

**City Synergy AGM
Friends' Meeting House
10th June 2017**

Attendance included members of City Synergy, volunteers, members of Brighton VIPs and officers from ESAB.

Members

Paul Gillett (chair)
Iris Keppler (treasurer)
Ruby Woolven
(committee)
Keith Turner (committee)
Chris Dutton
Denise Sharp
Nigel Holdstock
Margaret Pearson
Valerie (hon member)
Paul Staley

Volunteers

Steve Evans
Ray Woolven
Barbara Wells
Jonathan Dutton (notes)

In Attendance

Daniel Brookstein (ESAB)
Sue Fever (ESAB)

1. Apologies

(members) Tony McCoy, Sue Vivian, Colin Bennett,
Dawn Baldwin , Gordon Dival
(volunteers) Rosie Collins

2. Minutes

Minutes from the AGM on 21st May 2016 had been published on the website and were approved.

3. Chair's Report

Paul said that City Synergy had emerged from an RNIB Leisure link initiative 17 years ago. Since then, 500 events had been organised proving that sight loss is not a barrier to empowerment with self organisation and mutual support. 2 years ago the group joined ESAB, and now a merger is proposed with Brighton VIPs.

Paul thanked Daniel and Sue from ESAB for their support, along with volunteers and committee members with particular thanks to Iris who, in addition to be treasurer, had organised many events.

Barbara proposed a vote of thanks to Paul, seconded by Ruby.

Paul finished by saying that he had been chair or secretary of the group since its formation. He was proud of his involvement, but he has decided that this will be the final year that he will stand for office. He said that he will support a new appointment for next year.

4. Finance Report

Iris circulated a report showing expenditure on activities of £1,400 against receipts for activities of £799 showing a subsidy of £601 provided from grants. After receipt of membership and payment of other expenses, the group had a deficit of £745 and would carry forward funds of £1,781 to financial year 2017/18.

Iris said that fund applications were being progressed and in response to a question from Valerie said that this included a funding request to Brighton and Hove Buses.

Paul Staley said that if the merger went ahead, funds would transfer from Brighton VIPs.

Paul G proposed acceptance of the report which was seconded by Barbara and approved by the meeting.

5. Membership Subscriptions

Paul proposed that subs (payable by members) had been £5 for many years. They increased to £10 recently, but that it was now proposed to scrap subs and slightly reduce the subsidy to members for events. The cost of events to volunteers is not expected to change. Paul said collecting subs could be a problem, especially from members who may only attend one or two events in the year.

Daniel supported this saying that ESAB had scrapped subs, but invited donations instead (although otherwise ESAB do not fundraise from members). He said this was simpler, and generally raised more money. Valerie agreed that her experience was that collecting subs was arduous.

The motion was formally proposed by Paul, seconded by Nigel and agreed unanimously.

6. Election of Committee

Daniel took the chair for the election of the committee. He reported that the existing committee were prepared to stand again. He asked for any other nominations. Nigel said he was happy to stand and was nominated by Chris, seconded by Daniel. The new committee was agreed unanimously.

Paul resumed the Chair.

7. Merger of City Synergy and Brighton VIPs.

Paul said that the meeting on 30th March to discuss the issue with both City Synergy and Brighton VIP members, volunteers, and supporters had been positive.

Sue F said that the two groups had different qualities: City Synergy were mostly involved in organising activities, and Brighton VIPs was largely a social network helping members deal with issues mostly through internet communication. Both were active at combating isolation.

The meeting was advised that City Synergy has approximately 20 members and Brighton VIP has 60 members. Some 10 members are involved in both groups. It was not expected that the merger would mean many more people attending events, but it would streamline organisation and cover arrangements.

Margaret asked if future correspondence would be predominantly by e-mail. Paul said that he and Sue would be working on communication formats, but that alternatives to e-mail would be available.

Nigel asked about the advantages and disadvantages, and any pitfalls (insurance, etc) and was assured that advantages were mostly organisational and there were no known disadvantages or pitfalls.

Daniel said that Brighton VIPs had already voted in favour of the merger at their AGM. Paul said that the committee elected for City Synergy would become the committee for the new group.

Paul said that suggestions for activities from members or volunteers would always be welcome as they are now, and that these could be passed on via committee members, or just mentioned at the regular tea/coffee meetings.

The merger was formally proposed by Paul, seconded by Nigel and agreed unanimously.

8. Name for the New Group

Paul said that ideally the committee wanted suggestions for a new name for the group that didn't refer back to the existing names, but that described the purpose of the group and was snappy.

Sue F read out a long list of suggestions which she agreed to pass on to Paul. To this was added:

- Vision Impaired City Synergy (VICS)
- Seeing is Believing
- Eye Crowd

9. ESAB News and Activities

Daniel started by thanking the committee, and particularly Paul, for their hard work over the year.

He said that ESAB had been working on a merger with RNIB for 18 months but that this had broken down after near completion due to a change of direction from RNIB. He was disappointed, but said that other plans were being progressed with the aim of extending the current reach of ESAB allowing them to take direct control of certain services currently provided by other agencies.

In the meantime, he said that ESAB services were secure, and that the contracts with Brighton Council and East Sussex County Council had been extended for another year.

The ESAB vision is to increase tailoring services to age groups especially for younger people in work. ESAB is also dedicated to being less prescriptive and more empowering, and asking the question "what do you want?" of its members. The Trustees, Paul among them, are currently

working on a project to increase the involvement of younger (working age) people.

ESAB would shortly be advertising for a fund raiser.

Sue said that there had been a huge increase in referrals partly due to close ties with a new Eye Clinic Liaison Officer. Self referrals were also strong.

Daniel said that ESAB would be supporting Eye Health Week, week commencing 18th September, and focusing on an event at St George's Church, Kemptown. Details would be distributed soon.

Daniel said that ESAB had 1,800 members. He said that the catchment area data suggests that there are approximately 6,000 potential members.

Valerie said that she would be concerned about closer involvement of RNIB, noting that they had started the Leisurelink initiative and then dropped it, and that City Synergy had been formed by individuals in the face of indifference from RNIB. Other members commented on benefits of having small local groups that were flexible to local needs.

10. Activities

Paul circulated the current programme, and itemised some activities in development. Interest was shown in a minibus trip on 2nd September to Bignor and Arundel. Other ideas were:

- Westdene walk
- London trip
- Croquet
- Brighton Open Air Theatre
- Christmas Lunch at the Waterfront

It was agreed to switch tea/coffees back to Wednesdays for a period, and Margaret suggested Pret A Manger (North Street) as a venue.

11. Any Other Business

Sue mentioned Flashmob, a dance routine for 50+ which focuses on movements to improve balance and help avoid falls. This will be performed by a group including members and volunteers of City Synergy

at Take Part on 17th June (The Level, 2pm). It will also be filmed on 22nd June at St Johns' Community Centre, Palmeira Square, 10.30 am to be edited into a montage of performances of the dance for a health video

12. Date of Next AGM: to be decided.