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**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Retina UK**

Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 7:15pm - Webinar

1. **Welcome**

Martin Kirkup opened the AGM by formally welcoming all our members, supporters, staff members and Board of Trustees who have joined today. Martin announced himself as the outgoing chair of Retina UK and welcomed Kathy Evans who as part of today's AGM, stands for election as Chair which will effectively ratify her appointment. Kathy Evans was formerly the CEO of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists for some 19 years, and therefore knows our sector and work extremely well. She's a chartered accountant and holds a degree in law. Martin Kirkup relayed that he is looking forward to working with Kathy as he steps back into a trustee role. Parts of the meeting that are forward looking will be led by Kathy, and the parts that relate to the reporting period that this AGM represents will be led by Martin and our treasurer, Ashley Grist. Joining Martin Kirkup on the panel today is our new chair Kathy Evans, our treasurer, Ashley Grist, and our chief executive Tina Garvey. Kathy thanked Martin for all his help in the lead up and stated that she is really looking forward to the challenge of being the chair of such a fantastic charity. Kathy advised that if anybody joining has any questions to ask of the panel about the workings of Retina or items connected with the AGM, please use the chat function and we'll do our best to answer either in the meeting or subsequently.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies from Prof John Marshall and Mr Roger Backhouse were given.

1. **Approval of the minutes of the previous AGM (result of online voting)**

The approval of the minutes of the previous AGM was an online vote and received 35 yes votes, 1 vote against and 2 abstentions. 38 votes cast in total. The approval was proposed by Dr Elizabeth Graham and seconded by Mr Simon Keightley.

1. **Presentation of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023**

Martin Kirkup handed over to Retina UK’s Treasurer, Ashley Grist to present the Annual Report & Accounts for year ended 31st December 2023. The backdrop for fundraising 2023 continued to be a tough economic climate with cost-of-living challenges for individual households and we were further impacted by vacancies within our fundraising team. General fundraising levels were maintained but total income closed at £1,287,014, which was 18% less than the prior year due essentially to no major donor grant and no government grants. We were privileged to receive a number of legacies, totalling £542,476, which was broadly in line with the prior year and still above the average amount received over the past five years. A large part of our income is usually from voluntary sources, the key elements of which are the donations and fundraising efforts of individuals and groups across the UK. In addition to this, we received vital funds from corporate and trust donors. The trustees are aware of the unpredictability of all these sources of income and the need to continue to develop all the income channels. And as always, we very much appreciate the efforts of those who give us support. We continued in a year to provide information and other support activities for our community, spending £588,068 on these activities in 2023, which was a 4% reduction versus the prior year. We approved grants of £712,656 for medical research, which was a 77% increase on the prior year. Retina UK now have an active portfolio of 10 grants, including one added this year. And if these progress as planned, a further £1.2 million will be required to fund them through to completion. As a result of the income received and activities undertaken in 2023, there was a net reduction in funds of £508,667, driven primarily by the grant approvals. And at the 31st December 2023, our total funds were £1,527,959. The charity's investment policy remains unchanged. For any funds surplus to short term requirements, we consider using secure deposits on fixed terms of up to one year. The charity holds sufficient assets on the balance sheet to cover future potential grant commitments. Finally, you'll see in the annual report document that the financial statements have been audited by Azlets Audit Services Ltd, who confirm they give a true and fair view of the charity's affairs, have been properly prepared in accordance with UK accounting standards and with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011. I'm pleased to have been able to recommend the annual report and accounts for the year ending the 31st December 2023 to the members for auditors.

1. **Adoption of the annual report and accounts for 2023**

The Annual report and Accounts for 2023 were approved with 38 votes in total, 36 in favour, one against and one abstention. Colin McArthur proposed and Lucy Withington seconded.

1. **Appointment of the Auditors (result of online voting)**

The audit committee’s recommendation for the appointment of Azlets Audit Services Ltd was approved with a total of 38 votes, 37 were in favour, 1 against and no abstentions. The motion was proposed by Dr Elizabeth Graham and seconded by Mr Simon Keightley.

1. **Presentation of Retina UK activity in 2022 and 2023 overview**

Martin Kirkup gave a brief overview of Retina UK’s activity from 2020-2024. The financial results presented by Ashley Grist are obviously extremely positive. As we look forward, fundraising will be a major focus for Retina UK in 2024, given our ambitions. With the strengthening of the fundraising team, this will allow us to accelerate our funding ambitions. The team will focus on developing major donor trust and corporate sponsorship to help us move to a next level. Our ongoing strategy for the charity has already been set out in a review and it will give a clear focus to drive research into cures and treatments of inherited retinal dystrophies. 2023 has already represented an excellent start to the process with the launch of three new PhD projects and three new project grants being made. It also saw the charity share 16 opportunities for involvement with trials with our 500 strong lived experience panel. The Retina UK team continue to deliver vital information and support to its community through a broad range of channels and initiatives. We're indebted to our major donors and our corporate supporters for their vital support throughout 2023. I wish to highlight the efforts of those who give regularly to the charity and those that fundraise tirelessly through their own physical exploits and through the mobilisation of others who remain the core of our funding base. I also would like to recognise the very considerable achievements of all of the Retina UK staff team who've worked phenomenally hard to deliver on fundraising and to deliver an expertly curated program of research stewardship and an impressive program of information and support to the community. I wish to thank our volunteers who once again deliver great service to our community. I also wish to thank our ambassadors, our trustees and the members of our Medical Advisory Board for so generously contributing their time to the work of Retina UK. On a people front, the membership of the Board of Trustees saw some changes at the end of 2023. Paresh Makwana and Rachael Stevens took a step back from their roles as trustees to focus on activities outside of Retina UK. The Board of Trustees have shared their appreciation to Paresh and Rachael for their invaluable contributions and expressed the hope that they would be willing to return to the board when circumstances allow. I wish to take this opportunity in my final contribution to the annual report to thank my fellow trustees for all of their support and collaboration over recent years. I wish to extend my thanks to Tina and to the staff team, volunteers, supporters, members, donors and representatives for making my term such a memorable and an enjoyable one. And I wish each and every one of them a successful future. I will now hand over to Kathy to look at the amendments to the Charities Constitution.

1. **Amendments to the Charities Constitution (result of online voting)**

Kathy Evans stated that members were asked to consider an amendment to the Constitution that would enable us to create the post of President. This was voted on by 38 people, of which 35 agreed with the change, 2 people voted against and 1 person abstained, which means that the proposal is carried. This is tied up with an appreciation of the enormous contribution that the founder of the charity, Lynda Cantor, has made. It's really very hard to sum up in a few moments, but Tina has done her best by creating a montage, which we're going to play now. Thank you Lynda for all you have done.

1. **The appointment of trustees (result of online voting)**

35 people voted to re-elect Dr Elizabeth Graham, 1 person voted against and 2 people abstained. 37 people voted to re-elect Martin Kirkup, 1 person voted against, 0 abstentions. 36 people voted to have Colin McArthur return to the trustee board after a period away from the board. 1 person voted against, 1 person abstained. 37 people voted to elect Kathy Evans as a trustee. 1 person voted against.

1. **Any other business**

There were no questions or any other business.