

LFWI GUIDANCE ON PREPARATION FOR AND RUNNING THE ANNUAL MEETING

INTRODUCTION

This guidance from **LFWI sets out a recommended procedure** that complies with the WI Constitution, along with the **rationale (Appendix 1)** for taking such actions. Below is a summary, with key points in bold and more detailed guidance attached at Appendices 1 to 5.

FREQUENCY AND NOTIFICATIONS

- A **new WI** must hold an Annual Meeting within 15 months of formation.
- **Established WI's** must hold an Annual Meeting **every calendar year**.
- **Agree the time/date with LFWI.**
- **Seek LFWI approval** for any permanent changes.
- Include the date in the annual programme or give members 21 days' notice.

PURPOSE

- **To elect a Committee** of at least three members.
- **To elect a President** from the elected committee members.
- To receive a **report on the financial viability** of the WI.
- To report on **how the WI objectives are being met.**
- To provide members with **details of plans and activities** over the next year.

PREPARING FOR YOUR ANNUAL MEETING (further guidance at Appendix 2)

- The Committee should **agree on the nomination/election procedures.**
- If **proxy, postal or electronic voting** is to be used see **Appendix 3.**
- **Request nominations for the Committee** at least a month before.
- **Prepare an agenda** for the meeting
- **Prepare a Statement of Accounts** for the last financial year and arrange for this to be independently examined.
- **Prepare the Committee's Annual Report**, approved by the Committee
- The President should prepare her Address.
- **Arrange** for the presence of an **LFWI Adviser or two Tellers (Appendix 4).**
- Establish if any committee members will be absent but wish to stand for office.

COMMITTEE ELECTION as recommended by LFWI

- **Nominations to close on the day of the AM** prior to the start of business.
- Check that any **new nominees are willing and eligible to stand**.
- If **more nominees than places**, then conduct a **ballot**.
- Any **ballot** should be opened/closed **before the AM business starts**.
- Provide **each member** with a paper to **list the names** of the people **they wish to stand on the Committee** up to an agreed number.
- **Elections should be by secret ballot**, never reveal individual votes.
- The vote should be **conducted by a WI Adviser** or two independent **Tellers**.
- Any new committee members only take office once the AM has ended.

ANNUAL MEETING BUSINESS KEY ITEMS (see sample agenda at Appendix 5)

- Before the start of business, the President should **declare any ballot closed**.
- The **result** of any ballot for the Committee should **be announced**.
- **Presentation of the Annual Report** by the Secretary with adoption proposed by the President and members approval by a show of hands.
- **Presentation of the Financial Statement** by the Treasurer who proposes adoption, requests a seconder then members approval by a show of hands.
- The **Financial Statements/reconciled bank statement** should be on **display**.
- **Appointment of the IFE** for the following year, proposed by the Treasurer, with members approval by a show of hands.
- **Election of the President**.

ELECTION OF THE WI PRESIDENT as recommended by LFWI

- **Adviser or Tellers take the chair** during the election for a new President.
- The President is **chosen from the newly elected committee**.
- Provide a slip of paper for **each member to nominate their choice**.
- **The Adviser or Tellers to review all nominations** and approach those nominated to check if they wish to stand.
- **If only one** of those nominated is willing to stand, **they are duly elected**.
- **If more than one person** wishes to stand, **a secret ballot** should take place.
- In the event of a **tie**, then **follow the pre-agreed procedure**.
- If a new President is elected, she takes office once the Annual Meeting ends.
- The Adviser or Tellers should retain all ballot papers for a period of 3 months.

THE RATIONALE FOR THE LFWI RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE

- The Annual Meeting will comply with the WI Constitution and Handbook.
- Advance preparation will lead to a successful Annual Meeting.
- The relevant reports and accounts will be ready and approved.
- Procedures and decisions will be independent, fair and democratic.
- By closing voting for the Committee on the day before starting the Annual Meeting business it allows for last minute decisions, changes of heart or for newly paid-up members to put themselves forward to stand for Committee.
- If voting is conducted on the day of the meeting It encourages members to attend and participate in the Annual Meeting business.
- The inclusion of postal, electronic or proxy voting adds additional challenges, which some WI's may find too onerous. It involves a significant amount of advance planning to manage the process in a fair and transparent way and may require the involvement of independent tellers in advance of the meeting.
- Postal voting will have costs that will need to be met by the WI.
- The WI Constitution does not stipulate that the vote for the President is by ballot. It is recommended that a secret ballot on the day rather than a show of hands demonstrates that the process is fair and avoids pressure to conform.
- It is not appropriate for the numbers of votes cast to be known by anyone but the Adviser or independent Tellers.
- Every member has the right to state who they wish to see stand as President without feeling under any pressure.
- Every committee member has the right to be nominated, even if they do not wish to take up the role of President
- Members should not feel that decisions have been pre-determined.
- Change should be welcomed and embraced and provides opportunities for others to promote and support development and sustainability of the WI

FURTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER

In Preparation for the Meeting the Committee should:

- Review and agree the number of members sitting on the Committee (no max.).
- At least one month before the meeting, the Secretary should request nominations for the Committee.
- Decide if the names of any advance nominations are to be disclosed in advance of the meeting to give members time to consider how to vote.
- Decide on a procedure to ensure that only eligible members will be put forward for the committee i.e. paid-up members and not WI employees.
- Put in place a procedure to check eligibility to serve as a charity trustee.
- Agree the procedure in the event of a tied vote for the Committee or President
- All the above decisions should be recorded in the WI Committee Minutes.

Election of Committee Members

- Only members who have paid the relevant subscription for the year may vote.
- If a tie occurs for the last place on the Committee, then there should be another round of voting between the tied candidates. If this still results in a tie, it should be dealt with as previously decided by the WI.
- Once a result has been reached, the tellers write the names of those elected, in alphabetical order, and prepare to announce it once the business begins.
- New committee members take office once the Annual Meeting has ended.

Election of the WI President.

- If a committee member is absent from the Annual Meeting but willing to be nominated for election to any office, this should be put in writing in advance.
- In the event of a tie in the vote the agreed procedure should be followed.
- The two nominated individuals can be asked if they wish to share the role. If either or both nominees are not in agreement with sharing and both wish to still be considered, then the vote is continued until one person is elected.
- If a tie continues it may be necessary to use a random selection method e.g. a name 'pulled from a hat'

ADVANCE VOTING

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- The WI committee must decide if voting in advance by postal, electronic and proxy voting will be allowed and record this in the minutes.
- The means of electronic voting (such as email) needs to be agreed by the committee and recorded in the minutes.
- The WI committee must inform members whether postal, electronic and proxy voting will be allowed. This must be done well in advance of the vote taking place and it is recommended that at least two weeks' notice is given.
- All votes cast in advance whether they are by post, electronic means or a proxy vote are valid for as many rounds as the chosen candidate(s) remain.
- The total number of votes by all agreed means should be checked against MCS to ensure that the number of voters does not exceed the number of members.

THE FOLLOWING APPLIES TO ALL FORMS OF ADVANCE VOTING

- All members should be asked if they wish to have a postal, electronic or proxy vote in accordance with whichever method(s) have been agreed and must communicate their choice to the committee.
- Any member that has not replied with their preference will be assumed to want to vote in-person.
- This must be communicated to all members.
- How many postal, electronic or proxy votes are allocated should be noted.
- Each member will be allowed one vote for a candidate for President and one vote for each committee vacancy.
- The number of postal, electronic or proxy votes received must not exceed the number allocated.
- It is recommended that any postal or proxy votes should only be opened and counted with all in person and electronic votes by two independent Tellers preferably separate from but within the meeting room and in clear view.

POSTAL VOTING

- All members should be informed of where postal votes should be sent and who to address them to.
- It is recommended that those members who request a postal vote are provided with a stamped, addressed envelope and a form/piece of paper marked with 'postal vote'.
- The member casting a postal vote should not add their name to the form or the envelope to preserve the secrecy of the ballot.
- All postal votes must be received by the end of the day before the meeting. Any postal votes received after this time will not be counted.

ELECTRONIC VOTING

- The WI committee will have agreed to a suitable means of electronic voting such as email or an anonymous online poll.
- The means of electronic voting must be communicated to all members.
- For email votes, the email address should be specified and communicated to all members.
- The WI committee can decide for email votes to go directly to one of the tellers. (The teller's email will need to be shared).
- All electronic votes must be received by the end of the day before the meeting. Any electronic votes received after this time will not be counted.

PROXY VOTING

- Proxy voting is when a member is unable to attend a WI meeting/vote in person and gives her vote to another member to cast her vote for her.
- It recommended that members are provided with an envelope and a form/piece of paper, both clearly marked 'proxy vote'. The member should use these and seal the envelope.
- Members choosing a proxy vote should arrange for a fellow member, to take her vote to the meeting,
- Proxy votes must be handed to the chair of the meeting, before it starts.
- It is recommended that all members are informed who the chair will be ahead of the meeting and that this is reconfirmed on the day with an announcement that she is accepting proxy votes.

THE ROLE OF TELLERS

- The WI committee will need to produce a members list from the MCS and hand this to the Tellers to assist with the reconciliation.
- At the beginning of the meeting, the Teller will record the number of members present, the number of votes cast in advance (postal and electronic) and the number of proxy votes cast on the day. This total will be reconciled against the WI register.
- Inform the meeting that advance votes have been received, where relevant.
- All advance votes will be opened during the count, checked against the number(s) allocated and added to the tally.
- All votes should be counted by **two** independent Tellers preferably separate from but within the meeting room and in clear view.
- The total number of votes must be checked against the membership register.
- Note that the number of votes received cannot exceed the number of members.

SAMPLE AGENDA

Agenda for *** WI Annual Meeting ***** 202****

1. Appointment of Tellers
2. Ballot for the Committee if required or confirmation of the Committee
3. Apologies for Absence
4. Record of the 202* Annual Meeting
5. Matters Arising and Approval
6. Byelaw Review
7. Resolutions to amend or remove any Byelaws
8. Presentation and Adoption of the Financial Statement
9. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner
10. The Committee's Annual Report Presented by the Secretary
11. President's Address and Adoption of the Annual Report
12. Result of the vote for the Committee
13. Ballot for the President
14. Usual WI Business should follow