

Breakdown of Higgins's allowance 'drivel'

Casey labels President's account of €317,000 fund 'self-promoting'

Áras document details spending of Higgins's annual unaudited allowance

HARRY MCGEE
and FIACH KELLY

Presidential candidate Peter Casey has described the breakdown of how President Michael D Higgins's annual €317,000 allowance is spent as "self-promoting drivel" and "bullshit".

Áras an Uachtaráin published a 48-page document this week entitled *The Presidency in Review*, which gave details of spending of the annual unaudited allowance by Mr Higgins during his first seven-year term.

The greater part of the glossy publication was comprised of photographs of Mr Higgins, with only three pages of details of spending under the allowance.



66 It's impossible reading through it to work out the figures. It's a PR document. What's the breakdown for these different expenses?
Former presidential candidate Peter Casey

The breakdown discloses that the President spent just under €2 million of the allowance during his first term and returned €238,000 of unspent funds to the Exchequer.

Criticised

Yesterday, Mr Casey, a Donegal-based businessman who finished second in the recent presidential election, sharply criticised what he described as the complete lack of detail under the headings, as well as the decision to publish it in a booklet that cost thousands of euro.

"It is 48 pages of self-promoting drivel," Mr Casey told *The Irish Times*.

"It's impossible reading through it to work out the figures. It's a PR document. What's the breakdown for these different expenses?"

"All we needed was a three-page detailed document to show the breakdown of where the money was spent. This is just bullshit, for want of a better word."

Mr Higgins, who was sworn in for a second seven-year term last month, came under pressure in the election cam-

paigned over the allowance.

It has been set at its current rate of €317,000 since the presidency of Mary McAleese in 1998. The annual expenditure is broken down into five categories.

Three are under the broad heading of in-house events, and include food and beverage, hospitality and entertainment, and other, which includes fees for entertainers.

Another €170,000 has been spent cumulatively over seven years "representing Ireland abroad" but no further details have been disclosed as to how the funds were spent.

Costs

All the President's foreign trips are separately funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and costs associated with his travel abroad came to €667,000 during his term.

The last category is "books and research", which came to almost €40,000 over seven years.

There is a list on the following pages of the number of events associated with the first term in office including six incoming State visits, 52 themed garden parties, 22 afternoon tea events and 200 official lunches and dinners.

Mr Casey called for more detailed figures to be published and said this was not transparent. "There are huge numbers here but there is no breakdown. We get generic headings such as tea parties.

"Every quarter expenses should be published. He also spent over €100,000 on photographs and did not deny it during the campaign. That was a lot. His excuse was he could not get a local photographer.

"I am putting my expenses for the election into SIPO and every shilling and penny will have to be accounted for.

"Everything which was over €126, we have had to produce receipts. I have kept all the receipts.

"I want far more comprehensive governance of his office," he said.

Fellow unsuccessful election candidate Gavin Duffy welcomed the setting up of a review group. "Citizens expect openness and transparency and full accountability as regards all spending of exchequer funds across all State entities including Áras an Uachtaráin. Hopefully this will be achieved by the annual publication of the promised Presidential review," he said.

"The review must include itemised, spending details but should also try to establish value of the office for citizens by outlining the important work conducted by the office in the previous 12 months."

The amount of the allowance returned by Mr Higgins is a little below that of Mrs McAleese, who returned €518,000 of the funds she did not use during her 14 years in office.

Efforts to reach other presidential candidates were not successful.



Abuse scandal leaves scouting facing uncertain future



Jack Power

Ongoing review has identified 317 alleged victims and 212 alleged abusers

Allan Mathews (35) has been involved with scouting since he was eight years old, and is now a leader with the St Patrick's group, in Dundalk, Co Louth, one of Scouting Ireland's largest troops in the country.

In the troop den on Thursday night a group of 20 cubs, aged from nine to 11, were learning how to navigate using compasses. Upstairs a larger group of scouts, ranging in age from 12 to 15, played a series of games on their last meeting before Christmas.

The crisis over the historic child sexual abuse scandal facing the century-old youth organisation appeared far removed from the noisy Dundalk scout den.

"My stomach turned, it's not something that you ever want to hear," Mathews said, describing the moment he saw the news of the controversy break.

An ongoing review by Scouting Ireland has identified 317 alleged child sex abuse victims, and 212 alleged abusers.

Evidence from the review details abuse that occurred at "all levels within the organisation", cases where information was "covered up" and alleged perpetrators were permitted to "move from group to group", Scouting Ireland's new chairperson Aisling Kelly told a meeting of senior scout leaders on Monday.

"If that was true, that was disgusting, the thought of it is sickening... It's not something that I would ever have been able to comprehend happening," Mathews said.

"We detest the thoughts of what happened to the poor innocent kids," he went on, adding that he hoped the gardai would investigate allegations now surfacing to the fullest extent.

Despite it being the era of the smartphone and computer game, the Dundalk troop's numbers have increased year on year. The troop has 180 juvenile members, and "we could take 30 more kids tomorrow morning," Mathews said.

The organisation has taken a hit in relation to the public, but the national scandal has not

eroded the trust between parents and local leaders in Dundalk, he said.

In recent months Mathews's six-year-old son joined the younger "beavers" age group. "It's a way of life, I could never see myself leaving, I'm in it 27 years [and] it's something I'm proud of being a part of," Mathews said.

The aim of scouting is to help develop young people into independent individuals with good morals, who "know how to treat people well," he said.

"We've had people that have been fostered that had gone through terrible upbringings, that were brought here. To see them grow, develop, change and come out the other end on a happier path, that's what you want to do," Mathews said.

Confidential review

The first threads of the controversy came loose last February, when *The Irish Times* reported the details of a confidential review by safeguarding expert Ian Elliott. The review found Scouting Ireland's handling of a rape allegation from 2016, concerning two adult leaders, was "deeply flawed".

Elliott's report also identified shortcomings with safeguarding standards in the organisation, and recommended an audit of the handling of historic allegations.

Over several months Elliott conducted that review, based on historic child-protection files; interviews with former staff and senior volunteers; and information from a substantial number of alleged victims who had begun to come forward.

In mid-November the organisation announced the review had identified 108 alleged abuse victims, and 71 alleged perpetrators. Three weeks on, both figures have nearly tripled, as more abuse survivors continue to come forward. The ongoing review found the majority of the alleged abuse occurred between the 1960s and 1990s.

Historic abuse scandals have shaken scouting organisations in the United States, Australia and the UK in recent years.

Paul Mones is a prominent American lawyer, who has represented hundreds of abuse victims in cases against the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). In 2012, a case taken by Mones resulted in the release of the "perversion files" – thousands of pages of documents detailing accusations of abuse held by the organisation from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The files tell a story of scout leaders who faced allegations being allowed to "go quietly" from the BSA, Mones said. "These files show chapter and verse of the knowledge of men who joined and abused," he added.

The highly-publicised 2012 case "unleashed scores of lawsuits all over the country," after which the BSA approach to abuse allegations "did a 180", Mones said.

The previous policy was akin to "scorched earth", where the organisation adopted an aggressive defence against lawsuits, he said. After the public scandal the BSA's approach now is to resolve cases in settlements where possible, he said.

The scandal has resulted in a number of multimillion-dollar court payouts for abuse victims. Earlier this week the BSA hired a law firm to explore filing for bankruptcy in order to restructure, according to media reports.

Responding, the Boy Scouts of America said it "cares deeply" about all victims of child sex abuse, and sincerely apologised. "We believe them, we believe in fairly compensating them, and we pay for unlimited counselling for abuse victims and their families," it told *The Irish Times*.

Following the news report the firm was "contacted by over 400 people who were affected by it," McClenaghan said.

Since then the firm has represented more than 200 abuse victims in proceedings against the organisation, with awards ranging from £15,000 to hundreds of thousands of pounds.

McClenaghan said he had, in several lawsuits, "absolutely" come across historic cases where people had approached higher-level authorities in the UK Scout Association about abuse, but "then nothing had been done about it".

Failure to act on allegations to authorities appeared to be "individuals making mistakes rather than being directed not to do anything" in cases he had seen, McClenaghan said.

Responding, the UK scouting body said it dealt with the issues "with the utmost seriousness", adding that it works with all agencies to ensure that perpetrators "are removed" and that they face justice for their crimes.

To date, Bolt Burdon Kemp has recovered more than £2 million in compensation for abuse victims from the Scout Association.

The UK association was unable to identify who its insurers

complainants Daniel O'Connell, a solicitor with Irish firm Coleman Legal Partners who specialise in abuse cases, said the firm had 25 clients looking to take cases against Scouting Ireland. Some 21 of those complainants had contacted the firm in the last three weeks, he said.

"I have a few different clients who had the same abuser. When you see the shocking numbers coming out that does make you sit up and think," O'Connell said.

In late 2014, a BBC news report on an increase in lawsuits against the Scout Association in the UK since the Jimmy Savile abuse revelations featured the testimony of a victim who was molested in the scouts.

Prior to that point, David McClenaghan, a partner at law firm Bolt Burdon Kemp who specialises in abuse cases, had taken about 28 legal actions against the Scout Association.

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■ Allan Mathews is a leader in the St Patrick's Scout Group in Dundalk, Co Louth. He has been involved in scouting for 27 years. PHOTOGRAPH: CIARA WILKINSON

had been for a period between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, meaning it has had to pay the costs of any abuse lawsuits from that period from its own funds.

Indemnification Scouting Ireland now faces similar problems identifying past insurance records required to help indemnify the organisation against the cost of future legal cases.

The organisation was formed in 2004 following a merger of two legacy organisations, the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland (CBSI) and the Scout Association of Ireland (SAI).

The meeting of senior volunteers on Monday at Scouting Ireland's national head office in Larch Hill, Dublin, heard the organisation is facing challenges locating past insurance documents related to the SAI.

"At the moment there is only one insurer who is willing to insure Scouting Ireland in this country," Aisling Kelly told the private meeting. The historic documentation for the CBSI was in "much better shape" than records from the SAI, she said.

If Scouting Ireland is forced to bear the entire cost of lawsuits from past abuse in the SAI itself, the cost is "going to be huge," McClenaghan said.

The organisation does not have substantial financial reserves. Twice this year its State funding was suspended by Minister for Children Katherine Zappone, due to governance concerns following controversy over the flawed handling of the 2016 rape allegation.

Now, President Michael D Higgins, the organisation's patron, has joined the list of those expressing concern "and has asked to be kept informed, as patron, of the reforms that have been announced and any proposed actions in relation to the past," his spokesman said.

Scouting Ireland's approach to the abuse revelations has been to set up a victim-support scheme to provide counselling services to survivors.

There is a recognition inside the organisation that if large numbers of alleged abuse victims pursue civil cases against Scouting Ireland, the costs involved could collapse the organisation.

Its board is due to consider a range of emergency financial measures at a meeting on Saturday. If the number of alleged victims continues to increase, even selling assets such as scout dens may be considered, Kelly has said.

The Pandora's box of past child sexual abuse in the organisation, which lay dormant for decades, has now burst open, with the number of abuse survivors coming forward expected to keep increasing.

Scouting Ireland's board has vowed that nothing will be hidden, and that legacy failings will be addressed transparently. However, current goodwill towards the organisation may not be enough to save it from the sins of the past.

David (not his real name, as he does not wish to identify himself publicly) was 15 years old when he attended a national scout camp in the late 1970s, where he was allegedly raped by a scoutmaster.

"He laced me with drinks – whiskey and beer – and then brought me into a tent," David said. "He physically raped me, then he gave me a dirty dishcloth to wipe myself after," he said.

The trauma of the past abuse has "destroyed" his life, and David now struggles with depression and thoughts of suicide.

"At the time I couldn't tell anybody. I have three children, I can't tell them I was raped," he said. His wife knows about the past abuse, but the trauma has put a huge strain on their relationship, he said.

Earlier this year David contacted Scouting Ireland, and a number of days later met two

officials from the youth organisation, who apologised over the past abuse, and were "very supportive," he said. Scouting Ireland told him the organisation had received other allegations of abuse in relation to the CBSI scoutmaster, who is now deceased.

David is currently out of work, and said he may never work again due to his serious mental health problems. Scouting Ireland is providing him with a small travel allowance to attend counselling sessions once a week, he said.

"I can't sleep at night, I wake up some nights puking. I'm a middle-aged man, and my life is destroyed," he said. "Scouting Ireland are a great organisation... all I want to know is the kids now in Scouting Ireland are safe," he said.

Scouting Ireland has set up a confidential abuse helpline: 1800 221 199



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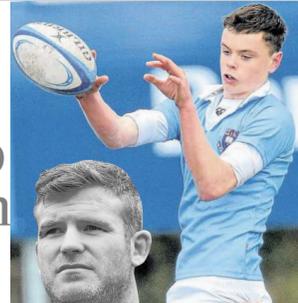
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Evidence emerges of abuse 'cover-up' at scouting bodies

JACK POWER

Scouting Ireland has identified more than 300 victims of alleged child sexual abuse, amid emerging evidence that abuse was "covered up" in the youth organisation for decades.

Volunteers who allegedly preyed on children were "protected" and permitted to move

from group to group, a meeting of senior scout leaders was told on Monday night. An ongoing review in the organisation has identified 317 alleged victims, and 212 alleged child abusers.

The number of alleged perpetrators and victims has nearly tripled in the three weeks since the scandal was disclosed before an Oireachtas committee.

Aisling Kelly, chair of the organisation's new board, told a private meeting of senior volunteers on Monday night a picture was emerging of "extensive, prolonged, and at times organised child sexual abuse" from the organisation's past.

"It happened within all levels within the organisation... all counties. It is a situation where

people knew of and protected alleged abusers. It's a situation where people allowed abusers to move from group to group," Ms Kelly said.

'Deeply sorry'

"There is information emerging that would support the conclusion that certain things were covered up," she told the meeting.

The majority of the alleged abuse occurred between the 1960s and the 1990s, but some cases date back to the 1940s, the meeting heard.

Scouting Ireland formed in 2004 following a merger of two legacy organisations, the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland and the Scout Association of Ireland.

In a statement, Scouting Ire-

land confirmed evidence had emerged "of alleged perpetrators being moved within scout groups". The organisation was "deeply sorry" that anyone who would have expected to be safe in previous legacy organisations was not.

Scouting Ireland expects the number of alleged victims and abusers to continue to increase,

the meeting heard.

The organisation's board is considering emergency financial measures, including selling assets, to fund a victims' support scheme.

➔ **Scouting Ireland considering sale of dens to meet cost of abuse crisis: page 3**

Varadkar and Martin discuss new deal

FIACH KELLY
Deputy Political Editor

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin met last night to discuss the future of the confidence-and-supply deal.

It is believed that Mr Martin is willing to extend the deal which underpins the Fine Gael-led minority Government – possibly for a year – albeit pending further negotiations and conditions.

A Fine Gael statement last night said the pair had discussed the Government's future and Brexit. They will meet again in the coming days.

Members of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil have been meeting in recent weeks to review the deal which has propped up the minority Government for the best part of three years.

The deal will reach the end of its lifespan once votes to secure the passage of next year's budget through the Oireachtas are complete as Fianna Fáil had agreed to vote with the Government on three budgets.

Serious issue

Earlier yesterday, Mr Martin told the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party meeting that the review of the confidence-and-supply deal to date had identified issues in the areas of health and housing, but that Brexit was a serious issue which was causing public anxiety. He told TDs and senators that Fianna Fáil had come a long way as a party, and was seen as responsible and trustworthy. However, he did not specially say the deal would be extended.

EU leaders offer May backstop assurances

Any prospect of renegotiating UK's withdrawal treaty firmly ruled out

Prime minister due in Dublin as she faces growing leadership threat

PAT LEAHY and DENIS STAUNTON

European leaders have signalled to British prime minister Theresa May a willingness to provide assurances that the Irish Border backstop is not intended to be a permanent solution but ruled out any prospect of renegotiating the withdrawal treaty.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar yesterday said the EU would work on "giving the UK assurances that it may need but never compromising on the basic fundamental substance and written letter of the backstop".

He said there was "resolute and overwhelming European support that the backstop has to remain part of a withdrawal agreement. It is not just an Irish issue but an issue for Europe too, and the integrity of the single market which we are all part of".

German chancellor Angela Merkel also ruled out renegotiating the EU-UK treaty but in talks with Mrs May in Berlin expressed optimism that further "securities" could be agreed with London to avoid a hard Brexit.

Bone of contention

Dr Merkel said the backstop was clearly the main bone of contention and it was essential to examine the case for further assurances for the UK in the interim phase between full EU membership and post-membership.

The president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, said there was "no room whatsoever for renegotiation" of the withdrawal treaty. "The deal

we achieved is the best deal possible, it is the only deal possible." However, Mr Juncker said that "further clarifications were possible".

Mrs May will visit Dublin this evening for talks with the Taoiseach as she continues her tour of European capitals in a bid to win assurances that would help her overcome opposition to the treaty in advance of this week's summit of European leaders in Brussels.

However, Mrs May remains under intense pressure at Westminster where talk of a no-confidence motion in the House of Commons, and a possible challenge to her from within the Conservative Party, was rife yesterday.

Meanwhile, a no-deal Brexit could almost halve Irish economic growth next year, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has warned.

It finds that if the UK leaves the EU without a deal, and assuming World Trade Organisation rules then apply, this would curtail growth here to 2.6 per cent.

Inside

News and analysis: page 8

Irish preparations for no-deal Brexit to accelerate: **Simon Coveney, page 12**

Hard Brexit could 'halve' Irish growth: **page 15**

The UK can repudiate the backstop? Not on **Patrick Smyth, page 8**



Terror attack Gunman goes on the rampage at Christmas market



French police near the scene of a shooting last night at a Christmas market in Strasbourg. PHOTOGRAPH: ABDESSLAM MIRDASS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Islamist suspected after four killed at Strasbourg market

LARA MARLOWE
in Paris

French police were last night searching for a man who shot dead at least four people and wounded numerous others, several critically, in central Strasbourg.

The first shots were fired just before 8pm in the rue des Orfèvres, near the Strasbourg Christmas market, which is the largest in France. An attempted attack by al Qaeda was foiled there in 2000.

The suspect carried a knife as well as a handgun. He shot at police first, and then fired randomly at passersby. French intelligence identified him from images taken by a surveillance camera as a 29-year-old who was born and lived in Strasbourg and had a criminal record.

The suspect is listed on the "S" (for "state security") list of suspected Islamic radicals.

A police source said the suspect was supposed to have been questioned yesterday morning in connection with a homicide charge but was not at home when gendarmes arrived to search his apartment.

The shootings were the first terrorist attack in France since a Franco-Moroccan killed four people and wounded 15 others in Carcassonne and Trèbes last March 23rd.

Locked down

Much of central Strasbourg was locked down, including a European basketball cup match. Spectators were not allowed to leave the Rhénus gymnasium. The European Parliament was also sealed.

Authorities asked residents of the Neudorf and parc de l'Étoile districts to remain indoors with doors locked. A police helicopter flew overhead. Customers were locked inside bars and restaurants. Tourists

were prevented from returning to their hotels and several Strasbourg residents used social media to offer shelter to stranded people. All bus and tram lines in Strasbourg were shut down.

The emergency "white plan", used for epidemics and natural disasters, was activated by the university hospital in Strasbourg.

President Emmanuel Macron cut short a meeting with parliamentarians at the Elysée Palace to follow events in Strasbourg.

The anti-terrorist section of the Paris prosecutor's office has opened an investigation for "murder and attempted murder in relation with a terrorist undertaking" and "associating with terrorist criminals".

Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the EU Commission, condemned the Strasbourg attack, saying Strasbourg "symbolises European peace and democracy".

Weather

Rain in parts of the east and northeast but elsewhere a good deal of dry weather with highs of 7-9 degrees.

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Home News

Policing: The level of hate crime and domestic violence is being significantly underestimated by the Garda, a review of the quality of crime data has found: **page 4**

Education: Psychologists feel under pressure from parents and schools to give exemptions for the study of Irish: **page 5**

World News



US: Donald Trump has threatened to shut down the federal government if he does not secure funding for the Mexican border wall: **page 9**

Business + Property

Media: The CEO of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland "stands over" a 2012 regulatory determination that Denis O'Brien does not exercise 'control' over INM: **page 14**

Banking: AIB's latest troubled loans portfolio sale contains debt originally valued at €3.4 billion: **page 17**

Sports Wednesday

Soccer: Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur advanced to the knockout stages of the Champions League last night after tense encounters: **page 20**

Rugby: Johnny Sexton has signed a contract to play in Ireland up to the end of the 2020/21 season: **page 22**

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Higgins stands over spending as campaign begins

Sitting president one of six candidates nominated for October 26th election

Higgins confirms intruder entered Áras and 'there were a few things we discussed'

HARRY MCGEE
Political Correspondent

Michael D Higgins has defended an unaudited presidential allowance of €317,000 and said he was willing to provide more details of spending in the Áras an Uachtaráin.

Speaking at the launch of his re-election campaign, Mr Higgins said he had started to supply more information during the summer on his website and would continue to do so.

"I have no difficulty in constructing a formal statement that can live within the Constitution and at the same time accept the independence of the president, whoever he or she is," he said of the allowance, which has been available since 1938, and at its present level of €317,000 since 1998.

The lack of transparency on spending in the Áras had been criticised in some quarters and was the subject of a Public Accounts Committee hearing earlier this week.

Mr Higgins says he has no role in handling the allowance which is used for the many events that take place in the Áras each year.

Slogan

He said it was always open to the Oireachtas to remove the allowance "if you didn't want to serve a cup of tea to those elderly citizens, if you didn't want to receive those citizens who were in the Magdalene Laundries or those associated with the Irish language movement and indeed all the different voluntary groups".

Mr Higgins' election slogan will be "A President for Us All".

Setting out his campaign themes, he said he would be best placed to be Ireland's voice in an uncertain period ahead.

Asked at the launch of his campaign about comments made by fellow candidate Peter Casey, who suggested an incident involving an intruder in the Áras was a stunt, Mr Higgins said: "The

gate was open and [the intruder] drove in and the door was open and [she] came in to a door beside my office. We had a conversation.

"There were a few things we discussed. When that was finished I left the room under my own volition.

"She was then interviewed by a senior garda. She was an unemployed person. I wished her well. That's how it should be."

In an extended conference Mr Higgins cut a relaxed figure when fielding questions.

Yoga teacher
Asked about his age, Mr Higgins (77) said: "My health is excellent... I am very fit and I am really looking forward to getting into the campaign."

He added: "I have much more energy than in 2011 because I got my knee done [operated on]."

"I don't drink and don't smoke and I have a yoga teacher."

Asked about the claims made by Senator Gerard Craughwell that he stayed in a suite at a luxury hotel in Switzerland this year, costing up to €3,000 per night, the President said he had never asked to stay in a particular hotel.

"The arrangement for the President and where he stays are made by the Department of Foreign Affairs without consultation," he said.

"I have never asked to stay in a particular hotel.

"I have stayed in hostels and stayed in tents and with Concern in Somalia."

Nominations for the presidential election closed at noon yesterday, with six candidates on the official ballot paper.

The other five candidates are Mr Casey, Seán Gallagher, Liadh Ní Riada, Gavin Duffy and Senator Joan Freeman.

The election will take place on Friday, October 26th, with the winner inaugurated on November 11th.

➔ Higgins, Gallagher miss first debate: page 8



All smiles Student whose points were incorrectly counted wins High Court case

Rebecca Carter with her mother, Annemarie, leaving the High Court in Dublin yesterday after she won her case against the State Examinations Commission for wrongly totting up her Leaving Cert results. Legal ruling will have impact on state exams: page 2. PHOTOGRAPH: GARETH CHANEY COLLINS

Scouts vote to reappoint under-fire chief

JACK POWER

The board of Scouting Ireland has voted to reinstate chief scout Christy McCann to chair the organisation's upcoming extraordinary general meeting on governance reforms.

Mr McCann is one of four senior volunteers under investigation over the organisation's handling of a rape allegation, and he stepped aside in April pending the findings of an ongoing barrister-led inquiry.

At a board meeting on Saturday, members voted for Mr McCann to chair the egm on October 6th. A second vote, to reinstate the other three volunteers under investigation – David Shaloo, Thérèse Bermingham and Ollie Kehoe – was defeated by a single vote.

The four were criticised in a confidential report by safeguarding expert Ian Elliott, which found the handling of an allegation in 2016, from a woman who claimed she was raped on a 2009 camping trip when she was 18 years old, was "deeply flawed".

The latest development comes as Minister for Children Katherine Zappone is considering whether to restore State grants to the organisation.

Funding worth €900,000 a year was suspended over the controversy, and in June Ms Zappone released an interim €220,000, following reform commitments. Her department was informed of the board vote on Tuesday.

Ms Zappone said Scouting Ireland officials had been

warned she would "take a very dim view of any decisions that could be deemed to be a step back from the commitments given to improve the governance of the organisation".

'Robust governance'

"I would find it very difficult to make a positive decision on restoration of funding if the current board of Scouting Ireland makes any decisions that call their commitment to robust governance into question," she told *The Irish Times*.

The organisation's members will vote to ratify an overhaul of their governance structures, adopted at a previous emergency conference, at the egm next week.

Mr McCann said he had been approached to chair the meeting following the board vote,

and was "considering" whether to do so. He was "reluctant" to accept as he did not "want the wrong message going out".

"It is important that the governance proposals get passed," he said, adding he would consider chairing the meeting if the board felt it would assist the reforms being approved.

The Elliott report said Mr McCann's decision to hold a meeting with the male volunteer accused of rape, while the man was suspended from Scouting Ireland over the claim, "demonstrated a blatant disregard" for

safeguarding policy.

Senior sources described the board's vote as a "total disaster" for the youth organisation. It is understood an attempt will be made to overturn the decision at another board meeting before the egm.

As part of reforms in June, the current board announced that its members would stand down, to be replaced by an entirely new board elected at the October meeting. However, at least five board members have refused to sign resignation letters, according to sources.

Trump's supreme court nominee faces fresh misconduct allegations

SUZANNE LYNCH

Washington Correspondent

Fresh sexual misconduct allegations emerged against supreme court nominee Brett Kavanaugh on the eve of a crucial Senate hearing that could dictate the political hue of the US supreme court for years.

Christine Blasey Ford, who accused Kavanaugh of assaulting her when both were high school students, is due to testify before the Senate judicial committee today. Kavanaugh will then testify, according to the schedule.

But there were strident calls last night from Democrats to delay the hearing in light of new allegations. Yesterday, a third

woman publicly accused the 53-year-old judge of misconduct when he was a teenager.

Julie Swetnick, represented by high-profile lawyer Michael Avenatti, said she witnessed Kavanaugh being physically abusive towards girls. In a sworn affidavit to the committee, she said she was present at a party in 1982 where she says she was raped by several boys.

'From the Twilight Zone'

Kavanaugh vehemently rejected the new accusations. "This is ridiculous and from the Twilight Zone," he said. "I don't know who this is and this never happened."

The controversy threatens to thwart Mr Trump's quest to

appoint a second conservative judge to the supreme court – a key demand of his conservative base. A handful of Republicans may not support Kavanaugh.

Mr Trump lashed-out: "The Democrats are playing this game that is disgraceful. It's a disgrace to the country. I think you will see it in the midterms. People are wise to it."

He also criticised Avenatti, who also represents Stormy Daniels, the adult film star in a legal battle with the president about a hush-money payment.

➔ Kavanaugh and Trump are not aligned: page 11
Editorial comment: page 15



66 Michael D is strong on the vision guff: 'I hope to spark a renewed sense of collective vision-making'. But it is guff of the highest quality
Miriam Lord, page 8



66 Why is our best marathon runner representing Australia?
Sonia O'Sullivan, page 18



Secession standoff Catalonia tense a year after its 'referendum'
World, page 10

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Vol. No. 50208. Thursday, September 27, 2018

Home News

Health: The prospect of strikes across the health service has increased significantly after nursing unions urged their members to reject pay proposals: page 6

Sink hole: The transport and storage of water is the 'probable' reason for recent subsidence in Monaghan: page 5

World News

UK: Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn says the Tories are seeking to use Brexit to transform Britain into a low-regulation, low-wage tax haven: page 9

Business + Technology

Aviation: Ryanair is demanding that the European Commission investigate rival airline crew, unions and lobby groups for impeding its talks with staff

Online sales: EU member states are likely to reach agreement by the end of 2018 to implement a digital sales tax

Sports Thursday

Rugby: Munster's Conor Murray is on course to become the highest paid player in Irish rugby history with an annual salary of about €800,000: page 19

Soccer: Liverpool were beaten 2-1 by Chelsea in the league cup last night after a late Hazard winner at Anfield: page 21

Lotto: 6, 7, 21, 37, 46, 47 (34) – no winner. Plus 1: 1, 2, 3, 17, 33, 34 (38). Plus 2: 1, 5, 23, 24, 26, 34 (16).