but for youths
- ❑ Formalising youth empowerment within:
  - Our Constitution
  - At Group and District Level
  - At the Executive and National Scout Council

To conclude Kevin stressed the point that we must ensure that our young members, who are our future leaders, Chief Scouts and Chief Commissioners, must have a place within our structure and are constantly encouraged to speak up and more importantly listened to.

#### *How Effective is the National Scout Council? (By Andrew Cutugno)*

Andrew started by explaining the function of the National Scout Council (NSC), having a governing function, that is to regulate and sanction. In fact the NSC exercises on behalf of this assembly in between general assembly meetings, and actions the decisions, recommendations and the needs of the Assembly. This is pretty much the same in other NSO elsewhere in the world.

Andrew then pointed out that constructive criticism is very good to move forward as an Association, however self-criticism is even better as it shows initiative from the Associations officers to do the necessary changes to improve.

He wished to start up discussion today and eventually in districts and groups which might be of benefit for us in the future:

1. Should we change the number of elected persons on the council? No/Yes, Increase/Decrease? Maybe the number is not important and we should look at the competences to improve operations. Do you agree?
2. Should we change the nomination process to ensure that NSC members are more representative?
3. Should we allow to have executive members on the NSC? Considering that at times operational issues are being discussed and the presence of executive members might influence the discussion.
4. Is the NSC effective as it is today? Is it reaching its objectives? If not how can we improve this?
5. Should we add or remove certain responsibilities from the NSC?
6. Should we take some Executive responsibilities and pass them over to the NSC or vice versa? Or is it fine as it is today?
7. Should we involve other youth organisations in our council?
8. Should we involve experts in the fields being discussed at National Council level?
9. Should the NSC be more proactive and creative in its thoughts especially in regards to the association policy reforms or are we on the right track?

Andrew continued to express his believe that the NSC should have a variety of members with a broader age bracket and broader capabilities whilst ensuring the presence of youth even at NSC. Andrew stressed that as pointed out by Kevin Camilleri earlier on, whilst those of us who are may no

longer be considered as youths still have their important role within the Association, without youth involvement at all levels we risk our continuity in the future.

Andrew also stated that if we do not take this up and involve youths even in the decision making process, we will be doing a huge mistake. After all this is a movement for the development of youths. Andrew also recalled his personal experience and the very positive effect that youth empowerment had within his own group.

### *Scouting vision 2020 (By Mark O'Neill)*

In 1907 Baden Powell Started a Movement that at the time was revolutionary. Just a year after, Malta was the first country to Start scouting outside of the UK. However a 100 years after, due to a number of circumstances, our Association is no longer at the forefront and at times we seem to struggle to be in line with our times. At times this has also negatively affected our membership.

The fact is that our Association is a part of a movement and as such we cannot remain glued to our glorious past. Without losing focus of our principles we must ensure to take up the challenges that we are faced with today.

The years ahead will bring along a number of tough challenges but with the right planning and strategy we should be confident to face and manage this. In 2020 we are expecting to have a multicultural population with more social challenges. However there will potentially be new prospective members wishing to join in order to reap benefits associated to extracurricular activities as being proposed in the new education reform.

However are we ready for this? Are we prepared to assist groups and individual that might be having urgent needs and going through difficult times? Unfortunately at the moment the Association has no idea how to do this and if help is forthcoming there is no established procedure.

Mark pointed out that as a section leader he is trained to be prepared whenever a new member joins his section to plan ahead, understand how much time the member has to finish his/her training programme and how to best achieve this.

It is therefore essential that the Assembly sets down a plan for 2020 in order to establish our goals, prepare the necessary step by step strategy and make sure that there is progress in achieving this. It is also vital to consult groups who are a critical element in such a plan as they are the once facing our young members on a daily basis. It is also essential to involve everyone, including youths and members such as GSLs with years of experience. This must be owned by everyone to be successful.

Mark therefore proposed to start working on our vision and strategy for 2020 straight away as it might already be too late. It is essential that the strategy is not imposed by a few as has happened numerous times in the past but must instead be the vision of everyone. However Mark stressed that it is vital for Groups to take part and not let past negative effects influence our collaboration and effective participation towards this goal.

Let us prove to ourselves that we are capable to do such changes even though we might be sceptical of our collective capabilities. It is true we do not have any guarantees that we will still be around in 2020 but wouldn't it be nice to leave a strong strategy behind us for those that will come. Let us show that we are a great team capable of great things even though we might have faced differences between us in the past. Let us all work together.

We are a movement and we must ensure that we have a strategy for the benefit of our future members. 2020 is only 9 years ahead and we must work now to find our common vision so as to live our motto, that of being prepared for the challenges ahead.

Mark then thanked the council for the opportunity to express his ideas and asked the National Scout Council to start this consultation process as soon as possible.

### *Our Constitution sets a solid ground but needs refinements and less ambiguity (By Robert Gonzi)*

Robert pointed out that further to the motions passed in the last General Assemblies the Constitution text was updated to reflect the passed changes and the latest version has been uploaded on ScoutKeeper. A few members had highlighted some typos which will be fixed and a final update will be uploaded. Another version of the constitution was uploaded with the changes highlighted so as to help members to point out each change.

Whilst going through the text in order to incorporate these changes it is evident that our constitution sets a solid ground but unfortunately it includes a number of ambiguities such as:

1. A clause which states that the executive might coopt any elected member who resigns. Considering that the only elected member on the executive is the Chief Commissioner it would seem that the executive could coopt a Chief Commissioner.
2. Another clause implies that any member of the National Scout Council may only be nominated from the General Assembly members thus it would mean that no lay member can become a council member as they would not have been Assembly Members before being elected.
3. Another clause states that at General Assembly meetings each Group is to send a representative from within the group, but does not set any criteria hence it would be perfectly in line with the constitution to have a beaver represent his/her Group

The above and other similar ambiguities create useless misunderstanding and multiple valid interpretations.

Robert therefore recommended the formation of a subcommittee to look into the constitution, highlight ambiguities and recommends changes, highlight useless restrictions and recommend amendments and maybe other changes as well.

Obviously we need people to sit on such a committee and these people need not necessarily be GSLs, Commissioners and National Council Members as it is evident that certain people are overloaded. Suffice to say that we have not yet managed to find all the required members to sit on the constitutional Policy Committee.

It is a fact that these working groups are effective. Recent teams made up of just 3 members managed to come up with proposed detailed General Assembly Procedure Guidelines and Elections Guidelines and they did a great Job.

Let us have a constitution which protects our interests but which may be used as a tool rather than an obstacle to face our challenges and adapt to the necessary changes.

## **6. QA Session**

Edward Cassola: Asked for a procedure to ensure that call for applications issued in relation to vacancies at IHQ, reach the interested GSLs where applicants are members from within their Group.

Edward Vella: Suggested that possibly the best catchment age for adult leaders is 17, which should be the right time to register so as to be able to start training at the age of 18.

John Micallef Engerer: Asked about any progress in regards to the Ghajn Tuffieha Project. The Chief Scout explained that talks were still under way that the Chief Commissioner and his team were doing all the

considerations to ensure that our interests are protected. The Chief Scout assured that further details will be given as they progress.

Joseph Bartolo: Suggested that the Groups' identity is kept in mind in the new Branding exercise. The Chief Scout replied that whilst we want to achieve a single image the Groups identities is also being put into the equation. However the Chief Scout also pointed out that the Branding team has tried to involve everyone for feedback but attendance for such was extremely poor.

Edward Cassola: Expressed the need for guidelines in regards to social networks such as facebook and website content. The Honorary secretary informed the assembly that he was in discussions with lawyers and the Data Protection Act Commission to understand the facts and legal obligations and rights. The administration department was also working to establish such guidelines but were facing international legal differences, such as that Facebook for instance is an US company and therefore falls under US law.

## **7. Closing address by the Chief Scout**

The Chief Scout pointed out that this was a very positive assembly and such two way communication was essential for the National Scout Council to get a feel from those whom they represent to ensure they set their priorities right.

He also expressed his satisfaction to here that our Adult training was in the process to get the deserved recognition. Also as expressed by a number of the members addresses we must do our utmost to listen to our youths and give them their rightful space. The Chief Scout also recommended a national council for youths all under 25 years and also for a term or 3 years so as to ensure to have youths on board.

The Chief Scout also asked: Do we really have a vision? And if yes whose vision is it? Mine, the councils, a group? This is why we need more of this 2 way communication and as General Assembly members we must make sure that we are representing all our members.

The Chief Scout also hoped to be able to recommend changes to the Constitution during the current National Council term of office.

To conclude the Chief Scout thanked everyone for the participation which enabled the very reason of the General Assembly which is to discuss and to take decisions. See you all at our AGM later on this year.

There being no other matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 19:40 by the Chief Scout.

Minutes approved on .....  
Date

By:

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Kenneth De Martino  
Chief Scout  
The Scout Association of Malta

.....  
Robert Gonzi  
Honorary Secretary  
The Scout Association of Malta