

## **109<sup>th</sup> Leicester Countesthorpe St Andrews**

### **Notification of moving onto online payments and introduction of Group Hardship policy**

Dear all,

We're really excited to be welcoming our young people back to meetings over the next few weeks. This has been a very difficult period for all of us in many ways – including financial and we wanted to let you know how we intend for subs payment to work as we reopen this Autumn, as well as letting you know the support that is available to you within the Group.

**We are determined that our Group and all of our activities are open to everyone, regardless of their background or financial situation, and we hope the policies we have set out below enable this.**

#### **Subs**

For the summer term, we did not make subs compulsory as contact varied between Sections and all Scouting was Virtual. Many of you chose to still donate some or all of the subs which would have been due to us, thank you to those who were able to do this, it was a great support to the Group at this time, including helping to fund the substantial cost of badges for those who have been Scouting at Home in this period. For context, although the Group has been able to source an external grant during the Covid crisis, we lost 40% of expected subs income for the Summer term, as well as all income from hut lettings, the Summer Gala and the Bonfires in 2019 and 2020, while our running costs remained the same. Since the start of lockdown, we have spent around £12,500 on planned hut maintenance costs (making £50,000 in the last 4 years), along with around £1,500 to prepare the outside of the hut for our reopening and make it Covid secure. In addition to this, there is an anticipated further £20,000 of essential maintenance needed on the hut in the next 12-18 months, and the capitation fee we pay the Scout Association each January to cover amongst other things, safeguarding and insurance costs, has been confirmed as increasing by £7.50 per member in January 2021.

**Because of this, we have made the difficult decision to make subs compulsory for all members from week beginning 7<sup>th</sup> September.** We recognise that most if not all of our members will not be able to come to face to face meetings every week, but through our Zoom meetings, and emailed badgework for Scouting at Home, we are confident that we are providing Scouting for everyone on as many weeks as possible, whether or not they are coming back to face to face meetings straightaway. Financial pressures mean we have little option but to make this decision which we are sure you will understand.

- Our subs remain amongst the lowest locally (£2.50 per week) – which we are committed to maintaining.
- We have always given the first 4 weeks for free to any member who is new to the group and will continue to do so.

- **We will also ensure that there is an option to pay subs weekly rather than half-termly for those who want and need to do so. Although weekly payments have not previously been possible for Scouts, this will now be possible for those who want and need to utilise this.**

### **Online payments on Online Scout Manager (OSM)**

Due to the current Covid situation, we have accelerated our plans to move cash free and solely onto an online payment system. We will be using OSM, which is now used by most Scout Groups locally. This system will also record all of our standard youth data securely, along with badge details and other useful features. All of this data will be held securely and will only be accessible to leaders within the Group, as previously. The only change is that this is all now held on one system. Should you have any questions about the data we hold, please get in touch with your Section Leader.

You will have by now received an email from OSM asking you to update your child's personal details and make sure these are complete – please do this at the earliest possible opportunity and inform us of any changes. You should also have an email inviting you to make subs payments. These are weekly by default, but you are welcome to pay them all immediately should you wish to pay half termly. The system (providing it all works!) will update you on when payments are due and remind you if you have not made a payment.

You will also have an email requesting your consent to claim Gift Aid. This will allow us to claim 25p for every £1 you pay in subs back from HMRC, creating a new revenue stream for the Group and helping us to keep the costs to you as low as we can. Consenting to Gift Aid will also allow us to claim on subs you have paid for the last 4 years – which we are **expecting to result in a claim of over £4000!** To support the Group at this time, please do consent to us claiming Gift Aid (providing you are eligible) as soon as possible, at the latest **by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September.**

### **Hardship policy**

In these difficult times, we recognise that some may have lost jobs, had reduced income or faced other difficulties which have posed financial issues. As stated at the beginning of this letter – we want to support in any way we can and are determined that this will not impact on your child's experience of the Group. We have therefore formalised our hardship policy to try to cater for this in a sensitive but efficient way that benefits the young person concerned without posing difficulties for the Group. Much of this has already been possible informally, but we wanted to make you all aware of this so you can gain support should you ever need it:

- Should paying for subs or other events pose significant financial difficulty to your family, you should in the first instance contact your Section Leader or Jack to discuss this. Any details you disclose will be kept confidential and no names or other personal details will be passed on.

- The leader you contacted will then discuss this issue with two designated members of our Executive Committee, Lucy and Sarah, to identify how the Group may be able to support. If you wish to stay anonymous, no details which could identify you will be shared, only the person you contact will know your identity.
- If you would rather not speak to a leader about this, you can contact Lucy or Sarah directly on [lucy.freeman@countesthorpescouts.org.uk](mailto:lucy.freeman@countesthorpescouts.org.uk) or [sarah.moore@countesthorpescouts.org.uk](mailto:sarah.moore@countesthorpescouts.org.uk) .
- There will always be 3 Committee members who discuss a particular case. Where Lucy or Sarah are contacted directly, Jack or a Section Leader will be informed to create the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Should the person initially contacted feel that one of these people could have a conflict of interest, an alternative 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee member will be contacted.
- These 3 members, when confident that the hardship is genuine and could affect a child's participation in an activity or the Group as a whole, will devise proposals on how the Group can support to ensure the full participation of your child. This may involve (not exclusively) delaying payments due until an acute issue has been resolved and you are more able to pay, payments in instalments, partially subsidised payments, or in more serious cases, applying to external bodies for support with fees for your child – usually this will be the Leicestershire Scouts Rudkin Trust.
- No other Committee members will be aware of the nature of any financial issue, your identity, or any support given. The Committee will though receive non-identifying details of the number of current hardship cases and the amount of financial support, if any given directly by the Group over a given period (e.g. 6 months)
- At no stage will funds be given directly to a claimant's bank account, any support given by the Group or another body towards fees will be transferred internally.

We hope that this process is clear and helps to ensure all of our members can enjoy as many of the opportunities we offer as possible over the coming months and years. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

See you all soon!

The Group Executive Committee