



RECORD OF DECISIONS 2021

Fire Brigades Union
Special Online Conference
28th May 2021



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FIRE BRIGADES UNION

Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT2 7AE
www.fbu.org.uk

MOTIONS CARRIED ...

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENTS AGREED BY ONLINE CONFERENCE 2021

1. THE WESTMINSTER GOVERNMENT AND THE FORTHCOMING ATTACK ON FIREFIGHTERS' RIGHTS, PAY AND CONDITIONS

(AS AMENDED BY HEREFORD & WORCESTER)

Conference notes that the Westminster Government has been preparing an unprecedented series of attacks on fire and rescue services governance arrangements, on firefighters' rights to collective bargaining, on our conditions of service, pay, jobs and our industry for some considerable time. These were first openly laid out by the Home Secretary of the day, Theresa May, in her speech to an event organised by Reform on 24 May 2016.

This coming attack directly applies to fire and rescue services in England but it will have significant implications for the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) across the UK. If the National Joint Council (NJC) is abolished or if its powers and structure are altered, this will impact on the rights, pay and conditions of FBU Members in all parts of the UK. This is therefore a battle for all FBU Members.

Conference notes the written statement made on 16 March 2021 by Home Secretary Priti Patel, announcing that the Home Office will be launching a White Paper on fire reform. The White Paper is likely to focus on:

- Professionalism: including minimum entry standards, promotion and leadership
- People: the role of firefighters
- Governance: mandating the takeover of fire and rescue authorities by Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) or mayors; and operational independence for chief fire officers.

Conference condemns the HMICFRS for its role as being the vehicle to provide ostensibly 'independent' reports to provide false legitimacy for these attacks. Conference condemns the reports published on 15 January 2020, 22 January 2021 and 17 March 2021, containing premeditated attacks on firefighters' pay and conditions under the pretext of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The conclusions and recommendations of these reports are not based on any genuine assessment of evidence; rather they represent a gross distortion of the facts and are a slur on the reputation and good work of firefighters. They were published by Thomas Winsor who has no expertise or experience in fire and rescue service matters who has previously carried out similar attacks as the Rail Regulator and when carrying out the government-commissioned review of the police service.

Conference condemns the HMICFRS for abusing the trust of fire and rescue service officers who volunteered to be seconded as the professional assessors for the inspection of local fire services.

Conference condemns Thomas Winsor, the chief fire inspector for England, for his destructive recommendations to downgrade firefighters' pay and conditions and to attack collective rights. His report makes the following recommendations:

- Determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them
- Consider the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the Grey Book
- Legislate to give chief fire officers operational independence
- Implement a Code of Ethics.

Conference condemns Winsor's demand to abolish the NJC and impose a pay review body, made up of Westminster-appointedees, required to work to an agenda and within terms of reference set by government. This is a major attack on the right to collective bargaining and, in turn, is an attempt to drive down the pay of firefighters across the UK.

Conference rejects Winsor's demand to tear up the Grey Book. This is an attempt to give governments, fire and rescue authorities and chief fire officers the power to unilaterally downgrade duty systems and hours of duty, pay, leave, maternity, childcare and dependency provisions, health & safety and welfare, occupational health, grievances, conduct, capability and discipline, local consultation and negotiation.

Conference rejects Winsor's demand that chief fire officers be granted "operational independence". This would reduce the accountability of chief fire officers to local communities and politicians, while giving them a free hand to dictate what firefighters do day-to-day, how they would do it and to what degree the safety of FBU Members is accommodated in doing so. Recent experience of National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) initiatives do not bode well in this regard. Furthermore, it would worsen the post code lottery and further undermine any element of national standards.

Conference further condemns Winsor's remarks made in an interview with the Daily Telegraph (18 March 2021), suggesting firefighters' right to take industrial action should be reviewed by Westminster politicians.

Conference condemns the proposal to impose wider roles on firefighters without pay. The aim is to give chief fire officers wide latitude to impose new areas of work and new roles locally, without any overarching national constraints or any additional payment. Despite significant upskilling and additional risks, the risk is that these tasks could be imposed without any remuneration or without other concerns being addressed such as investment, training and resources. Winsor bases his conclusions on a distorted and dishonest account of the work of fire and rescue services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conference rejects the proposal to hand over the governance of every fire and rescue service in England to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC). Currently, just four out of forty-four fire and rescue services are governed by PFCCs. Local communities, not ministers, should decide how their fire and rescue service is managed.

Conference therefore mandates the Executive Council (EC) to organise a multifaceted campaign in defence of:

- Fire and rescue services
- Firefighters' pay and conditions.

This campaign will consider all legal, political and industrial options. Conference calls on all FBU Members to unite in defence of:

- Fire and rescue services
- The dignity and professionalism of firefighters
- The reputation of the fire and rescue service, firefighters and the firefighters' trade union of choice – the Fire Brigades Union
- Our hard-won and well-deserved conditions of service
- The rights of firefighters to organise and bargain for our pay and conditions.

2. COVID-19 THE RESPONSE BY FIREFIGHTERS AND THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION (AS AMENDED BY SCOTLAND)

Conference notes that over the last 18 months, the Covid-19 virus has made around five million people sick, put almost half a million in hospital and led to more than 150,000 deaths in the UK.

The hazards posed by epidemics and pandemics has consistently been identified as a major risk in each iteration of the National Risk Register since their inception. Conference is appalled by the mismanagement of the Covid-19 crisis by all governments across the UK but in particular the Westminster Government which has overall responsibility under the Civil Contingencies Act.

The lack of preparedness despite warnings in the national risk register includes: the austerity cuts that weakened public services before the pandemic; the failure to procure reserves of sufficient PPE for workers; their failure to provide sick pay at a living level for workers; their expensive and inefficient use of private contractors for test, track and trace instead of public health authorities; and the cronyism demonstrated in the awarding of contracts to private sector providers.

Conference applauds the tremendous work of firefighters, emergency control and support staff in serving our communities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conference congratulates firefighters and all fire staff for continuing to provide our irreplaceable emergency service, tackling a wide range of hazards and keeping our communities safe over the last year from domestic, business and vehicle fires, floods, wildfires and other hazards.

Conference further applauds the tremendous additional work carried out by firefighters and emergency fire control staff to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. This has included:

- Delivering essential items to vulnerable persons
- Delivering PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care facilities
- Face-fitting masks to be used by NHS and clinical care staff working with Covid-19 patients
- Packing/repacking food supplies for vulnerable people
- Ambulance driving
- Moving bodies of the deceased

- Delivering training packages for care homes and care home staff
- Driving ambulances not on blue lights for outpatients or samples
- Training non-service personnel to drive ambulances
- Transferring patients to and from Nightingale hospitals.

Conference endorses the Fire Brigade Union's (FBU) constructive engagement with fire employers and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in negotiating a tripartite agreement to keep regular emergency intervention functioning, while enabling firefighters to safely volunteer for additional activities by ensuring that strict safety measures were in place.

Conference supports the approach taken by FBU officials at national, regional and local level, to insist on comprehensive risk assessments and control measures to keep the public and firefighters and their families safe.

Conference believes that the low levels of sickness absence and fatalities from Covid-19 in the fire and rescue services at the height of the pandemic were due to these safety measures. This ensured that fire and rescue services were able, in the main, to maintain service delivery and provide additional resources to the health and care sectors. Despite the low level of sickness absence and fatalities from Covid-19 within fire and rescue services, Conference notes the sad passing of FBU Members and mourns their loss.

Conference notes that there were serious Covid-related emergencies in a number of fire and rescue service establishments because of the failure of the relevant service to observe the relevant control measures.

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE NATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Conference notes the health and safety regulations, central government Covid-19 guidance and Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) evidence on transmission, which all require fire and rescue services to maintain strict safety measures in order to avoid the spread of the virus at work and in our communities.

Conference notes that during autumn 2020 a small number of chief fire officers no longer wanted to maintain the risk control measures, despite the rising number of Covid-19 cases and deaths.

Conference condemns the excuse given by those chief fire officers that these safety measures were “unsustainable” and criticises the NFCC for its failure to ensure that chief officers stuck to those nationally agreed safety measures.

Conference welcomes the FBU efforts to further extend the fire and rescue service national Covid-19 agreement with fire employers in December 2020, which would have included further additional activities and a planned national agreement to assist with the roll out of vaccination.

Conference notes the intensive negotiations which the FBU engaged in over the Christmas holiday, as the second wave hit and third UK-wide lockdown was implemented.

Conference condemns the unexpected decision of 13 January 2021 by fire employers, encouraged by the NFCC and the Home Office, to walk away from talks that centred on ensuring that there could be an extension of the national agreement.

Conference opposes the NFCC's decision to water down risk assessments and reduce the control measures to control the spread of Covid-19 that had been previously put in place and had so successfully protected the fire service and enabled the additional work.

Conference is alarmed that the national employers took the decision to mimic the NFCC stance on the control measures and then to unilaterally end the national agreement. This provided the excuse for the HMICFRS to launch their attack on the NJC and the FBU.

Conference applauds the intensive efforts of FBU Officials nationally, regionally and locally to renegotiate further agreements.

Conference thanks Members who continued to work on regular duties and additional Covid-19 work during the second wave.

Conference resolves to campaign for:

- The maintenance of national standards of Covid-19 risk assessment and control measures agreed with the FBU
- Testing and vaccination priority for firefighters including emergency fire control staff as key frontline workers
- Sickness absence policies in FRSs to reflect the national agreement that fully protects firefighters and emergency fire control staff to allow for isolation and paid sick leave when firefighters are isolating in accordance with guidance, including that sick leave from Covid-19 is not counted for aggregated sick leave. Furthermore, there will be no financial detriment from absences related to Covid-19
- Further research on long Covid including the implications for reasonable fire and rescue service sickness absence control policies
- Investment in the fire and rescue service to prepare for national risks, and in particular epidemics and pandemics. This must include further waves and new variants and other diseases
- Preparation at government level for all identified foreseeable risks including adequate resourcing and funding.

3. PAY IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Conference notes that for half a century, public sector pay in the UK has been bound within narrow constraints by central government, with public sector workers facing a long-term attack.

Westminster Government policy since Thatcher and continuing through every administration since has imposed tight limits on public sector workers' pay.

Conference condemns the pay freezes and caps imposed by the Westminster Government since 2010, which have held down the pay of all public sector workers.

Conference is appalled by the 13% real term cut in average full-time firefighters' pay (measured by CPI), equivalent to £4,000 a year.

Conference opposes the announcement on 25 November 2020 by Chancellor Rishi Sunak in his Spending Review that pay rises in much of the public sector would be frozen ("paused")

for at least a year. This is a further attack on public sector workers who have been central to ensuring our communities survived the pandemic of the past year. We oppose any attempts by government to play off the private sector against the public sector, all workers need a pay rise.

Conference condemns the 'something for nothing' approach of fire employers and chief fire officers in relation to role maps and new work undertaken by firefighters.

Conference opposes the attempts, sometimes successful, by some chief fire officers to unilaterally introduce unpaid expansion of roles within fire and rescue services, whereby firefighters are trained, upskilled and expected to do more complex and risky work, but without the necessary pay in return.

Conference opposes attacks on collective bargaining on pay and conditions, including proposals to scrap the National Joint Council (NJC) and Grey Book, replacing them with a pay review body that excludes the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Conference condemns the silence by individual chief fire officers and fire and rescue authorities; who have neither challenged the attacks on collective bargaining nor called for improved pay.

Conference rejects the view that nothing can be done to improve pay progression within fire and rescue services.

Conference has previously set out and agreed our views on the need for our service to adapt to the changing and emerging risks facing our communities but that this must be done by negotiation. New work and new roles must be linked to pay, investment, training and adequate resources.

Conference notes the complications for fire service policy created by the devolution of powers in relation to fire and rescue services. This may require different discussions in the devolved parts of the UK. Any such discussions must be authorised by the Executive Council and be conducted under their authority and in accordance with existing policies of the union.

Conference mandates the Executive Council to prepare for the greater campaigning which will become more possible as lockdown eases. This should include:

- The call for a united campaign across the public sector to challenge and oppose the Tory pay freeze
- Negotiating with employers around existing union policies regarding the future of our service, the changing risks facing communities and the changing skills of firefighters
- Developing an appropriate pay structure which improves pay progression for all FBU Members
- Officials engaging with FRA leaders & members on authorities, including those who are deemed as political allies, who have thus far failed to grasp the significance of the attack on national sectoral collective bargaining and what would replace it in terms of future discussions on the issue of pay
- Building the campaign to make the case for the investment in our service which is necessary to protect the service and to improve pay.

Conference agrees to campaign to make the case to politicians and employers for pay arrangements that reflect the irreplaceable contribution firefighters make to our communities.

4. REGION 11 RESTRUCTURE

The current Region 11 was created following the decision of Conference in May 2015 to merge the precursor regions 11 (south east) and 12 (southern). The merger has been monitored since its inception to ensure that the Members and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Officials within the region continued to receive the support and representation they required.

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service were subject to a merge on 1 April 2021 creating Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service.

Region 11 therefore currently consists of eight Brigades: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex.

In the period following the creation of the new Region 11, occasional concerns began to emerge within the region which were brought to the attention of the Executive Council (EC) by the Regional Committee regarding the efficacy of the arrangements. Conference in May 2018 agreed to commission a fundamental review and evaluation of the FBU's structure and organisation. A consultant with experience in this field and who has assisted the Union on such matters previously undertook the review and his findings were considered by the Executive Council on 17 January 2019.

The report was an organisation-wide review but included particular references to Region 11. It was agreed by the EC to commission the consultant to conduct a further evaluation of the region. This second report was presented in October 2019. The report concluded that there were matters which did need to be addressed. The report detailed those concerns and recommended that the EC take steps to evaluate the available options to rectify the situation. During this period the Region 11 Regional Committee, the Regional Executive and Brigade Committees in Region 11 continued to raise issues concerning the ability of the Region in its current format to adequately function to best serve FBU Members. In broad terms, the view of the Region 11 Regional Committee was that the Region was too large both in terms of geography and in terms of the numbers and variation between fire and rescue services and that due to the number of significant challenges and problems within the Region that workloads were close to becoming unmanageable.

These concerns were brought to the attention of the EC who commissioned a task and finish group comprising EC members and Officials from the Region to consider the scope of the issues raised in more detail and to report its findings to the EC at its meeting 23 September 2020. On 25 September 2020 the EC agreed the convening of an EC sub-committee in order to consider the specifics of any restructure. The sub-committee reported its recommendations to the full EC 10 February 2021.

The key summary outcomes of the EC sub-committee were:

- A. *Having considered the matter in detail "no change" is not an option.*
- B. *The strongly held conclusion and recommendation from the working group is that the current Region 11 should be divided into two separate regions reflecting the boundaries of the legacy regions 11 and 12 which were in place prior to FBU conference 2015.*
- C. *That the decision is a matter for FBU Conference.*
- D. *A FBU Conference should consider the matter at the earliest opportunity.*
- E. *Measures specified in the recommendations are required in the run up to any such Conference to support the Region.*

The EC sub-committee reported that it was acutely aware of the need to implement the restructure as soon as practicably possible. However, there was a lot of work to do within the region in terms of education, provision of regional office/s and work at head office in terms of membership, finance etc. before the final implementation date.

A further recommendation of the EC sub-committee report was that:

The EC is asked to agree that as soon as practicably possible, a Conference will be held which will consider an EC resolution/statement proposing the restructure of the current Region 11 into the two legacy Regions 11 and 12 which were in place prior to Conference 2015. That Conference will also consider the necessary rule change(s) to enable that restructure to commence, in this regard Head Office will draft an appropriate paper with the necessary proposed rule changes.

A restructure will result in the formation of the following two Regions:

REGION 11 SOUTH EAST REGION

East Sussex, Kent, Surrey and West Sussex

REGION 12 SOUTHERN REGION

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire & Isle of Wight and Oxfordshire

The current Region 12 shall be called Region 13 South West.

On 10 February 2021 the EC agreed the recommendations of the EC sub-committee.

The decision of the EC was supported by the Region 11 Regional Committee.

Accordingly, having considered these matters, Conference requires the EC to:

1. Restructure Region 11 reverting back to the precursor Regions 11 (south east) and 12 (southern)
2. Undertake the required work in relation to the restructure in terms of education, provision of regional office(s), membership databases, election of Officials, finance and to resolve any other consequential work
3. Introduce interim arrangements for current Regional Officials within Region 11 that they are to be considered as the post-holder within the Region which their FRS employer is located until their natural term of office concludes and re-election is due
4. Immediately commence the election for the EC member in the new Region 12 followed by further elections in accordance with the Rule Book.

Further, Conference agrees the Rule change (Appendix A) to allow the restructure to commence.

RECOMMENDED RULE CHANGE

PRESENT RULE	PROPOSED RULE CHANGE	NEW RULE AS AMENDED
Rule C1(2) CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION (2) For the government of the Union there shall be a Conference and for the general administration of the Union between Conferences there shall be an Executive Council. In order to provide the fullest opportunities for the democratic administration of the Union, the membership shall be divided into 12 Regions as follows: Region 1 Scotland Region 2 Northern Ireland Region 3 North East Region Region 4 Yorkshire and Humber Region Region 5 North West Region Region 6 East Midlands Region Region 7 West Midlands Region Region 8 Wales Region 9 Eastern Region Region 10 London Region Region 11 South East Region Region 12 South West Region The territory included in each Region is set out below. Only Conference shall have the power to vary the boundaries of the Regions as it may deem desirable. Region 1 Scotland. Region 2 Northern Ireland. Region 3 Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne & Wear. Region 4 Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. Region 5 Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire and Merseyside. Region 6 Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire. Region 7 Hereford & Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands. Region 8 Wales. Region 9 Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Region 10 London. Region 11 Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex. Region 12 Avon, Cornwall, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.	Rule C1(2) CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION Delete Rule C1(2) and insert: (2) For the government of the Union there shall be a Conference and for the general administration of the Union between Conferences there shall be an Executive Council. In order to provide the fullest opportunities for the democratic administration of the Union, the membership shall be divided into 13 Regions as follows: Region 1 Scotland Region 2 Northern Ireland Region 3 North East Region Region 4 Yorkshire and Humber Region Region 5 North West Region Region 6 East Midlands Region Region 7 West Midlands Region Region 8 Wales Region 9 Eastern Region Region 10 London Region Region 11 South East Region Region 12 Southern Region Region 13 South West Region The territory included in each Region is set out below. Only Conference shall have the power to vary the boundaries of the Regions as it may deem desirable. Region 1 Scotland. Region 2 Northern Ireland. Region 3 Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne & Wear. Region 4 Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. Region 5 Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire and Merseyside. Region 6 Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire. Region 7 Hereford & Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands. Region 8 Wales. Region 9 Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Region 10 London. Region 11 East Sussex, Kent, Surrey and West Sussex Region 12 Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire & Isle of Wight and Oxfordshire. Region 13 Avon, Cornwall, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire and Gloucestershire	Rule C1(2) CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION (2) For the government of the Union there shall be a Conference and for the general administration of the Union between Conferences there shall be an Executive Council. In order to provide the fullest opportunities for the democratic administration of the Union, the membership shall be divided into 13 Regions as follows: Region 1 Scotland Region 2 Northern Ireland Region 3 North East Region Region 4 Yorkshire and Humber Region Region 5 North West Region Region 6 East Midlands Region Region 7 West Midlands Region Region 8 Wales Region 9 Eastern Region Region 10 London Region Region 11 South East Region Region 12 Southern Region Region 13 South West Region The territory included in each Region is set out below. Only Conference shall have the power to vary the boundaries of the Regions as it may deem desirable. Region 1 Scotland. Region 2 Northern Ireland. Region 3 Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne & Wear. Region 4 Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. Region 5 Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire and Merseyside. Region 6 Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire. Region 7 Hereford & Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands. Region 8 Wales. Region 9 Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Region 10 London. Region 11 East Sussex, Kent, Surrey and West Sussex Region 12 Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire & Isle of Wight and Oxfordshire. Region 13 Avon, Cornwall, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire and Gloucestershire

FINAL APPEALS COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS 2021

REGION/SECTION	NOMINEE
Region 1	Denise Christie
Region 2	Dermot Rooney
Region 3	Brian Harris
Region 4	Neil Carbutt
Region 5	Ed Burrows
Region 6	Marc Redford
Region 7	Rich Williams
Region 8	Arwel Roberts
Region 9	Mav Langdon
Region 10	Jason Hunter
Region 11	Joe Weir
Region 12	Guy Herrington
B&EMM	Tariq Khan
ONC	Phil McDonald
NRC	Paul Revill
CSNC	Lynda Rowan-O'Neill
NWC	Kathryn Duncan
LGBT	Pat Carberry



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