

**NOVUM HEALTH PARTNERSHIP  
PATIENTS' GROUP**

**Annual General Meeting: 25 January 2023  
Baring Road Medical Centre 6.00 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

Present: Robert Thompson (RT, secretary), Chris Blake (CB), David Williams, Janet Thompson, Paul Howell, Jeanne Mynett (JM), Suzy Wilkinson (SW) and Dr Alberto Febles. Apologies had been received from Anthony Atherton, Vincent Yip and Patrick Connolly

1. RT welcomed those attending and passed on apologies received.
2. By general consent, SW was appointed chair for items 1–7 of the agenda.
3. The minutes of the 2022 AGM were accepted as an accurate record.
4. Matters arising not covered later in the agenda:
  - i. There was some discussion of the propriety of holding meetings online (such as the 2022 AGM), when a number of members and potential members would be unable to take part in them. It was accepted that the group had not chosen to hold meetings online; at the time, they were the only kind of meeting that was possible.
  - ii. Some members felt arrangements for future meetings were made unilaterally, without consultation. It was pointed out that dates for meetings must be arranged well in advance: they had been the subject of discussion at successive meetings and were included in the minutes.
  - iii. Members who do not use the internet have missed a number of communications, including minutes, which should have been sent through the practice. Offers by RT to send them directly were declined.

**Action point (practice): please can the practice be rigorous in ensuring that all PG documents are sent to members we know do not use the internet. RT will confirm who these are if necessary.**

5. Chair's Report:

Bob Blunden's report for 2022 was accepted with thanks. The group wishes to record its appreciation of Bob's many years of service to the group as Chair and in other capacities, and for his stepping in as interim Chair for much of 2022. Thanks are also extended to Pat Blunden as a committed and active member of the group since its foundation and for her time as secretary.

## 6. Terms of Reference

The new Terms of Reference document for the joint group was formally accepted.

The group agreed that the laudable aspirations of this ToR document (like those of the previous one) need to be put into practice. Practical suggestions included enhanced advertisement of the group through the practice, including more prominent information on the website. The practice will be asked if it can promote the Patients' Group more strongly, especially at Rushey Green; Marsia Stewart, as Practice Manager, will be invited to our next meeting, though it is recognised that the meeting is outside her working hours.

The alternation of meetings between the two sites was broadly welcomed. Dr Febles confirmed that parking is available at Rushey Green; SW's proposal that Baring Road members needing to travel by car should arrange to share was accepted.

CB pointed out that the ToR document does not specify a quorum. It was agreed that it would be desirable to fix a quorum, but this does not need to be in the ToR document and could be changed in the light of circumstances. SW's suggestion of a quorum of five was accepted.

**Action point (all): for the time being, the quorum for full PG meetings is five.**

## 7. Election of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and other committee members for 2023:

### *Chair*

Members who might have considered the role have plans or commitments which make it impossible for them to attend every meeting. It was agreed that the 'rolling chair' arrangement used through some of 2022 had worked well, and could perhaps be continued with some refinements, such as appointing a chair for each meeting at the meeting before. SW agreed to chair the meeting on 6 March, which will be the first at Rushey Green.

### *Secretary*

RT agreed to continue in this role.

### *Vice-Chair*

The 'rolling chair' arrangement effectively makes this post redundant.

### *Other committee members:*

It was agreed that the committee would be formed from the secretary, those who were prepared to act as 'rolling chairs', and a representative of Rushey Green. JM will undertake the Rushey Green role.

## 8. AoB

It became clear that most issues members wished to raise were included in the Practice Report, which was therefore considered at this point.

JM expanded upon the Practice Report comments about the apparent fault in the telephone system, which means that the 0207 Rushey Green number is not recognised. Contrary to the statement in the report that the telephone service provider Exponential could not find a fault in their system, JM had been told they might have identified a potential problem after all. While she commended the efforts made by Seyhan and other Novum staff to find an explanation and solution, JM was critical of the practice for not being more open about this communication problem; it had also affected the independent pharmacy on the Rushey Green site, which had subsequently changed its number. Most patients had indeed received information about alternative ways of contacting the practice, but without any suggestion that there is a known issue with the Rushey Green number.

Dr Febles said that the practice's contract with Exponential would not be renewed. He felt, however, that complaints about Rushey Green were unjustified; staff were working very hard to solve problems, and some solutions, such as changing the telephone service provider, cannot be implemented at once. Lack of progress does not necessarily imply lack of effort. There are also conflicting priorities: while the practice receives many requests to provide information in waiting rooms, it receives others to reduce the number of notices there, and has to decide which are the most important.

Dr Febles then went through the remaining action points in the Practice Report. All had been dealt with apart from the video about using apps and websites, which is to be followed up.

Members were appreciative of the 'option' system now provided in the response to telephone calls; however, JM suggested that the message might include a reminder that appointments are released at 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. The poster about the complaints procedure will be on the agenda at the next PG meeting.

**Action points (practice): please can the practice prioritise the video about online access and include information about appointment release times in recorded telephone messages.**

**Action point (PG): please can members give some thought to the draft poster (circulated online) before the next meeting.**

On behalf of the group, SW thanked Dr Febles for his attendance and contribution. The meeting was declared closed at 7.05 p.m.

Next meeting: Monday 6 March, 6.00 p.m., at Rushey Green