

WI Handbook

A guide to running a WI

3rd Edition 2004 - Amended June 2012

the**WI**
INSPIRING WOMEN

RUNNING A WI
IS EASY WHEN YOU
KNOW HOW

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

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Our Purpose

The Women's Institute organization is based on the ideals of fellowship, truth, tolerance and justice. All women who are interested in issues associated with rural life, including arts, crafts and sciences, may join no matter what their views on religion or politics may be. The organization is non-sectarian and non-party political. This does not prevent Women's Institutes from concerning themselves with matters of political and religious significance provided the views and rights of minorities are respected and provided the organization is never used for party-political or sectarian purposes. Women's Institutes are charitable and everything they do must be consistent with that special legal status.

Our Mission

We want the WI to be an organization of choice inspiring and enriching the lives of all women and girls who wish to play an active role in their communities, widen their horizons and learn new skills. We want every woman and girl to have the opportunity to join the WI, wherever they live. We want to secure a fair and sustainable future for our and the next generations by increasing our membership to have an even greater influence on decision makers and the world around us.

Our Aspiration

We aim to encourage and enable women:

- To enhance their lives and to play their part in the community through education and public debate
- To improve their lives and the lives of those around them
- To lead fulfilling lives and to be of value in the community and nationally by influencing policy/decision makers
- To provide a friendly atmosphere where women can be inspired and enlightened

Our Values

- Integrity
- Equity
- Transparency
- Openness
- Efficiency
- Excellence

Charitable Objects

The main purposes of the Women's Institute organisation are to enable women who are interested in issues associated with rural life, including arts, crafts and sciences, to improve and develop conditions of rural life, to advance their education in citizenship, in public questions both national and international, in music, drama and other cultural subjects and in all branches of agriculture, handicrafts, home economics, health and social welfare. It seeks to give to women the opportunity of working together through the Women's Institute organisation, and of putting into practice those ideals for which it stands.

Charity Structure

Every charity has a governing document (Constitution) which states the purpose of the charity and the way it should be run. In order to have charitable status (as defined by Law), it must meet certain criteria which currently fall into four groups:

1. relief of poverty
2. the advancement of education
3. the advancement of religion
4. other purposes beneficial to the whole of a community in a way recognized as charitable..

The WI fits into the second and fourth of these groups.

There are several different types of charities;

1. Trusts
2. Unincorporated associations
3. Companies limited by guarantee without share capital

The NFWI became incorporated in 1990 and many Federations are also incorporated. They fit into the third type, companies limited by guarantee without share capital.

WI funds can only be used in the furtherance of the WI objects as stated in the Constitution.

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Preface

The WI Handbook covers the role of WI officers with regard to planning and running meetings, and dealing with affairs at WI, Federation and NFWI levels. We give advice on how to plan, cost and carry out a yearly programme of events and on how to recruit and introduce new members.

We also look beyond at the wider issues of the role of a WI in the local community.

The WI Handbook has been produced in electronic format so that:

- it can be accessed by any member via the WI Moodle whenever required
- individual pages or sections can be printed for reference as needed

In particular you may want to print out the checklists which appear at regular intervals. These give you a reminder of the relevant points in the various sections and you may find it useful to have a copy of the specific checklist with you when carrying out various tasks.

Lastly, but most importantly, *the WI Handbook* stands as a resource for all members of your WI. It will be invaluable as groundwork for women taking on the responsibilities of an officer and as support for the individual, as a delegate at Federation or NFWI meetings. This handbook should be used alongside the Constitution and Rules for Women's Institutes, a copy of which can be found at the back of this document. Hard copies of *the WI Handbook* and Constitution are available by request from the NFWI and federation offices.

Part One:

The roles and
responsibilities of the
officers and committee members

The President

The President is the lynch-pin of a WI and is its leader and sets the style. She should be enthusiastic and decisive, yet approachable and friendly in her manner, interested in her members' views and ready to listen to their suggestions. It is from the contributions of a growing and diverse membership that the development of a WI will spring and it falls to the President, more than anyone, to encourage and foster this development.

The President is elected at the Annual Meeting, by a secret ballot of the members, from the elected committee members.

The responsibilities of the President

As President, your principal responsibilities are to:

- To have a copy of and be familiar with the WI Constitution and Rules for WIs
- Co-ordinate the affairs of your WI
- Oversee the work of your fellow officers and committee members
- Encourage good relations between the WI and both the local community and the outside world in general
- Represent your WI both within and outside the organisation
- Ensure your WI prospers through the active participation of its members at WI, Federation and NFWI levels and by means of a developing span of interests and activities.

Specific duties

In particular, the President should:

- Chair:
 - WI meetings
 - the Annual Meeting
 - committee meetings.
- Ensure that the constitution and rules of the NFWI, your Federation and your own WI are observed.
- Ensure that the financial accounts of your WI are accurate.
- See that monthly bank statements are shown to the committee.
- Promote a greater understanding of the WI and its activities by means of the NFWI Newsletter, Federation newsletter, *WI Life*, WI Moodle, NFWI Website and any other sources of information.
- Co-ordinate the work of all sub-committees and working groups.
- Work continually to encourage the recruitment and introduction of new members into your WI.

Finally, some general points:

- Your members are your WI - keep in close touch with them.
- Members attend a WI meeting for a variety of reasons, but everyone has something to contribute and you should try to involve all your members, so that each one actively participates, even if that only means making a new friend, or chatting over a cup of tea.
- At most meetings there will be information and ideas which need to be chased, so allocate enough time for general news and views.
- You will perform your own tasks better and get new ideas for the future if you broaden your own horizons by attending Federation and NFWI events - and why not take other members with you?

Don't forget your Vice President!

The Vice President is elected by the committee at its first meeting after the Annual Meeting. You may have up to three in number.

She has to be able to deputise for you and should be encouraged to chair both a committee and a WI meeting during her term of office. It would be a good idea to delegate some specific responsibilities to her - such as welcoming and looking after new members.

Constitution Rule 18: The officers of the WI shall be: the President, Vice Presidents (up to three), Secretary and Treasurer. The WI may combine the offices of Treasurer and Secretary or the offices of Treasurer and Vice President if the Federation Board of Trustees consents. No other office may be combined.

Checklist 1:

Chairing the WI meeting/Committee meeting

Many of your responsibilities culminate in the WI meeting, the chairing of which is perhaps the single most important duty a President has.

The following check list has been split into three areas:

- 1 Preparing for the meeting
- 2 Chairing the meeting itself
- 3 After the meeting

Preparing for the meeting

- ♦ Agree the agenda with the Secretary and read through any necessary papers and correspondence, including the Federation newsletter.
- ♦ Discuss with the Secretary the items of business and clarify details.
- ♦ Arrange the items in a logical sequence (see Specimen Agendas on pages 29 and 30).
- ♦ Time the agenda - not too many items with, ideally, a time limit for each item.
- ♦ Identify any item which requires special attention.
- ♦ Write any letters of congratulation or condolence on behalf of the WI.
- ♦ Make sure you take all relevant material with you - such as the agenda itself, the Federation newsletter and the biographical notes of any visiting speaker.

Chairing the meeting

- ♦ Arrive in good time.
- ♦ Start on time and keep to time.
- ♦ Stand up and start the meeting with a welcoming smile and a friendly greeting.
- ♦ Try to welcome new members/visitors by name.
- ♦ Introduce the agenda items clearly and audibly.
- ♦ Ensure all opinions are heard, and maintain order by asking that all remarks are addressed to the chair.
- ♦ Reach decisions by summing up quickly the main points for and against, then ask for a show of hands.
- ♦ Be informative. Tell members all they need to know to feel involved and interested.
- ♦ Welcome and introduce the speaker, with a short appropriate biography.
- ♦ Make time to circulate amongst members and chat informally.
- ♦ Close the meeting formally and thank the members for coming.
- ♦ With the other officers, be the last to leave.

After the meeting

- ♦ Check and then approve the draft copy of the minutes/ record prepared by the Secretary.
- ♦ Check with the Secretary any follow-up work generated by the meeting.

The Secretary

The Secretary works closely with the President and, like her, should be aware of the WI's Constitution and Rules. She shares with the President the responsibility for the general arrangements of meetings but, as the executive officer of the committee, she is personally responsible for seeing committee business is carried out.

The Secretary is elected annually, by the committee, at its first meeting after the Annual Meeting.

The responsibilities of the Secretary

As Secretary, your principle responsibilities are to:

- ♦ Ensure the smooth conduct of WI business.
- ♦ Organise and co-ordinate the work of any sub-committees and working groups.
- ♦ Handle and acknowledge all correspondence, referring to the President as appropriate.
- ♦ Establish and maintain good relations with the Secretary and staff of the Federation, with the Secretary/Convenor of the Group and with the secretaries of local organisations.

Specific duties of the Secretary

- ♦ Prepare the agenda for WI and committee meetings with the President.
- ♦ Write a record for the WI meeting and the minutes for the committee meeting and agree them with the President. Once the minutes have been agreed, it is recommended that these should be made available for members to peruse at the next meeting.
- ♦ Make sure invitations with a pre-paid reply form are sent to speakers and other guests with detailed guidance on how to find the meeting place.
- ♦ See the notice board is kept up to date (this could be delegated to another member).

Setting the agenda

To make sure your meeting runs smoothly, you will need an agenda with suggested timings for each part. Without this, your President will find it difficult to make sure everything is fitted in. (See specimen agendas on pages 29 and 30).

Specific things you will need to consider include:

- ♦ **The committee's recommendations.** These might include suggestions for future meetings or social events, arrangements for joining in exhibitions, in fact anything the committee members have discussed, and on which they now need to consult the members and gain their approval.
- ♦ **The Federation newsletter.** This letter will include news covering the whole Federation so your committee will need to pick out all the activities relevant to your particular WI - and encourage the members to take part.
- ♦ **Information from the NFWI.** Sometimes there will be information from the NFWI which you should make sure is passed on to your members. This is the way you will keep them in touch with the fact they are part of a large national organisation.
- ♦ **Reports.** Your WI Delegate may have attended the NFWI Annual General Meeting recently or a federation council meeting, or some other major event. Remember to allow time for her to tell the members about her experiences. Members attending a course at Denman may like to tell other members about their experience at the college.
- ♦ **Finance.** The Treasurer will need to keep the members up to date with the state of the WI's finances and should be included as an agenda item at least every 3 months. She will also need to make suggestions about fund raising, the allocation of bursaries and other details. She will need time to discuss this with the members.

During the meeting, some decisions will probably be made, so it is important that a record is kept of these. This will provide a reference to remind members what they agreed.

You should keep this record in a book provided for the purpose. It should be available at each meeting, but whether you read it each time is a matter for your members to decide; if they decide to take the record "as read", the President can sign it at the end of the meeting, by which time members will have had time to look at it.

Alternatively the record can be kept in a loose leaf file providing the pages are numbered sequentially and each page initialed by the President.

A Proforma Record Sheet can also be used (see specimen Record Proforma Sheet on page 31).

Assistant Secretary

Many WIs elect/appoint an Assistant Secretary to act as either a Minute Secretary or a Programme Secretary, to share the work of the Secretary.

Checklist 2:

The Secretary's tasks at the meeting

Preparing for the meeting

- ♦ Collate the information from previous minutes/records.
- ♦ Check any action required has been taken.
- ♦ Draft agenda into logical order of priorities.
- ♦ Discuss and agree proposed agenda with the President, providing her with all the necessary background information.
- ♦ Discuss federation newsletter with the President to identify items of interest for the members.
- ♦ Arrange all necessary papers in order of use at the meeting.
- ♦ Provide WI Officers, the Press Officer and yourself with a detailed agenda, and the committee members with an outline agenda for the committee meeting.
- ♦ Distribute the federation newsletter and any other items, e.g. your WI newsletter. (These tasks should be delegated to members.)

Before the meeting reminders

- ♦ Have you listed all the committee recommendations on which you wish to consult the members?
- ♦ Have you marked all the relevant items in the federation news?
- ♦ Have you allocated time for news from the NFWI, and for reports of meetings your members have attended?
- ♦ Is the Treasurer ready to bring the members up to date on the WI's finances?
- ♦ Will your record book be available for any member to read?
- ♦ Is your meeting planned in detail so that it runs smoothly, and to time?

At the meeting

- ♦ Arrive in good time.
- ♦ Be ready to start punctually with papers in correct order.
- ♦ Note the apologies for committee meetings.
- ♦ Read the minutes/record clearly and audibly. (At WI meeting stand up to do this.)
- ♦ Alternatively, the monthly record of the WI meeting can be placed for all members to read for themselves prior to the President signing them at the end of the meeting.
- ♦ Take careful, adequate notes of all items of business discussed, noting particularly names of proposers and seconders and the result of any voting. Never rely on your memory.
- ♦ Remind members of closing dates for applications for outings, courses, Federation events and Federation newsletter subscriptions.
- ♦ Have clipboards for members to sign, with a column for payment required.
- ♦ Stay alert, ready to prompt the President unobtrusively on any oversight or omission, but never assume her authority.
- ♦ Check that all papers and clipboards are returned.

After the meeting

- ♦ Write up the draft minutes/record as soon as possible after the meeting.
- ♦ Agree these with the President.
- ♦ In consultation with the President, do any required follow-up work/action from the meeting.
- ♦ Write any letters which were awaiting decisions taken at the meeting.
- ♦ Send off any applications for tickets before the closing date, with a WI cheque for the correct amount and enclosing a SAE.
- ♦ Be helpful over any queries from members, but remember the confidentiality of the committee minutes, so be discreet.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer's role is to be a guide and adviser to the committee and to maintain the actual accounts.

It is the committee as a whole which is responsible for the financial well-being of the WI. The Treasurer presents recommendations from the committee to the members at the WI meeting. It is the members who take the decisions.

The Treasurer is appointed by the committee, at the first meeting after the Annual Meeting, to look after the financial affairs of the WI.

The responsibilities of the Treasurer

As Treasurer, you have responsibility for the proper and efficient handling of your WI's money. Within this your responsibilities are to:

- ♦ Advise on financial planning.

Sound finance starts with the budget. A budget is a statement of probable income and expenditure, in round figures, for the year ahead. It is a framework which should be realistic, based on the previous year's actual figures, with expenditure over-estimated, rather than under-estimated.

The Treasurer draws up the budget and presents it, first to the committee and then to the members, for approval. The budget must be monitored and, if necessary, revised. (A specimen budget form can be found on pages 33 and 34.)

Keep the accounts up to date and prepare a statement at the year end for examination by an independent examiner.

Your Federation may be able to provide you with an Independent Examiner if you are unable to find anyone with financial experience to undertake the examination for you.

Make sure the reconciled monthly bank statement is seen by the President and committee.

Specific duties

- ♦ Be aware of the WI Constitution & Rules.
- ♦ Open a banking account in the name of the WI. This could include a Post Office Account, or a Building Society Current Account. (The committee appoints not less than three members - usually the President, Treasurer and one other, to sign cheques on behalf of the WI. Two signatures are required on each cheque.)
- ♦ To obtain a mandate from the bank if there is any change in the signatories.
- ♦ Collect the annual subscriptions. Pay these and all other monies into the bank.
- ♦ Ensure that obligatory payments are paid promptly. These are:
 - a) membership fees to Federation (which includes the NFWI payment).
 - b) pooling of fares for NFWI Annual General Meetings
 - c) Delegates' expenses.
- ♦ Pay all bills.
- ♦ Issue receipts.
- ♦ Ensure that all money collected is paid into the bank promptly. Money required to pay out (Petty Cash) should be drawn out from the bank.
- ♦ Check current account balance. Should this be excessive, open a deposit account which pays interest.
- ♦ Present the independently examined accounts to the committee and then to the members at the Annual Meeting, accompanied by the Bank Statements.

Assistant Treasurer

The Assistant Treasurer should have specific tasks delegated to her - such as collecting the annual subscriptions and running a savings scheme for them, and/or keeping the attendance register.

Fundraising

It is open to a WI (and a Federation and the NFWI) to raise funds not only for its own programme of events but also to support charitable activities consistent with the wide objectives of the WI movement. These objectives are:

“to enable women who are interested in issues associated with rural life, including arts, crafts and sciences, to improve and develop conditions of rural life, to advance their education, in citizenship, in public questions both national and international, in music, drama and other cultural subjects and in all branches of agriculture, handicrafts, home economics, health and social welfare. It seeks to give to women the opportunity of working together through the Women’s Institute organisation, and of putting into practice those ideals for which it stands.”

It could, for example, further the educational purposes of the WI by raising funds for a bursary or scholarship at an educational institution wholly unconnected with the WI to support women students (not necessarily members of the WI) in studying arts, crafts and sciences associated with rural life.

It will not always be easy to determine whether an activity falls within the objects of the WI movement and could therefore be supported by fundraising efforts of the WI. The improvement and upkeep of a village or community hall falls squarely within the objects of the WI, as it makes a contribution to improving the quality of rural life. Similarly, to raise funds to enable certain treatments to be available in a local hospital rather than patients having to travel, sometimes repeatedly, to an urban centre for their treatment - a journey which may be particularly difficult without access to private or public transport - can make a real contribution to the quality of rural life.

Some might argue that raising money to supply a local individual with a guide dog, or with a kidney machine, or with talking newspapers, etc., should be permissible. The answer in such cases must, however, be that this is outside the objects of the WI and the group of people who benefit is too narrow.

For a WI to support a nation-wide/international appeal, say for the relief of refugees, notwithstanding the pressing humanitarian need, would, again, not be within the objects of the WI.

WI members can act individually. Groups or individual WI members can organise fundraising events provided that they do it as individuals and not in the name of the WI. They can be helped by friends. In this case, publicity must not include mention of the WI and WI funds cannot be used to pay for expenses such as the hire of a hall.

Presentations

WI funds cannot be used for expensive presentations. However, trustees can provide a modest token of appreciation to a retiring trustee.

Outings and Parties

These may not be paid for from WI funds, but by the members who go. The general public should never be asked to pay for an outing for WI members through any fund-raising activities.

If an educational visit is arranged on a normal monthly meeting day, any associated expenses (e.g. travel) should be paid out of WI funds and entered in the account book as an expense of the meeting. (This does not apply to meals/food purchased on an educational visit.)

Raffle Prizes

WIs may have a bottle of alcohol as a raffle prize even if the hall does not have a Licence, provided it is incidental to the event and it is in a sealed bottle, the tickets are sold on the day it is drawn and there must be no cash prizes.

Checklist 3:

The Treasurer's tasks at the meeting

Preparing for the meeting

- ♦ Note the balance at the bank.
- ♦ Check expenses required for the meeting.
- ♦ Draw sufficient petty cash from the bank to pay out of pocket expenses at the meetings.
- ♦ Note any bills that have to be paid.
- ♦ Prepare a brief Financial Statement (monthly for the committee, at least quarterly for the WI meeting) to show the financial position in relation to the budget.
- ♦ Reconcile the bank statement with the account book.
- ♦ Remember to take:
 - Financial Statement and Bank Statement
 - cheque book
 - receipt books
 - petty cash and petty cash notebook
 - money bags or tins
 - notebook

At the meeting

- ♦ Arrive in good time, ready to receive any payments due.
- ♦ Give receipts for all monies received.
- ♦ Give a brief, clear statement of the finance - usually every three months.
- ♦ Encourage members to ask questions on money matters.
- ♦ Pay fees and expenses due to the speaker - ideally by cheque.
- ♦ Have a receipt ready for the speaker's signature.
- ♦ Collect money from trading stall, raffle, refreshments, sub-committees and give receipts. None of this money should be used to pay outgoings.
- ♦ Write all takings in a note book
- ♦ A petty cash book should be kept for all cash payments

After the meeting

- ♦ Pay any monies collected into the bank as soon as possible; large sums of money should never be kept at home.
- ♦ Enter payments and receipts in appropriate columns in WI account book as soon as possible after the meeting.
- ♦ Pay all bills due.
- ♦ Liaise with the Secretary regarding cheques for tickets.

Committees

The WI committee

The committee members are the trustees of the WI and are elected at the Annual Meeting. The committees' duties are to conduct the business of the WI, administer the funds, suggest policy and plans of action, and present the same to the members for their approval. Additional members may be co-opted to the committee for specific duties and immediately become full members with equal rights and responsibilities.

Dual members are eligible to stand for election to the committee (see WI Constitution Rule 14).

Committee members can be effective by:

- ♦ being aware of the Constitution and Rules
- ♦ knowing the correct procedure
- ♦ attending regularly and punctually
- ♦ being well prepared - read all papers, etc
- ♦ participating in the discussion
- ♦ being bound by the decisions of the committee
- ♦ remembering that the business of the committee is confidential.

Sub-committees and Working Groups

These give the opportunity to develop members' specific interests; for example, craft work, drama, sport, and music. Each should appoint a Chairman, who reports to and is responsible to the main committee. The sub-committee or working group may not hold funds, therefore all monies received and all expenses incurred are transacted through the Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer.

Rules relating to Officers and Committee

These Rules, where stated, have been taken from the WI Constitution & Rules and cannot be altered.

1) Role of the committee - Extract from Rule 23

To manage the affairs of the WI, arrange the time and place of meetings, outline the programme and present it to the members of the WI for approval.

To administer the funds of the WI, in consultation with the members.

2) Appointment and retirement of the committee - Rule 17b

The elected committee may co-opt up to three additional members, as long as there is always a majority of elected members. Any vacancy, which may occur during the WI year, may be filled by co-option until the next Annual Meeting of the WI.

3) Officers - WI Rule 20

The Vice President or Vice Presidents, the Secretary and the Treasurer are elected by the committee from its members.

Note: WI Rule 19 lays down that 'no person shall be a committee member of any other WI unless the Federation Board of Trustees consents

Also see Rule 14 with regard to dual members.

4) Meeting of the committee - WI Rule 23

The committee must keep minutes of the meeting

5) Quorum - WI Rule 23

The Quorum for a committee meeting is three or one third of the committee members (rounded up) if that is greater than three.

Note If less than the quorum be present, only unopposed business shall be dealt with and any decisions made must be ratified at a meeting at which a quorum is present.

6) Sub-committees - WI Rule 24

The committee may appoint sub committees of such persons as it thinks fit and determine the terms of reference, power, duration and composition of any such sub-committee. The chairman of each sub-committee or someone appointed for the purpose must report the proceedings of each meeting of the sub-committee to the WI committee. Sub-committees may not hold or have the power to dispose of the funds of the WI.

General notes

First committee meeting

A meeting shall be held as soon as possible after the Annual Meeting of the WI, to elect the officers and attend to other urgent business.

Verbal notice of this meeting may be given to the newly elected committee members at, or immediately after, the Annual Meeting, provided that an agenda is handed to each of them.

A meeting shall deal only with the particular business for which it is called and which is stated on the agenda.

No minutes shall be read at this meeting. The minutes of the meeting, as well as the minutes of the previous regular meeting, shall be read at the next regular meeting of the committee

Resolutions and decisions - urgency – rescinding

Proposals involving any question of policy or finance may not be decided until notice of the proposal has appeared on the agenda. Exceptions to this may be made if urgency is voted by two-thirds of the committee members present and voting. Decisions made by the committee shall be rescinded only if notice of the proposal to rescind has been given on the agenda and when two-thirds of the meeting are in favour of rescinding.

Byelaws

Byelaws which may have been made in addition to the WI constitution may be rescinded at the WI Annual Meeting. A two thirds majority of those present is required.

Casting vote

When voting on any proposal is equal, the President shall have a casting vote in addition to her ordinary vote.

The Annual Meeting

Extract from Rule 31

Notice of the meeting giving the date, place and hour of the meeting **must** be included in the Annual Programme of meetings given to each member

The Officers have extra specific duties at the Annual Meeting. The President and Secretary should work closely together to ensure all arrangements are in hand. The President and Treasurer need to meet to look at the examined Financial Statement, together with the bank statements. The President is required to sign the Financial Statement along with the independent examiner and Treasurer. The President should encourage all members to accept nomination for committee ideally at least one month prior to the Annual Meeting so that a ballot can be held.

Nominations may also be accepted from the floor on the day.

The President

The President chairs the Annual Meeting, only handing over the chair during the election for a new President. If a new President is elected, she does not take office until the Annual Meeting has ended. The current President gives a short address after the Committee's Annual Report has been given by the Secretary. It is a good opportunity for her to thank the members, committee and particularly the officers publicly for their encouragement and support throughout the year. She concludes by saying 'I propose the adoption of the Annual Report'. **No seconder is required.** Members then vote by show of hands.

The Secretary

The Secretary should have collected nominations for the new committee at least one month before the meeting (permission of nominees must be sought) and made out ballot papers if needed. She arranges for the tellers, usually members of a neighbouring WI. She prepares an Annual Meeting agenda with the President (see specimen agenda on page 35), including the wording of any resolutions to be discussed, and she prepares the committee's Annual Report, which she presents to the committee for their approval.

The Secretary prepares detailed agendas for herself, the President, Treasurer and WI Adviser, if present. At the Annual Meeting, besides her normal meeting duties, she reads the committee's Annual Report - this is a report of the year's activities of the WI. (See specimen agenda on page 35.)

The Treasurer

An important item is the appointment of the independent examiner. The committee, not the Treasurer, puts forward a name - someone with financial experience who is not a member of that WI nor related to a member of the committee.

The Financial Statement is presented by the Treasurer. Copies of the statement should be available to members, so that they may follow her explanations. She should encourage questions and have all the relevant papers to hand. The reconciled Bank Statement should be on display for all members to see. At the conclusion of her presentation she should say 'I propose the adoption of the Financial Statement'. The President will then ask for a seconder and, when the statement has been seconded, questions will be invited. The President should encourage interest in the WI's finances by asking for comments as well as questions. A vote by show of hands is then taken on the adoption of the statement.

The budget may appear on the Annual Meeting agenda, but many Treasurers feel a separate presentation at the first meeting of the new WI year is preferable.

Nominations/Elections

Nominations should preferably be submitted at the WI meeting before the Annual Meeting. In order to get a good number of nominations, as many members as possible should be asked if they are willing to stand for Committee. It is advisable to seek more nominations than there are places on the Committee. After the closing date for nominations, the Secretary should prepare printed or photocopied ballot papers, listing the names of all those who have accepted nomination in alphabetical or reverse alphabetical order - remembering to include initials or first names when surnames are the same - and a note of the number to be elected. Check the papers carefully, a simple mistake could mean the whole ballot has to be repeated.

Election of Committee

It is advisable to open the ballot before the start of the meeting so that voting is completed before the start of the Annual Meeting business. If possible the ballot should be held in a separate room, but you may have to make do with a corner at the back of your meeting room. Only members present at the Annual Meeting may vote. The tellers should be provided with Tellers' Charts and the Secretary, or WI Adviser if present, is responsible for making sure that they understand how to use the charts.

Before the start of Annual Meeting business, the President should ask if everyone present has voted and, if so, to declare the ballot closed.

When the tellers have counted all the ballot papers, they should write the names of those elected, **in alphabetical order** and not disclosing the votes gained by each candidate, on a flip chart or board and give the result to the WI Adviser, if present, or announce it themselves. If a tie has occurred for the last place on the committee, they should recount the votes for the tied places; if this still results in a tie, the tellers must draw for the last place **and should not reveal that there has been a tie.**

Election of President

If a WI Adviser is present at the Annual Meeting, she will conduct this part of the meeting.

Each member should be handed a slip of paper and asked to nominate the President for the coming year from the newly elected committee. Each nominee is then asked to indicate in writing whether or not she is willing to stand for election. All members then vote - again in writing - between those willing to stand for election; voting papers are collected, counted and the result announced. In the event of a tie, the procedure is the same as in the ballot for committee.

If a committee member is absent from the Annual Meeting, but is willing to be nominated for election to any office, she should state her willingness in writing.

Majorities required at WI meetings

In the WI, WI decisions, proposals and resolutions which have been put to the vote are normally carried on a simple or straight majority of those present and voting. Those who are not actually present to vote in person, or who abstain, are discounted. (See page 37 for exceptions to this ruling.)

There are, however, exceptions to this general principle and the table on page 28 sets out those resolutions which require to be passed by either two-thirds or three-quarters of those present and voting.

Note: some majorities will depend on the standing orders of the NFWI or Federation which have been adopted. Those affected are marked with asterisks(*).

	WOMEN'S INSTITUTE		FEDERATION		NATIONAL FEDERATION	
	Annual/ Special Meeting	Committee Meeting	Council Meeting	Fed. Board meeting	Annual General Meeting	National Council
Two-thirds	WI bye laws ¥ Recommendations to alter the rules	* Urgency * Rescinding	Fed. bye laws Recommendations to alter the Rules Closure * Authority to send resolutions to the Prime Minister, Government Depts, County Council or other Public bodies.	* Urgency * Rescinding * Suspension of Standing Orders	Proposal to alter or add to the Rules Authority to send Resolutions to the Prime Minister, Government Depts, County Council or other Public bodies.	
Three-quarters	Enlargement Transfer of property Suspension		* Urgency * Withdrawal of resolution or amendment * Move to next business		Urgency Special Resolution Extraordinary Resolution Withdrawal of resolution or amendment Move to next business	Urgency

¥ Note: When briefing a delegate at the WI monthly meeting on how she should vote on resolutions at a Federation Council Meeting or the NFWI Annual General Meeting, a simple or straight majority is only required, whatever the subject of the resolution.

Specimen agenda for a WI meeting

1. Welcome to all members, special mention of new members
2. Record of the last meeting, read or taken as read
3. Matters arising on the record
4. Correspondence
 - a) Federation newsletter and the NFWI Newsletter (if taken)
 - b) General correspondence
5. Financial Statement by Treasurer at least every three months
6. Reports from sub-committees, delegates, working parties and special groups
7. Reminder of forthcoming events - election of delegate if required
8. Introduction of speaker
9. Speaker (including questions)
10. Thanks to speaker
11. Refreshments and members' social time
12. Result of raffle/competition
13. Sign record, if taken as read
14. Next meeting: speaker/hostesses and other arrangements
15. Close of meeting

Specimen agenda for a committee meeting

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters arising on the last minutes
4. Matters arising on last WI meeting
5. Correspondence
 - a) Federation newsletter
 - b) NFWI Newsletter
 - c) Any other correspondence
6. Financial Statement
7. Reports of sub-committees
8. Arrangements for next WI meeting
 - a) Speaker's transport, meals, hostess, etc.
 - b) Thanks to speaker
 - c) Refreshments
 - d) Members' time
 - e) Timing of meeting
 - f) Notice board
 - g) If competition judge, judge's steward and thanks
9. Future plans
10. Any other business

Hon. Secretary

Suggested Proforma for the record of a WI monthly meeting

Name of WI
Record of meeting held at On

The President welcomed..... members andvisitors

Record of last meeting was read/taken as read and signed.

Matters arising were

1.
2.
3.

Correspondence received this month was:

1.
2.
3.
4.

Members agreed to the following decisions:

1.
2.
3.

Members were reminded of:

1.
2.
3.

The financial position was:

This month's speaker was:

The talk was on:

The social time was:

This month's competition was: Won by:

Future Events include:
.....

Signed as a true record of the meeting

.....

President

Date

Specimen agenda for an Annual Meeting

1. Appointment of tellers (if not done at previous meeting)
2. Secret ballot for committee. The ballot room will be open at and close at
3. Record of previous month's WI meeting
4. Matters arising on the record
5. WI ordinary business
6. Review of bye-laws (if any) which should be rescinded if obsolete
7. Resolutions if notice has been given of any to be proposed
8. Appointment of independent examiner for coming year. (Unless done with the budget, after the Treasurer is elected.)
9. Presentation and adoption of Financial Statement
10. The committee's Annual Report
11. President's address and adoption of Annual Report
12. WI Adviser talk (optional)
13. Result of ballot for committee
14. Written nominations and secret ballot for President
15. Thanks
16. Social time

Hon Secretary

Aids for the job

The aids marked * are available through your federation office

For the President

- ♦ Officers' memorandum book *
- ♦ Writing pad *

For the Secretary

- ♦ Committee minute book *
- ♦ WI meeting record book *
- ♦ Attendance register *
- ♦ Writing pad *
- ♦ Officers' memorandum book *
- ♦ Invitations and reminders *
- ♦ Nebus and Information pad
- ♦ Poster pad
- ♦ Award cards
- ♦ Judges comment pad

For the Treasurer

- ♦ WI Account book *
- ♦ Subscription book *
- ♦ Receipt books - general and subscription *
- ♦ Budget forms *
- ♦ Annual financial statement forms *
- ♦ Cheque book, paying-in book
- ♦ Day book/note book
- ♦ Petty cash note book
- ♦ Money bags
- ♦ Writing pad *

For all Officers and Committee members

- ♦ Access to the WI Constitution and Rules *
- ♦ WI Handbook
- ♦ Access to the NFWI Annual Review
- ♦ Access to current Denman course programme
- ♦ Federation newsletter
- ♦ *WI Life*
- ♦ WI stationery

These can be accessed on the WI Moodle: www.witraining.org.uk

Special Procedures

WI Decisions

The basic procedures according to which the WI is to be run will have been decided at its first meeting. These will include:

- ♦ The name of the WI
- ♦ The number of members to be elected to the committee
- ♦ The number of Vice-Presidents
- ♦ The month of the Annual Meeting
- ♦ The day, time and place of the regular meeting

These decisions should have been listed and pasted in the front of the record book. They may be amended at a special general meeting of the WI or the Annual Meeting. Every member should be notified of the proposals so that they may attend the meeting. A WI Adviser will advise on this if needed.

The last of these decisions is the only one which can be altered by postal ballot. If this option is exercised, all ballot papers should be sent direct to a WI Adviser for counting.

WI Bye-Laws

Some WIs have bye-laws, for example limiting membership of the WI because of the requirements of the hall in which they meet. These bye-laws are drawn up according to the WI Constitution and are reviewed annually and may be altered or rescinded at the WI Annual Meeting or at a Special Meeting called for that purpose (See Rule 39).

The following two meetings must be conducted by a WI Adviser

Enlargement

This enables one WI to join another without having to close both WIs and establish a new one. The rules for this procedure are found in WI Rule 45 & 46 of the WI Constitution. As the enlargement takes place the combined membership may wish to change some decisions - for example, the name of the WI. Changes to decisions can be made at the Special or Annual Meeting being held to establish the enlargement.

Checklist 4: Enlargement

- ♦ See WI Rules 45 & 46
- ♦ Notify all members of both WIs concerned in writing of proposed enlargement ten days before meeting.
- ♦ Arrange for a WI Adviser to attend both WI meetings where the resolution is to be put. A secret ballot is held; a three- quarters majority of those present and voting is required in favour of the enlargement in both WIs.
- ♦ When the resolution is accepted the closing WI shall pay all outstanding moneys, books will be independently examined and the account closed.
- ♦ The enlarging WI will ask a combined meeting to discuss the decisions and agree the name of the new, enlarged WI.
- ♦ The closing/terminating WI then follows the procedures outlined in Checklist 5.

The suspension of a WI

The rules outlining the procedures to be followed for the suspension and subsequent closure of a WI are laid down in Rule 48–50 of the WI Constitution. It is important to stress that the resolution to suspend, which is taken at a Special or Annual Meeting attended by a WI Adviser, must be approved by a majority of three-quarters of the members present and voting on the resolution. A secret ballot is held.

The property of the WI for example china, furniture, trophies, etc, may be given to another local organisation or kept in case the WI reforms. If it is decided to keep the property, three trustees should be appointed. Their names should be listed in the minutes of the suspension meeting which are read, agreed and signed at this meeting.

A WI is suspended for up to three years and only finally closed if not reformed before this time has passed. Upon suspension the balance of the funds remaining is handed to the Federation, to be held by them for three years or until the WI is reformed, or until a new WI is established which in the opinion of the Federation serves the area formerly served by the WI, whichever is the shorter period. If at the end of that time the WI has not been reformed, the funds are retained by the Federation.

Checklist 5: Suspension meeting

- ♦ All members must be informed in writing ten days before the proposed Suspension meeting. (See Rules 32 & 48.)
- ♦ A WI Adviser must be asked to attend and the Federation Board of Trustees/ BOT informed.
- ♦ Following acceptance of the suspension resolution, the Treasurer shall pay all outstanding bills and the balance of the funds is forwarded to the Federation.
- ♦ The minutes of the meeting containing the resolution to suspend are written at once, approved by those present and signed by the President.
- ♦ Arrangements for the disposal of WI property are made and the trustees appointed.
- ♦ All WI records are sent for safe custody to the Federation Office with an independently examined copy of the accounts.
- ♦ The WI Adviser will explain clearly that during the three-year suspension period the WI may be reformed and then the money and property being held on its behalf will return to the WI, unless in the interim a new WI has been formed serving that area.

Part Two:

Planning a programme
For the year

Introduction

In recent years, the role of women in society has changed dramatically. Women have fought for equal status with men in many aspects of life where before they had been the subject of prejudice. This means that, for the first time in many areas, women have a concerted voice which will be listened to.

A WI is a forum at which women get together and can discuss and explore topics of mutual interest. It is a social gathering, of course, but it is also a chance for the individual woman to get to grips with matters of local and national interest and form an opinion.

Over the years the NFWI has catered for women's needs. As the patterns of society, and the role of women within it, change, so WIs must change. Failure to do so will result in falling membership, and an opportunity to galvanise and organise female opinion will have been lost.

A WI will be judged by what it does

If your WI is seen to be active in a wide variety of interests and involved in the community, outsiders will think it's an organisation worth joining and your own members will respond to belonging to something lively and vital. Not everyone will enjoy everything you do - but if you offer lots of different opportunities, then many more people will be able to find something which appeals to them.

You need a good programme which contains variety and quality.

Rule 30 states you must have a minimum of eleven meetings a year, but don't limit yourselves to just one meeting in a month if your members would welcome more. Most women have many commitments, and may not be able to attend every meeting, so if the gap between meetings is too long, they will lose interest, and look for more lively organisations. Extra activities could include workshops, craft classes, walks, leisure pursuits, educational visits, reading/pottery/music or art groups etc.

Planning your year's programme

The committee will normally delegate the job of organising the yearly programme - it should not be left to one person, however willing and enthusiastic. Consider forming a working group with, say, one or two committee members and a couple of other members - including, perhaps, a newcomer who might bring a fresh approach.

Looking for ideas

Start big and work your way down to detail. Begin well in advance and aim to plan a whole year's programme.

Avoid the temptation to simply ring the changes on last year's programme. This would be boring and demotivating. There are traditional elements in the programme which you will not want to discard and for which you will always find a place in your plans, but you should start by looking at the wider issues of the day.

There may be national issues which have a local impact - the state of the health and education services, for example and there will certainly be local issues of great importance - for example, a proposed bypass scheme, or community integration problems, or the setting up of a neighbourhood crime watch scheme. These need not all be controversial issues - how about, for example, some practical help for your local day nursery or hospice, or cultural exchanges with our EU partners?

There are many sources from which to draw your ideas:

- ◆ Press, radio and television - both national and local
- ◆ Prominent, influential figures
- ◆ Local industry
- ◆ Local organisations (such as the education authority) for classes, speakers and demonstrators
- ◆ The Library Service
- ◆ The County Advisory Service for drama and music
- ◆ Foreign embassies
- ◆ Travel bureaux
- ◆ Above all don't neglect your own home-grown resources.

So consider:

- ◆ Your Federation Handbook will probably have a list of speakers. (Remember to report to your Federation office if you have heard a good speaker who is not included in this.)
- ◆ Making use of your Federation Board of Trustees and sub-committee members. They may have interesting talks, as with the Denman Ambassador or the Federation Publicity and Radio Officers.
- ◆ The WI Advisers will also be happy to come along. They can help with the running of your meetings, and will give advice on planning your programme.
- ◆ Applying to the NFWI Unit at Denman for their action packs which would be useful for small craft groups.
- ◆ Making use of your own members' skills.

Do remember the minority interests. Each member pays the same subscription, so each is entitled to the same consideration; and a new subject, covered with flair and expertise, may spread throughout the WI. Remember, too, we have a commitment to the community and the programme should reflect this.

Your members might like to take an active part in your local area. Reserve some time also for current issues, environmental and international affairs.

Structuring the plan

When you are happy with your choice of subjects, it's time to structure them into the plan itself.

Draw up a large chart, allowing plenty of space for each month. Start by filling in the events you already know about. For example:

- ◆ Your own Federation and the NFWI events and meetings
- ◆ Regular events such as shows and exhibitions
- ◆ Your own WI Annual Meeting
- ◆ During April/May - time for discussion of the resolutions for the NFWI Annual General Meeting.

Counting the cost

Before presenting your plan to the full committee, you should assess the costs as accurately as possible.

Find out what fee each speaker or demonstrator charges, whether this includes travelling expenses and, if not, how much the travelling expenses will be.

If the meeting is to be an outside visit, find out the possible cost of transport, and the entry fee to museums or art galleries. Remember at least eleven meetings must be free of charge to your members. Each member has already paid for these through her subscription and she should only be required to pay for optional extras which she chooses to buy - a raffle ticket, for example, or something from the trading stall. Good programmes usually cost money – but good programmes attract new members - so be prepared to pay.

Your WI funds have been contributed by members - let them enjoy the benefits.

Putting it into action

When your committee has accepted your plan, and has agreed to the cost, you should then show it to your members to give them a chance to comment. Then you have to put your plan into action.

Someone will be needed to make the final arrangements for each meeting. Perhaps you could appoint a Programme Secretary for this job. You will need to invite speakers to come (invitation forms may be available from your Federation office) and remind them again two weeks before the meeting.

You should also send out instructions for finding your meeting place. Make sure that they are clear, and can be followed in the dark, a map would help!

Make sure your speakers know exactly how long you want them to speak or demonstrate, and ask whether they are prepared to answer questions. Find out if they need any help with materials or equipment. If they have their own goods to sell make sure they realise beforehand that they must sell them on the WI sales table, and that your commission - usually 10% - will be deducted.

If your meeting is a 'hands on' activity make sure that you have all the necessary equipment - craft items, papers, pens, etc. If you are having an outside visit, double check booking times, entrance fees and so on.

The printed programme

Each member is entitled to receive a copy of the programme. How else will she know what is going on? So, do justice to your planning, and produce a programme of which you can be proud.

Make sure that it is written concisely, well designed and laid out clearly. Check very closely for accuracy - both before you give it to the printer in its original form and when he gives you the proofs to read.

There are a number of ways in which your printed programme can be produced using either a member's computer or a printing company. Take time to consider the layout, presentation and final impact of your programme card. If using the NFWI Logo a copy can be obtained on the WI Moodle or by email from the NFWI.

Remember that it will be in constant use and needs to fit easily into a bag, pocket or diary. Above all, make sure you order enough copies!

Programme should have:-

- ♦ Name of WI
- ♦ Programme year e.g. 2012
- ♦ Time, date and place of WI meetings
- ♦ Website and email address of WI
- ♦ The NFWI logo or local picture
- ♦ Name and telephone numbers and email address of President and Secretary
- ♦ Name only of Treasurer (for security reasons)
- ♦ Names of committee members
- ♦ Details of each monthly meeting including date, topic, speaker or demonstrator, visit etc.
- ♦ Details of extra activities in addition to the monthly meeting
- ♦ A 'visitors welcome' note.

Useful to have:-

- ♦ Name, email address and telephone number of Federation Secretary
- ♦ Address, telephone number and website of the NFWI
- ♦ NFWI/Federation events and dates
- ♦ Group/District events and dates
- ♦ Federation newsletter details
- ♦ Names of members with special duties (e.g. Press Officer, MCS Rep etc.)
- ♦ Names of members responsible for WI Activities
- ♦ Denman information

Each member receives a free copy of the programme, but a good programme is also good publicity for the WI, so be prepared to give copies to anyone who may be interested in joining. See the WI Moodle for WI Programme examples.

Speaking Out

If your programme is lively and thought-provoking your members may find that they feel very strongly about a current issue which affects you locally, nationally or even internationally. If you want to take it further than just your WI meeting, you can, of course, approach the relevant authorities, your local councillors or MP. If, however, you want the support of other WI members there are two channels open to you.

1. You can submit a resolution to your Federation Council Meeting. Find out from your Federation office the date by which the resolutions should be sent in, and keep to that time. Leave plenty of time to discuss the topic thoroughly at your WI and get your members to find out as much as possible about the subject. Word your resolution carefully (your Federation Resolutions Adviser/WI Adviser will be pleased to help you) so that it is clear to whom you are addressing the proposal, and what action you want taken. Take a vote at your meeting, and make sure before going any further that the majority are in favour.

Now decide which member will propose the resolution at the Council meeting. She will need to speak for several minutes, and may need to answer questions, so choose someone who is good on her feet! The resolution will need a seconder, so look for another WI which may sympathise with your views.

2. You can submit a resolution to the NFWI Annual General Meeting. The Annual General Meeting is usually held in June, but the resolution will probably need to be submitted in the previous June/July - so you need to start well in advance. Look at the NFWI publication, *Speaking Out*, to make sure the subject is not already covered by a previous resolution. Discuss it fully at your meeting, and make sure the proposal is passed by a majority of your members.

Ask your federation office for help in wording the resolution correctly – they will recommend the Resolutions Adviser, or a WI Adviser, or another committee member who will be able to help you.

A good resolution should contain only one proposal, and should make it clear to whom it is addressed - for example, government or local authority. Avoid unnecessary detail.

Resolutions should be:

- ♦ Topical – fits with current areas of public interest or debate and with current issues within the NFWI calendar
- ♦ Timely – it is an appropriate time for looking at the issue, it is not ‘yesterday’s news’
- ♦ Targeted – the resolution has a clear and achievable objective
- ♦ Achievable – the resolution is calling for something meaningful and sensible which could be achieved
- ♦ Allies – the NFWI’s work will add value to the work of other organisations or can draw on support from others
- ♦ Accurate – it reflects the current situation and does not use outdated or obsolete information as its basis

All WIs receive a form to use when submitting a resolution. On this you should add all the background information and details you have discovered on the subject.

If your resolution is accepted, one of your members will be required to propose it at the Annual General Meeting. She should be someone who is prepared to research the subject very thoroughly, who is competent to speak in a large hall to several thousands, and who will be prepared to answer spontaneous questions.

The NFWI Public Affairs Department will provide help and support if your Resolution is accepted.

WI Advisers - a helping hand

Any WI can do with an outside opinion from time to time. It is easy to get stale or run out of ideas. Sometimes you will have problems and no immediate solutions. The person to turn to is a WI Adviser.

A WI Adviser is a WI member, but because she is particularly interested in the way the organisation runs, she has agreed to undertake special training. This means she will have visited the NFWI Headquarters in London and she will also have studied at Denman with other trainees from all over the country. She will have learned about many different sorts of WIs, and picked up plenty of good ideas.

You can make the most of her knowledge if you invite her to your WI - either to a full meeting, or to a committee meeting. She would also be happy to take an informal meeting to tell your members (new and old) about the wider aspects, structure and opportunities for members in the WI organisation.

Remember, your WI Adviser is there to help and is always willing to discuss any WI problems, in confidence of course.

Checklist 6: **Planning your year's programme**

- ♦ Are you introducing at least one different topic at each meeting?
- ♦ Have you taken full account of national and local issues affecting women's interests?
- ♦ Is there something for those with minority interests?
- ♦ Will there be space to discuss a major issue that may arise during the year?
- ♦ Have you remembered that in May you will need plenty of time to discuss the resolutions for the NFWI Annual General Meeting?
- ♦ Is there at least one meeting at which all the members will be involved?
- ♦ Is there an educational visit?
- ♦ Will there be opportunities to meet members from other WIs?
- ♦ Will the programme make others want to join?
- ♦ Extra activities should also be planned.

Checklist 7: **Costing your year's programme**

- ♦ Members are entitled to at least eleven meetings which will be free of charge.
- ♦ Make sure you have included all the extras (transport, entrance fees, etc.) in your budget.
- ♦ Find out the fee, and the traveling expense of each speaker.
- ♦ Money raising efforts may be necessary to ensure you have enough funds to pay for good quality speakers and activities.
- ♦ Make sure the programme gives good value for the subscription.

Checklist 8: Speakers, visits and activities

Speakers

- ♦ Prepare accurate instructions, including a map for finding your meeting place.
- ♦ Tell the speaker at what time he/she will be speaking, and for how long.
- ♦ Find out any special requirements for the meeting, collect the necessary equipment, checked plug sockets.
- ♦ Help speaker in with their equipment
- ♦ Send your speaker a reminder at least 2 weeks before the meeting.

Visits

Check all:

- Arrangements
- Costs
- Times
- Access

Activities

- ♦ Check all details with the speaker.
- ♦ Check that you have all the necessary equipment.

Checklist 9: Printing your programme

Make sure that:

- ♦ The information is accurate and well presented.
- ♦ You have you proof-read it before passing it for printing.
- ♦ The material on which the programme is to be printed will withstand constant use for a year.
- ♦ Everyone knows the date, time, place and content of each meeting.
- ♦ There is plenty of information about your WI, your own Federation and the NFWI
- ♦ You have budget enough for a professionally produced programme.
- ♦ You have printed plenty of copies.

Checklist 10: **Submitting resolutions**

When submitting a resolution make sure that-

- ♦ You have taken a vote on the resolution, and the majority of members were in favour.
- ♦ It is clear to whom the resolution is addressed.
- ♦ There is only one proposal - not several disguised as one.
- ♦ The wording is concise and unambiguous.
- ♦ You have consulted your federation Resolutions Adviser.
- ♦ Your proposer is aware of what will be expected of her.
- ♦ You have checked the date for submissions.
- ♦ You have checked Speaking Out for previous mandates/resolutions.

Checklist 11: **Ways of taking resolutions**

- ♦ Ask members who have attended a federation conference on the resolutions to each be responsible for giving facts on a resolution.
- ♦ Have group discussions, each group discussing one resolution and reporting recommendations to the whole WI for further discussion and voting.
- ♦ A WI Adviser, or other federation committee member can be invited to help you discuss the resolutions.

Checklist 12: **The role of a WI Adviser**

A WI Adviser can help you:

- ♦ To plan next year's programme.
- ♦ When discussing the resolutions for the next Annual General Meeting.
- ♦ To know what happens to your membership fees.
- ♦ To organise your Annual Meeting.
- ♦ With any WI related matters.

The names and telephone numbers of your WI Advisers are listed in your Federation Year Book/Handbook.

WI ADVISERS ARE HERE TO HELP

Part Three:

The WI member

Welcoming new members

A continuing flow of new members is essential to the future growth and well-being of the WI. It is from these women that the future policy-makers and leaders of the organisation will emerge.

It is very important that the first impression a new member gets of her local WI is positive and favourable. Otherwise she might not stay and certainly won't get involved.

What membership involves

Membership of a WI is open to all women and girls by payment of the annual subscription. A member is entitled to participate in all aspects of her WI's activities, including:

- ♦ Holding office or serving on a committee, sub-committee or working group
- ♦ Undertaking specific responsibility for a particular topic, event or activity
- ♦ Taking a full part in meetings and having access to the various information issued by the WI, including federation newsletters and financial statements
- ♦ Taking advantage of the learning opportunities offered by WI, Federation, the NFWI and Denman
- ♦ Representing her WI as a delegate at Federation or NFWI meetings.

If she is encouraged from the very outset to take an active part, a new member will gradually develop the confidence to take on more responsibility. From the beginning she can attend meetings and get to know how the business of the WI is planned and carried out.

She can take part in workshops, day schools and speaking activities, and become involved in the decision-making process which enables the organization to change with the times.

First steps

At your WI it should be somebody's direct responsibility to see that the welcome given to new members is planned and thorough - perhaps a Vice President or new members' hostess could do this with a Welcome Team. Make sure your MCS Representative enters new members' details on the MCS and includes their date of joining so that they can receive a welcome pack from the NFWI as well as their WI Life."

New members need to know about:

- ♦ The New Members' Information leaflet published by some federations
- ♦ The federation newsletter
- ♦ *WI Life*- the WI's own magazine, sent direct to each member (8 editions annually)

- ◆ The WI Moodle and how to register
- ◆ Denman - the organisation's own residential college where a great variety of courses are held. The course programme is available to view at www.denman.org.uk, or to access a hard copy telephone the college on: 01865 391991. Members can either pay for themselves or go on a bursary which may be available from your WI, group or Federation. Members should know how and when WI, group and Federation bursaries are awarded.
- ◆ The background and structure of the organisation.
- ◆ The meanings of the various names and sets of initials used in the organisation (see Glossary starting on page 60).

Transfer of membership

A member moving to another district may ask her WI Secretary to put her in touch with the Secretary of the nearest WI in her new area.

NFWI Associates

An NFWI Associate is someone who, for a variety of reasons, is unable to join a WI, but who wishes to have links with the organisation. On payment of a fee to the NFWI, part of which is passed to the Federation, she receives:

- Eight editions per year of WI Life, the WI membership magazine
- National and federation newsletters
- A copy of the NFWI Annual Review
- Invitations to events throughout the year
- There is also an online forum especially for Associates to keep in touch.

She is entitled to enter all national competitions, to attend courses at Denman and to apply to attend Federation classes/events/Council meetings at the same fee as WI members.

Dual Membership

If a WI member wishes to take part in the activities of a second WI, or to retain contact with a WI to which, for example, she used to belong prior to moving to a new area of the country, she is entitled on production of her current membership card, to attend meetings of the second WI on payment of the WI's share of the annual subscription only. She has voting rights on the matters of her second (or subsequent WI) but votes on Federation and national matters at her first WI. She may also become a member of her second/subsequent WI committee, subject to WI Rules 14 and 19.

Becoming a delegate

One of the most important contributions any member can make is to become a delegate at a Federation or NFWI meeting. In such a large organisation it is impossible for every member to attend every meeting and so the role of the delegate is vital in:

- ♦ representing the views of others to the particular meeting.
- ♦ receiving feedback from the meeting to pass on to her fellow members.

Members should be encouraged to volunteer for these opportunities. If plenty of people want to go, you can organise a ballot.

Delegate to what?

The types of meetings a delegate may attend are:

- ♦ Group Committee Meetings, if applicable. (Groups are organised in various ways in different Federations.)
- ♦ Federation Council Meetings.
- ♦ Federation sub-committee days, where there is an emphasis on training which will benefit the whole WI. For these meetings all delegates' expenses are paid from WI funds.
- ♦ The NFWI Annual General Meeting which is held every year.

The Pooling of Fares Scheme covers the cost of travel to the NFWI Annual General Meetings. A WI is responsible for the cost of any overnight accommodation and meals required, and must budget accordingly.

The linked delegate

A delegate may, on occasions, be asked to represent more than one WI. This is most likely to apply to the Annual General Meetings. How the delegate registers the decisions she has been instructed to give and how they will be collected from the WIs she represents will be fully explained at the appropriate time.

What does a delegate do?

Resolutions

A major responsibility of a delegate is to vote on various resolutions debated at the meeting according to the decisions taken by her own WI - who should have discussed the matters thoroughly and given their delegate the appropriate instructions.

On some issues the members will grant a delegate discretion on how to vote, but she will be required to include in her report her reasons for voting a particular way

How to vote

♦ Voting on each amendment

It must never be forgotten that each delegate should vote on every amendment, since the resolution, once amended, will never appear again in its original form.

♦ Vote on the substantive resolution

When all the amendments have been taken, the resolution in its final form (called the substantive resolution) is put to the meeting and a straight vote 'for' or 'against' is taken. This final voting must always be taken, even if no amendments have been passed and the wording of the resolution is unchanged.

♦ That the question be now put

If the discussion on a resolution or amendment is prolonged, and no new points are being raised, any delegate may ask that the question be now put. The Chairman must put this proposition to the meeting, after it has been seconded, and if the majority is in favour, a vote on the matter under discussion must be taken as soon as the mover of the resolution or amendment has been given the right of reply, and in this case no questions are allowed.

♦ Proceeding to the next business

If it is felt that no useful purpose will be served by taking a vote on a resolution or amendment, any delegate may propose that the meeting proceed to the next business. This proposition must be seconded and is open to debate; after which it is put to the meeting and, if carried by a three - quarters majority of those present and voting, the Chairman must proceed to the next item on the agenda at once without taking a vote on the original resolution or amendment. This proposition should only be resorted to on very rare occasions and for very good reasons.

♦ Leave of urgency at Council meeting and the General Meeting

No resolution which has not appeared on the agenda may be moved unless leave of urgency is granted. This should only be granted if the matter has arisen since the final date for submission of resolutions and needs immediate action.

Reporting back

A delegate's report should be brief, factual yet comprehensive giving a clear picture of how she viewed the meeting.

The report should be given a place on the WI's meeting agenda so it can be properly received.

A delegates' report form is included in the Annual General Meeting Agenda booklet or the proforma on page 59 and can be used.

Delegate’s report form

Date and place of meeting
.....

Chairman’s introduction
.....

Report of business session
.....

Report on resolutions (include notes on which resolutions went to a count
and what the majority was)
.....

Comments on speakers
.....

Report of guest speaker’s address
.....

Other comments
.....
.....

Glossary

ACWW	Associated Country Women of the World. A world-wide organisation of country-women's societies to which the NFWI belongs. Federations, WIs and WI members can belong in their own right.
Ad hoc	An ad hoc ('for this purpose') committee is one appointed only to carry out one particular piece of work. It functions in the same way as a sub-committee, and cannot hold office longer than the committee which appoints it.
Adopt Affiliation	In WI procedure, agree to put into practice. To be connected with another society, but not bound by its rules and policy; a WI may be connected with or affiliated to other societies provided that doing so does not interfere with its life as a WI and that the approval of the NFWI Board of Trustees has first been obtained.
AGM	A meeting of the NFWI open to all members under the act
Agenda	The agenda of a meeting is the programme of business which must be dealt with by that meeting, in the order in which it is to be considered.
Amendment	A proposal to alter the wording or details of a resolution without affecting the principle of the resolution. An amendment must be clearly worded to show exactly which part of the resolution it is proposed to alter. Amendments are voted on before the resolution and, if passed they at once become part of the resolution.
Articles of Association	See <i>Memorandum and Articles of Association</i> .
Balance Sheet	A statement of all assets and liabilities and not merely a record of receipts and payments. It shows the complete financial position of a society or company. The assets include the current value of all property belonging to the organisation, for example, furniture, land and investments.
Ballot	A system of secret voting by which voters mark their papers only with crosses and do not sign them. The voter drops her marked paper into a box and

eventually the votes are counted by the tellers. Thus, no one but the voter herself knows how she voted.

NFWI Board of Trustees	The leaders of the NFWI. Up to 15 members elected by the membership every two years. The Chairman of the Federations of Wales shall be a board member ex-officio.
Federation Board of Trustees	The elected leaders of the federation. Between 8 and 15 elected every two/three years by the members of the federation.
Budget	An estimate of receipts and payments, set out under headings of the money expected to be received and spent within a certain time.
Bursary	An amount of money set aside by a WI to be awarded to a member to be used for educational purposes such as a course at Denman.
Bye-Law	An addition to, or modification of the Constitution and Rules for Women's Institutes or federations which: a) holds good only for the particular WI or federation which makes it; b) does not conflict with the Rules; c) before being adopted by a WI has been sanctioned by the federation Board of Trustees.
Casting vote	In the event of voting at a meeting being equal, it is usual for the President to have a deciding vote in addition to her ordinary vote; this is known as the casting vote.
Committee	A smaller body elected from amongst the members of a larger body for the purpose of carrying out the policy laid down by the larger body. The committee deals with the detailed business between meetings of the larger body and reports to it at stated times.
Constitution	The constitution of a society includes the statement of its objects, together with the rules and principles which govern its conduct. It defines the general organisation and the connection of different parts one with another.
Co-option	The power of co-option is given to a committee by the body which elects it to add a number of members to its own number. In WI procedure, a co-opted member has the same rights and responsibilities as other members.

Decisions	Every WI has to take five decisions on certain points in the Rules on which there is some freedom of choice (See page 37).
Delegate	A member of WI elected to attend a meeting to vote according to the instructions which the WI has given. It is the duty of a delegate to present her society with a clear report of the meeting which she has attended.
Democratic	Applied to a government or an organisation, such as the NFWI, in which all rules give all members the same rights and obligations and decisions are made by majority vote.
Dual Membership	See page 55
Education Co-ordinator	A member appointed by her Federation to co-ordinate educational activities within its area.
Endowment Fund	A sum of money settled on an institution or society, not to be used up in current expenditure but to be invested so as to provide a permanent annual income.
Ex-officio	The holder of a certain office is often entitled to be a member of some committee or other body by reason of her office or ex-officio. The officers of a committee are always ex-officio members of the sub-committees appointed by it. Anyone ceasing to hold office at once loses any ex-officio rights because these belong not to any person but to the office itself. An ex-officio member has the full privileges and voting rights of all other committee members.
Extraordinary General Meeting	A General Meeting other than an Annual General Meeting.
Federation	A group of states or societies - in the case of WIs - joined together in one body with one government. In the WI this applies to the County or Island Federation grouping to which each WI belongs.
Financial Statement	A periodical statement of receipts and payments and current finances of a society or company.
Hon	Short for Honorary, applied to unpaid officers.
Honorarium	A fee for specific services.

Independent Financial Examiner	A person appointed by a small charity/organisation to examine its accounts and to report as to whether or not they are correct.
Lie on the table	When a meeting decides that a particular letter or paper shall lie on the table this means that it decides to take no action on the matter dealt within it. There can be no further discussion on the paper, but it is literally left on the table, and anyone present may read it.
Link delegate	A member appointed to represent more than one WI at Annual General Meetings and Extraordinary General Meetings.
Majority Vote	The vote of the greater number.
Mandate	A command or instruction given by the electors to the elected, for example, resolutions passed at an Annual General Meeting give the NFWI Board of Trustees mandates or instructions on how the WIs wish it to act.
MCS	The Membership Communication System, a database of every members' details which enables the mailing of <i>WI Life</i> . Each WI is encouraged to appoint an MCS Rep to update its' members details.
Membership Fees	The fees which must be paid annually to the NFWI by all WIs and WI Associate members.
Memorandum and Articles of Association	The legal constitution of the NFWI and incorporated federations detailing its character, powers, rights and duties.
Minutes	The official account of the proceedings at a committee meeting of the WI. Minutes should give detailed and accurate information regarding policy, decisions and resolutions. In WI procedure all minutes are confidential. Minute books should be carefully preserved so that they are available for reference.
Moodle	An online learning environment just for WI members.
Motion	A resolution.
Mover	A proposer.
National	Meeting of Federation Chairmen and

Council	Treasurers, with the NFWI Board of Trustees, to discuss matters of policy and finance including the amount and division of subscriptions or membership fees.
Nem Con	A resolution is said to be carried Nem Con when no one has voted against it, but some of those present have abstained from voting.
Nominate	To put forward the name of a person as a candidate for a particular position.
Nominee	Is the person who is nominated.
Non-party Political	Open to members of all political parties or schools of thought.
Non-sectarian	Open to members of all religious faiths or schools of thought.
Notice	To give notice of a motion is to announce that one intends to bring forward a resolution on a certain point at a later meeting.
Officers	Those who hold office - President, Vice-President, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary.
Out of order	Not in accordance with the rules of procedure or the rules or policy of the society. The chairman/President of a meeting may rule that a subject is out of order, which means that it may not be discussed.
Point of order	A question raised in a deliberative assembly as to whether proceedings are according to the rules.
Pooling of Fares	An amount payable annually to the NFWI by each WI and federation. The resulting pool of money is used to pay the travelling expenses of each delegate to the NFWI Annual General Meeting. Some Federations operate a Pooling of Fares scheme for Council Meetings.
Policy	A course of action adopted by an organisation. This course of action must be within the constitution and rules of the organisation and, in a democratic organisation, is always decided upon by majority vote.
Procedure	The rules laid down for the management of business at meetings.

Proposer	The person who brings forward a resolution at a meeting. After being proposed, a resolution must be seconded by another person to show that it has support behind it. Only after a resolution has been proposed and seconded can it be discussed and voted upon. If a proposal comes from the chair it does not need to be seconded.
Proxy	A member who is appointed to take the place and fulfil the duties of an elected member in her absence.
Quorum	The least number of members who must be present at a meeting in order that any decisions taken may hold good. A committee's standing orders should lay down the number necessary to form a quorum.
Recommendation	A proposal or suggestion put forward by a committee for endorsement and approval by the majority of members. In the case of a sub-committee, recommendations are made to the main committee, which decides whether or not these recommendations should be endorsed.
Record	A precis of events and decisions at a WI meeting, written in the form of minutes.
Referred Back	If the committee does not agree with the recommendation of a sub-committee, it is usual, unless the matter is urgent, to refer back or send back the recommendation to the sub-committee to be reconsidered.
Regulation	Some agreed detail of management which is not of sufficient importance to necessitate the passing of a bye-law.
Representative	A member sent to a meeting on behalf of a body with full discretionary powers to vote on behalf of that body.
Rescind a motion	To cancel a previous decision. It is usual at a meeting not to rescind any motion recently carried unless notice to this effect has appeared on the agenda of the meeting and is passed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.
Resolution	A positive statement of opinion put forward for consideration at a meeting. A resolution calls for action, and should therefore deal with one subject only, and be clearly worded so that a straight vote can be taken on it.

Returning Officers	The persons appointed to count the votes in the ballot for the election of the NFWI Board of Trustees.
Right of Reply	When a resolution has been fully discussed, the mover has the right of reply. After the mover has made her reply no other member shall speak for or against the resolution. The mover of an amendment does not have the right of reply unless the amendment is passed and greatly alters the resolution, thus becoming the substantive resolution. When several amendments have been passed, the Chairman decides to whom the right of reply shall be given.
Rules	See Constitution. There are 4 separate booklets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Constitution and Rules for Women's Institutes are in a separate booklet (green booklet). ♦ Constitution and Rules for County Federations (pink booklet). ♦ Memorandum and Articles of Association for County Federations (blue booklet). ♦ The NFWI Memorandum and Articles of Association (white booklet).
Ruling	An explanation, in cases of doubt, of what is the correct procedure in a certain case, or the exact meaning of some rule or regulation. Rulings are sought from higher authority, or from the Chairman of a meeting.
Standing Orders	The regulations drawn up by a meeting, defining its methods of work.
Standing sub-committee	One appointed to serve throughout the term of office of the committee which appoints it.
Sub-committee	A subordinate body appointed by a committee to deal with matters covered by its terms of reference (Terms of reference, see below) and to recommend necessary action to the committee. A sub-committee must report the proceedings of each of its meetings to the committee which appointed it, and the recommendations of the sub-committee cannot be acted upon until they have been endorsed by the committee, excepting when the sub-committee has been given special powers to carry out some particular detailed piece of work (see also Standing sub-committee and Ad hoc).
Tellers	a) Impartial persons, usually two, appointed to take charge of the arrangements at an election, to see that

	all is done in order, to count the votes and make out a list of those elected during the meeting; b) Persons appointed by the meeting to count the votes of delegates.
Tellers' Chart	A form used by Tellers for recording votes, which should be used in secret ballots.
Terms of Reference	The definition of the powers and duties of a committee or sub-committee drawn up by the body which appoints it or laid down in the rules.
Trustee	Members of the NFWI Board, Federation Board or WI Committee are all charity trustees. Please refer to the Charity Commission's 'The Essential Trustee' booklet for more information on the basic duties of a charity trustee.
Unanimous	A resolution carried unanimously when all voters present have voted in favour.
WI Adviser	A member appointed by the NFWI to promote its policy within her own Federation. She is the only member able to form and suspend WIs and supervise their 'enlargement' (WI Rule 45).
WI Guide	An editorial style document to provide WIs with inspiration and information about running their WI with links to useful resources on the WI Moodle.
WI Life	The membership magazine of the WI, delivered direct to each member 8 times a year.

Your questions answered

As an officer - or a member - of the WI, you will be asked for a whole range of information about your organisation. In this section we try to answer the most common questions you will face.

What is the WI for?

Its purpose is to provide a democratically controlled educational and social organisation for women offering the opportunity of working and learning together to improve the quality of life in the community and to enable them to develop their own skills and talents. It is the largest voluntary women's organisation in the United Kingdom and is non-sectarian and non-party political.

How and when did the organisation begin?

The first WI in the United Kingdom met in 1915 at Llanfairpwll, Isle of Anglesey, North Wales. The WI was started in Canada in 1897 by Adelaide Hoodless in Stoney Creek, Ontario. Her fourth child died from what she believed was her own ignorance of hygiene and child care and so she started classes for the local women on domestic science. From these beginnings the WI has evolved.

How big is it and how is it organised?

It has a total membership of over 210,000, spread throughout England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Through its affiliation to the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) it has links with nine million women in 70 countries. It also has close links with the European Community and supports projects for women in the Third World.

WIs - the membership belong to about 6500+ separate WIs. These vary in size from less than 10 members to more than 100. Originally based exclusively in rural areas, the WI welcomes members wherever they live. Each WI is self-governing within the framework of the WI Constitution and Rules.

Federations - the WIs are grouped to form 69 County and Island Federations.

The NFWI - Together the WIs and County and Island Federations make up the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Each part of the WI is run by a committee of elected members, including the NFWI Board of Trustees. The headquarters of the NFWI is in London.

How is it funded?

The largest part of the WI's income comes from the annual subscriptions. It receives some grant funding from official sources with special projects financed by educational trusts or by commercial sponsors. Some income is derived from investments. The NFWI is a registered charity and is a company limited by guarantee (incorporated).

What does the WI offer?

On a regular basis it offers courses, conferences, social and fun activities in music, art, craft, current affairs, sports, home-making and other practical or leisure activities. Training is available in many different subjects, often leading to a certificate. Experience of committee work, practice in public speaking and insight into the most pressing social, political and environmental issues of today lead many WI members to stand for parish, district and county councils, to become magistrates and to take a more effective and informed part in public life.

Members are informed of new developments in social and environmental affairs through NFWI. Issues of particular interest to the membership are researched and promoted and NFWI's policies are promoted to government, opposition parties and other appropriate bodies. The work in this field aims to:

- develop policies
- increase membership
- promote an interest in current affairs
- encourage members to take a greater role in public life
- lobby appropriate authority

Representation on many outside organisations and official committees is a reflection of the reputation the WI has gained over the years through its leadership and continuing work in this field.

What is Denman?

It is the WI's own residential adult education college. It is located at Marcham in Oxfordshire and was bought in 1948. The main rooms at Denman are located in an elegant Georgian country house set in 17 acres of landscaped gardens. In the 70s, 80s and 90s new student accommodation was built together with an impressive range of up-to-date classrooms and a home economics kitchen. Every year some 6,000 members and non members take 500 or so one - to four-day courses which cover a wide range of subjects and activities.

Does the WI publish a magazine?

Yes, WI Life is a colour magazine and covers major WI events and concerns as well as the usual features of a good women's magazine. In addition, Federations each produce a newsletter for their member WIs, and the NFWI has a monthly newsletter sent direct to Federations and available on the WI Moodle for members to download.

Further information about any aspect of the WI can be obtained from your local federation office or from:

The National Federation of Women's Institutes

104 New Kings Road
London SW6 4LY
Tel: 0207 371 9300
Fax: 0207 736 3652
Website: www.theWI.co.uk

NFWI Unit

Denman
Marcham, Abingdon
Oxon OX13 6NW
Tel: 01865 391788
E-mail address: denman@nfwi-unit.org.uk

NFWI Wales

19 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9HA
Tel: 02920 221712
E-mail address: walesoffice@nfwi-wales.org.uk

Denman College

Marcham, Abingdon
Oxon OX13 6NW
Tel: 01865 391 991
Website: www.denman.org.uk

Additional Reading

- ♦ Speaking Out
- ♦ On with the Show
- ♦ The WI Guide
- ♦ NFWI Annual Review
- ♦ Legalities and fundraising- please refer to the separate 'Fundraising Guidelines' document available to download from the WI Moodle

Appendices

- ♦ WI Constitution and Rules
- ♦ Guidelines for setting up a WI Bursary
- ♦ Annual Meetings made easy

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S INSTITUTES
OF
ENGLAND AND WALES, JERSEY, GUERNSEY AND THE ISLE OF MAN

CONSTITUTION AND RULES
FOR
WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

(As amended by special resolution of the company passed on the
day of 6 June 2002)

*(*in the text denotes a choice of terminology.
Delete whichever is not appropriate.)*

DEFINITIONS

1. In this constitution:

“The Committee” and **“Committee Members”** are the charity trustees of the WI as defined in the Charities Act 1993.

“The Federation” means the Federation of Women’s Institutes with a Constitution in the form laid down from time to time by the National Federation for Federations and of which the WI is to be a member in accordance with Rule 40 of this Constitution.

“Holding Trustees” are the individuals appointed by the Committee to hold the legal title of property of the WI and who act on the instructions of the Committee.

“The National Council” means the National Council of the National Federation.

“The National Federation” means the National Federation of Women’s Institutes of England, Wales, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man a body incorporated under the Companies Act 1985.

“NFWI Associate” means an NFWI Associate of the National Federation.

“Women’s Institute” has the meaning prescribed by Rule 5 and “the WI” means this Women’s Institute.

“WI Adviser” means a WI Member appointed annually by the National Federation on the recommendation of the Federation to support Women’s Institutes and who has the powers and functions conferred on her by the Federation’s Constitution or otherwise by the Federation.

“WI Dual Member” means a member of another WI who becomes a dual member of this WI in accordance with Rule 13.

“WI Link Delegate” refers to a representative appointed in accordance with the Articles of the National Federation to represent Women’s Institutes at general meetings of the National Federation.

NAME

2. The name of the Institute is “The Women’s Institute”. In this Constitution it is called “the WI”. The members of the WI may decide to change the name of the WI but only with the consent of the Federation Board of Trustees*. A resolution to change the name requires a three quarters majority of the votes cast by the WI members.

CHARACTER AND OBJECTS OF THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE ORGANISATION

CHARACTER

3. The Women's Institute organisation is based on the ideals of fellowship, truth, tolerance and justice. All women who are interested in issues associated with rural life, including arts, crafts and sciences, may join, no matter what their views on religion or politics may be. The organisation is non-sectarian and non-party political. This does not prevent Women's Institutes from concerning themselves with matters of political and religious significance, provided the views and rights of minorities are respected and provided the organisation is never used for party-political or sectarian purposes. Women's Institutes are charitable and everything they do must be consistent with that special legal status.

OBJECTS

4. The main purposes of the Women's Institute organisation are to enable women who are interested in issues associated with rural life, including arts, crafts and sciences, to improve and develop conditions of rural life, to advance their education in citizenship, in public questions both national and international, in music, drama and other cultural subjects and in all branches of agriculture, handicrafts, home economics, health and social welfare. It seeks to give to women the opportunity of working together through the Women's Institute organisation, and of putting into practice those ideals for which it stands.

CONSTITUTION

5. A Women's Institute is an association of women with a constitution in the form laid down from time to time for Women's Institutes by the National Federation.
6. A Women's Institute may be formed in a village, town, city or district where the Federation considers that there is a need for an organisation for women interested in issues associated with rural life including arts, crafts and sciences. No Women's Institute may be formed unless it has been visited by a WI Adviser.

OBJECTS OF THE WI

7. The objects of the WI are to further the purposes of the Women's Institute organisation.

POWERS OF THE WI

8. To further its objects, the WI may:
 - (a) provide a centre for social intercourse and activities and organise courses of instruction, lectures and other educational activities;
 - (b) develop co-operative enterprise;
 - (c) promote international understanding among women interested in issues associated with rural life, including arts, crafts and sciences;
 - (d) raise funds by way of subscription, donation or otherwise, provided that the WI may not undertake any substantial permanent trading activities in raising funds;
 - (e) trade in the course of carrying out the objects of the WI (including making reasonable charges for any services) or as an ancillary activity to carrying out the objects (and incorporate any wholly owned company to carry on such trade);
 - (f) acquire any property and any rights and privileges and construct, maintain and alter any buildings;
 - (g) make regulations for any property of the WI;
 - (h) subject to any consents that may be required by law, dispose of or turn to account all or any of the property or assets of the WI;
 - (i) invest the moneys of the WI not immediately required for its objects in or upon such investments, securities or property as may be thought fit and as may be appropriate for the investment of charitable funds;
 - (j) do all such other lawful things as may further the objects of the WI.

MEMBERSHIP

9. Membership of the WI is open to women. They may join by paying the required annual subscription. A WI member is bound by the rules of the National Federation and of the WI for so long as she is a member.
10. The Committee may terminate the membership of any individual after consulting the Federation Board of Trustees* PROVIDED THAT the individual member concerned may within 28 days of being informed of the Committee's decision give notice to the Committee of her intention to make an oral or written appeal to the members of the WI at its next meeting AND PROVIDED FURTHER that if the members of the WI uphold the Committee's decision to terminate membership the individual member concerned may within 28 days of that decision submit a written representation for consideration by the Federation Board of Trustees* and the National Federation Board of Trustees. The decision of the National Federation Board of Trustees is final but before reaching that decision it must consult the Federation /Board of Trustees*.
11. The WI may adopt a byelaw in accordance with Rule 39 below to limit membership.
12. A member whose membership is terminated ceases to have any of the rights or privileges of membership.
13. Women who are already members of another WI may become dual members of this WI by paying the required annual subscription. Dual membership may be terminated by following the procedure described in Rule 10 above.
14. A dual member of the WI may participate and vote at the meetings of both/all WIs but she may only vote on constitutional matters and resolutions on public affairs or stand for election as an Officer, Committee member or Delegate of the WI at her main WI. The WI may alter this provision by adopting byelaws to permit a dual member to stand for election as an Officer or Committee Member but an Officer or Committee Member of another WI may not stand for election unless the Federation/Board of Trustees* consents in accordance with Rule 19.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

15. Each WI member must pay a subscription on first joining the WI and in January of each year thereafter. New members joining in October, November and December pay a subscription at the rate which is payable in January of the following year but do not pay again during that following year. The rate or rates of the subscription will be determined in accordance with the Articles of Association of the National Federation in consultation with the National Council.
16. Each WI dual member must pay to the WI that proportion of the annual subscription which is to be retained by the WI.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Appointment and retirement

17. At the Annual Meeting the WI members elect in accordance with rules 27 to 29:
 - (a) at least three Committee Members; and
 - (b) a President from the elected Committee Members.

The elected Committee Members may co-opt up to three additional members as long as there is always a majority of elected members. Vacancies on the Committee may be filled by co-option until the next Annual Meeting of the WI.

18. The officers of the WI shall be: the President, Vice President or Vice Presidents (up to three), Secretary and Treasurer. The WI may combine the offices of Treasurer and Secretary or the offices of Treasurer and Vice President if the Federation Board of Trustees* consents. No other offices may be combined.
19. No person may be a Committee Member of any other WI unless the Federation Board of Trustees* consents.
20. The Vice President or Vice Presidents, the Secretary and the Treasurer are elected by the Committee from its members.
21. The WI may terminate the appointment of an office-holder at a special meeting any time. If the office of President becomes vacant the WI members may elect a Committee Member to fill the vacancy. If the office of Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer becomes vacant the Committee may elect one of their members to fill the vacancy.

22. All officers and members of the Committee may be re-elected subject to any bye-law of the WI limiting terms of office.

Meetings of the Committee

23. The Committee must meet at least six times in the year. The quorum at Committee Meetings is three or one third of the Committee Members (rounded up) if that is greater than three. The Committee Members are the charity trustees of the WI as defined in the Charities Act 1993. Their role is to manage the affairs of the WI, arrange the time and place of meetings, outline the programme and present it to the members of the WI for approval, and administer the funds of the WI in consultation with the members. The Committee must keep minutes of its meetings.

Sub-committees

24. The Committee may appoint sub-committees of such persons as it thinks fit and determine the terms of reference, powers, duration and composition of any such sub-committee. The Chairman of each sub-committee or someone appointed for the purpose must report the proceedings of each meeting of the sub-committee to the WI Committee. Sub-committees may not hold funds or have power to dispose of the funds of the WI.

DELEGATES

25. At the Annual Meeting or at any other appropriate meeting the WI shall appoint from its members one or more delegates (and if they think fit one or more deputies) to attend meetings of the Federation Council and general meetings of the National Federation.
26. Delegates are entitled to all reasonable and proper out-of-pocket expenses incurred in representing the WI in accordance with guidelines issued from time to time by the Federation Board of Trustees*. Any dispute concerning the entitlement to or the amount of expenses is to be decided by the Federation Board of Trustees*.

ELECTION

27. All elections are to be conducted by secret ballot as specified from time to time by the National Federation. No person may hold office or vote unless she is a member and has paid her subscription for the current year. Persons employed by the WI

are not eligible for nomination as members of the Committee or as honorary officers.

28. Each WI member may nominate candidates for election up to the number of places to be filled on the Committee. All candidates must be members of the WI.
29. The delegates to attend meetings of the Federation and to the National Federation are to be elected by secret ballot if there are more nominations than vacancies.

MEETINGS

WI Meetings

30. A minimum of eleven meetings open to all members should be held each year in whatever month or months and at whatever hour and place decided upon by the members or , if necessary, by the WI Committee.

Annual Meeting:

31. An Annual Meeting must be held at a time agreed by the Federation Board of Trustees*. Notice of the meeting giving the date, place and hour of the meeting must be included in the annual programme of meetings given to each member. The retiring Committee must present for adoption a report of the work of the year and statement of accounts. (See rule 37).

Special Meeting:

32. The Secretary must convene a Special Meeting whenever directed to do so by the Committee, or at the written request of at least one-quarter of the paid up members. Notice of the meeting must be sent by the Secretary to each member of the WI at least ten days in advance, setting out the date, place and hour of the meeting and a note of the purpose for which it is called. The quorum for Special Meetings is one quarter of the WI members .

NFWI ASSOCIATES

33. An NFWI Associate may participate at any meeting of the WI on condition that she makes such reasonable contribution to the cost of the meeting as the Committee may decide.
34. Any dispute concerning the status of an NFWI Associate is to be decided by the National Federation Board of Trustees.

FINANCE

35. The Committee must open a bank account in the name of the WI and authorise at least three members, one of whom must be an officer, to sign cheques on behalf of the WI. All cheques drawn on the account must be signed by at least two authorised persons.
36. The funds of the WI must be applied for the purpose of carrying out the objects of the WI in accordance with its constitution and for no other purpose.
37. The Treasurer must keep proper accounts of the finances of the WI and a statement of the accounts for the last financial year independently examined or audited as required by the Charities Act 1993 or as otherwise specified from time to time by the National Federation must be presented by the Committee to the Annual Meeting and be available to all members.

PROPERTY

38. The title to all real or personal property which may be acquired by or on behalf of the WI must be vested in at least two and not more than four individuals as holding trustees or in the Official Custodian for Charities or in some other corporation lawfully entitled to act as custodian trustee.

BYE-LAWS

39. The WI may make bye-laws in addition to the Constitution by a resolution passed by two thirds of the members present and voting at an Annual Meeting of the WI or a Special Meeting called for the purpose. The proposed bye-laws must be sent to every member of the WI together with the notice calling the meeting. No bye-law is valid if it conflicts with the Constitution of the National Federation or Federation, or with this Constitution. Before being put into action, a bye-law must be approved by the Board of Trustees* of the Federation. Bye-laws may relate to membership, tenure of office, the holding of meetings and any other matter approved by the National Federation Board of Trustees.

FEDERATION MEMBERSHIP

40. On signing the Constitution the WI will become a member of the Federation (or if the Federation is incorporated the WI will become entitled to appoint Representative Members to the Federation) in whose area the WI is situated and must thenceforward comply with the Constitutions for the time being of the National Federation and the Federation. After one year the WI may, if desired, be transferred by the National Federation Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Boards of Trustees of the Federations concerned to whichever Federation is easiest of access. A transfer may only be authorised in cases of exceptional difficulty.
41. The WI must comply with the following conditions.
- (a) **Subscriptions:** On 31 March in each year the WI must pay a proportion of the annual subscriptions due from its members to the Federation and to the National Federation. The proportion to be paid and how it is to be divided between the Federation and the National Federation is decided by the National Federation Board of Trustees in consultation with the National Council. Where no Federation exists the whole sum is to be paid directly to the National Federation. The amount payable is to be calculated on the basis of the total number of members whose names are recorded in the WI's membership register on that date. A newly formed WI is not required to make the payment in the year of formation.
 - (b) **Reports:** The WI must supply membership, financial and statistical returns and reports of meetings to the National Federation and the Federation whenever required to do so.
 - (c) **Affiliation:** The WI must obtain the sanction of the Board of Trustees of the National Federation before affiliating to the county or central headquarters of any organisation outside the National Federation.

Pooling of Fares

42. The cost of fares of delegates attending meetings of the Federation Council may be shared by the Federation and member Women's Institutes if the Federation Board of Trustees* so decides.
43. The cost of fares of the Federation Representatives and WI Link Delegates and Proxies attending general meetings of the

National Federation shall be shared by all Federations and Women's Institutes in such manner as the Board of Trustees of the National Federation may decide.

ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION

44. This Constitution may be altered at a general meeting of the National Federation by a resolution passed by two thirds of the votes cast. No such alteration may be further altered until three years have expired unless a resolution to alter it is duly proposed at a general meeting of the National Federation by the National Federation Board of Trustees, or at least seven Federation Councils. If a proposed alteration of the Constitution is defeated at a general meeting, neither the proposed alteration nor an alteration which in the opinion of the Chairman of the National Federation is similar in substance may be brought forward for three years except by the National Federation Board of Trustees or at least seven Federation Councils.

ENLARGEMENT

45. A WI ("the continuing WI") may be enlarged by absorbing a WI ("the terminating WI") provided that:
- (a) The consent of the Federation Board of Trustees* to the enlargement has first been obtained.
 - (b) Each of the terminating WI and the continuing WI then at Special Meetings attended by at least one third of the members entitled to attend and by a WI Adviser approves a resolution setting out the terms of the enlargement (including the name of the enlarged WI) by a majority of three quarters of the members present and voting on the resolution by secret ballot.
46. When the terminating WI is absorbed by the continuing WI:
- (a) The Treasurer of the terminating WI must first discharge its outstanding liabilities out of the funds of the terminating WI; and
 - (b) Any remaining property of the terminating WI and the records of the terminating WI must then be transferred to the continuing WI for its free and independent use.

TRANSFER OF PROPERTY

47. The WI may transfer property of any kind to a newly formed WI to which members are to transfer or have transferred their membership or of which would be members of the WI are to become members provided that:
- (a) The consent of the Federation Board of Trustees* has first been obtained; and
 - (b) The WI then at a Special Meeting called for the purpose and attended by at least one third of the members entitled to attend and by a WI Adviser approves a resolution to transfer the property by a majority of three quarters of the members present and voting on the resolution.

CLOSURE OR SUSPENSION

48. The WI may be closed or its activities suspended provided that:
- (a) The Federation Board of Trustees* has first been informed of the intention to close or suspend activities; and
 - (b) The WI then at a Special Meeting called for the purpose and attended by at least one third of the members entitled to attend and by a WI Adviser approves a resolution by secret ballot to close or suspend activities by a majority of three quarters of the members present and voting on the resolution.
49. The WI may be closed or its activities suspended on the grounds that its conduct has been contrary to its objectives or detrimental to the best interests of the movement by the Federation Board of Trustees* after consultation with and in accordance with an authority from the National Federation Board of Trustees having first given the WI the opportunity to submit a written representation for consideration by the Federation Board of Trustees* and National Federation Board of Trustees before a final decision is made.
50. If the WI decides at a Special Meeting to close or suspend its activities, or if the Federation Board of Trustees* closes or suspends the activities of the WI:
- (a) The Treasurer of the WI must discharge its outstanding liabilities out of the funds of the WI;

- (b) A scheme approved by the majority of the members for the care or disposal of any property owned by the WI other than money or investments, must be submitted to the Federation Board of Trustees* for its approval. If the Federation Board of Trustees* objects to the scheme, the matter must be referred to the National Federation Board of Trustees, which may amend or alter the scheme as it thinks fit. The decision of the National Federation Board of Trustees is final;
- (c) The WI records must be forwarded for safe custody to the Federation Board of Trustees*;
- (d) The balance of the funds remaining after the payment of all outstanding liabilities shall be handed over to the Board of Trustees* of the Federation, to be held by them until the WI is revived, or for three years or until a new WI is established which in the opinion of the Federation Board of Trustees* serves the area formerly served by the WI whichever is the shorter period. If at the end of that time the WI has not been revived, the funds (including any income accrued) are to be retained by the Federation.

END

GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP WI BURSARIES (October 2002)

INTRODUCTION

We have received several requests for advice or guidelines on how to set up a bursary within a WI.

This section includes ideas on what needs to be taken into account. We hope you will find it helpful.

Should you have any further questions please contact the Senior Administrative Secretary at the NFWI Unit, Denman, Marcham, Oxon, OX13 6NW, or by email, denman@nfwl-unit.co.uk who would be very happy to answer your queries.

AWARDING A BURSARY

If you decide to award a bursary, draw up guidelines which clearly outline the conditions under which the bursary is awarded and the amount of money to be allocated.

WHAT WOULD THE BURSARY BE FOR?

1. A Denman course
3. An accredited Federation course
4. A Federation course
5. Any other course

WHO WOULD THE BURSARY BE FOR?

Decide who will be eligible either

- Full members only

or

- All members including dual members

THE PROCESS

- ♦ Decide how much and how often the bursary is to be offered.
- ♦ Decide what time of year the bursary is to be drawn.
- ♦ Draw a winner and a reserve.
- ♦ Decide how soon the winner has to apply/take up the bursary. Offer the reserve the option of taking up a course if the winner fails to apply or take up the course in the allotted time.
- ♦ Decide on the time scale in which the bursary has to be taken up.

- ♦ Decide if you want the winner to do something in return for being awarded the bursary, ie give a talk/demonstration, cascade the information etc.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Remember to place the bursary amount in the WI budget for the year of the allocation.

Try to be realistic in the amount of the bursary - if too small an amount is given the winning member may not be able to find the difference say for a Denman course. It is better to make an award every other or every third year rather than give a small bursary every year.

Cheques for the course should be made out in the name of the provider, e.g. Denman College. Alternatively, payment could be made to the bursary holder on receipt of proof of payment.

Why not organise a fundraising event to cover costs of the bursary rather than using existing WI funds?

ANNUAL MEETINGS MADE EASY

The Annual Meeting is the most important meeting of the WI year, when members survey the past and plan for the future. If well run it can be a most enjoyable and stimulating meeting.

WI Handbook, the NFWI guide to running a WI, contains some advice on running your Annual meeting and includes a specimen agenda. The paragraph numbers in this leaflet correspond to the numbers on the agenda. Officers should read the notes in WI Handbook that tell them how to prepare for the Annual Meeting, particularly with regard to preparation of the committee's Annual Report, the Annual Financial Statement and the preparations for committee election.

1. Tellers should be invited from a neighbouring WI to conduct the election of president, even if you think that the current president will be continuing. The **Guidance Notes for Tellers** should be made available to them.

2. Secret ballot for committee. This should take place before the start of the meeting in a room or area set aside for the purpose, and is conducted by the tellers. Before the start of the business it is advisable for the president to ask if everybody who should do has voted, and if so, declare the ballot room closed. **If you have no election**, no mention of the committee is made at this stage of the meeting.

3.4.5 The normal monthly business takes place before the Annual Meeting business.

6. Review of byelaws and decisions. Decisions are made when a WI is formed, and concern such details as date and place of meeting and age at which members can join. If there is any suggestion that any of these decisions should be changed, it is at this point in the meeting that it should be done.

Byelaws are rules made by an individual WI relating to that WI only. Many were made at a time when WIs had waiting lists and relate to minimum attendance. Some concern length of service on committee. Many are way out of date. Committees should look carefully at their WI's byelaws before the Annual Meeting and propose rescinding them if they are no longer relevant.

7. Resolutions. It is very rare for resolutions to be put in a WI, but if they are, then this is where they are discussed.

8. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner for the coming year. This could alternatively be done at a later date, when the new Treasurer presents her budget. The WI's accounts for the year and the Financial Statement must be approved by an independent examiner. They do not need a full audit.

9. The Treasurer then presents the Financial Statement. She should summarise the statement, pointing out the most important factors. **She should not** read out every single figure. It helps the members to understand the statement if copies are available for them to read while she is speaking. She should have all the relevant papers to hand in case there are any questions. At the close of the statement she should say "I propose the adoption of the Financial Statement". The president will then ask for a seconder, and when the statement has been seconded questions will be invited. After this, a vote is taken on the adoption of the statement.

10. The Committee's Annual Report. This must be drawn up and written by the secretary and passed by the committee before being presented. It should be in the form of a progress report on the past year and include such things as an increase or decrease in membership, average attendance at monthly meetings and attendance at Federation or National events. Members like to hear about activities or social events, and successes in Group or Federation competitions. Just a few outstanding speakers can be mentioned, but avoid listing the speakers month by month. The WI involvement in the local community should be included. The Annual Report is read by the secretary and adoption is proposed by the president at the end of her address.

11. President's Address. This sometimes causes concern to presidents, but it should only consist of an informal talk of five minutes or so. It is a chance for the president to thank her fellow officers and the committee for all the work that they do (but don't make it sound too arduous or you will not get a new committee!) It is risky to try and name everybody who helps in the WI – people can get upset if they are forgotten. Better to mention only outstanding contributions and those who are retiring, and then end the thanks with a general statement that covers everybody who helps the WI to function.

The president's address is also an opportunity for the president to get over any special message that she feels is important. The president should end her talk by saying "I propose the adoption of the Annual Report". No seconder is needed because the proposal comes from the chair. Before asking the meeting to approve the adoption by a show of hands, she should give the opportunity for discussion and questions, encouraging members to make comments or criticism. The report must then be formally adopted by a show of hands.

12. WI Adviser. If a WI Adviser is attending your meeting she will use this opportunity to tell you about coming events in the Federation. Alternatively, you can arrange beforehand for her to talk for a few moments about a specific aspect of WI such as Denman college or *WI Life*.

13. Result of ballot for Committee. If there has been a ballot the tellers will now give the list of elected members to the WI Adviser to read out. The names of the new committee should also be written on a board or

large piece of paper for the members to see. The tellers should seal the voting papers in an envelope and arrange for them to be taken to WI House for safe keeping. If just the correct number is standing, these names will be read. If there are not enough names for committee, then the WI Adviser will try and find the extra people to fill the places. **If you are seriously short of volunteers**, please get in touch with your WI Adviser before the meeting because plans may have to be in hand for suspension of your WI.

14. Election of the president. This happens every year, even if the current president is willing to stand. Either the WI Adviser or the tellers will conduct the election. The members nominate from amongst the new committee. Those nominated are asked to sign “yes” or “no” on a paper to indicate whether they are willing to stand. If there is more than one yes, then there is an election. If they all say no, then the arm-twisting starts!

15. Thanks. The retiring president now takes the chair again, and thanks are given to the WI Adviser and the tellers. It is customary for the secretary to arrange for a member to thank the president and committee for a successful year.

16. Social Time. As the Annual Meeting is a business meeting, it is important to have a relaxing session at the end of the meeting. A light-hearted quiz or game in which all members can take part can be most enjoyable at the end of a long meeting.