

HOW TO WIN ROLES AND INFLUENCE SCOUTING

A GUIDE TO GOVERNANCE IN SCOUTING
FOR YOUTH MEMBERS



WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

Governance is:

- a) using all available information to make the best possible decisions; and
- b) steering our work to ensure the best possible outcomes/greatest impact.

It generally takes place through discussion, whether that be around a table, by email, or on Skype. It also generally requires a fair amount of thought beforehand, in order to comprehend all the information, or come up with well thought out solutions.

Let's talk about the elephant in the room... yes, some people see it as a bit boring. In some cases, 'governance people' can make things formal than it seems they should be – but most of the time it's with good reason. As with everything, different people like different things, but even if you aren't thrilled by the thought of a meeting or long email chain, everyone enjoys coming up with creative solutions and having an impact in what they do.

Good governance should:

- a) have people who understand what they're there for;
- b) work for the good of the organisation;
- c) have people who can work well as a team, but come up with ideas as individuals too;
- d) know what the organisation is doing, spending and what it has to comply with so it can make sure good decisions are being made by everyone;
- e) behave with integrity; and
- f) be open and accountable.

Principles taken from The Scout Association's adaptation of "Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector", presented to The Scout Association's Board of Trustees in December 2015

WHAT ABOUT SCOUTING?

That's great, but what has this got to do with Scouting? Well, in fact, governance plays a key role in ensuring we deliver safe and fun activities for all of our members.

Take a few examples:

- Operations Committee, at national level, sets policy on what activities Scouts in the UK are allowed to do, and the rules leaders must adhere to. This means that we can be confident that when we go on a camp, all the activities will be run to a consistently high standard – and the people who want to run the activities are more confident to do so.
- An Executive Committee, at Group level, may decide whether to prioritise funds in order to buy a new boiler for the hall or hold off to run a Group party for Cubs100. This has a direct impact on what the young people can do.

- A Project Steering Group, such as for the Pears Project, allows us to funnel in all the feedback (positive and negative) and other information on a project and learn how to do things better next time – increasing our impact.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Okay, governance in Scouting plays a pretty big role, but how can I contribute?

As a youth member, you are perfectly placed to provide a unique and informed perspective on what we are doing. You'll have a wealth of real-world experience because, well, you're living it! I'm sure you'll have lots of ideas on how to improve what we do as well, and being part of the governance in Scouting is a great way to channel those ideas in a meaningful way.

Governance is all about making **well-informed** decisions. That means it's really important to have people who are accountants, lawyers, managers, experts in social change etc. etc. But it is equally important to have people who really know what Scouting is like 'on the ground' – who better to do that than you (and if you bring other skills as well, then all the better!).

WHAT DO I NEED?

Okay, so not everyone will find being part of the governance of Scouting is right for them. Here are some of the things you should be able to say "yep, that's me" to:

- You're interested in the impact of decisions you make.
- You're able to break down information into easily understandable ideas.
- You can come up with creative solutions to problems.
- You're able to consider other people's opinions, and admit when you're wrong.
- You're confident in presenting your views, opinions and ideas.
- You've got a passion for increasing the positive impact Scouting has on young people.

Some of these you will be able to grow over time whilst doing the role. For example, you may find it difficult to understand a set of accounts or a budget, but after talking it through with someone and hearing people ask questions about it, you'll soon pick it up.

Possibly the most important of these is being able to present your ideas. You can have someone with all the passion in the world, who understands all the information and has some show-stopper ideas – but if they don't present them (or don't present them well) then they won't be able to make the impact they're capable of.

IT'S REALLY RESPONSIBLE, RIGHT?

Yes, governance is very responsible – which is why it can be so great. You're the top of the tree when it comes to decision-making. If the Trustees say something isn't happening, it isn't happening. However, with great power comes great... oh yeah, this is all about responsibility isn't it?

But seriously, being a trustee specifically comes with serious legal responsibility. On a National, County, District or Group level, trustees might be held personally liable for any losses of the charity. However, in practice it is very rare for this to happen (as the law - and "trustee indemnity insurance" provided by the Association - protects trustees who have acted reasonably).

WHERE CAN I FIT IN?

By now you're ready and raring to become part of the governance of Scouting, right? Well, the first thing to do is found out where you can fit in – which will be dependent on how you want to have an impact, how old you are (in some cases), and where there are spaces to fill.

Here are some roles to consider, and who to contact to find out more about them.

Role	Impact	Notes	Who To Contact
The Scout Association	National, can feel distant from local Scouting	Need to be 18yrs+; Requires travel to London; Four Board Meetings and up to four Committee Meetings a year.	Judeth Neville, governance@scouts.org.uk
County or District Executive Committee	City-wide, slightly more obvious but may still feel distant	Need to be 18yrs+ (to vote, you could be an observer and still contribute); May require lengthy travel to meetings; Generally, four to five meetings a year (plus sub-committees).	Your County Chairman, or County Commissioner (for County Executive) Your District Chairman, or District Commissioner (for District Executive)
Group Executive Committee	Local, can really see the impact	Need to be 18yrs+ (to vote, you could be an observer and still contribute); Meetings will generally be very nearby; Generally, four to five meetings a year.	Your Group Chairman, or Group Scout Leader
Sub-Committees of the above	As above	You don't need to be 18yrs+ as you're not a 'trustee'. Will have more specific impact than at the top-level as a sub-committee has responsibility for specific areas of work.	As above.

Task and Finish Group	Very specific and obvious – could be local or national	Will allow you to focus on something very specific (such as reviewing what to do about campsite developments).	Ask your District or County Commissioner if there is anything coming up you could get involved with.
Project Boards/Steering Groups	Specific, will be areas that are obvious and some not-so	Allows you to see something through from start to finish. You can get a real handle on a project and shape its direction; but you generally won't be making 'operational' decisions unless they are high importance or high risk.	Ask your District or County Commissioner if there is anything coming up you could get involved with.

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