

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS 2021

SPECIAL ONLINE CONFERENCE

28 MAY 2021





Established 1 October 1918

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SPECIAL ONLINE CONFERENCE 2021

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CONTENTS

Morning Session	3
Afternoon Session	16
Officers and Officials of the Fire Brigades Union	39
Special Online Conference: List of Delegates	40
Index of Proceedings	47
Index of Speakers	48

A full list of executive council policy statements and special online conference decisions has been made available to all officials and members in the booklet, 'Record of Decisions 2021'

This is also available on the fbu website www.fbu.org.uk



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MORNING SESSION – 28 MAY 2021 10AM – 12PM

THE PRESIDENT:

Welcome to the Fire Brigades Union 2021, special online conference, a first for the union and hopefully, as things start to return to normal after the Covid-19 pandemic, we will see our conferences return to normal too.

As you'll have seen from the various circulars that have gone out for the limited amount of business that we can get through via an online conference, we have tried to reflect and mirror as normal a conference as we can under the circumstances, obviously there was always a risk of technical issues and other issues that we would ask for your cooperation and understanding as we proceed today. The voting has been fully explained in the circulars and will be fully explained again before we start with the business.

Conference, at this juncture, at a normal conference, we would call the obituary paragraph from the annual report and then I'd ask delegates to stand for a minute's silence. As there are no paragraphs to refer to at this online conference, in a moment I will call for a minute's silence to remember all of our members who have sadly died since our last conference and also to remember all of those who have died as a result of the Covid pandemic and to remember the victims who have died as a result of natural disasters or conflict around the globe. Conference, I now ask you to observe a minute's silence.

[SILENCE OBSERVED]

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Conference, I'd now like to call national officer, Mark Rowe, who's going to run through the voting and explain things, hopefully in a very simple manner.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, conference, we are in the new age of video conferencing and some of us have better IT skills than others, so to assist with the smooth running of conference, I'd like to explain the screen layout and how voting is going to work including a test vote.

The first thing I'd like to draw your attention to, conference, is the fact that no matter how much we try to get an online conference to run, it's never going to be easy, it's not going to be as quick as normal conference so therefore, your patience whilst we are voting is requested.

Conference, I'll explain the basic requirements for this meeting. We're hosting this meeting on the Zoom platform and in the top right of your screens, you will see the view icon. This should be on speaker view, if it isn't, please click speaker view. If you speak in any debate, you will automatically be highlighted onto the main screen. On the top bar of the screen on the right hand side, you'll find the minimise icon, you will be switching between screens for voting so once minimised, the screen can be brought back to full view by hovering over the cursor over exit minimise view and then clicking it.

At the bottom of the screen is the participant's view, clicking on this brings up a list, on the right hand side are those attending the meeting and hands raised can be seen there. Also at the bottom of the screen is the reactions button, this is where you'll raise your hand if you wish to speak during the debate. Please remember to lower your hand after you've spoken. Conference, please do not use any of the other reaction buttons as this is going to be off-putting for speakers.

Onto the voting: Your email client, Outlook, Gmail, Hotmail etc should be open behind the Zoom screen. This is how your votes are going to be cast. You can minimise the Zoom screen, as explained, to view your emails when you are asked to vote. Please do not vote until asked to do so. We are now going to conduct a test vote to familiarise conference with how to vote.

The email will be sent to you from Choice Voting, it will now be sent. While the test vote is counted, a slide will be displayed with the details of the Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry, please note these details down and make sure all members are aware of this important initiative designed to protect firefighters.

On every other vote, a slide asking you to vote and the issue you are voting on will be displayed whilst the vote is counted. It may take a few moments to count the vote, please be patient. Once all votes are cast, a PDF will be sent to your email account, this again may take some time to arrive but we will be able to see in the room and standing orders committee are here to oversee that, the votes as they come in. So it may well be that the president is able to call the vote as the votes come in.

If there's a failure of the voting software, we may have to resort to a virtual show of hands, if this happens, we will let you know. As we have over 200 attending this conference, we will control the mike on our function from this end, everybody will be muted, you will not be able to unmute yourself.

The president has been provided with the names and brigades of those wishing to second policy statements and amendments. If you wish to speak in a debate, please raise your hand. When the president calls you to speak, you will see a pop up on your screen asking you to unmute, please click to unmute. A list of speakers will be compiled as hands go up. There may be a problem with lip synch, there may be a slight delay, and this is due to the feeds coming in and out of head office.

When you are speaking, there will be a timer at the bottom of your screen to indicate how long you have left in your contribution to the debate, you can monitor as you speak, and an example is below. As advised in the previous circular, the chat function has been disabled as conversation across the floor at a physical meeting of conference would not be allowed, if the chat function was on, it would be distracting for the speakers.

Conference, everything's been done to ensure that the first online conference that the Fire Brigades Union has run progresses smoothly but I'm sure you've all experienced in video conferencing with as few as four people, so we anticipate there maybe a couple of hiccups. We will seek to resolve them as quickly as possible, please do not log out if there is a problem, if your feed goes down locally or your internet kicks you off the Zoom meeting, please re-join the meeting. Conference, thank you for your assistance.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call Phil Miller, the chair of the standing orders committee, to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president, good morning, conference. Please be aware that this online conference will be recorded for transcribing into a verbatim recording of proceedings and that no delegate is to make an individual recording of this online conference.

This special online conference has the same status as a physical meeting of conference and therefore, the standing orders committee would ask all attendees to behave in the same manner as they would at a formal, physical meeting of conference. The programme of business has been circulated to delegates via email, a list of scrutineers and tellers has been circulated by email and will now be placed before conference for endorsement as part of the standing orders report.

The list for the final appeals committee has been circulated via email and if I could ask delegates to refer to it now and amend by region 3, delete Tony Curry and replace with Brian Harris. The list of delegates has been circulated via email and if I could ask you to refer to it now, to note some delegate changes. Region 1, Scotland delegate – delete John Malcolm and replace with Melanie Gibb. Region 5, Isle of Man delegate – delete Amber Carridge and replace with Ian Alder. Region 6, Leicestershire delegate – delete Graham Vaux and replace with Daniel Fallers. ONC delegate – delete Dave Collingwood and replace with Phil McDonald.

The standing orders committee have produced a report in relation to the suspension or partial suspension of conference standing orders to enable this online conference to take place. A copy of the report has been circulated

via email and this is now before conference to be endorsed by agreeing the standing orders report. Conference standing order 29 is clear, that the standing orders maybe suspended if such suspension is agreed by at least two thirds of the votes cast by delegates attending conference.

Conference, I would now draw your attention to standing order 15, voting on a challenge to the chair of conference. The number of delegates in attendance at conference is 132, therefore the number of delegates voting to carry a challenge is 88. For procedural matters and challenges, all delegates attending conference will be able to vote, sections will not be able to vote on EC policy statements or amendments to those statements.

Delegations have notified the standing orders committee, the individuals that will be casting the vote for their delegation on matters relating to EC policy statements and amendments. National officer Mark Rowe has explained how the voting at this conference will work. It is anticipated that online conference will be required to vote on up to 10 occasions by separate emails, with the exception of agreeing the standing orders report, each vote will be weighted to reflect the membership within each brigade, in effect making each vote a card vote.

If you experience a problem when casting the vote, standing orders committee have agreed that your vote can be cast via text message to myself as chair of standing orders committee, which shall be in session throughout. The mobile number to use for voting in this way has previously been provided to you and please note, this is only to be used as an emergency back-up.

The text should state clearly your name and voting choice, in the case of a vote on procedural matters and your name and brigade for which you are casting the vote, along with your voting choice, for votes on EC statements and policy amendments. There will of course be scrutiny of votes cast via text to remove any double count.

The standing orders committee would like to stress the importance of delegates stating their name and brigade or section when called upon to speak. We also ask you to speak clearly into the microphone of the device you are using. Speakers' times will reflect those of a normal conference, delegates seconding EC policy statements will be allowed five minutes. Each subsequent speaker will be allowed three minutes. Delegations should agree who is to speak in each debate and only one delegate per brigade or section will be allowed to speak in the same debate.

A timer counting down the speaker's time will be visible on screen to assist delegates during their contribution. Delegates wishing to speak will indicate by raising a virtual hand, by clicking on the reactions icon to the bottom right of your screen and selecting, "raise hand." Once a delegate has spoken, the standing orders committee would ask you repeat this process and click on the icon to lower the virtual hand.

Conference, there has been a significant event that has been reported this week regarding the outcome of the Health and Safety Advisory Panel meeting, that has implications for firefighters across the UK. So on that basis, the standing orders committee have agreed that following the policy statements, the general secretary can give a report on these important developments before the president closes conference.

President, if this report can be agreed, then that concludes the standing orders report for online conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you for that Phil. Just before we move onto the vote on the standing orders report, it's been notified to me that 67 attendees did not vote on the test vote so please can you check your FBU email addresses, you should find the email there about casting your vote. If it isn't, Phil has just outlined how you can contact him via text but hopefully, we can get this resolved.

Conference, now what I am going to do is ask that the standing orders report be agreed and I'm going to put that to the vote, so you should all be receiving your emails now.

Conference, thanks for that. Again, apologies for the delay but we have had delegates now just notifying us of the change of the person who was their delegated voter, so we've now managed to amend that on the system so that's why there has been a delay. Hopefully, once that is all resolved for this vote, it will carry on smoothly.

What I would say, conference, is you would not be able to do that at a normal conference, once conference is in session, you would have to wait until conference was adjourned and then go to the standing orders committee. So please think about this in the future if ever we do have another online conference, please be aware, this is like a conference, it is extenuating circumstances, we know that but please be aware and make sure that your delegation has the registered voter with us. Thank you.

Conference, we've had people contacting us saying why is every delegate getting a voting email? On procedural matters, the standing orders report, every delegate gets a vote, it's only when we come onto the business, the EC policy statements, and it's the weighted vote. So everybody gets a vote on procedural matters, thank you.

Thanks, conference, as you can see that vote has now carried, the standing orders report is agreed. Conference, thank you for your patience but just to be clear, that vote was for procedural matters so every delegate gets a vote. The remaining votes will now be the weighted vote so it's your brigade secretary or the nominated person who will be required to vote.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

Conference, that's the easy bit done. Can you now come to order please and I'll call the president, Ian Murray, to make his presidential address.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Welcome to this special FBU online conference which is a first for the union and as I've just said, hopefully it won't become the norm as we slowly return back to some sort of normality. The past 12 months have certainly been a year of the unexpected, the coronavirus has swept like a wrecking ball through all of our lives and at the start, it seemed like something out of a movie but as we all know, it quickly became reality of our everyday life.

It was a year when firefighters worked throughout the darkest days of the pandemic, still providing their usual first class emergency service but also carrying out additional duties to help tackle the national emergency that we were facing. Every one of us should be proud of our members and the fantastic contribution they have made within our communities. We only heard about Covid-19 at the beginning of 2020 but none of us will forget the damage the pandemic has unleashed across the world.

Across the UK, more than 150,000 people have died including, I'm sad to say, some of our members. We've lost far too many people and our thoughts go out to all of those who have lost loved ones or have been affected by this global pandemic.

Central government has failed, they failed to prepare for this pandemic, something they were well aware of, they were well aware of the potential of and then when it hit, they did too little, too late to stop the spread. Their years of austerity have weakened the frontline. They preferred to award fat contracts to private profiteers instead of investing in public services. There will have to be a day of reckoning with these failures. Central government cannot be allowed to wriggle out of its responsibilities and working class communities, they shouldn't be the ones left to pay for this pandemic through unemployment, and more cuts to public services and years of pay freezes.

Big firms and the wealthiest in our society have got rich during this crisis, they can afford it, they should be the ones to pick up the bill for the country's recovery and our union will be part of any campaign holding them to account.

The FBU spent considerable time and effort this year doing our best to ensure our members were as safe as they possibly could be during this pandemic. The union negotiated with the national employers and the chief fire officers to ensure we could still provide an emergency service and assist in fighting Covid-19 by way of the tripartite agreements. Never forget, it was them who walked away from those agreements, not us.

We, the union, wanted those agreements to continue but they wanted to change them, they wanted the changes that would have resulted in our members being put at a greater risk and we were not willing to compromise our members' safety and lessen what were the agreed controlled measures and because we wouldn't be willing to do that, they walked away from those agreements. Many of our members went the extra mile to support vulnerable

people, the NHS and the care sector, making their skills and professionalism available to our communities and the union pays tribute to every single member for their contributing during the past year.

And whilst all of this was going on, other union work continued, it didn't stop. We continued to fight for justice nearly four years on from the Grenfell Tower fire, the public inquiry has spent a year on its Phase 2, looking at the causes of the fire, we've learned about the criminal practices of those in the construction industry that wrapped people's homes in flammable material and made a handsome profit while doing so. We've learned how corners were cut, shoddy work was carried out and many warnings ignored.

These people created the impossible situation that our members found themselves in on the night of that fire, and the FBU, we will not rest until the real culprits, all of those responsible for that terrible tragedy are brought to justice. We know that the Westminster government are bringing changes as a result of the Grenfell Tower fire and we have to keep a careful eye on their plans, and we'll make sure that our members are protected and as you've heard from the standing orders report, the general secretary will give a brief update of a very important outcome of a health and safety advisory panel that met following our challenge to a high rise policy that London Fire Brigade were seeking to introduce, a policy that has come as a result of the Grenfell tragedy and it has implications for every single firefighter across the UK.

Our union was the only organisation to stand up and say the procedure was wrong, it was unsafe and we believed, illegal and it shows that our union is irreplaceable and it clearly shows our importance within the fire and rescue service because we are the only ones who demonstrate, time after time, that our members' safety is paramount.

Other organisations, they talk the talk but when it comes to the crunch, there's only the FBU who walk the walk and challenge the bosses to ensure firefighters are best protected as they possibly can be.

Conference, I will close with a warning to us all, a warning that I ask you to take back from today and get it to be the topic of conversation amongst our members. The Westminster government is planning an attack on this union. They want to scrap all of our national collective bargaining arrangements that we have at the National Joint Council, they want to tear up our grey book, our national terms and conditions hard fought over many years, terms and conditions that protect our members' best interest and they want rid of them.

Why? It's sadly not for the betterment of our members, they want rid of the grey book and they want rid of the Fire Brigades Union because that's the best protection afforded to our members. They want to give chief fire officers free rein to boss our members around, they want chief fire officers to decide what's in a firefighter's role map and we have no say. They want firefighters to do more work, more training, more upskilling but without paying them anything for it. One route they will be seeking to try to get their aspirations through easier is to have police and crime commissioners running the fire and rescue service.

Conference, we know the attacks are coming, our job as elected officials of this union is to prepare the fightback and make no mistake, and a fightback will be required. We are preparing and we are asking you to get ready and get our members ready. The best guarantee that firefighters have is a voice over pay and conditions, our pensions, health and safety, our working lives and a voice in politics is the Fire Brigades Union.

Never has it been more important to get active in the union and to stand together and to finish on a positive note, conference, I want us to acknowledge and applaud the outstanding efforts of the crews in Leicestershire, that were mobilised to remove protestors from the roof of premises believed to be involved in the manufacturing of arms to Israel. The crews arrived and refused to assist the police in the removal of the peaceful protestors from the roof, they did go up and check that the protestors were safe and they offered safety advice while they were up there, but they refused to get involved in their forced removal.

Firefighters should not be forcibly pushed into becoming pawns involved in political confrontation between protestors and the state. The fire and rescue service is and should remain neutral and as such, I applaud each and every one of those Leicestershire crews who refused to be drawn into those activities and I'm sure if we were at a physical conference, right now, those members in Leicestershire would be getting a standing ovation for their actions.

Conference, that's enough from me so we'll now proceed with the business. Conference, you heard the standing orders report and that also agreed the final appeals committee and the endorsement of those nominations.

I now call on the EC policy statement, *The Westminster Government and the forthcoming attack on firefighters' rights, pays and conditions*, seconded by Hereford and Worcester, with amendments from Hereford and Worcester, seconded by Scotland, both can carry and moved by the general secretary, Matt Wrack. The EC are supporting both amendments.

GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president and conference, this paper, we've brought to the front of the agenda because we think this is the single most important discussion we're having today, because it's a threat to the entire functioning of this union and how we work to represent our members.

There is an attack coming, we don't know the full details as yet but we do know that attack on its way and our duty is to prepare ourselves and to prepare our members. This attack originates in the Home Office under the leadership of the home secretary, Priti Patel. We need to examine the role of the so-called 'independent' inspectorate of fire services in England, HMICFRS, we need to look at the role of chief fire officers, we need to note the power bid by the National Fire Chiefs Council and we need to take account of the role of the fire service employers, currently failing to stand up for local democracy.

On 16 March 2021, Priti Patel announced a consultative White Paper on fire reform later this year, including the following points: consideration of the mandatory transfer of fire and rescue functions to police, fire and crime commissioners across England. Consultation to address issues of co-terminosity, including in the South West. Legislation to create operational independence for chief fire officers and clearly separate strategic and operational planning for fire and rescue and consideration of options to clarify the legal entities within the PFCC model.

This is an English attack but it's very clear to us and to the executive council, that this affects every single member of the Fire Brigades Union all across the UK including those working under the devolved governments. The Home Office is engaged in this activity despite the fact that the majority of police and crime commissioners in England are already Tories and despite the fact that the Tories dominate local government in England and despite the fact that current legislation already allows, subject to local discussion, the takeover of fire governance by police and crime commissioners.

The union's position which we've set out previously at conference is that we oppose PCCs taking over the governance of fire and rescue services. We believe that this blurs the line between firefighters who provide a humanitarian service to our communities, and the police who carry out law enforcement.

The president has made reference already to an important recent development in relation to our members in Leicestershire and again, I join us in applauding our members who took a principled stand that we are not the police, our job is not to enforce police action against protestors.

Currently, we have only four fire and rescue services where governance has been taken over by the PCCs, that perhaps reflects the lack of enthusiasm at local level by local communities, by local fire and rescue authorities for that model and yet the government is considering making that a mandatory system.

The PCC system reduces local democracy, it puts the decision making in the hands of one person and we know there is a whole raft of scandals relating to police and crime commissioners. It's not a model that this union supports.

We also have to examine the role of the so-called 'independent' inspectorate, HMICFRS, as we have reported, regrettably the government, through the Home Office, are using HMICFRS as a tool to batter this union, as a tool to create the arguments to force thorough the changes they want. A supposedly independent inspectorate clearly working to a political agenda, a political agenda engaged in attacking this union and its members in order to undermine the pay, conditions, negotiating rights, safety rights and other rights enjoyed currently by firefighters through the National Joint Council.

It is clear that Tom Winsor, the chief inspector, has an anti-union agenda, it is clear that the reports that they have produced which all reach the same conclusions are not evidence based, it is clear that the conclusions have been reached prior to the carrying out of the reporting work. In the most recent report issued in March of this year, there are six recommendations, three of which particularly affect ourselves, our unions and our members.

Recommendation 3 states that the Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, “should review and with precision, determine the roles of [a] fire and rescue services and [b] those who work within them”. This is a long running debate within our service and our industry and our union. Firefighters already have role maps agreed and negotiated through collective bargaining. We already know through previous discussions at conference that employers and chief fire officers are constantly seeking to expand these by imposition and at local level.

It is clear from this that ministers and chief fire officers expect firefighters to take on wider roles and responsibilities, some requiring special training and risks but they want the ability to do that by imposition and not through negotiation. That’s the threat in that recommendation.

Recommendation 4 states that “the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay and negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the grey book.”

What is clear from this recommendation is that Winsor wants to see the undermining and potential ending of the collective bargaining rights of firefighters currently through the National Joint Council and to see its replacement with a pay review body, as they have done already in the NHS, to police officers, to prison officers and to teachers. A pay review body which would seek to exclude our union from discussions and determination of pay and conditions.

We’ve seen responses in the past few days from chief fire officers and some employers, outlining the so-called failings of the National Joint Council. Let’s be clear about this, what has failed is more than 10 years now of austerity imposed by the Westminster government, the government that holds ultimately the purse strings for public services including the fire and rescue service.

We know that currently, pay requires negotiation and agreement, they want rule instead by imposition. The other review bodies that we’ve begun to examine can address not just issues of pay but also the question of roles, work and responsibilities. So again, we see the threat of change by imposition under the model that Tom Winsor has set out.

He says, for example, in relation to the Covid-19 work: “Why was an agreement even necessary?”, that gives an insight into the sort of model that they want to see where chief fire officers would issue orders without negotiation and our members would simply be expected to implement those orders. That’s the threat that we face in relation to collective bargaining.

Recommendation 5 says that: “The Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the Fire and Rescue National Framework on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officers.”

Operational independence, as it’s being called, is carried over from policing, concerning the relationship between the elected authority, the PCC and the appointed officer, the chief constable or potentially in the future, the chief fire officers.

So-called operational independence would mean the PCC, for example, setting the budget but the chief fire officers having complete licence on how that budget is spent. This removes or would remove a vital area of scrutiny over chief fire officers’ decision making, giving them much greater latitude to dictate what happens within the fire and rescue service including what our members are required to do on a day to day basis. It would reduce the ability of our members and our officials to lobby and campaign as we do time and time again, in relation for example, to the threat of cuts to a local fire and rescue service.

It would turn the issue of which fire stations, which appliances are provided into simply a so-called operational decision and in their view, supposedly de-politicise it but in reality, would remove the question of local scrutiny, control and the right of local communities to have a say in what level of fire and rescue service provision they should enjoy. And it would of course, attempt to remove the voice of firefighters as well as local communities and local elected representatives from those discussions.

So conference, we expect a White Paper, we don't know exactly what it will say, it will be a consultation but it will be the start of potential legislation. I think we can be clear about a number of aspects that we will face, it will not be good news for us, it will be anti-union, it will be anti-democratic, it will seek to place more power in fewer hands, it will seek to place more power in the hands of individual chief fire officers, it will seek to place more power in the hands of the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Resistance will be difficult, we don't under-estimate that, the Tories now have an 80 seat majority in the House of Commons, we know their agenda, it's an anti-union agenda, it's an anti-Fire Brigades Union agenda and why are they attacking us?

They're attacking us because for 102 years, nearly 103 years, this union has stood up and argued on behalf of firefighters. They don't like the fact that we beat them in the highest court in the land on pensions. They don't like the fact that we stand up and oppose every cut that they propose. They don't like the fact that we refuse to shut up, they don't like the fact that we demand negotiations rather than imposition. That's why they oppose us, that's why they oppose everyone in this conference and the people we organise and represent. They want to clip our wings, they want to weaken us.

So our campaign, conference, firstly is to understand the scale of the threat and that's a responsibility on us here at head office, at the executive council but every single one of you attending this conference. Let's understand the threat that we face and the scale of it.

Secondly, we need to explain that threat to our members, we need to be out on the branches as soon as is it possible or using technology like this but primarily, if we can, face to face, speaking to our members. We then have to make that case to the public.

And yes, we will have to face up and deal with politicians, including politicians who are fundamentally opposed to this union and our aims and our values, but we have never run away from taking on those arguments and I'll recall the long-running pensions campaign and pay tribute to one story that stuck out to me, was the Cambridgeshire brigade committee who week after week after week, went into the House of Commons and argued with Tory MPs and Tory ministers and they knew that we had won that argument, and that's the level of determination and commitment we are going to need.

We need to take this case to local politicians, we're standing up for local democracy, that's the case that we're making. So we say today, we've been here for more than 100 years, we're the organisation of firefighters whole time, retained, in the control rooms, in the training centres, of officers, of non-uniform staff, we are the professional voice of this service and this industry, they're coming for us, we face up to that and we build the fight back. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Matt. Just before I bring in Hereford and Worcester to second the policy, could I ask that anybody wishing to speak in this debate start raising their hands now so we don't have a delay. And can I just remind everyone, it is only one delegate per brigade allowed to speak in the debate.

I now call Hereford and Worcester to second the EC policy statement and I will also ask Hereford and Worcester to move their two amendments, which have both been formally seconded by Scotland.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

President, conference, Neil Bevan, Hereford and Worcester brigade secretary, seconding executive council policy statement, *The Westminster government and the forthcoming attack on firefighters' rights, pay and conditions* and moving amendments 1 and 2, amendment 1 is a spelling mistake, amendment 2 is the insertion of the word "investment" to align this policy statement with the one entitled *Pay in the fire and rescue service*.

Conference, we are under attack, whether it be from the government who, through their austerity agenda, are strangling us with their purse strings, our employers who are happy for this onslaught to continue, the gutless NFCC who daren't question the government and then there's the HMICFRC, who have chosen to point their sights at every one of us, our members and our union, claiming it was us who delayed the FRS response to the pandemic when all that we asked for was that the safety of firefighters was fully considered through agreed risk assessments, in order to ensure that the response of fire crews was not affected due to the extra work we were undertaking.

Conference, in his opening address, the president stated that since the start of the pandemic, FBU members have been on the frontline, carrying out their daily duties and numerous voluntary activities. These were truly unprecedented and exceptional circumstances and the same can now be said of the scale of attacks we face.

In 2019, Hereford and Worcester FBU members reached the end of their tether after the fire authority authorised management to use Section 188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, if we continued to refuse to agree new shift systems, which were not only inferior to national agreements but also reduced fire cover and put firefighter safety at risk. I want to take this opportunity to thank conference for your support, for unanimously voting to back Hereford and Worcester FBU members in filing a trade dispute and for the help and advice we received from national and regional officials throughout our dispute.

But conference, it seems that 2019 provided us with a view of what was to come if, as HMICFRS and the Westminster government are advocating, that chief fire officers are granted operational independence, they would essentially have free rein to impose open ended, inferior contracts, unilaterally expanding the role of firefighters and dictating their duty systems, ignoring our right to collective bargaining or even recognising the right to raise a grievance. The ability to alter previously agreed safe systems of work, reducing the numbers of firefighters and fire engines or in fire control and condensing the initial and ongoing training that our members received, all increasing the risk to our members and the communities they serve, lowering standards and reducing fire cover in a seemingly endless, never-ending race to the bottom.

That is exactly where we were two years ago but if we simply stand by and do nothing about it, every one of our members could face the same level of attacks. In 2018, we celebrated the FBU's centenary, 100 years of progress, campaigning and fighting for improved terms and conditions, for better pay and pensions that have only been achieved with our constant and persistent commitment.

In his address to conference that same year, the general president of the International Association of Firefighters reminded us of the importance of unity and ensuring that we're ready to take on whatever attack or whoever attacks us next.

In his closing statement, he remarked, "When your successors look back at you and what you've done 100 years from now, what will they say? How will they measure your work, your contribution to the cause? I know you want them to say, 'they made one hell of a difference, they improved our members' lives, they left us a proud legacy of achievement and success to build on'.

Conference, I have every faith that our national officers and executive council members will continue to do all they can but let's not fool ourselves, we are dealing with a government that has no moral compass, a government that goes against everything we stand for. Our members put their lives on the line every day and fight indiscriminately for those in need, whereas the self-serving Westminster government are happy to clap our members on a Wednesday night and slap them down every chance they get. They would like nothing more than to fragment the UK fire and rescue service, replace the NJC with an independent pay review body, which would only accelerate the race to the bottom.

Conference, this is on us. Let's take this first step together in unity and give those we represent something to hand over to future FBU members. In solidarity, conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Neil. Are you formally moving your two amendments?

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester): *[visual confirmation of yes]*.

THE PRESIDENT:

I'll take that as a "Yes", and they've been formally seconded, both of those by Scotland. That's now open for debate and the first speaker I am calling is Steve Price-Hunt, thank you.

STEVE PRICE-HUNT (West Midlands):

Thank you, president. Steve Price-Hunt, West Midlands, speaking on behalf of the EC motion paper, supporting the general secretary's statement and Hereford and Worcester's amendments.

Conference, as the general secretary and Neil have already outlined, this is the biggest threat coming to the fire and rescue service and the Fire Brigades Union, in a generation. This White Paper must be opposed, we must do everything we possibly can to oppose it. I want to emphasise to all officials who already know this that so much work needs to be done at a local level. In the West Midlands, we were threatened with a takeover by the mayoral model, a Tory mayor wished to take over the fire and rescue service and local officials campaigned with local politicians, councillors to stop the takeover.

This faces us in the future, this White Paper, is a much bigger threat. This is going to allow chief fire officers up and down the country to not just impose work upon us, do what has happened in our brigade, impose catch-all contracts where there's not even a debate about what our role is, that had to be fought off and it was. There's going to be many fights ahead and we've all got to come together and challenge this White Paper, and attempt to rip it up, speaking in support of the EC motion and Hereford and Worcester's amendment, thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Steve. I know some people are looking on different devices, Steve we could hear you but we couldn't see you, I don't know if your camera was switched on but if people are speaking in the debate, ensure that the cameras are switched on please, thank you.

Conference, we're just going to try and sort some more technical glitches out so we're going to take a five minute adjournment, thank you.

[ADJOURNMENT]

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, sorry for the delay but we've had further requests for changing the voters on delegations and it's not a straightforward or simple process as the weighting software has to be adjusted to take account of the change of delegate but we've done that now.

We've got no more people indicating to speak, there was no opposition so there's no need for a right of reply to Matt, so I'm going to now put amendment 1 from Hereford and Worcester, seconded by Scotland, to the vote.

Those emails will have gone now, please check your emails and while that vote is going to be collated, we're going to have our guest speaker and it gives me great pleasure to introduce Kevin Courtney, who's the joint general secretary of the National Education Union which is the largest teachers union in England and Wales and Kevin is a good friend of the FBU, so it gives me great pleasure to introduce Kevin Courtney.

KEVIN COURTNEY (National Education Union):

Thank you very much, president and good morning and solidarity to everyone on the call from the National Education Union. I want to start by saying thank you to you for keeping us all safe in our homes and from my members in our schools and colleges, and for putting your own lives in the line and I want to thank Matt for the invitation to be with you today.

I wish that this conference was in person and then Matt would probably have bought me some fish and chips as well, but I'm at home drinking my own coffee. We're not there in person because of a worldwide pandemic and

our unions and the key workers we represent have been vital in getting our society through this crisis. All the work you've done, including being drafted in as ambulance drivers etc., our members, teachers and support staff in schools throughout the lockdown, working with vulnerable children and the children of other key workers to ensure that those key workers, like yourselves, can be in work.

And those key workers who will now find themselves attacked by a government that should be embracing them. The pay pause is just the start of it, the sorts of proposals that Matt and your motion has just been about, being another big part of that.

Matt asked me to talk to you about the experiences of pay review bodies in the NEU and before that, in the NUT and frankly, listening to Matt's presentation just now, I really do think this matters. We have had our review body, the STRB since 1991, so for 20 years. I've been directly involved in the process, is that 30 years? Anyway, it's a long time since 1991 and I've been directly involved in the process since 2010 and just in case any FBU member thinks this is a good idea for you, I want to tell you that in my belief, it has been a complete disaster for the teachers of England and I want to compare it with the much better situation in Scotland, where teachers still have negotiations, I'll come back to that.

But I first of all want to tell you what the process is for the review body. The first thing that happens is that the government sets a remit and that's important, they tell the STRB what to look at and they will say, "Look at how much pay you need to give teachers to ensure a supply of teachers", they do not say, "Look at what is a fair rate for the job", they don't say, "Look at what is a competitive rate", they just ask, "What's the minimum amount you need to pay to ensure you've got enough teachers?"

Then they also say, in the remit, in the very first letter, they say it has to be affordable and they tell them what "affordable" is. So they'll say schools can't afford more than 2%, so that's the first stage of the process, the government tells them what to do. Then the second stage is the review body takes evidence from us and it takes evidence from the employers, then it makes a recommendation.

Now, they will tell you the review body is independent but it's appointed by government and they appoint lots of what are called labour market economists. It's supposedly independent but the STRB has never recommended more than the limit the government suggests in its remit, in its 20 year life or 30 year life, whatever it is, except once, in 2018, they went a little bit beyond the government's remit and do you know what happened that year? The government didn't accept it, they didn't do even then what the STRB said, so the government sets the remit, they stuff the review body with people that they want to have on it, then that body is never independent and if it is, if it has the temerity to be independent, the government just ignores it.

And even worse is when you think about your interaction with that, at the moment, you sit across, your union's representatives sit across a negotiating table with the employers, that's not what happens with the review body, I've been going to the review body since 2010. We go along and we give evidence, that's all we do. We do a good job of giving evidence but it is not anything like a negotiating meeting, it's not collective bargaining, there's no cut and thrust, there's no give and take, there's no negotiation, there's no they say they're going to introduce this and we say, "that's a really stupid way to introduce it, do it like that, and we'd agree with it". There's nothing like that.

And like Matt said, the government doesn't just give them a remit on pay. They ask the STRB to look at other things, they ask the STRB to look at removing management allowances which is something that we used to have, introducing performance related pay or introducing appraisal, adding workload descriptions for points on the pay spine and we don't negotiate those changes. The government gives them a remit, they take some evidence, they decide, these labour market economists decide what they think is a good idea, they recommend it to government and government accepts it – unless they manage to go a little bit beyond – and then they turn them down. So we haven't negotiated any of the changes that then happen.

And then at the same time, the government has been rolling out more and more discretion to school level, most directly you see it in academisation, undemocratic structures without local councillors, without those sort of

involvements, where chief executives can make decisions and that sounds to me very much like what Matt was describing their thinking is for you as well.

And what happens in those situations when decisions are made at school level? Our members go in with TUPE, with the transfer of undertakings and then over time, they will find conditions worsening, worsening for new staff perhaps.

Now sometimes, we've just had a strike at Beale school in Redbridge, a really good strike because they had introduced much worse sick pay regulations for new starters and we've beaten them back on that. But I tell you we've beaten them back at a strong union school where we've got good organisation and we know there are weaker schools where we don't have good organisation, where those conditions are being worsened. And that can happen to you.

A direct comparison with Scotland, we don't organise in Scotland, I know you're across the whole of the UK, we organise in England and Wales but our sister union in Scotland, the Education In Scotland, EIS, I spoke with Larry Flanagan, their general secretary, he asked me to send you his greetings as well so greetings from the EIS to all your Scottish delegates and all of your UK delegates from Larry in the EIS, and they don't have a pay review body, they haven't had a pay review body since 1991, they've got tripartite negotiations, the unions, the Scottish government and the local authorities.

And over that 30 years since 1991, they have no performance related pay introduced, they haven't had supply teachers privatised, they've got much better workload controls than we have, that's why it's been a disaster for teachers in England, workload much higher and it's a disaster for children as well because the turnover of teachers that comes from it.

And I need to say, you might find if you look around, you can find some unions that tell you they prefer review bodies and I tell you, they will be small unions because in collective bargaining, the majority union, the NUT in the old days, the EIS in Scotland, the FBU in your negotiations, they carry the majority weight on the staff side, on the teachers' side or on the firefighters' side. But if you're giving evidence, the small union, the non-strike union voice, in our case a tiny union, it gives evidence equally with us so you can find small unions who feel that they've got more status but you really shouldn't think about what a small union wants, it's what's best for firefighters, for teachers that we need in this situation.

And I tell you, there's one example where Michael Gove wanted to remove all the limitations on workload through the review body and the only way we could stop that was national strike action that we took with the NASUWT in 2014. So whatever happens, you need to build your union, to keep building your union, it's so strong your union, you have such good density, you need that union, you need that density but you should resist this pay review body.

You should resist atomisation of terms and conditions, moving away from the national, it's worse for everybody all round, we see it directly in that comparison with Scotland. I wish you every good luck in fighting these proposals, in all of our workers' movement, in all industries, fighting back against what this government intends to do with us, we got our society through this pandemic, we deserve far more from this government than what they're giving us, solidarity forever and good luck to you for the rest of your conference. Thanks for inviting me.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks a lot, Kevin. Pretty horrendous listening, I'm sure all of us would agree, of what has happened in the education sector and something we all need to take heed of and be prepared to fight to keep what we've got because the alternative sounds a disaster for our membership. Once again, many thanks, Kevin, we wish you and your members well in the future, solidarity from the Fire Brigades Union, thank you.

Conference, we now return to business, I've been informed that the amendment 1 from Hereford and Worcester has carried and therefore, I now put amendment 2 to the vote. You will be receiving emails in your inboxes now, please go and please vote, we are aware that people are opening emails but they're not actually voting so please, go to your inbox and vote. Thank you.

Thanks, conference, we've now had confirmation that amendment 2 from Hereford and Worcester has carried. I now put executive council policy statement as amended to the vote. So you'll be getting the emails in your inbox, please go to the inbox now, open your emails and make sure you vote, thank you.

Conference, I can now report executive council policy statement, *The Westminster government and the forthcoming attack on firefighters' rights, pay and conditions*, seconded by Hereford and Worcester, has now carried as amended.

Conference, we're now going to take the programmed 15 minute break, we're nearly at 12 o'clock so we'll reconvene at quarter past 12, thank you.

[END OF MORNING SESSION]

AFTERNOON SESSION – 28 MAY 2021 12:15PM – 2PM

THE PRESIDENT:

Welcome back, conference. We now move onto more business of the day and I call EC policy statement, *Covid-19, the response by firefighters and the Fire Brigades Union*, with an amendment from Scotland, moved by the national officer, Riccardo la Torre and seconded by South Wales. EC support the amendment.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Conference, good afternoon. I'm sure conference will agree that this policy statement comes as a result of one of the most unique and incredibly challenging years in this union's 103 year history, an unprecedented year for both the FRS and the FBU.

We've had to reassess, review and adapt absolutely everything we do, both as a professional fire service and as a trade union and in doing so, we have always had at the front of our minds, that this virus has taken FBU members from us and many FBU members would have lost loved ones as a result of it, and we remember all of them and we mourn their loss, comrades.

A virus that has seen 4.5 million cases, 150,000 deaths and 450,000 hospitalised just in the UK alone, has meant that FBU members have found themselves faced with an immense challenge. But we have stepped up and we have met that challenge, conference, in a way that only FBU members can.

It's important to remember, as we heard from the president in his opening address, when the FBU started to discuss what would be needed in our response to this pandemic, we were starting on the back foot already as it became quickly apparent how unprepared we were as a service, unprepared despite the fact that every iteration of the National Risk Register since its inception has identified pandemic disease as a major risk. Yet decades of austerity, underfunding and cuts to the FRS left us thoroughly unready to meet the duties and responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act for events such as this.

This lack of preparedness, despite warnings, also stretched beyond the FRS and affected FBU members in every walk of their life, the austerity cuts that weakened all public services before the pandemic, the failure to procure reserves of sufficient PPE for workers, the failure to provide sick pay at a living level for workers, the expense of 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.

But despite all of these obstacles, conference and despite all of this, FBU members stepped up to the challenge and we did so much earlier than many would like to give us credit for. Through NJC mechanisms and through our own structures, we were communicating with members about the pandemic as early as February 2020 and by the very next month, March 2020, we worked to halt all non-essential outside services, the FBU was central in getting the FRS prepared and keeping our essential service running where others failed, conference.

As the union lobbied ministers on priority testing, on priority vaccination, on Covid-19 compensation, FBU members remained on the frontline of this pandemic every single day, at a time when the majority of workers were very rightly more safely working from home, FBU members weren't, we continued to provide our irreplaceable emergency service, tackling the wide range of hazards and keeping our communities safe from fires, floods, specialist rescues and other hazards. Every single member, conference, should be congratulated for that and every single member should be rightly proud of that work.

As a union, we then began to look and explore how we could further use our skills and our knowledge as firefighters and our position as the fire service, to assist our communities more widely in the pandemic response. And yet again, FBU members stepped up, by way of a historic agreement spearheaded by the FBU, the Fire Brigades Union, national employers and the National Fire Chiefs Council entered into a tripartite agreement, that saw firefighters and control staff deliver over 400,000 additional activity interventions. We saw firefighters control staff effectively and safely carry out a number of additional voluntary Covid-19 activities, activities outside of our role, activities that

included assisting ambulance crews, moving bodies of the deceased, transferring Covid patients and delivering essential items and medicines, just to name a few and let's be clear, conference, activities that undoubtedly saved lives and prevented deaths.

The agreement ensured the contractual pension and health and safety protections that FBU members and their families needed, by ensuring that these additional activities met certain criteria within the agreement before they were allowed to progress but most importantly, assuring that they were risk assessed, maintaining to the highest standards as possible, the health, safety and welfare of all FRS staff.

We knew we could help, conference but we knew we had a responsibility to help safely and not just a responsibility to the safety of our members but a wider responsibility as part of the national effort to suppress this virus and protect the vulnerable.

As the risk of Covid-19, cases increased and deaths increased, all medical and scientific advice called for the need to strengthen safety measures, review risk assessments and increase our transmission suppression measures. A variation in the format, the content and the findings of the risk assessments for the additional activities however became apparent across the FRS, despite the fact that the additional activities didn't change and the risks remained the same, so the FBU worked quickly to address that and by way of the tripartite process, we prioritised this work by committing the time and resources required to prioritise the safety of our members and we developed a suite of national risk assessments, which were best practice and became a requirement of that agreement.

And it's here, conference, we have to point towards the work of our health and safety reps and our officials locally. At a time when they were already working and campaigning and organising tirelessly to ensure workplace safety measures and risk assessments, they also worked tirelessly to get these risk assessments adopted and delivered these activities as safely for our members and for those that we were assisting.

And whether we're looking at getting PPE in the workplace, getting a Perspex screen erected or getting these risk assessments adopted and control measures such as the PCR testing and the detachment, we must be clear, the work of FBU safety reps and officials not only kept sickness levels in the FRS at comparatively low levels during the height of this pandemic, during the first wave, no fire and rescue service approached risk critical absence but the work of FBU safety reps has beyond a doubt, saved lives, it has protected health, it has saved the lives of our members, it has saved the lives of those we were assisting and it saved the lives in the communities that we returned to, all against the backdrop of thousands of avoidable worker deaths. Our reps and our officials must be congratulated by that and conference, we applaud them.

So I will repeat, the low levels of sickness absence and fatalities from Covid-19 in the fire and rescue service at the height of the pandemic were due to these safety measures fought for by FBU members and reps. And this work became even more vital when we realised that enforcement was failing us, the systems in place to protect us, to protect workers instead sided with bosses.

Hundreds of thousands of Covid workplace safety complaints have been made to the HSE. Thousands of workers have lost their life to this virus, yet we are still to see a single prosecution of any employer, it became clear that trade unions and organised workers were the only line of defence between workers and this virus.

So despite a historic way of working together and our engagement in that, the NFCC then began to show their true hand, against a raft of growing reports from brigade officials and brigade committees that CFOs were now trying to navigate test and trace, refused to isolate firefighters, not put appropriate safety measures in workplaces such as our control rooms, refused to report Covid incidents and Covid clusters.

We also saw a number of chiefs beginning to apply pressure to downgrade the nationally agreed risk assessments for the additional activities, and rip up those safety measures that had been proven to keep Covid out of FRS workplaces. The measure that was most unpalatable to the chiefs was the measure of detachment whilst carrying out the high risk activities, taking the more appropriate and more accurate PCR test on return before returning to the workplace, no sooner than three days.

Three days, conference and I want to highlight that, when we've already set out the commitment and the additional activity that our members made, three days was considered too inconvenient to protect the safety and welfare of our members. And we didn't just pull this measure out of the air, FBU officials spoke to scientists, we spoke to professors, we spoke to medical experts and we developed these risk assessments and it was in line with all health and care sector advice, to create barriers between higher risk workplaces and others and more importantly, conference, it was proven to work, we have numerous examples of that control measure safely identifying positive Covid cases in FBU members returning from those high risk activities, and safely isolating them before they returned to the FRS workplace, that is positive cases of Covid that weren't spread to other members and weren't spread onto the vulnerable.

It is impossible to know how many cases have been taken into the FRS where those chief fire officers have now removed that measure. But rather than holding up their hands to facilitating the decades of cuts that made this control measure so inconvenient for them to put in place, the NFCC continued to argue that it was unsustainable, they continued to argue that the risk assessment process was too restrictive and demanding the safety of firefighters and control staff was unreasonable.

So in the face of the Office of National Statistics reporting that the chances of catching Covid and dying from it in the sectors that our members were working in was on the increase, in the face of scientific advisors to the government advising that everybody needed to uplift their risk assessments and their safety measures, the NFCC did the exact opposite and worked to rip them up and decided to end that agreement that delivered vital assistance to our communities throughout the pandemic up until that point, all the while keeping firefighters and their families as safe as possible whilst doing so.

But committed to continuing with these additional activities, the union attempted to revive that agreement for members, this time with the employers alone but disappointingly, the employers chose to let the NFCC back into that conversation as operational advisors, and yet again we saw the NFCC work to scupper that agreement and remove those safety measures from firefighters.

In fact, having worked all over the Christmas period to get that agreement across the line and to get those activities back in place, head office officials found out through unofficial channels that the employers were walking away from talks, as they unilaterally ended the agreement on 13 January and sent out a circular to that effect.

Head office officials were at the time expecting to be back in the discussions the very next day and in fact, I was sat on my sofa at home that evening and found out through Twitter that I was no longer in those discussions, and immediately contacted the general secretary, who also hadn't been contacted.

And I'll take this opportunity, conference, at the rostrum to address some mistruths that some are choosing to peddle about the FBU in those discussions, about the FBU not being available for talks. Conference, I'll be clear and be in no doubt, FBU officials prioritise the safety of our members above anything else, we were available and willing to be available every second of that Christmas period and to say any different is a complete mistruth and frankly, is unprofessional and it's an insult, a common theme we saw from some in their approach to these discussions.

And in that circular released by the employers, they confirmed again their thinking, there was no evidence base as to why that control measure was unnecessary, there was no evidence base to say that control measure was ineffective, there was no counter to the examples we provided of that control measure working. Instead, in their own words, they called it "unsustainable", the health and safety of our members was simply an inconvenience to them, conference.

We utterly condemn the unexpected decision by our fire employers, encouraged by the NFCC and as we heard from the general secretary, encouraged by the Home Office to walk away from talks that centred on ensuring that there could be an extension to that national agreement.

And as we also heard from the general secretary this morning, conference, another agenda soon became apparent as the findings of the HMI inspection report were published, an inspection report into the FRS response to Covid,

may I add and I use the word “inspection report” loosely because I prefer to call it exactly what it was, conference, a stitch-up and a blatant attack on the FBU members who worked tirelessly in and out of role for their communities throughout this pandemic.

Hand in glove with fire bosses, the report spoke of FBU members and in particular their safety demands as being an obstacle, the same members who moved thousands of dead bodies, delivered tens of thousands of essential items, assisted tens of thousands of ambulance and transferred thousands of Covid patients, an obstacle conference.

They offered opinion on technical FRS matters and risk assessments they have no knowledge of and played no part in. They offered opinion on a safety measure dispute which they didn’t even attempt to talk to the FBU about but effectively handed a blank sheet of paper to the NFCC, to give their account.

It unsurprisingly repeated many of the attacks as we heard delivered by previous HMI reports, recommending giving more operational independence to the chiefs, the very people who ignored and worked against expert advice to remove safety measures from firefighters, the damage caused by which conference, we’ll never truly know and it recommended we should change how firefighters collectively bargain on issues such as pay and you’ll be right, conference, if you are confused and wondering just what the hell how we bargain on pay has anything to do with the Covid-19 virus.

So conference, I’ll be clear, the attempts to politically weaponise a pandemic responsible for the deaths of thousands of workers, responsible for the deaths of some of our own members, responsible for the deaths of millions globally, by fire bosses and fire chiefs to push their own anti-union agenda is perverse to the extreme and we condemn it with everything we have, conference.

FBU members will rightly never forget such a grotesque insult and attack, an attack made by those from the safety of their laptops on Teams calls whilst FBU members remained on the frontline in the face of this pandemic, every single day.

Conference, I’ve never been prouder of our union and its members, when communities needed FBU members, FBU members were there and conference, we applaud them.

I saw an NFCC member tweet recently following their conference and it boasted that CFOs are now more aligned than ever under the NFCC banner. And I’ll tell you, conference, I think I agree with them, I saw them, I saw that alignment. I saw how they aligned to push a political agenda and remove vital safety measures from firefighters, control staff, our families and our communities. Yet at the same time, conference, we also saw FBU members aligned but FBU members aligned to prepare and deliver our vital service, FBU members aligned to protect each other and our families, FBU members aligned to serve our communities and keep them safe, that is the alignment that has defined our membership throughout this crisis and it is one we should be eternally proud of.

So conference, I’ll end on this, the pandemic isn’t over and the work isn’t over. There is much more to do. As the statement rightly says, we have to continue to work, we have to continue to organise and we have to continue to prepare, we must prepare for a return of this very virus in a third wave, we have to prepare for future pandemics as iterated by national risk registers. We have to work to understand the effects of Long Covid on our members that have suffered from this virus and when we look at the under-reporting by the FRS, that is certainly a battleground we will find ourselves in, in the future.

We have to remember and honour and fight for the members that we have lost to this virus, conference, it is essential that we understand exactly how they got exposed to this virus and we will fight for justice in their memory. Conference, we have to fight for the adequate resources and the adequate funding so that we are prepared to face crises of this state and others going forward.

Conference, at the risk of repeating myself, I’m going to say this one last time because I think it’s important, we must absolutely applaud the work of every single FBU member who remained on the frontline in the face of this pandemic, every single day since Day 1, we have to applaud those who assisted in carrying out the 400,000 plus

additional activity interventions that without a doubt saved lives and prevented deaths, conference. We have to applaud our FBU reps, our officials and our members who never stopped tirelessly campaigning for safety and there are many more of us still here today because of that work and we can never underestimate that conference.

So when we consider this is against the backdrop of thousands of avoidable workers' deaths, it reminds me of a saying in our movement, comrades and that saying is: "Remember the dead and fight for the living" and that is absolutely what we have to do as we rebuild as a service and a union coming out of this pandemic. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I now call on Mike Alexander of South Wales to second the EC policy statement.

MIKE ALEXANDER (South Wales):

Conference, we have all heard far too often, excuses from bosses, management and government that Covid-19 could have not been predicted or planned for. But conference, we know that this is simply untrue, as recently as 2017, the National Risk Register records, records a respiratory pandemic is one of the biggest threats to health here in the United Kingdom.

The truth, conference, is that bosses, management and the government failed to adequately plan for this eventuality and were slow to react, hindered at every step by a decade of underfunding, public services and the NHS by a Tory government.

In March last year, with very little information about Covid-19 and its severity, firefighters across this country had the almost impossible task of balancing their commitment to the communities they serve, with their strong instincts to protect their loved ones and families. Conference, it's easy to forget the fear and worry that we all had, not for ourselves but for the ones in our lives that we hold most dear, our children, our partners and our parents.

But firefighters put these fears and worries aside and continued to provide our vital, irreplaceable service to our communities alongside other key workers, nurses, doctors, teachers, police officers, paramedics, delivery drivers, supermarket workers, bus drivers and all other workers that are key to the functioning of our society. Workers, who for the last 10 years, have been overlooked and left behind by a decade of austerity.

Conference, firefighters didn't just work to do their job, they went further, they volunteered to help where they could, making a real difference, taking part in additional activities where the country needed them.

Through the historic tripartite agreement, an agreement born out of the understanding that the risks associated with these additional activities were the same across the country, the same whether you were in Cardiff or Carlisle and that a consistent approach to these risks and national risk assessments and control measures for these new activities, were the only way to maintain our regular emergency intervention, while enabling firefighters to safely volunteer for these additional activities.

Conference, the decision taken by fire employers guided by the NFCC to walk away from talks to extend the national agreement on additional activities during the Covid-19 has only resulted in a worse outcome for the communities we serve. The employers, led by the NFCC, chose to put politics before people. Conference, we in South Wales second this executive council policy statement. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mike. Just before I bring Scotland into move their amendment, can I remind anybody who wishes to speak in this debate, that they raise their hand by going on the reaction button on the bottom of the screen and you'll see it there, we will then bring you in. Okay, thank you.

I now ask Melanie Gibb to come into move the Scotland amendment and if we could have BAME ready to second, please. Melanie, over to you, thank you.

MELANIE GIBB (Scotland):

President, conference, Melanie Gibb, Scotland, moving our amendment to the EC policy statement, *Covid-19, the response by firefighters and the Fire Brigades Union*.

We believe the addition of our amendment and the commitment of no financial detriment from absences related to Covid-19, strengthens this policy statement and is essential to protect and support our members who follow public health guidance. No-one should feel under pressure to breach public health advice and our members should not be put at risk, nor should they put others at risk of infection. The success in managing the virus at this crucial stage depends on our employers supporting our members to self-isolate and attend their vaccinations when advised to do so, without any financial detriment.

We would have significant concerns regarding any proposed changes around payment which remove protection for workers suffering from post Covid-19, Long Covid and demand that the no financial detriment principle must apply to all Covid related absences, those arising from isolation, short term illness and Long Covid. Allowing our employers to treat absences related to long term Covid in the same way as other long term illnesses leaves our members at risk of the rigorous attendance management processes, financial detriment and potential capability dismissals that may impact on pensionable pay.

Firefighters are essential key workers who are unable to work from home and may have had a higher exposure to Covid as a result of their attendance at work during the pandemic. These risks were and still are greater for our members who are unable to socially distance due to the nature of our emergency occupation. Evidence also shows a higher incidence of Covid in the BME workforce who would also be adversely impacted by any removal of a no financial detriment principle.

We also have concerns regarding accurate diagnosis and the impact on absence management and resulting changes in sick pay. During the early stages of the pandemic, testing was not widely available and as a result, GPs could only therefore state on a fit note that the illness is “probably” rather than definitively as a result of Covid. We still remain in the middle of a global pandemic and the science surrounding the long term effects of this virus is still developing, given this, we do not believe it is appropriate to treat this like any other illness and there is a legitimate reason for not doing so.

Covid-19 continues to present the biggest challenge we have faced in our lifetimes and is affecting our daily lives including our work. The measures our employers take to deal with it must reflect its magnitude and must also reflect the unprecedented response firefighters have given in order to protect health and suppress the virus, and protecting everyone’s safety must continue to be the priority.

So the national endeavour to get us through this health crisis requires on an ongoing and unparalleled response, by both firefighters and employers, we believe that our members have delivered on that so it’s now time for our employers to do the same. Support the policy statement and support the amendment, I move. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Melanie. I now call on Amit Malde from B&EMM to second the Scotland amendment. Amit.

AMIT MALDE (B&EMM):

President, conference, Amit Malde from B&EMM section, I would like to second this amendment. A Public Health England report in August 2020 highlighted that people from a black and minority ethnic background are at a higher risk from ill effects as a result of contracting Covid. Whilst the socio-economic factors highlighted in the report are broadly equivalent throughout the fire community, there are additional genetic factors that have been identified which place BAME firefighters at a greater risk of ill-effects. In some cases, those from black and South Asian backgrounds were up to twice as likely to contract and suffer severe effects from the Covid-19 virus.

Without the protection of pay with no threat of penalties for firefighters already stretched financially, there is a very real risk of firefighters feeling obliged to return to work, which places their colleagues and the greater public at greater risk of contracting the virus and perpetuating this pandemic. Consequently, this may have a detrimental

effect on their relationship with their watch and colleagues, should they be considered the source of an outbreak. Whilst the effects of Long Covid are still being revealed over time, we must proactively secure for members to safeguard against any fear of financial penalisation caused by contracting a disease, often as a consequence of continued interaction with colleagues and the public in the line of duty.

We know those who contract Covid have had a range of reactions from being totally asymptomatic all the way to severe and critical effects, resulting in death. By extending the protection afforded in this amendment, victims of this disease, the spread of which has been exacerbated by the nature of our role and the incompetence of the government, firefighters would be confident to take the time to focus on their recovery and not feel forced to prematurely return to full duties, something which will likely cause damaging long term consequences.

Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Amit. That is now open for debate, I've got a couple of speakers indicated so far, I'll take Steve Price-Hunt first and then Andrew Fox-Hewitt after that. Thank you. Steve, over to you.

STEVE PRICE-HUNT (West Midlands):

Conference, president, speaking in support of the EC policy statement and Scotland's amendment. West Midlands firefighters commend national officials and EC members for their rapid implementation and tireless work in setting up the workstreams and condemn the NFCC and the employers for walking away from those agreements.

Members all round these Isles stepped up to serve the public in huge numbers and went well above and beyond. In the West Midlands, around 1000 firefighters and control operators volunteered and carried out many workstreams which were set up nationally. I wish to note that at the height of this first wave of this pandemic, West Midlands' members and officials rapidly implemented risk assessments, set up policies and procedures, safe personal protective equipment and implemented the grim task of body removal.

Brigade official, David Pitt, of which many of you will know, was on the ground the very first day coming out of that said activity and for all his work under health and safety, was awarded the Queen's Fire Service medal and he only accepted this on behalf of all of our members and I'm sure you'll applaud how honourable Dave Pitt was in receiving that award.

Conference, our members did step up to the plate, they did serve the public to their greatest professionalism and we applaud them, I ask you to support the statement as amended by Scotland. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that Steve, and I will now call Andrew Fox-Hewitt?

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Thank you, president and conference. Speaking in support of both the statement and the amendment by Scotland. Firstly, we commend all of those involved in the tripartite work in defending members in the workplace. We'd just like to thank Scotland for bringing this necessary and relevant amendment to the policy because in Cheshire and indeed across the North West region as a whole, the employers have used Covid as a despicable opportunity to attack terms and conditions, where they're seeking to deduct, for example, annual leave from members who are required to follow shielding guidance, are isolating and even having tested positive for Covid-19. And obviously, we will repudiate each and every attempt at that despicable behaviour but it is entirely right that Scotland have made that clear within their amendment to this policy statement. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andrew. I've got nobody else indicating to speak and there's been no alternate position so no need for a right to apply, so I'm now going to put the amendment from Scotland to the vote, so if you could all check your inboxes of your emails now please, make sure you vote on that, thank you.

Conference, thank you the amendment from Scotland has carried unanimously so I now put the executive council policy statement Covid-19, the response by firefighters and the Fire Brigades Union” as amended by Scotland to the vote, please check your inboxes.

Conference, thank you. The executive council policy statement, *Covid-19, the response by firefighters and the Fire Brigades Union*, as amended, has carried, we’re now going to put on a short video explaining the Red Plaque Scheme so just bear with us, conference.

[RED PLAQUE VIDEO]

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I’m sure you’ll agree with me, a very moving video and having attended several Red Plaque unveilings, it’s certainly one of the proudest things I’ve been involved with in the union. It’s important that we do ensure that our communities recognise that ultimately firefighters do pay that ultimate sacrifice and that it’s a permanent reminder that they can do that.

I applaud all of those who get involved in organising a Red Plaque event, it’s a lot of work but assisted by head office and Tam McFarlane, we get it done and we do a really good thorough job on that and obviously, it’s sponsored by our Firefighters 100 Lottery, so a vitally important initiative that came out of our centenary year, so well done to all who’ve been involved in them and if you have got any pending, obviously now with the Covid restrictions hopefully being lifted, we can get back to getting those unveiled at a proper ceremony.

Okay, now we’re back onto the business I’ll now call EC policy statement, *Pay in the fire and rescue service*, seconded by Tyne and Wear with an amendment from Cheshire, moved by the general secretary. The EC oppose the amendment. Matt, thank you.

GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president and I’d echo those comments about the Red Plaques. Just commenting on the conference seems to be settling in now, I notice the clean shaven, Steve Price-Hunt with some nice wall decoration and those nineteenth century socialists did a good line in beards, which I think lockdown is bringing back into fashion somewhat.

Conference, we’ve now faced 11 years of austerity and attacks on public services and those who work within them. All workers, public and private sector workers have suffered losses in real wages, including our own members in the fire and rescue service. Following the 2010 general election, we had pay restraint introduced, firstly by the Coalition government, then replicated by the Tory government. We saw a two year pay freeze followed by five years of a 1% pay cap.

As we discussed earlier, we now have the very mechanism whereby we address the issue of pay in our industry being placed under threat. I think, conference that we need to take stock of where we’ve been since we last met, we met physically and there have been momentous political changes since then.

We saw the Brexit crisis throw the entire British political system and British political establishment into crisis. That was followed by the December 2019 election and we now face a Tory government with a majority of 80. It’s a very different world from the world politically that we faced when we met physically.

We have a Westminster government that is very clearly right wing, anti-worker, anti-trade union, anti-public service, pro privatisation. That’s the government that holds the purse strings to public services and ultimately, our pay all across the United Kingdom and it would be irresponsible of us all not to acknowledge the scale of that change.

We have a prime minister, Boris Johnson and people have made reference, delegates have made reference to the role of the government in the mishandling of the pandemic, but this is also a Prime Minister who previously was the Mayor of London, who forced through the biggest single round of cuts in the fire and rescue service in modern history. This is a prime minister, as mayor of London, who swore at and abused Labour Assembly members, when they attempted to ask questions about his management of fire matters in London.

And of course since then, we've had the Covid pandemic, as Riccardo has set out, more than 150,000 have died in the UK. They're now assessing the costs economically as well of the pandemic and in April, the government announced that it had borrowed more than £300bn last year, more than six times what was expected and let's make no bones about it, they will once again seek to make workers' pay for the costs of the pandemic just as they tried to make and effectively did make workers' pay for the costs of the financial crisis that emerged in 2007-2008, followed by a decade of austerity.

And if we're going to turn the tide on that in any significant way, then we're going to have to build the sort of dialogue as we saw mentioned by Kevin Courtney earlier, this is an attack on all public sector workers and all public sector workers, indeed key workers in the public and private sector are going to have to work together, campaign together and fight together if we're going to turn the tide of the attacks that are coming.

If we look at pay in the fire and rescue service specifically, there are two groups that we need to address, there are our own employers, the fire and rescue service employers all across the UK who we talk to through the National Joint Council, and then there are the four governments in the UK but especially the Chancellor in Westminster, who holds the purse strings.

We have seen a number of years when pay has been higher than inflation including last year, but that has not restored real wages in the face of that decade of austerity and so in April, we submitted a claim letter to the fire service employers setting out three elements:

Firstly, calling for them to make a pay offer and make a pay increase and setting out how far real wages had been affected by that decade of austerity.

Secondly, we set out the case for a restructure of pay within the fire and rescue service, for mechanisms for pay progression, taking account of policies we've agreed here at conference on issues such as equalisation of CPD and other such matters.

Thirdly, we set out the need to address the issue of the changing roles within the fire and rescue service and that must be done by means of negotiation and agreement, we have here at this conference over the years, accepted and understood, in many cases pioneered changes to the work undertaken by firefighters, that's been part of our history for the past century.

Nevertheless, we are aware that at local level, some of those changes are being made locally and by imposition rather than by national negotiation, discussion and agreement. That's how we set out our position on pay to the employers.

You will recall, delegates, that on the 25th November 2020, chancellor Rishi Sunak announced in his Spending Review, a further so-called pay pause for most of the public sector. We opposed that and we condemn it and we call for it to be lifted but we also say to the fire service employers, that that is not statutory, there is no legal obligation on them to comply with Sunak's call for a pay pause, the fire service employers can and they should act independently.

So we come to our lobbying campaign which we've embarked on over the past few weeks. We have to shift them, we have to shift our employers and that is a job for every single one of us here in this conference. We're aware that chief fire officers like to court popularity in their own services, they often issue statements or tweets or comments on social media that yes, firefighters deserve a pay rise. We hear similar from individual employers occasionally.

But the question is what do they do when they really have the chance to make a change? And we know that they have had consultation meetings, three of them, over the past couple of weeks, where their views have been sought on what the employers should do at the National Joint Council in relation to pay this year.

We thank all the brigade secretaries who wrote to chief fire officers and to local employers asking them for their position in relation to pay for 2021, and to commit to supporting a pay rise for our members.

The responses we've had so far make interesting reading, it seems that someone's been briefing them because in a number of cases, they seek to blame the NJC for the fact that the fire service employers have not made a pay offer in recent years, they seek to blame the structures of the NJC for the fact that pay has fallen behind. It is a completely nonsensical argument, they say that the NJC structures do not guarantee funding.

The truth is this, conference, there is no pay mechanism anywhere in the public sector which guarantees the necessary funding to deliver a pay rise. Kevin Courtney set that out very well earlier, that a pay review body does not in any way, for example, guarantee the necessary funding to provide the finances for any pay rise.

So yes, we need governments to invest, we need lobbying by fire service employers for governments to invest, we need lobbying by chief fire officers for governments to invest. It's ironic that the NFCC and individual chief fire officers criticise the NJC and its structures for not delivering pay rises and yet, I've not ever heard in the past decade or seen systematic lobbying of governments, of the chancellor, by the NFCC or any of their members for the funding that is necessary to stop the cuts and to deliver the investment that we need for pay, for our members.

So we say to them, as we approach the National Joint Council next week that they, the employers need to make a pay offer. They need to engage in this debate and we want them to do it in front of our members, let's hear what they've really got to say, let's hear what their real view is.

I think one question to delegates at the conference is this: Has your chief fire officers replied to that letter? Is pay on the agenda, not just at the National Joint Council but at your local negotiating committees as well? We wrote to you, where's your answer? And by the way, here's why the answer you gave, if they did give one, here's why it's wrong and flawed in terms of the arguments you put forward. We need to expose their claims and their false assertions and we need to keep demanding that they come out and support a pay rise for firefighters.

We meet at the National Joint Council next week, we will see then what they have to say. But there's no escape. Our demand for pay is part and parcel of the campaign for more wide investment into our fire and rescue service. Yes, we have to lobby, we have to campaign, we have to put people on the spot and yes, it's a harsh reality that with an 80 seat majority, that means lobbying this Tory government, putting our case to them and I know that that's difficult and I know some people find it frustrating but when we call, as we did in the run-up to the Spending Review, for every single official of this union to encourage members to participate in that campaign, then there is an obligation on every single FBU official to participate and support that campaign, that's our job, we can have our debates at conference but our job then is to implement the decisions and the campaigns as set out by conference and as then implemented by the executive council.

We have to use every single opportunity and that's why you've seen it in the screen shots that we've had in the breaks and in the president's introduction, that's why our long running campaign on Grenfell and its aftermath is so important because it highlights the need for investment in our service and part of that investment is about pay for our members.

That's why our campaigning on issues such as climate change are so vital, we face changing risks to our communities including through climate change and extreme weather events and that's part of us making the case for investment, and part of that investment is about the pay that our members receive.

We have discussed here at conference over several years, the changing nature of the work that our members are already doing, it has changed before and it is changing and it will continue to change. We have set out through our democratic structures here at conference, an approach to that, those are conference decisions and we say it must be done by negotiation and it must address the concerns of our members and it must bring investment and it must bring pay.

We have to address as part of this discussion, the impact of devolution on our service. Because we now have a unique experience of UK wide collective wide bargaining, but in a situation where fire service policy and funding is a devolved matter, so we're dealing with four different governments with slightly different agendas and that's a difficult tightrope to walk.

At our last conference, we reported we would be engaging in talks with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, the employer in Scotland, about pay in Scotland and whether arrangements could be reached there and those will have been reported back through the structures of our union. Those talks actually were fairly constructive and we ended up with a pay proposal from the Scottish employer.

However, the executive council and the Scottish committee of the union recommended that our members should not accept that proposal, it was put to ballot and our members rejected that proposal at that time. Nevertheless, we continue to seek discussions with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish government about the necessary funding and we will continue those, the executive council has just agreed a letter that has gone back to the Scottish employer and we hope that those talks will continue.

Likewise, we are aware that the Welsh government seeks to make changes to what is expected of the fire and rescue service and we have said to them that we will engage in those discussions but actually, whatever they decide as a government doesn't necessarily alter the contractual rights of our members and that the individual employers in Wales would need to negotiate with us, and negotiate through the National Joint Council, any changes that they wanted to achieve.

I think the Scottish discussions and the Scottish ballot also raises an issue which we will need to discuss and talk through in a calm manner and that's about the issue of what is really happening on the ground. We know that some considerable work was done on this but we do hear reports that issues which cannot be agreed nationally are sometimes being introduced through the backdoor, given a different title and introduced regardless of the position taken by the Fire Brigades Union or reached through negotiations at the National Joint Council. We need to have a clear picture of what is happening in fire and rescue service all across the UK, if we're going to be in a position to negotiate with our employers about what our members do and what they should be paid for that.

So conference, it is a complex situation and that complexity brought about by dealing with four different governments but nevertheless seeking to maintain UK wide collective bargaining, does present very difficult challenges for all of us in the Fire Brigades Union. We have to ensure that we represent all our members and seek the best possible arrangements for them in terms of the pay they receive and the work that they do.

We need to ensure that there is no race to the bottom. Let's be clear, that is undoubtedly the agenda of chief fire officers who are exploiting the current situation, clearly egging on the Westminster government in their attacks, you work with them, you know them, you speak to them more regularly than I do and you will be able to work out what their real agenda is and it is certainly not about making up for the £4,000 that we need to make up in terms of lost real wages. It will be about fragmentation, it will be about empowering them to tell our members what to do and when to do it.

We need to ensure that that's not what happens, that we defend collective bargaining because that's how we try to deliver pay. What will happen next, conference, we don't exactly know. We meet the employers at the National Joint Council next week, they have had our letter, they have had the lobbying that you've undertaken, I would ask all delegates and all brigade committees to carry on that lobbying, that pressuring, don't let them off the hook as we approach that National Joint Council meeting next week. We'll see what happens at the meeting, whether a pay offer arises or not and the executive council will clearly need to take account of those as we plan the next phase of our campaigning.

So there is no getting away from it, conference, in closing, we are facing huge challenges, the cost of the pandemic, a right wing, anti-union government. Nevertheless, we have a job to deliver, to campaign, to campaign for the investment that is necessary, to deliver the service that our communities need, the service our members want to deliver to those communities and of course, the pay and conditions that our members rightly deserve for the outstanding work they do. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Just before I bring Tyne and Wear in, can I remind anybody that if they're wishing to speak in this debate, that they use the Reaction button at the bottom and raise their hand. I now call on Tyne and Wear, Brian Harris, to second the pay policy statement.

BRIAN HARRIS (Tyne and Wear):

Thank you, president, conference, Tyne and Wear, Brian Harris, seconding the EC policy statement but not supporting the amendment.

Conference, we heard previously the general secretary set out the threat to the fire service and the forthcoming attack on firefighters' rights, pay and conditions in an earlier policy statement. This is a real threat to tear up our national terms and conditions and a threat to national sectoral collective bargaining. This is a politically driven and coordinated attack by the Tory government, the NFCC and the HMICFRS.

The HMI should provide independent reports but they are clearly not, the reports have a clear agenda and contain premeditated attacks under the pretext of the pandemic. Tom Winsor, the Chief Inspector, has made recommendations to determine the role of the fire service and the employees who work in the fire service, such as introduce a pay review body, rip up the grey book and give operational independence to chief fire officers, or in other words, carte blanche to chief fire officers.

Comrades, this is frightening. Without a collective bargaining structure, this will only lead to expanding the role without remuneration and result in a race to the bottom for terms and conditions and drive down pay, not increase pay.

I have recently heard chief fire officers saying in public things like: "What has the NJC ever done for you?", and "trade unions are just scaremongering". Conference, I say this to the chief fire officers, this isn't scaremongering, this is a reality check, a threat to one is a threat to all including chief fire officers and the governance of the fire service.

We must reject the proposal to hand over control and maintain accountability and scrutiny by locally elected members of the community. Conference, we need to mobilise and coordinate a campaign to defend the fire service, an attack on the FBU, which this clearly is, is an attack on the whole fire service. A coordinated campaign isn't just about mobilising FBU members, it's about engaging with politicians across the whole political spectrum and across the whole of the UK. It's about engaging and mobilising all trade unions for support. As I said earlier, a threat to one is a threat to all.

It has been mentioned that some fire authority members just don't get it and this is very true. Some would say they're as thick as a docker's sandwich. We recently had a meeting with our fire authority chair and after several attempts to explain, we realised he just doesn't understand what is at stake.

Conference, many do understand though, that is why the political engagement is so vital to get the message across to the whole political spectrum and gain support and hopefully support will spread, and the message will be understood. We need to gain support for a fully funded pay increase.

Conference, I generally operate on the principle, if a chief fire officers wants rid of something, it must be good for me, if a Tory wants something off me, it must be useful and if an employer was to take something out of my contract, I'd be better off with it. This whole episode confirms that I'm not far off the mark with these theories.

So we need a coordinated campaign but that campaign isn't just about mobilising FBU members, it's about engaging with the politicians across the whole political spectrum and across the whole UK. Please support this policy statement, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Brian. I now call on Cheshire to move their amendment, I've been informed that they'll be withdrawing it with the right to speak so Cheshire.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Thank you, president, conference, yes that's correct, we are withdrawing the amendment. The spirit of intent of the amendment was to connect with the membership, given it's been some significant time since the views of the national membership were canvassed and recorded in a more structured consultation. That would result in our view, in a platform to take into the pay strategy and move it forward and allow benchmarking and progress as the campaign develops.

However, we have received assurances that this work is planned and will be completed in a timely manner as part of the campaign plans, so having received those assurances, we are withdrawing the amendment and support the policy statement as proposed. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Andrew. Right, that's open for debate, I've got two people indicated so far, I've got Trevor Conley first and then Gavin Marshall. Trevor Connolly from Hereford and Worcester.

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

Thanks, president. President, conference, comrades, just a quick few words on this. First of all, I'd say thank you to Kevin Courtney for an excellent input, really important stuff for us to learn and take on board there. Just a brief history and lesson from myself, 1984 18 June was my eighteenth birthday, the Battle of Orgreave. Thatcher was in charge then and nothing's changed, we had the Blairite years and we've moved to an even more hardened Tory government now.

Let's not be under any impression that the Tories are not any friends of ours in any sense of the word. They give us platitudes, stand on doorsteps clapping and "well done everybody, you've done a grand job there", at the same time, pickpocketing money from our members' pockets. We've got members visiting foodbanks at the moment while Boris spends £840 on a roll of wallpaper, I think that needs to be noted.

We've got instances where we've got members going to foodbanks which is absolutely outrageous, they can't afford to pay the bills, they're talking to us about this on a daily basis.

Back to the Covid situation as well, I'm just going to pay tribute to the members that did take part and did go out there from facemask fittings in our own brigade, to I know the neighbouring brigades in Warwickshire where they were doing body removal and that sort of thing, and I would say that's absolutely work above and beyond of any firefighter.

I must pay tribute to these people because I think they've been left behind and sometimes, they think is it worth it, a lot of the call back we get. We mustn't forget as well that the Tories are actually turning on themselves as well, so we need to play into that game and really try to turn the screws as much as we can and as the general secretary said, we don't like talking to Tories but we have to and it's something that we need to get to grips with, take the fight to them, take the fight to the chief fire officers and the fire authorities and keep going, as we always say, it's called a struggle for a reason. Thank you, president, solidarity, comrades.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Trevor, I'll now call Gavin Marshall from Humberside.

GAVIN MARSHALL (Humberside):

President, conference, I'm Gavin Marshall, brigade secretary, Humberside. I speak in support of the EC policy, *Pay in the fire and rescue service*. Previous reigns in Humberside have meant that Humberside members have fallen to the successful implication of numerous unpaid expansions to the firefighter role. I stand here today speaking openly but more importantly, honestly. I hope conference hears my words, failure to secure payments for these additional roles did not come without a fight and Humberside applaud all the hard work of all officials up and down the country, who managed to secure additional payments or stave off these attempts.

The fragmentation as Matt spoke about of additional roles and the amount paid for these roles and including CPD throughout the UK, has spiralled out of control and desperately needs bringing back to alignment. It's important that all members are working to the same roadmap and receiving the same payments.

The additional unpaid activities have certainly taken its toll on members in Humberside, especially as numerous activities mentioned in the 2019 NJC pay proposal clearly highlighted one key factor, if they want to pay us for these activities, why are we doing them in the first place? So with the recent all members circulars, FBU circulars stating we are £4000 behind the rate of inflation and the announcement of the pay pause pockets of Humberside employees are looking to say no to these un-negotiated duties. I must state this is not coordinated action by local

FBU officials but FBU members and non-members wanting to take a stance against the behaviour of chief fire officers up and down the country.

If chief fire officers want to openly state firefighters deserve a substantial pay increase, then it's time to put their money where their mouth is and maybe if firefighters individually choose to stop these activities, then chief fire officers can go cap in hand to the Tory magic money tree and secure more funding, or risk losing the individual goodwill of their staff.

We would highlight this and would call this leverage, so don't write back to us, to our letters and threaten us with how they can fund a pay cut by stating threats of cuts, so although this policy has yet to be accepted by conference, all the hard work over the last few years from the FBU regarding the need for our services to adapt to the changing and emerging risks faced in our communities is finally starting to bloom and the message is starting to hit home.

The campaign feels like it's already under way and if employees of fire and rescue services individually say "no" to these additional duties, I am confident to say the FBU will be here to support our members, should any actions be imposed by fire and rescue services. Thank you, president, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Gavin, I'll now call Chris Craddock from Staffordshire.

CHRIS CRADDOCK (Staffordshire):

Thanks, president, conference, Chris Craddock, brigade chair for Staffordshire. In brief, we fully support the EC statements on pay in the fire and rescue service and we strongly oppose attacks on pay and our terms and conditions. We clearly should not allow government to scrap the NJC and the grey book. A pay review body is totally unacceptable and the fact that it will exclude the FBU is even more alarming.

Coming from a brigade where we've had a takeover of a PFCC, we must fight nationally and as one to stop any single person having control over pay or our terms and conditions. Staff fully support these statements, president and conference, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. I'll now call Colin Brown from Scotland.

COLIN BROWN (Scotland):

Thank you, president. President, conference, I'd initially intended to speak in opposition to the amendment proposed by Cheshire due to the scale they've undertaken and the timescales for reporting that was being asked. I fully support the spirit and intent but do welcome Cheshire's withdrawal.

Scotland also welcomes the recognition within EC policy statement regarding the differences and difficulties posed by devolution. In the lead up to Scottish parliamentary elections, we campaigned vigorously to ensure that all parties were supporting the funding of a broadened role in Scotland, as per previous conference policy. The SNP government that's now been formed on the back of these elections has given that commitment, in their manifesto, they had stated: "We will support the modernisation of a fire and rescue service so that SFRS can do more to protect communities and deliver positive outcomes for the people of Scotland. We've continued to invest in the modernisation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service with an additional £8.7m allocated from 2021 to 2022. Central to this modernisation, which must be achieved in partnership with trade unions, is broadening the role of firefighting in Scotland."

Additionally to this, we campaigned and secured a parliamentary question during the campaigns which again, at the hustings, the now first minister, Nicola Sturgeon commented in her debate that "the point about firefighters is very well made, we have been trying to get a pay deal that modernises and changes the role of firefighters but also ensures fair pay, the point that was made that will require investment from the next Scottish government is one we have recognised."

She went onto say she's not going to pre-empt the negotiations but "I'm really, really hopeful that we can get to a fair, decent settlement that provides firefighters with the pay they deserve but also brings their role up to date, in a way that I know many firefighters want, fair pay, progressive pay, recognising the low pay issues that many live with is an absolute key principle."

Conference, the statements from the first minister both in the lead up to the Scottish parliamentary elections and since show that we're on a very different path through devolved administrations. As I say, I welcome the statement and I welcome the recognition within that, that devolution has brought challenges to the union that need to be addressed and need to be supported throughout. Conference, president, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Colin, I now call Billy Holland from West Mids.

BILLY HOLLAND (West Midlands):

Thank you, president, Billy Holland, West Midlands. I'm speaking in support and I'm going to refer, if the president will allow, to some of the information in Cheshire's amendment in support of that because I think it's important to this policy.

As a union, we do need to be much more open to varying the ways in which we take industrial action. Our national and joined up action is of course really important in building solidarity and building publicity for the cause, but we've got to be more agile in each brigade area and we've got to get the absolute most out of all of our members' sacrifices. We've got to be in the business of having the maximum impact and not just doing things the way that we've always done them.

I've no doubt that every single official here today could immediately bring to mind exactly what forms of action would work best in their area and what would be best supported in their area and for me, one of the primary responsibilities of a brigade committee should be to always know and always keep updated on exactly what that is. Committees should always know where leverage exists and how they can apply it.

So for me, brigade committees are best placed to provide that information, not necessarily having to consult with each branch and when they do provide that information, everybody within our union needs to commit to being open minded and taking a more targeted and locally driven action, in among the traditional mass national action. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Billy. Well that was the last speaker that's indicated, there was nobody spoke in opposition so there's no need for a right to reply. I'll now be putting the vote on the EC policy statement on pay to the vote and when we do that, we will break for a 10 minute comfort break while those votes are being put in.

Start voting now please, go to your inbox and we will reconvene in 10 minutes which will be at 13.50. You've got an extra minute, thank you.

[ADJOURNMENT]

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, we've now got the result of the voting but just before I announce that, I'm just going to bring the general secretary, who's going to respond to Cheshire's amendment and the assurances sought by Andrew Fox-Hewitt, thanks.

GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president and yes, we thank Andrew and the Cheshire delegates for withdrawing the amendment, I think there's been some discussion outside of conference and the executive council had some concerns with some of the phraseology within the resolution. But in terms of the work called for, I think Cheshire makes a good point, that clearly we all need to ensure that we're engaging thoroughly with every single branch and that we're doing that

as quickly as possible, and regularly. So we give that assurance that the executive council will take on board the concerns set out by Andrew and the Cheshire amendment, but appreciate the fact that it was withdrawn. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I can now inform conference that the executive council policy statement, *Pay in the fire and rescue service*, was carried.

Conference, I now call EC policy statement, *Region 11 restructure*, seconded by Oxfordshire, with the amendment from Hereford and Worcestershire and it's going to be moved by national officer, Mark Rowe, the EC support the amendments.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

President, conference, I'm moving Region 11 restructure, EC policy statement. The current region 11 was created following discussion and decision at conference in May 2015 and it merged the precursor regions, regions 11 South East and 12 Southern. Since the merge, the region has been monitored to ensure that our members, our officials within the region continued to receive the support and representation that they require.

The executive council in this policy statement are proposing to restructure the current region 11. The executive council are proposing this, conference because it has become apparent that the current structure isn't working as well as it was intended to and the proposal to revert to the previous structure will assist in helping those regions run more efficiently and more effectively.

There's been a comprehensive and considered review process that has had the full involvement of the respected brigade committees and the region 11 regional committee. In the period following the creation of the new region in 2015, occasional concerns began to emerge within the region which were brought to the attention of the executive council by the regional committee. Salient issues that were beginning to affect the region including geographical and logistical concerns due to the large size of the region were raised.

During the monitoring period, it became apparent that for regional officials managing as they were then, nine brigades, with each facing their own different and varied attacks on conditions of service, was becoming too onerous. The regional and brigade officials have coped as well as anybody could have expected them to and have undertaken the work expected of them, but the Tory attacks and cuts continue and consequently, workloads have and will continue to increase.

Our conference in May 2018 agreed to commission a fundamental review and evaluation of the FBU's structure and organisation, and a consultant with experience in this field and who had assisted the union on such matters previously undertook the review, which included the respective regions. His findings were considered by the executive council in January 2019.

Following a paper brought to the executive council at its meeting in February 2020, it was agreed by the executive council that an in principle demerger of the current region 11 back to the former region 11 and 12, would be considered in more detail. The EC commissioned a task and finish group who met regularly, comprised of EC members and officials from the region to consider the scope of the issues raised by the region in more detail.

The task and finish group reported its finding to the executive at its meeting in September 2020. In September 2020, the EC agreed to the convening of an EC sub-committee in order to consider the specifics of any restructure. The sub-committee then reported its recommendations in February 2021 to the executive council.

The key summary outcomes of the EC sub-committee were that having considered the matter in detail, no change is not an option. 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. The executive council also agreed that this decision is a matter for FBU conference.

The executive council further agreed that measures specified in the recommendations are required in the run-up to any such conference to put immediate support in place for the region. A further recommendation of the EC sub-committee report was that the EC is asked to agree that as soon as practically possible, a conference will be held which will consider an EC 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 to enable that restructure to commence. In this regard, head office were to draft an appropriate paper for conference to consider that included the necessary rule change. On 10 February, the EC agreed the recommendations of the EC sub-committee and the decision of the executive was fully supported by the region 11 regional committee.

Conference, you are being asked to consider the recommendations in the EC policy statement that the proposed restructure will result in the formation of the following two regions: region 11 South East region consisting of East Sussex, Kent, Surrey and West Sussex and region 12, Southern region, consisting of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and Oxfordshire. The current region 12 shall be called region 13 South West.

Conference, having considered these matters, if conference approves the recommendations and the proposals being put before you in the EC policy statement, you require the executive council to restructure the region 11, reverting back to the precursor regions 11 South East and 12 Southern.

You require the executive council to undertake the required work in relation to the restructure in terms of education, provision of regional offices, membership databases, election of officials, finance and to resolve any other consequential work. The executive council is also to put in place interim arrangements for current regional officials within region 11 and immediately commence the election for the EC member in the new region 12, followed by further elections in accordance with the rule book.

The EC also recommend that conference agrees to the required rule change detailed in appendix A of the policy statement to allow the restructure to commence.

Conference, this matter has been considered in depth and is very much in the region's interests, having executed and concluded a comprehensive consultation, the EC now recommends to you conference that the restructure as detailed in the policy statement, with your agreement, takes place. Thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Mark and just before we move onto the seconder, I'd just remind people if they want to speak in this debate, can they raise their hands now with the reaction button on the bottom. I now call Steve Wright of Oxfordshire to second the policy statement.

STEVE WRIGHT (Oxfordshire):

President, conference, Steve Wright, Oxfordshire speaking in support of the EC policy statement, *Region 11 Restructure*. The conference is aware of the decision taken in May 2015, to merge the former region 11 and region 12 but time has moved on and the need for local organising and local activism has never been more important.

Due to ever increasing workloads based upon regional officials, the South East regional committee has been of the opinion for some time that brigade officials, local reps and committees would be better supported if the region demerged and formed two separate well organised regions. This demerger would enable officials to be better placed to protect our members' rights, safety, welfare and conditions of service within each brigade and across the regions.

The reduction since 2015 in both EC members and regional officials due to the merger has resulted in far greater workloads, not only for the EC member and regional officials but also for brigade officials who are having to take on more work, due to capacity issues at regional level.

Like all brigades across the country, officials and reps in our region have faced challenges and attacks from management, from a number of unscrupulous chief fire officers and local authorities, determine to erode our

members' conditions of service. We have fought off attacks, both industrially and politically and the membership in the region have held the line. But we are all well aware of the challenges our union and our members face in the very near future.

Comrades, we must be prepared and ready for the Westminster government attacks to break up the NJC and abolish our terms and conditions. Many firefighters, FBU members, our brothers and sisters before us have fought on many fronts over the past 100 years for the terms and conditions we have today. Now we must do the same for all those following our footsteps and fight back connectively and united with all trade unions, to protect workers' rights. We cannot and will not allow Johnson and his cronies to continue with this assault on working people.

Conference, now is the time to focus our efforts to build, to organise and agitate, to assist in organising and preparing for the fight ahead, locally and nationally. Officials across the South East are ready to work, ready to fight and take this battle on.

This is the right thing to do, it's the right thing to do for regional officials, brigade officials, branch reps and each and every member within the two regions and across the entire membership. And let's be clear, this will make our union stronger, more resilient and better placed to fight industrially and politically.

We, the union, are going nowhere, we will be here and continue to be a fighting union for the next 100 years, as we and comrades before us have been for the past century.

Conference, I urge you to support the EC policy statement, allow us to organise and form our battle lines ready for the fight ahead. I second, thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Can I remind anybody, if they want to indicate to speak to raise their hand? No, I'm being informed that nobody's wanting to speak. I've also been informed that the amendment from Hereford and Worcester has been moved formally and it has been seconded formally by Cumbria. So with no further debate, I will first put the amendment from Hereford and Worcester to the vote. Please go your inboxes and vote on the amendment, thank you.

Thanks, conference. I can now report that the amendment from Hereford and Worcester has carried, so I'm now going to put the executive council policy statement, *Region 11 restructure*, as amended, to the vote. Please check your inboxes now and vote, thank you.

Thank you, conference, I can now report that the executive council policy statement, *Region 11 Restructure*, has now carried and that work will immediately start to get everything in place, and it starts as soon as conference has finished because myself and the national officer have got a meeting with all the members of both now respective regional committees.

I'm now calling the general secretary to give his report on the high rise policy, health and safety advisory panel report as was reported earlier. Conference, this is a report from the general secretary and there's still a lot of ongoing work, it's not for debate, it's just an update and a report from the general secretary. Matt, over to you.

GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president and thank you to the standing orders committee for allowing the executive council to present this report and thank you to conference for your indulgence on this matter as well.

This is simply a preliminary report to conference, there may be issues that need to be discussed with members, some of whom maybe unclear as to the purpose or the reasoning behind a union's position on this issue. There will be need for further discussion and debate, including potentially at future conferences.

But conference, I'm very pleased to announce that we have won a very significant victory in defence of our members' health and safety. It relates to a case which arose in the London Fire Brigade, but has implications for all

firefighters across the entire union membership. Last year, the London Fire Brigade attempted to implement a new high rise firefighting policy, what they call PN633, arising from discussions after the Grenfell Tower fire.

Our London officials engaged in those discussions with the empathy but they and the executive council and head office agreed that we could not accept elements of the new procedure, desired by the London Fire Brigade. The proposed procedure included provision to allow incident commanders at high rise fires to deploy firefighters to work beyond the entry control point at the bridge head, without having first started up breathing apparatus.

The union has argued that this procedure was unsafe, putting firefighters and the public at greater risk. Because no agreement could be reached on the matter, the issue was referred to a London specific policy, a health and safety advisory panel that took place and considered evidence and made a ruling last month. In that process, the union presented a case as follows.

That in summary, the arguments we presented were that the proposed procedure would breach the fire authority's obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act, would remove a reasonably practicable control measure, would reduce the level of safety below what is known to be a reasonably practicable measure to achieve, would overturn decades of BA safe practice, would ignore lessons learned from previous firefighter deaths, injuries and BA emergencies, would knowingly place BA teams beyond the point of rescue, would completely remove the responsibilities of the BA entry control officer and their ability to monitor and supervise the wearer, would breach PPE regulations and would undermine and render firefighter PPE ineffective.

It would further require firefighters to commit similar breaches of the same regulations. It would undermine vital BA entry control checks and safe systems of work, would render it impossible for BA teams to calculate working duration and safe turnaround pressures, would expose firefighters to toxic fire effluent and other substances hazardous to health, would undermine public safety by the potential to hamper fireground operations, rescue efforts and the need to redirect resources, that it would not make buildings safer and it would offer no identifiable benefit to public safety.

We are pleased that the LFB has such a mechanism that allowed us to engage in that discussion and present such evidence. That included the submission of evidence by each party, the Fire Brigades Union and the LFB management, to an independent chair.

The chair in this instance, mutually agreed, was Mr Andrew Strawson, a former HSE inspector with a long and well respected experience of fire service matters. On 14 April 2021, head office and London officials participated in that process. I want to thank all involved, the various officials at national and regional level, staff who assisted in the preparation of that case, Mr Lewis Ramsay, who provided an expert report from the perspective of a fire officer and our legal advisors who provided some extremely firm and clear legal advice on the safety law implications of what was being proposed.

I want to thank FBU reps on branches in London who took a model resolution to members opposing the proposed procedure. The independent chair concluded after the hearing and considering arguments from both sides and made recommendations as follows:

"My recommendation is that the proposed procedure in Paragraph 630 of the latest draft be removed as it does not represent appropriate and best practice at fires in high rise buildings".

"Furthermore, in the course of panel deliberations, it appeared that there were some inconsistencies and omissions in the proposed procedure. I am not of the opinion that rectifying these inconsistencies and omissions would change the recommendations."

In summary, that was a very clear and concise decision in favour of the position argued by the Fire Brigades Union. And conference, the executive council asked to raise this because we believe it is of immense importance and I just want to put it in some historical context, so that conference recognises the significance of firstly what was being proposed and secondly, why and how we challenged it.

We can go back to the 1958 Smithfield fire to find the origins of debate about BA safety procedures including the rules about BA entry control. It was a fire in which two firefighters died and I'd ask people to read the reproduction of Firefighter magazine, which we issued on the anniversary, which sets out very well what the Fire Brigades Union did at the time, how safety measures were raised with the employer and nationally to improve safety and the truth is that following that fire, for decades, this union has fought to improve procedures and equipment in relation to the use of breathing apparatus.

And every single one of us who has worn breathing apparatus since that incident has benefited from greater safety, as a result of the sacrifice made by Jack Fourt-Wells and Richard Stocking in that fire and by the work that firefighters in London and the union nationally made at the time and subsequently. We need to think of all those who've also died in other incidents whilst wearing breathing apparatus, even with improved safety provision.

We're approaching the 30th anniversary of the Gillender Street fire, I knew the two firefighters who died at that incident, it was an incident which resulted in the London Fire Brigade being issued with improvement notices by the Health and Safety Executive.

Sadly, it seems that among some in the fire service and I'll come onto those, some of those lessons of those past are being forgotten. The reason we cannot forget those lessons is because this is the organisation which always has to pick up the pieces in the aftermath of such terrible instances.

I'd also ask people to remember people on the other side of that because it's not just those injured and died who maybe under threat but other members. In 2007, four of our members were killed in a fire at Atherstone on Stour in Warwickshire but we also need to remember that three middle managers, also FBU members, were subsequently charged with gross negligence manslaughter. They were defended not by their employer but by their union, the Fire Brigades Union.

So the approach suggested by the LFB management but also by the National Fire Chiefs Council and by certain other fire and rescue services, in our view will not make buildings any safer, indeed will achieve the opposite, will not make firefighters any safer, indeed will achieve the opposite and will not make the public safer, indeed will achieve the opposite.

So that approach in our view would also help those, including those in government, who wish to dodge their responsibility for the crisis in building safety that emerged and has become clear since the Grenfell Tower fire, and who seek instead to blame failings within the fire and rescue service or the failings of firefighters in responding to incidents, and we utterly reject that approach.

We welcome the decision of the commissioner of the London Fire Brigade, Andy Roe, to accept the findings of that panel and to withdraw the disputed aspects of the proposed procedure and the FBU will work with the London Fire Brigade and others, to finalise the revised policy and improve the procedures within that brigade and elsewhere.

But we are aware that the NFCC and certain other individual fire services have either introduced or recommended or are discussing similar policies to the one which has just been withdrawn in the London Fire Brigade, and we want to send them a very clear message, we have written to the NFCC immediately and brigade officials now have letters for all fire and rescue services, to insist that any such policy is immediately removed and that the National Fire Chiefs Council withdraws its advice on that matter.

I have to say, considering the issues we've discussed earlier in this conference and the idea that the Westminster government wishes to hand even more power to the National Fire Chiefs Council, this issue, an issue that goes to the heart of professionalism and safety within our sector, highlights actually significant failings on the part of the National Fire Chiefs Council.

We had very clear advice and we're very clear that had the London Fire Brigade proceeded with that policy, they would have been in breach of the law and we would have taken the necessary action. We will now consider the steps that we need to take to challenge, address and ensure the removal of this policy by the NFCC and by any other individual empathy who seeks to introduce it, or has introduced something similar.

I think we can be very proud, conference, of the work that all those involved in this particular issue have done, it builds on decades of experience, decades of campaigning and it shows once again that the voice of professionalism in our sector, the voice of professionalism in our industry and the voice representing the best interests of all firefighters is the Fire Brigades Union. Thanks, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Matt. Well, conference, that concludes all of the business we had programmed for today and also the vital safety update which we've just had from the general secretary.

We all know nothing will replace our annual conference but I would hope that you would agree that due to its content, this special conference was needed and you can see from some of the topics of discussion today, that the attacks are being lined up against us and they are coming and we must be ready to fight because if we don't, no-one else in the fire and rescue service will.

No other organisation will stand up to the politicians and bosses when they come in for our terms and conditions, our pensions and most importantly, when they come into further slash the frontline services that our communities have a right to. There's only the Fire Brigades Union that will stand up to be counted so conference, we have a duty as officials to prepare our members for what is fast approaching us down the track and make sure that they are ready to fight as and when it comes.

And to finish on a positive note, we just heard from the general secretary on what was a massive win for this union in protecting our members' safety and I applaud everyone involved in that win, be it the local London officials, the members in London who stood strong because if they haven't had done, the management would have introduced it over the union's heads so I applaud them all and obviously, all the national officials and everybody else involved in that.

Finally, just before I close, conference, I'd like to thank a few people for putting this event on and without them, it would never have happened. Firstly, national officer Mark Rowe and the standing orders committee, our Comms team, Mascols Events, Choice Voting Systems, all of whom have put a tremendous amount of work in behind the scenes in order for this online event to happen, so I thank you all for your involvement in that and putting this conference on.

Also I'd like to thank all of you officials, as we all know, the majority, it's a thankless task, being a union official, however, we know that without the union, without our officials out there doing their stuff, the fire and rescue service would be in a far worse state than it is now. It's not great as we all know but without the Fire Brigades Union and its officials and its members, I dread to think how the fire service would actually look, so I thank you all.

And one special last thanks goes from me to the vice president, Andy Noble, it's his last day in the office today before he walks off into that retirement sunset, so I'm sure you'll join me in wishing Andy a long, happy and healthy retirement. Andy, thank you very much. On that note, conference is now closed, thank you.

Conference adjourned



Established 1 October 1918

**OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE
FIRE BRIGADES UNION
ALONG WITH
LIST OF DELEGATES**

MAY 2021

OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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VICE-PRESIDENT – Andy Noble

NATIONAL TREASURER – Jim Quinn

GENERAL SECRETARY – Matt Wrack

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY – Andy Dark

NATIONAL OFFICER – Riccardo la Torre

NATIONAL OFFICER – Tam McFarlane

NATIONAL OFFICER – Mark Rowe

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REGION 4	Pete Smith
REGION 5	Les Skarratts
REGION 6	Ben Selby
REGION 7	Matt Lamb
REGION 8	Cerith Griffiths
REGION 9	Brian Hooper
REGION 10	David Shek
REGION 11	Richard Jones
REGION 12	Trevor French

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REGION 6	Adam Taylor
REGION 7	Andrew Scattergood
REGION 8	Arwel Roberts
REGION 9	Jamie Newell
REGION 10	Jon Lambe
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REGION 12	Guy Herrington
B&EMM	Joseph Mendy
CSNC	Lynda Rowan-O'Neill
LGBT	Pat Carberry
ONC	Phil McDonald
NRC	Shaun Pickles
NWC	Kat Duncan

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REGION 2	Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Russ King
REGION 4	Neil Carbutt
REGION 5	Gary Keary
REGION 6	Marc Redford
REGION 7	Richard Williams
REGION 8	Alex Psaila
REGION 9	Cameron Matthews
REGION 10	Gareth Beeton
REGION 11	Mark Simmons
REGION 12	Scott Young
B&EMM	Cameron Matthews
CSNC	Caroline Saunderson
LGBT	Yannick Dubois
ONC	Mark Ames
NRC	Paul Revill
NWC	Louise Connell

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REGION 2	David Nichol
REGION 3	Dave Howe
REGION 4	Gavin Marshall
REGION 5	Andrew Fox-Hewitt
REGION 6	Clare Hudson
REGION 7	Sasha Hitchins
REGION 8	Blythe Roberts
REGION 9	Mav Langdon
REGION 10	Jason Hunter
REGION 11	Andy Petch
REGION 12	Val Hampshire

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REGION 2	NIFB	Mark McCartan Barry Mitchell Rod O'Hare Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Cleveland	Nick Cain
		Karl Wager
	Durham	Jim Bittlestone
		David Welsh
	Northumberland	Guy Tiffin
REGION 4		Steve Walker
	Tyne & Wear	Wayne Anderson
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	North Yorkshire	Edmund Billing
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	South Yorkshire	Daz Kenny
REGION 6		Matt Nicholls
	West Yorkshire	Martyn Bairstow
		Ryan Binks
REGION 7	Cheshire	Andrew Fox-Hewitt
		John West
	Cumbria	Oliver Burrow
		Hal Fell
	GMC	Matt Fryer
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		Stephen Wiswell
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Northamptonshire	Graham Vaux
Nottinghamshire	Simon Thomas
	Richard Wright
	Chris Kemp
	John Wadsworth
	Mark Stilwell
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REGION 7

Hereford & Worcester	Neil Bevan
Staffordshire	Trevor Connolly
Shropshire	Chris Craddock
Warwickshire	Martin Starkey
West Midlands	Louise Fletcher
	Kent Hallihan
	Adam Hemmings
	Neil Stuart
	Billy Holland
	Steven Price-Hunt
	Philippa Smith

REGION 8

Mid & West Wales	Deiniol Lloyd
North Wales	Simon Jones
South Wales	Tim Lloyd
	Duncan Stewart-Ball
	Michael Alexander
	Gareth Brown
	Gareth Tovey

REGION 9

Bedfordshire	Craig Carter
Cambridgeshire	Mark Cook
Essex	Scott Newbon
Hertfordshire	George White
Norfolk	Andrew Knowels
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	Robin Fortune
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Katie Holloway
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LIST OF DELEGATES

B&EMM

B&EMM

Tariq Khamr
Amit Malde

CSNC

CSNC

Donna Donachie
Sherrie Kitson

LGBT

LGBT

Neil Pearson
Rebecca Savin

NRC

NRC

Paul Farman
Phillip Williams

NWC

NWC

Jess Doran
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ONC

ONC

Dave Collingwood
Peter Trayner



Established 1 October 1918

INDEX

INDEX OF PROCEEDINGS

(ECPS) Exective Council policy statement

A

Addresses:

Courtney, K 12

Appreciations:

Courtney, K 14

Ramsay, L 34

Rowe, M 36

Brigade secretaries 24

Choice Voting Systems 36

Hereford and Worcester trade dispute 11

Head office staff 34, 36

London officials 34

Mascots 36

Standing Orders Committee 32, 36

C

Covid-19 the response by firefighters and the Fire
Brigades Union (ECPS) 16

G

Grenfell Tower 7, 34, 35

P

Pay in the fire and rescue service (ECPS) 23

Presidential address 6

R

Region 11 restructure (ECPS) 31

Report on breathing apparatus safety 33

T

The Westminster government and the forthcoming
attack on firefighters' rights, pay and conditions
(ECPS) 8

INDEX OF SPEAKERS

A

Alexander, M 20

B

Bevan, N 10
Brown, C 29

C

Connolly, T 28
Courtney, K 12
Craddock, C 29

F

Fox-Hewitt, A 22, 27

G

General secretary – see Wrack, M
Gibb, M 21

H

Harris, B 27
Holland, B 30

L

La Torre, R 16

M

Malde, A 21
Marshall, G 28
Millar, P 4
Murray, I 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26,
27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36

N

National officers
– see La Torre, R
– see Rowe, M
Noble, A 6

P

President - see Murray, I
Price-Hunt, S 12, 22

R

Rowe, M 1, 31, 36

V

Vice president – see Noble, A

W

Wrack, M 8, 23, 30, 33
Wright, S 32



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