



FIRE BRIGADES UNION

CONFERENCE 2022

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY
STATEMENT**

PAY AND THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Conference recognises the enormous pressures on workers' living standards as we emerge from two years of the Covid-19 pandemic. These pressures come after years of central government cuts and attacks on workers across the UK and elsewhere in the world. This requires an industrial and political response from the whole labour movement.

Cost of living crisis

Conference notes the rising cost of living crisis, the result of global private profiteering and government mismanagement of the economy. Consumer prices, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), were 5.4% higher in December 2021 than a year before. In February 2022, the Bank of England forecast CPI inflation to reach more than 7% by the spring this year.

Ministers want workers to pay for the costs of the pandemic, while continuing to provide their friends in business with profitable contracts, tax breaks and favours. The stagnation in workers' wages contrasts starkly with the billions of profits made by big corporations and the handsome rewards meted out to their senior executives.

Conference condemns the empty promise made by Chancellor Rishi Sunak on 27 October 2021, that public sector workers would "see fair and affordable pay rises across the whole spending review period", while announcing no new investment in public services.

Conference notes the analysis by the Resolution Foundation, which estimated that the expected rise in National Insurance contributions, cuts to benefits and the lifting of the energy price cap will lead to an average £1,200 per year increase in costs for households from April 2022.

Firefighters' pay

Conference condemns the Westminster government's longstanding policy of tight constraints on public sector pay in the UK, which include decades of central funding cuts, pay caps, imposed pay review bodies and other limits designed to hold down the pay of all public sector workers.

Conference opposes the austerity policies of successive Westminster governments, which have seen central funding to the fire and rescue service cut by 30% over the last decade, in addition to earlier cuts. This austerity continues, with further below inflation central funding announced in 2022.

Conference is appalled by the 12% real-terms cut in average full-time firefighters' pay (measured by CPI) since 2010, equivalent to £4,000 a year.

Conference notes the continued threat of closing down collective bargaining for firefighters and emergency control staff, including demands to impose a pay review body with no voice for the FBU, restrictions on the right to take industrial action, and other efforts to tie our hands when defending our standard of living.

The future work of the fire and rescue service

Conference reaffirms the FBU's policy, supported by successive conferences of the union, to negotiate around the future work of firefighters and emergency control staff as part of our campaign to increase pay across our industry.

Conference applauds the progress made by the union on marauding terrorist attacks, which were endorsed by ballots of our members in Greater Manchester and London. This shows that it is possible to make gains, including on pay, despite the difficult political and financial situation we operate in.

Conference condemns the 'something for nothing' approach of ministers, fire employers, chief fire officers and the outgoing chief fire inspector in England with respect to role maps and new work undertaken by firefighters.

Conference opposes attempts by some chief officers to unilaterally introduce expanded roles within the fire and rescue service, in which firefighters are trained and expected to do more complex and risky work, without the necessary pay in return.

Conference supports the union's continued negotiation with employers within the devolved parts of the U.K. over future work and pay. All such discussions must be authorised by the Executive Council and conducted under its authority and in accordance with existing policies of the union.

Conference notes that despite the FBU's best efforts, these negotiations within the devolved administrations have not so far yielded acceptable agreements that the union could recommend to our members.

Pay campaign

Conference mandates the executive council to campaign for a pay rise through the NJC, which would account for the real terms pay reductions made over recent years, as well as the higher cost of living we currently face. This must include addressing the push by some employers to endlessly extend the work they demand of our members – without adequate or negotiated payment. It must also include at the appropriate time and after consultation with members, consideration of industrial action, including strike action.

Conference mandates the executive council to conduct a vigorous pay campaign over the coming months, which should include:

- A united campaign together with public sector trade unions to challenge and oppose austerity, pay cuts and the increased cost of living.
- Negotiating with employers around existing union policies regarding the future of our service, the changing risks facing communities and the developing skills of firefighters
- Addressing the issue previously identified of work outside of role introduced or imposed without the agreement of the union
- Developing an appropriate pay structure that improves pay progression for all FBU members
- Engagement with fire employers in all forms of fire governance, to repel the attack on national sectoral collective bargaining
- Make the case for investment in the fire and rescue service necessary to protect resilience and improve the pay and reward of FBU members in recognition of their work and dedication to saving lives, homes and property.

Conference mandates the executive council to take the necessary steps, involving all political, industrial and legal means, to secure a decent pay rise for all our members.