

WEA ESSEX FEDERATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 10th October 2014 at 10.15 a.m.

Venue: Great Baddow Millennium Community Centre, Baddow Rd, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9RL.

Present:

Branches:

Ardleigh: John Terry; - Billericay: Julia Curren, Denise Fielding, Sue Fisher; - Braintree: David Stubbs ; - Brightlingsea: Peter Norfolk; - Chelmsford: Chris Morden, Mike Wall; - Coggeshall: Nancy Powell-Davies; - Colchester: Jos Claessen, Jane Humbles; - Danbury & Little Baddow: Lawrence O'Brien; - Felsted : Mary Ogle, Stephen Ogle; - Frinton: Katie Andrews, Rob Andrews; - Kelvedon & Feering: Ron Marks; - Lawford: Joyce Wrobel; - Loughton: Pat Dale, Bettie Bock; Lesley Barnard: - Maldon: John Came, David Leslie; - The Maplesteads: Pamela Hunter, Charles Soule; - Mersea: John Dinnin, Hilary McMullen, David McMullen; - Shalford : John Pearce; - Tiptree: Chris Gunton ; - Wickford: Barbara Stammers, Donald Stammers; - West Bergholt: Gillian Poole; - Writtle: Anita Curtis.

[Delegates from 21 out of 36 Branches]

Volunteer Federation Officers:

Chairman: Ron Marks; Vice-Chairman: Joan Black; Treasurer: Jane Dougan; Secretary: David Stubbs.
Federation News Sheet Editor: Ray Hedley.

Eastern Region Officials in Attendance:

Sharon Watson; Regional Education Manager; Samantha Bickerton, Course Coordinator, West Essex.

Guests:

James Ward, Director for Marketing, Membership and Income Growth
Peter Threadkell, Regional Chairman; Mo Green, Regional Treasurer & Association Council Representative;
Betty Wolfendon – Chairman, Hertfordshire, and Regional Vic-Chair; Trevor Scott – Chairman Norfolk;
Mr Malcolm Bell, J.P.

- 1. Welcome and Outline of the Day:** The Chairman welcomed members from the 21 branches present, the Regional officials, James Watson, who would be giving the keynote speech later in the morning, and other guests. He also welcomed Mr. Malcolm Bell, J.P. who would later be giving us a talk on The Work of the Magistracy and the Courts in Essex . Ron then outlined the business of the day.
- 2. Apologies for Absence:** There were apologies from the following Branches: Benfleet, Dedham, Great Dunmow, Great Bardfield, Great Oakley, Hatfield Peverel, Holland on Sea, Saffron Walden, Tollesbury, Halstead, Great Bentley, Silver End and Thaxted. Apologies were also received from Sir Bob Russell (Patron), Colin Padgett, Lesley and Peter Naish, Dianne Collins (Writtle), Dick Frost (Felsted), and Gillian Simms, Charles Simms (Leigh on Sea).
- 3. Minutes of the last AGM held on Saturday 11th October 2014:** The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.
- 4. Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.
- 5. Chairman's Annual Report:** –

Ron Marks started by saying that sadly it had again been a year when the WEA had had to mourn the loss of colleagues or members of their families. In June on behalf of the Federation he had attended the funerals of Roger Slade, Secretary of Colchester Branch, and of the wife of John Cupitt, long-serving committee member of Kelvedon & Feering Branch. Norman Bevan too, husband of Grace Bevan, until this summer and for many years Secretary of Writtle Branch, had died recently. The funeral was to be at the crematorium in Chelmsford at 10.30 a.m. the following Friday. Grace, he knew, would welcome the support of members who knew Norman, a frequent contributor to discussion at these gatherings and a tremendous help to Grace in running the Writtle Branch, particularly in dealing with the computer work and e-mails.

Federation Committee Meetings

Since the last Federation AGM the Committee had had five full meetings, covering a great deal of business, as well as a sub-committee meeting to discuss and plan our One Day and Summer Schools. He reported that we had nearly finished booking the speakers for the Federation Summer Schools in Chelmsford and Colchester and the Day Schools on 23rd April 2016 and 19th November 2016

The Committee meetings had been held as follows:

- Wednesday 5th November 2013, 10.15 a.m. – 1.05 p.m. in Kelvedon: with observers from Brightlingsea, Coggeshall, Kelvedon & Feering and Silver End.
- Thursday 22nd Jan 2015, 10.15 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. in Writtle: Observers from Danbury & Little Baddow and Writtle.
- Monday 23rd March 2015, 10.15 a.m. – 1.05 p.m. in Rayleigh: Observers from Benfleet, Leigh-on-Sea, Rayleigh and Wickford, and also Liz and Clive Bandy from Biggleswade Branch in Bedfordshire.
- Thursday 18th June, 10.15 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. in Colchester: Observers from Ardleigh, Frinton-on-Sea and Holland-on-Sea.
- Monday 14th September, 10.15 a.m. – 12.45 p.m. in Thaxted: Observer: Richard Till from Thaxted.

Ron explained that moving the meetings around the County had helped to enable observers from a number of branches to attend, although it was disappointing that when we met in Thaxted no representatives from Saffron Walden and other nearby branches had been able to attend. It was still hoped that clusters of branches in various areas of the county would always in future be represented on the Committee. Ron went on to say that he wanted to thank all who had served on the committee for their contributions. He asked everyone to consider if they could find the time and energy to join the committee – nominations had not yet closed!

Federation Events:

Taster Day: A successful Essex Taster Day had been held in Feering on Saturday 10th January, with one new Tutor, Mark Felton, presenting his course offers and several other Tutors giving a taste of new courses they had developed. This year the Essex Taster Day provided by the Region is planned for as early in December as possible, and the Committee may consider the provision of at least one more by the Federation. Joan, and probably Samantha, would talk about the new Eastern Region course selection schedule that has been planned.

The Federation Day Schools had been held in Feering on 22nd November 2014 and 25th April this year. At the November meeting 77 people had booked for Valerie Morse's course on "Women and the Vote", 24 for Dr. Paul Rusiecki's "Living With Conflict: Essex and the Great War", and 26 for "Poetry and Prose of the First World War" delivered by Colin Padgett and Ron. The Spring course had attracted 72 for Roger Cooke's course on Magna Carta, 46 for Dr. Tony Lane's on Merchant Seamen in World War Two, and 28 for Professor Chris Green's "Culture on the Brink" course. Ron thanked all those who had helped at each event on the day, including Lesley Naish and Joan Black with the provision of the Speakers' lunches, Derek Painter and Ken Edwards for helping control car parking and assisting the caretaker clearing up at the end of the day, Beverley Painter and two other members of Kelvedon & Feering Branch for serving the coffees and teas and biscuits, Peter Naish for bringing and setting up the equipment, and all of the others who had helped to make the day a success.

The Politics Day delivered by Dr. Henry Tam in Chelmsford on 11th April this year had attracted over ninety people. This was a free event, though the collection afterwards had raised a respectable sum. Thanks were due to Sarah Moore, Sylvia Gentleman and the other Regional officials who had assisted.

The Richard Waskett Memorial Lecture delivered by a lively and entertaining John Morgan on Medieval Warfare and the Battle of Agincourt at the Oaklands Museum in Chelmsford on 16th April. Thanks are due to Joan and the members of her croquet club who again provided the tea and delicious cakes.

A free two-day Volunteer Training Course had been organised for Branches on 9th and 17th September. The focus of the first day had been on Marketing and Publicity and the use of IT to adapt centrally produced publicity material, with presentations by Hertfordshire Organiser Sylvia Gentleman and Area Education Manager Sarah Moore. Most of the ten who had participated enrolled online, trying out the system and online enrolment was another topic covered. Ron had also attempted to demonstrate the new website, but there were reception and teething problems at that stage. On the second day we had been joined by Jacquie Taylor, the Regional Operations Manager, who had explained the whole course selection process from start to finish, provided tips and led discussion on how best to go about trying to secure the preferred Tutors and ensure that new Tutors are introduced and selected. The discussions which followed the presentations were felt to be of great benefit to all those who attended.

The Federation Summer Schools had been held in Colchester on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 22nd to 24th June and in Chelmsford on 29th June to 1st July. Although all of the six courses had been very well received by those who had attended, overall attendance had been very disappointing, as shown in the Treasurer's Report. In Colchester fourteen attended Julia Jones and Margery Wilson's course on Spy and Detective Fiction, ten Mark Mower's "Murder, Mystery and Mayhem" course, and fifteen Rosemary Williams's course "Roads to (and from) Waterloo". In Chelmsford Rosemary's Waterloo course had drawn eleven, Dr. Mike Baldry's "The Shock of Post Impressionism" eight, and Stephen Norris's "Changing Chelmsford 1880 to 1914" ten.

Given the fact that for the second year running the Federation had made a considerable loss on the Summer Schools, Ron had conducted a survey by questionnaire at both venues seeking views on their future and possible changes to the arrangements. All those surveyed said they would be happy to come again, would encourage others to attend and appreciated the opportunity to study a topic in depth with an expert. The majority were happy with the dates and the timing, and also with the three-day format. However, a number thought that a two-day instead of a three-day course might be easier for others to attend. Thus, having considered all options, the Committee had now decided that in 2016 the classes will run for two days only, but with slightly extended hours allowing for ten hours' contact time over the two days. In previous years contact time had been thirteen and a half hours. The fee would be reduced proportionately. Furthermore, we would try running two classes instead of three at each venue, but without any duplication of topic. We anticipated that the resulting saving in costs overall would ensure that we at least broke even. We were open to a return to the three-class and/or three-day format if a clear and sufficient demand were expressed after the new formula had been tried.

Branch AGMs

The Federation had 36 Branches, and the committee tried to ensure, as far as is possible, that a Federation Committee member attended every Branch AGM. Since the last Federation AGM the Chairman had attended those of West Bergholt (28th October), Billericay (4th December), Holland-on-Sea (10th March), Rayleigh (16th March), Braintree (20th March), Tiptree (25th March), Colchester (28th March), Maldon (30th March), Silver End (9th April), and Writtle (6th May). At the latter he had had the pleasure of presenting long-service certificates to the retiring Secretary, Grace Bevan, and Chairman, Jane Daniel, on behalf of the Regional Chair, Peter Threadkell. He had also attended Loughton & Epping's summer One Day School to present certificates to Bettie Bock and Pat Dale.

Other tasks performed by the Chairman

On 20th May Ron had attended, on Peter Threadkell's behalf, a focus group meeting in London on the review of WEA Governance with specific reference to the roles of Regional Committees. The meeting had been attended by a range of other representatives including members of the Southern Region committee. Subsequently Ron had been involved in e-mail discussions on a document produced by Pearl Ryall, the Regional Membership & Volunteer Development Manager. These discussions had resulted in the submission of a number of amendments and the amended document and further changes being then discussed by our Regional Committee. Recently he had also been consulted on the proposed new national Branch Handbook.

In addition to these tasks Ron had also proof-read the draft 2015-16 Essex Course Brochure, assisted by the Secretaries of larger branches, and had also attended the meeting of Federation Chairs in Cambridge on 10th February. The meeting on 14th September clashed with our pre-arranged Federation Committee meeting, but Ron had submitted a fairly detailed report on the situation in Essex and our activities, and later the same day in Cambridge had been able to have useful discussions with Sharon Watson and with Jacquie Taylor.

Updates to Web Site

In the summer Ron and David Stubbs discussed with Andrew Clark of NextNorth, the company that created and maintains the Federation Web-Site, proposals to update the site. (See later item)

6. Vice-Chairman's Report:

Joan Black started her report by explaining that she and Ron had attended the Regional Committee meetings on behalf of Essex and in addition she had attended the Regional Education sub-committee. She had been co-opted on to the Scrutiny committee too. The Scrutiny committee monitors performance against the Regional Business Plan and the educational performance against actions for all provision. This includes the Core SFA contract and other contracts. It reports to the Regional Committee.

The Education committee monitors all the work that goes on in the Region. This covers both the Branch programme and the Targeted programme. This year the Region had organised and funded the Politics Day Schools, which had been very successful- over 100 people had attended Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford to hear Henry Tam. Events had also taken place in Biggleswade, Cambridge and Norfolk. Work was also ongoing, linking with other Regions, with regard to WW1 “Voices of Conflict”. Tutors were being asked to get together to discuss WW1 themes. Magna Carta resources had been produced and were to be put on the website under “Routes to Democracy”.

The Region was looking at developing a package on the EU referendum which could be put out to Federations.

Timetable for Selection of Courses

The Education Committee had recently met with staff in Cambridge to discuss the timetable for the selection of courses for 2016/17. This had now been much revised. Branches would now receive the course selection lists in mid-November. It was hoped that Taster days would happen before Christmas and selections returned to Region by mid-January. This should guarantee that Branches would be notified of acceptances much earlier. There would be more information on the form about distances that Tutors were prepared to travel and hopefully phone numbers for Tutors so that Secretaries could contact them for more information about a course – but not, of course, to make the actual booking. All applications must still go through Region.

Blue Badge Guided Walks

Last year Joan had tried, unsuccessfully, to get a series of walks arranged around the County, which being linked to Branches could have provided some useful advertising for them and the WEA as a whole. Sadly lack of responses prevented this from happening. However, she doesn't give up that easily and in 2016 there will be 6 walks arranged across the county which will be open to all. These will be led by Blue Badge Guides. If the Branches in the vicinity of the walks would like to be involved in order to promote their Branches then do please let Joan know.

7. Secretary's Annual Report:

David Stubbs hoped that he had responded to all telephone calls, letters and e-mails received during the past year. In relation to sending out documents and letters as hardcopy, the cost of postage was considerable and he hoped that the use of e-mails was acceptable to the majority of branch officers. If anyone has had problems with e-mails, especially the format of attachments, please let him know in order that he could provide the material in a suitable format.

WEA Essex Federation Website: David, together with Ron, had recently been involved in the development of an updated WEA Essex Federation Website. The new website should be easier to navigate on tablets and smart phones as well as on PC's and laptops. He had created a new user name and password for every Branch Secretary in order that they could access and manage their branch webpage. Branches would be able to add text, images, links and even video clips to their own news pages and could use their pages to keep students updated with relevant information about current as well as new courses.

Copies of the booklet of courses for 2015-2016 were available at the AGM as were copies of *EF News*. Delegates were urged to collect sufficient for their branches, but it was worth bearing in mind that all of the information in the booklets should be easily accessible via the Federation website too.

WEA Autumn One Day School: David took the opportunity to remind everyone about the upcoming WEA Autumn One Day School which would take place on Saturday 14th November, starting at 11.00 a.m. at the Feering Community Centre. As usual there were three topics to choose from on the day:

- a. Laurence Staig would talk about the days of the silent cinema. He would look at the way that cinema developed as an entertainment media, giving birth to a wide range of different types of film.
- b. Peter Whent and Mark Mower would split the day to talk about different aspects of Crime and Detection. In the morning session Peter Whent would focus on the use of forensic science in the investigation of crime and would look at how the police really investigate serious crimes. For the afternoon session Mark Mower would explore the history and the development of medical and forensic science. He would consider its early origins and its development in the 19th Century.
- c. Nick Miller would talk about the life and times of Edith Cavell, who died one hundred years ago. She was executed in October 1915 for helping allied soldiers to escape from occupied Belgium. Nick

would consider what drove her to put her life on the line, why she risked compromising Red Cross nursing work and how the world at that time reacted to her death.

Other matters that the Federation had been involved with during the last year were covered in other items in the minutes.

8. Treasurer's Annual Report: [See Appendix 1]

Jane reported that the Federation had had a varied and full programme of events during the past year but not all had been as successful as we would have liked. Whilst the Henry Tam Lecture had brought in £114 in donations, others such as Laurence Staig's World War I lecture and Patrick Denney's Colchester walk had made a loss although the prime objective of all three events had been to raise the profile of the WEA and so were events of the kind that we would continue to support.

The Benham-Seaman Trust and the Basil Slaughter Trust: Both trusts had continued with their generous grants, enabling us to purchase more equipment, produce *EF News* and help branches in need. Their contributions were greatly appreciated.

Both one day schools made a small profit and bookings for this autumn's event were beginning to come in; so she was hopeful that we would at least break even again.

The Summer Schools presented a different problem. Enrolments had been down in both venues and expenditure increased. WEA Colchester's offer to pay for the Colchester accommodation meant on paper the Federation was able to break even on the Colchester summer school but was not so fortunate with the Chelmsford one. In view of this, the committee had decided to maintain the two venues but reduce the days to two next year in the hope this would encourage more people to attend. Timing had also been tweaked to start at 10.15 a.m. and finish at 4.15 p.m.

The Affiliation Fee was still a welcome source of income, although reducing with the number of branches decreasing. Most of this income goes to maintain the website, a useful resource for all branches and recently improved so that all branches can make better use of it. We were asking for an increase of £2.50 this year, taking the fee to £20 per branch, although naturally we were prepared to waive the fee if any branch were in financial difficulties. Jane would appreciate it, as Treasurer, if all affiliation fees could be paid before the end of the financial year in July, as there were still fees outstanding for the last year.

Jane formally proposed that the affiliation fee for this academic year be raised to £20. Joan Black seconded the proposal, which was passed unanimously. (Jane has since asked that an invoice for the fee be sent to each Branch Treasurer.)

The diminishing balance in our bank account: Jane was concerned about the diminishing balance in our bank account, currently standing at about £2,500 including the remainder of the Richard Waskett Memorial Fund, which stands at £639. The Federation cannot really afford to make a loss as great as the £827 last year (£1466 if the Richard Waskett Fund is taken out), but she was hopeful that our events, day schools, revamped summer schools, walks and lectures would enable the Federation to flourish this year.

- 9. EF News and websites:** Ray Hedley reported that the Autumn 2015 *EF News* was out despite some technical difficulties both with receiving material for publication but also with the actual printing process. He spoke of the increasing costs of production and of requests that the publication should be in colour. Printing in colour would inevitably put up costs, but making it available on the Federation Web Site would allow people to access the full colour version. In addition to that an archive of past copies could also be of value for research purposes. Copies of *EF News* were available and branch representatives were asked to collect copies for their branches.

- 10. WEA Essex Federation Website:** covered in the Secretary's Report above.

- 11. Questions to Federation Officers:** Peter Threadkell asked about the number of branches in Essex. Ron said that there were currently 36 branches, not including Harlow which is still recorded but has no courses arranged. On the positive side in the past few years the Federation had been instrumental in establishing new branches in Braintree and Billericay. The aim was still to get new branches to open, particularly in areas of high population. It was also recognised that there was also a need to expand the day schools both as a stream of income but also to bring the WEA to the attention of a wider audience.

Chris Gunton (Tiptree) thanked Ron and the Committee for the work carried out by the Federation and the wider WEA on behalf of the branches and their students.

- 12. Branch Programme Report:** Sarah Moore's role has changed and her report of September 2015 was distributed as a tabled report. **[See Appendix 2]**)

Samantha Bickerton, West Essex Course Co-Ordinator, reported on the number of courses arranged for the current year, 2015-16, these being for branches:

Autumn Courses - 64, Spring Courses - 61 and Summer Courses - 3. The summer term was therefore ideal for day schools and other activities.

She went on to report that research is being carried out by the Regional Office into the use of on-line enrolment; currently 50% of tutors favour this process. In relation to the two-day course for Branch Volunteers that had recently been run she drew attention to the templates for publicity material that are available on line for Branches to use. She said that the Cambridge Regional Office was very happy to assist with the production of publicity material for Branches.

Samantha reported that a **Taster Day** had been arranged for **Saturday 5th December 2015**. This will be held in the Labour Club in Kelvedon. Details in relation to this day would be distributed soon.

As previously stated, the **Course Selection Process** had been brought forward. In addition work was being carried out to recruit new tutors and also to look at those tutors who haven't yet been asked to put on any courses. There was also a need to understand the criteria that branches use when selecting tutors and courses.

From the evidence available it would appear that over 80% of people who attended Taster Days found them to be useful or very useful when it came to course selection. Further feedback provided by attendees of Taster Days indicated that they helped to provide a sense of the personality and teaching style of prospective tutors and also provided the opportunity for tutors to indicate the distances they were prepared to travel to Branches.

- 13. Partnership Programme Report:** Samantha reported on the Partnership Programme. She said that work was going on to develop new partnerships and ways of working. For example, the course created to assist the 'Open Road' alcohol recovery centre in Chelmsford. Enrolment for this course was fully on-line before the course started. The WEA has also developed Tablet computer courses which have been run in Roydon and it works with Job Centre Plus in Chelmsford to develop courses that will benefit their clients. Overall we were trying to help people in need of assistance.

Samantha went on to give some examples of people whose lives have been changed as a result of joining WEA classes.

- 14. Questions for Programme Staff:**

- a. What is the minimum number of students to make a course viable: Sharon Watson said that the minimum is around 15. This is due to the fact that the WEA receives a part subsidy on their courses from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). About 50% of WEA funding is covered by such subsidies. She went on to explain that the contracted number of teaching hours that the WEA delivers for the SFA has been reduced by 400 hours this year, which obviously impacts on the WEA's cash flow; therefore additional day schools are an effective way to help balance the books.
- b. In the past the Branch Designated Fund had been used on occasions to support courses which would otherwise have had to close. At the moment the use of this fund has had to be cut back to an extent.
- c. In answer to a question about fee remission funding Sharon said that branches will be credited with the fee.
- d. In relation to the work of the Partnership Programme it was suggested that there was a need to circulate information about this programme to branches. (*We do circulate the Partnership Programme reports with committee meeting minutes to Officers in all branches.*)

- 15. Regional and National Matters: Sharon Watson, Regional Education Manager.**

[See PowerPoint attachment]

Sharon gave a brief overview of the Eastern Region which, she said, was very different from the Yorkshire and Humberside Region she recently came from, with its large urban branches and combined programmes.

Unemployment in the Eastern region was generally below the national average. However, there were pockets of unemployment and deprivation, and housing was also expensive. Mapping these factors can show the areas where the targeted programmes should be directed.

Looking at the social divide across the region we can see that the population is getting older and also that in some areas children have low levels of educational achievement. For groups such as these, 'Non-Formal Education' such as that provided by the WEA can help these people to advance.

Sharon went on to explain the key purposes of our courses:

- The subject purpose
 - introduce and /or build and / or further develop, knowledge, understanding, skills, competence and critical perspectives on the subject of study.
- The basic literacies purpose
 - develop the fundamental literacies necessary for effective study, English, Maths, Digital Skills.
- The thematic purpose
 - using the four WEA themes of: Health & Wellbeing; Culture; Employability and Community Engagement as a context in which the course subject is explored.
- The social and critical purposes
 - develop through critical study our students' individual and collective capacity to engage in socially beneficial activity for the improvement of communities in the broadest sense.

As she sees it the challenges that the WEA faces are as follows:

- Spending Review (24th Nov.) (Please write to your MP). We need to let decision makers know what we do and what we need to be able to continue providing that service.
- Income. We need to look at new income sources.
- Change – and impact of change
- Communication – at all levels
- Profile and 'visibility' in local/national networks
- Dispersed teams /geography – pulling together
- OU – closure of Cintra House
- Being an outward facing organisation

She finished by saying that all of those involved with the WEA needed to be looking at how Non-Formal Education benefits society and individuals. We also need to look at how we can measure the benefits it brings.

16. Questions on Regional Matters:

- a. Where is evidence that WEA is good for us? Sharon replied that two impact surveys have recently been carried out to look at this matter. Reports on these studies are available if required. In addition there is strong feedback from individuals of the benefits they have had from WEA. Ron said that as a tutor he had noted positive feedback from students in relation to both the physical and mental health benefits they obtained from participation on WEA courses.
- b. What is the % of ethnic minorities that take WEA courses? About 15% but this was centred more in urban areas. We need to put on courses that target the minority groups and are attractive to a more diverse group of students.

17. Getting us known – Promoting the WEA: James Ward, Director for Marketing, Membership & Income Growth:

James commenced by thanking the Federation for the invitation to its AGM. He explained that his background is in education and the arts as well as fundraising. He had only been with the WEA for 5 months and sees his task as being a 5 year one to raise the profile of the WEA. To this end he will be seeking contact with the ministers in the Skills Funding Agency and others in Government.

One of his first tasks is to understand what students and new groups want from the WEA. Nationally we need to raise our profile. In order to do that we need to engage with members across the country. We need to make sure that we provide relevant and timely information and we need to improve our national web-site. He sees the web site as being much more interactive and central to the operation of the WEA and relevant to the individual learners with information about their past courses as well as information to help them select new courses.

Further to this he sees the need to create a nationally relevant body that speaks about the WEA, what we are doing and what impact we are having.

He went on to speak of the possibility of developing links with SAGA Magazine to let people know about the WEA. He also spoke about moves to work with the **Co-Op**, first identifying common areas of interest.

When asked about membership fees (decisively rejected by National Conference 2013) he said that he had mixed feelings about the value of them to the individual. He felt that a different model for membership was required. Maybe along the lines of getting companies to subscribe to something along the lines of ‘Investors in Education’

Chris Gunton asked about information in relation to membership and was advised to contact the Regional Office.

Mo Green asked about the U3A. Should we be trying to work with it? The general feeling was the U3A is very different to WEA. There is a disconnect between what they offer and what WEA provides. The U3A does not use professional tutors. However, we should try to establish links – some members already belonged to both.

The Chairman thanked James for his talk and for answering questions so comprehensively. The Meeting then broke for **lunch** at 12.50 p.m. and resumed at 2.00 p.m.

18. Election of Federation Officers and Committee Members: Nominations having been received for all of the individuals listed below, and there being no additional nominations, all of the following were duly elected:

Ron Marks (Kelvedon & Feering)	– Chairman; Regional Committee Representative
Joan Black (Chelmsford)	– Vice Chairman; Education Committee Representative
Jane Dougan (Chelmsford)	– Treasurer
David Stubbs (Braintree)	– Secretary
Ray Hedley (Colchester)	– Editor EF News
Lesley Naish (Hatfield Peverel)	-- Minutes Secretary – Summer School Organiser(Colchester)
Peter Naish (Hatfield Peverel)	-- AV Support
Richard Colley (Great Oakley)	
Pat Dale (Loughton & Epping)	
Mary Nugent (Chelmsford)	
Colin Padgett (Tutor)	
Peter Norfolk (Brightlingsea).	

[Publicity Officer posts currently remain unfilled.]

19. Marketing and Inter-Branch Cooperation:

A question was raised as to the general feeling about the name of the organisation, i.e. Workers Educational Association; the issue being that the WEA goes back to 1903 and arguably has an image of being an organisation rooted in the past. This it was felt deterred people from joining.

Alternatives had often been suggested but rejected, although slogans such as “**We Educate Adults**”, used at our AGM last year by Ruth Spellman when dealing with a similar question [see the link on our website to the video recording] and the Chairman’s own suggestion of “**A World Of Education for Adults**” could be used prominently in our publicity as well as the registered title. The idea of reintroducing “**Learning For Life**” as part of our logo was generally approved of.

Peter Norfolk said that the name could be changed if sufficient people were prepared to back the change at the National Conference, although successive Conferences had soundly rejected such moves.

In relation to getting WEA known Jos Claessen informed the meeting that he has a WEA ‘business card’ which he hands out at all suitable opportunities and venues. He said it had proved to be a quick and effective means of getting the word out. He has also had a WEA tee shirt made which he wears when appropriate.

Joan Black told the meeting that Chelmsford had produced two large banners to advertise the WEA. One had been displayed at Chelmsford railway station but it had been stolen! Unfortunately banners suspended from bridges had been banned by the railway after one had fallen down.

Colchester recently had an open day in its town library and the branch had put on a demonstration of how to use the on-line enrollment system.

Mo Green spoke of the Market Place promotion days they hold in her Norfolk locality. These are open days in the village (with lunch) and they advertise new WEA courses and provide information about the WEA.

Peter Threadkell informed the meeting that the Norfolk Federation organises an annual Public Conference involving other organisations designed to attract a wider audience. The next one is entitled “**Water Matters**” and is to be held on 16th April 2016 at the John Innes Centre in Norwich. Past conferences have been well

attended and provided a great opportunity to advertise the WEA. Ron suggested that it would be worth investigating if the Essex Federation could put on a similar event in this county.

Ron Marks reminded the meeting that in relation to the types of initiatives spoken about branches could bid for funding from the Regional Branch Designated Fund and that the Federation too was open to requests for grants, the Basil Slaughter Trust being a possible source of funding in Essex.

On a different matter Chris Gunton asked if more information could be provided in relation to the distance that tutors were prepared to travel to branches. Sharon said that the Education Committee had discussed this issue and the 'distance' information on the Course Selection list would be clearer in future and tutors' phone numbers would be added to enable branches to seek further clarification.

20. Any Other Business

There being no other business the Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and declared the meeting closed at 2.35 p.m.

Afternoon Talk: Mr Malcolm Bell J.P. on Magistrates in the Community:

Mr Bell gave an exceedingly interesting talk about the history of the Magistracy and the Courts in Essex. He went on to describe his background and the path he had taken to become a Justice of the Peace. In describing the daily workings of a Magistrates Court he gave a picture of a part of society that most of us will hopefully never encounter. But his accounts of some of the characters he has had to deal with and some of the extremely difficult decisions that have to be made by the Magistrates left us in no doubt about the importance of what they do.

Appendix 1

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR WEA ESSEX FEDERATION AGM 10 OCTOBER 2015

We have had a varied and full programme of events during the past year but not all have been as successful as we would have liked. Whilst the Henry Tam Lecture brought in £114 in donations, others such as Laurence Staig's World War I lecture and Patrick Denney's Colchester walk made a loss, although the prime objective of all three events was to raise the profile of the WEA, events that we shall continue to support.

Both the Benham-Seaman Trust and the Basil Slaughter Trust have continued with their generous grants enabling us to purchase more equipment, produce EF News and help branches in need. Their contributions are greatly appreciated.

Both one day schools made a small profit and bookings for this Autumn's event are beginning to come in: so I am hopeful we shall at least break even again.

However, the Summer Schools present a different problem. Enrolments were down in both venues and expenditure increased. WEA Colchester's offer to pay for the Colchester accommodation meant on paper we were able to break even on the Colchester summer school but were not so fortunate with the Chelmsford one. In view of this, the committee has decided to maintain the two venues but reduce the days to two next year in the hope this will encourage more people to attend. Timing has also been tweaked to start at 10.15am and finish at 4.15pm.

The affiliation fee is still a welcome source of income although reducing with the number of branches decreasing. Most of this income goes to maintain the website, a useful resource for all branches and recently improved so that all branches can make better use of it. We are asking for an increase of £2.50 this year taking the fee to £20 per branch although naturally we are prepared to waive the fee if any branch is in financial difficulties. I would appreciate it, as treasurer, if all affiliation fees could be paid before the end of the financial year in July as there are still fees outstanding for last year. Can I, therefore, propose a £20 fee for this academic year - seconder? (The motion was passed). Thank you - an invoice for the fee will be sent with copies of the minutes of this meeting.

I am concerned about the diminishing balance in our bank account, currently standing at about £2,500 including the remainder of the Richard Waskett Memorial Fund, which stands at £639. We cannot really afford to make a loss as great as the £827 last year (£1466 if you take out the Richard Waskett Fund), but I am hopeful that our events, day schools, revamped summer schools, walks and lectures will enable the Federation to flourish this year.

Jane Dougan - Treasurer

**Essex Branch Programme
ALM Report: September 2015**

Branch Course programme 2015-16

129 courses have been arranged for the branch programme in Essex for 2015-16 which is 5 fewer than at this time last year, equating to 2330 course hours.

About half the courses (66) are available for online enrolment which is a marked increase on last year. I am currently pulling together some information to feedback about 'how online enrolments' work in practice – highlighting both good and bad! Feedback welcomed via email please so I can collate:

sarahmoore@wea.org.uk

We have as usual had a couple of tutors withdraw after they have been contracted; however, most of these courses have now been replaced with only a couple left to sort out before the spring. This is annoying for both staff and branches but is outside of our control.

We have contracted 55 individual tutors to deliver the 129 courses. There are 64 courses planned this term, 61 for spring but only 3 for summer. The summer term is therefore ideal for day schools and extra activities to keep students engaged and to encourage new ones before next autumn.

Day Schools

The following day schools have already been planned and are confirmed 'on the system'.

StartDate	Day	ActivityName	Total Hours	Branch
07/11/2015	Saturday	Day School: Art Deco - Style and Colour in Design	6	WEA CHELMSFORD
07/11/2015	Saturday	Day School: Zero Night	6	WEA CHELMSFORD
14/11/2015	Saturday	Day School: Flappers 'n' Fliers	6	WEA CHELMSFORD
14/11/2015	Saturday	Day School: Stonehenge	6	WEA HALSTEAD
14/11/2015	Saturday	Day School: Dark and Light - Faces of Silent Cinema	5.5	WEA ESSEX FEDERATION
14/11/2015	Saturday	Day School: Unearthing the Truth 100 Years On - Edith Cavell 1865-1915	5.5	WEA ESSEX FEDERATION
28/11/2015	Saturday	Day School: Solving the	2	WEA ESSEX FEDERATION

			Crime		
30/01/201	6	Saturday	Day School: In the Nick of Time	2	WEA ESSEX FEDERATION
27/02/201	6	Saturday	Day School: Rene Lalique, Master Craftsman in Jewelry and Glass	3	WEA BENFLEET
11/06/201	6	Saturday	Day School: A Journey through Ancient Iraq	3	WEA BENFLEET

Regional / National update

Sharon Watson joined us as the new REM for eastern region on 1st September. I had the pleasure of meeting with her in Essex on the 2nd and introduced her to the staff team. She will be attending the Essex Federation AGM in October where I am sure she will happily answer your questions. Sharon has 18 years' experience within the WEA in a range of roles based in Yorkshire and Humber; she is keen to 'get out' and see the region and meet the people who make the WEA so worthwhile.

WEA have had a reduction in funding for the period between August 2015 and March 2016. The cut will certainly have an impact but is not the 20+% that other providers have had to deal with... (Yet!). As a region we need to make a saving of about £40K, which includes delivery costs associated with 400 course hours. (We will be cutting 400 hours of SFA funded provision this year across the region). The regional accountant has been able to amend the budget to produce these cuts without losing staff; it does mean, however, that we will be watching every penny we spend and looking to increase income by other routes.

On Wednesday we held the first day of a 2-day volunteer training course we are running in Essex. The first session introduced participants to the WEA online templates for marketing and advised them on how the office can produce these resources in house at very low cost. For branches these costs will not be charged back to you. This week we are running the second day and looking at course selection processes and 'getting the right tutors'.

Sarah Moore – Area Learning Manager 12.09.2015