

Annual Report of The Surrey Federation of Women's Institutes

1. Federation Overview

Co- Chairs Report - 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025

Governance:

We participated in the revision of the Constitution of WIs set by the changes approved at the National Annual General Meeting on 4-6-25. The Companies Act Meeting was held prior to the AGM.

Surrey Federation held the Adoption Meeting of the new Constitution on 7-July-25. This was necessary because Surrey Federation, like many Charities, is a Company Limited by Guarantee and therefore must comply with the Companies Act formalities. We sent information to all our WIs inviting them to either send a delegate or grant a Proxy vote prior to this meeting.

The new Constitution was duly adopted.

We have used the Strategic Plan for Surrey Federation to develop our organisation into one that encourages our members to enrich their lives by inspiring them to take an active role in their community, learn new skills and widen their horizons.

The newly formed Skills Activities and Learning Team (known as SALT) has enhanced this objective by running a wide variety of courses. They have started to build a relationship with an organisation which distributes food to Food Banks and offers courses to teach cooking skills. Through this team we have engaged with a Nationally supported "Let's Dance" initiative, to encourage fitness, with our members and potential members.

Our Membership Support Team, (known as MST) have been actively looking at the growth areas in Surrey, to see if there is potential to open new WIs. So far this period 3 WIs have been opened. Sadly, due to falling numbers, frailty of age and an inability to retain and recruit committee members, we have had to suspend 2 WIs.

However, we notice that WIs have extended their hand of friendship and offered enlargement to mutual benefit of both the existing WI and the suspended WI.

The Resolution and Campaigns Team (known as RACT) have used the Strategic Plan to measure their increasing involvement with informing our members of new Campaigns, how to craft a new resolution as well as taking on a greater involvement in developing an understanding of the role of a Delegate to our WIs.

This team has also provided members to scrutineer the long list of proposed Resolutions.

We said farewell to our Surrey WI News editor as she wishes to enjoy a new lifestyle. We welcomed a new Editor, who comes from a background of journalism and is now able to bring fresh ideas to this magazine.

She leads an enthusiastic team of proofreaders under the guidance of one of our newer Trustees.

We continue to deliver Surrey WI News, to all our members who have an email account, on the 1st of the month. We also print copies for our members, who like to hold a magazine but lack a printer. We charge for the paper, ink and postage. This has reduced from 500 to around 300.

We have also employed a new member of staff – the Digital Administrator. This role encompasses the role of Webmaster, to improve our social media presence, help our WIs understand the 365, we use.

We held our Annual Council Meeting as a hybrid meeting, following the deficit we made in the previous year. We invited the WIs who would have a certificate on achieving age related milestones. Some came.

Other WIs formed Watch parties.

Unfortunately, this was not as smooth as the normal Zoom call. The technology had a 'gremlin' day, and members could not get in as usual. We learnt a lot.

Our Trustees have all completed their Trustee Training as well as other Training courses offered by National Federation, such as, Conflict Resolution, Safeguarding and the new Advisers Course.

We, continue to invite our members to observe and contribute to the Trustee Team meeting and the committee meeting, this we hope will enable them to understand how the Federation is run, and maybe volunteer to serve.

Our number of Trustee's is appropriate, but succession planning is always on our minds, with the need to replenish.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team is taking longer to become effective, but due to the dedication of founder members we have great hopes.

We took our gazebo to the Pride @ Surrey event held at Stoke Park in Guildford. This event was very successful, many members came to share their memories of their family's involvement with WI, and how can they join? A carnival like festival.

However, we report success 'growing' our Climate Ambassador's Team. They have participated in Marches, lobbying your MP at Westminster, as well as monitoring the cleanliness of our streams and rivers. We have had window displays in shopping areas to inform the general public about our climate concerns, plastic free picnics etc.

Cranleigh Show, saw us show casing the variety of skills one can learn through membership of the WI, whilst introducing children to decorating plant pots and then planting a small plant. This area seems to be a growth area, and we had many enquiries about WIs in the area.

Edenbridge & Oxted Show, saw us again showing the range of skills we have and how when entered in a Show we can be so competitive. The foot fall was steady allowing us to engage with many people.

The 110th Anniversary of National Federation of WIs was celebrated by Parading our Banners in Guildford. We also had a stall to showcase the History of the various WIs in Surrey.

We had a self-funded holiday in Bristol for a larger group of our members who responded to staying in Student Halls during the balloon Festival so positively, good team building, this may be repeated next year.

The framework of the Strategic Plan has proved to be invaluable in guiding our Trustees and Chairs of Committees to achieve the stability and growth of Surrey Federation of WIs.

2. Surrey Federation Sub-Teams and Working Groups

Skills, Activities and Learning Team (SALT)

The Skills, Activities and Learning Team has organised a wide range of events for Surrey WI members.

They hosted a Christmas Bread workshop at Richard Challenor School where attendees learned to make Cinnamon Buns, Festive Japanese Milk Bread, and Traditional Loaf—making for a fun and welcoming session. Louise led two successful cheese workshops, allowing participants to bring home delicious samples.

Auditions were also held, resulting in a strong lineup of new speakers featured in the yearbook. Members enjoyed a lively afternoon tea at Ripley Village Hall, which included talks from three antiques experts. In addition, members and friends had a tasty lunch at Glenmore House, followed by an engaging talk by author Karen Swan.

Team members ran both zips and flower arranging workshops at Federation office, helping members develop new skills to share with others.

Creative workshops at Ripley Village Hall gave members the chance to design tealight holders and glass wave pieces using glass fusing techniques, resulting in many beautiful creations.

The Camera Club continues to meet regularly at various locations around the Federation, where members enjoy photography and camaraderie, all organised by a dedicated team member.

None of these activities would happen without the commitment, time, and hard work of the SALT team, whose efforts are greatly valued.

Member Support Team (MST)

The MST is responsible for the welfare and development of the WIs in the Surrey Federation. SFWI has five WI Advisers, trained by NFWI who are reappointed annually by the Federation, and recently retired Advisers and other WI members who give valued support. The team has nine members in total. 2 WIs were suspended this year due mainly to being unable to find committee members. However, 3 WIs have been formed during this period. MST members are also attached to Groups within the Federation. They have been actively involved in 18 Group committee meetings, meetings and social events, in person or virtual. They have also attended 7 Prison WI meetings

Members of the team have collectively made 67 visits to WIs to offer support, advice and encouragement and pre-formation meetings. They have attended 21 Annual Meetings at the request of the WIs, to offer support and help them conduct the business of the meeting. Annual meetings made easy workshops accounted for 6 attendances by members of the team and between them they

Have attended 7 courses to further their knowledge and skills, plus supported 11 zoom members general discussions. There have been 20 attendances 6 at county shows and promotional events.

Resolutions and Campaigns Team (RACT)

Resolutions and Campaigns Team has continued to meet its objective of encouraging awareness of, and involvement in, WI campaigns. One of the ways we do this is with monthly articles in SWIN which have covered a wide range of topics including encouraging volunteering, environmental concerns, International Women's Day and ending gender-based violence.

We have also spread awareness of the resolution process, working with the Membership team to run two workshops on Resolutions which again proved popular. After the national Annual Meeting, we worked with other Surrey teams to spread information about the new Campaign "Bystanders can be Lifesavers" and the importance of learning about CPR.

The team works closely with our Climate Advocate and Resolutions co-ordinator and have looked at ways to reduce our climate footprint, including holding some meetings by zoom. We have been pleased to welcome WI members to our most recent zoom meeting and are hopeful that we have gained new team members as a result.

We are looking forward to a new year of campaigning and encouraging others to take part.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDI)

Surrey Federation have continued to monitor activities and events put on by and within the Federation to ensure that where possible, we have events throughout the year that will cater for all of our members if they wish to attend.

This has included varying the time and venue for workshops and aiming for a variety of price ranges. We ran crafting workshops, open to all members, to create 'give away' things at Pride in Surrey. This created a safe space for productive conversations to take place to aid our overall inclusive approach to the LGBTQIA+ community. We undertook a thorough risk assessment prior to our attendance at Pride in Surrey and had a good time supporting this local event.

We began to create a 'Black Lives Matter' banner for the Federation and reached out to various groups within the black community for advice and feedback. It was suggested that it was not authentic and needed to be created by members who identify within that community so the project is on hold, and we will look for members to help with this.

3. Federation Roles

The Federation Archivist has worked tirelessly to sort and store donations from WIs.

The Yearbook is now an online publication. The Yearbook holds a great deal of information on SFWI as well as the Speaker Information. We held two successful Auditions in the year for new Speakers who have been added to the publication.

4. Communications and Publicity and the Public Face of the Surrey Federation

A full year we have had publicity wise putting ourselves out there for both National and Surrey events

Nationally we went to Happy Place Festival where we spoke to women from all over the country telling them about our Surrey WI's

In Surrey this year we have had a few big events that have brought in newspaper and local advertising of our WIs

White ribbon orange flower campaign, Let's Dance, Pride, E & O show, Cranleigh show, banner parade.

Each of these have led us to connect with the public and our members

Our biggest event for fundraising this year had to be Bristol a great weekend where 65 of our members came together for a Balloon filled weekend of high jinks and fun.

Edenbridge & Oxted Show (E&O)

The show theme was 'A Year in the Life of ---' Entries were again slow to arrive as in 2024 for this show on the August Bank Holiday weekend at the Edenbridge & Oxted Agricultural Show. However, with a lot of reminding and arm twisting of members the large marquee we were allocated was filled with a marvellous array of top-quality crafts and cookery and hands on demonstrations and activities.

The weather for the set-up days was dry and warm. The 2 show days were hot, and it was a full-time job keeping all the volunteer stewards and helpers hydrated as the temperature in the marquee soared and everyone's energy levels plummeted. Some members of the public just found it too hot to spend time viewing our show. The yummy brownies for sale on the Country Market cake stall quickly turned into drinking chocolate!

Six judges spent 5 hours each judging all the exhibits - what a task. They were overwhelmed with the skills, talents and attention to detail achieved by all the exhibitors.

We were delighted to welcome St John Ambulance to join us to promote the WI campaign that 'Bystanders can be Life Savers'. They ran regular demonstrations re giving CPR and using a defibrillator, educating us and the public.

It was so encouraging to have WIs participating from across Surrey including some of the London WIs and more exhibitors entered the show for the first time, some of whom also volunteered as stewards.

The children's activities were a great hit.

We were delighted to have Oxted Country Markets joined us again, selling their popular home made, hand crafted and home-grown products. They make a substantial financial contribution to financing the event.

Sadly, we didn't this year receive an Agricultural Show award but as far as the Surrey Fed WI E & O Committee are concerned this was a great show enjoyed and appreciated by exhibitors and public alike and showcased what the WI is all about.

5. Interest Groups

The Camera Group meet regularly at various venues around the Federation and enjoys taking lovely photos as well as the friendship of the group, this is organised and lead by a team member. Crafty Ladies meet at SFWI Office six times a year where members share ideas. Everyone is welcome to come along with their craft work. The Surrey Serenaders held regular rehearsals and put on a few concerts

Angie Leach and Jill Mulryan
Co-Chairs, The Surrey Federation of Women's Institutes