

Chair's Report 2017

Those who managed to attend the AGM last year will recall, that the floods prevented our speaker and some of our members from attending, so I am pleased to welcome you all this evening and our speaker, Jane Randall-Smith from Healthwatch.

I should like to start by thanking the committee and all the volunteers who have worked for the Friends during the last year. We are missing Cheryl Smith, our secretary for the last two years, and we hope she and her family enjoy their new home in Devon.

Volunteers have continued to provide recall, shopping and library services in the home and hospital and to run a successful weekly knitting group with some of their garments in a window display during the Arts Festival. The items go to various charities which include :hats and scarves for Christmas shoe boxes, small hats for the Innocent Smoothie Age UK project and children's jumpers for Malawi. Thanks to all who support the coffee mornings to pay for shipment of the garments to Malawi. Double knitting wool is always required if you have any to spare. Volunteers were pleased to be invited to join patients and friends in the hospital at Christmas for a buffet lunch in appreciation of their work throughout the year.

Apart from contributions for Christmas gifts and entertainment, funding this year has been mainly in the community. We offered financial support to the launch of Accessible Screening at SpArC. The performance starts at 1.30 pm., cabaret seating is arranged for easier access and low level lighting is on throughout the film. Tickets are £3 and everyone is welcome. Carers go free with a paying entrant.

We are keen to see health services provided in the local community and hope to see an increase in outpatient services in the Community Hospital. We have assisted the audiology clinic in acquiring chairs designed specifically for clinician and patient.

We are all being encouraged to do more walking. Parish Paths Partnership works with volunteers to maintain public rights of way and is keen to encourage full use of local footpaths. Stiles are prohibitive to some walkers so we have recently agreed to buy two gates to replace stiles on local footpaths. Shropshire Outdoor Partnership will provide the gates and equipment and local volunteers in the Parish Paths Partnership will fit the gates.

Coverage Care held a very successful Garden Fete in August. Friends

organised cake and plant stalls and I would like to thank all of the supporters who contributed to our stalls, the proceeds of which went to the Comforts Fund for service users in the Home.

St John the Baptist Church invited community groups to take part in the Flower Festival in June this year and our thanks go to Sandra Bradbury who readily volunteered to represent the Friends with a very attractive arrangement.

Our community offers a wide range of activities in which people can get involved and meet others and avoid social isolation. Friends have recently drawn up a list to raise awareness of what is available under group headings such as Arts and Crafts, National Organisations, Opportunities for Volunteering. The list is on the website of Friends of Stonehouse and a copy is available in the Bishop's Castle library.

The committee invited Val Brown from the Alzheimer's Society to help us understand more about dementia and how we might become more dementia friendly as individuals and as a community.

Some of us went to the meeting of the Shropshire Leagues of Friends at Ludlow Hospital where speakers were Dr Simon Freeman, Accountable Officer of the Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Dr Julian Povey, Chair of the Shropshire CCG. They addressed the need to improve efficiency and deal with the overspend in the county. Areas under consideration were: reducing community beds and introducing new services such as rehab. at home or in residential or nursing homes.; looking at alternatives to some orthopaedic surgery where there was thought to be over-intervention.; reducing the number of over-the-counter medicines given on prescription.

We are all aware that the hospital is currently closed for essential repair work. During the closure most of the hospital staff are engaged in a pilot project with the GPs which is aimed, where appropriate, at treating patients at home rather than in hospital. With the result that admissions to RSH or Princess Royal Hospital are being reduced. Where patients are discharged from the acute hospital, the medical team is able to assist with recovery and rehabilitation at home. All patients deemed to require hospital care continue to be admitted to the acute and community hospitals.

We anticipate there will eventually be changes in medical care but look towards the development of services in our Community Hospital. Repair work

to flooring, boiler and filtration unit is due to be completed for the beginning of November when preparations can begin for the readmission of patients.

Finally, Friends are always ready to consider assisting with any project which is beneficial to elderly and vulnerable people in the community. If you are aware of any project that could benefit from the support of friends then please ask for an application for funding and your request will be considered by the trustees.

We are keen to welcome new Trustees and hope that names will be put forward when we come to electing the committee. We usually meet six times a year, an evening meeting in Coverage Care Day room.

Thank you for attending this evening and for your continued support.

Pat Morrison October 2017