

THE FRIENDS OF COMBE DOWN SURGERY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday March 25 2025 at 6.15pm at Combe Down Surgery

1. Welcome. The Chairman, Debbie Williams welcomed the members present

2. Present: - Debbie Williams (Chair), Becky Wych, (Nursing Team), Janet Read (Secretary), John Weinle (Treasurer), James Davis (Vice Chair), Aditya Bhise, Ninette Flowerdew, Tony Price, Mary Read, Daphne Roethenbaugh, Philip Slater, (all committee)

Sue Crookes, David and Elsie Pyman, Sue West, Robin Phillips

Apologies for absence: Dr Sam Robinson, Linda Barrow, Paul and Margaret Maxwell Cook, Sue O'Donovan

3. The minutes of the A.G.M. held on Tuesday 26 March 2024 were approved

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

At the 2023 meeting a move to internet banking was discussed. This was achieved in 2024.

Ideas for celebrating 20 years of Friends of Combe Down will be discussed later. Two questions which remain as part of our ongoing strategy are: How can we reach out to younger/or additional members in the community and should we raise funds in other ways? This will be referred to in the Chairman 's report.

Chairman's Report

I have been chairman now since 2019, 6 years in post not bad for a temporary solution!! It made me think what changes have happened in the past 6 years? We were a committee of 13 in 2019 and although some personnel have changed thanks to 4 new members this year - Paul, Margaret, Linda and Adi - we are a committee of 13 again. At that time, we had 250 members to date we have 150 (100 less). This year we gained 6 new members 4 of whom are committee members, so despite our continual promotion it is a downward trend.

What we do know is that during this six-year period the patient numbers have increased by approximately 5000. In accordance with this increase the Friends have continued to provide medical equipment to keep the Surgery up to date and furnished 4 new clinical rooms to cope with this increase. The reason for my reflection was to consider if are we still useful as a committee? I think this shows we are. Do we have a large enough committee, fortunately I think we are now in a better position than we have been for a couple of years. Our success can be measured in 2 ways - financial which John will explain and social. In 2024 we had intended to host 4 fairs - spring, summer, autumn and winter. Unfortunately, the weather had other ideas and the 2024 winter fair was held in January 2025. The takings in the Autumn were almost 50 % down on the previous year but unfortunately the weather is always our biggest enemy. These events continue to bring joy to the local community. Last Saturday's fair brought in some new faces and some new helpers. Daphne is gradually enlisting all of her neighbours to help!! Thank you to Sue West and Sandra for their help and to Joy and Carol who regularly bake for the cake stall. Saturday's takings were £488 and 47 people attended. I think I speak for the committee when I say that these fairs are enjoyable, Saturday had a really lovely community feel about it which makes it worthwhile. I don't believe we have lost out since we reduced the number of coffee mornings. The summer fair is a particularly successful event raising on average £1000 each year. At this summer's fete we would like to celebrate 20 years of the committee.

Please let us know if you have any ideas how we might make it special.

Can I take this opportunity to thank you all as committee members for continuing to give me your support plus your time to attend meetings and events and donating prizes, gifts, cakes, plants etc. It wouldn't be a fair without Tony's rock cakes. A special thank you to Janet and John as secretary and treasurer. Thank you also to Dr Robinson and Dr Jenkins in particular from the Partners for their support and also the 2 Rosies and Mandy who have been stand out members from the surgery staff. As a committee it is important to have this relationship and support.

The surgery vehicle continues to be our main expense. Thank you to James and Tony for managing the drivers' rota and the minibus itself and to Robin who is a regular driver, also to Combe Down garage who maintain it which is a huge saving for us. James will update you further on this service but now I think it is

time for me to hand over to John who will explain our financial accounts for 2024, including our takings at fairs, our purchases and our new accounts with Metro Bank.

6. Statement of Accounts for year ending 31st December 2024

Treasurer, John Weinle presented his report.

In July we moved from HSBC and Virgin to Metro Bank. This allowed us to move to online banking and also to attract a reasonable rate of interest. We now have three accounts with Metro. A Community account which we use for day- to-day transactions. A Deposit account which pays a small amount of interest and a Fixed Term Account which pays significant interest in which we have invested £40000 for a year.

This year we have bought equipment for the surgery to the value of £7203. This includes 3 three trollies, 2 examination couches, 3 ophthalmoscopes a digital flat scale and some specialist chairs.

The money from last year's events is down because the Christmas Fayre had to be postponed to January due to to adverse weather conditions. These takings will show in next year's accounts

Gift aid does not show as HMRC were slow to make payment and had to be chased.

Our funds were boosted by a generous bequest of £12000. This means there is a net surplus for the year of £7333.19

7. Minibus report

James Davis, lead driver for the minibus, gave the following report

The driving team has remained consistent over the last year with Robin, Tony, myself as main drivers. Also John Peat and occasionally Brian Martin helping out when one of us is away. We remain very flexible to patient needs. Driving during afternoon hours and on Fridays if requested by the reception team.

Tony retires after many years of driving service and looking after the vehicle at the end of July. A huge loss both in terms of the way he looks after the patients on a Tuesday to the branch and Thursday to here. But also liaising with the garage to keep the vehicle on the road, paying attention to it off the road, and keeping it topped up with fuel. A new recruit Geoff, can step into Tony's Thursday driving shoes, but in general those shoes will be very, very difficult to fill.

I have to say that the last 6 months for the vehicle have been disappointing. Disappointing in terms of numbers, not of course for the service we provide or how grateful the patients are each time we take them to the surgery and bring them home again.

Despite recognition by all for the need to sell and promote the service, since the beginning of the year we have been averaging between 3 and 4 patients a week. I've been looking back over the last couple of years. In 2022 we were averaging 8 per week, 2023 a similar number, and in the early part of last year 7. We dropped off in the latter months of last year.

Unfortunately, our present numbers suggests that the running of the minibus is no longer sustainable. Looking at John's accounts we can see that the minibus is running at a loss. I think I'm right in saying however, that when the service started in 2005 it was not established to turn a large profit, but to be of benefit across the community and for the surgery.

With the numbers we are currently running our benefit is reducing exponentially.

We now have to ask is the service becoming redundant?

As we know there are other ways and means patients can find transport to and from the surgery. Bath Community Transport for example. I have no data to say how many patients use alternative means to get here rather than using the surgery transport. I am unsure why the situation is as it is.

So, to the future. I recommend that we insure the vehicle once again from the beginning of May. We then look to the ensuing 3 months. If the numbers remain as they are, we make the difficult decision to stop the service - with much regret- and much regret from the fewer number of patients we are now taking

Post report discussion.

There was a feeling the minibus was still not being sufficiently promoted. And disappointment that it was not being sufficiently used. While some thought the minibus should be retained despite low usage, others made the point that money could be better spent to support a much wider spread of patients if used elsewhere. The age of the vehicle could only mean rising costs.

Becky said discontinuing the minibus would be a loss to the surgery and said they should think again about how they promoted the service. It did not just need to be for the elderly and infirm but for eg young mothers too.

It was pointed out that people's expectations and needs have changed so the requirement for the vehicle is not as it was in the past. With our smaller operation it is not possible for drivers to be as flexible as the alternative services that now exist and we are limited to only taking patients to and from the surgery.

It was agreed that we should follow James' suggestion and trial the situation for a further three months. If there is no improvement the committee would take any necessary decisions.

8. Re-appointment of Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary and appointment of Vice Chair

All three serving officers were elected unanimously. James Davis was elected as Vice Chair

9. Surgery Update

Becky reported that patient numbers are nearing c14,000 and rising. This is a sign of the good reputation of the surgery as the increase is made up of both new patients and patients moving from other surgeries. An end of year review by NHS Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) had shown the surgery is meeting targets. It is able to be more efficient by using its mix of skills between doctors, nurses and other health professionals well, with nurses taking on more roles than in other practices. The surgery really appreciates the help provided by the Friends. For instance, a new FeNO machine purchased by the Friends was already helping in the diagnosis of asthma and a huge benefit to children and adults.

One new doctor has been appointed and the surgery is going to use a further locum doctor whilst it works out what is needed. The Covid Spring vaccine programme is underway and the RSV vaccine is also being offered. Staff were being trained to respond to any emergency scenario that might occur in the surgery. Government funding remains tight but hopefully new contracts will improve this

10. Any Other Business

Debbie thanked Tony for his years of service with the minibus.

She invited ideas for the Friends to celebrate their twentieth anniversary.

The committee was thanked from the floor for all they do and there was a round of applause.

The meeting closed at 19.25