



Minutes of Annual General Meeting held at Patching Lodge, Saturday 21st February 2015

Members present: Paul Gillett (Chair), Colin Bennett, Shirley West, Ruby Woolven, Sam Collingham-Wood, Keith Turner, Sue Vivian, Iris Keppler, Claire Amorose, Martin Fench, Denise Sharp, Tony McCoy.

Volunteers present: Andrea Nonce, Jonathan Dutton (minutes), Ray Woolven, Rosemary Collins, Steve Evans, Sue Joseph, Darren Luckhurst, Barbara Wells.

Guest: Daniel Brookbank, Chief Executive East Sussex Association for Blind & Partially Sighted People (ESAB)

1. Introduction

Paul welcomed everyone to City Synergy's 12th AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

Christina Mendez, Liz Porter, Connie French, Valerie Mainstone, Thea Collingham-Wood, Margaret Pearson, Wendy Dyke.

3. Minutes of last meeting dated 15.2.14 have been published on the website and were taken as read.

4. Chair's Report

Paul said this was an opportunity to look back at the achievements of staging 30 varied and enjoyable activities in 2014 and also participating in the development of Sound Tennis in the City. It was also the time to look at opportunities to come, particularly the proposal to become a part of East Sussex Association for Blind & Partially Sighted People (ESAB). Paul said that we had always had a close working relationship with ESAB. Paul thanked Daniel Brookbank (their Chief Executive) for his positive attitude and encouragement through the discussions to date which Paul hoped would help to create a more secure future with greater opportunities as City Synergy continue to support people with sight loss, including helping those newly diagnosed to come to terms with their condition and realise that opportunities were not closed off to them.

Paul thanked the Committee, Volunteers and Members for their support.

A vote of thanks was expressed to Paul.

5. Treasurer's Report

Iris distributed the finance report showing a 31st December 2014 cash and bank balance of £1,700. In the year we spent £2,002 on activities receiving £1,082 in contributions from members. In the year our fundraising was £239.

Iris informed the meeting that we had changed our approach to presenting our accounts so as not to carry forward grants unless received late in the year or with a specific time or purpose in mind. This meant that although our actual reserves had decreased by £1,000 we were showing a positive balance for the year of £1,247.

A vote of thanks was expressed to Iris.

6. Proposals from the Committee

6.1 Raise the subscriptions to £10 with immediate effect

Paul introduced this proposal from the committee. After very brief discussion, Sue Vivian formally proposed and Sam Collingham-Wood seconded the proposal which was **unanimously agreed by the members**.

6.2 Become a part of ESAB

Paul introduced this proposal from the committee. There was significant discussion during which Daniel gave the following reassurances:

- City Synergy would keep its identity, bank account, committee, and AGM as at present. However, our accounts would be consolidated with ESAB and we would be required to follow their procedures on health and safety (including risk assessments) and volunteers.
- City Synergy would be covered by ESAB's current insurance saving the group £200 a year.
- ESAB would provide back-office support to City Synergy.

- City Synergy would continue to fundraise (in liaison with ESAB). ESAB's own fundraisers would look for funding opportunities for City Synergy.
- ESAB were very happy to welcome members living in West Sussex.
- ESAB will campaign vigorously about street obstacles (A-boards, street tables and chairs, scaffolding, cars parked on pavements etc) and City Synergy joining ESAB would give them more strength in the campaign in Brighton and Hove.
- ESAB would provide computer education in Brighton and Hove.
- ESAB already have 14 social groups operating independently and Daniel provided examples of those which would have folded but for the support of ESAB.
- ESAB have assets of £800,000 providing financial security during a period when funding is difficult to attract.

Shirley asked if City Synergy may close if it didn't join ESAB. Paul said that the finances were causing concern and it could have been necessary to scale down activities significantly.

Paul formally proposed and Sam Collingham-Wood seconded that City Synergy should join ESAB. **The proposal was passed** by 11 members voting in favour, 1 against.

7. Election of Officers

Paul stood down as chair and Jonathan took the chair for the election of officers. Jonathan said that the

existing committee of Paul Gillett, Iris Kepler, Sam Collingham- Wood and Ruby Woolven had all expressed a willingness to stand again. Chris Dutton proposed that they should be re-elected en bloc and this was seconded by Tony McCoy and **agreed unanimously by the members.**

Paul resumed as chair. Paul invited other members to stand for the committee, there were no applications. He also mentioned that the opportunity existed for members to attend as observers if interested but not sure whether they wanted to commit themselves, committee meetings would be every 2 months

8 Fundraising

Darren Luckhurst said that he had been involved in fundraising and noted that City Synergy had not received significant grants recently. He raised the following opportunities:

- On March 22nd he will walk 25k crossing the Thames bridges from Hammersmith to Tower Bridge to raise money for City Synergy. Sponsorship forms are available.
- Click on the Easyfundraising.org.uk link on the website (or click

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/city synergy/?t=Easyfundraising-lo&v=a>

to purchase from popular on-line shopping sites with a contribution going to City Synergy, or use the EasySearch toolbar to search the internet with a contribution made to City Synergy funds for each completed search made. As at the AGM date City Synergy had raised £736 from this.

- Other fundraising ideas:
 - Casino Night
 - Disco
 - Raffle
 - Individual member pledges (save 5p pieces, give up chocolate, etc).

9 Review Groups

Members and volunteers split into 3 groups to discuss issues that could help City Synergy be more resilient. The feedback from the groups was as follows:

9.1 Fundraising

- We should repeat bids for Waitrose and Asda Community Funds.
- Apply to Lions groups for funds.
- Rosemary will try to organise a Cheese and Wine party at her church.
- Christmas Bazaar (Daniel offered ESAB's help and experience) which could raise funds and awareness.
- Sponsored activities (Daniel said that ESAB has a Virgin Money Giving Page which simplifies the organisation and gift aid).

9.2 Recruiting Members

Tony mentioned his experience of it being 2 years after being diagnosed with sight loss before he found out about support networks available. Ideas include:

- Update and reprint leaflets
- Have leaflets in opticians and GP surgeries

- Have leaflets at the library (Tony has contact details for the Community Engagement Manager)
- Word-of-mouth – all to have leaflets available to give to people you meet.

9.3 Booking Events

It is a constant problem knowing exactly how many members and volunteers will attend an event, and this is crucial for ensuring the safety of activities and the effective use of funds to subsidise events. There is no easy solution, but the group suggested:

- Have one person for volunteers and members to respond to about attending events;
- Apply a strict deadline for volunteers and members to respond;
- After the closing date, members will be told if the event is going ahead and volunteers will be told if they are required. If the event has a cost involved, members and volunteers will be reminded how much is due.
- Amounts due should be paid in advance of the event, and as soon as possible, to the Treasurer either by cheque or bank transfer (using references to identify the event), or given directly to the Treasurer at proposed monthly coffee mornings or tea afternoons.
- The agreed arrangements need to be strictly enforced.
- If people cannot attend an event they are booked for (unavailable or unwell) there should not be a refund.

The ideas will be reviewed by the committee.

10 Activity Suggestions

Paul distributed the current list of forthcoming activities. Suggestions from the AGM were:

- Sue Vivian passed a list of Sailability dates to Paul to publicise on the website.
- Colin distributed leaflets for a forthcoming organ recital.
- Andrea mentioned a String Concert on 12th March at St George's Kempton.
- Claire said that Southampton Yacht club are having a blind sailing weekend in July.
- Sue Vivian reminded the group that Patching Lodge have a tea-dance (free to over 50s) 1st Thursday of every month.

11 Date of Next Meeting

Paul said we need an AGM or EGM in April or May to approve our final accounts to 31st March 2015 and synchronise our accounting year with that of ESAB.

The meeting closed for tea and cake.