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| 2.3 | In May 2024, WEA received a full Ofsted inspection and was rated a “good” provider with “outstanding” elements. Trustees welcomed the outcome and thanked all contributors. |
| 2.4 | Work also progressed on inclusive membership, with all learners and staff now offered automatic free membership for one year, followed by an optional £15 renewal. |
| 2.5 | To strengthen transparency and diversity, Trustees expanded the Governance & Nominations Committee, published board details online, approved a new delegation scheme, and launched an annual skills audit. Recruitment efforts led to greater diversity, with further progress still a priority. |
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| 3 | Report of the Chief Executive & General Secretary |
| 3.1 | <p>SP gave a verbal report. Gratitude was expressed to the Trustees and WEA Council members for their continued support throughout the year</p> <p>The positive outcomes from the recent Ofsted inspection were highlighted, noting the enhanced support now available to learners as a result. The WEA had also received positive feedback from an external accreditor for the support provided to WEA learners, particularly in Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG).</p> |
| 3.2 | <p>SP addressed key external challenges, focusing particularly on funding concerns and the recent ONS reclassification. Attention was drawn to a potential 4% reduction in education funding and the transfer of funding responsibilities from the ESFA to devolved authorities. It was hoped that the forthcoming Impact Report, scheduled for release on 11 June and highlighting the WEA’s work and achievements, would be considered in future funding decisions. Members were encouraged to actively petition and advocate for the protection and promotion of adult education funding.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding WEA’s relationship with the newly elected Mayor of Lincolnshire.</p> <p>SP confirmed having met Andrea Jenkins, she had attended a WEA awards event, and the WEA had sent a letter of congratulations on her election. SP added that he wished to meet all newly elected mayors in due course.</p> |
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| 4 | Report of the Association Treasurer |
| 4.1 | KD presented the 2023/24 Trustees’ Report and Financial Statements, highlighting external challenges such as devolution and shifting priorities in skills-based education, alongside internal challenges including organisational restructuring, contract management, income diversification, and sustaining community learning. |
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| 5 | Report of the WEA Council |
| 5.1 | SP noted the previously mentioned WEA Impact Report would be released at the Annual Conference, on Wednesday 11 June. |
| 5.2 | KF noted that elections for Association Officer roles would take place in 2026. To support this, the WEA Council had established a working group to develop clear and engaging role descriptions, aimed at making the responsibilities and opportunities of these positions more appealing to potential candidates. |
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| 6 | Member Feedback (002) |
| 6.1 | It was noted no advisory motions had been submitted, and none were raised during the conference. |
| 6.2 | It was noted questions submitted prior to the event had been answered and published (paper 002 - Member Questions for Conference.pdf) |

6.3

Questions from attendees were invited:

A Member **inquired** about the overall cost of the WEA Reshape, including specific details regarding redundancy expenses.

SP **advised** that the reshape was a difficult but necessary exercise which resulted in a reduction of 90 posts. The associated costs were primarily due to redundancy payments. This process was agreed upon with the Department for Education and served as a valuable financial health check. It has allowed the organisation to become agile with specialist teams.

A Member **asked** whether the decline in tutor applications could be linked to low pay.

SP **responded** that the WEA had increased the number of core tutors on permanent contracts and was transitioning away from zero-hours contracts to fixed-term or annualised hours contracts. Recruiting tutors, particularly for functional skills, was a sector-wide issue, with mainstream providers often able to offer higher pay.

A Member **asked** how community learning could be sustainably funded.

SP **advised** that learners able to pay for community learning may be expected to contribute more in the future. A limited full-cost model would be introduced at the start of the 2025/26 academic year. A hardship fund, with an application process, would be made available to support learners in need.

A Member **asked** why learner numbers had declined in tailored learning courses.

SP **advised** that threats to funding, particularly from devolved and skills-focused regions, had resulted in fewer funded learners being able to participate in non-vocational courses such as creative writing.

A Member **asked** what support was available for local branches struggling to recruit tutors for face-to-face teaching.

SP **responded** that Curriculum Lead Rochelle Robshaw, along with three Course Managers, were available to support branches. Additionally, an updated Branch Handbook included guidance for supporting provision. Members were encouraged to reach out to SP or KF for further assistance.

A Member **asked** why the vacant Deputy President role was not filled following its advertisement to Council.

SP **advised** that while there was clear guidance around the roles of President and Treasurer, the Deputy President role lacked a clear job description. It was hoped the role would be filled in 2026.

A Member **asked** if the WEA had considered collaborating with other organisations to petition the government.

SP **advised** that while forming coalitions could be challenging due to differing organisational priorities, working with new community-based partners with aligned values

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| | <p>may be more effective. The successful grassroots efforts in Newcastle were cited as an example that could be replicated elsewhere.</p> <p>A Member asked what level of IT support was available to learners.</p> <p>SP responded that the WEA had developed into a truly hybrid organisation since Covid, with significant investment made into IT systems and integration. Support is available for learners, including help with Canvas and general IT assistance.</p> <p>A Member asked whether there was any evidence that the failure of private providers had contributed to funding losses, either nationally or within combined authorities.</p> <p>SP advised that some private providers had withdrawn from contracts due to an inability to generate profit, which may have contributed to funding challenges.</p> <p>A Member asked if a Local Advisory Panel (LAP) existed in Essex.</p> <p>SP advised that LAPs were under review and being developed. Originally designed to help meet the statutory duty of evidencing responsiveness to local need, LAPs had evolved as the organisation moved away from regionally-based structures. As a national provider, maintaining geographically-defined groups remained complex. However, the WEA remained committed to supporting self-organised groups.</p> <p>A Member asked if the Essex Federation could transition into a Local Advisory Panel (LAP).</p> <p>SP advised that Essex was a devolved area and the question could be raised at the upcoming Conference on Wednesday for further discussion.</p> |
| 7 | Closing Remarks |
| 7.1 | JW thanked members for attending and encouraged members to feedback. |
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| | The formal business of the 2025 Annual Conference was brought to a close at 19:24. |