

# **Basingstoke Breast Cancer Self-help Group**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

Held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Chairman: Angela Bennett

Treasurer: Renee Smith

Newsletter: Liz Janes

Secretary: Heather Bounaouara

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### **Apologies**

Jane Aggrey, Maureen Brailey, Yvonne Houston, Kirsten Johnson, Anne Knight, Judy Carson, Eileen Gould and Sue Seymore.

### **Approval of last year's minutes**

Approval was given and the minutes were signed.

## **Angela's report**

Welcome everyone to the Basingstoke Breast Cancer Self-help Group Annual General Meeting.

This is a momentous year for the group as we celebrated our 20th Anniversary on 14th January. I never imagined when we held our first meeting here at the Ark in January 2003 that we would still be meeting as a group 20 years later. It is thanks to ladies like you and all the other ladies who have come to the group over the last 20 years that we are still in existence.

I am so pleased to welcome you all to this face-to-face meeting, our first in three years due to Covid. Although I am grateful we were able to hold our other AGM meetings via Zoom, for me, it's so nice we are able to meet face to face.

As many of you know, we are not a registered charity, but I feel it's very important we start each year with an AGM in order you all know where and how the public money donated to us is spent. This meeting also gives you the opportunity to ask any questions about the group finances and put forward suggestions regarding the running of the group. It also gives ladies the opportunity to put your names forward if you would like to join our committee.

### **Referrals**

I am very pleased to tell you that the number of referrals rose considerably from 13 the previous year to 22 last year. This is probably due to patients being seen face to face by nurses at the DTC, who are able to speak and suggest that newly-diagnosed ladies contact us.

The referral breakdown is as follows :

Nurses from the DTC.	10
Brochure.	2
Group members.	3
DTC support workers.	2
Friends.	1
Website.	4
Total.	<u>22</u>

You will see that I received four enquiries from our website; however, it's hard to know if these enquiries were genuine. I always answer any enquiries offering to have a telephone conversation by giving them my phone number; unfortunately only one person replied.

Although meeting restrictions had been lifted in time for us to hold a face-to-face AGM last year, some ladies were still reluctant to meet as a group due to Covid. It was therefore again held via Zoom.

### **Meetings/guest speakers**

As you know, we have a variety of guest speakers during the year, and I'm always happy to approach anyone you feel would be of interest to the group. We have two regular speakers each year: Mr Kevin Harris, consultant surgeon here at our hospital, in May; and the nurses from the DTC in October. We are incredibly fortunate that both Mr Harris and the nurses agree to come to the group after their working day is over, and I know this is very much appreciated by the ladies in the group.

Our first face-to-face meeting was on 15th February, which was really special as we could be all together again after such a long time. Our speaker was Gail Harbers, who is a specialist in managing and treating

lymphoedema. Gail's talk was most informative offering ladies helpful suggestions on how to manage their lymphoedema with a demonstration on manual massage etc. Gail also brought a selection of brochures, support sleeves, stocking etc. and was very happy to answer ladies' questions, which the ladies found most helpful.

Unfortunately, our speaker for March was unable to attend due to contracting Covid. This gave the ladies an opportunity to talk about future events for the group.

We do not have guest speakers every month and by popular demand the ladies requested a quiz as part of our April meeting. These are always very popular and thanks to Renee, the questions can be taxing sometimes.

In May, Mr Kevin Harris, consultant surgeon here at our hospital, was our guest speaker. Mr Harris's talk was most interesting, informing the ladies of the different types of breast cancer surgery being offered to newly-diagnosed ladies here at Basingstoke. He also spoke briefly about treatments such as radiotherapy, chemotherapy and medication. At the end of his talk, he very kindly answered numerous varied questions from the ladies.

Our June meeting was again a chance for the ladies to spend time together offering help and support to new members.

Our July meeting was rescheduled to August when Liz Janes, who is a member of the group, gave a very interesting talk on New Zealand (a request of one of the ladies due to visit the country early 2023). Liz has given talks to our and other groups before as she has travelled extensively. Along with her amusing commentary, photographs and slides, Liz also has the ability of making everything come to life. Her world-wide knowledge is especially useful to ladies should they be planning on going to a country and want first-hand useful information.

At the request of one of our ladies, Cllr Ken Rhatigan who is a long-standing member of the Basingstoke & Dean Borough Council, was our speaker in September. Cllr Rhatigan is the first member of our borough council to come to our group as a speaker. He was most interesting and informative speaking about plans for the town centre, housing both local and rural, which will have an impact on all residents of Basingstoke. At the end of his talk, he spent a considerable amount of time answering questions, which the ladies appreciated.

Our guests speakers at our October meeting were five nurses from the DTC unit here in Basingstoke. Each nurse gave a brief PowerPoint presentation of her role within the DTC unit, which was most interesting and very informative. They spoke about telling newly-diagnosed ladies about the group, giving them one of our brochures and date cards for information. At the end of the meeting, the nurses stayed and chatted to the ladies, happy to answer all their questions.

Our speaker in November was to have been Mrs Rosie Stanton, consultant surgeon here at our hospital. Unfortunately, Mrs Stanton was not able to attend; however, it is hoped she will be our speaker at our November meeting in 2023.

As always, our December meeting is the group's Christmas party, which is a lovely way to end the year and is enjoyed by everyone. Each lady brings plates of food and a secret Santa gift; the group provides the liquid refreshments. Last year, we had a raffle to raise funds for the group.

### **Donations made or received**

These are outlined in our Treasurer's report. Many thanks to everyone who has donated funds to the group, which are very much appreciated. I always send a card of thanks to anyone outside of the group who makes a donation.

### **Social and fundraising events**

These events stopped due to the pandemic; however, discussions are taking place to hold fundraising events later this year.

### **Special thanks**

As in previous AGM reports, I like to publicly thank two people who help me enormously with the smooth running of the group:

#### **1) Renee, Group Treasurer**

I have, in previous reports, outlined all the responsibilities Renee performs on behalf of the group. These include:-

- a) Looking after group finances - main and Cadbury accounts
- b) Producing a monthly spreadsheet
- c) Banking all cheques and cash donated to the group
- d) Writing cheques for payments incurred by the group

For me, knowing the group's finances are in safe and capable hands is very reassuring and this lets me concentrate on other aspects of the group. Thank you Renee for all your hard work, commitment and support you give me throughout the year. I really do appreciate it.

#### **2) Liz, Newsletter and IT Consultant**

Liz, last year, once again produced really interesting and informative newsletters, which keep all of us up to date with group activities and news. Liz first designed and created our newsletter some years ago, and it has been a real asset keeping ladies informed as to what is happening within the group. Liz sends these newsletters to ladies online; however, those who do not have access to a computer receive a copy I print and post to them. On a separate sheet, Liz attaches contact numbers of other organisations, such as Macmillan or Breast Cancer Care, etc.

Liz is also the group's IT Consultant, for which I will be forever grateful. The reassurance it gives me knowing that any problems I have with emails etc. can be sorted out by her. Thank you Liz for all your help, support and commitment you have given me throughout the year; I really do appreciate it.

### **Monthly coffee mornings**

Liz organises our Saturday morning coffee meeting, which take place on the last Saturday of each month at Gaberdines cafe at the top of town at 10.30am. All ladies are welcome; please contact Liz for more information.

### **Group website**

Paula updated our website and calendar earlier this year, adding a full list of dates for our 2023 meetings, plus news of forthcoming activities, events and speakers. She obtains all this information from our newsletter. Paula redesigned our website a few years ago, making it modern and relevant to people wanting to know more about the group. If you haven't looked at it for a while, I recommend you do so as I'm extremely proud of it. Our website is the group's "shop window", often leading newly-diagnosed ladies to make enquiries when they are feeling in need of support from others who have been through the same experience they are going through. Thank you Paula for all your help and suggestions keeping our website relevant and up to date, which is appreciated by myself and all the ladies in the group.

**Final words**

I would like to thank you all for your continued support in making this group so special. As I said at the beginning of this report I cannot believe we are still in existence 20 years after our first meeting here on 14th January 2003. A lot has happened in the intervening years - new friendships have been made, our individual journey of recovery from breast cancer has helped us, the support and encouragement we give each other and to new ladies who join our group. Not forgetting dear friends we have lost along the way. Thank you all for your continued support and I look forward to being all together supporting one another during 2023.