

Basingstoke Breast Cancer Self Help Group Annual General Meeting 11th January 2022

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

Unfortunately, we are once again holding our AGM via a Zoom meeting as a number of ladies in the group have expressed concern about meeting together. As we all know the number of people affected with Omicron nationally is very high, this includes our area here in Basingstoke.

I and other committee members felt it was the right decision to cancel this January face to face meeting and instead hold our AGM via Zoom. I apologise to those ladies who were looking forward to coming to the Ark this evening. Regarding our future group meetings, the committee will keep monitoring the situation and a decision will be made few days before each meeting and you will be told if it is to be held at the Ark or via Zoom. I know this is very unsatisfactory, but we need to look after each other.

As many of you know we are not a registered charity. I feel it is important we start each year with an Annual General Meeting in order for you all to know how the money donated to us is spent. This meeting also gives you the opportunity to ask questions and put any suggestions forward regarding the running of the group which are always welcome. It also gives you ladies the opportunity to put your names forward if you would like to come onto our committee.

REFERRALS:

The number of referrals not unsurprisingly has dropped from 17 the previous year to 13 last year. These exclude 3 enquiries made on our website, but I feel these enquiries were not genuine as when I replied I didn't hear from them again.

The breakdown is as follows:

DTC nurses including Tracy (support worker at the unit): 6

Friends of the group: 6

Leaflet: 1

Considering we were in the middle of a pandemic and people unable to meet I think we did well to receive as many referrals as we did. I am delighted nurses at the DTC still encourage newly diagnosed ladies to make contact with us if they feel it appropriate. It is encouraging to note ladies in the group referred

almost half the total number of referrals received throughout the year which is very encouraging and says a lot about you ladies and how you feel about the group and what support we can offer your friend. Thank you all.

Just to clarify my remarks about the three enquiries I received via our website not being genuine. From time to time, ladies have left their names along with a phone number or email address on the group's website contact us/get in touch page leaving a short message outlining their diagnosis or question. In all cases I always reply as soon as I see this see enquiries. Last year I received three such enquiries but after replying to each one I didn't hear from them again. I have an uneasy feeling they were not a genuine enquiry – maybe they were someone passing the time and perhaps not expecting to receive a reply.

Our last formal group meeting at the Ark was held in February 2020, which now seems such a long time ago. The Ark kindly gave us permission to hold two face-to-face meetings in October and November last year, which were a great success and both meetings were very well attended. It was so good to all get together again and I was delighted to see so many of our regular and new ladies join us.

Our last Annual General Meeting was held on 26th January 2021 which as I said was via Zoom due to the government-imposed restrictions. At this meeting it was suggested we invite guest speakers to our monthly zoom meetings to come and talk on various subjects and names were put forward as to speakers the ladies would like. These people were contacted and agreed to speak at our last year monthly zoom meeting and included:-

February: Sandra Lyford and nurses from the DTC were our guest speakers and told us about new medical treatments for breast cancer patients nationally plus what was happening here locally in Basingstoke. She introduced us to a new member of her team, Marian Parfitt who was the manager of The Haven in Titchfield prior to closing down due to lack of funding. Sandy and all the nurses were happy to answer ladies questions and agreed to follow up with phone calls where necessary. Although Sandy is retiring in April the team have agreed to be our guest speakers in October.

May: Our speaker was Sarah Reay who gave a very interesting talk on scar tissue massage treatment. Sarah told us what oils to use and gave useful tips on how to massage fresh and older scars which have occurred due to breast surgery. She also forwarded a diagram outlining massage techniques.

June: Sean Grey was our speaker specialising in emotional freedom technique (EFT) for short. EFT is used in many areas to ease stress by the use of tapping your fingers on certain areas of your body to release the stress. This can help in numerous ways, for example difficulty in sleeping, worrying about exams, problems with work or to help ease the stress after receiving and coping with a cancer diagnosis. Sean asked us all to participate in a number of exercises which many of us found very useful. He also downloaded a diagram of the “tapping” technique for everyone to use at home. I understand several ladies have used this and found it helpful.

July: Lavinia Winch was our guest speaker. Lavinia is an ambassador for YES a company specialising in intimate products. She gave the most interesting talk and gave advice on intimate subjects ladies have encountered as a result of their cancer treatment. The company Lavinia works for has produced products to help in all these areas, they can also be prescribed by your GP or bought over the counter. I understand some ladies have found these products most useful.

October: Liz was our speaker and gave a very interesting talk about her two-year round the world tour with husband Andy. Liz showed us a selection of wonderful photographs all of which come to life when accompanied by her funny and at times hair raising stories. For ladies who didn't join this Zoom meeting, Liz has agreed to be a speaker at our July later this year. I do urge as many ladies as possible to attend this meeting as it's a very enjoyable evening.

November. Our speaker was Denise Banks who spoke about mindfulness techniques and how they can help us in our everyday life. I know mindfulness is a subject many of you find interesting and Denise didn't disappoint us with her talk and presentation.

December: No guest speaker.

I know a lot of ladies are not keen to join Zoom meetings, however, these meetings did keep us in touch and gave us the opportunity to offer help, friendship, and support to one another at a difficult time. In the summer when restrictions permitted we met outside on a Saturday morning in the Memorial Park armed with chairs and flasks of coffee or soft drinks.

LOSS OF TWO FRIENDS. In April and May last year we unfortunately lost two of our dear friends, Sizie and Loucille. Renee and I represented the group by attending both ladies' funerals which was difficult due to the restrictions imposed at the time. We were most fortunate that both families asked for

donations to be made to the group and for the money to be donated to the Cadbury Fund which we have done. We took flowers from the group which were displayed along with those of family and friends.

DONATION RECEIVED. Renee will give you a breakdown of these from her report.

DONATIONS MADE. As in previous years we made two donations to St Michael's Hospice – one for the Sunflower Appeal in May and the other the Light up a Life appeal in December both in memory of friends we have lost. We donated £280 to each appeal, making it £560 in total for the year.

CADBURY FUND. The group continued supporting ladies by means of a £50 cheque should they be admitted to hospital and require surgery. This can go towards cost of travel, parking, toiletries or just out for a meal sometime when feeling better. This totalled £200 last year and we will continue to support ladies in this way for the foreseeable future.

NEWSLETTER

Throughout the year even though we were unable to meet, Liz has continued producing our excellent bi-monthly newsletter which I know is welcomed by all the ladies in the group. These have been most welcome especially at a time we were unable to meet – these newsletters were especially important as they kept us all informed as to what was happening within the group.

The format of each newsletter is very professional and easy to read. Liz always adds her own touch of humour along with lots of information about the group and forthcoming events. This helps to keep ladies up to date with what is happening in the group which is very useful for ladies who haven't attended recent meetings. I know Liz welcomes suggestions or topics you may have and she will always include these in her newsletter. Thank you Liz and look forward to reading your newsletter during 2022.

SOCIAL AND FUNDRAISING EVENTS

These have all stopped of course due to the pandemic, however, I would like to know what you feel like about starting to organise these again for later this year at our monthly meetings.

In December the group enjoyed a lovely Christmas dinner at the Ark. The room looked very festive and Christmassy, the food was delicious and the staff were very attentive. I did not receive one negative comment from any lady about the evening. It was just a lovely way for us to end the very difficult year

we had all experienced with 37 friends being all together under one roof. I wrote to Sandra Fell, chairman of the Ark to tell her how delighted we all we're and received a very nice letter back.

On 14th January the group will celebrate its 19th anniversary. When I started the group in 2003 I had no idea if we would still be in existence in one year let alone 19. This of course wouldn't have happened if it had it been for you ladies, like yourselves both past and present who have supported me and thereby the group for all these years.

Before I end my report I would like to publicly thank Renee our treasurer for all her hard work, also Liz and Lyn, (who is no longer treasurer) and Paula who looks after our website. All of you ladies for spreading the word and continuing support.

Renee our Treasurer. Listed below are some of the responsibilities Renee performs on behalf of the group whilst being our treasurer.

- 1) Looks after all the group's finances which included banking all cheques and cash on behalf of the group.
- 2). Produces and gives me a monthly printout with up to date information regarding both our current and Cadbury account
- 3) All group cheques are written and signed by Renee and countersigned by either myself or Liz.
- 4) Renee also produces and presents her Treasurer's report at our AGM which gives ladies the opportunity to ask questions regarding the group's finances.
- 5) A folder outlining all the group's finances is available to every lady to view at any time and is available at our meetings.

On behalf of all the ladies in the group, I would like publicly thank you for all your hard work in relation to looking after the group's finances. On a personal note I would like to say thank you for all your support and accompanying me to both Suzie and Loucille funerals which I really appreciated.

Liz: Newsletter and IT consultant

I would like to publicly thank Liz for writing and producing the group's bi-monthly newsletter which was our window on the group whilst we were unable to meet. Liz included information she received from organisations such

as Macmillan, Breast Cancer Care and others who were offering help and suggestions to groups like ourselves to help cope with the challenges of Covid and lockdown. Liz's newsletters are always very professional in layout and extremely informative and I know you ladies enjoy reading them.

I don't expect many of you know that our group has its very own IT consultant who is on hand at almost any time of the day and evenings to sort out technical problems people like myself create and unable to rectify. That lady is our very own Liz – the same lady who produces our newsletter and helps support Renee and I with the running of the group. Liz has on many occasions come to my rescue especially with hosting Zoom meetings plus forwarding my numerous emails to all you ladies who are on our mailing list. Thank you Liz for all your support I really do appreciate it.

GROUP WEBSITE

A number of years ago Paula offered to look after the group's website - an offer I was delighted to receive. She completely redesigned it, making it modern and up to date in appearance and content. Paula keeps it updated with new photographs, forthcoming events, minutes and has created a page for individuals to leave messages asking for information and advice to which I would reply. A recent addition is a page designed for people to make donations to the group.

Our website is our 'shop window' and advertises the group both locally and nationally. This has been especially important these past two years as it has been the only way of people have been able to view and find information out about the group.

I would publicly like to thank Paula for all her help in keeping our website up to date, fresh-looking and for making it a website all of us are very proud of. On behalf of all the ladies in the group – thank you .

Last but by no means least I want to thank all you ladies for your continued support throughout this past difficult year which has been a challenge for all of us. My best memory of 2021 was seeing 30 ladies all together at the Ark for our first face to face meeting in October. This showed me the friendships and support you have given one another during this most challenging of times born out of being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness is something that we can be truly proud of.

Next year will be the group's 20th year and it would be nice to mark this occasion in a special way. I look to you all to offer suggestions on how we can do this but whatever it is we will be celebrating it all together

End of report.