



## Annual General Meeting

9<sup>th</sup> Feb 2008

### **Minutes**

#### Members present:

Paul Gillett (chair), Chris Dutton, Jackie Campbell, Jackie Petty, Keith Turner, Shirley Turner, Rose McCormick, Dorothy Duboisson, Katie Wheatland, Ruby Woolvern, Colin Bennett.

Volunteers Present: Jonathan Dutton, Christina Mendez, Sue Joseph (minutes),

Guest: Kerry Leask

#### Apologies

Connie French, Christine Laurence, Remy Allard, Valerie Mainstone, Val and Jim Lee.

Minutes for AGM 2007 were read by Jonathan and agreed as a true record by the meeting.

#### Matters Arising

1. Brighton Society for the Blind, now Sussex Lantern.  
Serious continuing concern was expressed by several members about the change of brief of this charity leading to a loss of service to vision impaired people in Brighton and Hove. There was also frustration about the lack of information following their move from Brighton. A number of members reported that they had attempted to make contact to find out what was happening.

Paul and Kerry advised that they were exploring a number of avenues as part of the Low Vision Committee and encouraged members to continue efforts to make contact.

2. Spiral Workshops

Funding had been received during the year from the Argus Appeal, some workshops had been run during the autumn but Spiral were no longer able to run them. Chris asked for suggestions about how to spend the money, now that the original plan was not working out. Chris volunteered to put on a clay workshop, if people were interested.

3. Audible bus stops

Keith gave a report to the meeting. He explained that the system works by key fobs which trigger information about the location of the bus stop, and real time information identifying which buses were coming. City Synergy had 10 in total which had been distributed to members. The original key fobs could still be used but were not as reliable. It is hoped that eventually these will be able to be used on buses to tell when you reach your destination. (This would be helpful for sighted tourists as well as for Vision Impaired people).

Paul informed that the scheme was being nominated for several awards and suggested the council should be congratulated for their commitment to its progress. He commented that it had been said that if you were going to lose your sight, Brighton and Hove was one of the best places to be.

**Guest Speaker** – Kerry Leask, Eye Care Liaison Officer at the Brighton Eye Hospital gave a talk about her work and answered questions from the meeting. A summary is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

**Rose McCormick's resignation**

We were very sad to hear from Rose that, at the age of 96, she had been advised to slow down a bit. She has decided to leave City Synergy, to which she had been coming for several years. She said she had thoroughly enjoyed the activities, the company and the

support, and she especially was grateful to Chris and Jonathan who had helped her particularly. There were more than a few tears amongst the members on hearing her news, and we will all miss her a great deal.

**Chair's Report** - Presented by Paul, copy available on request

**Treasurer's Report**

**2007 accounts**

Chris's report was read by Jonathan. Roughly, £2,400 had been spent on activities this year, half of which was raised by Membership contributions, fees, etc. About £2000 was to be carried forward to the next year. Detailed copies of the accounts were presented and copies can be had on request.

**2008 Budget**

Administration, insurance and Police checks for volunteers had to be budgeted for. The treasurer proposed aiming to raise about £800 in money-raising activities this year. There were questions about raising money from other sources, charities, etc.

**Election of Officers**

<b><u>Officers</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed</u></b>	<b><u>Seconded</u></b>	<b><u>Elected</u></b>
Chairman	Paul Gillett	Jackie	Keith	Unanimous
Secretary	See below.			
Treasurer	Chris Dutton	Rose	Jackie	Unanimous
<b><u>Committee</u></b>	Jackie Campbell	Paul	Chris	Unanimous as a group
	Jim Lee			
	Ruby Woolvern			
	Shirley West			
	Keith Turner			

Paul advised the meeting that the arrangement whereby the secretary role had been shared amongst committee members and volunteers was working well. He proposed that in the absence of nominations for the role, this continue for another year. The meeting agreed unanimously to this suggestion.

It was proposed and agreed that Katy Wheatland be co-opted to the committee.

### **Volunteers**

Jonathan, Christina, Sue, Valerie Mainstone and Remy remained as the current volunteers. Other volunteers are being sought to support the activities of City Synergy. Sue and Remy were being asked to obtain a Police Check, as would all future volunteers.

### **Activities in 2007**

Many enjoyable activities had been organised this year, including walks - long and short, town and country; pub visits and meals; carol singing, musical events and pantomimes (2 in this financial year), bowling, Audio described films, Christmas dinner together, etc.

### **Events agreed so far for 2008**

Ten pin bowling 20<sup>th</sup> Feb  
Walk with Valerie in Hastings 24<sup>th</sup> Feb

### **Activities suggested for the future**

A minibus trip, possibly with a Bluebird driver or Seaford Lions?  
Craft activities, Spiral type or its replacement.  
Batemen's, a National Trust house (Rudyard Kipling's home)  
Charleston Manor (Bloomsbury group home)  
Herstmonceux telescope  
Line dancing  
Trip to Isle of Wight  
Brighton Festival events  
e.g. a tour of the sewers especially for VI, with support

Bluebell railway  
More audio described films at the Odeon  
Wakehurst Place

## **AOB**

1. Colin talked about the support he had received doing an **Open University** Course. He had been given Supernova for his computer, plus extra memory, as well as a reader to read textbooks, etc. for him. He said it was only for committed people as it was really arduous, but he was enjoying it.

2. **Eye T 4 All** This was a course for people with limited experience of computers and wanted to make a start. Volunteers were required to support the day, but EyeT4all provided the VI teachers, the computers and all the software required. 'Guide' would be the system used. 10 people were needed to set up a one-day course, and Paul was investigating a day course with other VI people in Brighton, e.g. ESAB. Ruby, Jackie, Shirley, and Dorothy expressed interest.

## **Fund Raising**

1. A fund raising **Barn dance** was discussed. Sue's band would play the music, without charge (except for some food and drink on the night). Chris and Sue agreed to meet to plan the event. It was hoped a decent amount could be raised this way, by charging £7 or £8 entry to include a Ploughman's supper. Chris and Jonathan were exploring possible venues, such as church halls.

2. Paul was looking into possible grants to support City Synergy.

3. Attendance at a Car Boot Sale, was suggested, taking items from the loft, garden shed, etc.

**Date of next meeting – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2009 (subject to confirmation)**

# APPENDIX

## Guest Speaker – Kerry Leask, ECLO - Eye Clinic Liaison Officer

The meeting welcomed Kerry who told us about her work.

Kerry told us she worked for the RNIB, Brighton Social Services and the Primary Care Trust in a 3-way partnership. The aim was to improve patient support after diagnosis at the Eye Hospital, so that the patient left the hospital feeling informed about their condition, and supported. Not all patients are referred to her. The doctor or nurse will communicate the diagnosis to the patient, and then follow up with a referral to her if they are concerned about the person coping with the bad news. Patients can also ring her directly and self-refer.

Her direct line Tel. No. is 01273 696955 Ext. 7528.

Patients do not have to be registered Blind or Partially Sighted any more to receive a Social Services visit and follow-up support. Kerry is aiming to fill the gap between the different hospitals, and see the patient before they receive a visit from a social worker. She is also aiming to educate the staff about the realities of having a visual impairment. She can support the staff in how to be sensitive when giving bad news, and how to deal with the patient's sadness.

Kerry said there was some confusion about whether people should use the Brighton Eye Hospital - Accident and Emergency Service. It was very overloaded, sometimes with minor ailments, that could have been treated at the GP Surgery. There was concern that people suffered from a problem for a couple of weeks without going to their GP, but then went to the Eye Hospital A and E.

A District Nurse might visit after an operation, to support the person practising administering eye drops, etc. but the patients were encouraged to learn how to administer them themselves. It was a simple job with practice, but very time consuming for the Nurse, if the

drops were needed every few hours. Kerry told us there are also volunteers who can provide support at the Hospital.

Kerry also told us about the Brighton Low Vision Clinic, at Montague House, Somerset Street and Mark Godfrey, who runs it. This is a free NHS service, open Monday to Thursday. It stores equipment, such as Reading aids and lighting, that can be borrowed and shared. The tel. no. is 01273 295686.

Just around the corner, also in Montague House, but in Montague Place, are the Brighton and Hove Sensory Team (Social Workers) and ROVI's (Rehabilitation Officers for the VI), who can be seen on the same visit, if an appointment is made. Their tel. no. is 01273 295710. There are Low Vision Clinics outside Brighton that welcome visitors, e.g. Seaford for East Sussex residents, but their ROVI's are not in the same building.

It had been found that it could take weeks or months to replace, say, a white stick, through the main Adult Social Services, whereas this could be done immediately at Montague House. If the person does not come in themselves during the year, they are given an annual appointment to review their vision and support required.

Kerry told us she worked together with the Social Services Sensory Team, and she could refer people on to, say, the Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist. She also was working towards better links with East and West Sussex as the Eye Hospital saw patients from all these areas. For example, she saw patients referred from East Sussex Association for the Blind - ESAB, and West Sussex - WSAB, and referred patients to them too. She could also refer people to a Specialist Counsellor for the Vision Impaired for 8 free sessions, if they were losing their sight and becoming depressed or anxious about this. Kerry provides Information Packs on services in Sussex, both for adults, and for VI children and their parents. Copies can be obtained from her.

The RNIB's involvement in raising standards in Brighton in support for Vision Impaired people, is because they are trying to support

Brighton Eye Hospital in becoming a model for other regions. For example, they are looking at the environment of the hospital and in how people are received.

Kerry chairs the local Low Vision Committee, which meets every 3 months and is attended by a number of people linked to organisation for and of vision impaired people. The next meeting of the committee includes a visit by David Lepper, M.P for Brighton Pavilion. This would give an opportunity to raise a number of issues of concern

Kerry also mentioned an Expert Patient programme, with a free NHS course for people with a long-standing disability. This includes, learning how to manage the disability positively, and using special techniques, such as relaxation.

Paul expressed on behalf of the meeting our gratitude to Kerry for explaining her role, and for all the support she provides.