

Sometimes we can focus on one angle and, in the process we may miss the real story

Since this website was established in 2020 we have attempted to capture emerging information about the organisation and its governance as well as presenting a few articles which might be of benefit to those involved in decision-making in the organisation. We have attempted to provide factual information in an easy-accessible form and have retained copies online so that readers may have historical context for new items as they arise. This one took a little more digging than usual.

So when the Irish Times published an article on April 14th, we set about including that. The full text of the article can be [read here](#).

The report is filed on Scouting Ireland's website under About -> Documents. A copy is now filed on this website and can be [viewed here](#).

Naturally, it was not practical for the journalist to reproduce the full report in their article. But it is striking that much of the specific references they did include were taken directly from the one page "Context" section of the report and centred on the actions of two board members who the Board had caused to be removed via an EGM.

This is unfortunate in that it may give rise to the view that this was a finding of the review and/or the most significant cause for the Boards current Governance challenges. It may have arisen because the journalist saw linkage to an article they wrote on February 22nd last. The full text of that earlier article can be [read here](#).

On the subject of Headlines, the journalist has declared that the report found that the Board were tired, exhausted and wiped out by in-fighting whereas the report sets out a broader description of the causes, while notably missing out a mention of the effects of Public Health Restrictions during the Covid pandemic.

Although the two Directors who were removed from the Board last year did not contribute to the Governance Review, we understand that the journalist contacted them for comment before publication of the recent article. One of the two responded to him by email and gave his permission for us to share the contents of that [email here](#).

On the subject of the review itself, it would appear that this is not the review that the Department commissioned in February 2024 as there is no reference to the Department anywhere in it. Indeed it appears that it was undertaken by an individual who had previously been providing advice and training services to the Board.

The Story that could have been written

Based on the contents of the report, the article could arguably have read something like this.

"Last May, the Board of Scouting Ireland engaged a specialist firm The Governance Company to undertake a review of Governance arrangements at Scouting Ireland. Their report issued last August and a copy of that report has recently been filed on Scouting Ireland's website.

The review was to assess current arrangements at Scouting Ireland in light of good practice in similar organisations and the Charity Regulator Code of Governance, to identify issues and to develop a high-level plan to address any such issues.

During the review only current members of the Board were canvassed for their input, despite recent whistle-blower activities by two Directors who were subsequently removed from office prior to the review. Indeed, the Board claimed that they had been unable to work effectively for a period of 15 months due to the presence of the two.

The report contained a number of findings and observations including:

- Some uncertainty was expressed as to whether Scouting Ireland is compliant with the CRA requirements
- The Board and its Committees appear to be significantly under-resourced, with numerous gaps in expertise and no current work plan
- The organisation has faced considerable challenge in attracting new Board members given the risks for Directors (presumably a reference to the possible consequences for Directors if the organisation were

to become economically unviable due to the outcome of a number of pending court cases re. historical abuse)

- The organisation is without a Strategic Plan, its previous plan was never progressed to an Implementation Plan and little progress has been made towards developing a fresh plan
- Board Reporting is ad-hoc and informal, and Board papers are often late / incomplete. There is a lack of clarity on whether minutes are produced and or circulated to all Board members and concerns were expressed over their accuracy
- The Key Message from the report is “The Governance of Scouting Ireland while adequate requires an immediate focus on Board renewal”

Some may find the Key Message overly lenient in light of the contents of the report.

It is to be hoped that the Governance review that the Department of Children commissioned in February 2024 and the statutory investigation being currently undertaken by the Charities Regulator may shed further light on the operations of Scouting Ireland.”