

WEA 2021 Conference FINAL AGENDA

Introduction. Please refer to section 2 of the 24 Aug 2021 SOC Report

Motion 1 from North East Region

This conference, noting the changing political and funding background for adult education and the impact on WEA branches and volunteers (as shown by the recent branch survey), calls on the Trustees to instigate a plan of action as follows:-

1. Make next year the Year of the Branch to celebrate our branches and volunteers.
2. Seek to create new thematic branches, such as History and Heritage, and Green Branches, and to share good practice on what can work wherever possible.
3. Ensure our funding systems for branch activity are simple, user-friendly, and encourage initiatives.
4. Acknowledge the positive effect the new Branch Innovation Fund has had, and seek to continue this as part of the Year of the Branch.
5. Review our on-line course registration technology, which currently acts as a barrier to learners, and make it more user-friendly, accessible and simple to use.

Supporting Statement

WEA Branches and volunteers have for over 100 years played an important role in the development and success of adult and community education. However, this important role is now at risk, as never before. The pandemic and the long suspension of face-to-face learning; the shift in government funding towards skills and employability criteria; coupled with the growing move towards devolved mayoral authorities; as well as our own internal financial arrangements for Branch financial systems, have led to a serious and rapid decline.

Motion 2 from North East Region

This conference, noting the changes in the political and funding background arising from devolution, calls on the Trustees to instigate a plan of action as follows:-

1. Carry out a comprehensive analysis of the present and future impact of the devolution of adult education and skills funding.
2. Carry out a thorough evaluation of the way in which the finance, management and influence of the WEA are presently deployed at national and regional level
3. To consider, in the light of devolution, whether the resource allocation offers the best fit for the changing nature of funding allocation.

Motion 2 continued

Supporting Statement

- a) England is in the process of devolving the procurement and funding of adult education and skills to local municipalities (Mayoral Authorities), which will only increase as new Mayoral Authorities are created.
- b) The devolution of funding could provide a real opportunity for the provision of adult education and skills to be more closely aligned to the needs of local communities and business sectors in a given area.
- c) The WEA has a proud tradition of reaching out and responding to the needs of local communities, and of cooperating with a whole range of partners at community and regional level, through its democratic structures and locally managed staff.
- d) The devolution of funding constitutes a real threat to the future funding and viability of the WEA as a national provider of adult education.
- e) There has been a move in recent years towards the centralisation of the operation and management of the WEA, with financial and human resources appearing to be shifted from regions to the centre.

Motion 3 From Eastern Region

In view of the current uncertainty regarding branch funding, and noting the provisions of Regulations 5.36 to 5.42 on local finances, this conference calls on the Trustees to agree that:

- (a) local fundraising should be ring-fenced for use in and by the branch concerned
- (b) national guidance should be provided on what these monies could be used for, for example: the provision of free places, the subsidising of fees, venue costs, the laying on of free events
- (c) the specific purpose of the local fundraising should be stated in advance.

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