DISTRICT SCOUT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT
1ST APRIL 2025 – 31ST MARCH 2026
including
TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT
and
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING
31 March 2026
(accompanying document)

Sevenoaks District Scout Council

Charity registered in England No: 303435

Scout Association registered No: 12717

Annual report for the year ending 31 March, 2026

PRESIDENT: John Talbot

THE DISTRICT TRUSTEE BOARD:

Ex-Officio Members:

District Chairman	Anthony Hitchings
District Treasurer	Martin Cox
District Lead Volunteer	Jo Brookbank
District Youth Lead	Vacant
Elected Members:	Michael Schwarz, Erik Barrow, Nigel Rainey, Nick Roberts, Jennifer Baker-Hirst, Mike Randall, Martin Cox, Richard Williams
Co-opted Members:	Verena Carmichael (October 2025)

SUB-COMMITTEES:.

FINANCE:	Jennifer Baker-Hirst, Martin Cox, Jo Brookbank and Verena Carmichael
ESTATES:	Michael Schwarz, Nick Roberts, Richard Williams

DISTRICT ROLES:

14-24 Team Lead	Mike Randall
District Scout Shop Mgr	Jade Roberts
District Badge Secretary	Jeanette Schwarz
District Scout Quartermaster	Vacancy
Youth Representative	Vacancy
Volunteer Development Team	Chris Barrow and Nigel Rainey
Programme Team	Erik Barrow (Activities)
Support Team Lead	Michael Dreksler
District Beaver Team	Jan Padgett, Shelley Williams
District Cub Team	Nick Roberts, Phil Seabrook
District Scout Team	Vacancy
District Award Team	Jeanette Schwarz and Chris Barrow
Bankers	Lloyds TSB
Other Investments:	CCLA Investment Management Ltd, Flagstone
Charity contact:	Jennifer Baker-Hirst, 9 The Glebe Field, Shoreham Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 3DR (Please note this will be changing after the AGM)

Structure, governance and management

The Sevenoaks District Scout Council's governing documents are those of The Scout Association. They consist of a Royal Charter, which in turn gives authority to the Bye laws of the Association and The Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association. The Sevenoaks District Scout Council is a trust established under its rules which are common

to all Scouts. The agreed quorum for the Sevenoaks District Scout Council AGM is 15, and for committee meetings in 2025/6 was one third plus one of the Trustee board.

The Sevenoaks District Scout Council, which is an educational charity, is Governed by the Trustee Board, whose members are responsible for ensuring compliance with legislation applicable to charities.

The Trustee Board exists to support the District Leadership team in meeting their responsibilities and to provide support for the charity.

Risk and Internal Control

The Trustees have in place systems of internal controls that are designed to provide reasonable assurance against material mismanagement or loss, these include two authorised signatories for all payments and comprehensive insurance policies to ensure that insurable risks are covered.

Trustee board selection methods

The Trustees are appointed in accordance with the Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), either by election or approval of their nomination; other trustees may be co-opted during the year to serve until the next AGM.

Objectives and Activities

The Purpose of Scouting - Scouting exists to actively engage and support young people in their personal development, empowering them to make a positive contribution to society.

The Values of Scouting - As Scouts we are guided by these values:

- Integrity - We act with integrity; we are honest, trustworthy and loyal.
- Respect - We have self-respect and respect for others.
- Care - We support others and take care of the world in which we live.
- Belief - We explore our faiths, beliefs and attitudes.
- Co-operation - We make a positive difference; we cooperate with others and make friends.

The Scout Method - Scouting takes place when young people, in partnership with adults, work together based on the values of Scouting and:

- enjoy what they are doing and have fun
- take part in activities indoors and outdoors
- learn by doing
- share in spiritual reflection
- take responsibility and make choices
- undertake new and challenging activities
- make and live by their Promise.

Annual Report 2025 - 2026

DISTRICT LEAD VOLUNTEER REPORT

As is often the case we marked the start of the Scouting year with our St George's parade through Sevenoaks high street, followed by our promise renewal service, annual awards and multiple activities for our young people. Scouts were able to make use of our popular Laser tag equipment as well as Tomahawk throwing and every group arranged activities for the younger sections. An afternoon of much fun. We were joined by Rachel Parry, our previous District president, Richard Parry's, widow.

Nights away events continue in the district with many more volunteers gaining Night's away permits this past year. All but one Scout troop took part in the quadrennial Kent International Jamboree, with many of our district volunteers supporting or running activities onsite too. Over 80 Explorer scouts attended, in two units, supported by several Network members plus adults across the district including myself. With growing numbers of Explorer Scouts turning 18 we hope we will have the start of Network meetings soon.

Youth membership fell by a small amount over the year, but just small movements across almost all groups with no significant changes within one group. Our youth membership continues to be just below one thousand. However we know some groups are facing challenges, with a shortage of volunteers. This remains our main priority to recruit.

The new Scouts.org.uk digital system has not quite been what we had hoped for and was subject to several "bugs". The district team has spent many hours trying to "work out" solutions to support us all. Big thanks especially go to Chris Barrow and Nigel Rainey plus of course all GLV's.

Much of 2025 has been spent preparing for MAG7, our quadrennial district camp. We ended the year just a month before the camp so not really part of the year's report but the preparations very much were part of this year! However at the time of writing we can report it was a huge success bringing all of our groups and Explorer units together. The camp theme of "Celebration" with a Disney twist was due to the 3 special birthdays in 2026 of Squirrels (5yo), Beavers (40yo) & Cubs (110yo). The numbers of youth attendees booked exceeded 600 and with so much adult support during the weekend we approached 1,000 in total being part of this amazing camp. Erik Barrow made many improvements to our bespoke booking system that he created for the previous camp, which resulted in much less work for all that were managing attendees.

Lastly my unending thanks go to Anthony Hitchings who has been a constant, dependable and incredible part of our support team since 2017 since the start of my journey leading the District. The trustee board and the District have achieved so much in this time, transforming the trustee board and district processes. He steps down from the trustee team leaving us in very good order to continue. He remains an integral part of our district team in his role as chair at Kemsing and as part of the District Water team.

Jo Brookbank, District Leader Volunteer

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Year End

The Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2026 relate to a 12 month accounting period and are prepared on a Receipts and Payments basis. This year we have aligned with the charity SORP which no longer "nets" Annual Membership Subscriptions (AMS) paid to County/National against AMS received from groups, but now includes the payment with expenses.

Cash and Investments

At the end of the year, total cash funds amounted to £584,290 (2025 £558,184). The District adopts a risk averse approach to investment of its funds and all funds are held with mainstream banks with the exception of units held in COIF The Charities and Investment Fund - these units were valued at £55,491 in March 2026 (original purchase price £19,783). Restricted funds of £519,316 (2025 £506,439) have been placed in long and short term deposits with Flagstone in this financial year, a cash deposit platform, which enables distribution of the funds across various banks in order to manage risk.

Reserves policy

It is the policy of Sevenoaks District Scout Council to hold a reasonable level of reserves in order to provide a sound financial basis for the development and running of Scouting within the District and to vary that level through annual budgeting according to perceived future needs and risks. In particular, the funds are there to provide financial support to Scout Groups in the event of financial difficulties to continue operation or to establish or improve their facilities, to supplement the cost of training leaders, to subsidise the annual membership subscriptions, to support the prepayment of fees for young people attending Jamborees, to up-date and purchase activity equipment, and to cover possible unforeseen costs and emergencies. At the end of the financial year 25/26 we have allocated £25,000 as a reserve.

DISTRICT ESTATES TEAM REPORT

Further progress has been made with the Sevenoaks Scouts Community Barn project on the Tarmac quarry site. We were successful in our bid for funds from the Sevenoaks District Council Community Infrastructure Levy fund and were awarded £500,000. We thank the District Council for this generous award and together with the over £500,000 previously raised from the sale of surplus land this is a tremendous start to our fundraising campaign.

We also made progress with the submission of the reserved matters planning application. This was submitted by Tarmac in May 2025 with the design information prepared by the consultants appointed by the scouts. Various issues were raised during the consultation process and together with Tarmac we answered the concerns expressed by various of the consultees. It is expected that planning consent will finally be granted in late spring/early summer 2026. We thank Tarmac for the commitment they have shown in their efforts to secure planning consent for the Barn.

In parallel with the planning process we have continued negotiating the various legal agreements with Tarmac that will enable the project to proceed. These have become increasingly complicated as a result of link to the rest of the Quarry development. There are a number of key issues still to be resolved but with reasonable negotiation from both parties it is hoped that by the end of the summer 2026 we will have documentation that

the Trustee Board can approve. This will then enable the fundraising process to move forward and detailed design and tendering of the building work to progress.
By the middle of 2027 it is then anticipated that the Trustee Board will be in a position to finally make the decision to start on site.
We first contacted Tarmac about the Barn almost 7 years ago when the decision was made to sell the old Seal site and look for a new home for the Seal Scout Group and a base for scouting in the Sevenoaks District. We hope that 2026/27 will be the year when we can finally start construction although there are still hurdles to be overcome.
I would finally like to thank all of the volunteers who have helped on the project to date. We are still looking for additional help, particularly with marketing/communications, local engagement with other potential users of the project, fundraising and construction.

Update - September 2026. This report was written as per the year end. It is worth noting that planning consent has now been granted.

Nick Roberts, Estates Team Chair

DISTRICT YOUTH COMMISSIONERS REPORT

The Youth Commissioner role has remained vacant this year and the search for youth representation on the Trustee Board is ongoing. This is an opportunity for somebody aged 18-25 to gain management experience that would reflect well on any CV. Mentoring and guidance will be provided. If you are interested or know anybody who is interested please let us know,

Chairman

EXPLORER SCOUT SECTION

The census results reflect a period of steady growth and high engagement across Sevenoaks District. This year, we recorded a **1.5% increase** in membership from the previous year, bringing our total to:

- **133 Explorer Scouts**
- **16 Adult Leaders**

This growth is a testament to the diverse, high-quality programming offered across our District Units, ensuring that young people continue to find challenge, community, and adventure in Explorers.

Year of Adventure: Big Events & Jamborees

Our Explorers represented Sevenoaks at major county and national events, creating unforgettable memories and bonding with the wider scouting community.

- **Kent International Jamboree (KIJ):** A massive highlight of the year, providing our Explorers with a global scouting experience, subcamp life, and a week of high-octane activities.
- **Kent Scouts Big Weekend:** A fantastic opportunity for our units to come together for a weekend of festival-style fun, large-scale activities, and socializing.

- **Monopoly Run:** 80 Explorers took to the streets for this fast-paced, strategic race across London, testing their teamwork, navigation, and speed.

Skills for Life & District Activities

From practical life skills to traditional outdoor scouting, the weekly programme has been packed with varied, youth-shaped activities:

Category	Activities & Highlights
Survival & Practical Skills	* **Introduction to Navigation & Night Hikes:** Building core map-and-compass skills by day and putting them to the test in the dark. * **Survival First Aid:** Practical, hands-on training to handle emergencies in the field. * **Vehicle Maintenance:** A highly valuable "life skill" session teaching the basics of car upkeep.
Seasonal & Social Events	* **Halloween & Winter:** Pumpkin Carving, Christmas Ice Skating, and traditional Carol Singing. * **Cultural Celebrations:** A dedicated Burns Night evening to experience Scottish culture and traditions.
Teamwork & Creative Challenges	* **Escape Room:** Testing logic, patience, and problem-solving under pressure. * **Pirates @ Bromley:** A themed event packed with creative challenges and friendly competition. * **Back to Basics:** Classic campfires paired with the mandatory toasted S'mores.

None of these incredible experiences would be possible without the unwavering dedication of our **16 adult leaders and Parent Helpers.**. Your enthusiasm, energy, and willingness to give up your weekends, evenings, and holidays are what keep the District moving forward.

Whether you were supervising a night hike in the freezing rain, organizing transport to jamborees, or teaching life skills, your impact on the lives of these 133 young people is immeasurable. **Thank you for everything you do.**

Mike Randall, 14-24 Team Lead

PROGRAMME & ACTIVITIES REPORT

This past year (1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026) has been an extraordinary period of delivery, scaling, and major event preparation. Building upon the structural transformations and digital foundations established last year, our focus shifted toward expanding our equipment inventory, enhancing self-serve digital infrastructure, and preparing for landmark district and international events.

Digital Infrastructure and Self-Serve Systems

Our unified district website, launched in the previous period, has become fully embedded in daily operations. The equipment booking and district activity notification systems are now routinely and successfully used across the district, dramatically streamlining administration and ensuring high standards of safety and oversight.

Building on this success, a major technical focus of 2025–2026 was gearing up for our upcoming district-wide camp, **MAG7**. To support this major event, we heavily revamped the MAG7 booking system, introducing advanced functionality tailored for Group Lead Volunteers (GLVs). New self-serve features—designed to minimize district-level intervention—now include:

- **Parking Pass Management:** Streamlined allocation and distribution.
- **Check-In / Check-Out Systems:** Efficient arrival and departure tracking.
- **ID Card Generation:** Automated badge and credential creation.
- **Timetable Building:** Interactive scheduling tools for camp activities.

Equipment Expansion and Grants

Immediately after the year end and in advance of the MAG7 camp, we successfully secured a large external grant alongside strategic district funding allocations, allowing us to dramatically expand and upgrade our district activity equipment inventory:

- **Silent Disco:** Scaled up significantly from 60 headphones to a massive fleet of 310 headphones, complete with extra transmitters. This enables us to split the equipment up to three ways simultaneously should we receive multiple requests for use at the same time.
- **Laser Tag:** Upgraded Pack A and Pack B to ensure parity in equipment, added extra referee taggers, and introduced an extra game box. Additionally, district funding was used to purchase approximately 40 smaller laser tagger handsets tailored specifically for our younger Squirrel and Beaver sections.
- **Audio Equipment:** Refreshed and replaced our aged district speaker system with two new battery-powered speakers. These can operate together or independently, allowing them to be split across two simultaneous district events.
- **Power Supply:** The 1000Wh portable power station purchased last year has seen heavy, valuable use—particularly in powering medical devices for leaders on camps, alongside supporting off-grid activity equipment.

Direct Activities and Major Events

Planning and execution for major events have kept the team exceptionally busy. A huge amount of the year was dedicated to final preparations for the **MAG7 District Camp**, scheduled for the early May bank holiday (1st–4th May 2026) at the newly re-opened Downe Activity Centre.

On the international stage, the selection process for the **2027 World Scout Jamboree in Poland** reached its milestone conclusion in the final quarter of 2025. Following strong local interest, our allocation was increased, and we are proud to announce that **8 young people** from Sevenoaks will be attending: **James Hambley, Amy Cowland, Luke Harris, Maia Bowles, Lilian Kemp, James Read, Holly Maystone, and Abbie MacAulay**. Each participant faces an ambitious fundraising target of £3,600, and we encourage groups across Sevenoaks to support their efforts and share their fundraising events. Furthermore,

Erik Barrow was selected at a national level at the beginning of 2026 as an International Service Team (IST) member representing Sevenoaks.

Looking Ahead and Volunteer Support

As we look toward the future, we continue to seek enthusiastic volunteers to help sustain our operations. We are actively looking for dedicated individuals to take on vital coordination roles, such as managing our equipment and events such as the annual St George's Day parade as well as to help shape sectional activities.

It has been a phenomenal year of growth, scaling up our physical resources, and rallying around monumental events like MAG7 and the World Scout Jamboree. We always welcome suggestions for new district equipment that would be prohibitive for a single Group to purchase but would enhance our collective activity offering for young people in Sevenoaks.

Erik Barrow (Programme Team Leader - Activities)

Sevenoaks District Scouts: Volunteering Development Team Report

Introduction

The Volunteering Development Team's primary focus over the past twelve months has been the recruitment, retention, and support of the incredible adults who make Scouting possible in Sevenoaks. Following the transition to the new Scout volunteer experience and digital tools, this year has been one of adaptation and renewed focus on making volunteering as easy and rewarding as possible.

Key Activities & Achievements

Recruitment Initiatives & The "MAG 7" Effect. We are incredibly pleased to report a strong year for growth across the District. A significant driver for our recruitment this year was MAG 7, the District-wide quadrennial camp. Large-scale events like these continue to be our most successful "shop window" for adult volunteering.

Over the last 12 months, we have welcomed:

- **Team Members:** 37 new Team Members joined to deliver high-quality programs directly to young people.
- **Trustees & Governance:** We have welcomed 2 new Trustees and 1 new Treasurer, providing vital oversight and financial management.
- **Network Growth:** 5 new Network members have engaged with volunteering, bridging the gap between youth participation and adult leadership.
- **Support Roles:** 71 individuals joined in roles that do not require disclosure (non-member roles).

Analysis of Support Roles: We attribute the high number of support roles (71) largely to the surge in help required for MAG 7. These volunteers provided essential "hands-on" support for logistics, catering, and activity supervision during the camp. Our challenge now is to nurture this group and encourage them to support Group-level activities in the future.

Welcome Conversations: The team has streamlined the "Welcome Conversation" process, ensuring that these 40 new member volunteers felt welcomed and supported from their first interaction.

Digital Transformation

System Migration: Much of the team's time was dedicated to supporting the migration to the new national digital membership system. We held several "drop-in" clinics to assist with data verification and learning the new interface

Challenges Faced

Volunteer Vacancies
While the addition of 2 Trustees and 1 Treasurer is a positive step, filling "behind-the-scenes" roles remains our greatest challenge. We still need to ensure our Trustee Boards are robust enough to support our Members.

Training Completion
The transition to the new learning framework has caused some initial confusion. Ensuring all new volunteers are up to date with mandatory safety and safeguarding training remains a top priority.

Post-Camp Momentum
While MAG 7 brought in 71 temporary support volunteers, our ongoing challenge is retention. We are working to ensure these volunteers remain engaged with their local Groups rather than seeing their contribution as a "one-off" for the District camp.

Looking Ahead: Goals for 2026-2027

Retention Strategy: Nurture the 71 support volunteers from the MAG 7 period to offer flexible "micro-volunteering" opportunities at a Group level.

Targeted Trustee Recruitment: Launching a campaign to build on this year's appointments, aiming to attract more Trustees from outside the immediate Scouting family.

Peer Support Networks: Establishing better peer-to-peer support networks for Lead Volunteers to share best practices in adult management.

Conclusion

Scouting in Sevenoaks only happens because of the time, energy, and passion of our volunteers. The Volunteering Development Team remains committed to ensuring that every adult in our District—from our new Network members to our newest Treasurer—feels valued and inspired.

My thanks go to the members of the Development Team and every leader in the District for their continued hard work over the last year.

Chris Barrow, Volunteering Development Team Leader

Training & Development Report

As we moved to the new way of working after the transformation to the new membership system. The need for learning changed and the amount of learning a member had to do also changed. Members now have up to 6 modules that are compulsory instead of the previous 19 and if they wish can go on to undertake the other 7 modules to earn their Wood beads and become fully trained. The primary learning to get a member to full status is now online. To get to Wood Bead status a member has to voluntarily undertake the rest of the modules through face to face learning at present, but eventually they will be available as online learning.

Compliance

Compliance became a new issue as Scouts had to undertake to ask members to keep their Safety, Safeguarding and Data and Barring Service disclosures in date. This led to all those with child facing roles having to keep their learning and disclosure valid. Should it expire, they are temporarily suspended, until completion of the required training. I am pleased to say that Sevenoaks is keeping a pretty good record, with our members in the main completing these elements in time.

Nigel Rainey, Volunteering Development Team leader - Training & Development Lead

DISTRICT UNIFORM SHOP

The shop has again been very busy with several orders received every week and regular collections from 4th Sevenoaks site during evening meetings.

Parents from almost every group in the district as well as new volunteers requiring uniform are placing orders reflecting the need for a local shop. Stock levels remain quite high to keep up with this demand. We are struggling with volunteer support to keep up with demand for this essential service for parents and groups and welcome any offers of help.

We ask that groups ensure the Shop website is shared with parents so we can all continue to benefit from this additional revenue that boosts district funds. Please also share that parental support for the shop to complete orders etc would be greatly appreciated.

Jade Roberts, Scout Shop Manager