

Walsall Society for the Blind



A Year in Review 2018 – 2019
Edition 114



Annual Report

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Our Mission

To provide information, support and friendship to all visually impaired people living within the Borough of Walsall

Our Services

Walsall Society for the Blind is the leading charity providing advice, information and support to the visually impaired living in Walsall.

The Society employs 13 members of staff, and we are assisted by over 25 dedicated volunteers and provide support to over 1,300 visually impaired people within the Borough of Walsall.

The range of service we offer includes:

A Social Activity Centre

Talking Newspaper and Magazine Service

Registration Services

A Community Engagement Officer

A Community Officer

Transcription Service

Awareness and Training Sessions

Resource and Information

Equipment and Loan Services

The Society is contracted to provide Registration services and maintains the Sight Loss Register on behalf of Walsall Council.



Public Benefit

Through the year we have:

Had 2,569 Enquiries at Reception

Dealt with over 9,079 Community enquiries

Offered 2,522 Social Activity placements

Sent out over 9,392 issues of the Talking Newspaper and Magazine.

Conducted 16 training and awareness sessions.

Legal and Administrative Information

Registered Name

Walsall Society for the Blind Limited

Charity Registration number

1075854

Company Registration number

3674948

Governing instruments

The Society is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England & Wales No. 3674948. The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Society comply with the Companies Act 2006. The Company was formed on 27th November 1998.



Directors/Trustees

Chairman

John Cooke

Vice Chairman

David Smith

Directors / Trustees

Richard Meere, Julie Harris,
Elizabeth Smith, Amanda Elliott,
Kevin Merchant.

Chief Executive Officer

Amanda Reed

Investment Advisors

EFG Harris Allday
33 Great Charles Street
Queensway
Birmingham
B3 3JN

Auditors

Bakers Chartered Accountants
Arbor House
Broadway North
Walsall
WS1 2AN

Solicitors

Enoch Evans LLP
St Pauls Chambers
6-9 Hatherton Road
Walsall
WS1 1XS

Registered Office

Hawley House
11 Hatherton Road
Walsall
WS1 1XS

Bankers

HSBC
The Bridge
Walsall
WS1 1LN

Report of the Trustees

The Trustees, who are also the Directors of the Charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2006, present their annual report and the audited financial statement for the year ending 31st March 2019. The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practise (SORP 2015) “Accounting and Reporting by Charities” (FRS102) in preparing the annual report and financial statement of the Charity.

The Charity was established in 1885. It is an incorporated Charity, being a Company Limited by Guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum of Association and the Articles of Association.



Workshops for the Blind



Chief Executive's Report

This year we continued to have an increase in the demand for all our services, with more people making contact with us for information, advice and support.

The Community Team has continued to make regular contact with all clients on the database, as well as supporting individuals due to the removal of services, from Council provision including Welfare Rights and Community Alarms.

Our Social Activity Centre has seen an increase in numbers attending, with a developing programme of activities and themed weeks. We continue to benefit from transport being provided by Ring and Ride.

The Walsall Talking Newspaper and Magazine service continues to be well received with more listeners receiving our publication not only on a USB stick, but through the web platform Soundcloud, which allows our listeners to access it where they have internet connection.



We currently retain only one contract with Walsall Council covering just the registration post. With donations and legacies being unpredictable, our investments have now become an essential part of our total income; this year we received 48% of our income from this source, although we have incurred a deficit in 2018/19. We have been able to continue to provide all our charitable activities by drawing on our reserves.

A huge thank you goes to each of our dedicated volunteers, for all their hard work. They have clocked up a fabulous 3,692 hours of their time to support us. We really could not achieve all we do without you.

Walsall Society for the Blind remains in a strong position, to be able to continue to provide all its services to all, for now and the future, due to the generosity of those who make donations and from the legacies of those who remember us in their wills.

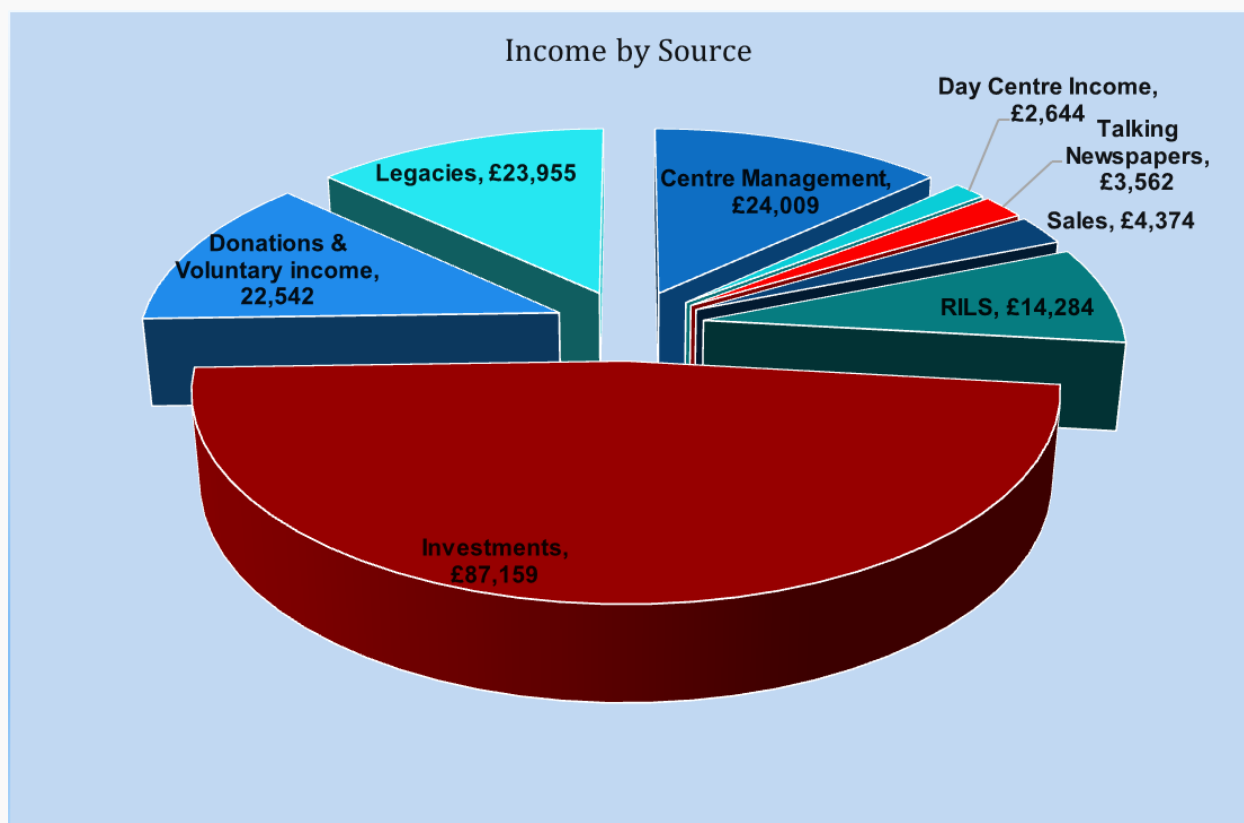
We go forward with a positive attitude, knowing that we are secure for the future and that we can continue our mission to provide information, support and friendship, to all those affected by sight loss in the Borough of Walsall.

Treasurer's Report 2019

Income

Our total income for the year was £182,529 compared with £165,000 last year. This was an increase in income of £17,529.

Income by Source – year to 31st March 2019

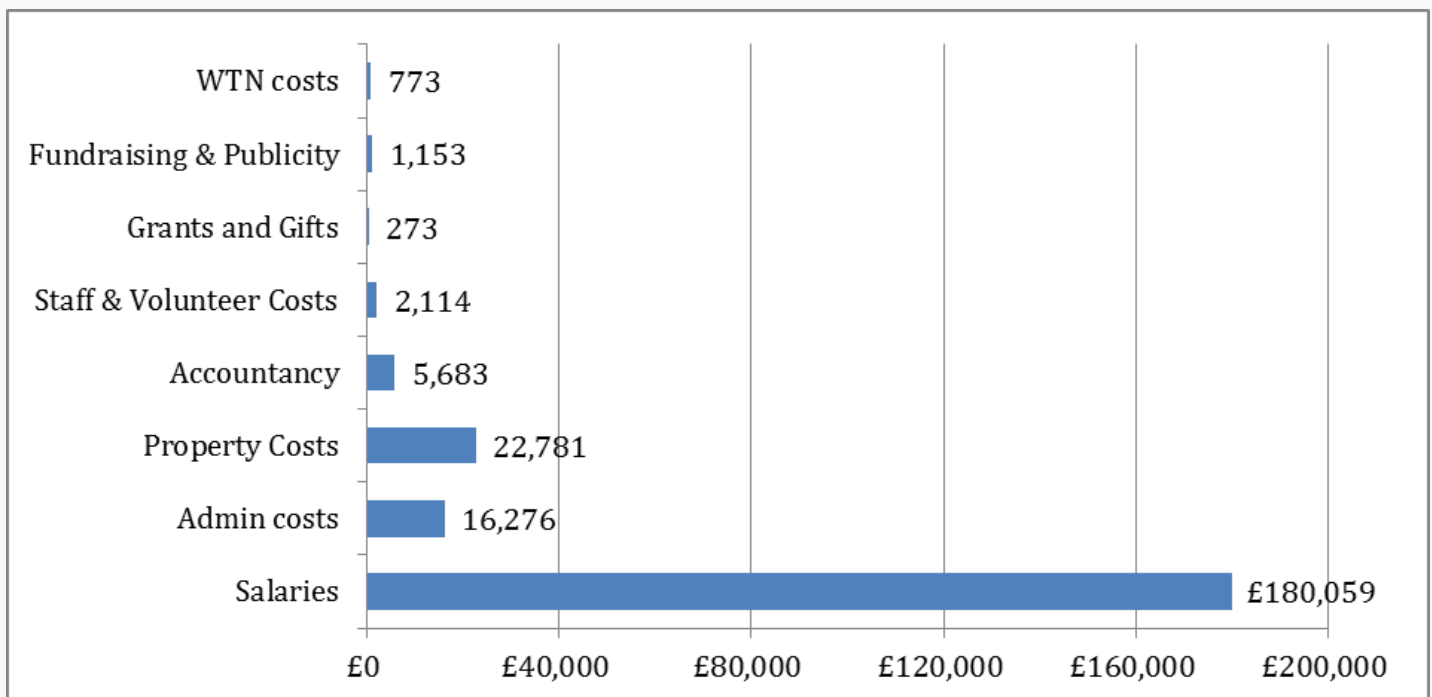


We wish to thank all who support the Society and the families of those who donate to us in memory of their loved ones. Thank you also to Walsall Council for their continued support.

Expenditure

Costs incurred this year were £235,860 compared with £227,739 in the prior year. Salaries form the largest share of our expenditure at a cost of £180,059

Expenditure by cost – year to 31st March 2019

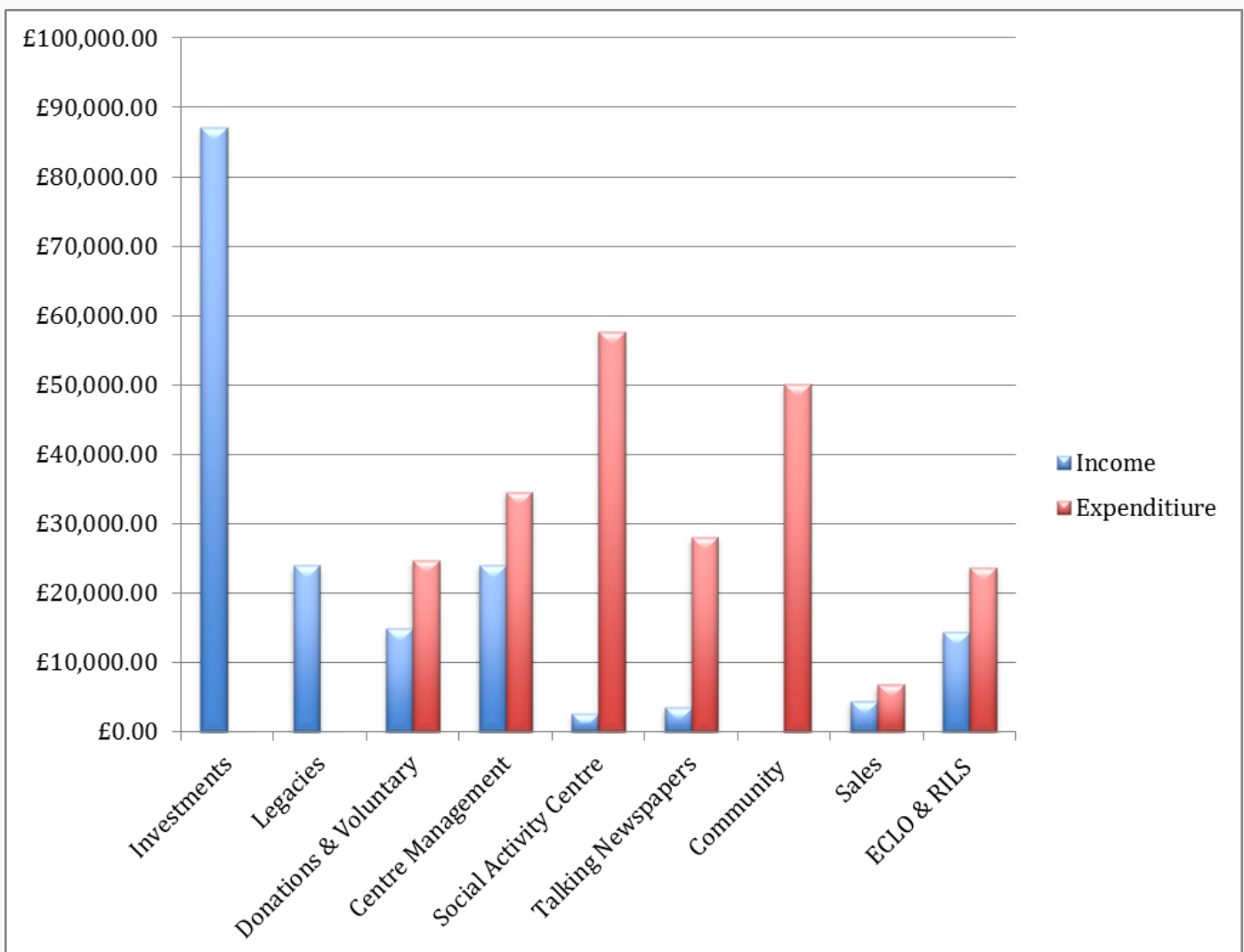


Result for the year

Our expenditure this year was greater than our income showing a deficit of £53,331. We continue to maintain the level of support and guidance we offer to the Blind and Partially Sighted individuals, their families and carers within the Borough of Walsall.

The Society's Activity Centre, Transcription, Talking News and Community Support are funded primarily by income generated by investment, legacies and donations. These services are at the heart of WSB's charitable activities. As we have seen, the level of legacies and general donations has not been sufficient to fully meet the costs of those activities this year, which is why we have had to draw on reserves.

Income & Expenditure – year to 31 March 2019





Society Assets

The investment income received each year is generated from WSB's investment portfolio, managed by an independent broker.

This income represents 48% of our annual income. Over time, this income has become an increasing proportion of our total income.

The cost of our investments was consistent at £2 million and they were valued at £1.9 million at the year end.

Society Reserves

We are required to hold sufficient funds to cover between 9 months and 2 years' costs at any time which we hold in a Development Fund, at £1.2 million.

Closing unrestricted funds for use by the Society stand at £855,825.

Summary

The Trustees believe the Society has sufficient funds to continue to support the visually impaired people of Walsall.

The Trustees also express their thanks to the Chief Executive and her dedicated team, who have continued to provide support to those affected by sight loss within the Borough of Walsall.

A complete set of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019 is available on request from the Society in various formats.



Hawley House

Although WSB deliver all services direct from our premises in Hatherton Road, we are happy to support other sight loss groups in Walsall.

Tea & Tech



The 17th February 2016 saw the first ever group meeting of Tea & Tech. It was all very new and the aim was to provide advice and demonstrate how to use accessible portable technology (such as mobile phones, tablets etc) in a way that someone with sight loss can access with ease and confidence.

Now three years later it still goes strong with an emphasis not only on accessible technology, new apps, gadgets and gismos, but the group offers a great sense of peer support with everyday issues too.

The group meets alternate Wednesdays and is open to all affected with sight loss. For more information please contact Dee on 07814 262 895



Walsall VIP Bowling Group

Walsall VIP Bowling Group lost its previous premises in 2017, after a discussion we agreed that they would run their group from Hawley house and their first group started on 16th October 2017.

Over the past 2 years we've seen great improvement in their skills. We no longer get woken up in the afternoon by balls hitting the office doors! However the chants of "On for One" followed by "Not for Long" can be heard most Mondays.

Space for new members is limited, due to the nature of the game, however if you would like to put your name down on the waiting list please let reception know.



My name is David and this is my sight loss journey

My name is David and this is my sight loss journey.

I was diagnosed Type 1 diabetic at the age of four, and along my sight loss journey, I have been unfortunate enough to suffer from the main symptoms of diabetes including:

- Cardiovascular disease (including strokes)
- Nerve damage (neuropathy)
- Kidney damage (nephropathy)
- Eye damage (retinopathy)
- Foot damage
- Skin conditions
- Hearing impairment.

Okay, so as depressing as the list of symptoms are, please remember that all the above are linked to diabetes, this does not mean you will suffer from them. I could just be the unlucky one.

My diagnosis early in life made me determined to achieve. If someone said no, I would. If someone said it couldn't be done, it just made me more determined to succeed and I did, I had a great childhood and I was not exactly the model teenager, however I excelled in an occupation that I loved. I became a sound engineer and through my working career met some fabulous musicians and pop groups, but I'm not one to name drop.

In 2007, my health had deteriorated due to my diabetes and I needed a multi organ transplant, a new kidney and pancreas. In 2007, I was lucky to be matched with a donor and for a while things seemed to be going well.



In 2015, I was diagnosed with a viral encephalitis infection. I was rushed into hospital, put in an induced coma, whilst they attempted to reduce the swelling in my brain. When I woke the swelling had caused me to lose my cognitive memory. I did not recognise my mom or my wife. Slowly some memories returned but most of the things people class as 'everyday activities' I had to learn all over again - just making a cup of tea was a new challenge. On discharge, I went home and spent the next three years sitting in a chair staring out of the window into my garden, I had withdrawn from the world, suffered with severe depression, had nothing left to live for and contemplated suicide, but did not have the energy to carry it out.

Then in 2017, a letter arrived from Les from the Society. Of course, I had no interest, however my wife and Les had a chat over the phone. It was at this home visit when things started to turn around. Les encouraged me to join the Friday group and reluctantly I agreed. I started in January; I found it difficult at first. I was a nervous wreck, as I had been so isolated for so long, but soon my social skills flourished and I made some fantastic new friends, all of whom struggle with their own sight loss each day, something we all have in common. At this time Headway had also began to support me and day-by-day things started to get better a little brighter. Shortly afterwards I joined the Monday bowling group. By March I felt ready to give long cane training a go and Les made the referral. I received training from the Sensory Support Team, and developed long cane skills allowing me to go outdoors independently for the first time in years!

By May I made an application for a bus pass, as I felt ready to start independent travel. I have even applied for a guide dog and am currently on their waiting list.

It has been a difficult journey and I have come so far. It's not over yet, sometimes I think that I am just at the beginning of an incredible new chapter in my life. If not for the support received from Walsall Society for the Blind, Headway, The Sensory Support Team and all my friends here at the Society, I guess I would still be sitting in my chair staring out of the window.

I am grateful for the support that I have received. Without this help advice and support I would not be the person I am here now.





**We really could not manage without you.
 Thank You for everything you do.**





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01922 627 683

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Website - www.walsallblind.org

Charity No - 1075854
Company Reg - 3674948

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