



## **Women in the Fire Service UK**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

#### **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 held via zoom**

The Chair Jules King QFSM opened the meeting at 1905 saying how really pleased she was to see so many members in attendance, 31 in total with 2 international delegates - for our AGM. A very warm welcome to you all

Having not been in a position to hold one last year, we have the task of running 2 AGMS's this year with our next one, a fuller one combined with speakers and workshops on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July at so we very much hope that you will want to join us again.

I have to confess this is a first virtual AGM I have done, so hoping you will bear with me and be kind. In order to make sure that everything is covered, and you are clear on the protocols for the meeting, these are in your packs. One change to these is we are will be running a poll/vote for agenda items so that we can record the numbers.

Helping me manage all the business tonight is Karen Smith our Admin Manager, Nathalie Holden, our Comms and Marketing Officer and Cheryl Rolph, our Company Secretary/Director. Alex Johnson will be sharing the papers connected with agenda items 2, 5 and 7.

**Agenda item 1. Apologies** for absence were received from Rebecca Savin, Divine Zake, Georgina Connor and Jenny Nangle.

**Agenda item 2. Minutes of the last AGM** held 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2019 were agreed as a true record and Jules would therefore sign off.

**Agenda item 3. Matters arising.** None.

**Agenda item 4. Chair's report.**

I think we can all safely say that the past year has been many things and I would probably run out of descriptive words, challenging, demanding, harsh, tragic yet at the same time, we have learnt new skills, become experts with zoom (other mediums exist) seen the best (and worst of human nature and had our sense of belonging, worth and esteem challenged beyond belief. In the FRS we have seen new roles and opportunities and been part of the resilience forum, delivering PPE, driving ambulances, administering vaccinations and the list continues.

Moving closer to home, the WFS Hon Officers have had a challenging 12 months and early on set out some guiding principles to help steer us through the pandemic and ensure the longevity of the association. We also had to take some very tough decisions, in relation to Karen and Nathalie who we furloughed in April 2020. I am pleased to say that finances were juggled to ensure full pay until the end of the year and in January/February 2021, pay reduced to 80% with them having returned to work 1 day a week from November. It was with much relief though that we welcomed them back of furlough leave on 1 March 2021. Utilising the Governments Job retention scheme has helped enormously with our survival as

you will see from the 2020/2021 accounts when they are published later this year in time for the July AGM. I won't say anything further on finances as I know Amy will be making some comments in her part of the agenda.

Just before lockdown 1 we have launched our awards scheme and despite the difficulties faced in the spring/summer of 2020, am delighted to tell you there was a total of 54 nominations which is the highest number of nominations ever in one year coming from 19 FRS, 1 x charity and 2 from other backgrounds. Individual categories brought

- 6 nominations in the Young Persons role model – this was sponsored by Stephen Mackenzie – Fire Risk consultant and we were able to make cash prizes to all the young people
- There were 16 nominations in the Bright Light category
- 10 nominations in the Men as Allies category with 3 men also nominated in other categories
- 9 nominations in the Woman FF Rising Star category
- 11 nominations in the Dany Cotton Inspiring Leader category
- 1 nomination in the Event Champion category
- Joint nomination in the Corporate Star category
- 2 people were nominated twice
- 1 person was nominated 3 times
- 3 Chief Fire Officers were nominated

This was an overwhelmingly good news story with a great 'feel good factor' which ran for several weeks with such good publicity for the winners and runners, the FRS and WFS. In the build-up to the pandemic, WFS set a number of guiding principles to keep us afloat and I am pleased that these kept us on track 7 with Hon Officers meeting once a month (as opposed to twice a year) I am proud that in the background, the virtual event programme has been set up which was launched last month and as these roll out am pleased to say that it's an income stream we can start to utilise.

In closing I want to look forward to the next few months, and ask for you to send your ideas in for our virtual AGM in July – ideas on speakers, activities etc. We are really keen to hear what you want.

And a date for your diary JUNE 10<sup>TH</sup> TO 12<sup>TH</sup> 2022 – Training and Development event at the Fire Service College

#### **Agenda item 5. Presentation of WFS accounts for the period May 2019 to April 2020.**

I shall hand over to Amy Webb at this point but before I do, Amy signalled her intention to stand down as our Treasurer in June 2020 but agreed to stay on until things were a bit clearer with the pandemic and our situation. Amy has been our Treasurer since 2016 and it has been a pleasure having her on board. A keen eye for detail, and a different perspective on life and how we do things is always welcomed but her sense of fun, love of running and alcohol all helped her fit in brilliantly. It's a tough act being the Treasurer and we were genuinely concerned about how we would replace her and as you can see from the next item, we have. Amy, I didn't want to steal your item, but it would have been remiss of me not to have taken

a few moments to say thank you, wish you all the best in your new role as Director of Corporate Services for North Somerset Council and to say how much we will miss you.

Amy thanked Jules for her kind words and thanked WFS for all it had given her and especially Louise Brown for introducing her to WFS and running. She confirmed she would miss everyone.

WFS operates as a not-for-profit organisation which relies on income from its events, corporate and membership subscriptions to cover its costs each year. Due to there being no AGM in 2020 the accounts were signed off by the Honorary Officers and filed within the relevant guidelines. Therefore, this item is to present and take any questions that may arise.

I am pleased to report that the WFS finances remain in a healthy position, with a forecast surplus for the year ending 30/04/21.

Dawn Whitaker asked if WFS had given any thought to increasing the subscription rates and Amy confirmed that the Honorary Officers had, a recommendation had gone to the NEC which was accepted and was part of the amendments contained within agenda item.

**Agenda item 6. Appointment of Treasurer.**

We have received a nomination of Sara Slater for the post. Sara is the Financial Services Manager with South Yorkshire FRS. Before I take a proposer and seconder for Sara, do we have any other nominations? None were declared.

Sara Slater was proposed by Alex Johnson and seconded by Amy Webb. The vote was 28

**Agenda item 7. Memorandum of understanding and articles of association.**

I shall hand over to Cheryl Rolph at this point. Cheryl used the summary document issues with the agenda papers but said that she wouldn't go through all the summary as some changes are needed because of legislative changes and some are through reflecting current practices. However, will go through the more material changes and then very happy to answer any questions/issues.

Page number	Ref	Change
<b>MOU</b>		
1	4.2	New. To facilitate procuring services if needed but linked to already approved financial powers and procurement policy.
<b>Articles</b>		
4	2.	Categories of memberships changed to reflect practice
4	2.1	Increase of subs (have remained constant since 2008) and as recommended by the NEC at their meeting January 2021. Simplified process but introduced a super supporter rate for those who could afford a slightly higher rate, recognise the value WFS bring to the sector/society and believed in the mission.

		Currently we have just under 280 members and in the coming year we intend to improve our membership management and hopefully in doing this we can improve the actual numbers of individual members. Our main income stream other than events is Corporate Membership and these are kept at the same rate (since 2008)
5	2.5.1	New wording and draft policy developed for NEC to consider at their April meeting
5	3	Now includes the provision to hold the AGM virtually
7/8	5	Several changes to this section – renamed Hon Officers to Directors – streamlines the structure as currently have NEC/HO and Directors. It reflects how work has and is being undertaken so putting the accountability with the Directors plus the functions seems to make sense. Have added in numbers for quorate and increased the number of meetings per year
8	6.1.5	Inclusion of NEC having powers to temporarily appoint to NEC outside of AGM.
8	6.1.6	Removal of need to hold an annual regional meeting 1 month prior to AGM to appoint regional representative.
8	6.6	Duties of NEC – see section 7 as some duties removed from here and now under Directors.
10	10.1	Removal of a named bank, to provide greater flexibility for changes banks subject to need but must have approval of Treasurer and Directors. We looked into change during 2020 as problems with current provider but have seen an improvement. However, the removal of a named bank gives Directors/NEC greater flexibility if needed.
12	12.1	To be used only if required and or if approved by the named officers.

There were no questions or issues raised. The vote was 29

#### **Agenda item 8. Appointment of Auditor.**

This agenda item should read appointment of external accountant and it is recommended that we appoint Nick Westbury who has been our external accountant/ auditor some years. The vote was 29

The meeting closed at 1940.