

READING PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held online via Zoom on Friday 5th March 2021 at 18:30.

Present: 39 RPCSG members
6 guests from other support groups.

Chairman Chris Addison introduced the meeting and welcomed all members and guests to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence.

One apology for absence had been received.

2. Approval of the Minutes of AGM of 6th March 2020

Members had been notified of the minutes before the meeting. No issues were raised and so the minutes were deemed to be approved.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes / Action Points.

No actions had been placed at the meeting of 6th March 2020 and there were no 'Matters Arising'.

4. Approval of the Minutes of EGM 5th February 2021.

The minutes had been sent to all members by email before the meeting. No issues were raised and so the minutes were deemed to be approved.

5. Treasurer's Report.

Treasurer Roger Bennett had provided the audited 2020 financial accounts that had been sent by email to all members before the AGM along with some explanatory notes. No queries were raised and hence the accounts were unanimously approved.

Roger was thanked for his work in preparing the accounts.

6. Chairman's Report.

The report by Chairman Chris Addison had previously been delivered by email to all members. There was a typing error in the first line of the paragraph concerning Pharos that has been corrected in the Chairman's Report as follows:

READING PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FRIDAY 5th March 2021 via Zoom at 6:30 pm

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

"I would like to give you a summary of our activities and achievements over the last 12 months since the AGM in March 2020. We managed to hold our March AGM in March 2020 and have a walk later in March, then the first lockdown happened. We had to cancel our April group meeting and subsequent ones and two planned awareness events, and to consider our walks and coffee mornings in the light of frequently changing isolation rules.

GROUP MEETINGS

We did not want to see the group's activities come to a total stop so we made efforts to keep our activities going. We discovered Zoom and all of our monthly group meetings from May 2020 and on were held online. This is not an ideal solution but it enabled us to keep contact with the members. There were other benefits in moving to Zoom, in that we invited several other prostate support groups to join our group meetings, and likewise they invited us to theirs.

The attendances at group meetings have suffered from the pandemic. Before the pandemic in the year to February 2020 there was on average 58 RPCSG members attending our group meetings, that fell in the year to February 2021 to 45. This is a fairly good record as we expected a much bigger reduction in numbers and we believe that without the use of Zoom we would have had no group meetings at all and a big risk of losing members.

MEETINGS HELD

Our group meetings in the year to March 2021 included two Question and Answer sessions at which Beverley Skelton answered a variety of questions. These Q&A sessions are very popular and are tremendous opportunities to ask questions that would otherwise need a consultant visit, and we are very grateful to Beverley and also Tessa Martin for their excellent responses at these events.

Other topics covered by 8 speakers at our group meetings were: New Surgical Techniques; Physiotherapy; Talking Therapies; Erectile Dysfunction; Scanning Systems; Brachytherapy; and Immunotherapy. In addition, Andrew Gabriel gave one of his superb talks on Hormone Therapy.

PHAROS

The newsletter of March 2020 achieved its memorable 100th edition, quite an achievement over the 14 years that the group has been in existence. It has been produced regularly in spite of the coronavirus problems. It was vital both to maintain contact with our members and to keep us informed of those activities that we were able to continue in spite of the pandemic. Thanks go to the editor Steve Parkinson.

AWARENESS

One of our main objectives has been to spread information and awareness of prostate cancer to members of the public, in the expectation that this would lead to earlier diagnoses and hence better outcomes. One of our ways of achieving this was

by way of information stands in public areas and we had two events planned for 2020, one in Reading Broad Street Mall and another in Broad Street itself. Both of these had to be cancelled.

Doubtless some people have been deterred from visiting their GPs during the virus restrictions, on account of social distancing and the complications of arranging GP visits. This has been reflected in a big reduction in the number of men joining our group.

In the year to March 2019, we had 26 new members.

In the year to March 2020, we had 29 new members.

In the year to end of February 2021, we had 7 new members.

This is indeed a cause of great concern as we suspect that fewer men are being referred for investigation and that this could lead to increases in the late diagnosis of prostate cancer.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

WALKS

The group walks continued to be popular throughout the last year with up to 13 people joining in. We were able to hold six walks during the year whilst observing social distancing, until the Tier 4 and lockdown restrictions meant that for now we can no longer meet together for walks.

They were most enjoyable walks and the starting points for these were Aston, the Waterside Centre, Ramsbury, Pangbourne and Aldermaston.

Many thanks to Richard Brown for organising the walks.

COFFEE MORNINGS

Richard Brown and Andrew Gabriel between them had a new idea of coffee mornings at which members could turn up to these social occasions and chat among themselves. At this time last year, the first one had been held at The Mill at Sonning and was very popular.

In March 2020 the lockdown arrived and upset our arrangements - it was then a case of holding coffee meetings whilst conforming to frequently changing restrictions.

However, in spite of having to cancel 3 coffee mornings, we managed to hold 7 coffee mornings at The Flower Pot in Aston (near Henley), and 2 by Zoom. When the lockdown restrictions were imposed, we cancelled future coffee meetings and we look forward to resuming these sessions as soon as we are able.

Many thanks to Richard and Andrew for managing these coffee events through difficult times.

OTHER GROUPS

Some of our committee members have attended meetings with organisations such as PCUK, Tackle, Thames Valley Cancer Alliance (TVCA) and Sue Ryder/Duchess of Kent.

BRACHYTHERAPY SUPPORT GROUP

Our committee member Andrew Gabriel became aware of a support group in the USA dedicated to brachytherapy patients. This group supported both men considering brachytherapy as a primary treatment and also those who had undergone the treatment. Andrew recognised the need for such a group in the UK especially as we have noticed that brachytherapy has been increasing in popularity as a choice of primary treatment. Andrew liaised with PCUK and he established a UK based brachytherapy support group in the very short time of a few weeks. His first meeting by Zoom was very well attended by about 30 people and this is a very good indicator that there is a great need for such a group. Our congratulations go to Andrew for this amazing achievement.

ACTIVE SURVEILLANCE SUPPORT GROUP

Andrew became aware of a support group specifically for men undergoing active surveillance and information on this group was included in the January 2021 newsletter. Membership of this group will help men to better understand this treatment.

COMMITTEE

I am grateful to the other 11 members of the RPCSG committee, who have tirelessly met regularly to ensure the smooth and continued running of the group.

Particular thanks to Beverley who did the organising of guest speakers, as she has been doing tirelessly since the establishment of the group in 2007.

I would like to mention that the committee always welcomes new members to the committee. New members can bring with them their own experiences and possibly new ideas so if anyone is interested in joining the committee you will be most welcome to one of our regular committee meetings, under no obligation. We currently meet once per month and before the pandemic happened we had face-to-face group meetings, but now we hold them by Zoom and very much look forward to resuming meetings in person. If you are interested please see in our web site for contact information or enquire of any of the committee members.

Committee Members

Two committee members will leave the committee, these are Graham Cook and Roger Bennett.

Graham has served many years on the committee in which time he has variously held the posts of Treasurer, Social Secretary and Chairman.

Roger has been a member since the founding of the group in 2007 and has at various times been Secretary and Treasurer (twice).

I extend sincere gratitude to them both. "

Chris Addison
RPCSG Chairman
21/02/2021

Chris thanked all of the committee members for their efforts over the past year.

Chris mentioned that there are now two vacancies on the committee so if anyone is interested in joining the committee you will be most welcome, please contact a committee member. Committee meetings are currently held by Zoom but when possible will revert to monthly meetings in person.

7. Election of Committee Members.

Four members stood for election to the committee. Member Steve Smyth stood for full committee membership having been co-opted during the past year. Members Steve Allen, Richard Joyes and Richard Brown stood for serving for the optional fourth year of service as provided for by the Constitution. All four were unanimously elected. Richard Joyes has kindly offered to take the role of Treasurer for which he was thanked.

8. Any Other Business.

There was no further AGM related business.

In a general discussion some comments were made:

- The RBH has seen a reduction of about 37% in the number of prostate cancer referrals. This is a great concern as it means that a large number of prostate cancer cases are likely to have missed being diagnosed.
- The RPCSG leaflet is still being given to newly diagnosed men.
- The RPCSG has a Facebook page that is not public although the existence of it is publicised. It was suggested that some men may want to make initial contact with the group by virtual means.

9. Date of next AGM.

The proposed date of the next AGM is the 4th March 2022.

The Chairman closed the Annual General Meeting at 6:44 p.m.