**Minutes of a Meeting**

**Held at**

**Walsall Society for the Blind**

[**7-11 Hatherton Road**](https://www.google.com/maps/search/7-11+Hatherton+Road%C2%A0+Walsall.+WS1+1XS?entry=gmail&source=g)

[**Walsall. WS1 1XS**](https://www.google.com/maps/search/7-11+Hatherton+Road%C2%A0+Walsall.+WS1+1XS?entry=gmail&source=g)

**Saturday 26th July 2025**

**at**

**11.00am-1pm**

**Welcome & Notices**

Dee **Dewhurst** and Steve Mellor opened the meeting, reminding members, that no fire drills are planned but reminded them of the evacuation plan, should the alarm sound. Also a reminder was given informing members that the Gents has had the urinal removed leaving just 2 standard cubicles now.

**Present** - Steve Mellor, Dee Dewhurst, Claire Evans, Paul Evans, Richard Evans, Kim Bate, Tim Clifft, Adrian Griffiths, Joyce Parry, Kanu Patel, Talia Treen, Stella Bates and Craig Bates.

**Apologies** - Andy Dewhurst, Harjit Hayer, Paige Edwards, Jackie Edwards, Martin Edwards, Denise Evans, Anita Warrender, Cliff Warrender.

**Chairs Report**

Steve informed the meeting of the passing of Reg Cole, a long-standing member of Walsall Eyes, who sadly passed away on 9th July 2025 at 86 years old. Reg’s funeral will be on 31st July 2025 at the Mercia Forest Crematorium, highlighting that the wake is for family only.

Steve thanked everyone who attended The Skittles evening as £157 was raised on the night, held at the Walsall Arms.

Steve reminded the meeting that he had submitted funding application through Boost for £900 for tenpin bowling in August, although expressed this could be used as a multi activity grant from horseracing, games night and buffet or a night at the dogs. Steve will update everyone if the funding has been successful when he is notified possibly the end of August, beginning of September.

Steve then provided feedback on his visit to Sight Village and felt it seemed to be the same stands, companies/organisation but felt there was much less than previous years. Steve praised his guide that was assisting him at the venue and was pleased with the number of volunteers there helping. Steve had picked up a CD from the Synapptic stand with useful information on phones, laptops, and other items that Synapptic provide. Steve had finished with the CD so offered the attendees an opportunity to take it for their benefit.

Steve said he would have liked more phone companies at Sight Village as there was not enough out there that’s new and thought it would be an opportunity to show more new products then just updated software and devices all the time. Companies like Apple, Samsung, EE or O2 would be ideal for future Sight Village events.

Steve asked during the meeting what others thought and their feedback was similar, they were disappointed that some popular stands wasn’t there that usually create interest and there was only one braille stand at the event. The event this year was on Monday and Tuesday whereas in previous years it has taken place on a Tuesday and Wednesday, which may have not fitted well with some exhibitors. Sight and Sound was still providing discount following the event and if anyone was interested, they can contact Craig, and he can provide the email re discount.

**Secretary's Report**

Dee expressed a point raised about the structure of meetings and while most members are happy, following feedback from others, it would be good to have an extended break for members to chat with each other and to also invite Guest Speakers once again. Relating to events, while our Beer & Skittles & Tenpin Bowling are well attended and most popular, these type of events may not be suitable for all. Although you can’t please everyone, all the time, it would be nice to consider future events and activities. An idea of events we have held in the past are …

* Lunch or dinner out (such as Mad O’Rourke’s pie factory, afternoon tea, Beefeater, Harvester, The Table, The Littleton or the Waterside Cafe)
* Theatre visits (The Grand, The Alexandra or the Hippodrome)
* Symphany Hall
* Aerospace Museum Leicester
* Light cinema (disability friendly and audio description showings)
* Clay and pottery classes and Arts and Crafts.
* Paintballing, Escape rooms, Riffle Shooting, Clay Pigeon shooting, Foot Golf, Archery, Driving experiences and horse riding.

Dee asked the members for ideas as regards the structure of our meetings, going forward. Would they like 30 minutes in the agenda to chat with other members or are there any different suggestions. Joyce expressed that while some people have their own comfort zones, she likes to explore and finds joy in venturing out and trying new opportunities.

Dee informed the meeting, she has been trying to book some guest speakers for future meetings although there are many that ask for their expenses to be covered or set a minimal fee. Dee had been quoted £275 - £925, however some have just asked for a small donation to cover their time or travel costs. Dee asked the meeting what they thought would be a reasonable amount to give as a small donation, but everyone agreed it was difficult to provide an exact amount as it depended on how long the guest speaker presented for, or the distance they had travelled.

Dee suggested guest speakers from Blind Dave as an inspirational speaker, Faz Iqbal on the Meta AI Ray Ban glasses and a poet. Craig mentioned potential football clubs being approached and Stella suggested speaking to the Grand Theatre. Steve said they have never paid in the past for speakers and had approached Ellie Simmonds to guest speak, although this wasn’t taken up as she wanted £1000, which was a huge cost and ask for a charity.

**Treasurer's Report**

Harjit sent an update on the financial status, with not being able to attend today. £6344.53 that’s with banking in the funeral donation, 2 x raffle monies raised and membership. There is roughly £450 in the petty cash tin.

**PR and IT Officer Update**

Craig continues to work on the website and discussed having information on accessibility resources and services, activities and benefits that would be helpful for visually impaired People to have access to the website. Photos will also be put up of events that have taken place to highlight Walsall Eyes.

* Craig gave an update on the food waste service soon to be provided by the Walsall Council for their residents. Craig discussed the upcoming food waste disposal consultation period and informed that feedback can be provided by telephone or face to face and needs to be submitted by 21st August 2025 as it’s open for 4 weeks. Black Country radio covered this recently and can be listened to on this link [Food waste collections coming to Walsall - Black Country Radio](https://www.blackcountryradio.co.uk/news/local-headlines/food-waste-collections-coming-to-walsall/). Craig is still waiting to be provided with answers about the additional bin and what food waste will exactly go where. Government has issued March to April 2026 as a National Borough roll out.

Craig and Steve explained the Council are holding cabinet meetings at the Walsall Town Hall and informed they are live-streamed meetings and all their meetings, can be accessed online.

Craig said there is ongoing work in Walsall and surrounding areas which is not good for the Visual Impaired community. No one seems to be taking responsibility for the work as the council have informed it is the Canal Trust. Work is currently being carried out by the canal, to install new bollards and a bridge aimed at improving accessibility and greater safety and The Art Gallery and Costa are also is currently fenced off around the square. Further work is commencing at the top of Park Street by the Saddlers Centre, Shops will be moving around August/September as approx 4-5 shops from WHSmith are being knocked down and moving as they are planning to link the bus station with the train station, so there will be a lot of work taking place. A lift is also being introduced to the Saddlers centre to be more accessible from the top floor to the bottom.

**Fundraising and Events Planning Officer Update**

Claire has arranged a Charity Fundraising afternoon for Walsall Eyes, on Sunday 17th August 2025 at the Wheatsheaf, 4 Birmingham Road, Walsall, WS1 2NA from 12pm - 4pm. If anyone would like to have a stall or knows anyone that may also like one, they are £10 and can be paid on the day.

Claire mentioned that anyone attending the charity event at the Wheatsheaf, should be aware that there are steps at the front of the building, although there is access to the side of the building without steps.

Claire moved on and updated everyone on the trip to Southport, now scheduled for Saturday 27th September 2025. A coach would be required as a minibus would not accommodate if numbers were to increase. Claire quoted as an example that a coach seating 57 people would cost £675 if all seats were filled this would then be divided by all attending. Any interest for the trip please let Claire or Dee know (Dee 07814 262895) and a £10 deposit will be required to secure your place as soon as possible with the final balance to be paid a week before at our next meeting on Saturday 20th September 2025.

Claire Informed the meeting of other dates secured for holding a stall and raising money for Walsall Eyes at the following events.

* Christmas Party – Saturday 20th December 2025, Rushall Labour Club, Liberty House, Lichfield Rd, Rushall, Walsall WS4 1HB, times to be confirmed.
* Willenhall Carnival – Saturday 4th June 2026
* Pelsall Carnival – Saturday 4th July 2026.

**Research and Media Officer Update**

Paul confirmed that he is waiting for RW Printers, on the following branded resources. Tablecloth, runner, and leaflets in A3, A4 and A5. Paul will liaise with the GP surgery when the resources arrive as Steve Mellor has contacts there and will be distributing the leaflets around Walsall, which will help with promoting Walsall Eyes. There is no date currently set, and this can’t be provided until the resources arrive.

**Any Other Business**

Dee asked Members if they would be interested in theatre visits to a pantomime later in the year and expressed how good Matt Slack is in the pantomime. Mary Poppins is currently on at the Theatre and Dee asked if anyone would be interested in attending on Saturday 16th August. Tickets are priced from £13, and this showing is audio described. Dee will check availability.

Stella informed of the nimbus card that supports disabled visitors. The nimbus card can be purchased from [Nimbus Disability: Innovation for an accessible future](https://www.nimbusdisability.com/services/access-card-and-nos/) and raised that theatres require a letter from Guide Dogs to prove your Dog is a working assistance dog for attending.

Talia informed of the Meta AI glasses Ray Ban have recently released in Vision Express and other platforms. The Ray-Ban Meta glasses combine the latest in wearable tech with authentic Ray-Ban design, to keep you connected wherever you go. With the latest Ray-Ban AI glasses and AI sunglasses, you can take photos and videos, listen to music, make calls and even livestream direct to Facebook and Instagram – all without taking your phone out of your pocket. You can choose from a selection of iconic styles, including prescription or non-prescription with different tints to the AI glasses. Faz Iqbal who runs VI Social has purchased two pairs and is loaning them out for a week for those with sight loss to trial. If anyone is interested, Faz can be contacted via Dee. However Dee will be inviting Faz to one of our up and coming meetings enabling our members to try out the Ray Ban Meta Ai glasses.

**Meeting Conclusion**

Dee confirmed the date of the next meeting as Saturday 20th September 2025 with all members in agreement.

Dee will circulate the minutes.

Steve has kindly offered to have any donations for the Walsall Eyes stall dropped off at his home beforehand. Steves Address is 11 Newhall Street, Walsall, WS1 3DZ.

Dee asked for a minimum donation of £1 for refreshments for today's meeting to support WSFTB hosting and providing the facilities and thanked everyone for their participation. A donation is asked as a contribution, at each meeting.

The meeting concluded at 13:11pm with a positive note, and members expressed their appreciation for the efforts and updates shared during the meeting.

**Action Items**

Dee to research further into guest speakers and activities for the Walsall Eyes Meetings.

Dee to ask Faz to attend a future meeting and demonstrate Meta AI Ray Ban glasses.

All members to promote charity event at the Wheatsheaf and Southport trip.

Any items for the Bric-a-bract stall, to be dropped to Steve before Sunday 17th August 2025 at 11 Newhall Street, Walsall, WS1 3DZ.