

E01-2024

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6th January 2024

Dear Members,

Happy New Year to all our volunteers and members. We look forward to a full year of scouting activities across the country with young people continuing to enjoy and learn from the scouting method.

As we move forward into 2024, some legacy issues continue to be of media interest. Today The Irish Times published an article that contains a number of allegations about our organisation. The allegations call into question the integrity of the safeguarding department, the financial health of Scouting Ireland and the integrity of the Board.

These allegations have been made in a document prepared for Sinn Féin by two directors of Scouting Ireland CLG. We have received legal advice that the document is defamatory. No evidence has been produced to support the many ill-informed claims made. These claims are without merit and seem designed to undermine the progressive work of Scouting Ireland and to damage its reputation.

Among the claims made by the two directors are that a safeguarding issue had not been 'properly investigated'. This is wrong. The matter in question was prior to the directors joining the Board and was dealt with fully at the time by the safeguarding department and the then Board.

The Board rejects in the strongest possible terms the allegation that 'the integrity' of

child protection standards in the youth organisation is in “jeopardy” due to infighting among directors. Members will know that safeguarding is a priority for every member of the organisation and for the Board. The learnings from the Ian Elliott Review have been fully implemented and safeguarding is at the forefront of every activity within our organisation. Our safeguarding processes and practices are in line with legislation and recognised best practice child protection and vulnerable adult processes – nationally and internationally.

The Safeguarding Department in Scouting Ireland is a professional unit. No interference with the work of the department by any third party is countenanced. It is wrong and deeply disappointing that these directors would question the professionalism of the safeguarding team who are diligent in their work and deeply committed to protecting vulnerable people in our organisation.

It is also wrong to say there is ‘infighting among directors’. The Board of Scouting Ireland operates in a professional manner and strongly rejects any suggestions to the contrary. All members of the Board of Scouting Ireland CLG have the opportunity to contribute at Board meetings and are also members of various Board Sub-Committees. Robust discussion takes place at Board level and there can be disagreement, but any concerns raised by any Board Member are listened to and responded to in a professional manner.

The two directors express concerns about the future financial health of Scouting Ireland, in light of potential legal cases against the organisation. This is despite one of the directors agreeing that Scouting Ireland was a going concern at a Board meeting and the other director failing to engage on the issue. The Chair of the Board, in seeking to address their concerns, invited all Board Members to seek any further information they required from the finance team, the Audit & Risk Sub-committee or from the external legal advisors and auditor. No further information was requested by the two directors.

As you will be aware from our pre-Christmas update, the audited financial accounts of Scouting Ireland CLG for the year ended 31 August 2022 have been signed off by the Board. The accounts show that our finances are robust. The efforts of the Board and

the professional staff are focused on ensuring Scouting Ireland's stability and prosperity so that the organisation can continue to support scouting for young people throughout Ireland while also supporting survivors. To this end, the statements include a contingency for potential claims against Scouting Ireland arising from historic sexual abuse in CBSI and SAI.

It is a serious concern to us, as members of the Board that the reputation of Scouting Ireland has been damaged by the actions of these two directors. We are particularly mindful of the extraordinary work of our volunteers to rebuild scouting following Covid-19 and the inordinate amount of work undertaken over the past number of years to restore the good name of scouting following the exposure of historical sexual abuse in CBSI and SAI.

Be assured that our focus is to continue to implement good corporate governance, to meet our fiduciary duties and to work in the best interests of Scouting Ireland, our members, and volunteers. On your behalf we will work together in accordance with our Scout Law and Promise.

The Board of SI worked in co-operation and collaboration for October 2018 to September 2022.

Yours in Scouting



Ned Brennan

Chairman

On behalf of the Board of Scouting Ireland

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