



## **1<sup>st</sup> Willingham Scout Group Annual Report 2023/24– Willingham Parish Council**

1<sup>st</sup> Willingham Scouts has been serving the community of Willingham for over 50 years, providing activities for young people between the ages of 6-14. We are currently at capacity based on the number of volunteers with 23 Beavers, 20 Cubs, 29 Scouts and have a waiting list of 105 youngsters.

The Scout group is always in need of volunteers, not only to run activities but in many aspects of managing and administering the group. These contributions vary greatly but are essential to the effective running of the group. Roles or skills required are available on the [1<sup>st</sup> Willingham Scout Group](#) website including contact details for anyone who wants to enquire.

This year has seen several changes to the volunteer base of the scout group. After 6 years as Group Scout Leader, Matt Haigh has stepped down handing the position over to our long-time Scout Leader Tim Mead. Matt's contribution to leading the group ensuring a safe environment for our youngsters to flourish is greatly appreciated, he will continue to support the group as a leader and member of the Trustee Board. Ben Monks has stepped down from his role on the Trustee Board after 10 years having among other things helped plan and run many fundraising events during that time. He will be greatly missed and wish him well. Clive Messenger has taken a break from leading the Cubs section handing the reins to Si Barber. The Trustee Board has a new Chair, with Andrew Wainwright taking on the role and we also welcome new leaders in Beavers and Cubs who join a highly motivated and dedicated team providing a wide variety of activities.

All scouting activities follow the framework of scouting method and are underpinned by the values of scouting; Integrity, Respect, Care, Belief and Co-Operation to develop our young people to become global citizens and create positive change. The whole range of activities are too numerous to mention but some of the highlights include several local and district camps, hiking, archery and axe throwing, indoor and outdoor climbing, high ropes, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The group also attended the St Georges Day parade and remembrance service in uniform as part of our community engagement.

Scouting is undergoing significant transformation at a national level with updates to the structure and governance, providing more directed support to groups and updating the online tools to enhancing the volunteer experience and make it as easy as possible for groups to function safely and effectively. Most of this will be transparent to the general public but will ensure the safeguarding of all members of the scouting community.

The group relies on fundraising to supplement the membership cost to help subsidise the activities to make sure they are affordable and accessible to all members. This years fundraising included supporting the fate at the Fen Gallop with the traditional BBQ and for the first time a maze however, the biggest annual fundraiser is the village Firework Spectacular. Usually held on the recreational ground, this year due to the flooding this was not suitable. After a lot of searching, an alternative was found thanks to the generosity of Barry Papworth from Highgate Country Store. Weather conditions during the week and on the day were challenging due to high winds and rain but in the end the event was a success with an excellent turn out.

An issue that has been facing the group for a few years now is the future availability and sustainability of the Public Hall. The Parish Council have not renewed the mandate for the charity trust who have been managing the hall, opting to take direct management of the building from Jan 2025. As yet there is no commitment upon which the Scout Group can rely and make plans on for future use of the hall, though neither is there any expressed intent from the council for the group to need to relocate at this time. This uncertainty is directly reflected in the group finances which is holding a significant reserve as a contingency. The scouts and members of the Public Hall Trust continue to engage with the parish council to try and establish a way forward.