

## **GUIDELINES FOR VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETINGS**

This document has been written by WI Advisers in Dorset. Virtual meetings are new to all WI's so the Advisers have tried to make some suggestions for running such meetings. This is very much a working document so any comments and feedback would be appreciated.

This document is based on the Constitution and Rules for Women's Institutes which were updated in March 2021. These Rules acknowledge that Annual Meetings can take place virtually (Rules 38 and 39) The relevant Rules are printed at the end of this document. For all the Rules see the actual Constitution.

Another option is for a WI to delay or postpone their Annual Meeting and continue with the same Committee and President until such time as an actual Annual Meeting can be held. (Rule 37) In this case the Annual Report and Financial documents should still be presented to members. It is important that it is clearly documented that this has been done.

### **At least one month before a Virtual Annual Meeting:**

Secretary to write Annual Report on behalf of committee.

Treasurer to produce accounts (these will previously have been examined)

These two documents should be sent to all members either by email or post.

Any comments or questions should be sent to the secretary.

There is not a requirement for the President to submit a separate report, but it is customary for the President to address those present at the actual Annual Meeting and thank the Committee.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

Nominations for the committee should be sent to the secretary at least one month ahead of the Annual Meeting. These can be sent by email, post or phone.

If there are more nominations for committee than places, then an election would need to take place or co-option may be considered. Please contact your WI Adviser (WIA) should you need to run an election for committee places and/or for advice re co-option.

If an election is to take place members should be notified by email or post of those standing. Members should vote ahead of the Annual Meeting for the relevant number of committee members by sending their choices (by email, post or phone) to the WIA or the person running the election (member from another WI) by an agreed date.

## **PRESIDENT:**

Members should also be asked to consider nominations for President and names should be sent to the WIA (or member from another WI) Nominations are usually from committee members but anyone can put themselves forward. Names to be sent by email, post or phone by an agreed date to allow nominees to be contacted concerning their willingness to stand.

## **At the Virtual Annual Meeting:**

Adoption of the Annual Report is proposed by the President.  
No seconder is required.

Adoption of the accounts is proposed by the Treasurer and a seconder is required.

Agreement can be indicated by a show of hands.

For those not attending virtually then agreement for adoption will be assumed unless objections have been received 7 days in advance to enable a reply.

The same applies for the proposal to appoint an Independent Financial Examiner for the coming year.

**COMMITTEE :** names are announced by WIA (or member from another WI) For confidentiality a WIA or a member from another WI must run any elections. The number of votes or an individual's nomination / vote must never be revealed.

If there are other nominations on the day or even at a later date, members can always be co-opted onto the committee

**PRESIDENT** : nominations will have been received ahead of the meeting. Nominees will have been contacted ahead to ensure that they are willing to stand as President.

Anyone can also be nominated on the day. This would then mean a private chat would need to take place by the WIA (or member from another WI) to ensure the member is willing to stand as President. This chat could be by electronic means or a telephone call.

WIA lists those willing to stand as President and all nominees say a few words about themselves

Members vote electronically by secret ballot for President. Proxy votes are allowed by those not actually in attendance or anyone could join the meeting by phone and vote in this way.

Name of President is announced

**IF NO PRESIDENT IS ELECTED:**

A WI cannot continue without a President therefore the only option is suspension *and the members should be informed*. However, it is always worth asking all nominees to consider their position

**ADDITIONAL NOTE:**

If only one nominee indicates that they are willing to be President then that nominee becomes the President.

**BYE-LAWS** should be reviewed yearly. Any proposal to amend, repeal or make a new bye law must be sent to the DFWI Board of Trustees for approval.

**CONSTITUTION AND RULES**

Based on the version of the Constitution and Rules for Women's Institutes which were updated in March 2021.

The following Rules are relevant for Virtual Annual Meetings:

*Rule 19. The elected Committee Members may co-opt up to three additional Committee Members as long as there is always a majority of elected Committee Members.*

*Rule 21. No person can be a committee Member unless she is a WI Member and has paid her subscription for the current year.*

*Rule 33. WI's must hold an Annual Meeting once in a calendar year, or if a new WI, within 15 months of Formation.*

*Rule 36. No person may vote at WI meetings unless she is a WI member and has paid her subscription for the current year.*

WI Subscriptions are due on 1 April so for those WI's holding their Annual Meeting in April it is important that subscriptions are collected in advance of the meeting. These can be paid by BACS, or cheque / cash to the treasurer or other nominated member

*Rule 37. Notwithstanding Rules 33 to 35, the Committee may delay or postpone Annual Meetings (including delaying or postponing them into the following year), decide not to hold an Annual Meeting in a particular year, or delay or postpone Special Meetings where they reasonably consider that this is necessary for the safety of the attendees or the public, or to comply with law or regulation. In such a case where applicable they shall give as much notice of the revised date, place and hour of the meeting as reasonably practicable. For the avoidance of doubt, where this Rule 37 is applied to an Annual Meeting, the existing Committee Members will stay in place until the next Annual Meeting which occurs (unless their position is vacated under Rule 26).*

#### ***Virtual Participation (Rules 38 & 39)***

*Rule 38. The Committee Members may provide that Annual Meetings and Special Meetings can take place wholly or partly by suitable electronic means (including telephone or videoconferencing facilities). This constitution and rules are then to be interpreted to allow business to be conducted by the relevant means (for example, the reference to a "place" in Rules 33 and 35 should be construed as a reference to providing details of any physical place (if there is one) and suitable telephone / electronic details to allow members to participate; a person participating remotely is present at the meeting and forms part of the quorum thereof).*

*Rule 39. Without prejudice to Rules 40 to 42, the WI may, if the Committee Members so decide (and subject to taking such safeguards as the National Federation shall prescribe), allow the WI Members to vote by post or suitable electronic means (including email) to make a decision on any matter that is being decided at an Annual Meeting or Special Meeting.*

*Rule 40. All elections of Committee members must be conducted by secret ballot.*

*Rule 40 (b) All candidates must be WI members.*