

HALSTEAD HOSPITAL LEAGUE OF FRIENDS CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023

This is Halstead Hospital League of Friends 55th AGM and I would like to start by thanking the officers, committee, members and volunteers for their longstanding support and commitment to the future of Halstead Hospital and the local medical services. I would particularly like to thank our Vice Chairman, Jackie Pell, for her unwavering support.

Although the threat of Covid still lingers we have managed to return to bimonthly face to face meetings.

This last year has been a worry and a struggle particularly concerning the ward block which remained closed until last December. We have continued to battle to get the ward block reopened. Our local MP, James Cleverly, has been a great support and has helped us with our campaign. He kindly accepted an invitation to walk round the empty ward and I will never forget his incredulity that such an excellent facility had been forsaken.

We received little feedback from PROVIDE who extended their 'Virtual Ward in the Community' and all did not look promising.

The Facebook page we opened last year has been a success and an excellent communication media with the local community and now has over 500 members who have given us their full support. Thanks to Bridget Couch for keeping it up to date.

The League of Friends has also had great support from the Halstead Town Council and thanks in particular to Mick Radley and Dave Gronland.

The turning point in our campaign came at the end of last year when pressures on District General Hospital's (DGHs) became intolerable and central funding was found to reopen Halstead Hospital ward block on a three month trial from early December 2022 until March 2023. An excellent Ward Manager, Mel Evans, was appointed and with adequate numbers of nursing staff, physiotherapists and occupational therapist the ward has proved a resounding success with an average patient turnover of 11 days. Patients and relatives have been very happy with their hospital experience and feedback has been very positive. James Cleverley revisited on March 4th and was most impressed. The League of Friends was able to reinstate our Christmas visit and presents on the ward on Christmas Day and we held a staff buffet in January to thank them for all their hard work.

It has been agreed that the ward block will remain open for another year while its future role is being reviewed alongside St Peter's Hospital in Maldon and Brentwood Community Hospital by Mid and South Essex Alliance Integrated Care System(ICS). At this point I would like to thank Dan Doherty, a Director of the ICS, who has given up his time to support us and keep us updated on the current situation in the NHS. He has had feedback that the ward is being well used, has a good turnover of patients and has eased the pressures on acute DGHs. We now feel much more optimistic about the future but realistic that the future of the ward block remains in the balance.

Further good news this year is the announcement that Elizabeth Courtauld Surgery have been given permission to open a branch surgery in the old X ray block of Halstead Hospital. We look forward to working with them and supporting them in this new venture.

The League has remained active in improving the facilities at the hospital. We have funded air conditioning units in the Rehabilitation Centre consulting rooms and in reception which will make life much more tolerable. We continue to liaise closely with the ward and I would like to thank Bridget Couch who is our day to day communication route with the Ward Manager and staff.

We continue to receive legacies and monies and I would like to thank all those that leave donations to the League of Friends. We are most grateful and always ensure these are wisely used.

I would like to thank Steve Barber who voluntarily monitors our two defibrillators in the town. This life saving equipment needs regular review and maintenance and we have been very lucky to have Steve keep a check on it.

Thank you to our treasurer Andy Green for monitoring our finances and being always available for advice and guidance on monetary matters.

Thank you to James Waters for looking after our website.

I would particularly like to thank Eileen Self, our secretary, for all hard work carrying out the minutes, supporting the Chairman and keeping us on the straight and narrow. Thank you !

In conclusion I feel more optimistic for the future of Halstead Hospital but realistic that there is still a way to go. We remain at the mercy of those who run the system with limited resources.

We will continue to champion best clinical practice and fight hard against reduced services for the people of Halstead.

Thank you for your support

Alan Symington.