

The Scout Association of Malta

General Assembly Meeting Minutes

23rd November 2011

Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome by the Chief Scout
2. Approval of proposed Agenda
3. Approval of previous Minutes and matters arising
4. Address by the Honorary Secretary
5. Address by the Chief Commissioner
6. Presentation of the Financial Report
7. Nomination and Appointment of or Auditor
8. Q&A Session
9. Closing address the Chief Scout

Attendees

67 Eligible Attendees. 45 Attendees to the meeting excluding the observers on the strangers gallery.

The meeting started at 6:00pm.

1. Welcome by the Chief Scout

The Chief Scout welcomed and thanked all those present. This was the 3rd General Assembly in the form of an AGM for the Chief Scout and all were complete with the relevant reports. It was the Council's wish to propose earlier AGMs starting from 2012 possibly in Q1 of every year.

2. Approval of the proposed Agenda

The agenda for the meeting had been sent to all the General Assembly members prior to the meeting. The Chief Scout then proceeded to request the approval of proposed agenda. Mr. David Darmanin (GSL Sliema Asst. Comm. Finance) and Mr. John Micallef Engerer (Asst. Comm. Training) proposed and seconded this. There being no objections 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

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and no matters arising, the Chief Scout asked for members to propose and second the minutes. Mr. John Micallef Engerer (Asst. Comm. Training) and Mr. Lorrie Saliba (GSL Victoria and DC Gozo).

4. Address by the Honorary Secretary

The Honorary Secretary (HS) noted that his report as published in the distributed General Assembly Report focused on the National Scout Council and the importance of feedback from members. He reminded members that the last Assembly was a great opportunity for feedback from members, however it should not be the only such occasion.

HS indicated that unfortunately an amount of effort was wasted fire-fighting and managing conflict. For the Council it was evident from the start that in order to achieve the set targets and being of tangible assistance to our Groups the national team had to be beefed up. This is how the new IHQ structure came about. Obviously, as is the case with every change, there were also changes in team members. It is essential that if any set target is to be reached, all team members must be pulling together in the same direction. The HS made it very clear that however this does not in any way demean the efforts and gratitude to these former national team members who have worked hard and deserve the respect and appreciation of all members.

The HS pointed out that whilst the council was working hard to achieve the targets set, it was very much pushing forward 2 particular topics: Quality in Scouting and Branding. These targets were obviously not picked out of a hat. The HS explained that Branding was not about the same t-shirt style and stationary. It is about an image which as an Association we are in desperate need. We need to be counted, to be known for who we are and what we really do and not for what we appear to be doing mostly at parades. Unless we achieved this, it will be very difficult to have the right recognition when requesting funding and assistance from the authorities and we need to ensure that this is evenly distributed on all Groups as much as the few Groups who have managed to 'brand' their Group as a quality group hence achieving better and faster results when requesting assistance.

This brings us to the Quality in Scouting. The HS said that this was a self assessment tool with the only aim to manage tailored support for each Group. It was essential that District Commissioners promoted this and assist all Groups to measure their string and weak points so the national team can truly address their needs and help them to grow in the quality they deliver to our young members. Unless we know each Group's needs, the national team will never manage to tangibly assist.

The HS said that the council wanted to ensure that every Group had all the papers in place to have piece of mind on its property and finances, which is why the Trustees and the Finance Department were scrutinising accounts and property contracts. This was not being done, as some perceived, as an intrusion from the national team, but to ensure that every Group could withstand a couple of bad years and also to ensure that should this happen the national team would be ready to step in for you.

The HS closed his address by reminding all members that the National Scout Council was their voice and they were to ensure to use it to the best of their ability.

5. Address by the Chief Commissioner

The Chief Commissioner, Mr. Leslie Bonnici, addressed the Assembly and highlighted the efforts undertaken by every department. (Please see report attached)

6. Presentation of the Financial Report

Mr. Mark Pizzuto, Commissioner of Finance, explained the financial report, which was represented in the distributed General Assembly Document. The Chief Scout thanked Mr. Pizzuto for his presentation and kindly asked Assembly members to address any questions in the QA Session following the appointment of the Association Auditor.

7. Nomination and Appointment of or Auditor

The Chief Scout pointed out that as stipulated in our constitution the General Assembly were to appoint an Auditor for the following year. Mr. Robert Gonzi (Honorary Secretary and Administration Comm.) proposed Mr. Peter Degiorgio. Mr. Kevin Camilleri (International Comm.) seconded this proposal which was also approved by the Assembly Members. The Chief Scout asked Mr. Degiorgio if he would willing to take up this role. Mr. Degiorgio was pleased to accept and therefore was appointed as the Association's Auditor.

8. QA Session

Mr. Joe Dalli (Scout Fellowship Chairperson) suggested that the Association addresses the remaining centenary clothing issue and possibly lowers the price to almost giveaway so as to avoid such a waste and to at least recover some of the costs. The Honorary Secretary replied that the Executive had tried to address this and was concerned that lowering the price might create a feeling of unfairness in the respect of those that had paid the full price back in 2008. Having said so the Honorary Secretary agreed with Mr. Dalli and compared this to an out of season discount which was the normal practice with such items at all retail establishments. There was general consensus that the price should be lowered and therefore the Executive will be selling these at rock bottom prices.

Mr. Vincent Camilleri (Hamrun Group Rep.) asked how come there was such an increase in income from Scouting Activities and if it would be possible to redirect some of this towards subsidising the training fee of our young leaders most of whom are still students without an income. It was explained that the surplus shown was money coming in from Jamboree Participants in the form of instalments which were not spent till the end of the year as the Maltese contingent paid most of its dues in 2011 and therefore the outgoing amount is not represented in the 2010 Accounts.

Mr. Edward Cassola (GSL SAC) asked for a progress report on the Ghajn Tuffieha Project. The Chief Commissioner reported that meetings were still ongoing. The Association was constantly monitoring the project planning progress and making sure that at the end it would be viable for our Association and that the area allocated to the parking would not eat up more space that we are ready to allow. The CC also explained that the Association had applied to take over the Barracks further up from the site and that unfortunately we had recently been informed that these were being handed over to another organisation.

Mr. Mario Ellul (GSL Cospicua) asked for the possibility to extend the deadline in the payment of the membership fee as the reality in Groups was that this would be trickling in by their members and usually took quite a lot to be collected in full. He also wished to take the opportunity to

thank the Training Department for all the work including the publications being produced. It was agreed that any Groups having difficulties to settle the membership fee at the beginning of the year should request assistance and if necessary an instalment plan will be arranged.

Mr. David Schembri (GSL Qrendi) commented that the Scout In Need was probably not reaping the desired effect as possibly members really in need were not willing, possibly embarrassed, to come forward and possibly those who did were not really in need. Other members commented that the process of submitting a request and follow up was also not very clear. The Honorary Secretary ensured that every request was treated in the strictest confidentiality manner. He also ensured that by the following day he would create a new email address specifically intended to submit such requests which goes directly to Mr. Martin Azzopardi (Deputy Chief Scout) who is in charge of this fund.

Mr. Schembri continued that the membership fee increase was still considered high even though it was the equivalent of a soft drink. He explained that Groups were constantly facing new costs such as increased rent, higher utility bills and he therefore asked for consideration.

He also stated that the Golden Sands project seemed to have slowed down. The Chief Scout explained that discussions were still underway and that negotiations tend to develop new processes and new considerations which delay the project further. The CS assured all present that he had absolutely no personal interests and his only interest was to 'fund raise' as much as possible for the Association and for the benefit of all our members.

Mr. Mark O'Neill (Zebbug Group Rep.) took up the utility bills comment and asked if we could possibly address this possibly by requesting a subsidy. The Chief Scout and Chief Commissioner confirmed that discussions were held with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations in this regards and also other similar expenses and it was evident that the commissioner was looking into this.

Mr. Marco Cassar (GSL Zabbar) asked if it was possible to have some further details on the branding material so that Groups may start implementing the exercise. The CS assured that details will soon be reaching all Groups.

9. Closing address by the Chief Scout

The Chief Scout (CS) pointed out that he had decided to scrap his planned closing address as following his recent attendance to the Girl Guides General Assembly he preferred to change the topic completely. It was evident that the environment at the Girl Guides Assembly was much better, with a relaxed atmosphere and a positive attitude from all. No one attended with the intension of attacked others. The CS asked why is it that we cannot seem to find a similar environment.

The CS therefore started his address by apologizing to anyone who he might have unintentionally harmed. Everyone is subject to do mistakes but the uneasy feeling when attending an Assembly is always present constantly waiting for someone to personally attack someone else. Scouting is what we do with the Kids. At the Guides Assembly I saw genuine smiles and we have a lot to learn in this aspect. The environment we work in is something I am not proud of.

The CS continued that we are the ones to make our environment the way it is and everyone should look at his actions before pointing fingers. This is why, the CS explained, I am looking at myself and apologizing. The CS asked the National Scout Council to be an active promoter of a healthy and friendly environment so at the end of their term they will leave a solid value behind.

The CS, whilst explaining that he did not have an executive role, wanted all members to note the very healthy collaboration that exists between himself and the Chief Commissioner, who heads the executive section of the Association. He noted that he meets the Chief Commissioner once a week to discuss any matters and was also in frequent contact with the Honorary Secretary.

The CS also stressed the importance of feedback from our members to the council as the Honorary Secretary indicated in his address. He added that the council wanted to listen to our members needs. At the last Assembly, in a particular address presented by a member of the Assembly, a question was raised, "Where are the youths?". The CS stated that he was looking forward to see new blood in the National Scout Council. He also pointed out that the Youth National Council being proposed is something he is hoping to start as early as possibly with a free election for all youths. This will ensure that our Youths have a say and that their voice is heard in the decision making process.

The CS concluded that democracy is very nice but he asked if we are really ready for it. Unless we are ready to change the atmosphere we are working in than we will have serious problems to continue functioning. We need to ensure that all our members are experiencing the true scouting spirit and we can only do this if we all promise to do at least something small to improve our environment. Let us all feel that we are at home with friends and therefore free to make mistakes and learn from them. Let us be ambassadors of a genuine smile.

Minutes approved on _____
Date

By:

Kenneth De Martino
Chief Scout
The Scout Association of Malta

Robert Gonzi
Honorary Secretary
The Scout Association of Malta