

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021

This is our 53rd AGM and I would like to begin my report by thanking the officers, committee, members and volunteers for their longstanding commitment to the future of Halstead Hospital and local medical services.

The last eighteen months have been unprecedented. We have been, and remain, in the midst of a Covid 19 pandemic which has been frightening, worrying and challenging to us all. We have had several 'lockdowns' when all our lives have been put on hold and we have tragically lost relatives and friends from this devastating disease. Hopefully now with the introduction and successful administration of Covid vaccines we are beginning to emerge from the darkness and sadness and can begin to think about restarting our lives - although clearly nothing will ever be the same again and vigilance will be necessary for the foreseeable future.

Sadly, during this pandemic we have lost Barbara Bragg and Gerry Cook, two longstanding members of our committee who had given a considerable amount of their time and support to the League of Friends and who are missed by us all.

During these challenging times changes have occurred to Halstead Hospital and particularly to the ward block. The ward block is at present closed and has been since Christmas 2020 when all the staff were transferred to Braintree Community Hospital.

Most recently a six month trial of a 'virtual ward' in the community has been started which will end in November 2021. All staff have either been redeployed into the trial or have left the NHS.

The fabric of the ward block building has been a concern particularly with regards to lack of heating and running water over last winter and spring. Externally, the ward block has become increasingly rundown. The Rehabilitation unit and the 'old' Hospital block have remained open albeit with strict Covid restrictions.

I would like to thank Mid Essex CCG who have kept in contact with us and we have had several meetings to discuss our concerns and their future plans for the hospital. I have kept the committee up to date with these meetings through regular newsletters. The future remains unclear for the ward block but it is hoped that it will reopen at some point after November 2021.

With new regulations for Covid the ward block will need updating in order to comply. What the future role of the ward block will be is, at present, uncertain .

I would like to thank NHS Properties and in particular Mark Owen, the Facilities Service Manager for his support and help obtaining quotes and overseeing the works paid for by the League of Friends of Halstead Hospital. Since our last AGM we have paid for the installation of a new kitchen with air conditioning, a new walk-in shower room, and a new patio and awning. These have considerably enhanced the hospital facilities. Further requests from NHS Properties have been put 'on hold' until the future of the ward block particularly is decided.

I would like to thank Bridget Couch and Jo Colyer (who has recently retired as PROVIDE manager for the hospital). They have been our route of communication with PROVIDE and the ward staff during these challenging times. This has enabled us to purchase numerous appropriate items of equipment which have benefited the care of the patients.

The quiet memorial garden we have established has been a source of solace and I have received a lot of positive feedback.

The League of Friends has funded another defibrillator situated at the Queen's Hall and I would like to thank Steve Barber who monitors both defibrillators. We have also made a donation to Halstead Day Centre which has helped them struggle on through the difficult times of lockdown.

We have continued to receive legacies, money in memoriam and small donations though clearly have not been able to hold any fund raising events. Financially we are in good health. Thank you to all .

I would also like to thank James Waters for maintaining our website and hopefully we will be able to raise our profile when the pandemic allows. I would like to thank my vice chairman for her support and wise words during the difficult times when we could not meet regularly as a committee. I would particularly like to thank our secretary, Eileen Self, who has been a pillar of support answering all my questions, pointing out diplomatically the errors of my ways and sending out all the newsletter to the members during shutdown.

In conclusion, these unprecedented times have been uncertain and troubling for us all and have been especially difficult for the Halstead Hospital ward block. We, as a committee, will continue to work hard to lobby the NHS services to achieve a stable future and best practice for both the hospital ward block, the Rehabilitation centre and the Out Patient services.

Thank You