

Leicestershire & Rutland Federation of Women's Institutes

Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting

Saturday, 16 March 2024

Leicester Grammar School, Great Glen, Leicester, LE8 9FL

1	GW welcomed members to the meeting. The meeting opened with Jerusalem. Present: Members and guests of the Federation.
2	The Chairman, Glenice Wignall (GW) welcomed members and introduced herself, Mary Hobbs (MH) Federation Assistant Treasurer and Sandra Woodward, Federation Secretary.
3	GW introduced the Board of Trustees and committee Chairmen and welcomed our speakers, guests from neighbouring federations and former Chairmen. Apologies were received from 3 former Chairman, Linda Martin, Federation Treasurer, Trustee and Chairman of Finance & House Management Committee and 1 neighbouring Federation. GW thanked Polly Morgans, Ashby Spa WI for the floral arrangements and Hathern WI for arranging the raffle. GW asked for volunteers for the flowers and raffle next year to contact WI House.
4	GW asked the delegates to vote using their pink forms for the Standing Orders of the Federation, proposed by Kirby Muxloe WI, seconded by Market Harborough WI; agreed and signed by GW.
5	The minutes of the ACM 2023 were agreed with no amendments, proposed by Botcheston WI, seconded by Kibworth & Smeeton WI; signed by GW as a true record.
6	No matters arising from the minutes. Requested any matters to be sent to the house.
7	GW gave her Chairman's address. GW welcomed everyone and noted the exciting day planned with stalls, Committee boards, competitions and more. GW welcomed the new Committee members that have joined and would encourage more from WIs so please come and observe. GW reflected on the year and how WI forges friendship. GW noted that WI membership is strong however there are still challenges in keeping WIs open. There is an advert going out to encourage new members and across the County Have Your Say meetings are arranged to engage WIs.
8	GW proposed the adoption of the Annual Report for 2022-23 with no amendments, seconded by Rearsby WI. Agreed and carried.
9	MH gave the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Linda Martin. Referring to the Federation Accounts to 31 August 2022 and 2023, copies of which are available from WI House and to download from our website. At August 2023 Federation income was £3381. There were losses on investments due to the stock market. There are approximately 3400 members. MH explained the programme of events are back to normal and outdoor events are particularly popular. There is the bursary scheme on offer to WIs so please do apply. Prices continue to increase on postage and utilities. Staff numbers have stayed the same. Monthly draw and quizzes are in the hall and continue to raise good funds for the Federation however the NFWI Raffle sales are down – despite Leicestershire member winning the £10,000. Gift Aid raised £3000 for first claim so do continue to complete. GW stated that Linda Martin is retiring as Treasurer. GW wanted to thank her for her work over 7 years and she has been wonderful for the Federation.
10	MH proposed Johnson, Murkett & Hurst as accountants and Markfield WI seconded. MH proposed suitable independent tellers for 2024/25 and Stoke Golding WI seconded, agreed and carried.

11	<p>GW thanked MH.</p> <p>GW introduced our charity speaker, Rebecca Middleton from Canine Partners. Rebecca explained they train dogs to support people with physical disabilities across the UK. They are based in Osgathorpe, Leicestershire where they have a training centre.</p> <p>They train dogs from 8 weeks of age and for advanced training from 18 months. They train them to sit, stay, retrieve, tug and they can unload washing machines, take items from the shelf and even pop up on the conveyor belt at the shops – plus in Covid taught them to make contactless card payments! The difference is immeasurable to the partners they support.</p> <p>Rebecca introduced Kate who is partnered with dog May who is a golden retriever cross. Kate gave a snapshot of what life was like before her diagnosis of Ehlers Danos syndrome in her early 20s. The disability affects the whole body and includes widespread chronic pain, dislocating joints and fatigue. Kate planned to be a professional pianist however retrained as a teacher due to health. Kate spent a lot of time in hospital and when her mobility declined, Kate took early retirement from teaching as she was increasingly reliant on a wheelchair. Kate gave a story of verbal and physical abuse when using her wheelchair on a park and was terrified by the event which left her feeling without confidence and low. If anyone would have said a dog could turn her life around she said she'd thought they were barking mad! Kate met the charity Canine Partners at a visit to Crufts and in 2007 had her first dog Byron. Her life changed overnight. Byron retired due to ill health and now May helps with all the chores, picks up anything dropped on the floor, can carry crutches and always willing to help – not like a husband! Kate is less tired, less likely to be injured and can be crucial in an emergency. Canine Partners breaks down barriers for disabled people who previously felt invisible as people will always notice May.</p> <p>Rebecca explained £30K is needed for one partnership which includes training from a puppy to aged 12. This works out at £6.85 per day and this is versus the costs of hospital admissions, husband/child having to care plus many other unseen costs. There are lots of volunteer opportunities from a puppy parent, advanced training parent, admin and much more. Rebecca showed a video on social media and invited all members to follow and share. Rebecca noted there is a volunteer who is 84 is doing a wing walk to raise funds. Plus, sponsor a puppy is a good swap for chocolate as an Easter present.</p> <p>Questions were asked about breeds (biddable dogs that work for food), how dogs are looked after they are retired and whether there is an upper age limit on taking on a dog which Rebecca confirmed there isn't.</p> <p>Sue Kirk gave vote of thanks to Rebecca, Kate and May.</p>
12	<p>GW introduced the morning speaker, High Sherriff of Leicestershire Henrietta Chubb Justice of the Peace.</p> <p>Henrietta talked about the role and her values. Equality, opportunity and honours the important role of women to share and inspire others and their amazing ability to pull together to make a difference – very much like the WI.</p> <p>High Sherriff is a royal appointment to look after the Kings interests, visit volunteers and charities and give thanks. Henrietta creates her own diary except for some civic duties. The process of being chosen is a 'tap on the shoulder' and they have the next 2 names for the next 2 years High</p>

	<p>Sherriff's already planned. The role has no attached funds, office or staff. The High Sherriff role has been in place for over 1000 years and is secular. They are mentioned in 27 of the 63 clauses of the Magna Carta and was traditionally a judge, law enforcer and could lead military. They were also responsible for collecting taxes, and would be liable if there was a shortfall, so were not keen to take on the role! From 1300 the powers waned but High Sherriffs remain with a duty of care for visiting high court judges.</p> <p>Henrietta explained the Court Uniform – in the 18th and 19th Century were expected to wear court dress and there was a precise description until 1937. Men wore dark blue velvet suit with lace cuffs, tights and a sword. Women had similar with a hat of 3 ostrich feathers (the Prince of Wales plume) but the sword could be carried on a cushion.</p> <p>There are 3 charities that Henrietta supports and Warning Zone, Leics Community Foundation and Charity Link plus she is setting up a capital fund as a legacy to Leicestershire. The High Sherriff can give personal awards.</p> <p>Henrietta is Leicestershire born and has had many careers including as an analytical chemist and now assesses the chemistry in historical artefacts. She has been a Magistrate for 16 years including the adult, youth and criminal bench. She is patron of Clean Up UK and No Going Back, a prison release support service. Henrietta has twins who are young adults.</p> <p>Questions asked were about what was learnt – Henrietta said she has understood the role is 'not about you' and all of life is a legacy from the past and the question is whether to take it forward. The role will transfer to next Sherriff on 4th April 2024.</p> <p>Rita Caves thanked Henrietta Chubb, High Sherriff. GW announced a break for lunch encouraging members to browse the stalls.</p>
	LUNCH
	GW welcomed members back to the afternoon meeting at 1.45pm.
13	Sue Kirk presented the ACWW Pennies for Friendship collection of £3138.35. SK gave an explanation that there have been changes at ACWW where funds are not linked to specific projects, so the Board have taken the decision to no longer co-ordinate donations to ACWW or send envelopes. Last date to receive ACWW donations will be 31 st March 2024 and then all donations will be returned to WIs. WIs may still donate directly if they wish.
14	<p>The following trophies and certificates were awarded by GW and Maxilyn Geary, presented by Polly Toynbee</p> <p>Membership Bell – Breedon on the Hill</p> <p>June Taylor Federation Art Trophy - Sue Shelton Smith, Sheepy WI</p> <p>Munro Cup for 2024 - Cromwell WI</p> <p>Edith Buckley Poetry Cup 2023 was awarded to Beverley Ashby, Loughborough Ladies WI</p> <p>Long Alley Skittles Trophy 2023 Winner trophy was awarded to Waltham on the Wolds WI</p> <p>Long Alley Skittles Trophy 2023 Runners Up trophy was awarded to Ashby Castle WI</p> <p>Darts Trophy 2023 Winner trophy was awarded to Barsby WI</p> <p>Darts Trophy 2023 Runners Up trophy was awarded to Witherley WI</p> <p>Individual Craft Competition –1st Elaine Anderson Ashby Spa, 2nd Linda Mott Ashby Spa</p> <p>Adult Cookery Competition – 1st Lyn Hastings, Seagrave WI, Joint 2nd Hilary Jackson, Nailstone WI, and Kathryn Stevenson Wymondham WI</p> <p>Child Cookery Competition – Farrah Wells</p>

	<p>Jose Smart Award 2023 – 1st Lynne Lewis Kirby Muxloe WI, 2nd Patricia Sills Kirby Muxloe WI, 3rd Val Moreland, Ashby Spa WI</p> <p>Birthdays noted but not presented: 35 – Astill Lodge 50 – Oaks in Charnwood 55 – Quorn 60 – Thorpe Acre 70 – Wakerley & Barrowden 75 – Barrow upon Soar</p> <p>100th Anniversary certificates were presented to Hoby, Brooksby, Rotherby & Ragdale Rearsby Barsby Swinford Wymondham Peatling Parva</p>
15	<p>The draw for the County Bursary took place. The Bursary was awarded to Glenfield WI. Raffle tickets were read aloud by GW and noted for prizes to be collected from raffle table.</p>
16	<p>GW introduced our afternoon speaker, Polly Toynbee.</p> <p>Polly began by saying the WI was incredibly powerful with campaigns and continues to have the power to make change. Polly has written books about the NHS, adoption, class but not herself too much until now. This new book is called ‘An Uneasy Inheritance’.</p> <p>The book was prompted by interviews to asking whether people felt too posh or not posh enough. Polly was asked to answer the same questions and so the book was born.</p> <p>Polly’s Great Grandfather, Gilbert Murray, was a well known academic and on the radical side of things – married another radical the Countess of Carlisle who lived at Castle Howarth (set of Bridgerton etc). They had 11 children and was only on speaking terms with 1. Murray was the founder of the UN and League of Nations.</p> <p>Grandfather Arnold Toynbee was a successful historian on the cover of TIME magazine however was mentally ill and in an asylum for 40 years. Polly’s father was a literary critic – wanted to lead a life in an agricultural commune which quickly broke down. Polly says she would tell her late father and the generations before about the more recent ‘wins’ on policy. Polly feels that it is shocking that we are now going backwards in terms of equalities. In the 1900s it got more equal, between 1950-70 there were increased opportunities, however since the 1970s it has gone into reverse. Birth now means destiny. Since the 1980s there was an explosion of high pay where the top earner was getting paid 100 times the salary of the lowest and so a widening gap between rich and poor was re-established. Only 25% of under 35-year olds own their own home and 50% of all workers are not due to have pay return to proportionate levels until 2028.</p> <p>Polly undertook an experiment where, 30 years ago, she worked in different low pay settings including a local hospital porter. She was seemingly unrecognisable despite interviewing</p>

	<p>consultants there previously. She wrote the book 'A Working Life' from this experience. Then she repeated the experiment and managed to get a job in the same hospital where the Institute of Fiscal Studies stated her pay was the equivalent to a third less in 30 years.</p> <p>A further book 'Unjust Rewards' questioned city bankers and lawyers – some on £10m per year – who were deciding on finances and the evidence stated they were clearly out of sync with the real world - average wage and benefits etc.</p> <p>Questions were asked about Humanists, stigma of council housing, experience of giving debt advice when nothing more could be done, gender inequalities and how they progress through generations and the possible complacency of the young in mobilising change.</p> <p>Gail Wooliscroft thanked Polly Toynbee.</p>
	<p>Gail Wooliscroft thanked GW for chairing the meeting and for all her work as Chairman.</p> <p>GW thanked all the Federation Committees, WI House staff, stall holders, judges, volunteers for providing the guest refreshments. GW thanked everyone for their support to her as Chairman.</p> <p>GW announced the officers on the Board of Trustees Glenice Wignall – Chairman Mary Hobbs - Treasurer Vice Chairman 1 – Gail Wooliscroft Vice Chairman 2– Susan Woollard</p> <p>GW gave sum up of the day and thanks again.</p>
17	Meeting closed with the National Anthem.