

General Assembly Meeting Minutes

16th May 2013

Meeting Agenda

- 17:30 1. Welcome Coffee and Registration of Assembly Members
18:00 2. Welcome by the Chief Scout
- 18:05 3. Approval of proposed agenda
4. Approval of previous meeting minutes
5. Matters Arising from previous meeting minutes
- 18:15 6. Approval of Motion Text as proposed by Policy Committee
- 18:30 7. Address by the Honorary Secretary
18:40 8. Address by the Chief Commissioner
19:00 9. Presentation of the Financial Budget
19:05 10. Presentation of the Financial Report
19:20 11. Q&A and Approval of Reports
19:45 12. Appointment of the Association Auditor
- 19:50 13. Presentation of the proposal for the Youth National Scout Council
20:00 14. Presentation of the Discussion Document for the Association Strategy
- 20:10 15. Address by the 2 nominees for the Post of Chief Scout
- 20:20 16. Closing address by the Chief Scout
20:30 17. Closing of Meeting

Attendees

Old Assembly Members Format – Prior to Motion Text Approval:

63 Eligible Attendees. 41 Attendees to the meeting excluding the observers on the strangers gallery.

New Assembly Members Format – After Approval

122 Eligible Attendees. 50 Attendees to the meeting excluding the observers on the strangers gallery. The assembly adopted the 1/3 Members attendance after 30+ minutes wait as effectively this attendance became effective at 18:50

The meeting started at 6:15pm.

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2. Welcome by the Chief Scout

The Chief Scout welcomed all the members present including the new members of the Assembly and the members in the strangers gallery. He urged all members to keep our young members as a focal point of all our discussions. He reminded all of the times when a General Assembly did not even exist and today we were extending the membership of the Assembly. The Chief Scout asked for a healthy debate and the respect of every opinion expressed by any Assembly member.

5. Matters Arising from previous meeting minutes

3 Members of the assembly felt that the motion voted for at the previous assembly to extend the membership of the General Assembly was not properly managed and hence all the new members should have not been invited to the meeting and this should only have happened after the text of the constitution was agreed upon. The Honorary Secretary explained that there was no contestation to the effect that the motion had passed by over 97% of the Assembly and that delaying the Chief Scout Election and the General Assembly to a future date to simply ratify the text was seen as unnecessary. It was agreed by all that the text had to be approved by the previous assembly members before involving the new assembly members to take part in the meeting however there was no need to postpone the current agenda.

These 3 members contested that the Agenda should be approved by the old Assembly members and could effectively change. The Honorary Secretary asked for a show of hands to this effect, that is changing the proposed agenda and asked only the old assembly members to vote. This request had only 3 members in favor and all against hence the agenda remained as is.

One of the 3 members in favor of the change pointed out that he did not agree with the extended membership and that he had sent a letter to IHQ in this sense prior to the last Assembly. The Secretary reminded him that whilst he was not present one of his Group members was present by proxy and had all the rights to raise the discussion on the day when the motion was being discussed and it would be unfair to reopen the discussion today on an already voted and passed motion. However the Secretary reminded this member that as an Assembly member he had all the rights to present a counter motion to be passed at a next General Assembly. The meeting proceeded after this.

3. Approval of proposed agenda

The Chief Scout requested the approval of the agenda as proposed. This was seconded by Mr. Martin Azzopardi and Mr Mark O'Neill.

4. Approval of previous meeting minutes

The Chief Scout requested the approval of the minutes of the previous general Assembly Meeting. This was seconded by Mr. Glen Catania and Dr. Kevin Camilleri. There being no further matters arising the meeting proceeded to the next point on the Agenda.

6. Approval of Motion Text as proposed by Policy Committee

The following constitutional amendments were unanimously approved by the old members of the Assembly following a healthy discussion and feedback from the floor on the text recommended by the Policy Committee which was sent to all Assembly Members prior to the meeting,.

New approved text for the effected constitutional clauses:

Chapter IV – The General Assembly

Article XV – Composition

Point (h)

All officially appointed Group Scout Leaders or Scouters in Charge, Assistant Group Scout Leader/s and the Section Leader/s¹ of each section of all duly registered Scout Groups as further provided for at Article XVII Section 3. In those instances where All officially appointed Group Scout Leaders or Scouters in Charge, Assistant Group Scout Leaders and the section leader/s¹ of each section as provided for at Article XXVI section 6 the Leader shall nominate an adult uniformed member of the Scout Group to represent him/her at the General Assembly. Such member shall be entitled to a vote as provided for at Article XVII sections 1 and 3.

¹ The wording “Section Leader/s” excludes Assistant Section Leaders, Support Leaders and Group Auxiliaries who are however welcome at General Assembly meetings as observers in the visitors’ gallery.

Article XVII – Voting

Section (3)

A Member whose annual Association membership fee has not been paid up to and including the end of the fiscal year preceding the Assembly shall forfeit his/her right to vote at that meeting of the Assembly, unless remission or postponement of dues has received prior authorisation from the Executive Committee.

The Chief Scout informed all present that from this point onwards all the new assembly members were officially invited to take part in the rest of the meeting.

7. Address by the Honorary Secretary

A short video was shown highlighting the story of American Astronaut Jim Lovell, commander of NASA mission Apollo 13 which had failed a moon landing but succeeded in returning safe and sound from outer space on a derelict space craft using incredible skills. The video ends by pointing out that before he wore his astronaut uniform Jim Lowell wore his scout one. (Video may be seen here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNq6WsYIAFI>)

The Honorary Secretary stated that he was proud to be a Scout. He was thankful to all his leaders who had given him so much personally and to all of today leaders for making a difference for their members. However he pointed out that by time he realized that he does not have at heart the scout movement in itself. He has at heart all the members and the positive experience they gain from scouting. Should the Movement, The Association or any Group become an aim in itself and loses the non-formal and informal educational priority then all the efforts would be futile.

The secretary continued that he is saddened and frustrated when he has to write letter or attend meetings with certain Groups on uniforms, parades or constitutional clauses and the same groups do not show the same passion or even do not show up when the Association invites leaders for consultation in regards to our young members training programme which is the first priority.

Returning on the Jim Lovell video, the Secretary stated that he was mostly proud not of the fact that Jim Lovell was a scout, but that the video associated his preparedness to the moment of truth that he had to face with his scouting educational background.

He continued by reminding the Assembly members of the metaphor used by the Chief Scout in his first address 4 years ago when he compared the Association to a train on a journey which is keeping on track and at times may need to clean its windows. The secretary, continuing on the same metaphor, felt that a number of Groups had upgraded their tickets to 1st class but a few Groups never even made it to the station. He said he is confident that the latter will find their way or will somehow be helped to find the way and that eventually will also manage to upgrade to first class or will be assisted into upgrading for the benefit of all young members but not upgrading was not an option.

The Secretary then asked the Assembly Members to find a few minutes in their busy schedule to read the his report on page 6 of the Assembly Document as he felt it had a very important short message and did not wish to repeat what was written there.

The Secretary closed his address with a heart felt thanks to Mr. Kenneth DeMartino, as the outgoing Chief Scout for all his efforts, dedication and support throughout his term and also thanked the 2 contestants for the post of Chief Scout for offering their time for the benefit of our members.

8. Address by the Chief Commissioner

The Chief Commissioner informed all members that the Assembly Document included a list of all the work done in 2012 and also highlighted the current efforts of the Training department to launch the elder 2 sections programme. He reminded all members that a detailed report had been uploaded on ScoutKeeper.

He then proceeded to inform the Assembly of the criticism that he together with the Chief Scout had received from government departments on the fact that the Association seemed not to have a central point of reference as a number of Groups were still approaching government entities directly bypassing the IHQ as was requested in these cases. He pointed out that this was having a very negative effect and was detrimental to all of us. He asked all members to follow the right channels and ensure that such communication is directed through the IHQ administration office. He informed the members that the Association had helped a number of groups in attaining funding and property and was always on the lookout to help all Groups in the best possible way.

The Chief Commissioner also informed the members that there seemed to be some progress with the lands department in regards to the Ghajn Tuffieha Campsite and a lot of progress was being done on site to continue upgrading the facilities.

He continued that the Association was already holding a number of meeting with the new Government Administration especially with the Education department as it was very important for us to be considered as an educational entity also in line with the MQC to reach agreements which would see our adult training courses being properly considered as a formal qualification.

Another Government department that the Association was working with was the Finance department. Efforts were being made on different fronts which included the possibility of tax rebates on membership fees and other very relevant topics which would be very beneficial on the Group finances.

The Chief Commissioner closed his address by thanking the Chief Scout for the 3 non easy years and for the constant reciprocal respect and support which was very much appreciated.

9. Presentation of the Financial Budget

The Honorary Secretary presented the 2013 budget (As printed on page 7 of the Assembly Document) as this was a draft administration budget rather than a fully fletched financial budget. He started by explaining that this was being recommended by the Executive committee as a draft guideline and that going forward a proper full budget would be presented to the Assembly for 2014 at the last Assembly of 2013. The figures were based on the financial report of the last 3 years taking into consideration noticed trends, know upcoming expenses and obviously the knowledge of the first 4 months of this year.

Following an explanation of the budget 3 questions were raised:

1. What was meant by 'Scarves' in the expenditure list?
2. Being an educational association, how come training is not being allotted more funds?
3. Towards whom (Groups or Association) will the funding and other services that might be provided by the proposed full timer be targeted?

Answers:

1. Woodbadge Scarves as the Association had identified a good quality supplier which would result in also cheaper consumer prices.
2. The Association was looking into European and Education Funds, hence why we are in meetings with the Education department and trying to be recognized as such rather than falling under the 'Kunsill Malti għall-iSport' but the point was very valid and this will be looked into further.
3. Mostly towards the Groups as these type of funding are predominantly project based and whilst the Association had a number of projects it was evident even from the recent past that Groups would benefit a real lot. The Secretary highlighted Groups who had recently benefitted from property and also funding ranging from €3,000 to €20,000.

A few members also expressed their satisfaction at seeing a budget being presented for the first time.

The draft budget was unanimously approved by a show of hands by all Assembly Members.

10. Presentation of the Financial Report

The Commissioner for finance pointed out a few of the large amounts represented in the financial report. He then proceeded to highlight a few points in regards to Group finance management especially in regards to personal cheques which should be changed to Cheque Books opened on the Association Group and having at least 2 signatories.

He thanked all Groups for managing to submit the Accounts allowing the Association to present a set of consolidated accounts for the first time. He explained that a sample brief audit was done by visiting a number of groups and that this year the finance team will try to manage proper audits of Groups.

A suggestion was raised from the floor asking for a hands on training and procedure document as one has to understand that a number of Groups do not have the skills of a professional accountant at their disposal.

The report's approval was proposed and seconded by Mr. Andrew Cutugno and Mr. Martin Azzopardi and was then unanimously approved by a show of hands by all Assembly Members.

11. Q&A and Approval of Reports

The Reports had been approved after each presentation hence the Chief Scout asked for any questions from the Floor.

A member started by thanking IHQ for the efforts that had evidently occurred throughout the year and thanked the National team for all the support. He stressed that whilst Group leaders experienced satisfaction through their scouting activities with the young members the National Team mostly faced criticism for its efforts and it was fair to show appreciation when it was deserved.

There was a request to highlight to the authorities during meetings that whilst athletes were approved special leave for events, Scout Leaders were not treated equally.

A few members also praised the idea of the National Youth Scout Council and encouraged also a Leaders platform and representation of even younger kids in specifically designed fora.

12. Appointment of the Association Auditor

The Honorary Secretary reminded that Mr. Peter DeGiorgio had resigned from his post on the National Scout Council to eliminate any possible conflict of interest between his national role and his role as the Association Auditor. The Secretary explained the efforts the Mr. DeGiorgio goes through to freely provide the auditing services in the shortest time possible. The Secretary also publicly thanked him for his continued generous services and proposed him for the post of Association Auditor. A number of members immediately seconded this nomination and Mr. DeGiorgio was unanimously voted as the Association Auditor by a show of hands.

13. Presentation of the proposal for the Youth National Scout Council

A document was distributed highlighting the ideas and feedback corroborated by the National Scout Council members namely Ms. Victoria Bonavia and Mr. Mark O'Neill from a number of different sources. A presentation was held via a power point presentation which officially opened the possibility for Assembly members to give feedback to the National Council so this dream could become a reality. More details are available in the distributed document and also available on ScoutKeeper

14. Presentation of the Discussion Document for the Association Strategy

Mr. Kevin Camilleri, National Scout Council explained the importance of an Association wide strategy. A booklet had been prepared and was distributed with a number of questions derived from a number of meetings held with the National Team and District Group Representatives. This document officially starts the discussion of highlighting the short term, medium term and long term priorities of the Association as a whole. The Booklet is also available on ScoutKeeper.

15. Address by the 2 nominees for the Post of Chief Scout

Dr. Gregory Attard and Dr. Arthur Azzopardi, being the 2 contestants for the post of Chief Scout were offered the possibility to address the Assembly members to introduce themselves and highlight their vision/ideas for the Association.

16. Closing address by the Chief Scout

The Chief Scout opened his address by highlighting his personal challenge over his past term in regards to maintaining a non-executive role, which he loves in order to respect the role of a Chief Scout.

His main focus over his term was to try and bring the members together all pulling the same rope. Thankfully he had a very active and supportive National Scout Council. It was also a pleasure to see great interest from the European Scout Region in regards to our National Youth Scout Council proposal and that our project might effectively be a pilot one for Europe to promote youth voice at all levels.

The Chief Scout stated that he is ready to continue serving the movement as it is definitely not easy to leave however he felt that persons like him who occupy roles for too long should give way and space to new ideas. On my end of term I dare to say what I would have possibly done differently. I used to fight to get my voice across when I was a section leader. The GSL forum should be given more weight and the GSLs should always represent their Groups' members thoughts not just their own. The Chief Scout stressed that the feeling of some GSLs that the idea to extend the Assembly was done to somehow undermine their role is unfounded as we are in no way eliminating the experience and responsibility of the GSL who ultimately approves the appointment of his Group leaders and hence the representatives on the General Assembly.

He continued by reminding that in his very first address he had stressed that the Association was not his and that the Assembly should open its doors to ensure we give voice to all members. The Chief Scout made it very clear that leaders who are in the movement for any other reason but to serve the young members are missing the point and should not retain their roles.

The Chief Scout expressed his confidence in the great potential of the movement and was glad to see that the efforts were being appreciated by the authorities.

The Chief Scout closed his address by thanking all members for their support, the executive team which has been a very strong and healthy motor of the Association. He also thanked the contestants for the role of Chief Scout for their address and augured a healthy relationship between the new Chief Scout and the Chief Commissioner to avoid past conflicts which were definitely not the case during his term thanks to the constant support of the Chief Commissioner and through making sure that as a Chief Scout I did not step into executive decisions. The Chief Scout also stressed the importance of the weekly meetings that occurred between himself and the Chief Commissioner.

He wished the Association all the best and finished by stating that a lot has been done and a lot still needs doing and hoped that he left the movement better than he found it.

Meeting ended at 20:30

Approved on _____

By:

Mr. Kenneth DeMartino
Chief Scout

Mr. Robert Gonzi
Honorary Secretary