W’EYES

(Walsall Consumer Group for Blind and Partially Sighted People)

MINUTES

of a

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

on

Saturday 9th September 2023

-at-

11.00am

Held at

The Table, Lower Hall Lane,

Walsall, WS1 1RR

Present :-

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Steve Mellor, Dee Dewhurst, Harjit Hayer, John Davis, Craig Bates, Claire Evans,

Paul Evans, Julie McFall (Scribe}, Holly Mills (Guest Speaker), Andy Dewhurst,

Richard Evans, Anita Warrender, James Warrender, Joyce Parry, Gemma Allen,

Chris Barkley

Apologies

Stella Bates, Jan Farrow, Cliff Warrender, Kelly Roberts, Pat Lote

Steve opened the meeting and welcomed all Members. He asked everyone to introduce themselves and stated that today's meeting was a Special General Meeting for a Change of Name to our current Charity name, W’EYES followed by our usual Agenda.

Apologies were given on behalf of non-attendees.

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate copy.

Dee informed all members of our reason for wanting a name change, problems with the domain, confusion in pronouncing the name etc. Craig added that changing the charity name is ideally needed to match it’s name to the domain, emails, Twitter etc and will also help us to move forward when attaching items such as a QR Code or a donation page.

Dee then explained that today’s Special General Meeting for Weyes Consumer Group for Blind and Partially Sighted People, was to cast our votes to a change of name, the new name put forward by the Directors is Walsall Eyes, using two words and our slogan would be - Supporting and Connecting People With Sight Loss. Dee then asked by way of a Special Resolution that all members present, raise a hand, if they agree to the Change of the Charity name, to be known as Walsall Eyes. A full show of hands (16) confirmed the change of name. Dee then announced that a Special Resolution had been passed on Saturday 9 September 2023, for a Change of Name from W’EYES to Walsall Eyes and thanked all members for attending to cast their vote.

Dee informed all members that this Special Resolution will now need to be registered at Companies House, together with a fee of £10, Charity Commissioners and such items as Articles of Association, Memorandum of Articles, bank books, website and media etc. will need to be changed. Dee said this will be completed in the near future and asked Harjit and Craig if the changes to the bank, website and media sites etc., could be made over the next few weeks also, once registration of the change of name has been completed with Companies House and Charity Commissioners. Anita asked if we will remain as a consumer group and Dee confirmed that Walsall Eyes will continue to be a consumer group and provide the services that we always have.

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Guest Speaker - Holly Mills

Information Officer for Walsall Society for the Blind

Dee introduced Holly who began by pointing out how sight loss can be isolating socially. She then moved on to the services offered by WSB to include Wellbeing support, sight loss registration, the social activities centre on Tuesday and Fridays, 10.30-3.30pm, the assistive technology they host, the transcription service and Talking News. Finally, Holly chatted about the collaboration they have with the Good Things Foundation, bridging the Digital Gap for the digitally excluded and Bequeathed, the online Will writing service. Holly then asked members if they had any questions and both Dee and Steve thanked Holly for her presentation and invited Holly to come back and update us from time to time.

Dee thanked Holly for giving a lovely presentation and all members were surprised at the new services offered at Walsall Society for the Blind and was pleased to hear that these services are available and invited her to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

Chair’s Report

Steve mentioned that if you are still working and are registered blind, you may be able to claim tax, as far back as 5 years. He said this may only apply to a few members but it certainly is worth looking into and he would be happy to go through it with anyone wanting more information

Steve moved on to funding and grants and said that he is liasing with Kate at Blakemores with regards to our Christmas ‘social’. He believes that successful applicants for funding will be notified on Monday 16th October and if we are successful this would subsidise our event by £200, being the cost of entertainment, a buffet and room hire. He went on to say that he is also working with Boost charitable trust to grant funds for an afternoon out at Tenpin bowling, possible dates, 20th or 27th January 2024 for 30 people. £730 is the amount he has applied for to include travel. Once again part of the criteria is good feedback and photographic proof of our event and has asked Andy to take photos at the event, if successful. This funding can be applied for every 12 months. Boost will allow us to apply verbally which means no form filling which can prove rather difficult. Finally Steve went on to say that we also fit the criteria for funding for the total of £1,062 and an application with Yapp has also been applied for to cover such items as transport costs, stationery costs etc and we will of course be looking at other sources of funding so have at the moment put our Crowdfunding application on hold as we feel it best to avoid any restrictions/conditional funding at the moment.

Secretary Report

Dee began by saying that there had been a lot to get through today and thanked everyone for coming to today’s Special General Meeting where it was so lovely to see some new Members as well as those who had not been able to get to our meetings since we were hit with the Pandemic. Dee then mentioned that Claire had now been co-pted and come on board the Directors and is now a Member/Director. Claire will then be eligible for nomination at our next AGM and if and when elected will be able to have a Directors vote also. Dee also welcomed Richard, Claires husband and James, Anitas son who both support Claire and Anita and attend frequent meetings, events and functions and are always welcome at our meetings.

Dee moved on to the outstanding matter arising from the last meeting’s action list and asked Andy if he could now confirm the query regarding whether a motability car must be returned once the person reaches pension age and Andy confirmed that sadly this is the case.

A sad point to let all Members know is that John had been involved in an accident recently and had received some injuries but after a night in hospital, has been determined to carry on as normal, including attending todays meeting. On behalf of all members, Dee wished him well and a speedy recovery.

Another matter to discuss in the next few months was that the cost of the room hire at The Table will be increasing and the Directors will hold a meeting before the December Christmas meet to discuss this.

Finally, Dee said Tea and Tech is going well but they are losing one of their first members who joined the very first session as Gemma is off to University. All members were pleased to hear this and on behalf of Walsall Eyes, Dee wished Gemma all the very best for her future. The Tea & Tech group was formed by Walsall Eyes and has been running for almost 10 years. Steve added that there is a good collaboration with the staff at WSB. Dee, Dan and Andy have recently helped set up a computer suite, offering fortnightly, accessable computer training courses for people with sight loss. Next week Joyce, Kim, Sharon and John will be attending the course. After finishing the course this will enable those attendees can call WSB on 01922 627683 and book in to use the computer suite anytime is is available. . The next course will be in October.

Treasurer’s Report

Harjit confirmed the bank account holds £5,005.34p and petty cash holds £48.40p. She is to withdraw some money from the bank for petty cash.

PR report

Craig reported to the members that the new domain for Walsall Eyes had been purchased and all new details had been updated to the website which is now live and our email address active also. Dee added that the old logo had now been replaced with the new logo chosen by the Directors, the logo is of an owl, sat on a branch wearing glasses. This would now be added to our website, Letterhead, media sites and any other printing matter in the future. Craig added that he and Harjit are working to get our QR code set up on the website in order for us to receive online donations, once Harj has online banking set up and running. Craig mentioned that our website is to be updated with an Events and info page, stating what we do and what we are going to do. Finally, Craig informed all members that Paul had written a great piece relating to the history and services of W’EYES/Walsall Eyes which he would like to include on an About us page and thanked Paul for submitting this and asked him to keep it coming and any contributions for our website will be gratefully received. He will also get in touch with Holly regarding sending in any info they would like us to share on our website. Dee asked if Craig could mention contact/email lists, giving everyone the option of having their details stored within a database but feels this should be centralised, in one place.

Planning and Events Officer Report

Claire stated the December meeting will be the christmas party. Originally tickets would be £5 ahead but now it has been agreed that tickets will be £6 as due to us bringing in our own food, The Table will therefore charge a corkage fee per head. As Steve mentioned a little earlier, an application to Blakemores, if successful, will help subsidise towards the cost of the buffet, singer, rent/corkage fee. Dee and Steve were only informed of this by James just before the meeting and they both felt it was unfair of The Table to charge extra as when we originally made all bookings for 2023, we were told that they had not started doing buffets as yet as they had only just introduced food in the cafe and it would be fine to bring our own as other bookings did the same. The Table has had 2 break-ins recently and are struggling and trying to recoup losses.

Claire went on to say that she and Dee have also applied to Leeds building society for a social focus grant of £1,000. We are currently going through the process and will inform everyone of the outcome once we have had a response. A further application which Claire had again applied for was with Morrisons foundation application which had been declined but as members can see we do have other options open to us.

Finally, Claire is planning the trip to the Black country museum to arrange a day out for us for Spring next yer and will come back to us with her findings.

A.O.B

Craig was amazed at how much goes on at WSB, that he wasn't aware of and other members agreed with him, this was directed to Claire and Holly, who said that there had been many upgrades which had made a positive change and a new fundraiser had come on board. Again, Steve invited Holly to visit Walsall Eyes every 6 months or so, to update them.

John mentioned to the group that he had been asked about 4 times recently what W'EYES/Walsall Eyes provides as a group and although he informed those of our services, he suggested Walsall Eyes has a type of Business Card made which can be handed out to the public. Everyone agreed and suggested they could also be put in Doctors, Eye Clinics, Opticians etc. Dee said that as soon as the change of name registration had gone through, she would then look into the cards,flyers & posters as she has a printer that she uses, who is very reasonable.

Claire asked is she could return to the subject of the day out next year as she would like some possible dates for the Black Country Museum trip. It was suggested next April 2024, on a Saturday. Costing for tickets will need doing (possibly self funded), coach travel, food and also a boat trip. Dee has had a bad experience with them, as she's found it difficult getting in touch and noone had returned any of her 3 calls.. Claire said she is hopeful and very persuasive.

Dee will arrange a time and date between now and December to collect the ticket money for our December Christmas Party and will contact members who had reserved tickets.

Holly mentioned to the members that she is in a theatre group and writes and directs Pantomimes. The next one is in Halesowen in February, she has invited the group. Majority of the group are interested. Transport to be costed. Holly can arrange a 'Touch Tour' with the theatre committee. The saturday matinee is most popular.

Dee asked everyone's opinion on what guest speakers they'd like in 2024. Suggestions are RNIB, Simon Topman-Whistles talk, Air Ambulance, Fire Service, Leather Museum (murder talks), Blind Dave Healey.

Date of next meeting

Finally Dee explained there would be no other meetings this year as our next meeting is the Christmas party. Saturday 2nd December 2023 12pm to 3pm

Close of meeting 12.42pm