

Axminster Hospital League of Friends

Minutes of the Annual Open Meeting

held on

Tuesday 19th May 2026, 6.30 pm in Axminster Heritage Centre

Opening remarks from the Chair	Steve Holt welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. Steve Holt welcomed the guest speakers Rebecca Armitage, Lisa Jones and Meg Clark,
Apologies Received	Jill Farrow, Mary Darlow, Petronella Byrde, Gillie George, Janet Prior, Joy Skarrat, Karen Churchill, Jeanette Ward, Rita Holt
Guest Speaker	<p>RA explained the there is a small but dedicated team in the Ophthalmology department at Axminster Hospital.</p> <p>22/23 they saw 2376 patients 23/24 they saw 2353 patients 24/25 they saw 3824 patients</p> <p>In the current year (2025/26) there have been approx 270 operating lists to date and they will carry out approximately 2500 surgeries a year. They perform cataract surgery using a technique called phacoemulsification and oculoplastic surgeries such as Entropion/Ectropion repair, Blepharoplasty, Ptosis, Electrolysis for Trichiasis, Excision/Biopsy of lesions from the eyelid or conjunctiva. Training and development of staff means there is capacity for minor oculoplastic operations to be conducted in the treatment room. A business case for a YAG laser is being proposed. This laser treats posterior capsular opacification, a common complication after cataract surgery where the lens capsule becomes cloudy, often called a secondary cataract.</p>
Questions from the Floor	<p>A question was asked regarding the funding of operations for people outside of area. Rebecca confirmed this happened a lot as we are located close to the border of Dorset and Somerset and Axminster Hospital also has a relatively short waiting list. She confirmed that funding is claimed back form the patients' ICB.</p> <p>A question was asked regarding eye related emergencies. Axminster Hospital is not able to deal with eye emergencies. Advice was given to visit your Optician, GP, the Emergency Department, or Minor Injuries Unit. Or ring NHS 111. They can refer to Emergency Eye Services at Exeter. This is not a walk-in service.</p>
Reports Chair – Steve Holt	<p>SH thanked Rebecca, Meg and Lisa for coming and enlightening us on the work of the Ophthalmology department at Axminster Hospital. The League is thrilled that the department has gone from strength to strength at Axminster Hospital.</p> <p>Currently the League is focusing on the drive for Hospice at Home, but we continue to support the hospital.</p>

	<p>SH announced that the League of Friends will be launching the Hospice at Home service, on June 4th in the Guildhall. He thanked the Community nursing team, the senior management at the Trust and the Trustees who have supported our manager in driving our fundraising to ensure there are sufficient funds to start this service. However, the service will only continue with donations and legacies from our supporter</p> <p>SH thanked our members and supporters.</p> <p>The Trustees of the League have been stalwarts in helping us remain as a leading charity in Axminster. There are up to 14 trustees on the committee and with some recently stepping down, there are vacancies if anyone would like to join in our drives to support the health and wellbeing of its residents.</p> <p>SH thanked everyone for coming.</p>
<p>Treasurer- Christine Cawley</p>	<p>Income</p> <p>The Treasurer reported that the League of Friends have had a steady income from our members and by various donations throughout the 2025 financial year. Our own fundraising efforts have given us an income of £5140 during 2025 compared with £2184 in 2024. Also during the 2025 financial year we have received donations from external fund raising.</p> <p>Following applications for funding we have made grants to purchase the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual subscription to Daily Sparkle for Axe Valley Dementia Team • Posi Perle assessment kit for Occupational Therapy • Suction Machine for Community Nurses. <p>So far this year (2026) we have received donations totalling £2103. League of Friends events have raised £780.</p> <p>The 100 club has 39 members and made a profit of £39.</p> <p>In May 2025 we opened a savings account with interest added annually on the anniversary of opening the account, so later this month we will be credited with the first amount of interest. The current account bank balance is £327612.74. And the balance of the savings account is £200,000.00</p>
<p>Manager - Helen Arnold</p>	<p>The Manager reported that Axminster Hospital League of Friends is administered by a trustees Committee. There are currently 12 Trustees- Steve Holt, Chair, Julian Hussey Vice Chair, Christine Cawley Treasurer.</p> <p>Mervyn Symes, Gillie George, Hazel Cross, Margaret Pike, Jeanette Ward, Dr Phil Taylor, Dr Sarah Ellis, Karen Churchill and Delia Driver.</p>

	<p>The Membership numbers remain steady, and we continue to connect with the community with events, visits to community and village groups, our refreshed website, local newsletters, social media and email distribution of our annual Newsletter.</p> <p>It is becoming increasingly difficult to raise funds from local events but with the support of the Trustees and volunteers there have been a number coffee mornings, bingo and quiz events. All of the events are advertised on the League of Friends Facebook page, the website and often on posters around Axminster.</p> <p>June 2025 was a very busy month with the Axe Vale Show and Open Farm Sunday. The dementia bus and a smoothie bike on the stand caused a lot of interest. The League of Friends provided the refreshments at Dennings Down Farm for Open Farm Sunday. Later in June we attended Open Garden at Socks Orchard Smallridge. All the proceeds from the refreshments and sale of cards were donated to The League of Friends.</p> <p>In July, The League of Friends hosted an afternoon Garden Party at Great Jackleigh Farm. Musical entertainment was provided by the Windy Bowers and afternoon tea served by our Trustees.</p> <p>The League of Friends are grateful to all the bereaved families who have made a donation. As the news spreads of the Hospice at Home Service there are an increased number of donations from clubs and organisations who have chosen us to benefit from their fundraising. There have also been several grants of money to support our service and are currently awaiting the decision for an application for additional funding for the Hospice at Home Service.</p> <p>You are invited to the launch of our Hospice at Home Service from 7pm on 4th June at the Axminster Guildhall.</p> <p>The League of Friends has been invited again to provide refreshments at Open Farm Sunday at Dennings Down Farm, on 7th June. Liz Goff will be running another bingo event in July, and there are plans for another event at Great Jackleigh Farm during the summer.</p> <p>The 100 Club was launched at this meeting a year ago. The membership continues to grow slowly, but we would love more people to take part.</p>
Questions from the floor	A question was asked about if social care would be integrated into the Hospice at Home model. SH explained that NHS care and social care were funded separately and in different ways. It was not currently possible to integrate the two services.
AGM Business	
Minutes of the previous AGM	The minutes of the previous AOM held on Tuesday 20 th May 2025 had been distributed to the Trustees and were available to view on the website. The minutes were agreed as a true record.

	PROPOSER: Phil Taylor SECONDER: Mervyn Symes
To agree the Annual report and Financial Statements	The Annual Report and Financial Statements dated 31/12 /2025 PROPOSER: Julian Hussey SECONDER: Mervyn Symes
Election of Officers	<p>Steve Holt, Julian Hussy and Chrissy Cawley have indicated their willingness to remain as Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer respectively. PROPOSER: Mervyn Symes SECONDER: Hazel Cross</p> <p>According to our Object and Rules one third of our Trustees will retire from office at each AGM. The following Trustees have tendered their resignation;</p> <p>Hazel Cross Mervyn Symes Margaret Pike Jeanette Ward</p> <p>The following have indicated their wish to stand for re-election; Hazel Cross Mervyn Symes</p> <p>PROPOSER: Sarah Ellis SECONDER: Julian Hussey</p> <p>This leaves 4 vacancies for Trustees to join the Trustee Committee.</p>
To appoint auditors until the conclusion of the next AGM	Westcotts were appointed as Auditors. PROPOSER: Sarah Ellis SECONDER: Phil Taylor
Date of next AGM	Tuesday May 18 th 2027. Venue to be confirmed.
Close of Meeting	<p>Steve thanked Margaret and Jeanette for their long service on the Trustees Committee.</p> <p>Steve thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.</p>