

The Board of Directors of Scouting Ireland CLG

Scouting Ireland National Office

Larch Hill

Tibradden

Co. Dublin 16

31st August 2020

Re: Former Chief Scouts Concerns

Dear Board Members,

We wish to thank Adrian, Peter and Anne for meeting with us on 27th of August on your behalf and for listening to our concerns. It was a frank exchange and we believe we made our concerns very clear, however, we feel that it is important that we reiterate those concerns in writing so that there can be no doubt regarding our fears for the future of our Movement.

Learning Review & Cronyism

As we explained we feel that the Learning Review carried out by Mr Ian Elliott was large on supposition and assumption and short on factual data to enable readers to fully comprehend the scale of the atrocities visited on youth members of Scouting over a long number of years.

As we said we are not seeking the naming of specific people but Mr Elliott says “In my view, credible allegations have been made against many national officers of the legacy scouting organisations”. In our view it would help if we knew how many very senior officers and other volunteers at National Level were engaged in abuse and cover up. This is important so that we can better understand how this situation came about and to ensure that the possibility of it recurring is minimised.

We also found the comments made by Mr Elliott regarding actions undertaken during the discussions on and the formation of Scouting Ireland difficult to understand. At no point in time did he discuss with or ask questions of the Chairman of the Committee established to discuss the formation of a new association nor with the First Chief Scout of Scouting Ireland. It is hard to understand how he arrived at his conclusions in the absence of such discussions.

Whilst we do accept that cronyism existed in our Movements and still does today there is no factual evidence presented in the Learning Review to support the contention that “In some respects, it was made even more acute by the creation of Scouting Ireland”. We need more clarification regarding this particularly given that Adrian expressed the view that cronyism is still prevalent in Scouting Ireland.

Authority of the Board

Before discussing the Lorna Lynch report it is worth remembering that at the EGM on 6th October 2018 the NMC stated “the current board will resign tonight and the newly elected board will take up office then. Following legal advice, the outgoing Board recommend that M4 and M5 are withdrawn from the Agenda today in order for the incoming Board to take legal advice surrounding the issues involved. At present Scouting Ireland is an Association and a Company; should the National Council vote in favour of M1 and M2 today – Scouting Ireland will become a Company only and the new Board will oversee the winding down of the Association.”

It would seem that the transfer of power significantly changed at a later date and it would be good to understand why.

Lorna Lynch Report

We do not accept or understand the stance adopted by you the Board in not dealing with this matter appropriately and bringing this debacle to a conclusion. It must be recognised that it is unfair to the Chief Scout, to the other respondents and to the members of Scouting Ireland who placed their trust in you. You said that you are not in a position to discuss the matter with us because of legal advice but did not specify from whom this advice was received nor whether you the Board challenged this advice or just accepted it.

As we said in the Zoom discussion we were really perplexed as to why the situation regarding the Chief Scout has still not been resolved and unfortunately the reason posited by Adrian did not enlighten us very much. As it happens the situation regarding the two Chief Commissioners is somewhat different given that their terms of office finished in April 2020 whereas the Chief Scouts term is due to finish in April 2021 hence our concern regarding the treatment of the Chief Scout.

The recent NMC update clearly demonstrates that there will be no progress to resolve this issue any time soon. It may well be that what the NMC is attempting to do with regard to the winding down of the Association is complex, but surely deciding on the fate of the four respondents is not complex given that the final appeals process has been completed since May.

It is patently obvious that the NMC is either not capable of dealing with the issues expeditiously or is purposely dragging the process out for unknown reasons.

The inordinate delay in finalising the matter flies in the face of the most recent disciplinary process established by you, as the Board of Scouting Ireland CLG, and, even more importantly, it is completely out of line with the ethos of Scouting and any normal measure of due process. It is unfair that the process has been dragged out for such a long time with no end in sight at present.

Unfortunately, the huge amount of good work done by the Board will be for naught unless this issue is dealt with decisively and sooner rather than later. It has the potential to result in a sizeable minority, if not majority, of the members being very dissatisfied with the Board.

You the Board need to recognise that you do not have as much support as you may believe and this is largely attributable to the Board not grasping this nettle and dealing with it quickly, decisively and fairly.

Lorna Lynch found that “Mr. McCann did not act appropriately in relation to the Complaint in failing to disclose at the Board meeting on 11 February 2017 the fact and/or details of his meeting with the subject of the Complaint on 14 January 2017”. She further found that “There are no other findings apart from those set out above that Mr. McCann did not act appropriately in relation to the Complaint. There are no findings that Mr. McCann inappropriately contacted the staff involved in managing the Complaint seeking to exert influence in favour of [the subject of the Complaint].”

The Chief Scout has now been out of his role for almost 29 months which, in our view, should be punishment enough for not acting appropriately as found by Ms Lynch and it is not understandable why it is taking such a long time for the matter to be concluded.

The NMC accepted the recommendations of a subcommittee they appointed to consider what sanction should be applied to the respondents including the Chief Scout. We believe that this resulted in the Chief Scout and the two Chief Commissioners being suspended from their roles until such time as there is a general meeting of National Council. We do not know what the NMC intend to propose to National Council but that is the body that must approve the removal from office of a Chief Scout or Chief Commissioner. To date there has been no indication of when or if an EGM of National Council will be convened.

In the recent update the NMC says “We cannot make any further comment at this time in respect of this matter”. This is completely unacceptable, and it is incumbent on the Board and the NMC to issue a proper statement on the matter without delay. We mentioned during our discussion that we feel the NMC is prolonging the issue until such time as the term of office of the Chief Scout finishes so that the whole issue will just go away. The recent NMC update strengthens our suspicion.

In Conclusion

We believe that the You the Board need to:

1. Develop and finalise the specific learnings to be taken from the Learning Review as a matter of urgency;
2. We believe that the evidence underpinning the suppositions and assumptions made by Mr Elliott should be shared with the members to demonstrate why they were validly made;
3. Exert your authority and take full control of the matters that the NMC have dismally failed to deal with, i.e. winding down of the Association and finalising the outcomes from the Lorna Lynch Review;

4. In the true spirit of Scouting afford the Chief Scout an opportunity to finish his term in office.

It is our belief that if you were to do so you would have the support of the vast majority of the members of Scouting Ireland and it would open up a pathway to the future with much more grass root support.

Yours in Scouting

Ken Ramsey, Donald Harvey and Martin Burbridge