



21st March 2017

Dear Parents, Guardians, Young People and Supporters

As you know, Scout Groups are run solely by volunteers who continue to give their time to support the aims of the Scouting Movement and allow our young people to experience all that scouting can give.

In Wingham we are very fortunate to have some 20 people as leaders and committee members who do this, some with children in the group, others without; we are a mixed bag and together give some 1000 hours of volunteering time to the group each year.

However, over the last month, both Akela (Jo Lawn) and John White who lead the Cub and Scout sections, have said that they cannot carry on with their current level of commitment, although they do not wish to give up Scouting completely. In addition, the two explorer leaders, Andrew Walker and Steve Burr, have also said they are stepping back to concentrate on delivering the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for the district.

This is clearly a difficult situation, especially when the leader of each section undertakes a lot of behind the scenes work to ensure we comply with policies and standards. Although it may look like we have a lot of volunteers, being the Section Leader is a big commitment and is not a role that everyone wants, whether they are already a volunteer or not.

We have discussed options at length between the volunteers, and we are really pleased to say that as a team we have agreed some changes which will not only see the groups continue to thrive, but could also see new opportunities for scouting and who knows, entice new volunteers to get involved.

The Scout Association has been promoting 'flexible volunteering' for a few years to try to help those people who are finding it difficult to give the traditional level of commitment that is associated with being a scout leader, and at Wingham we are about to jump into this way of volunteering with both feet.

This will require a different way of thinking for not only the leaders but you as young people, parents, guardians and supporters; there will be people who may find the changes more difficult than the current arrangements, but at the moment there is simply no other option and we believe that it will see many positives as the effects are seen over the months.

Beavers :-

There are no proposed changes to the Beaver Section which will continue to run on Wednesdays and Thursday with our wonderful leaders.

Cubs :-

After Easter, or shortly thereafter, we will run cubs with three Akelas, or Section Leaders, Jo Lawn and Richard Collins, both of whom are leaders at the moment, will be joined by one of our committee members, Louisa Smith. They will strictly work on a 3 week rota of being Akela and may or may not attend on the other nights. We will set up a new email address which all 3 leaders can access to ensure communication is consistent and we will make it clear on the programme and on the nights who is in charge. The main change will be for the Cubs themselves, and we will help them understand the way we expect them to adapt to the changes and will ask for your patience and support. If you would like to add yourself or someone you know to the leader cohort, there is space!

Scouts :-

The changes here will be a bit more pronounced. As of September, we will be moving from a Friday evening during term time to running all day on the 3rd Saturday of each month along with a Friday night two weeks before the Saturday. We are very excited about the opportunities that this will give for scouting and by holding the Friday night in between, we will allow the young people to still meet and maintain their friendships. This will be more manageable for the current leaders and will allow more support to be given to the group. John will not be able to be at scouts much after Easter but we will continue with some extra support over the summer term. If someone comes forward who would like to lead the group, we will have time to review this before September.

Explorers :-

The Explorer Unit is not officially run as part of the Wingham Scout Group, but they are formal partners and we see them as part of us. At the moment, the unit will continue to run on a Thursday until the end of the summer term and options for September onwards are continuing to be looked at, these include moving to a Saturday along with the Scouts or seeking a new Section Leader.

We will continue to work on these changes to make sure they are embedded well and with the full support of our volunteers. In the end, without the leaders there would be no scouting, so we do need to make sure their needs are met as well as those of the young people.

As these changes affect everyone, please can we ask that you use the group website to check on updates and changes as this is available to all and is updated weekly as a minimum www.winghamscoutgroup.btck.co.uk. The Facebook page is also there for all members to join, search "8th (Deal) Wingham Scout Group".

If with the new arrangements, you feel you could support the group as an occasional helper; offering a one-off activity; a leader; or on our very depleted committee, please contact us via the facebook page or the contact page of the website.

We will keep you up to date on further information related to the changes.

With best wishes

Matthew and Alison Sims - Group Scout Leaders

Emma Baker – Group Chairperson

8th Deal (Wingham) Scout Group