2019 Resolution Conference Report.

Over its long history the WI has compiled a lengthy list of mandates on which to base its campaigning work. At the Resolution Conference held at the Moreton Hall Community Centre on Wednesday 17th April the two proposed resolutions for debate at the NFWI Annual Meeting in Bournemouth were presented to members of the Suffolk West Federation of WIs. A number of those in the audience listening to the various experts will be delegates at that meeting , carrying the votes of the WIs from around West Suffolk.

The first resolution aimed to bring to public attention the current worrying decline in the numbers of women attending for cervical tests. The number being the lowest for a decade. Leanne Brown, Screening and Immunisation Co-ordinator, NHS Midlands East explained the current efforts made to remedy that decline and outlined how the voluntary sector could help to raise awareness. Also attending was Mrs Prasad, Consultant Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the West Suffolk Hospital, who explained how many reasons were cited for failure to attend for screening appointments, ranging from fear of a painful procedure to concerns about inconvenient appointment times. Dr Susanne Unsworth, from the Angel Hill Surgery in Bury St Edmunds, suggested that special ‘Women’s Health GPs’ could improve understanding. This being a role she currently fills. It was made clear that the HPV vaccine available to girls 12 -18 years protects against only four types of the possible 200 Human Papilloma Viruses and that continuing screening was still vital for these girls. These detailed presentations ensure that members can make an informed choice in deciding to vote for or against the motion at their WIs and later in Bournemouth.

The second resolution discussed at the meeting concerned the decline in rural bus services and the need to increase subsidies and work in partnership with other operators. The victim of both savage cuts in funding and the growth in private vehicular transport, there are now many rural areas poorly served by bus routes. Despite a great number of requests none of our major local bus service providers could manage to provide a spokesperson for the meeting . Nor, ironically, could the Cambridgshire Campaingn for Better Transport. It fell, as is so often the case, to the voluntary sector to put forward a representative from the community bus organisation serving the villages of Rickinghall, Botesdale, Redgrave, Wattisfield and Stanton. Huan Kenworthy , a volunteer driver explained just how valued this ‘ voluntary not for profit service’ is and how it is staffed and funded. Most of the members present had first-hand experience of the difficulties of transport in rural Suffolk. The WI records show that this subject was first raised in 1948, then 1956 and again in 1963. Future discussion will doubtless centre on the value to communities of reducing social isolation and supporting access to employment education and local facilities, such as shops, leisure centres and health provision. The Bus Services Act 2017 calls on councils to take action to ensure provision is available where companies cannot operate commercially by partnering other bus operators. Meanwhile the supporters of the community bus service will be busy fund raising with a view to keeping the service running and with the need eventually for a new bus.

The Powerpoints and links used at the Resolution Conference can be found on the SWFWI website, under the Resolution tab,

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Public Affairs Committee