

# **Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment**

## **Minute of the Cross Party Group for Visual Impairment AGM and meeting held on Thursday 6 March 2013 in Committee Room 4, Scottish Parliament.**

### **Present:**

Stuart McMillan MSP (Convenor)  
Neil Bibby MSP  
Dennis Robertson MSP (Item 1-5)

David Allen, RNIB  
Annie Bell, SITE Scotland  
Joanne Boyle, ADSW  
Sam Brown  
Valerie Breck, Visibility  
Catriona Burness, RNIB Scotland  
Mo Colvin, Haggeye  
Stephen Davidson, Haggeye  
Dominic Everett, RNIB Scotland  
Laura Gibson, Lothian Police  
Sharon Grant, Scottish Government  
Sheena Guz, ADA (Scotland)  
Nigel Harvey, RNIB Scotland  
Richard Hellewell, Royal Blind  
Jane Horsburgh, Guide Dogs Scotland  
Colin Howie, SCOVl  
Bob Ironside, Perth and Kinross Society For the Blind  
John Legg, RNIB Scotland  
Tom Lowe, SDEP

Sheila Mackenzie, University of Edinburgh  
Gemma Macintosh, Haggeye  
Jill Mulholland, Scottish Government  
Mary Rasmussen  
John Ravenscroft, University of Edinburgh  
George Reid  
Ken Reid, Scottish Vision Strategy  
Alex Scott  
Roisin Scrimshire, North Ayrshire Council  
Nathan Sparling, Office of Dennis Robertson MSP  
Allan Suttie, Fife Society for the Blind  
Ken Swa  
Danny Sweeney, North Ayrshire Council  
Christine Thomson, Scottish Government  
Katrina Thomson, Haggeye  
Mhairi Thurston, University of Abertay Dundee  
Lesley Walters, Novartis

### **+1. Welcome and Introductions**

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the AGM of the Cross Party Group and explained that parts of the meeting were being filmed by the Parliament and may be posted on the website. Anyone not wanting to be filmed should contact the Group's secretariat.

## **+2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

James Adams, RNIB Scotland  
Elaine Brackenridge, Royal Blind  
Marion Burchart, Novartis  
Amanda Burt  
John Donaldson, Scottish Braille  
Press  
Julie Fardell, Royal Blind  
Graham Findlay, NESS  
Sandra Gollan, Dundee Blind and  
Partially Sighted Society

David McKerral  
Anne McLean  
Pat Onions  
Ann Robertson, NESS  
Susan Robinson  
Fiona Sandford, Visibility  
Janelle Scotland, ASTN  
Angus Scott, Eyecare Scotland  
Jennifer Stewart, BIOS

## **+3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 December 2012**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 December 2012 were approved and there were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

## **+4. Election of Office Bearers**

The Convenor explained that Parliamentary regulations require an annual election of the Group's office bearers at the AGM. The following nominations had been received.

Convenor: Stuart McMillan MSP  
Vice Convenor: Neil Bibby MSP  
Nanette Milne MSP  
Dennis Robertson MSP

Secretary: James Adams

No further nominations were received and Ken Reid proposed the above nominations, seconded by Mhairi Thurston. The office bearers were elected by acclaim.

## **+5. Blue Badge Consultation**

Dennis Robertson MSP outlined his Private Members Bill to strengthen Blue Badge enforcement powers and provide an appeals process where applications are refused on eligibility grounds. The aim is to ensure Blue Badges are used more appropriately and remove badges that are being misused. Copies of the proposal are available online or in alternative formats. The consultation opened in December and will close on 20 March.

The group was supportive of the proposals and there followed detailed discussion of the proposal. Clarification was sought around part journey's i.e. use of the badge when either picking up or collecting a disabled person. The question of education and awareness raising was also discussed as misuse of badges is not always malicious. It was noted that although an information leaflet is currently provided this is not available in alternative formats and is therefore not accessible. The instructions on the badge itself, although clearly worded, are in very small print which is again inaccessible.

A further issue was raised by Ken Reid about multiple applications for the Blue Badge, National Entitlement Card, Leisure Cards etc. The same evidence must be submitted to the same people for each card and there is the potential to simplify the process and reduce costs at the same time. It was noted that this could not be considered under the Blue Badge consultation. The Convenor noted that he is a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and that he would be happy to raise this matter in this forum.

### **Action**

- Convenor to raise issue of multiple applications at the Local Government and Regeneration Committee.

### **+6. Developments in Rehabilitation**

Alan Suttie gave a presentation outlining current developments and opportunities in rehabilitation. The sector faces a range of issues including a poor understanding of who and how services are delivered, early cuts to services, poor career structure, shortage of workers, lack of professional registration and new groups working in the sector. The Future of Rehabilitation Working Group was established to look at these issues and progress has been made in key areas as outlined below:

- What do blind and partially sighted people want: for the first time there is universal agreement on this question with the production of "Seeing It My Way" following extensive consultation.
- How can we deliver services: The working group has developed the UK Sight Loss Pathway which outlines a patient's journey. This is not a fixed model and allows for the differences across the countries.
- Who can deliver services: the core skills required by workers are being clarified for the first time. This was deliberated in Scotland by ScotsVIP and endorsed by SCOVl. The Rehab Network Forum has been established for

workers and is free to join. The Scottish Government has granted funding for a 1 year training pilot.

These developments present a unique opportunity to make a huge difference in the sector and four “asks” were made:

1. That “Seeing it My Way” is used as a basis for planning services
2. To ensure that service structures provide for effective delivery pathway
3. To support worker membership of the Rehab Workers Professional Network
4. To support an approach to SSCC for worker registration.

The Group supported these proposals and the importance of rehab work and it was also noted that this is also of great importance in relation to supporting children and young people and that there is a need for additional training for workers in this area. A range of action points were agreed as outlined below.

### **Actions**

- Secretary to write regarding this matter on behalf of the Group to the Cabinet Secretary for Health; COSLA; all Health Board Chief Executives; the Children’s Commissioner

### **+7. Access to AMD treatment**

John Legg reported the Government has set up working group to look at capacity and demand in relation to access to treatment to AMD, Glaucoma and Cataracts. The group includes representatives from health boards, Optometry Scotland, Eyecare Scotland and RNIB. A survey is underway and will be followed by site visits and a report is expected in September.

It was agreed it would be helpful if the report could be completed in time for the relevant civil servants to present at the meeting of Cross Party Group on 12 September, as delays in treatment have serious implications including people losing their sight unnecessarily across the whole of the country.

### **Action**

- Secretary to write to Cabinet Secretary and request that the report be presented to the meeting of the Cross Party Group on 12 September.

### **+8. Haggeye update**

Stephen Davidson reported that Haggeye held their first national meeting for 2013 and agreed their strategy for year. There are 6 events being planned for across Scotland focussing on the RNIB campaign, “Stop for Me; Speak to Me”

about accessible bus travel. A scoping exercise is also being undertaken about production of a Haggeye magazine and the group celebrated the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of “Facebook Friday”. There followed discussion around these various initiatives including the possible use of Twitter.

## **+9. AOCB**

9.1. Accessible Education: Dominic Everett gave a short update following a discussion at the September 2012 meeting on issues around accessible technology in schools. The VI Technology Group have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, local authorities and COSLA. Representatives have met with COSLA who were very supportive and a working group are currently developing an action plan and examples of good practice to present at a future meeting. There followed discussion around the potential to develop this area as part of the shared services debate which has been ongoing for the last several years and the importance of procurement. The Convenor noted that a new Procurement Bill will be coming to Government shortly and encouraged everyone to submit a response to the consultation. It was agreed it would be helpful for the Group to hear a presentation on the proposed Bill.

### **Action**

- Secretary to write to relevant Minister and request that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Cross Party Group.

## **+10. Date of next meeting**

- Thursday 23 May, 5-6pm in Committee Room 4. Followed by a reception in the Garden Lobby, Scottish Parliament
- Thursday 12 Sept, 1-2pm
- Thursday 5 Dec, 5-6pm followed by a reception

## **+11. Close**

The Chair thanked everybody for attending the meeting.