

Conference resolutions: advice, guidance and instruction

Conference 2023 agreed specific decisions in relation to all future proposed resolutions to Conference submitted by brigade, regional and sectional committees. Those decisions are attached as an appendix to this document.

In accordance with the decision of conference this document provides advice, guidance and instruction as to how brigade, regional and sectional committees and also Standing Orders Committee will proceed in relation to proposed resolutions for Conference 2024 and for all future conferences.

Resolutions

Resolutions to conference **must** follow the requirements set out within this document.

Resolutions that do not follow these requirements will be **ruled out of order** and will not be included in the preliminary agenda.

This document must be brought to the attention of all brigade, regional and sectional committees.

Resolutions submitted for inclusion in the preliminary agenda **must** have been agreed by the relevant brigade, regional or sectional committee. Those committees **must** ensure that the resolutions have been thoroughly proof read and that the requirements contained within this document have been met **before** the resolution(s) are agreed by the committee and submitted.

Resolution proposal form

The resolution proposal form must be filled out correctly, if the resolution proposal form contains incorrect or incomplete information it will be ruled out of order.

The facility to allow resolutions which have been ruled out of order to be amended in a timely manner for reconsideration by the Standing Orders Committee only applies to the resolution itself and not to inaccurate or incomplete information submitted on the form, such as no title to the resolution or submitted by incorrect official.

Resolution proposal forms that contain inaccurate or incomplete information will be ruled out of order by Standing Orders Committee without informing the official who submitted the resolution proposal that the proposed resolution has been ruled out of order. Therefore, committees must ensure all of the relevant information required on the form is completed accurately.

The resolution proposal form **must** have each of the sections below completed accurately and be returned no later than the date specified on the form. The resolution proposal form must be submitted electronically by email (do not submit via links to FBU SharePoint) from either the brigade/national sectional chair's or secretary's email account to the email accounts specified on the form.

The form must contain the following information entered into the appropriate section of the resolution proposal form, using font Arial 11.

- Name of **brigade/national sectional committee**
- **Resolution title**
- Name of official **submitted by**
- **Position** of official
- **Date** resolution submitted.

Any resolution received after the close date and time for submission of resolutions will be ruled out of order and not included within the preliminary agenda.

Resolutions that call for a rule change

Any resolution that by specific intent calls for a current rule of the union to be changed will not be accepted as the resolution will have directly called for a rule change.

Rule changes must be submitted on the specific rule change form at the appropriate conference.

A resolution that as a result of being carried at conference has a consequential that would require the updating of the Rule Book can be accepted because the Executive Council would have the ability to enact this between rule change conferences.

Abbreviations and acronyms

The first time an abbreviation or acronym appears in a resolution it should be written in full with the abbreviation or acronym included in brackets. For example:

- The Fire Brigades Union (FBU)
- Constituency Labour Party (CLP)
- Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)

Resolution writing advice

Resolutions need to state 'Conference' at the start of the resolution.
Not 'Annual conference' or 'This brigade committee' or 'This section'.
For example: 'Conference believes...' or 'Conference is concerned...'

If bullet points are used they should not start with a capital letter and there should only be a full stop at the end of the last bullet point.

A new paragraph should be used each time reference is made to conference.

The title of the resolution must be descriptive of the content of the resolution.

The resolution **must** be clear in its intent: it must be clear what the issue is and what is being asked for.

Resolutions **must** have been agreed and proof read by the relevant committee before being submitted.

It is the responsibility of the relevant committee **not** an individual official's responsibility to check a proposed resolution against the compliance requirements contained within this document.

Resolutions should originate from a branch or section.
Quotes, figures and statistics should have the source referenced.

Do not include hyperlinks to information in a resolution.

Do not put a speech into a resolution as speakers at conference usually have seven minutes to move a resolution.

To be competent a resolution should be asking for something from someone, usually the Executive Council. Therefore, the final paragraph of a resolution should usually begin with 'Conference instructs...' or 'Conference demands...'

There is no UK fire and rescue service (singular), there are UK fire and rescue services (plural). Therefore it is UK fire and rescue services (UKFRS's) not UK fire and rescue service (UKFRS) that, if required to, should be referred to in proposed resolutions.

The longer the resolution is the more likely it becomes that something will be wrong with it. A resolution should be clear and precise.

Capital letters should be used:

- At the start of every sentence
- For people's names
- For specific names of people, places, and brands
- For the first word in a sentence, a title, or a subtitle.

PLEASE NOTE: Previous preliminary and final agendas are available on the Fire Brigades Union website, committees should review these previous agendas for an understanding of what an acceptable resolution is and what an acceptable resolution should look like.

Standing Orders Committee proposed resolutions ruled out of order

If applicable Standing Orders Committee will rule a proposed resolution out of order for one or more of the following reasons:

- omnibus
- not factually correct
- unclear in intent
- rule change required
- not grammatically correct.

An explanation of each reason for Standing Orders Committee ruling a resolution out of order is given below. See also appendix B and C for examples.

1. Must not be omnibus

An omnibus proposal is one that deals with more than one subject. It is important that this is not allowed by Standing Orders Committee as delegates may be forced to vote against something that they support, because they oppose the other part of the resolution.

2. Must be factually correct

Fire Brigades Union conference resolutions, if carried, become the policy of our union. They are read not just by Fire Brigades Union members but also by government, employers and the wider trade union movement. In implementing conference policy it is important that they are factually correct as some require the union to embark on a specific course of action.

3. Must be clear in intent

If conference were to agree a resolution that was not clear in its intent the Executive Council would be unable to carry out the decision of conference.

4. Must not be a rule change

Rule change conference occurs every three years as agreed previously by conference, Rule changes are required to be submitted to the appropriate conference at the appropriate time.

5. Must be grammatically correct

Resolutions become Fire Brigades Union policy and therefore become part of our historical record. It is important resolution proposals are grammatically correct as grammatical mistakes can alter the intent of the proposed resolution.

Conference standing order four

Conference standing order four allows resolution proposals which have been ruled out of order to be amended in a timely manner, for reconsideration by the Standing Orders Committee.

‘...There is a facility to allow resolutions which have been rejected to be amended in a timely manner for reconsideration by the Standing Orders Committee.’

Proposed resolutions ruled out of order by Standing Orders Committee will be returned to the submitting official by Standing Orders Committee referencing only which reason(s) (as detailed 1 to 5 above) it is that the proposed resolution has been ruled out of order.

Amendments to the Preliminary Agenda resolutions

At the appropriate time, a form to submit proposed amendments to resolutions contained within the Preliminary Agenda will be issued to officials. The same principles detailed previously for submitting resolutions will also apply to submitting proposed amendments to resolutions.

Proposed amendments to resolution proposals:

- must be directly relevant to the original motion
- must not mutilate or make absurd or be frivolous
- must be the same subject matter
- must not make the resolution omnibus
- must not negate the original intention of the resolution
- must be clear in intent
- must be grammatically correct.

If the above are not complied with the proposed amendment to resolution proposal will be ruled out of order. Officials should note there is no facility for **proposed amendments** ruled out of order by Standing Orders Committee to be resubmitted.

Appendix A

Chair of Standing Orders report (agreed by Conference 2023)

‘Conference, this year the standing orders committee received 100 resolutions, 7 of which were ruled out of order, and as you can see, the remaining 93 are contained within your final agenda. Conference, in 2016 a resolution calling for an amendment to standing orders was carried at that year’s conference which means that when a resolution is submitted to standing orders committee which is deemed to be not-competent, the committee cannot summarily rule it out of order but instead have to give the brigade or section in question an opportunity to rectify and resubmit. On the face of it, I am sure that seemed like a perfectly reasonable position to take at the time. However, I have to inform this conference that the standing orders committee believe that the decision has now brought the Fire Brigades Union to a critical juncture that will have repercussions for years to come unless we take some action.

This year, of the 93 resolutions contained within your final agenda, 27 had to be sent back with suggested wording that would make them competent, or a very clear instruction as to why we ruled it out and what to do to fix it. For a further 51 resolutions, the standing orders committee contacted the nominated person via telephone and asked if they were content for changes or amendments to be made rather than having to wait for the 24 hours for them to be returned. In all of these cases the standing orders suggestions were accepted without question. Conference, this means that if we were still operating to the conference standing orders prior to the amendment that was passed in 2016, this year’s conference final agenda would have 15 resolutions in it.

Given that in 2016 the final agenda for that conference had 46 resolutions in it, and the year before that there were 66, none of which had been granted the facility to correct mistakes, we really need to ask the question: did the amendment to standing orders back in 2016 fix the problem or did it create one? The standing orders committee believe it created one. What was no doubt at the time envisaged to be a safety net when submitting resolutions has now become a prosthetic for writing them.

Of the resolutions that we ruled out, most of these were for either the wrong person sending the resolution form or not filling in the sections. There is very clear guidance, guidance that was altered for this year to simplify it and make clear what was required when submitting. Are we now at the point where brigade committees or officials are not even reading the guidance before submitting a resolution?

When the standing orders committee receive the submitted resolutions in their raw state, it is very clear to see that an individual has written them, for it is inconceivable that they could have been through a brigade committee and vetted by brigade officials and still be submitted thinking that the resolution was competent. In times past those submitting resolutions would have checked and double-checked before sending them. They would have had other eyes on it to make sure they hadn’t missed something. It now seems to us that the view is that your standing orders will fix it. Conference, just to be clear, I have heard the stories from years past where resolutions would be ruled out by standing orders because a comma was missing. I am not referring to grammar mistakes. Not one of the 78 resolutions we contacted brigades or secretaries about were to do with grammar. Conference is the parliament of our union. The resolutions that are passed at conference become FBU policy. Those resolutions that become FBU policy should come from, and be written by, the brigades that submit them. It should be your words and your words alone in that final agenda, and not the standing orders committee.

So, conference, in consultation with the president, it is the intention of the standing orders committee to take the following action for next year's conference in an attempt to try and fix this. To be clear, these actions are not punitive; they are an attempt to steer us back to the position where we feel it is needed to address this. There will be at least one conference matters course at the beginning of 2024 and more will be scheduled, if there is an uptake.

Prior to the deadline for the close of submitting of resolutions there will be an online seminar for all officials who wish to avail of it. Chaired by the president, there will be a one subject how to write a competent resolution to get it through standing orders. To be clear, conference, by "competent" I mean a resolution that meets the criteria of your standing orders, not one which the standing orders like or dislike which seems to have been the incorrect perception in the past. There will be published and distributed a new conference skills booklet that will also reference in detail how to write a competent resolution with examples. And, when the standing orders committee meet next year to review the resolutions that have been submitted for the 2024 preliminary agenda, any that are ruled out will be sent back with just the reason that they have been ruled out on. Rules such as "factually incorrect" are omnibus and it will be up to the brigade committee to correct the resolution and resubmit.'

President's address to Conference 2023

'It also means you play your part in preparing for conference: ensuring your resolutions are competent. We have just heard that this year the standing orders committee returned 27 resolutions to brigade committees which would have been ruled out of order, and a further 51 amended via a phone call – 78 out of the 93 resolutions would have been ruled out of order prior to the 2016 resolution from West Midlands. I have seen it with my own eyes, standing orders committee working late into the night in head office rewriting resolutions which is not their job. So, conference, now the actual process of resolutions being returned to brigade committees is established and is embedded within our processes, I have advised the standing orders committee they should now stick to what the resolution actually calls for.

Standing orders will tell you how the resolutions will be ruled out of order unless they are amended, but then you have the job and the responsibility to correct them and return them by the time stated otherwise they will not make it on to the agenda.

Appendix B

Example of resolution that will be ruled out of order with explanation(s) why.

Fair pay for firefighters (1)

This brigade committee (2) notes that there were **no pay rises for firefighters 2010 – 2020** (3)

This brigade committee (4) demands that a fair pay rise is negotiated through the **NJC** (5) to make up for a decade of pay losses. Firefighters have taken on more work and in many areas of the **UKFRS** (6) are riding fire appliances with three firefighters.

We must (7) **against riding with three firefighters**. (8)

1. Title does not reflect the content of the resolution as the resolution also references riding fire appliances with three riders.
2. The resolution should start with 'Conference' not 'This brigade committee'.
3. **Factually incorrect** – there were pay rises during that period.
4. Should be 'Conference' not 'This brigade committee'.
5. The first time an acronym is used it should be preceded by what the acronym refers to with the acronym in brackets. For example: 'National Joint Council (NJC)'.
6. There is no UKFRS there are UK fire and rescue services (plural) so **factually incorrect**.
7. The word 'campaign' is missing so **grammatically incorrect**.
8. The resolution does not state who should campaign or who should negotiate through the NJC... is it local officials? regional officials or the executive council? Also this would be ruled out of order as it is '**omnibus**' in that the resolution seeks to address two distinctly separate issues – pay and riding with three firefighters.

The resolution would be ruled out of order on any one (or several) of the points identified above. Therefore the Standing Orders Committee would email the submitting official the following:

Standing Orders Committee has ruled the attached resolution out of order for the following reason(s):

1. *Factually incorrect*
2. *Grammatically incorrect*
3. *Omnibus*

*You now have 24 hours to amend and resubmit the resolution. For further information please refer to the '**Conference resolutions: advice, guidance and instruction**' previously issued with the resolution proposal form.*

If the resolution is resubmitted and is again ruled out of order by Standing Orders Committee it will not be included in the preliminary agenda.

Appendix C

Example of an acceptable resolution

Fair pay for firefighters

Conference notes the decade of pay restraint that has resulted in firefighters and firefighters Control pay being over £3,000 lower in 2021 than it should be if firefighter and firefighter Control pay rises had kept pace with the Consumer Price Index.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to commence negotiations through the National Joint Council (NJC) to urgently address the fall in firefighter and firefighter control pay.

Conference instructs the EC to report to brigade secretaries, at three monthly intervals commencing 1 August 2021, the progress of the NJC negotiations.