

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS 2022

93rd CONFERENCE
10 – 13 MAY 2022



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Established 1 October 1918

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

93rd CONFERENCE 2022

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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 2022'

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



Established 1 October 1918

93rd CONFERENCE 2022

BRIGHTON

10-13 MAY 2022

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Good morning, conference. Welcome back. Conference, I now call Phil Millar, chair of standing orders committee to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Conference, good morning. The standing orders committee welcomes you to the first conference since the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020. Whilst we are in a much better position and are able to hold a physical conference, the virus is still prevalent and therefore some precautions are still deemed advisable.

The head office circular released on Tuesday 3 May by national officer and secretary to the standing orders committee, Mark Rowe, outlined the precautionary measures that would be in place throughout conference. May I remind conference of the measures contained within that circular. All attendees at conference have been provided with a face covering and a personal bottle of hand sanitiser which can be found in the delegate packs at your table. Attendees are asked to consider wearing the face covering in areas of close contact. Meeting rooms, where possible, will have increased ventilation and will be refreshed with fresh water glasses and jugs following each meeting. Hotel rooms will only be refreshed, if requested, in order to limit contact with hotel staff. Hand sanitising stations will be available throughout the hotel and standing orders committee hold a supply of lateral flow tests (LFTs) for use during conference should any attendee request one.

If, during conference, any attendee becomes unwell and suspects that it may be Covid-19 related, either stay in your room or return to your room and immediately contact myself as chair of standing orders either by email or by texting my mobile phone. My contact details can be found within the head office circular, a copy of which has been circulated and is on your table. Please, when you contact me, provide me with your name, brigade, the name of the hotel that you are staying in and your room number. I shall then arrange for an LFT to be brought to your room, and if you return a positive result, please leave conference and return home. I would ask that you do not leave conference without informing me first, as chair of standing orders, of the result of your LFT as other delegates may wish to take one as well.

The standing orders committee seeks your cooperation with regard to conference credentials. Would all delegates and officials please make sure that you have filled in the details on your credentials so that stewards can clearly identify them. Visitors and observers to conference are identified by different coloured credentials which must be displayed at all times. No visitors or observers are allowed on the conference floor amongst the delegates.

All credentials issued are the personal property of the persons to whom they are issued and cannot be transferred to other persons without the approval of the standing orders committee.

All conference credentials will be examined by the stewards at the beginning of each session and the standing orders committee ask for your patience with this. The standing orders committee would like to stress the importance of delegates stating their name and brigade or section when addressing conference as this assists the president and the verbatim report. We also ask you to speak clearly into the microphone when you are at the rostrum.

Access to the standing orders committee, for those who have not been there already, is through the partition doors behind you, out of the corridor, turn right, through the door on your right and it is clearly marked.

Delegates with business for the standing orders committee should inform the steward of the nature of their business and you will need to be called by standing orders or advised when to come back if we are in session.

The standing orders committee must report to conference the whole of the Grand Hotel is a no smoking building and trust that this will be adhered to. May I also request that all delegates, officials, stewards, visitors and observers switch off their mobile phones, laptops, tablets and any other portable devices whilst in conference. Can everyone please check their mobile phones and electronic devices now. Thank you, conference. May I remind you that

conference is in session from 9.30 to 5.15 every day. May I also remind conference of standing order 16 which clearly states assembly, adjournment and comfort break times, all of which can be found on the front of your programme of business.

Tea and coffee for all will be served in the area immediately behind, through the partition doors in the Charlotte Room.

Conference, the list of scrutineers and tellers has been circulated as has the final appeals committee list. Can you please – and I know you have got a lot of stuff on your tables – find your final appeals list. There might be one per delegation; that would explain it. Those with the final appeals list, can you remove for the NWC, Kathryn Duncan and replace with Rachel Rogers.

The standing orders committee must be kept informed of any changes to delegations and we, in turn, will keep the president's list up to date and I will inform conference of any changes in my standing orders report at the beginning of each session.

Can you please turn to your delegates list which everyone should have. On your delegates list, region 1, Scotland, remove Scott MacRory and insert John McKenzie. In region 4, North Yorkshire, remove Adam Lee and replace with Paul James. Region 5, Cumbria, remove Oliver Burrow and insert Edward Burrows. Greater Manchester (GMC), remove Matthew Fryer and insert Sam Merriott. Again, Greater Manchester, remove Dave Pike and insert Daniel Giblin. Region 7, West Midlands, remove Steve Price-Hunt and replace with Cara Lansley. Mid and West Wales remove both delegates, no replacement. South Wales, remove Timothy Monkton and replace with Steve Saunders. Region 10, London, remove Greg Ashman and replace with Barry Jackson. Region 13, Dorset and Wiltshire, remove Kate Scott and replace with Andy Corben. LGBT, remove Tracey Doyle and replace with Maria Buck. For the ONC can you please add delegate Greg Ashman.

Conference, any further changes to the delegate list need to come through standing orders.

Stall facilities and fringe meetings. The standing orders committee have agreed stall facilities for the following organisations: Justice for Colombia, Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Stand up to Racism, Institute of Employment Rights, Morning Star, Bookmarks and Stop the War. They will be situated in the corridor outside and in the Charlotte Room, which is at the rear of the conference hall.

There are a number of fringe meetings which introduce international issues and issues closer to home. Lunchtime fringes are scheduled to start 1pm and run for 45 minutes. Evening fringe meetings are scheduled to start at 5.45 and will run for 60 minutes. There will be an evening fringe this evening organised by Justice for Colombia, and on Wednesday an afternoon fringe hosted by Institute of Employment Rights, and an evening one with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. All fringe meetings will take place in the Charlotte Room at the rear. We would encourage you to attend, conference.

The standing orders committee has agreed the facility of the FBU shop at this conference. It is located in the Regency Suite which is through the partition doors behind you, onto and along the corridor, through the door on your right which is clearly marked.

The FBU press and research department are in attendance at conference. They are located in the George II suite.

Emergency resolutions. The standing orders committee have received two emergency resolutions that have now been circulated to conference. Both of these emergency resolutions have been ruled out of order because they are not of an exceptional nature and could have been submitted before 8 April, the deadline for resolutions.

Emergency rule changes. Conference, there are two emergency rule changes submitted by the executive council that have been circulated to delegates that the standing orders committee have accepted as being of an emergency nature. These emergency rule changes will be included in the conference business in the first session of conference tomorrow morning.

Resolutions withdrawn. The standing orders committee received 113 resolutions to conference of which 109 made it into the final agenda. A copy of the resolutions ruled out of order along with the rule changes and amendments that were also rejected, have been circulated to conference.

Conference, can you now turn to your programme of business. On page 3, resolution 95 has been withdrawn; resolution 96 has been withdrawn; resolution 98 has been withdrawn. Page 4, resolution 97 has been withdrawn; also on page 4, resolution 94 has been withdrawn by Hereford and Worcester, and they will be seconding resolution 103, online voting, moved by Scotland. Still on page 4, resolution 105 has been withdrawn. On page 6 resolutions 76, 77, 78 and 79 have been withdrawn and have been composited. So, on page 6, after the heading "Section I Accident and Injury (AIF)" insert "Composite A". A copy of that composite resolution has been circulated and should be on your tables. Page 7, resolution 2 has been withdrawn; resolution 8 has been withdrawn. Turn to page 9. At the bottom of the page, resolutions 61 and 63 have been withdrawn to be composited and after resolution 62 please insert "Composite B" a copy of which is also on your tables. On page 13, resolution 54 Building Solidarity has been withdrawn to second resolution 52 Building Solidarity.

Moving on, speakers' times: The executive council policy statements, *National Officers*, *Grenfell Tower*, *Pay and the Cost of Living Crisis*, *Sexual Harassment and Political Challenges Facing the FBU and the Labour Movement* will be moved by the general secretary and he will speak for 15 minutes for each of those.

Conference, may I draw your attention to standing order 15, voting on a challenge to the chair of conference. The number of delegates to conference is 123. Therefore, the number of delegates voting to carry a challenge is 82. Please note that NRC delegates, ONC delegates, CSNC delegates, NWC delegates, B&EMM national committee delegates and LGBT national committee delegates are all entitled to vote on procedural motions and challenges only.

Regional officials who are not delegates have been issued with different credentials and they are not permitted to vote at all.

The stewards have now distributed the voting cards to each brigade delegation to be used in the event of a card vote being called. Voting cards are not to be removed from the conference hall by any delegates.

In compliance with standing order 14, delegations have been supplied with a list showing their voting figures for card votes in relation to trade votes, political fund votes and for accident and injury fund votes.

So, conference, on to the order of business. Conference, this year is unusual as you as delegates will be asked to agree three annual reports over the four days of conference as the 2020 and 2021 annual reports still require formal agreement through a physical meeting of conference. The 2020 and 2021 annual reports will not simply be taken as a whole document for conference to agree. In order to comply with the standing orders of conference, the president will introduce each annual report by year starting with the 2020 annual report and will then call out each of the relevant sections within the report in sequential order. Once the president has called out all of the sections which will be inclusive of paragraphs contained within them for the 2020 report, he will then put the report to conference to agree. The president will then repeat the same process for the 2021 annual report. The 2022 annual report will be taken in the usual manner and each section and paragraph taken over the four days of this conference and you will be asked to agree its contents on the final day just prior to conference closing.

Delegates wishing to speak specifically on any of the paragraphs contained within the 2020 and 2021 annual reports are free to do so. However, please be aware that the 2022 report contains the same sections and paragraphs and paragraph headings. Therefore, issues that can be raised in those reports can be raised in the 2022 one as normal business.

Finally, conference, the standing orders committee are holding an election. There is a ballot box at the back of the hall. This will take place first thing tomorrow morning. Completed nomination forms which are on your desks, one per delegation, must be placed in the ballot box at the rear of the hall by 11am tomorrow. A vacancy needs to be filled which will be left by brother Paul Reames who will be retiring after conference. Paul has served on the standing

orders committee for 13 years and I, personally, would like to thank him for his dedicated service and commitment to the standing orders committee and wish him a long and healthy retirement.

President that concludes the first report from the standing orders committee.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

Point of order.

THE PRESIDENT:

Will you please confirm, if this a point of order or a challenge to the standing orders report?

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

Point of order for the rule change.

THE PRESIDENT:

Are you challenging the standing orders on their ruling out – so it is a challenge?

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

Yes. President. LGBT committee rule had our rule change ruled out by standing orders committee because the rule book does not actually contain the abbreviation LGBT so this proposed alteration cannot be actioned. We understand that standing orders committee's hands are tied. We appreciate the time taken to speak to us this morning. However, this is a simple change that will have a huge impact on the section and its members. We believe the terms are interchangeable in plain and common English both lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and LGBT are understood to be the same and mean the same. Observe our section name on the floor and within your publications today. To include the term "LGBT+" recognises that people use to identify and express their sexuality and gender has diversified the section to include everyone. This has been a long time coming. This not only prevents our section fully representing all of our members. It is vitally important that our union now moves in line with the rest of the trade union and equality movements in the UK. President, we challenge.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Maria. I call the chair of standing orders to respond.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. We met with the LGBT delegation this morning to discuss this. Conference, there were 30 proposed rule changes submitted to the standing orders committee and 27 were ruled out of order. Standing order No 4 gives the standing orders committee the latitude to allow resolutions that have been rejected to be amended in a timely manner for reconsideration by the standing orders committee. There is no provision to allow standing orders to apply the same latitude to resolutions for proposed alterations to the rules of the union. The rule book is a legal document and it has served to protect the FBU many times from legal challenges. So, conference, if you overturn standing orders and allow any rule change to be included as conference business, it will have to be included exactly as it was submitted, and if agreed by conference would then be included in the rule book exactly as conference agreed it in its incorrect state because we cannot alter it. If conference takes the decision to allow the rule changes to be altered and corrected so that it would now be competent, then all of the brigades and all of the national sectional committees that had their rule changes rejected would also have to be given the opportunity to amend and resubmit.

To be clear, there is nothing within the conference standing orders that allows for brigades or national sectional committees to amend and resubmit their ruled out proposed rule changes at conference, and in doing so conference would be acting outside and in contravention of its own standing orders.

In relation to the rule change that has been submitted by the LGBT section, just for clarity there is nowhere within the rule book that there is an abbreviation made of LGBT, it is all spelt out. So if you were to overturn and allow the rule change back in, I don't know what I could do other than come back here and say we cannot physically carry out this instruction because it is not in the rule book. What I would encourage the LGBT section to do is to raise it

through the sections and the EC can bring a rule change at the next conference which they have the ability to do even though it is not a rule change conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. I am now going to put that challenge to the vote. All those in favour of the challenge please show. All those against the challenge please show. That falls. Thank you.

Conference, is that standing orders report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you.

Conference, we now move on to Section N, Obituary. Conference, we have just heard the chair of standing orders state that we will be taking three annual reports at this conference, and I will explain how I intend to do that in a minute, but as is usual at conference, we will start with a minute's silence to remember those members named in the obituary section of all three annual reports. We have lost some officials over recent months who played a big part in our union. I certainly remember from conferences I attended as a brigade official, names like Jim Barbour from Northern Ireland, Tony Carr from Merseyside and, sadly, very recently, Sam Mitchell from Scotland who played a big part in the union's national retained committee. I would also ask you to remember the victims of the many recent natural disasters and conflicts around the world since conference last met, not least the horrors of the conflict we are currently seeing played out before our very eyes in Ukraine.

Can Members please stand for a minute's silence.

Conference stood in memory of those who had died

Thanks, Phil, and thanks on behalf of the union for all the work you do representing us at various events, be it the Red Plaque and everything else.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order. I now call our president, Ian Murray, to give his presidential address.

THE PRESIDENT:

Morning, conference, it is great to be back after our enforced two-year absence. Conference, you, over the next four days are the parliament of our union. This is where we make our policy and collectively set our priorities and steer the direction of our great union going forward.

Looking around, it is good to see there are plenty of new faces (as well as some old ones). It is good to see some new faces, good to see that we have got new officials coming through and carrying on the good fight on behalf of our members because we are their protection. We stand up to defend them when others say nothing. We are the conscience of the fire service. We stand up to defend our communities' fire cover from the never-ending onslaught unleashed by the respective governments that we have seen over the last twenty years, but even more so since 2010.

I am proud to be the president of such a fantastic union. My job as your president here at conference is to make sure the debates are carried out in good order so every speaker gets their say. This is our democracy and we have to do it right. What I will ask of every delegate here is to respect conference, respect standing orders committee who work hard behind the scenes to get us through the business. They are your standing orders committee elected by you to ensure your conference abides by the rules that you set for them. Remember that, conference.

Respect every delegate even if you don't agree with them. Speak out in opposition in the debates if you don't, but what I will expect from you is respect their views. Stick to the time you are given, put your arguments clearly and think through every vote that you cast here. Let us use this conference to renew and reinvigorate our union, not give our enemies more ammunition to attack us.

As I said, it is great to be back after enforced absence due to the Covid pandemic, a dark time which hopefully we are coming out of, albeit not fully, but there does seem to be a light at the end of the tunnel. No doubt we will see many variants of Covid appearing, but let's hope they are nothing like we saw at the outbreak of the virus with

thousands losing their lives, a time when once again we saw firefighters across the UK stepping up to do their bit to assist in the national response to the pandemic.

This union made ground breaking national collective agreements at the National Joint Council to assist in that fight that saw firefighters delivering PPE, driving ambulances, assisting in the temporary mortuaries set up, to name just a few. Our members did the fire and rescue service proud. It is a shame some chief fire officers didn't behave in the same honourable way. Some of them didn't want the deals, they wanted to have absolute freedom to tell firefighters what to do, when to do it, with total disregard for their safety, and we weren't prepared to accept that. We had agreements in place, but they wanted to weaken the safety measures contained within those agreements which would have put the firefighters at stations at greater risk when these deployed firefighters returned to their places of work, and the downgrading of fire safety measures has never been, nor will it ever be, up for negotiation with the Fire Brigades Union.

Some chiefs who we know saw the pandemic as an opportunity, an opportunity to introduce new working practices without any agreements, without any consultation and without adequate risk assessments, and of course they saw it as an opportunity to bypass the Fire Brigades Union and to try to push us to the margins, but because we stood together, officials, members, as usual, they failed miserably at that. But the political shenanigans aside that saw the NJC agreement scuppered, be it by the NFCC, the national employers or the Home Office, I am extremely proud of every single one of our members for what they contributed during the last couple of years to assist our communities in dealing with the pandemic.

Conference, we have got some extremely important debates coming up this week. Obviously, our members are no different from any other workers. They have seen their pay more and more devalued when set against the current cost of living crisis, where their household bills are soaring. Firefighters are just like the rest of our communities and they will look to the union to try to secure them a pay rise that addresses their shortfalls.

The pandemic has cost the economy billions of pounds and, as we have seen with the enforced austerity measures put in place by the then coalition government after 2010, someone pays the price and, as we all know, this Westminster government will not take wealth from the super-rich. They want working class people to foot the bill by increased taxes, low pay and cuts to public services. The Westminster government has a big majority and is lining up to attack our industry and our union. We have got the impending White Paper looming over us ready to land at any time and you can bet your bottom dollar it will not be good news for any of our members.

Our national collective bargaining by way of the National Joint Council is under a huge threat. Pay, as we know, is threatened with the imposition of independent pay review bodies and, from the experiences of other sectors, like education and the police, who already have them, their advice to us is fight them off with everything you have got at your disposal because it will be a disaster for your members and they are certainly not independent.

There will undoubtedly be attacks on firefighters' terms and conditions in the White Paper with the NFCC demanding that chief fire officers are given "operational independence" which in reality translates to "You will do anything I want you to, when I want you to do it, without the need for agreement with your union and, of course, for no additional pay."

Conference, they are threatening to scrap fire authorities and put the governance of firefighting under the police and crime commissioners who do not know our industry, who are not held accountable to local politicians, and although we are getting mixed messages, we have heard calls by the outgoing chief inspector in England to remove the firefighters' right to strike. So we need to be ready to react, if necessary, to these threats that may come in the White Paper.

Conference, once again we will be covering the Grenfell Tower fire just as we approach the fifth anniversary of that terrible night where 72 people needlessly lost their lives. We were told in the aftermath of Grenfell that the fire itself and the tragic deaths of 72 people would be a turning point in the UK fire and rescue service with the fire safety regulations and the fire service seeing massive changes to ensure such a tragedy could never happen again. Well, as we all know, conference, we have not seen many changes in five years. But the Grenfell Tower Inquiry is entering

its final stages and hopefully at the end of that we may see something that could signal there to be a change of direction, a change of direction we have all been waiting and hoping for: like the decades of deregulation reversed, like investment in the fire and rescue service, like crewing levels restored back to the numbers we had before the years of austerity cuts were made. We will be hoping I am sure, but let us not forget, five years have passed and we have still got no answers.

Conference, what I can assure you is that the Fire Brigades Union will continue to stand in solidarity with the bereaved, the survivors and the residents of Grenfell, fighting for justice, fighting for every one of the victims who perished that night. What is very sad, as I sit here, is that I cannot say with total confidence that the Grenfell Tower Inquiry will deliver the improvements we want to see from its findings because we know the Westminster government is carrying on with its deregulation agenda. We know they have not done enough with the Building Safety Act. They have not given us the resources for more fire inspectors and they have certainly not invested in the fire and rescue service to reverse the cuts. Lives are still being put at risk by cowboys in the construction industry and by the lack of national standards, and it will be up to this union fighting alongside housing campaigners and other allies to make sure that the lessons are learned from the Grenfell Tower fire.

Conference, we will spend much of our time this week discussing the nuts and bolts of our industry and that is only right. We are an industrial union. We need to discuss the issues that matter to our members on stations, in control rooms, training centres, headquarters etc. We will also, quite rightly, spend time discussing politics and we may have contempt for the liars and cheats that make up the ruling party in Westminster, but we know there is no escape from politics. Our industry is funded with public money both centrally and locally. Our service is run by politicians and that means we have to engage with ministers, councillors, civil servants and others involved in the political process, but it also means we need a political voice in politics.

Later this week we will debate our involvement in the Labour Party. It has been my duty over recent years to carry our union's policies and interests into the heart of the Labour Party, at the Labour Party conference, sitting on Labour's national executive, and I can assure you it has not been a pleasant place to be over recent years. Please be assured that myself, the general secretary, any of our national officers and officials are not soft on the current Labour leadership. We have our criticisms and we have made our points loud and clear to them, but we do this work because we know that the Labour Party, for all its flaws, is still the only party based on the trade union movement. We know the only existing alternative government to the Tories at Westminster is a Labour government. So when you are discussing our political work this week, I ask you to look at the bigger picture and what are the alternatives, and I hope the decisions we make this week will mean our voices continue to be heard in every corner of the corridors of power and alongside others in the trade union movement. I am sure it will all come out during that debate this week.

I want to turn, before I finish, to a matter of vital importance to this union and its members, to the whole of the labour movement and to society in general. Our union has a proud history in leading from the front when it comes to equality and fighting injustice, and now more than ever we need to stand up and call out inappropriate language and behaviours within our workplace. Every single one of our members should feel safe when at work and free from any such behaviours. That is why we have our All Different All Equal policy.

We have also seen the rise in what not so long ago would have been classed as inappropriate, inflammatory and offensive language being used out in the public domain, and it is our job as officials to ensure where it creeps into our workplaces we challenge it. Conference, we have got a really important EC policy statement to be taken as business this week on sexual harassment. I want you to take a close look at it, see what is behind it, see what is behind it being brought here to conference. This is your union being proactive, leading from the front on matters that no person should be forced to endure, be it at work or at any time in their lives. All of us as officials of the union can play our part in that. We can all lead from the front in calling it out and in doing so eradicate unwarranted and unwelcome behaviours.

As officials of the union our members look to you to set the standards and lead by example so I urge you to do that, get fully behind the policy statement here at conference, but also when you leave here.

Conference, I want to finish on a positive note. I want to give a big shout out for every single person involved in our DECON project be it Professor Anna Stec and her team at the University of Central Lancashire, national officer, Riccardo la Torre, and the other head office officials and staff who played their part in the project's launch, and to every single official of this union that has had any involvement in trying to implement the project's recommendations back in their brigades. Just by taking some simple steps, we can greatly reduce the risk to firefighters from the numerous toxic contaminants we know that firefighters come into contact with daily, contaminants that we know can seriously do them harm or, even worse, kill them. There is no doubt in my mind that the DECON project will save hundreds if not thousands of firefighters' lives.

No other organisation is doing this work: it is only the Fire Brigades Union. We are leading the charge into this vital life-saving research on our members' behalf.

Let's not forget what has funded this vitally important project and the research that backed it up. It is our Firefighters 100 Lottery, and if there is one thing that I could ask of you when you leave here, when you go back to your respective brigades and regions, please push for every single firefighter to join the lottery. All of the good causes it funds, be it the DECON project, be it the Red Plaque scheme, be it assisting our injured members or the families of firefighters injured or sadly killed in the line of duty, all come from the Firefighters 100 Lottery.

It is a fantastic legacy of our centenary year, but it could be so much more. I think at my last look we had less than 10% of our membership as supporters of the lottery, but I bet every single one of them would support the good causes it funds. Every penny raised after we have paid the company that facilitates it on our behalf goes towards the five good causes. So please make every effort to increase our membership and support the Firefighters 100 Lottery so we can carry on with that excellent work.

In closing, conference, we have got an extremely busy week ahead of us: over 25 rule changes, over 100 resolutions, five EC policy statements and I would ask that you are disciplined. Read conference standing orders, behave in accordance with them, behave in accordance with our rule book and our policies and treat other delegates with dignity and show them respect when they are speaking at conference and, as I have stated, it is going to be a long week so can I ask that you don't pack up and leave early on Friday. We will do our best to get through business and get you away as early as possible on Friday, but it is not fair on the speakers moving the last few resolutions to be doing so to a half empty hall.

Conference that is enough from me so enjoy your week, enjoy Brighton and, importantly, behave yourselves. Let us leave here on Friday united to face the challenges we undoubtedly face. Thank you, conference.

Conference, as stated, we need to agree three annual reports over the week. The way I intend to conduct that business is to take the 2020 and 2021 annual reports as our first business and then take the 2022 annual report over the course of conference in the usual manner and I will ask you to agree the 2022 annual report in the final session.

There has been a circular sent out detailing this and also seeking in advance the names of any delegates wishing to speak on any of the paragraphs contained within the 2020 and 2021 annual reports. The 2020 and 2021 annual reports will not be taken as a whole document to agree. I will introduce each annual report by year starting with the 2020 annual report, and I will call out all of the relevant sections within that report in sequential order. If any delegate wishes to speak on any paragraph be it if they have notified us in advance or they haven't, they should call out to get my attention when the relevant section is called containing the paragraph they wish to speak to, and I will invite them to speak. Once I have called out all of the sections, inclusive of the paragraphs contained with them for that year's report, I will then put the annual report to you to agree it. I will then repeat the same process for the 2021 annual report covering each section in sequential order and then when complete putting it to conference to agree it. Once the 2020 and 2021 annual reports are agreed, we will then proceed with the 2022 annual report over the course of conference in the usual manner. What I would ask conference for is your cooperation and forbearance in dealing with this annual report and I ask if you intend to speak on a paragraph and it is the subject matter contained in the 2022 annual report then you raise it as part of that report as it comes up this week.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

So I now call on the following sections of the 2020 annual report. If anybody wishes to speak on those, please shout out.

Section A, Pay and Conditions; Section B, Pensions; Section C, Operations Health and Safety; Section D, Fire and Rescue Service Policy; Section E, Government Policy and Legislation; Section F, Trade Union and Labour Movement; Section G, Education; Section H, Equality and Fairness at Work; Section I, Accident and Injury Fund (AIF); Section J, Legal Report; Section K, Organising and Membership; Section L, Internal Administration; Section M, Financial Accounts; Section N, Obituary.

Conference, I have now called all of the sections inclusive of the paragraphs contained within them for the 2020 Report. Conference, can that report be agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you, conference.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

I now call on the following sections from the 2021 annual report.

Section A, Pay and Conditions; Section B, Pensions; Section C, Operations Health and Safety; Section D, Fire and Rescue Service Policy; Section E, Government Policy and Legislation; Section F, Trade Union and Labour Movement; Section G, Education; Section H, Equality and Fairness at Work; Section I, Accident and Injury Fund (AIF); Section J, Legal Report; Section K, Organising and Membership; Section L, Internal Administration; Section M, Financial Accounts; Section N, Obituary.

Conference, I have called all of the sections inclusive of the paragraphs contained within them for the annual report 2021. Conference, can that Report be agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you, conference.

Conference, as I say, the 2022 report will be taken over the next four days and then we will agree it on the final session.

OK, we are now moving on Section M, Financial Accounts from the 2022 Annual Report, Section M Financial Accounts, para M1, Introduction; para M2, Financial Statement.

I now call on the national treasurer to move the financial statement, Jim Quinn.

NATIONAL TREASURER (Jim Quinn):

Thanks, president. Good morning, conference, the work carried out on the accounts over the last year in the FBU has been done by Michael, sitting to my right here, and his team at head office, and I cannot thank them enough for their assistance in the preparation of this year's accounts.

They weren't without challenges. We have had some technical difficulties which have meant that the accounts were not completed until very recently. We have learned valuable lessons and I am sure next year things will be done more smoothly.

Of course, like everyone else, we faced issues presented by Covid. This worked both for and against us. Some of the team were impacted directly by the virus which caused some delays, but on a positive note because we were severely restricted there was reduced spending on conferences, meetings, hotels and the like so it improved our financial situation to some degree.

An additional hurdle is the fact that some rules change almost on an annual basis which presents logistical problems for an organisation of our size in completing complex returns.

I would also like to thank the regional treasurers for the work they have done over the past year but particularly for their work during Covid which, as I have already mentioned, produced some very unusual challenges.

It is important that the national treasurer does not relay what the accounts say and read out a list of figures which I will do anyway, but more importantly try to explain what they actually mean and how we should interpret the information and relate it to the situation we find ourselves in.

To prevent any misinterpretation of that situation, I will be as clear, concise and candid as I can. That is because those numbers in front of you will not suddenly change: they are what they are, but we need to examine what they actually mean for us going forward.

Conference will be aware that over the last number of years we have reformatted the way we present the accounts to conference in the report, and by way of extension the members, so we have maintained that format. We have retained the formatting for a number of reasons but mainly because traditional spreadsheet accounts can be difficult for some to fully comprehend, even for those who spend far too much time looking at them.

The truth is quite often people simply look at the top line for income and expenditure and then move straight to the bottom line for surplus and deficits. However, the real story is somewhere in between. It is not all about how much we are receiving or spending, it is about what we are spending it on, what proportion of income it is and whether we are spending more or less on a particular budget compared with previous years. That is the real story, and that is why when you are operating in an extremely tight financial environment you need to focus.

It is not solely presentational. We are trying to enable a greater degree of understanding and throughout that ensure a greater degree of accountability. Of course, there would be no point in making these changes, presentational or otherwise, unless there is a benefit in doing so. For us the main benefit is the more accountable we are the better our forecasting for the future will be, and the reality is that the more you are on top of the financial environment you are operating in, the better your preparations need to be.

I will now move on to the accounts themselves and give a quick overview of the 2021 accounts. It is already laid out in some detail in the report in front of you. In 2021 our income was £10.93m; it was £11.15m in 2020. That is a small decrease of £220,000. Our running costs in 2021 were £8.9m. That was up slightly from £8.89m which are almost exactly the same. This gave us an operating surplus of £2.04m compared to £2.26m in 2020, but that was before actuarial adjustments for pension liabilities. The surplus after actuarial pension adjustments was £3.08m for 2021. That is compared to a deficit in the previous year of £332,000. That is a massive improvement. It should be noted though, as pointed out previously, that these actuarial adjustments are outside of our control and are due to external factors which means they can vary enormously.

The pie chart in the report shows a breakdown of our 2021 expenditure. It clearly shows three main areas of spending: staffing, running costs protecting members' interests, and member benefits. As a result of 2021's surplus of £3.08m, our funds have risen from £8.23m to a healthy £11.31m.

In conclusion, the executive council successfully took action to reduce the adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the union and have taken a prudent approach in the preparation of our 2022 budget. We are now planning on a business as usual, back to normal approach to the FBU activities. This will result in increased expenditure as all Covid restrictions have now been lifted and indeed this conference sees the first steps on the road to normality in that regard.

We have, and will continue, to provide members with the same first-class service and benefits but this doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels and not continue to explore all ways of reducing expenditure. In fact, not only is it likely that more work will have to be done to improve this year, but we may have to take tougher and more difficult decisions this year coming. On that happy note, president, I will move the accounts.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Jim. Is that statement agreed? *Agreed.*

Conference, we are now going to move on to the proposed alteration to the rules of the union and I am going to try and explain and make it as easy as I can because it can get quite confusing. I am going to start with rules A, B, C and D and I am going to take those in one debate. I will call the proposer to move their prospective rule change, I will call for a seconder, and if formally moved they will get a "formally" from the floor. After we have moved and seconded all proposed rule changes for sections A, B, C and D and had the debates on them, I will put them to the vote together. I will then repeat this for rule G1, taking all those in another separate debate before putting them all to

the vote and, finally, I will take all proposed rule changes for rule G2 and rule G3 concluding by putting them to the vote.

I now call on rule A2 moved by the executive council, Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. This rule change is fairly straightforward, conference. It is to add to rule A2, objects of the union, a new point (16) to ensure that any member killed in the line of duty is fittingly remembered. I think that is a straightforward rule change, and I move on behalf of the executive council.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder?

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

Speaking in support of the executive council's rule change as outlined by the general secretary. It is important that we remember how our members have served properly through their duties in accordance with how the EC member has outlined the appropriate rule change. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate. Anybody? No. I now call on rule B2(2)(vi) moved by Nottinghamshire. The EC support.

STEPHEN TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

We propose this change to rule B2 to add "if any member retires on ill-health grounds with a terminal illness they shall pay no contributions". This rule change is for Louise Brownlee. Lou worked in our fire control and was amazing in this role and a dedicated FBU member. Unfortunately, we faced a round of cuts in Nottinghamshire which meant we lost some in control. Lou was redeployed into a Green Book position in a community role. She was amazing in this role as well and when our rule change allowed she rejoined the FBU as a Green Book member. Devastatingly, she was diagnosed with breast cancer and, despite years of fighting, eventually lost her battle on 15 July 2021. She left an enormous void in the lives of those who knew and loved her and during the ill-health retirement process it was clear that Lou didn't want to leave the service. She didn't want to accept that the working phase of her life was over and she didn't want to retire but was just not strong enough to continue.

It was Lou's time to make the most of the time she had left and spend every penny that she had making memories with her family, even the two hundred pennies a month it cost to be an out of trade member should have been spent making memories and not funding her membership. If you accept this rule change today you will ensure that our members can access the benefits of our union without cost. It will be a small gesture from us. It will give some peace of mind to our members at an incredibly difficult time. For Lou, I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is open for debate. Anybody? No. I now call rule B2(5)(iv) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, conference, hopefully a straightforward rule change to add parental leave to maternity leave within the rule B2(5)(iv). On behalf the executive council, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That's open for debate. Anybody? I now call on rule C2, moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, on behalf of the executive council I move to add point (10) to rule C2. This is a departure in terms of monitoring of our policies and it arises out of some practical difficulties we have in policies which may become out of date because of time. Sometimes we have very old policies. Some of them are overtaken by subsequent decisions

of conference on industrial matters but some may sit there as valid policies and not be subject to such review. I will give you one example, and I am not going to embarrass anyone, but if anyone has ever been on holiday on to Turkey you are actually in breach of conference policy when I found to my cost when I was advised by an official that a planned family holiday to Turkey would be in breach of rules and I ended up camping in Snowdonia on my own. So there are policies which are brought in for particular reasons at a particular time and which, if not subject to review, may become outdated and somewhat irrelevant.

The proposal is that these policies would last for 20 years, and each year in advance of conference the executive council would alert delegates through circulars of the conference policies which would fall at the following year's conference. That would allow any brigade committee or sectional committee to consider matters which they think would need to be refreshed within policy and to bring resolutions, rule changes or other proposals for the consideration of conference. The executive council has concluded this would be a better way of managing the policy database that we hold and allow for better management of conference policies. On behalf of the executive council I move the addition of point (10) to Rule C2.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. Open for debate. Anybody. No. I now call rule C3(2) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this is purely a point of clarification adding to make clear that other full time officials than the general secretary and assistant general secretary shall attend the executive council in an advisory capacity. We mean by that the national officers. On behalf of the executive council I move that amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. Open for debate. Anybody. No. I now call on rule C4(5) moved by Tyne and Wear. The EC support.

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

Conference, this proposed rule change is as straightforward as they get. It offers sectional reps a vote on regional committees. We trust our sectional reps to sit on regional committees. Why would we not trust them with a vote? I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. Does that have a seconder?

ROSA CROWLEY-BENNETT (National Women's Committee):

Seconding this motion for votes for sectional officials on regional committees. Conference, the national women's committee thank the EC for their support on this rule change which recognises and empowers the officials and members of the equality sections. We also pass on our thanks to Tyne and Wear brigade committee who recognised the importance of our sections' voices.

This comes after a period of years when attending regional committee meetings as a sectional official has felt like we are not an equal member of the committee. Sectional officials from the women's, LGBT and B&EMM sections bring knowledge, understanding and valuable debate to meetings, but when it comes to a vote we must sit and keep our hands by our sides whilst others are able to make decisions for their members.

It leaves our officials feeling disempowered and of less value than our regional official colleagues. We must recognise that as a union the FBU are not always listening to, hearing or representing our members from the equality sections. This rule change is one step to addressing this.

Some may argue that the rule change would equate to some people voting twice. That is not the case. When voices are marginalised, they need to be uplifted and brought forward, not silenced. The sections must be more than a token gesture. We are here and we have voices to be heard. If you call yourself an ally of the sections, we thank you, but we are also watching and waiting for your support.

I was proud when my own brigade committee in Tyne and Wear stood with the sections and brought this rule change. I am sure your own committees and members will be proud when you stand up for the sections and vote in support. Conference, I second. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rosa. That's open for debate. Anybody? Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. We would ask conference to consider this rule change and the next one very carefully. We have had a debate in our union and in our industry for more than 40 years on the question of equality and diversity. The first operational women, for example, came into the post-war fire service in 1981 and years following decisions of the then Greater London Council. They came into an industry which was overwhelmingly white and male. That presented challenges to employers and it presented challenges to us as a trade union. The union has grappled with those debates and discussions ever since, and those of you who have been around this conference for some time will know that at various times we have changed the equality structures and sectional representation within our union.

The executive council thought very carefully about this rule change and the following one, and it is important that our rules are clear, that all members are represented through their workplace branch and I think all of us need to think carefully about what means when we are discussing industrial matters and pay claims and campaigns and industrial action, but also we are aware very clearly that there are particular voices and particular experiences of both our trade sections and from our equality sections that also needed to be heard if we were to face the challenges that we do face as a union in the most united manner.

So on balance the executive council concluded that we urge conference to support this rule change. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I will now call on rule C6(2)(v)(b) moved by LGBT. The EC support.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

President, conference, I appreciate this is similar to the last one so I will try and keep this as brief as I can.

Thank you, firstly, to the EC for the support. To have our equality sections included within branches, the actual grassroots of our membership, shows your ongoing commitment to equality and what this means within the union. If we recognise that there is a need for equality sections to exist to address issues of diversity and inclusion, then we must give the representatives of these sections agency to effect change within our union structures.

Currently, we have a situation where when issues of equality are debated in our brigade or regional committee meetings, including All Different All Equal, the representatives of the members most likely to be affected cannot vote and so are unable to impact any decisions. If this rule is accepted our members will feel the acceptance immediately within their branches, being able to finally not only have their voices heard but their votes counted. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Maria. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is open for debate. Anybody? No. I now call on Rule D2 moved by the executive council. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this is a simple clarification of the rule. It is about the time requirement for standing for the post of president and vice president. I know there was a reference earlier to the rules being very clear but sometimes we spot glitches in them and clearly there is a difference between the time of nomination and the time of election so by removing "and election" this clarifies the time period required for standing for those posts. On behalf of the executive council, I move that amendment to rule D2.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, thanks Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That is open for debate. Anybody? No. Right, Conference, I am now going to call out all of those rules that we have just moved and I am going to put them to the vote. I now put Rule A2 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule B2(2)(vi) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule B2(5)(iv) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule C2 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule C3(2) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule C4(5) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule C6(2)(v)(b) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule D2 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference, because we are so generous and you have been so good, we are going to break for coffee (and you can have tea if you wish). Could we have you back in the conference hall at 11.15 sharpish please.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I call chair of standing orders, Phil Millar, to give a standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, can you turn to your programme of business. Page 3, resolution 99, titled Fire Brigade Union (FBU) membership, proposed by Cambridgeshire, has been remitted.

Conference, at the request of the hotel after it became apparent at dinner yesterday evening that people were congregating and being served at one end, the standing orders committee wish to make conference aware of some changes to the dining arrangements. Lunch and dinner arrangements this evening due to a prior booking, main dining room will be split in two for lunch and they will be marked A and B. A partition will be pulled across dividing the room. For this evening, due to the booking, meals will be served in the Scion Restaurant, left hand bar near to the hotel exit, including the terrace and the Albert II. All access through the bar entrance. B is accessed through the Scion bar entrance, past the reception heading towards the front exit on the left. The rest of the week the main dining hall will be split in two, A and B. A is accessed as accessed for breakfast. Those eating in B will be – you might want to note this down if it hasn't come to your table yet – regions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, the NWC, the NRC and the LGBT, and those eating in A will be regions 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, ONC, B&EMM and CSNC. That concludes the report, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that standing orders report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you.

Conference, I am now moving on to rule G1. I will be calling them but I will keep the general secretary stood up to move all the resolutions. So I now call on rule G1(1) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, moving G1(1) adds an offence to the list of offences and that is a member who seeks or accepts promotion or monetary inducements from a fire and rescue service as a direct outcome of holding or assuming office within the union. The union has had a policy on this matter for many years arising out of incidents that happened in the past and that were debated here at conference going back to the 1980s and 1990s, and took a decision that in certain instances employers had offered promotion to officials obtaining certain positions within the union. The union

took a decision at conference to ensure that that was not acceptable. What the executive council has done here is to suggest that we write that into the rules.

Just to be clear, this is not about preventing people, members, officials, from obtaining, seeking and being promoted. We have always encouraged our members and our officials to do that. What we are seeking to ensure is that there is no link between people's role in the Fire Brigades Union and any promotion within the fire and rescue service. It is an old ploy of employers to try and buy off the shop steward or whatever. We want to make sure there is no potential of any allegation of such behaviour within the FBU, and we recommend that this rule change is a means to ensure that that is achieved. On behalf of the executive council, I move that rule change.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. It is open for debate. No. I now call on Rule G1(2)(ii)(b) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

This rule change clarifies that the investigation will be carried out by an official of the union, hopefully a straightforward rule change. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. That's open for debate. No. OK. I now call on rule G1(2)(v)(b) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this ensures that the potential awards under rule G1 mirror the awards under other internal union disciplinary rules. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. Open for debate, anybody? No. I now call on rule G1(4)(i)(b) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this actually strengthens the right of appeal of a member who has been debarred allowing the same rights of appeal as if they were expelled. So it strengthens the rights of appeal of the individual affected. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Open for debate. Thank you. I now call on rule G1(4)(ii)(b) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

This is to ensure that there are no gaps in terms of representation on the final appeals committee. There are occasions, and some of you may have noticed this over the years, where officials who are nominated and agreed by conference to sit on the final appeals committee retire, move on or resign from office during the course of the year in which they are serving on the final appeals committee. This allows the relevant committee to nominate a replacement to be endorsed by the executive council. So it fills any gaps in the final appeals committee. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. That's open for debate. Anybody? No. I now call on rule G1(4)(ii)(c) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, conference, this tidies up the arrangements for the final appeals committee in that it ensures that in the case, for example, of conference being cancelled – as we have, of course, had over the past two years – the final appeals committee nominated officials remain in place until the following conference. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. It's open for debate. No. OK. I now call on rule G1(5)(ii) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this tidies up a somewhat dated bit of the rules regarding what is ordinary first class post. We know that there are more secure ways of posting to individuals in all business matters, but in relation to disciplinary matters in this case, it effectively modernises the mechanism simply by ensuring that communications with the individual member facing the disciplinary hearing will be done securely by post. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. It's open for debate. No. I now call on rule G1(5)((iii)(j)) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference this is recommended as a mechanism of ensuring that the process is undertaken and carried out reasonably in the interests of all parties. It is to avoid possible frustration of the process explicitly setting out that if no acknowledgement of notice of the meeting is received the meeting shall proceed as set out in the written notice.

I just want to make the point that obviously we seek to avoid such processes. The executive council when considering requests from individuals facing hearing is always extremely sensitive to issues such as personal circumstances, hospital appointments and so on. However, there have been occasions where meetings have been convened only to find out at the very last moment after people have travelled, after a great deal of costs have been undertaken, that the individual informed the secretary to the committee that they will not be attending. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. No. I now call on Rule G1(5)(iv) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

In terms of convening of meetings, this again in our opinion allows greater leniency on the part of the secretary to the committee to consider reasons why a defendant cannot attend a hearing. This is to the benefit of the individuals facing the disciplinary process. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. No. Thank you. I now call on rule G1(5)(v) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this ends a contradiction in the current rules in that the complaint has already been issued to the individual at the point in the rules that G1(5)(v) refers to so the amendment tidies up the process to make that clarification. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is now open for debate. No. I now call on rule G1(6)(ii)(a) to be moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, as a tidying up amendment to note that we may have sections of the union that are called divisions. I think in most cases now where we have what were previously divisions they are called areas, so it is to clarify that the wording may be "or agreed areas". Under other rules those provisions are agreed between the relevant region and the executive council, and it is to make that clear. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. No. I now call on rule G1(6)(ii)(b) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, a clarification of a similar point that in Scotland, Northern Ireland and in London we have areas which have been agreed between the region and the executive council and it clarifies the issues of attendance at hearings of people within those designated areas where the defendant is from that relevant area. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. It is open for debate. No. I now call on Rule G1(7)(ii) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, just bringing the disciplinary processes into the twenty first century allowing the request of the email address of the individual's representative. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. No. Right, conference, I am now going to put all of those proposed rule changes from G1 to the vote so could you please indicate clearly and raise your hands. I know you will be getting tired at the end of all of these but keep them well in the air.

I now put rule G1(1) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(2)(ii)(b) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(2)(v)(b) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(4)(i)(b) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(4)(ii)(b) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(4)(ii)(c) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(5)(ii) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(5)(iii)(j) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Nearly there. Five more to go. I now put rule G1(5)(iv) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(5)(v) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(6)(ii)(a) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(6)(ii)(b) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G1(7)(ii) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on rule G2(2) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

We are nearly there, conference. G2(2) is to clarify the requirement of the union that a defendant suspended under that rule shall not attend the premises of the union unless with the agreement of the union either through the

executive council member or another national official of the union which may, of course, be required for interviews and such like in terms of the process. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. It is open for debate. No. Ok. I now call on rule G2(7) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this addresses the question of appeals to conference and the current provision in the rule that only one address shall be heard. Having considered that, the executive council feels that the conference should on balance hear an explanation from the complainant of the case against the individual. That is why the executive council took the decision that it did. It avoids the current position whereby only one presentation would be given. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does it have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That's open for debate. No. I now call on rule G2(7) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, that again relates to the same point, the presentation of the case at a conference hearing to hear an appeal, and addresses the issue of the complainant being able to address conference. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That's open for debate. No. I now call on rule G2(10) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this tidies up I think what was a typographical error in the rule book. If you look at that relevant section of the rule book it is clear that there is an omission in the current version and it needs rule G2(11) to clarify the point at which rule G2(10) would apply. When points (a) and (b) within G2(10)(i) apply, it should refer to rule G2(11) – clear as mud. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. No. Right, I now call on rule G3(1) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, conference, this is about a defendant not attending the premises of the union without the agreement of the union, whether that would be in this case the vice president who would initiate proceedings under this rule, or again another national officer. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. No. I now call rule G3(4)(i) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, I think if comrades read the rule it is simply a tidying up rule to make it simpler to understand the appeal process in relation to debarment from office. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. I now call on rule G3(4)(ii) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this sets out a process for an appeal to conference whereby the defendant would be invited to make a

presentation to the conference hearing the appeal, but that following hearing from the defendant, the complainant would also be afforded an opportunity to address conference to explain the case that was brought against the individual and to explain the decision making of the executive council in making the award. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. No. Right, I am now going to put all those rule changes to the vote so we are nearly there, conference.

I now put rule G2(2) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G2(7) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G2(10) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G3(1) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G3(4)(i) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put rule G3(4)(ii) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, well done! It is hard work and thank god it is only every four years.

We are now moving on to the business of conference. We are moving on to section L, Internal Administration, para L1, Introduction. I now call resolution 91, Unified Interview Statement, moved by Humberside. The EC support.

Resolution 91 UNIFIED INTERVIEW STATEMENT

Conference instructs the Executive Council to produce a generic preamble pre interview statement for Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Officials to utilise during Internal Union Discipline interviews. This should be produced by the relevant Officials in Head Office, to assist all Officials of the FBU when undertaking interviews in line with the rules and policies of the FBU.

HUMBERSIDE

SAM MILLER-HODGES (Humberside):

Moving motion 91. This is my first conference and my first resolution. *Applause*. I would like the EC to produce a generic statement to be read at the start of any internal discipline interviews. An official statement would explain why an interview is taking place, who is attending and the outcomes that could come from the interview. This statement would be read at the start of internal discipline interviews.

By having a brief generic statement, it would immediately reinforce the gravity of the proceedings. It would remind people that they are taking part in an important and vital element of union business and that there could be ramifications to the findings.

I took part in a serious investigation with a more experienced official, and all the interviews began with a short preamble to explain what was happening. By having the EC produce this we would have the initial start of these processes easier for everyone involved and add an element of uniformity to those proceedings. Conference, please support motion 91. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sam. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. That is open for debate. Anybody. No. I now put resolution 91 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on resolution 92, Simon Sapper Report, moved by Hertfordshire. The EC support.

Resolution 92 SIMON SAPPER REPORT

Conference notes the work already undertaken by Simon Sapper and the subsequent report and recommendations made to the Executive Council (EC).

Conference instructs the EC to provide a record of what recommendations from the Simon Sapper report have been concluded and the current situation regarding those recommendations that have yet to be concluded or acted upon.

The EC must report back a record of progress to all Brigade Officials ahead of the next Conference or within one calendar year whichever is sooner.

HERTFORDSHIRE

ROB FORTUNE (Hertfordshire):

The resolution we are putting forward is the Simon Sapper report. Apologies, I am reading off my phone as the notes are being typed up at the moment.

Conference, a review by Simon Sapper was commissioned by the EC and paid for by the members' subscriptions into the structure of our union. I have been told that there are a lot of new faces here, mine as well, but they may not have been present at the meeting that was called by the EC in Birmingham. But, like you, I have heard through our brigade and our regional structures of some of our areas considered including the structural brigade and regional committees. Yet some time has passed and there has been little done about the report and little action has been taken. Same for the restructure of region 11.

Conference, our resolution calls for the EC to inform us what has been concluded and the current situation regarding those recommendations that have yet to have been concluded or acted upon. Conference, we are repeatedly told this week that our conference held annually is the supreme parliament of our union and that the Simon Sapper report has potential to influence all. Back this resolution. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rob. Does that have a seconder? *Formally Seconded*. Thank you. That is open for debate. Nobody.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

The executive council are supporting the resolution. There is no problem doing the things that are requested by Hertfordshire. One point. Simon Sapper did a number of areas of work for us and some of you were interviewed and gave helpful contributions to that process. I think at least two documents were produced.

The second one that was referred to about the merged former region 11, we have acted on because, following discussion with the then region 11, the executive council considered the concerns that were identified by the region and actually we underwent a process of demerging and we have now new regions 11, 12 and 13 as a result of that. So actually that was one on which I think we possibly disagreed with Simon Sapper on some of the points in his assessment, but in terms of the request of the resolution, no problem at all in digging that work out and sharing it out as required.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, thanks Matt. I now put resolution 92 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolutions 104 and 108 to be taken in the same debate. Both resolutions can carry together. So the first one is resolution 104, Uplift of mileage rates, moved by Suffolk. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 104 UPLIFT OF MILEAGE RATES

Conference notes changes to Officials' mileage rates at previous Conferences. Since the last change, the cost of living and the cost of fuel has dramatically increased.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to review the current mileage rate for Union business and to uplift the rate at the earliest opportunity. Any uplift will take into consideration the HMRC mileage rate for the years 2021/2022.

SUFFOLK

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

Conference, no-one joins the fire service to become wealthy. No-one becomes an FBU rep or official to make money. Not only has fire service pay lagged behind that of other occupations over recent years and has effectively been reduced by low increases, pay freezes and so-called austerity measures, but mileage allowance payments are far behind that of the approved government HMRC rates which have themselves been in place since 2011.

Conference, we are not asking for extra: we are asking for equality. No FBU rep or official should be out of pocket by the additional mileage, fuel costs, wear and tear, servicing and maintenance of their vehicle for carrying out union duties. Please support this resolution. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. I now call on resolution 108, Increase to officials' allowances and subsistence moved by London. The EC oppose.

Resolution 108 INCREASE TO OFFICIALS' ALLOWANCES AND SUBSISTENCE

Conference notes that our Officials are the lifeblood of this Union and without their tireless work this Union would not be able to function as it does.

Conference notes that most Officials work entirely in their own time, giving up precious family and leisure time to ensure Members are represented to the best standards in Fire and Rescue Services.

Conference notes that Officials' allowances and subsistence have not increased in many years.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to increase all Officials' allowances and subsistence in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) each year following Conference 2022.

LONDON

ROSS McLAREN (London):

The representatives of the FBU are extremely valuable commodities to the members of the FBU. I am sure I can safely say that each one of us in this room today have spent hours upon hours of our own time and resources to invest in the best possible outcome for our members whether it be half-pay appeals, sickness or discipline.

Our officials are at the forefront of defence against detrimental action sought to them from our respective brigades. Inspiring dedication from our representatives should not go unheard. Each day in my region I meet officials who go above and beyond, who even after claiming back expenses are out of pocket. We all know the cost of living is skyrocketing. We all know the extent our officials push the levels to ensure our union members are receiving the best representation any trade union member should expect, but that excellence should not be at a personal cost.

At a time where every penny counts under this cruel Tory government, it is not fair to see our officials struggle with the cost of representing a member. Conference, we are asking you to back resolution 108 and act to increase allowances and subsistence in line with CPI to ensure our officials can continue the sterling work they carry out, the duty they volunteer themselves to execute and the solidarity our union so often publicly enforces.

Conference, I know our officials deserve a little more back in their pockets to carry on the fights that we all fight. Without our officials, we are nothing. Please support motion 108. I move. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ross. Does that have seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. Right. They are open for debate. Anybody?

STEPHEN TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

Whilst I agree with the fundamental elements of both proposals, I do think in this time of austerity when things are at an all-time low and firefighters are struggling, we shouldn't be taking that time to line our pockets whilst representing our members. They are also putting their time into it for no pay. We do get something back. We are not here for the money, we are here for the membership. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Anybody else? No. General secretary to give the qualified support and the opposition to 108.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, conference, and thanks to the delegates for moving the two resolutions. They raise important points that we do need to discuss frankly and in a comradely manner and professionally.

First of all, in terms of the qualification in terms of the Suffolk resolution, you will see that the executive council took some decisions – so, just to clarify the decision making process which conference has previously agreed, conference has agreed that those matters are matters for the executive council to review, and the executive council does review allowances, subsistence rates and so on, and you will see that recently the executive council took a decision, for example, to increase the allowance to brigade officials which is the biggest gap within the allowances that the union pays, and to try and narrow that gap the executive council took that decision. But it took it with caution – and I will come on to the finances in a moment.

In terms of the mileage rates, you will note that the executive council also agreed to undertake a review of the mileage rates which are in payment. I think we need to clarify that in terms of the decisions that conference has taken before, the allowances which are paid to officials include an element which replaced former car allowances. So we need to be careful when we are making comparisons between mileage rates which the Fire Brigades Union pays, and mileage rates which, for example, employers might make. Our allowances, when they were agreed, included an element for the wear and tear of vehicles that officials may use for their own purposes and for union purposes.

The executive council gives qualified support for the Suffolk resolution. Uplifts that are viable and achievable can be delivered, but we are saying it is not guaranteed. Everything needs to be affordable, and to remind people the existing allowances already include elements to cover wear and tear on vehicles.

In terms of the London resolution on increasing allowances and subsistence, again I would ask conference to think very carefully on this point. You heard earlier the financial report. I know people tend to glaze over during the financial report, but without finances there is no union. That's the reality of it.

Anyone who has been here for any length of time, and I know there is a lot of new delegates, but for the past 15 years this union has spent a great deal of time, effort and resources to ensure that the union is put on a sound financial footing. The truth is if you went back 15 years this union's finances were in dire straits. For the past 12 years we have faced austerity. One of the biggest outcomes of austerity is falling membership. Every single region, every single brigade in this union has seen falling membership. The only sort of income for this union, by and large, is membership contributions. Therefore, if there are job losses in the fire and rescue service, it means that there are membership losses in the Fire Brigades Union. That is a simple fact of life. Certainly among wholtime firefighters, we have levels of membership density compared with other industries, and therefore any job loss effectively means a loss of membership in the union and a loss of income in the union.

Again, if you look at the charts on the financial report – and it is important that you familiarise yourself with those – you will see that even within the past five, six and seven years, there have been years in which our income has fallen. There have also been years in which our total balance has declined. The question which I think any sensible organisation would have to think about is how do we fund increases if there is no increase in income, and we have experienced that on several occasions over the past six years and many occasions over the past ten years.

In terms of the reference to CPI, again I would ask conference to think very carefully about it. CPI has risen to record levels in recent months and it is predicted it may rise as high as 10%. The executive council and the union as a whole would have significant problems of funding such an increase without any comparable increase in income. On that basis the executive council would ask you to oppose the London Resolution. The executive council do not believe currently we can guarantee automated increases. The executive council give the commitment that they will take into account the pressures on officials and seek to ensure that our allowances are as generous as possible, but they do need to be affordable in terms of the income that the membership receives. I urge people to think very carefully about this, and we urge conference to oppose the London resolution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I am taking it that Nottinghamshire were speaking in opposition to both resolutions so therefore I am giving the right of reply to Suffolk and to London. Suffolk, right of reply.

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

President, conference. We are not just talking about officials here. We are also talking about local reps who can claim only mileage allowance and some expenses such as meals. We have got to consider all of us, not just those within this room. Thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. London, right of reply.

ROSS McLAREN (London):

Conference, it is very simple. We are overworked and out of pocket, so again I implore you to back 108. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, thanks Ross. I now put resolution 104 from Suffolk to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 108 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls*.

Conference, I now call resolution 100, Development Firefighter and Development Firefighter Control Membership Fees moved by Avon. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 100 DEVELOPMENT FIREFIGHTER AND DEVELOPMENT FIREFIGHTER CONTROL MEMBERSHIP FEES

Conference recognises firefighters and firefighters Control spend vast amounts of time training to be competent in role. Whilst this takes place they are at financial disadvantage compared to competent firefighters to the sum of approximately £7,000 following the 2021 pay settlement. With the ongoing social financial issues, the impact of the difference in pay hits Members hard.

Rule B2(1)(viii) states;

‘The weekly contribution of Ordinary members shall be:

Full-time members who are competent firefighters or whose weekly rate of pay is equal to or above that of a competent firefighter shall contribute 1 percent of the Firefighter (competent) weekly rate of pay. Job share members who are competent firefighters or whose full-time weekly rate of pay is equal to or above that of a competent firefighter shall pay half of 1 percent of the Firefighter (competent) weekly rate of pay. Retained members shall contribute one third of the trade contribution of full-time members, plus 3 percent of the trade contribution of full-time members rounded to the nearest penny. Volunteer members shall contribute annually a flat rate fee as set by the Executive Council.

Where members pay by the calendar month the contribution amount payable shall be calculated from the weekly contribution rates.

Where members are paid less than the Firefighter (competent) weekly rate of pay the Executive Council shall publish each year the relevant contribution rates for each pay band’.

As this is already an agreed rule Conference demands that the rule is applied to affected Members. This will include firefighters in development and firefighters Control in development.

AVON

STEVE McGREAVY (Avon):

President, conference, I would like to start by praising the executive council for the work they have already done by giving recruit firefighters and recruit control firefighters three months’ free membership to this fine union.

We have brought this resolution forward following a programme of recruitment for new members. The rates which have been signed up haven’t been bad but they have not been the 100% that you would expect to be the target.

From the numbers we haven't signed up in the first instance, the majority have signed up once their competent pay has kicked in, the cost of membership and the cost of living being stated as the reason for the delay in joining. With being allegedly competent in my role after 20 odd years and receiving a CPD payment, even I have felt the pinch of cost of living and that was before the recent £249 in my energy bill per month.

The resolution sets out that there is a massive pay difference between competent and non-competent members and we believe the existing rule should be implemented fully and a non-competent contribution rate published and enacted.

Publication of non-Grey Book members' rates show that it is possible to administer varying rates depending on pay. Non-competent pay rates are currently 78.15% of competent pay rates. If a member was competent after 18 months with the union receiving 78.15% of contribution rates for 15 months following the three month free period, the union would be short of £191.70 in contributions per member. If that same person was not to join the union, over that 18 months the missed contributions would be £540.90 at current rates. If they then didn't go on to join the union, the 40 year career loss would be £14,664 per member.

To me it seems logical that the EC continue its programme to make membership more appealing and implement this rule to safeguard future membership and ease the financial burden to control firefighters in development and firefighters in development by publishing and enacting appropriate rates of contributions for them. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Does that have a seconder?

CALLUM HODGKIN (Cambridgeshire):

Speaking at my first conference. *Applause*. We are speaking to second resolution 100 from Avon in regard to the development of firefighter fees. We believe this to be a more robust resolution that we put in in Cambridgeshire and therefore we have remitted ours in favour of this. Conference, I urge you to support this.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Callum. That's open for debate. No. Ok. Tam McFarlane.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Thanks, President, and hello conference. Thanks very much to Steve for bringing this resolution. There is qualified support. The qualification is we do feel we are ready to do it, but it gives me the chance to quickly mention our Safer Stronger Together Package. You will be doing that by the end of the week. It has come to the cutting edge of holding pamphlets. It is all in there for your information, plus we also have a stand on the other side of the hall as well. We have got it all going on next week.

As Steve says, this is in the rule and we work very hard to implement it through the ongoing work of the Brigade Organisers Group that was set up over the last couple of years.

Back in February 2021 the executive council made the decision to implement that rule but implement it in a more concentrated manner. What we have done now for the first time is introduce three months' free contributions for all trainee firefighters and firefighters control who join the Fire Brigades Union. I have to say our experience is that it has had a really positive effect. I can tell conference that between the period of April 2020 to April 2021, we had 1,651 new joiners and 270 rejoiners. That is right during the course of the lockdown. That was the members we were signing up, so it has been a tremendous success, and we have now launched that as part of this strategy which includes an online joining platform. We are truly in the 21st century.

What that does mean for trainee firefighters – and I would ask conference to consider this carefully, because it is an ongoing saving, as it were – for trainee firefighters (I know Steve has got his statistics here), the total benefit for a wholetime trainee firefighter in three months is £91.65. That is a 25% saving in the first twelve months. Even if you take it over three years, which is the maximum for the competence time frame, that is an 8% saving year on year. We think that is a really attractive package and it deals with the rule itself.

I would just say as well that we have to consider this in the context of why we switched over to direct debit in the first place, and that was because, of course, during 2015 to 2016 and it then rolled into the Trade Union Act. That was an act that attacked check off so the FBU made a decision to get all our members on direct debit. We have been hugely successful at that, 23,608 Members on direct debit. A special shout out for Cambridgeshire, Nottinghamshire and, of course, Buckinghamshire. They have got 100% membership in those brigades on direct debit. But what that then means, conference, is that we rely on the members to control their own direct debits to the union. So when we sign up new trainee firefighters, using our new membership system (Phoenix), it automatically means that when they first start there is a three months' trigger period and then the contributions start. That is the only way we can make it work.

The difficulty we have got if we started to spread that over further periods is we are relying on members to tell us when their pay has increased and therefore the union contributions increase. I have to say we have a little trial of that going on just now for Green Book members who have got a sliding scale, and we do rely on Green Book members when they get their pay increases to come to the union and say "my pay has increased. I therefore want to pay you an increased union contribution." I have to say, conference, it is not particularly positive at the moment, that trial, but we do want to look at that further.

So that is the qualification, president. Again, thanks very much for bringing it, and get to the back of the hall at the end of this and hear all about Safer, Stronger, Together. Thanks very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tam. I will now put resolution 100 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 102, Fire Brigades Union, Health and Safety (H&S) Release Position moved by Bedfordshire. The EC are seeking Bedfordshire to remit or they oppose.

Resolution 102 FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) HEALTH AND SAFETY (H&S) RELEASE POSITION

Conference notes the efforts taken by Fire Brigades Union (FBU) H&S Reps up, down and across the whole of the UK in the battle to ensure firefighter and community safety in the face of adversity by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, FBU H&S Reps work tirelessly to usher in a new era of firefighter safety with respect to contaminants and psychological wellbeing, upholding the finest traditions in breathing apparatus safety as the fire sector struggles to resolve the decades of poor and reckless application of building regulations.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to create a full-time release position for the role of regional H&S co-ordinator, in recognition of the crucial work carried out in the role of H&S and to provide them with the means to do this work with the full support and recognition of the FBU.

BEDFORDSHIRE

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

Conference, last year brigade officials received a request to assist the Centre for Employment and Work at Greenwich University with their survey of trade union safety reps. For the first time the 2020/2021 survey asked respondents about their pay time away from their job responsibilities to carry out their role as a safety rep. 17% were on full-time release. I know the respondents that replied came from industries spread far and wide and were from places that were totally different to the fire service.

The FBU has a membership of over 32,000. Should we now be looking at giving some assistance to the massive workload of health and safety reps? Brigade health and safety officials, despite their hard work, don't even receive an allowance unlike brigade organisers, brigade chairs and brigade secretaries who do. So the daunting task of taking on a regional role in this position is a barrier way too big for many.

Over the last two years, to help keep our comrades safe, health and safety reps have worked tirelessly around the clock checking risk assessments, meeting with the brigade management and helping maintain safe-working practices in our workplace. Trying to find the time and information is tiring, mentally draining too.

Conference, would it be too much of an ask to at least think about creating a full-time release position for the regional health and safety official to put them in the best position to offer help and assistance to brigade officials? Organisation is crucial when it comes to reviewing new risk assessments, policies and holding Brigades accountable. Not only that, we are now under a constant threat from the NFCC with the likes of national operational guidance, guidance that threatens the bare basics of breathing apparatus safety.

All this is coupled with holding brigades accountable for keeping members safe from the everyday risk of contaminants. I feel this has more than doubled the workload of the health and safety officials. In region 9 we don't have a regional health and safety official. Is this the reason why? Even though at a brigade level a doubling up job to keep the position covered, and I won't even go there when it comes to station health and safety reps. Peer retention is a constant problem.

Why are we asking for this? Why is this so important to us? I will tell you why. Chris Page worked as a lead cadet instructor and RDS firefighter in one of Bedfordshire's RDS stations. Chris attended a course in our training centre where, towards the end of the course, several candidates contracted Covid. Chris's symptoms gradually got worse. He was then admitted to hospital where it was him against Covid. As a brigade we all rallied together in our thoughts for Chris as he battled this horrible disease.

2020 left us and we went into a New Year, a time for hope, with change that a New Year brings. On 5 January 2021 Chris sadly passed away. I can tell you how we all felt when that news broke on that morning and the things that went through our minds. Did we do enough? Could we have done better? How did it come to this? Even if we could do anything, how could we do our best in the future and say we tried? I would rather fail trying than never have tried at all.

The Brown Book only allows a safety official to have time off to carry out his duties in their own brigade, so granting time off for someone to assist another member in another brigade is difficult. A full time release would assist in this all important work. We need more support for our safety officials now. Conference, I remit. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark, thanks for that. I now call resolution 107, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) rule book update, moved by Derbyshire, amendment from Scotland. I understand Derbyshire are going to remit with a right to speak.

Resolution 107 FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) RULE BOOK UPDATE

Conference notes that the FBU Rule Book has served us well and continues to do so. However, it can't be ignored that many rules are now rendered irrelevant by modern technology, procedures and practices, and that some of the text is not in line with current best practice, for example using gender specific pronouns.

It is our duty as Officials to ensure that during our time in post we not only serve the current membership, but also ensure that we leave it in the best possible condition to serve Members in the 21st century.

Following our centenary and the excellent work to leave a legacy for future generations of Members, it is now time to conduct a full review of the Rule Book to remove or amend unnecessary rules and amend language where required.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to form a working party made up of the appropriate National Officials, EC Members and representatives from each of the equality and trade sections to review the rules of this Union.

This work should be completed before the next rule change Conference for presentation and ratification.

DERBYSHIRE

AMENDMENT

1st paragraph, 4th line after 'best practice' insert full stop delete 'for example using gender specific pronouns.'

SCOTLAND

DAN CARTER (Derbyshire):

Requesting to speak following remission of resolution 107 Fire Brigades Union rule book update on behalf of members in Derbyshire.

As we approach the 104th anniversary of our union's founding, I would like to recognise the legacy we have created during our centenary celebrations: the Firefighters 100 lottery which is funding the Red Plaque scheme to honour the bravery and sacrifice of those firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty, and also the excellent DECON campaign which is already having the effect of making the firefighting role safer for our members.

I applaud the forward looking ethos embodied by the centenary. However, some of our rules are woefully out of date or even rendered irrelevant by modern technology, practices and changing roles, such as the evolution of the membership secretary into brigade organisers.

Conference, we have reluctantly remitted this resolution after some detailed conversation with our regional officials and within Derbyshire with members who want to see a fully updated rule book. By remitting this resolution we believe we are being clear with the executive council that the update to the rule book is required as a matter of urgency but the timeframe and make up of any review group is now more flexible.

In recognition of this morning's rule change decisions around our equality sections, the group should have adequate representation, consultation and/or communication with these sections and the trade sections to ensure that the rule book is accurate, appropriate and up to date. In addition, this means that the EC can discuss the appropriate resources required in order to undertake this task.

We appreciate resources are at a premium. However, we feel that they need to be allocated to this task in due course. Derbyshire members understand that this will no doubt create a large demand on officials but once complete and ratified by conference it will ensure that our rules are up to date and fit to continue guiding us through the next 100 years.

President, conference, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important subject. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dan, I will just bring in the AGS to respond.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Yes, I wouldn't want that resolution or the previous resolution to go without comment from the executive council. Both resolutions clearly do have extremely important points which the executive council has extreme sympathy with and does want to look at. We are glad they are remitted rather than being put to a vote, and we are more pleased, actually, that they haven't been withdrawn because these are both issues that we wish to look at, both the trade union facilities, trade union release, health and safety release and, in the context of this resolution, which I should be speaking to, in terms of the rule book.

We do recognise that the rule book could be improved. It does need to be improved. Every so often, as Matt said earlier, we have recognised that there are glitches, anomalies, slight contradictions. We fully support the aim of the resolution and the executive council will be looking at it. Again, thank you for remitting, we do take it seriously.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. We now move on to para L2, Executive Council Meetings; para L3, Executive Council Attendance Record; para L4, Finance and Administration Committee. I now call resolution 103, Online Voting, moved by Scotland. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 103 ONLINE VOTING

Conference recognises the recent excellent work by Head Office and other Officials, in particular Brigade Organisers, to develop the new membership database, online application forms and app that can be downloaded by individual Members, creating vital organising tools in the most up-to-date and convenient forms.

Conference also recognises that many organisations, trade unions and political parties have now moved their voting systems to online platforms including the 2019 hybrid consultative ballot on Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Members' pay and conditions for which the opportunity to vote online was provided, as per Head Office Circular 20190183MW.

Previous Conference policy instructed the Executive Council to;

'...make the necessary preparations for future online voting, including recommending a definitive list of which Brigade, Regional and Sectional positions will be covered, and to bring any necessary Rule changes to Conference 2020.'

Conference recognises the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on workloads and the delays this has caused to delivering Conference Policy.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to provide feedback on the progress of moving FBU ballots and elections to a secure online platform and set a completion date for moving to online voting for all relevant, identified FBU elections and ballots, no later than Conference 2024.

SCOTLAND

STEVEN WEIR (Scotland):

Moving resolution 103 for Online Voting. Conference recognises the excellent work carried out by all involved in the development of the Phoenix Membership System and the downloadable FBU application. These additions will undoubtedly be of huge benefit to all members and officials, the benefits being full members having the access and ability to vote on line.

In 2019, resolution 87, Online Voting and Elections, was moved by Jason Hunter from London and carried at conference. The executive council was instructed to make the necessary preparations to enable future online voting and to bring any necessary rule change to conference in 2020.

Conference recognises the impact that Covid-19 has had on workloads and the delays that has caused in delivering conference policy, but benefits can be gained by moving online and make it crucial as we move towards its implementation.

Historically, it is not uncommon for there to be varying returns within all election processes even in matters of such importance as pay and role map expansion. Recent examples would include 24% returned in ballots from the most recent regional chair election in Scotland, 33% returned in ballots for the most recent regional secretaries election in Scotland.

Online voting is an opportunity to further engage our membership and whilst not a panacea is a further tool working alongside the phoenix system and online application is likely to help us in our drive to obtain maximum participation as possible in all of our democratic decision-making processes. Online voting is accessible across a variety of devices and will make the entire process as simple as a click of a button or the tap of a screen and also means that all members can participate from anywhere in the world.

Conference, moving for online voting in all matters that are deemed appropriate and within UK statute will drive our member engagement and save our union money whilst enhancing our ability as a union to work towards reducing our carbon footprint with a huge reduction in both printing and delivery of paper ballots.

Conference, we need to futureproof our voting mechanism since the vast majority of our members have mobile phones or other suitable devices at hand. We need to move with the times and make online voting the normal practice within our union. Conference, I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder?

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Seconding Scotland's resolution No 103 online voting. Conference, one of the advantages being a new member

is that unlike other unions or associations found in our workplaces, FBU members have a say in their terms and conditions. However, we cannot simply rely on age old mechanisms to consult our members and we must move with the times.

Conference has previously agreed to look at online voting, and I urge you to support Scotland's resolution to progress this work. Not only will online voting most likely enable us to reach out and engage with more of our members, most specifically younger members, it will also yield a better return in ballots and elections and save our union money that can be better spent elsewhere.

Conference, please support the resolution. I second. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Neil. That's open for debate. Anybody. No. Riccardo to give the qualification.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, President, thank you conference. The EC are supporting this resolution with a qualification. I would like to start by thanking Scotland for bringing it and, particularly, in welcoming some of the good work that we done and the fact that we are trying to take the union forward with a database, with the application forms going online, and our thanks to the work of Tam McFarlane and head office staff. We are really making advances in that area. So we have started the preparations as per the original resolution, and we have seen hybrid attempts in Scotland, as the resolution mentions, recently in London and GMC, so we do support this and we will continue this work.

The qualification is that we do have to check some of the legal aspects of this. Everyone in this room knows we have the Certification Officer breathing down our necks especially with new powers, so there will be areas such as if someone was to make a claim after losing an election as part of a trial period, we need to tighten that up and make sure we are safe for the union to proceed with that. One thing I will add, to make this a success we obviously need reps and members to engage in any system that we do produce, and in our initial discussions with scrutineers like Popularis, a good database of email is going to be vital in delivering these sorts of processes. I would put a request out that we carry on getting out there, we carry on organising and getting our members' details, particularly their email addresses if we want to start using systems like this and ensuring that they are successful.

So with that qualification, conference, we support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 103 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

We are now on to para L6, Regional offices and Officials. I now call on resolution 106, Collective Agreements, Dorset and Wiltshire, with amendment from Humberside. The EC are recommending withdrawal.

Resolution 106 COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Brigade Secretaries' circular 2022HOC0090AD issued on 11th February 2022 to Fire and Rescue Authorities and Fire and Rescue Services states that '...the only officials who are authorised to make a collective agreement on behalf of the FBU in respect of new and/or changes to duty systems are the FBU General Secretary, and/or the FBU Assistant General Secretary and/or one of the FBU's National Officers, who will all have been elected or appointed...'

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to explain why this decision was made with no consultation with Regional and local Officials and why this communication was received by our employers before local Officials.

Conference also instructs the EC to provide a rationale and an explanation of the impact this circular will have on local industrial relations.

DORSET and WILTSHIRE

KAREN ADAMS (Dorset and Wiltshire):

Conference, you will be aware of the brigade circular issued on 11 February to fire and rescue services and fire rescue authorities stating that the only officials authorised to make a collective agreement on behalf of the FBU in respect of new and changes for duty systems are the FBU general secretary and/or the FBU assistant general secretary and/or one of the FBU national officials.

This circular was issued with no consultation with regional and local officials and sent to our fire and rescue services thirty minutes before it was sent to the officials of the Fire Brigades Union. To send this circular via my chief fire officer and not my union was embarrassing. To have a letter sent to our fire and rescue services of this magnitude without any consultation with local officials is totally unacceptable. Why not bring this issue to conference, the governing body of our union, to discuss if there is a problem?

I am being told that this was sent to fire and rescue services due to local officials signing collective agreements contrary to the Grey Book and eroding our conditions of service. If this is the case, then deal with the local officials and not have a blanket approach to all. Is this not what we have a go at our services for doing? Whether this was the intention of the circular or not, chief fire officers and fire and rescue services are using this letter as an excuse not to negotiate with our local officials on all kinds of issues.

Whilst we have good industrial relations within Dorset and Wiltshire, my chief officer and our senior leadership team have commented that your FBU obviously has no trust and has no faith in local officials. Conference, my members are angry that this letter has undermined us as local officials and my members want answers. Conference, I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Karen. Just before you come up with a point of order, I am going to clarify that I said there was an amendment from Humberside. That was an error on my part so, Humberside, you haven't got an amendment. Was that your point of order? *Agreed.* Thank you. Does that have a seconder?

JAMES LESLIE (Devon and Somerset):

I would like to second what Dorset and Wiltshire have brought here. Whether it was the intention or not, it did undermine local officials. We were in the process of trying to renegotiate a facilities agreement and after receiving the letter they came back and said "Why should we give you any relief because you can't agree locally". Whether or not the intention was to undermine, it did undermine us. I think it is more than just the timing in this. There was no need to send it to fire authorities and fire chiefs. It could have just come to local officials and reminded us if that was necessary at all. Then if we needed your help on anything, we could then ask you to remind our fire authorities of that. I second the proposal.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, James. That's open for debate. Anybody?

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Speaking in opposition to the resolution. I understand the sentiment of the resolution and I understand the frustration, but for me nothing changed with that letter. That letter landed and for me nothing changed. At the end of the day, if a shift system has been negotiated, it goes through the EC. I have not been an official of the union for that long, but I have known that has never ever changed. I don't understand what changed with that letter. The fact that chief fire officers were using it to have discussion, my opinion on that is unless they are FBU members, I don't care what they think about that letter. That letter comes down to us. If they are not FBU members tell them it is none of their business.

I do understand the sentiments, but at the end of the day that letter was put out to remind us and to remind chief fire officers that we don't sign collective agreements on their behalf unless it is approved by the EC. I don't understand what has changed. So please oppose this resolution, although I do understand it. Thank you.

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

I absolutely understand the sentiment of this resolution. I was in the middle of a negotiation on the DCC from our service when it dropped. It caused no end of drama. But, conference, oppose this resolution because this is not how we do our business. If you need answers, get them a different way, just not like this. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne, anybody else? No. AGS.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, the resolution calls for an explanation, an explanation whether asked for by resolution or had been asked for under paragraph, we are more than happy to give conference, to give a delegation, to give a brigade committee.

In terms of the letter that was sent, I have got to say it is unusual and was unusual for the executive council to take that decision as recommended to them, and it wasn't a decision that we would have preferred to have taken. It is very restricted. It is restricted to one area of our work, a very typical (at times) area of our work resisting fire and rescue services in their pursuit of duty system, shift system change.

It arises from a very rare – but unfortunately too common occurrence – of where it appeared that a fire and rescue service was going to pressurise our officials to use some degree of pressure from a small group of members to assert that they had agreement from the local officials with regard to a duty system change. That is what they were going to assert, and in asserting it impose. That gives us difficulties. It gives the members difficulties. It gives the brigade officials difficulties.

By writing the letter we protected the members in that brigade. We protected the officials in that brigade and at one and the same time, because this is not an unknown occurrence, we protected all officials at brigade level and all members of the Fire Brigades Union by saying that if you want to do this change, fine, have your negotiations, have your discussions. We have got procedures internally which I know is part of a Cleveland resolution which we will discuss later, about putting all that together, but we have got our own procedures in terms of how we internally as a union will discuss and come to a position with regard to a possible shift change either wanted by some of our members or wanted by a fire and rescue service. We have those procedures.

What we have said to the fire and rescue services is do not think that you are going to get away with it because we, the national union, on this issue have had enough. I have got to say we have a number of resolutions at this year's conference and at previous conferences, and often raised at the executive council, with regards to a different area of work which we are not looking to put out. Let us face it, what is considered by some to be an edict, and that is the issue of additional work that is imposed, brought in, introduced by fire and rescue services. I do know that there are some brigade officials – not necessarily delegates at this conference – that have said that we should be doing that or taking this same approach with regards to additional work. That is not what we are calling for. It is not what we did on the occasion.

It was a decision that was taken, like I say, as a result of an issue which had arisen, which was arising, it was imminent. I totally get Karen's point that there was no discussion, there was no negotiation, there was no consultation with the committees, simply because there wasn't time. No other reason. It was imminent, it was thrust upon the executive council as much as it was thrust upon brigade officials.

I cannot explain, Karen, but I can apologise to you and everyone in this room that you got notified after the event. I have got no hesitation in making that apology. I can't explain it. I can look back and I can't explain it, but I will make that apology. You should never be the last to know or the second to know, and the firm should never be the first to know. Totally accepted. I will say it for the fourth time, I apologise on behalf of the executive council as the author of the circular – I make that apology to you.

So I do hope, despite the fact that clearly the way it landed has given dissatisfaction to a number of brigade committees – I know only two have spoken but there may be others as well – but it was necessary, it certainly

wasn't to undermine you. We did speak to the national joint secretaries, or I spoke to the national joint secretaries, shortly afterwards when the calls had come in from chiefs saying 'What does this mean?' I will say the national joint secretaries got it entirely. It was restricted to one issue and it was not saying all negotiations would be conducted by the national union on all issues. I do accept what Karen is saying, that was an approach or that was an impression, that was an interpretation, cynical or otherwise, taken by that FRS management and, indeed, Devon and Somerset and others as well.

Clearly, we can't account for a cynical approach by an employer or a number of employers, but I hope conference in terms of Dorset and Wiltshire and Devon and Somerset that that explanation, which is what the resolution calls for, does answer the point and gives that explanation to you. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Dorset and Wiltshire right of reply.

KAREN ADAMS (Dorset and Wiltshire):

President, Conference, we are disappointed, Andy. I appreciate your response and so in the interests of unity we are withdrawing resolution 106. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, because you have been so good again and because we are so generous at this table, we are going to break for lunch and giving you three minutes extra. Back in the room at 2 o'clock, please, prompt and ready to start.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Conference, with regard to the election of standing orders, it has come to our attention that some of the nomination forms may have gone astray. The nomination forms have now been printed and placed at the standing orders ballot box for your convenience.

May I draw your attention to a leaflet for a fringe meeting that has been distributed by the stewards over lunchtime entitled Supporting Peace and Human Rights in Colombia. As mentioned in my opening report, this will be held in the room behind you where the tea and coffee are served during comfort breaks, at 5.45. The standing orders committee would strongly encourage delegates to attend this fringe meeting. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. I now call resolution 109, regional officials and executive council members - outside employment or paid work moved by London. The EC are seeking London withdrawal or they oppose.

Resolution 109 REGIONAL OFFICIALS AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS - OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT OR PAID WORK

Conference notes All Members' circular 2019HOC0400MW which states;

'Outside Employment or Paid Work by Senior FBU Officials

The Executive Council is aware that due to the pressures of the cost of living and a decade long squeeze on real wages, some FBU members have had to undertake outside employment. The union campaigns to improve pay and conditions so that such additional earning should not be necessary. Nevertheless, the policy set out here does not relate to the activities of non-officials. This statement does not address the activities of officials of the union other than those set out below.

To be clear, the policy set out here applies only to FBU officials who are on trade union release where the employer is reimbursed by the FBU. It applies to all members of the Executive Council and all Regional Secretaries.

None of these categories of FBU official shall undertake any outside employment or paid work of any kind.

If any doubt arises as to whether this policy applies, the matter should be raised with the General Secretary and President.'

Conference notes that due to years of austerity firefighter wages have fallen well below inflation. Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to allow where it does not impact and or infringe upon their full-time Union role that EC Members and Regional Officials be allowed to have outside employment.

LONDON

MARTIN THOMPSON (London):

This resolution, as we see it, is straightforward. The London Fire Brigade has fought tirelessly for decades to prevent our employer from dictating what we can and cannot do in our personal time. We have fought this as a trade union and as such it would be remiss of us as a collective to allow this approach to continue to be enforced by us, the FBU. Members are allowed to work on their days off supplementing their income in the capital city to counter the high cost of living and now the cost of living crisis. Why should this be any different as an official?

The reality is, as long as it does not impede on our union duties, it has no relevance; nor is there any need or justification as to why we cannot undertake paid work outside the fire service and trade union activity. The union is our passion and not our employer. Conference, as I have said, we do not let our employers dictate what we do in our time so why should we let our union dictate what we do as lay officials. I ask you to support us. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martin. Do I have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. That is open for debate.

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Speaking in opposition of resolution 109. As a regional official, I will be honest with you, if I have got time to do any other business or any other work, I wouldn't think I would be doing my job properly if I am totally honest. This is calling for regional officials and executive council members to be allowed to do outside employment paid work. Let's not forget, conference, that our members pay a really good amount of money to have us as regional officials and EC members. I personally think, as a member, if I drove past a house and saw regional chair, Karl Wager's Garden Company, digging up grass while I have been released from my full-time job as a firefighter, I would be disappointed. I would ask us all to oppose this resolution. I think it is dangerous. I think we need to give our members a service that they deserve and I certainly don't have the time to do that.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Karl. Can I just ask delegates not to actually jump on the rostrum yet until I call you up. Obviously, if I call you up I will call two or three to actually come before they actually get on the rostrum because it could put the other speaker off.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Speaking in support of London's motion. I do understand the concern and the issues that the executive have with that, particularly around capacity and workloads on individuals, but I do think the last paragraph in the resolution is key. I think it is reasonable for officials who wish to undertake a role where it can be demonstrated that it would not have any adverse impact or detrimental impact on the individual or the union, to have that assessed on a case by case basis, and I believe that is what they are asking for and I think that is fair and reasonable. Thank you.

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

Speaking in opposition to resolution 109. I think my issues with this – some of it has already been outlined by Karl about the regional officials and executive council members, full time union officials representing our members going out, as illustrated, setting up other businesses, doesn't sit particularly right. But on a broader issue, we talked earlier about mileage rates and things like. I don't think this is the time or the conference for us to then spend our time passing resolutions for us as officials to go earning more money. What kind of message do we want to take back to the membership at the end of this conference, if day one, we are only just past lunch and we are talking about this kind of thing? For me that is worrying.

The last paragraph, unfortunately, I differ from what Andy has just said. The last paragraph for me is a problem because it says "...where it does not impact or infringe upon..." Who is deciding that? There is no mechanism in here to decide whether that is the case. Are we going to have somebody come to a meeting and demonstrate what they do outside, and then we are going to have some kind of jury, or is the president going to decide? I don't know. For me again, if we had some structure as to how this could be done, then may be that is the case. I don't know – and maybe whoever speaks will be able to – but I believe there is a facility for a conversation to take place with the president or others to discuss what people want to do outside of their other roles. For me, I can understand where it is coming from, I will say that, but unfortunately I can't support it and I would urge conference to oppose. Thank you.

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

Speaking in support. Conference, being a member of the fire service is a vocation, we all do it with a passion, but we all have other passions in our lives; our lives must not revolve just around the fire service and what we do. Yes, as officials we spend an enormous amount of time carrying out that role and doing work and representing people to try and bring things and continue with things, and fight for pay and conditions and fight for the good of our members. We have got to also respect what we do outside this job. We cannot be on call 24 hours a day in this job. We have to have our own time. We have to have some time away and do what else interests us. Some people amongst us – there's a lot of talented people in this room who are representatives as well – have got other passions, artists, musicians, etc, and some need to be able to make ends meet and earn extra money. So we must consider the whole picture. It is not just about the FBU and representing members. We need time ourselves. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Any more speakers, conference? No. general secretary to outline the opposition.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, again I would urge conference to think very carefully about this resolution. We think there are all sorts of risks to our organisation if we were to agree it.

First of all, let's clarify what we are talking about. This is not talking about the Fire Brigades Union banning members or officials from doing other activities. It is very specific. It is about specific categories of officials. We seek from our employers to get officials released from work to undertake their trade union activities. In many brigades, we have brigade secretary, for example, who may be on full-time release at the cost of the employer.

At regional level, however, things have been somewhat different and for the past almost 20 years now, we have had a drive from employers to begin to charge the Fire Brigades Union for releasing officials from duty. What they have said is, in the case of regional secretaries and executive council members, for example (they are the main categories of officials affected by this), that they seek us to reimburse the salary and also the employers' national insurance costs and the employers' pensions costs. This has risen massively since 2001. I think the 2001 figure is something like £125,000 that we were paying. If you look in the annual accounts this year we are paying close to £1 million of our members' money to release officials from work paid back to fire service employers.

So that is the context in which we are operating. The issue arose because of a circular issued by the executive council to clarify, and it was very clear to the executive council that the clarification related to an executive council member (or someone who at the time was an executive council member), that the EC did not think should have had to have been made, because it had been the assumption on the executive council that people who come on to the executive council are not engaged in other employment, are not running businesses, because they are devoting their time to the Fire Brigades Union and representation of our members. So that was clarified in that circular but I want to be clear, it does not apply to most people in here; it does apply to the people behind me on this table and it applies to regional secretaries, but to no other official does this apply. So it is a very narrow group of officials we are talking about.

The issue varies region by region. In some regions the employer is more generous and does not charge us. In some they charge us and in some they charge us more than they do elsewhere. £1 million we are already paying for that. Again, you can see the figures in the financial section of the annual report. We are paying significant allowances to regional secretaries and to executive council members. We had a debate about it this morning, an ability to claim for mileage and subsistence.

So the executive council acknowledges the contribution and the sacrifice that all our officials made, including at regional secretary level and at executive council level. But we are concerned about where this would take us. The points that were made in the contribution there about our own time and the need to have a balance – well, that is not what is being suggested in the resolution. What is being suggested is that people work very hard on FBU business but then should be free to go and run other businesses or engage in other employment. We think that is hugely reputationally problematic for this union, to negotiate with our employers who then say you are actually running a business, we know the second jobs that you are doing. The final paragraph, as I think has already been said, the question of capacity, who decides whether there is that capacity: is that down to the individual or is that down to someone else? We liaise regularly with regions, head office officials' work every day liaising with regional secretaries to assist them in their work. Who decides whether that regional secretary or executive council member has the capacity to run another business or to do a second employment?

In terms of the time to yourself, let us be clear, if you read the circular – because there were problems raised about what if somebody is refereeing Sunday football and so on and receives a small payment for that – that was not the intention of the executive council decision and that is why within the circular that was issued to officials it very clearly says if there is an issue and question as to whether this policy applies, the matter should be raised with the general secretary and the president who, if necessary, will clarify it with the executive council. So there is already provision within the existing arrangements for flexibility, but conference I would urge you, this is a dangerous path to go down.

First of all, I would urge London to withdraw the resolution and, if not, conference, I would strongly urge on behalf of the executive council that you vote against the resolution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

London, right of reply?

MARTIN THOMPSON (London):

President, conference, in regard to some of the issues brought up there, so we are not just talking about running businesses; we are talking about smaller activity such as Matt mentioned there, refereeing football games, being in a band, steward at a football match, cab driver; it is not just about running landscaping businesses all day.

We were under the impression that the EC could decide on what jobs would be acceptable for regional reps and EC reps as our brigades do when we put forms in to register for part-timing and we tell them what we are going to be doing. They have the overall say on it and if it is a yes or a no, so that same decision could be made by you.

In regards to something you said there at the end, Matt, yes, they do get released but they are still entitled to days off, the same as they would have these days off if they were not released. So they are still being paid by you but they are still entitled to do what they want at the weekends, and if that is earning a bit of extra money doing these smaller activities, we don't see what the problem is. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 109 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls*.

FROM THE FLOOR:

Card Vote.

THE PRESIDENT:

There has been a card vote called. We have got a lot of new delegates attending this year so what we will do, as we said in the welcome meetings, is we will get the chair of standing orders and he will talk us through the full process of the card vote so be ready very shortly. Conference, I will now call on the chair of standing orders, Phil Millar, who will talk us through the process.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Can the scrutineers and tellers who were nominated and agreed in this morning's report, please come to the rostrum. Conference, you all have in front of you a voting card that was given to you by the stewards this morning. When you are called to come up, there are two boxes at the front, one in favour, one against. Will you please bring your voting card and place it into the relevant box. From that point the tellers and scrutineers will bring both boxes and accompany me back to standing orders, and we will go through each box. Each voting card has a bar code on it so we have a bar code reader, so it shouldn't take us very long, and the computer will total it up and we should have an answer for you fairly quickly.

Can your delegate leaders come up with your voting cards and place them in the box.

Conference, can we have those in favour come up first. *Pause*. Thank you, conference. Can we now have those voting against? Thank you, conference; thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, conference. Standing orders will now process the card vote. We will continue and then we will bring the chief scrutineer back in to report the result of that one. So we are now continuing with section L within the 2022 report, para L7, retired officials. Para L8, Final appeals committee, para L9, Union trustees, Para L10, Political fund, para L11, Communications report, para L12, Research report, para L13 Firefighters 100 Lottery.

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Addressing para L13, the Firefighters 100 Lottery, we had a member in Cleveland two years ago unfortunately

got trapped under a car and lost the use of his lower legs. It was potentially life-threatening at the time, definitely career threatening. He got massive support from the Firefighter 100 Lottery to build him a gym to help him with his rehabilitation. He was at the time absolutely certain that he was going to have to leave the fire service. Because of that gym and because of the work of the Firefighter 100 Lottery, we have managed to get him that and he was able to rehabilitate. We have now got him back into a role. Yes, we have to admit it is not an operational role, but we are putting things in place to potentially get that person back to an operational role. Without the Firefighters 100 lottery, that would never have ever been able to be done. So please, conference, go back to your brigades, get people playing the lottery, get people supporting the lottery. What better thing than being a firefighter is to protect firefighters that unfortunately might need help. So please play the lottery. I urge us all to play the lottery. Thank you very much, President.

THE PRESIDENT:

Para L14 Red Plaque scheme, para L15 FBU online shop, para L16 FBU-recognised social media pages. I move on to Section K, Organising and Membership. Para K1. I now call resolution 84, the Growing Threat of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), moved by West Yorkshire. The EC are seeking remit.

Resolution 84 GROWING THREAT OF THE NATIONAL FIRE CHIEFS COUNCIL (NFCC)

Conference notes with concern, the increasing involvement of the NFCC in issuing guidance on policy and procedure.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to run a campaign to raise Members' awareness of the severity of this threat.

WEST YORKSHIRE

MARTYN BAIRSTOW (West Yorks):

The sentiment behind our motion is that we fear a growing threat from the NFCC who are very prolific in producing statements, policies and guidance, and are pushing to be the dominant voice of fire. Our members are unsure of the standing of the NFCC and many believe that if it is from the NFCC there must have been some agreement.

What we are asking for is a strategy, a campaign, to educate and inform members about the role of the NFCC. It is an understatement that its aims and objectives do not necessarily align with those of this union. So what we are seeking is reassurances that such a campaign will take place.

THE PRESIDENT:

I think I may have misunderstood the EC qualification; I was just trying to clarify that, and I missed your last point. Could you just repeat it, Martyn.

MARTYN BAIRSTOW (West Yorks):

Yes, so we are seeking reassurances that there will be a campaign to educate our members. The NFCC's aims and objectives do not necessarily align with those of this union.

THE PRESIDENT:

It is my fault. Tam, could you give us that reassurance?

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

I am here to reassure, Martyn. I just want to give a couple of quick stats. The National Fire Chiefs Council is a committee of the Chief Fire Officers Association, CFOA. CFOA continues to exist as a charity. CFOA's accounts, because they are a charity, are published on the Charity Commission's website. In 2017, CFOA had 292 ordinary individual working members. In 2017 CFOA's income was £1.1 million. The income was £72,000 from individual subscriptions, £430,000 for corporate subscription and £500,000 from grants. Let us fast forward to 2021. In the latest year for the accounts – the charity accounts – CFOA has now risen to 456 individual members. Their overall income (bear in mind it was previously £1.1 million), has risen to more than £8 million. More than £5 million comes from grants from the Home Office, and more than £2.5 million comes from corporate subscription income. We are going to find out where that money comes from.

So the NFCC is run by chief fire officers but funded mostly from public money through a registered company and a charity. Not exactly the ethos you would think of the leaders of a life-saving emergency service. So, Martin, yes, we can certainly give you the reassurance that we are doing work and will continue to do work on this bunch, but we certainly don't want to give them the satisfaction of running a specifically directed campaign because our aim has to be, as a trade union, to make sure that our members are focussed on their employers. We have to hold our chief fire officers and our fire authorities to account and not let them hide behind this registered charity.

Of course, we will continue to send out information about this bunch but whilst we do see them as a threat and will continue to campaign in that way, let us focus on the real people we have to as a trade union, our own employers. I hope that gives you the reassurance, Martyn.

MARTYN BAIRSTOW (West Yorks):

Thanks, Tam. We'll remit it.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martyn, and apologies. I will now call on resolution 85, The Future of Organising the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to be moved by Greater Manchester. The EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 85 THE FUTURE OF ORGANISING THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU)

Conference commends the efforts of the General Secretary, National Officers, Executive Council (EC) and Officials and Members of the Fire Brigades Union for their continued commitment to organising within our Union.

It is a fact however that organising is not dogmatic and is an ever-changing process designed to progress our victories and activism within the movement. Nor is it bureaucratic, rather it is the very essence of the day-to-day work of an active trade union member regardless of the roles we hold.

Whilst the Trades Union Congress organising agenda, much of which the FBU has adopted should be congratulated it simply is not always wholly applicable in every circumstance. A number of our sister unions have adopted an 'Industrial Organising' approach and one which Conference believes is more in keeping with the history and traditions of the FBU.

Conference believes that an industrial organising approach and strategy focused on local brigade issues will increase membership, activism, and improve Members' conditions.

Conference instructs that following any necessary rule changes;

- ***each region appoints an Official responsible for organising within the region***
- ***the National Officer responsible for organising should convene a national committee consisting of the aforementioned Regional Officials to critique the current organising strategy within the FBU, and endeavour to create a new strategy based on an 'industrial organising approach' and set out its targets and campaigns for the coming year***
- ***communication should take place with sister unions who have adopted Industrial Organising to develop best practice***
- ***the organising committee should meet quarterly and each region should submit an organising report to the relevant committees following EC business meetings***
- ***the Regional Official responsible for organising should ensure the organising strategy is implemented and the expected work carried out alongside the Brigade Organisers.***

GREATER MANCHESTER

DANIEL GIBLIN (Greater Manchester):

I will say this: there is nothing of criticism in this at all, so I hope anyone in the conference doesn't deem it in that way; it is simply looking at how we re-evaluate at how what we do with our organising agenda and how we move it forward. To be honest, this motion should be debated all over the trade union movement at the moment because we have had a situation where the union movement over the last probably 20 years has been going down the line of what we call the organising model, and that is the transition that the TUC brought along, and I was part of that with those who were around then through the organising academy. It was like the work we are doing now.

What we are asking for in this resolution is about re-looking at that and putting a structure in place of building on the already existing work the union is doing and effectively going back to belt and braces. That is what industrial organising is. Those of us who know the work the RMT did and continue to do, an organisation that we now know to love as we all do, I am sure. When Bob Crow was elected, began on the back of that building an industrial organising strategy and we are all familiar with the sort of action that the RMT are involved in.

I will give you a little bit of an example of some of that work. When I was down in London I went to a meeting with RMT members and it was cleaners on the underground, our brothers and sisters on the underground, who had that much pressure being applied to them for taking action over pensions, they were sending Immigration round to their houses and booting the doors in in the middle of the night and intimidating them to try to stop them fighting this dispute over pensions. Then brothers and sisters went on to continue to fight that fight and they won that, and they won pensions for cleaners on the underground.

Why is that important to this industrial organising? Tam, I know you mentioned this earlier – and this is not criticism, this is great work what you have done, some of the stuff I was arguing for when I was in post in the FBU. It is great that we are doing the online joiner, it is great that we are offering three months' free membership to people, but we all know, how many of our members who were getting their doors booted-in in the middle of the night when we were taking action over something would still go back to work and stand and fight? We would probably be struggling.

Obviously, offering someone three months' free subscription is great, it gets them in the union, but it doesn't get them ready for the fight, and that is what we are talking about with organising industrially. If people want to go and read about what we are talking about, *Never on our Knees* by the RMT talks about their organising strategy. We have got Jane Holgate who has just written a book now called *The Rise* and it is about building the trade union movement for the future round industrial organising and moving away from the TUC model, you know, like the stuff we are doing. It is about building, it is about fighting, it is about encouraging members from day one. You are in this union because we go out and fight. So as well as giving them a free badge and a book and all the things that come with it, maybe we need to give them a sword and a shield as well to be ready for the battles that are coming.

The president mentioned it at the start of the conference. That was the opening gambit. We have got the White Paper. We have got pay, we have got all the things we are debating here today, the stuff round equalities. How do we deal with that? What do we do with the NFCC stuff? We just talked about it. We eradicate the NFCC. We batter them. We go out there. We industrially organise and we fight. We take them on when they are attacking our health and safety, our conditions of service, we industrially take them on, and we do that and we get out members ready to fight along the way.

I believe this resolution gives us that option to do it because what we are saying is we are building a structure. Our union has not got a national organising committee. I find that unbelievable; I really do. We have got committees on everything. The general secretary mentioned our biggest income is our membership subs and we have not got a national organising committee. This is what we are saying here; we need that.

To alleviate any concerns from the EC, we are not asking for an additional official to look after or organising a region; we are just asking for an official to be given that responsibility to be doing that, so that it is coordinated in the regions so we are running these campaigns properly. Everyone knows here, you are going to go in the bar tonight, or you did last night or you will later in the week, and we are all speaking to each other and all the different issues we have got on brigades. We are having a tough time, as we always have done in this job, but it is continuing and our conditions are getting attacked and attacked, and it is about what we are going to do about that. This is about building that future where our newer members and our existing members are aware of it: being part of the Fire Brigades Union comes with responsibility. It is not just about picking your subs up and waiting until you get in trouble; it is about being ready to take them and fight, and that is what we are walking into and we need to be ready for that, and I think this gives us the tools to be able to build on that.

Like I said, Tam mentioned 21st century organising with the stuff we are doing. I think following this resolution is bringing our union in line with other unions, it is giving us a structure, building us a strategy and maybe when we talk

about having an organising official in a region, maybe we could look at that in the future but at the moment it is what is written there and please I hope you can support that.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Daniel. Does that have a seconder?

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Seconding the resolution, Future of Organising the FBU. President, conference, the FBU has a proud history of organising and mobilising our members, not only in support of our own industry but in support of the wider trade union movement. Sadly, as we have seen, there has been a steady decline in industry. So too, have we begun to see a disconnect within the trade union movement.

This is not just an issue affecting the FBU but something which is breathing apathy across all unions. With this in mind, it is more important than ever that we organise across all branches and sections including local issues that are understood and actions. Conference, whilst we have seen good results challenging attacks on our movement utilising legal means, we must not forget the importance of building confidence and understanding the challenge, attacks industrially. We are an industrial union and we should seek to organise and mobilise our members as such. No-one is suggesting organisation is not already under way, or that locally we are not listening to and understanding our members. What we are saying, conference, is that we can and must do more and we cannot continue to wait for a sympathetic government to come and solve our issues for us.

We must look to rebuild and bolster ties with our sister unions and implement a more rigorous industrial organising approach. All this resolution is seeking is to put in place strategic organising support for our already hard-working organisers. We have already heard from the president on the upcoming attacks upon our union, and we need to ensure that we are organised and ready for an industrial battle. This can only be achieved through a strong industrial organising approach. There is simply no downside to adopting this approach. Merseyside even have a suggestion about how we can free up some funds for this and other strategies later in the proceedings. Conference, please support. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. That is open for debate. Anybody? No.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Thanks, President, thanks conference, and a big thanks to both Dan and Ian for those contributions. Yes, we are giving qualified support. We were a bit nervous to start with that this seemed very bureaucratic, which is the opposite of what we are trying to achieve, but I had a really good meeting with the GMC delegation. I thank them for that. Out of that we got a clear understanding. The qualifications have been agreed and that is not an additional official, as Dan said, that is getting looked at: it is a role for a current official. It does not have to be a regional official, of course; it could even be a brigade organiser, who knows, and also of course the terms of reference for that committee can be discussed at head office.

Just a quick word. We can never take organising for granted. There were things in the FBU's past when it was simply the case that you joined the fire service, you joined the Fire Brigades Union. In fact, it is one of the first things you did at trade union school. We all know those days have long gone, and we have to fight for members. One of the first things we did was the *We Are Stronger Together* campaign. Stage 1 is getting people in the trade union, but of course we then have to take it a stage further.

Back in the time it was called membership secretary. That is how we treated it. It was simply a case of checking the boxes. We have to become organisers. While we have got the role brigade organisers, we are all organisers; it is all up to us to get into our branches and organise our members.

Yes, I welcome the language around industrial organising because we have to take trade unionism into the workplace. That is where it begins and that is where it has to end. We have to get into our work places, find out our members' issues, help them to organise around them and then support them to fight back. That is what this

organising has to be about and we all have to be a big part of it. Thanks for the resolution and yes, that is the qualifying support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tam. I will now put resolution 85 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against, please show. That *carries*. I now call chief scrutineer, Ian Hibbert, to announce the result of the card vote to resolution 109.

IAN HIBBERT (Chief Scrutineer):

Conference, I am here to announce the result of the card vote for resolution 109. The result is as follows. For, 12,753; Against, 19,087. Therefore, the resolution *falls*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. I now call on resolution 86, Retired and out of Trade (ROOT) members moved by Cheshire. The EC are seeking Cheshire remit or they oppose.

Resolution 86 RETIRED AND OUT OF TRADE (ROOT) MEMBERS

Conference notes the continued attacks on our Members and Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) from both Central Government and more recently the National Fire Chiefs Council. One of the ways to counter these attacks is by using the skills and knowledge of Members, Reps and Officials that has been built up over many years. Retired Reps and Officials are often great sources of information and can provide advice on strategy, tactics and previous agreements within regions and individual brigades. They are also free to contact the press without being subject to policies of the former employer.

We have seen the benefit of utilising ROOT Members to aid campaigns locally by providing vital statistical information and also providing lobbying assistance.

Nationally there are over 6000 ROOT Members that are largely an untapped resource for existing Reps and it is an area that should be exploited to harness the knowledge and experience of retired Members.

Conference therefore calls upon the Executive Council (EC) to;

- ***establish the role of a ROOT Organiser within each Region reporting directly to the Regional Executive harnessing the knowledge when required and appropriate of the ROOT Members within each respective Region***
- ***each ROOT Organiser appointed by the Regional Committee should work supporting individual Brigade Organisers on areas as deemed necessary by Regional Executives or on request by Brigade Committees***
- ***each appointed ROOT Organiser to be retired themselves in order to operate freely without fear of sanction from Individual FRSs.***

To facilitate the establishing of a ROOT Organiser the EC will bring any necessary rule changes to Conference 2023.

CHESHIRE

JOHN WEST (Cheshire):

Cheshire agrees to remit resolution 86, Retired and out of Trade members. However, in doing so, we do ask that the work to address the intent of the motion is conducted timely to reflect the important roles both politically and industrially that our ROOT members offer.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

I can guarantee we will give you support in doing that and thank you for remitting it. I can guarantee that is what we will take on. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 88, Retirement Gift, to be moved by Nottinghamshire. The EC are seeking they remit.

Resolution 88 RETIREMENT GIFT

Conference recognises the commitment of its Members to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). When a Member retires from the Service, some Brigade Committees present Members with a basic retirement certificate, only arranged if the Member requests one at a local level. This feels underwhelming and does not reflect the commitment and dedication to the FBU that the retiree deserves.

Many Members have paid contributions for their entire career, amounting to thousands of pounds. It would be a small token of appreciation and would pay homage to the Member if we could present them a retirement certificate and a small gift.

Conference instructs that Brigade Officials are allowed to ask Region to purchase gifts from the FBU online shop, up to the value of one month's wholetime subscription, this would only apply for retiring FBU Members with ten or more years continuous membership in the FBU.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

STEPHEN TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

Our proposal intends to recognise the work that our members do over the course of their career at the point that they retire. Some members have been members for 30 years and paid thousands in subscriptions, and at the point they retire a lot get nothing back.

In Nottinghamshire we provide a certificate which we print and present ourselves to our retired members, but it often feels like it falls short of actually giving them what they deserve.

We are proposing that upon retirement we are able as a brigade to approach our region for £30 or one month of a member's subscription to spend in the official FBU shop to buy a gift for that member upon retiring. After discussions around the table and with our EC members, it appears that we have accidentally put a time limit on that of ten years. This could be seen as age discrimination and that was in no way our intention for this proposal. We want to reward all members, and for that reason we remit. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. We now move on to para K2, Industrial disputes; K3, Online FBU conference; K4, FBU Noticeboard; K5, CSNC section report.

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

Can you just give us an update on the utterly disgraceful decision that saw control members excluded from receiving the Queen's Platinum Jubilee medal, please?

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thanks, president, and thanks, Sherri, for raising that. You are right, it is a very important issue. We first became aware of the disgraceful position of central government in relation to the medal awarded to our control staff. We met very quickly – I think one of the very first Teams meetings we actually had in the Covid pandemic in April 2020 (and CSNC do Teams meetings in style with lots of refreshments). We raised it straightaway and it is the royal warrant that is the big issue here because it clearly controls control and emergency services. Other emergency services were facing the same issue. Nevertheless, we started the process of lobbying straightaway.

There were initially two issues that were raised. The first was the provision of the medal itself, and the second was the provision of the bank holiday. The bank holiday was resolved but we wrote to the NJC within a few days of the CSNC notifying us that they were being excluded, and then we wrote to every chief fire officer repeating what we said so many times before, that our fire control staff are an absolutely vital part of the emergency response and that they play an absolutely key role in resolving incidents and ensuring lives are saved.

Our control members' are no different from other workers. They suffered the same pay restraint over recent years that everybody has, and our control members' work ensures that all of the operational incidents that we attend are

resolved, supported to their conclusion and that we all return back to our stations safely and they guide us to every single incident we attend and even help us resolve those incidents. So there is no doubt in the executive council's mind that they should be receiving that Platinum Medal. However, as I say, the problem is with the royal warrant. We got a response from the permanent secretary and, again, it is really disappointing that all these letters off these people have no idea about the role undertaken despite us repeatedly telling what our control operators do.

They did say in their letter that provision can be made for a Platinum Medal to be provided, so we wrote to the chief fire officers around that saying to them, "Look, you have got the discretion to put names forward for this. We strongly urge that you do that." Shamefully – and I do say that with all the venom I can muster, to be honest with you, only 11 chief fire officers actually responded to those requests, and that was only after we chased them on the follow-ups as well, after we asked them what steps should be taken to support control etc, and did they intend to recommend them for a medal. That letter was circulated. It did go out as a circular.

Basically, they came back and said we are going to go to print and press our own medal. That might be very nice, but it wholly misses the point. The point is that our control staff must be recognised. Unfortunately, that is the position to date. The permanent secretary is not moving on the criteria that they set but we do give control and our CSNC section this commitment: we will continue to pursue this even after the Jubilee itself. We will not let this drop and we will be writing to them again once that date has passed, to raise the issues to make sure that this never ever happens again. That is where we are up to with it, Sherri and CSNC.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call Para K6, Retained Section report. I now call resolution 87, Retained Recruitment, moved by Lancashire. The EC are seeking remit or they oppose.

Resolution 87 RETAINED RECRUITMENT

Conference demands the employment of a full-time member of staff to visit all retained stations for the purpose of recruitment.

Due to the high turnover of RDS staff and the rural location of stations it would be beneficial for the Fire Brigades Union to employ a recruiter to increase membership which would be self-funding due to membership being increased. There is a local concern that there are local strongholds of Fire and Rescue Services Association developing in some rural counties. This post will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

LANCASHIRE

TOM COGLEY (Lancs):

Lancashire, like many other rural services, have RDS members living and working in the most rural locations of the country. It is part of the role of the organiser to visit these stations and maintain recruitment within the RDS system. They do this to the best of their ability with senior managers trying consistently to restrict access with our potential members.

We agree with the EC that organisers should be doing this role, but we have areas geographically that it is difficult to achieve. Look at Cumbria. Carlisle to Walney is over a two-hour drive. Visiting stations regularly is difficult. What we are asking conference here today is to agree to what we have already done in the past. We have done this before and it was successful.

Dan Giblin was employed to increase membership in the RDS. It was self-funding as the increase of membership paid for this role. Some time has now passed, and with the development of the new Phoenix system we can target those areas needing visiting. Look at the benefits. It is an opportunity to eradicate the FRSA (formerly the RFU) who currently have a thousand members nationally. Even with these small numbers, they get the support from CFOs who are recognising collective bargaining rights of these small groups to undermine us, the FBU.

Our organisers need support. This resolution will not cost the FBU. It is cost neutral and will swell membership that will slowly diminish if we do not do all we can. I ask you, including the larger brigades like London – we know this does not affect you, but it is a massive issue for us in the rural brigades. Do not underestimate the power of the

RDS; they give us strength. I ask you to please support this resolution. We need to maintain our RDS membership otherwise we become weak. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tom. Does it have a seconder?

EDWARD BURROWS (Cumbria):

Seconding resolution 87. It has been stated by the general secretary today that our membership numbers are decreasing. Why would we not want to increase our membership in any way possible? This is not about replacing the organisers. They will still do their part. This is about supporting the rural brigades with targeted recruitment. We believe it would be self-funding. It has worked before. The resolution states it would be reviewed on a yearly basis. We have got nothing to lose. Conference, please support. Do not remit. We need this. Let's build our membership. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Anybody?

SIMON LEROUX (Scotland):

Speaking in opposition to resolution 87. Conference understands the need to maximise FBU membership within all duty systems across all fire and rescue services. History tells us that it is only through our union that members' interests are best served. However, given that, Scotland is opposing this resolution not due to its intent but due to its unintended consequences. For example, in my area in the North of Scotland there are 147 RDS stations. These are spread over a geographical area of over 13,500 square miles including the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland. Some of these stations only have a handful of employees. The workload, time and expense of a full-time recruiter to cover my area alone simply could not be covered by the new member uptake and, in turn, the current member retention.

Conference, urge the EC to examine the intent of this resolution and address the current barriers to maximise RDS recruitment. However, Scotland does not believe that resolution 87 is the most effective mechanism to achieve this. Conference, I oppose.

DANIEL GIBLIN (Greater Manchester):

Speaking in support of the resolution. Just for the comrade in Scotland, it has been done. Speaking from personal experience, we done it. We went into Scotland. When Scottish volunteer stations got upgraded to retained, we had a massive job on our hands, and with the comrades of Scotland at the time we worked alongside them, and we went and done that work and we got hundreds and hundreds of new members up there and it was massively beneficial, and I absolutely support what was said in the resolution by Lancs. We had some great success when we ran this project, and it did kind of fall to the wayside.

Look, I think the stuff we moved on organising before, this can run alongside the stuff that we were saying. I could not understand personally anyone opposing this, and we should support it. We need members. We need the money. You know, we need the members for what we talked about with the industrial struggle that is coming and, look, we are all absolutely aware that the RDS issue will be a thorn in our side if we don't deal with it. We have got this White Paper. We keep hearing about it. We have got the issues over pay, the cost of living. We have got resolutions here today talking about upping allowances for officials that were discussed already but actually, what about pay? When is that fight going to come? When are we going to have that? We are going to need the RDS onside. We have got some great RDS members and officials out there already. The RDS section are fantastic.

When we were doing this work previously, the RDS section was fantastic running alongside us and supporting us. It is not about having someone flying around and doing all the work on their own. I think this has been misinterpreted. It is about having someone who can assist with that work, working alongside us as officials. I plead with you to support this because it is massively important. Like I say, please support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else? No. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Thanks, President. I am guessing Lancashire are not going to remit it then, so I will be asking Conference to oppose this. I am also from a rural fire and rescue service, and I have had to deal with the body explained in this resolution when they were called something else previously as well as currently. I know there is nothing they would like better than being discussed at annual conference.

I think we need to clear up one thing to start with about membership falling. I can quite assure you – we talked about the figures recently – April 2020 to April 2021, 1,651 new joiners, 282 rejoiners; August 2020 to August 2021, 1,324 new joiners and 226 rejoiners. Our membership may be falling, but it is because fire and rescue services are not recruiting.

When new trainees join the fire and rescue service, we are sweeping them up because of the work of our organisers and long may that continue, but of course we need to increase our density amongst the RDS specifically. I think everyone who has looked at the new Phoenix system (by the way, there is a stall at the back that tells you all about it) has identified that has to happen. I think the disagreement here is who is the best person or best people placed to recruit RDS firefighters. I would have to state it is certainly my experience that the best people to connect with firefighters in a particular area and recruit them into the FBU are firefighters and FBU members in that area. I think if you have got strongholds in Lancashire, the best people to get into those strongholds in Lancashire are FBU members and officials from Lancashire so that the members can identify with them, connect with them, and most importantly of all will have something to follow up with them as well.

We have got models for this as well, and I am going to namedrop people here. Scott Langford, the brigade organiser for Dorset and Wiltshire, he identified Portland fire station was becoming one of these so-called strongholds. He went into the workplace, he identified their problems, he helped them organise and supported them to fight back. They are now a solid FBU station.

I could talk about Dan Carter from Derbyshire (he is going to go bright red here) – amazing work among RDS firefighters, and again a very rural area. Joe Foot in Buckinghamshire, again a very rural area. They are doing this across the country. I suppose what we are saying, and urging very strongly, is the best people to connect with firefighters, to organise firefighters and support firefighters within the Fire Brigades Union, are members of the Fire Brigades Union and officials of the Fire Brigades Union that people can identify with, who they are accountable to and who they also elect.

So conference, we believe our organising strategy is correct because it is based around us, FBU members and FBU officials. We think that is what connects with members, and on that basis – as much as I appreciate the resolution (and we all agree, by the way, where the resolution is coming from and the problems it is associated with) – we think the best way to deal with it is within the Fire Brigades Union. Please oppose.

THE PRESIDENT:

Lancashire, right of reply.

TOM COGLEY (Lancashire):

President, conference, thanks for the opportunity to reply. Like Dan said, this is a trial that we have done in the past and it has worked. I will stand by it. This is cost-neutral; there is no risk. But we do need the support in the rural areas. Yes, absolutely, I agree it should be a local official that goes in there, but we are challenged by time and workload to achieve this.

I want to get my membership up in the RDS in Lancashire and I believe that the trial we have run before will work again; it is cost-neutral; it is no risk to us to trial this again. I will ask you for your support, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 87 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *carried*.

We are now on para K7, officers section report. I now call resolution 89, Strength and Unity, Officers National Committee. I am sorry, that has been remitted already I have just been informed. So has resolution 90 been

remitted. So now we move to Para K8, Membership services; para K9, Region 11 and 12 demerger; para K10, new membership engagement system; para K11, Buildings; para K12 Membership statistics.

Section B, Pensions. para B1; para B2, Westminster response; age discrimination; Para B3, Further FBU legal victory on age discrimination; para B4, Cost control mechanism; judicial review; para B5, Immediate detriment: Memorandum of Understanding. I now call resolution 23, Pensions, moved by Hertfordshire. The EC support.

Resolution 23 PENSIONS

Conference notes the work carried out by past and present National Officers that helped secure the legal victory on pension discrimination.

Conference further notes the work carried out by National Officers in securing an agreement with the Local Government Association in October 2021, by terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

In respect of the MoU, Conference notes a number of Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs), and Fire Authorities (FAs), are refusing or delaying in signing up to the MoU thus restricting our Members accessing the pension that they are entitled to.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to instigate legal proceedings against any FRSs and/or FAs refusing to sign up to the MoU, with immediate effect, and proceed all cases through the courts until final conclusion.

HERTFORDSHIRE

ROB FORTUNE (Hertfordshire):

Moving resolution 23, pensions. Can I start by thanking the EC for the massive legal victory on the pension discrimination case. So proud to be part of the union when these cases keep getting won. It gives our members so much confidence and that is when our membership starts to get bigger and bigger, especially for our new members, to see you keep winning in the courts.

On the pension discrimination case, many fire and rescue services up and down the country are refusing or delaying in payment to pensions of members that they are entitled to, particularly in Hertfordshire where only last year a member – an FBU member – retired. Someone may correct me on this, but in the history of the UK fire service, he retired with no pension because he would not sign a corrupt disclaimer from Hertfordshire County Council.

Our resolution calls for the EC to take immediate legal action on this unjust, disgraceful action on pension discrimination. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rob. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is open for debate. Anybody? No

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. Conference, I particularly thank Hertfordshire for bringing this issue to conference and assure that our debates on the fight for pensions justice continues.

It is worth reflecting on the various legal cases that this union has embarked on and the one in particular that Rob has referred to, the age discrimination case, which was a ground breaking case not just for our members but across the public sector, and I will come on to that in a moment.

Let us be clear. Our employers, assisted by our chief officers, are responsible for that age discrimination and are responsible for the treatment of our members who have not been granted the pension to which they are legally entitled. We are being clear that they need to be held accountable for that. According to them, in that legal case, they had no choice but to follow the regulations, to apply government regulations that the government put on the statute book in 2015 even if they were discriminatory. They lost that point in the employment tribunal in 2016. They then appealed that and that was heard at appeal in December 2020 and again the fire authorities resisted that and made a late submission to introduce even further delay.

Remember that every single delay is causing our members again not to receive the pension to which they are entitled. Again, the employment appeal tribunal disagreed with the fire and rescue authorities and agreed with us once more.

The Equality Act already covers the way such provisions need to be automatically rewritten if they are discriminatory. Those are the points we made legally, and the employers and relevant authorities must apply if the discriminatory provisions are not addressed.

The judgment meant that they must and should deal with those cases and they didn't. On 8 October 2021 an agreement was reached because we issued three test cases. These three test cases were settled in accordance with the FBU LGA agreement. The members concerned were paid their full correct entitlement and the FRAs have had to pay the union's legal costs.

The immediate detriment MoU framework was fully supported by the LGA and all FRAs were urged to adopt it to prevent them having to pay further unnecessary legal costs. The MoU provided a route to resolve this issue.

What followed next was a further series of disgraceful interventions with the sole purpose of attempting to derail the agreement we had reached with the Local Government Association. The Treasury and Home Office raised issues in relation to tax and lump sum payments all of which could have been resolved, but it was clear that they did not wish to resolve them. What they want is for our members who are facing uncertainty in relation to their future and real financial hardship in their retirement to wait until October 2023. That is the position of many of our employers and it seems all of our chief fire officers when the Treasury will finally issue directions on how immediate detriment cases should be dealt with.

The union asked the Home Office directly, the scheme advisory board in December 2021, about the Home Office note explaining why their guidance was being withdrawn. It states that it is up to those schemes to choose to process cases or not. Does that mean the FRAs can continue to utilise the MoU to pay immediate detriment cases? The response was that the Home Office believed the guidance to be clear. It is therefore clear to us that the immediate payment under the MoU should continue.

Again, we see further disgraceful and underhanded tactics that we have witnessed throughout our battle for pensions justice. While we have worked to resolve this, we now see a further intervention by the people mentioned earlier on, the NSCC, who issued a letter attempting to intervene in this process.

Unfortunately for them, the FBU has got eyes everywhere and we got hold of their secret letter. We have got the name of the person who wrote that secret letter. That letter from the National Fire Chiefs Council urges fire authorities not to reach settlements on immediate detriment cases and not to pay the pension entitlements to which our members are legally entitled. That letter comes from the NFCC's lead on pensions. I will name him here: his name is Mr Ian Hayton, chief fire officer. I will throw this challenge out to Mr Hayton because I would like him to come here perhaps and tell us what his own pension status is because I think he has already got a pension. It is a bit damn rich of a chief fire officer who has already got a pension and then been re-employed by that fire authority to tell thousands of our members around the country that they should not be getting the pension to which they are legally entitled and it is a damn disgrace, and they need to be told very clearly that.

Even more bizarrely, and frankly stupidly, we have got these employers all over the country who, in some cases, had agreed to make the payments but as a result of that letter have stopped making those necessary payments, and they are happening in your fire and rescue services now.

We will announce here today that we will not be standing for this and we will now issue claims against every fire and rescue authority who are not paying out under the immediate detriment MoU framework agreement. That legal action will start from today. That is what we are about to do immediately following this.

We will not be settling those claims until every member has had the payment to which they are legally entitled.

I will just finish on this point about why this is. The immediate detriment claim, the age discrimination case, is simply one strand of what we are fighting on pensions. We are fighting across a whole range of issues, whether that is control members pensions, whether that is the members of the new scheme where we are also involved in legal challenges to the government on entitlement that our members of the new scheme should have benefitted from but have not yet done so.

Here is the reason why they are so resistant. Here is the reason why the Home Office are backing chief officers – these guys who go round fire stations claiming to be people's friends, all the while stopping your friends, your comrades, your workmates from getting the money that they are entitled to. It is an absolute disgrace. But this is the reason. Rob mentioned earlier about being proud. This is something we should be proud of. In July 2020 HM Treasury issued a consultation document on the cost of remedying unlawful age discrimination in pension cases. Remember, there is only one trade union who took that case, but because we won it that is a principle that applies to every single member of every single public sector pension scheme. The total cost of that, according to that consultation, is £17 billion. That is £17 billion for ordinary working people that this union is winning and continues to fight for, and that is something we should be very proud of.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I am now going to put resolution 23 to the vote. I think I have got a feeling I know how this is going to go. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now move on to para B6, Immediate detriment guidance withdrawn; para B7, Retained firefighters' pensions; para B8, Local Pension Board information; para B9, Scheme Advisory Board representatives.

We now move on to Section I, Accident and Injury Fund (AIF). I now call composite A, Accident, Injury and Death Benefit Fund (AIF) moved by Hereford and Worcester and seconded by South Wales. The EC are supporting.

Composite A ACCIDENT INJURY AND DEATH BENEFIT FUND (AIF)

Conference acknowledges the importance of the AIF. Approximately 95% of Members have signed up to it, so it is clear the benefits are widely recognised. It cannot be overstated the impact the AIF has on Members' lives when they suffer an injury, or to their families in the event of the death of a Member. However, Conference appreciates that there are restrictions within the existing scheme, and consequently room for improvement.

Two specific areas for improvement are;

- ***Mental illness***
- ***Cancers***

Conference instructs the Executive Council to set up a task and finish group to ensure that the benefits of the AIF are the best that they can be for our Members, that the AIF pays out in the maximum amount of circumstances and that the scheme offers best value for money. The task and finish group shall complete their work before the end of 2022 to allow sufficient time for all Members to be consulted over any proposed changes prior to Conference 2023.

After completion of the review training is to be provided to Officials in the correct application of the AIF.

Conference instructs that the relevant rules shall be amended as necessary once a decision has been taken on any changes to the scheme.

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Moving composite A, Accident, Injury and Death Benefit Fund (AIF). Conference, firstly I wanted to extend my thanks to the brigade officials and members of South Wales, Devon and Somerset and Cambridgeshire for agreeing to composite their resolutions, and the standing orders committee, and specifically Mark Rowe, for his assistance with the composite.

Conference is well aware of the benefits of the AIF but I am sure most representatives and officials have faced a situation where members have been injured but due to the restrictions have been unable to make a claim.

Since our last face to face conference there have been three such examples in Hereford and Worcester alone. One involved a member who suffered a cardiac arrest. His heart stopped for 15 minutes, and if it wasn't for the swift and decisive actions of his wife and son, he wouldn't be with us today.

This event took place a few months after the same member suffered a heart attack away from work, after which he was off work on full pay for six months, and then on half pay for the remainder whilst he recovered until he returned to work. However, because this occurred away from the workplace, our member wasn't eligible to claim under the AIF and because the second cardiac arrest occurred within 12 months of the previous one, he was on zero pay for 11 months until he was dismissed on grounds of ill health.

2017 research funded by the British Heart Foundation reported that cardiovascular events are the leading cause of death amongst firefighters and are responsible for approximately 45% of on duty fatalities each year in the United States. It also reported that death from coronary artery disease were 12 to 136 times more likely to occur during, or shortly after, fire suppression than non-emergency duties.

So in addition to the specific cases identified in the composite, mental health and cancers, we ask that all illnesses are considered as part of the review, but we ask that there is a focus on cardiac events.

The second case involved a member who slipped three discs whilst lifting a casualty out of a river. Without our member's intervention the casualty would most likely have drowned. However, as is commonplace in many brigades, our member was working a temporary fixed-term wholetime contract and he had no other source of income.

Thanks to the FBU his pay was maintained for seven months, although the service were going to end his contract after just two months. Despite his injuries, the inability to work and get access to proper care due to the pandemic, our member was unable to make a claim because he was no longer employed.

The third case involved a retained member who sustained an on duty injury during a training exercise. Our member received statutory sick pay from his primary employment, and the service paid his wage based on an average of his previous 12 weeks' pay. Despite this combined income being a fraction of his normal earnings and due to circumstances arising through no fault of his own, he was unable to make a claim under the Accident and Injury Fund.

Conference, please support this resolution to ensure that the maximum number of members are eligible to claim under the scheme we offer. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Neil. South Wales.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER (South Wales):

I second the composite A resolution. As representatives and officials of the FBU, many who have served in these positions past and present will be familiar with dealing with situations where not only do we work in the best interests of our members but also act as ambassadors for the correct and appropriate ways to assist individuals who are suffering with their health. We inform, educate and campaign within our services for them to provide the best provision for our members in the worst of circumstances.

This is not always easy but there have been notable successes up and down the UK, in part thanks to the hard work of our members' reps and officials. We always retain the position as bastions of what is right and proper. This is why now it is time to look internally.

Conference asks the executive council to do some work with a view to our Accident and Injury Fund being expanded to accommodate mental illness and cancers. There is a clear link with all the good work the FBU does in these areas. The DECON campaign has been phenomenal. We should now back that up by modernising our Accident and Injury Fund so that is fit for the 21st century. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Michael. That is open for debate. Anybody?

HAL FELL (Cumbria):

Speaking in support of the resolution. Cumbria, and the whole of region 5, support this resolution wholeheartedly as it has affected our members in the past and recently, and will unfortunately affect us in the future.

Cumbria lost a much-loved brigade secretary, Graham Higgins, who succumbed to brain cancer in 2016, and more recently our brother, Kelvin Dawson, on the Isle of Man who passed away with terminal cancer on 16 March this year. Kelvin started his career as a firefighter in 2004 at Peel Fire Station. He served the community of Peel for 18 years getting to the rank of leading firefighter before leaving the service. Our sincere thoughts and sympathy are with his wife and daughters and family at this difficult time.

Our reps tried to get something from the area for Kelvin's family, but there was nothing we could do. The Isle of Man Fire Service kept him employed as long as they could but finally had to let him go. He passed just a few months later.

The sad fact is that those who are diagnosed with terminal cancer just want to make provision for their families. They pay into the Accident and Injury Fund for their entire career, most never making a claim. Even with the fight with the DECON campaign to get presumptive legislation, we have to show we are the leaders in this field and compensate our members accordingly. I note that the Area Fund currently has £5.5 million. It is not helping members sitting in a bank account. Now is the time to include cancer within the Accident and Injury Fund. We are letting members and their families down. We would like to see this change made quickly, put in place and not wait until next year. Whoever will sit on the Task and Finish Group to do this work quickly, region 5 is happy to assist.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Al. Anybody else?

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

Scotland is speaking in support of composite resolution A. The cases outlined by our brothers in Hereford and Worcester, South Wales and Cumbria, are both moving and display the value of the AIF.

It is important that the fund provides the best possible value per member and gives them the greatest support it can in their times of need. I reiterate Scotland are supporting this composite motion. However, it would be out of character for Scotland not to speak at the rostrum and in some ways appear dour. Our only concern with this – and I reiterate that we are supporting the composite motion – is the scale of the two examples included of the injuries that our members could suffer.

One of the previous speakers reiterated the level of funds available within the AIF and we fundamentally and absolutely agree that this should be used in the best interests of our members, but we also have to be conscious that any decisions that we make at conference do not, as an unintended consequence, potentially undermine these and cover a range within our rule book of injuries and illness that could compromise a scheme that is so valuable to all of our members.

As I would reiterate, Scotland is fully in support of the composite motion and massively reassured by the work that has been done by the brigades that brought the four resolutions and the assistance they have received from Mark Rowe, and we are in no way looking to undermine the intent or the outcomes of it. We are only urging caution. We all want to help our members. We all became involved in the roles that we undertake in order to do so, but we must do so responsibly. We cannot undermine the structures we put in place in order to do that beyond the time that we hold the roles that we currently do. We must maintain the structures within the Union for a further hundred years of its existence.

Scotland supports this composite motion, but I would just urge caution from us all when the report comes back from the task and finish working group, to examine what the findings are and ensure that it does not create a

situation that does not allow for the AIF to continue well past the time when the representatives in this room will be gone and our seats will be filled by others. Scotland supports composite motion A.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John. Anybody else in this debate? No. I will bring in Mark Rowe.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

My thanks as well to Hereford and Worcester, South Wales, Cambridgeshire and Devon and Somerset. I have always been a big fan of composites and we have not had composites for a long time, so welcome back composites!

We hear you loud and clear. A review by the task and finish group is the right way to go with this because what we need to do is make sure the task that we are setting ourselves in the review to look at keep the AIF financially viable. We understand as well with our members facing huge financial issues already due to tightening household budgets, low pay, spiralling energy costs etc that nobody wants to inadvertently make matters worse by increasing AIF subscriptions, so we need to look at that very carefully.

We also accept that mental ill health is a huge issue at the moment within our membership specifically, but of course in the wider society as well, as is the increase in cancers amongst firefighters. We all know through the DECON and speakers have referred to that as well.

We want to keep the fund viable so that it can be utilised to respond and assist when it is most needed, and if rules need reviewing through the task and finish group, I am sure they will make recommendations that way.

We sadly saw at the start of conference the long list of comrades who have lost their lives over the last three years, and I would suggest most if not all of their families and loved ones left behind (I wouldn't say have benefited) have had the blow softened slightly by knowing that financial plans have been put in place before them through people who have been members of the AIF.

If you are looking in the financial accounts, it looks like the AIF is making money. At the moment it is in a surplus of £115,000 but sadly we only need three additional deaths to remove that. We have had discussion over the years at head office in relation to producing a booklet style document, something akin to the size and nature of the ADAE document that explains the AIF rules. There is certainly a lot of misinformation around the AIF, so we want to make sure that brigade officials have got that document to refer to.

I will mention Nina Levine who does an awful lot of work at head office. She is bound by the rules of the AIF that are in the rule book. This is certainly the right way to go. If we need to explain the rules better, we are going to do that, and all of these things are going to be considered by the task and finish group. We will certainly get on with that work, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I will now put composite A to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. Tea break.

Break for tea

Right, conference, are you all suitably refreshed? We are now moving on to section J, Legal Report, para J1. Louise. Sorry, Louise, just hang fire. We have got an updated standing orders report which we must give before any delegates speak. I now call on the chair of standing orders, Phil Millar.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, could you now turn to your delegates list. Region 7, West Midlands, remove Billy Holland and replace with William Atwell. Region 9, Bedfordshire, remove Craig Carter and replace with Jamie Newell. Conference, can I just get you once again to check that mobile phones are on silent and that computers are off please. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, Louise, apologies.

LOUISE FLETCHER (Shropshire):

Regarding J1, can I ask the EC to update conference on what steps have, or are being taken, to ensure that brigades get all the support needed when legal assistance is required. Sadly, I myself know of one case in 2021 where I felt more could have been done. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thanks, President. Thanks, Louise, I am not going to mention the case. We are aware of it and we did discuss that at the time. I am not going to make excuses, but if you look at the legal report you will see the examples of absolutely outstanding work that Thompsons do for us on a daily basis, but you know, there have been a huge amount of issues created through the courts because of Covid, we have got the backlog, sometimes there are delays in members providing information. Some of these claims that are coming in are very complex requiring very specific and detailed information. Some of them just hinge on one email, and if we cannot get that in time Thompsons cannot do the merits assessment. We have got issues sometimes where brigade officials themselves submit the legal assistance application form – and I am not blaming officials or delegates in this room – these are just some of the problems with the legal assistance applications. If they are not complete, Thompsons cannot conclude, complete, or in some cases even start, their merits assessment. Yes, Thompsons are sometimes not quick enough in responding.

This has been something that myself and the general secretary have been aware of and we did have a meeting in 2021, in October, with the chief executive of Thompsons, where we raised a number of issues, particularly that merits assessment take too long after Thompsons have received instructions.

Representation cases sometimes enter a dead zone where claim forms have been lodged so once the ET1 goes in because of the delays in the court it is sometimes, three, four, five and even six months before a member or the brigade officials involved receive a further update from Thompsons, and that is simply because nothing has happened. That happens with the personal injury claims.

I am not going to go on too much about that, but we have put measures in place to say that even if we enter this zone where nothing is happening, each month they should get an update to say that, you know, we haven't forgotten you, the court is taking too long, we are waiting for the hearing to be scheduled etc. One of the criticisms as well was that Thompsons are occasionally too pessimistic in their outlook on cases. They have to provide a merits assessment that keeps our legal assistance to yourselves financially viable. We absolutely understand that members are treated pretty horrifically on occasions. Nobody disputes that, and when Thompsons obtain their advice, they are not disputing that; it is just what can be proven in the courts.

So what we did, we had meetings with regional secretaries on line where we had solicitors from Thompsons who went through and explained in quite a bit of detail what is required on the applications so we have already seen an improvement in them coming up and Thompsons have committed on personal injury cases to let members know on those monthly updates what is happening. It is something we are really vigilant on. If you think you have not had an update in time, please go through Nina and myself – the emails just for updates, we do get that quite a lot and we will provide that update. It is something we are aware of, Louise. We can reassure you that we are constantly monitoring it and we are making sure both Thompsons and ourselves are improving in our responses.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I now call resolution 80, National Negotiations for Outcomes from Employment Tribunals and Employment Appeals Tribunal, moved by West Yorkshire. The EC supports.

Resolution 80 NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS FOR OUTCOMES FROM EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS AND EMPLOYMENT APPEALS TRIBUNALS

Conference recognises the importance of changes in employment law handed down in Employment Tribunals and Appeals which benefit Members and the requirement for employers to implement these beneficial changes within prompt timescales.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) that when these decisions are advantageous to Members, that the EC look to negotiate with employers nationally through the National Joint Council rather than Brigade Officials negotiating locally so that such changes are implemented in a timely and consistent manner.

WEST YORKSHIRE

RYAN BINKS (West Yorkshire):

Moving motion 80. This is my first time conference and first resolution. *Applause* Thanks for that. This motion was brought as a result of the various employment tribunals and appeals pertaining to the requirement of employers to reflect all overtime payments both compulsory and voluntary within holiday pay whilst on leave, most notably the decision handed down in the *Bear Scotland Ltd v Fulton* case.

We feel that when any cases of employment tribunals are of benefit to our members, these should be negotiated nationally through the National Joint Council, through the EC, within prompt timescales. This would alleviate the need to negotiate locally resulting in one deal rather than fragmenting ones across all services.

I only came across this case law twelve months ago whilst looking through some case law studies – I know, quite sad! I need to find something better to do. If this had been negotiated at the time when this decision was handed down, all our members would have had this holiday pay within their pay slips for a number of years now, because this case law goes back quite a while.

I was surprised to find out only a small number of brigades had implemented this judgment and that there are still a lot of brigades that are not paying this. I would like to take the opportunity to thank those officials who supplied me with information on their local agreements which has undoubtedly helped with our negotiations over this matter. Conference, I urge your support. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ryan. Do I have a seconder?

TRISTAN ORR-BERWICK (Surrey):

Bigger room when you are up here. First conference, brigade secretary for Surrey. *Applause*. I support West Yorkshire's resolution.

We are undertaking the holiday pay negotiations now. Unsurprisingly, Surrey Fire and Rescue management are trying to use statutory limitations called the Deduction from Wages (Limitation) Regulations to only go back two years. We have had a culture of overtime for an extremely long time where we have negotiated local agreements to do unlimited amounts of overtime. It is disgusting that the fire service can use the defence that they were waiting for NJC to issue guidance on how they should negotiate on things like that. Then, as a new brigade secretary, I inherited this problem six months ago and I have 400 members who are going to be out of pocket for thousands of pounds. If this had been proactively addressed at a national level, I would not be in this position.

I urge of you to support this resolution, and if anyone hasn't done holiday pay negotiations, to get a move on.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tristan. That's open for debate. Anybody?

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

I will start off by giving a qualified apology to our brothers in West Yorkshire and Surrey. This is an issue that we have resolved in Scotland a number of years ago now, and maybe trying to steal a bit of Sam Mitchell's thunder,

certainly sitting listening to your contributions at the rostrum today, on reflection it is something that we could have used the facilities that the FBU has in place. I am not suggesting by any stretch of imagination that this should change the intent of the resolution, which we fully support, but in hindsight and listening to the contributions at the rostrum, this is something we could have used the FBU noticeboard facility to at least have raised awareness about and to stimulate a conversation in.

Sitting listening to the contributions just as they were made there, certainly made us think about some of the tools that we currently have that can help to stimulate and address some of these issues, and in no way shape or form am I looking to challenge the intent of the resolution. Like I said, it is one Scotland fully supports. It is about capacity often, you dealt with one thing and bang, you are straight on to the next thing and then the next thing and you have forgotten about it before the week is out.

Absolutely, sitting listening to the contributions at the rostrum, this is something we could have flagged up to other brigades, following our own negotiations. We accept our part in that and there are at least facilities that could have flagged it up in the conversation with the awareness of other brigades. Scotland fully supports resolution 80, and acknowledges that we all have facilities that we all need to be mindful of using.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John. Anybody else? No.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Just to clarify one point, a brigade secretary circular did go out some time after the case. Look, we want to reassure West Yorkshire that that will be done, the resolution will be implemented. The only caution raised though is, you know, the NJC things sometimes take a little longer than they should. So while we are doing that work, we will continue to circulate the information to brigade officials when we become aware of it, so you are not placed at any disadvantage should managers become aware before you and raise it in during discussion and negotiation, and we will do that while we are conducting the national stuff through the NJC.

On EATs, they obviously affect our members. Thompsons do put out occasionally briefing sheets so we will continue to circulate those to brigade officials. So print them off, put them in a file, keep them in the office and refer back to them.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I will now put resolution 80 to the vote. All in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now call resolution 81, Support and Family Law, moved by Tyne and Wear. The EC oppose.

Resolution 81 SUPPORT AND FAMILY LAW

Conference recognises our Union supports and defends its Members' employment rights through our representatives and legal services. Support for our Members in matters relating to family law should be integral to the Fire Brigades Union.

Many of our Members are facing difficulty and expense navigating issues involving family law. Separation and child arrangement orders being particularly challenging and likely to have an effect on work. Advice, financial support, negotiated discounts, mentoring and partnerships with other organisations are examples of support that should be considered.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to explore ways in which we could provide additional support for our Members when faced with dealing with the complexity of family law and report back to Members at Conference in 2023.

TYNE and WEAR

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

President, conference, we at Tyne and Wear are moving resolution 81, Support and Family Law.

We all have members who have difficulty navigating the complexities of family law. I am sure everybody in this room knows somebody who is going through a divorce or separation, and when it comes to things like access to children or just the basics of handling finances, our members get into a mess. This is our problem because it causes time off work and it causes our members to be ill.

Conference, this resolution only asks the EC to explore what could be done and then report back; there is no other financial element to this. It could be that we could negotiate something with Thompsons; it could be that we link up with the relevant charities; it could be signposting; it could be all those things. But the resolution only asks to explore and report back.

Conference, support the resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. Does it have a seconder?

DEAN POUNDER (B&EMM):

Supporting resolution 81, Support and Family Law. I am truly shocked, mystified and disappointed as to why the EC would oppose this considering that mental health problems are one of the main causes of overall disease burden worldwide as stated on [mentalhealth.org](https://www.mentalhealth.org).

The trauma experienced by a parent having to deal with contact issues should be taken seriously as it impacts every single part of their lives. Trauma is an emotional response that leads to longer term reactions which include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches and nausea.

One in four people suffer from the effects of mental health issues and with the added impact of the life changing challenge that we face at the hands of the Tory government, would we not want to explore the possibility of assisting and helping our members legally.

The mental health charity MIND reported that 30% of firefighters have contemplated taking their lives. I was in that 30% when I was prevented from having contact with my daughter. Back then I did attempt to reach out to Thompsons, but there is very little information, help or guidance that they could offer.

Then, by chance, I met a colleague from my previous brigade who I am now good friends with, and her background being family law, and I told her my story. With her help, she printed off the application form that I needed to fill out to pursue a court order as it was called back then. We met, she sat with me and I filled out this form, and making sure it was filled out correctly, and upon completion I delivered this form by hand to my local family court, and back then the price was approximately £220 just to submit that form.

In the meantime, my friend assured me that I would be fine to represent myself. Again, she guided and educated me what to expect, how to conduct myself, don't let anger take over, keep calm, remain professional, yet speak the truth with passion and from the heart – after all, you are fighting for your daughter, Dean. Fast forward to the end, I won. The court order ruled in my favour and a court order was drafted, a legal document that both parties had to abide by.

Without my friend the chances are I would have taken out a credit card or a loan in order to pay thousands for a solicitor that I could not afford, thousands that I did not have set aside for a rainy day, and trust me there were a few because that was not the last time I was in court, but on every single occasion I went to court I won due to my friend helping me out with her family legal background.

Now unless you go through this traumatic ordeal, you never truly appreciate the pain. The reality is you go to work after your four days off, you are sat around the mess table and everybody is reporting back from their last four days off, sharing stories of what each colleague has done with their children, and you are sharing their joy but you can't share your story so you smile and you are hurting and you are angry, and it gets to a point where you begin to feel tears, get into a rut, and there have been times in my personal experience when I have had to leave the mess because I know it has got too much for me to handle.

These are my experiences, but just by talking to other firefighters around the mess table, I am not a rare case. I have been on a watch where there have been ten and about a third have been suffering the same as I have been suffering. I have got to show my comrade Wayne from Tyne and Wear massive respect for bringing this to our attention. Wayne doesn't suffer this but he has empathy, and I hope we have the empathy of you, our colleagues, our comrades and EC because I guarantee, as Wayne said, every single one of you in this room knows one person who is suffering this traumatic ordeal. I urge you to support this motion. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. That's open for debate.

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

Conference, it is not easy to listen to contributions such as that and come to the rostrum to oppose the resolution, but that is what Scotland is going to do.

We recognise the issues that have been laid out, the personal examples that have been given and the weight behind them. Again, this comes back to looking at the role of our union and what the appropriate uses of its finances are. Is this overreach of our role? Think of the scale of the problem. Think of the number of our members who are affected like this and the resources that would need to be put aside to deal with it.

It doesn't come easy standing here and talking like this when you have sympathy for speakers coming to the rostrum and laying out the argument so well, but that doesn't automatically mean that you should support. Again, this is about what is the right decision for our union moving forward and, by virtue, our members.

I wouldn't discount any of the contributions that either Tyne and Wear or the B&EMM section has made and the way they have made them, we recognise the seriousness of the issue and the impact it can have upon our members, but we must also, in considering the decisions that we make today, weigh that up against what is the best interest for our members and this union in their entirety.

We recognise, as Tyne and Wear and B&EMM section have pointed out, the last paragraph only asks for the executive council to explore ways in which we could provide this additional support. I understand the comfort that could give, but what it also gives is our support for the principle that this is an area that is reasonable or proportionate for our union to be involved in.

Partly, I am playing devil's advocate by standing here because I have personal experiences and friends who would benefit from the union taking a direction in this way, but we must also look at the wider impact it may have. I would encourage us all to think about the potential impact, not so much of the resolution, but with the intent that is ultimately delivered, and consider whether that is in the best interests of the union or not.

As I have said, in no way is Scotland opposing this or in any way minimising the contributions that have already been made at the rostrum, but it is important to consider all aspects when making our decision in relation to this. Scotland opposes.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John.

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Just what my comrade said there from Scotland was part of this resolution about having empathy – let us remember why we are in this room. We are in this room for our members. This is something that is affecting our members. If it is affecting our members, it is affecting our workplaces; if it is affecting our workplaces, it is affecting us.

Trust me, the amount of work that I have put in over the last God knows how many years dealing with members' issues around this exact matter, even just looking at this and exploring it seeing what we can do, the outcome of the exploration might be there is not a lot we can do, but what we can do is to offer some advice like Dean said, help fill in the forms, how to go, where to go with it, the processes. We might not end up having to do anything other than to be there as a friendly face and a helping hand along the way.

We all know people who are suffering out there and as reps and as a union moving forward, we should be proud to make sure that we look after what they need. Like Wayne, I am not suffering with this, but the thought of me having to go through a process to fight for my child nearly brings me to tears, so I can't imagine what some people are going through. Please support this resolution. Please support our members.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Karl. Anybody else in the debate?

PAUL JAMES (North Yorkshire):

I am supporting this motion because I personally have lived through this, not seeing my children in eight years. At the beginning of that process I would have given my right hand just for a little bit of support, little bit of guidance that didn't cost any money, and I believe this is what this motion is calling for.

To my brother over there who won his case, total respect to you, sir. I will leave it there and ask you for support. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Paul. Anybody else in the debate? No.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thanks, president. Conference, look, this is clearly a very difficult resolution to wrestle with but I will start by saying that the EC don't dispute that members do face difficulties and are usually incredibly sympathetic to these issues that arise in family life, but the resolution calls for consideration of financial support, and we don't want to create any false expectations by saying to Tyne and Wear that we will go away and look at this when in fact we know financial support would be hugely problematic for the union as it carries not just a financial burden but also reputational issues potentially.

The average cost for a divorce at the moment is about £15,000. I know, I have been through divorces. My brother is going through similar circumstances to what has been described by delegates on the rostrum just a moment ago. Child arrangement orders can also be very costly depending on their complexity, the arrangement about who a child should live with, spend time with and have other types of contact with, requires specialist family law solicitors to deal with those issues, and that comes at quite a significant cost particularly if the dispute is protracted.

Thompsons already provide 30 minutes initial advice free on the phone line to get some instant advice. Potentially we could be in a situation where we have reputational issues with the union financing one party against another in a divorce. It could result in allegations that the union has been responsible for an aggrieved partner losing their home, child separation arrangement cases, similar situations. We could have aggrieved partners saying, you know, they don't see their child anymore because the Fire Brigades Union has assisted in funding one side against another in a custody battle. We have got FBU members married to other FBU members, and if they divorce we would require conflict solicitors, and conflict solicitors again don't come cheap. I know I am focusing on the financial issue here and the EC fully understand the emotional issues so we are in no way discounting that.

There are also several free services available at the moment, including the likes of Citizens' Advice, the UK website page on family break-ups direct to the charity RELATE for advice and a list of counsellors. We will add those to the FBU website to assist members. As I say, it is a very difficult issue for you to now consider, but I would ask that you consider this very carefully. The union will face difficulty funding this, it is going to be costly for the union and carries with it potential reputational damage, and the executive council asks that bearing that in mind you oppose this resolution. Thanks conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. Tyne and Wear right of reply.

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

Conference has become fixated on the financial side of this, and again I will reiterate this is only an exploration

exercise. If it is too costly, if you can't do it, then all we will have at worst is an answer for our members when they come for help. If it can't be done, it can't be done, but we need to tell them why the FBU can't stretch quite that far. If that is the worst that comes from this, then so be it, but I reiterate it is just an exploration; there is nothing binding in here. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. I now put resolution 81 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 82, Judges Don't Run our Union. Move by Staffordshire. The EC supports.

Resolution 82 JUDGES DON'T RUN OUR UNION

Conference notes that trade unions in the UK are subject to some of the worst anti-union legislation in Europe. These include provisions for courts to interfere in the business and decision making of trade unions.

Conference notes that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has seen such interference by the courts in our democratic structures, including a decision by an Employment Tribunal that a policy of the Union was redundant. Such a decision can only be made by the FBU and its Members through our own democratic structures.

Conference reminds all Members and Officials of the Union of the provisions of Rule C2 that: 'The supreme government of the Union shall be vested in the Conference...'

No individual Member or Official has the authority to determine, overturn or end policies of the Union except through the democratic structures of the Union and ultimately through Conference.

STAFFORDSHIRE

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

This is my first conference. *Applause*. Moving resolution 82, Judges don't run our Union.

The FBU is the most important organisation in our careers as firefighters. We have been here for over 100 years and hopefully we will be here for over 100 more. The challenges we face are immense from government attacks and cuts to representing members from ever increasing punitive attacks from the fire bosses.

We need our union to function democratically and free from interference from those interests are not to the best of our members. The democracy of the union is sacred and we must defend that at all costs.

In recent times we have seen anti-trade union laws used against our union, laws which are designed to hinder and burden unions leading to interference from the courts attempting to undermine us as members. Our resolution seeks to send a message. This conference is our union's supreme government, and our union's democracy is a line not to be crossed. Our members will decide what decisions we do and do not take, and to those who are thinking of attacking our democracy we say this: whilst we work hard to represent and defend our members' day in and day out, you choose to try to hamper us. We will not stand by and allow that. We will stand up for our members against these attacks like we do all the others. Please support this resolution. President. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martin, does that have a seconder? Formally seconded. That's open for debate. Nobody. Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Conference, we haven't much to add from the executive other than to maybe expand the title and say "and the majority of judges are no friends of workers or trade unions".

Recent research has shown the UK is the worst violator of trade union rights in Europe at present whilst most other European countries were found to have the best protections for trade unions in the world. The rights tracked for that research are the right to strike, the right to collective bargaining, the right to establish or join a union, the right to access justice, the right to engage in trade union activities and the right to civil liberties. A decline in all of these

protections has been found across the world with workers in Europe particularly badly affected when it came to being excluded from the labour movement.

Judges often have the ability to influence law. The central purpose of a court is for resolution when the court achieves this by giving judgment in a particular case. For judges to make law, well, it is enough if they do their primary task of making a ruling in a case. They make law incidentally because of the effect that law gives to their rulings. The reason that bad law exists and is perpetrated is due to the majority of judges not ever seeking to advance workers' rights and, frankly, conference, why would they? They are firmly of the ruling class and no friend of the working class, and Staffordshire has highlighted quite well there the consequences of bad rulings of judges and we have had and seen a fair share of them recently.

So the executive council support resolution 82 and urge you to do the same. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I will now put resolution 82 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *carried*.

I now call resolution 83, Matzak, moved by Essex. The EC are seeking remit or they oppose.

Resolution 83 MATZAK

On the 21st February 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that Mr Matzak, a Belgian volunteer firefighter, whose on-call time when not at his place of work constituted working time. This ruling resulted from the interpretation of European Union Working Time Directive (WTD).

It is noted that the primary motive of the WTD is that of the welfare of the individual worker and not remuneration. However, given the low pay and poor retention rates of UK Retained firefighters this is a situation that cannot remain fully unexplored.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to seek immediate legal advice and guidance with the aim to explore enacting the ECJ ruling within Fire and Rescue Services.

ESSEX

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

For many fire and rescue services the retained duty system has for many years provided a significant proportion of their fire cover. It was recently reported that 70% of the UK land mass is covered by RDS personnel for there is no escaping the strains that the modern world of work is having upon the model and scarce benefits to any individual contemplating the role.

In the case of Matzak the European Court of Justice ruled that within certain parameters on-call time constitutes working time, and although this ruling was based upon the working time directive and essentially forms health and safety regulations, once any action has been determined as working time, the question of pay soon follows.

Given the hours of availability expected of RDS members, increased demands on training, maintenance and competence and continual professional development, the rates of pay for this commitment are incredibly low and in need of vast improvement. To that end the resolution reads:

“On the 21 February 2018 the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that Mr Matzak, a Belgian volunteer firefighter, whose on-call time when not at his place of work constituted working time. The ruling resulted from the interpretation of the European Union Working Time Directive (WTD).

“It is noted that the primary motive of the WTD is that of the welfare of the individual worker and not remuneration. However, given the low pay and poor retention rates of UK retained firefighters this is a situation that cannot remain fully unexplored. Conference instructs the executive council to seek immediate legal advice and guidance with the aim to explore enacting the ECJ ruling within fire and rescue services.”

I note the request to remit. To add a bit more to this, this is a collective grievance that was run in Essex over quite a considerable period of time. It obviously wasn't upheld. We requested for legal assistance that we didn't get, so

again noting the request to remit, we believe that an explanation and update for the FBU regarding the Matzak case may be needed.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andrew. Have I got a seconder?

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

Conference, no-one can deny the commitment our brothers and sisters make to work the retained duty system in the UK fire and rescue service, with people working further away from where they live and employers not wanting or being able to afford to leave their staff to respond to the alerter, there are less and less retained or potential retained firefighters available. For many, particularly those who are self-employed, the rate of pay as a firefighter means that to respond from work is to lose money.

If we consider the pay of a retained firefighter in relation to the hours of availability, their hourly rate becomes pennies instead of pounds. Conference, the days of providing a fire service on the cheap cannot continue. It is not acceptable to employ people on what can be considered a pittance and expect them to be available to respond at all times of the day and night.

Our retained brothers and sisters deserve more. Bringing the Matzak ruling into the UK fire service could bring improvement to the working hours, rest periods and also potentially remuneration of retained firefighters. Conference, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Bill. That is open to debate. Anybody? No. AGS.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

In terms of the Essex resolution, I have got to say that there were a number of legal cases both at employment tribunal and those that went to the European Courts. They looked at a number of different workers, many of them firefighters, but there is nuance of difference between the employment conditions and the contracts of those different workers, whether they be Belgian, whether they be the ET case, whether they be the cases taken in Dublin, and so on. And they weren't all uniform.

In all of those cases the detail is important. In some of the cases it was said that the rate of pay should be not the contractual rate but should be the minimum wage. In others it was that the working hours, it would be the working hours, but not the hours when you would ordinarily be expected to sleep. There is an awful lot of nuance involved.

I have to say a real issue for us is that success, or the possibility of success, or the potential for success, will be used against us, and we shouldn't wield a weapon which could be used against us especially if we are not even sure that it is a viable weapon to use in the first place.

The Essex resolution clearly does talk about seeking advice and it does talk about exploring, and we welcome that, but it does use the word "enact". We are very clear if members are due money they are due money. But we live in a fire and rescue service and we discussed earlier the NFCC. The NFCC is referenced in other resolutions yet to come.

I think everyone in this conference hall knows that the NFCC will use it to their advantage, and their advantage isn't for their organisation. As they see it, what advantages them for some bizarre reason is knocking the fire service, cutting the fire service and trying to persuade fire and rescue authorities to restrict or reduce the increases in pay that we get.

Like I say, it really is important that we know that if we are going to wield the weapon that we know it is going to be successful.

I have no doubt at all – this executive council has no doubt at all – that the moment they get wind that we are pursuing a challenge, that we have got a conference resolution that says we must enact a challenge, we are not

that far away from the pay talks for this year when the employers will come to us with a figure. The role of the NFCC would say, good chance they are going to win (whether they believe it or not). That would be a huge increase on the pay packet. You might want to consider a zero but certainly a low pay rise for this year, fire and rescue authority.

As I say, the Essex resolution is helpful in as much as it talks about getting advice, get legal advice, explore, but it does have, unfortunately, the tang of immediacy in terms of acting, and it is for that reason, Essex, we ask you to remit. Come what may, whether it is remitted, whether the resolution goes to the vote and is opposed by conference, or is supported by conference, this executive council will be getting that legal advice, but we ask Essex to remit it. We ask conference if Essex don't remit, to oppose it, to ensure it gives us tactical flexibility. Essex, I really do ask you to remit. Thank you Conference. Thank you president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Essex right of reply.

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

Thanks president. Conference, I accept the nuance and the complexity of these rulings and the potential for unintended consequences so we remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andrew. We now come to para J3, Breathing apparatus procedures; para J4, Manchester Arena Inquiry; para J5, Employment rights; para J6, Injuries at work; para J7, Medical negligence; para J8, Personal injury away from work; para J9, Road traffic accidents.

We now move to Section D, Fire and Rescue Service Policy. Para D1. I now call resolution 36, National Fire Chief Council Guidance and the lack of Fire Brigades Union National Direction for Brigade Officials moved by North Yorkshire. The EC are seeking remittance or they oppose. Just come up to the rostrum. I am just checking on the accuracy of the EC's position. That is correct. The EC are seeking remittance or they oppose.

Resolution 36 NATIONAL FIRE CHIEFS COUNCIL GUIDANCE AND THE LACK OF FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) NATIONAL DIRECTION FOR BRIGADE OFFICIALS.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Fire and Rescue Service Brigade Managers are acting collectively through National Operational Guidance (NOG) and other associated guidance. The FBU must also act collectively when challenging NFCC policy.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to;

- ***respond to all correspondence received regarding NOG and other associated guidance from the NFCC***
- ***review NFCC guidance and where appropriate issue its own national collective guidance for Brigade Secretaries***
- ***issue monthly Brigade Secretaries Circulars, advising of any FBU national collective guidance on NFCC publications***
- ***conduct virtual meetings to discuss NFCC publications and potential FBU national collective guidance. All Brigade Officials will be invited and these meetings will be chaired by an FBU National Officer with the aim of allowing Brigade Officials influence over the FBU response to NFCC guidance. Meetings will be at least every quarter or more frequently where necessary.***

NORTH YORKSHIRE

STEPHEN HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

We listened to what the EC have had to say about our remittance. This, for us, is a really important issue and something we feel that as a Union we have lost pace with the NFCC. We have heard a lot today about the NFCC, their movement, how they are organising and how they are coming together to fight us and our members. What this resolution is asking for is a commitment from the EC to look at the work, to put together a coordinated response to the attacks that we face on a daily basis through the NFCC. If you can provide that assurance, president, we will remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, thank you, conference. Thanks for that, comrade. The reason we were asking to remit was not because we are not unsympathetic to this resolution. Of course we are not. It was simply that we could not be assured that we could have delivered on it. I can give you the assurance that if we can find a way we will. The resolution says we should respond and should change all NFCC policy. Conference, we can assure you when it is unsafe, where it is disagreeable, where it is unfair, we do challenge NFCC policy. We have one of the best examples which we are going to be talking about in more detail later in this conference in regard to the scandalous, unsafe, unprofessional BA above the bridgehead policy that the NFCC are trying to impose on our members. Not only do we challenge that, we are successful in challenging that.

The resolution talks about responding to all correspondence. The fact is we don't receive it all. Their structures are simply not designed in a way to always give us genuine influence for change. We absolutely agree with you in the guidance. We can give you assurance on issuing the brigade secretary circulars as and when we do. We have said previously, particularly throughout this pandemic, we are keen to expand on virtual briefings, virtual discussions in all areas, and NOG is absolutely no exception so we welcome that part of the resolution.

Hopefully those assurances are enough for you to remit this resolution and the commitments that we are giving. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Steve.

STEPHEN HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

President, conference, Riccardo, we accept the majority of what you have said there. We would suggest that NOG is now a massive part of policy and procedure within the fire and rescue service, and for that we do really need to coordinate from a national basis to provide officials and reps with the information that they need to challenge this in a collective manner, so we will remit on the proviso that you deliver what you have just said.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Yes, absolutely, comrade. Conference, we can absolutely give that assurance.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference, I now call resolution 37, National Appliance Availability Standards, moved by North Wales. The EC give qualified support. North Wales.

Resolution 37 NATIONAL APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY STANDARDS

In the past Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) were required to meet standards for response times, known as standards of fire cover and these were subsequently abolished. In recent years FRSs throughout the country have seen a steady decrease in appliance availability, particularly in rural areas who are largely reliant on on-call RDS staff. This has undoubtedly resulted in potentially preventable fire deaths and firefighters being put at higher risk.

This resolution would seek to stop this and introduce accountability at the highest level to what Conference believes to be our most important job, that of keeping our firefighters and communities safe by providing an adequate emergency response when needed.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to investigate the introduction of a nationally agreed formal appliance availability measuring and recording mechanism. This will allow FRSs to Benchmark their performance, with a formal record of this. Measuring performance will enable FRSs to plan for improvement and measure the success (or otherwise) of their emergency response and availability strategy.

Conference instructs the EC to develop this mechanism through negotiation with our employers.

NORTH WALES

TIM LLOYD (North Wales):

We are bringing to the conference the resolution where we are making a formal request to revisit our national standard fire cover. What I will do is explain to you the situation in North Wales which I am sure will sound familiar to many of those services out there, particularly services like ours who are predominantly a rural service.

In North Wales we have got 44 fire stations, 8 of them wholetime, the remainder are RDS stations, and of those stations we should have on paper 54 fire appliances available to us at all times. The reality is that our managers have taken it upon themselves to set themselves a target of 20 appliances. Twenty appliances from 54 is what they hoped to achieve. The reality is that they don't achieve that. There have been occasions from the 45 retained pumps that should be available where we can only crew three of them. That is how serious the situation is in North Wales.

The problem is that nobody needs to be accountable for that, so there is no need for our managers, our Principal Officers to show any accountability. They can make whatever decisions they want. There is no bench marking, there is no standard that they have to reach as there was in the past. I am sure many of you will remember the old standards of fire cover, the ABCD risk. They were there to ensure that we were able to provide an adequate fire cover, not only keeping our communities safe but also keeping our firefighters safe because what happens is when we can only turn out a whole time pump and the second pump is just not available and it is not coming from anywhere, it is putting our firefighters at risk and that is the issue that we face in North Wales, and I am sure it is the issue that many other services out there in a similar situation to ours who can't recruit retained staff, and who cannot retain retained staff. It continues to get worse and worse.

Over the years we have seen a steady decline and nobody seems to be concerned about it apart from us the local FBU officials, which is why we are asking to revisit at a national level, to go back, talk to the employers and say, "Look, this is something that we need and we need it not only for the safety of our crews and our firefighters, but for the safety of our communities."

Conference, North Wales presents this resolution and we ask you to support. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tim. Do I have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. That is open for debate.

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

Conference, just a very quick word. Scotland supports the North Wales resolution but again the devil will be in the detail as to achievability. We share similar problems to North Wales in relation to making up appliances. Scotland has 356 stations, 533 appliances. It is important how we record that and how we gather that information. Scotland supports because we recognise the importance of this. There are far too many fire engines that are effectively just sitting as a gilt framed example of resilience to the public, that in reality have no ability to be mobilised and no firefighters to staff them.

The scale of the problem is huge. The fundamental issue behind it is the Fire and Rescue Authorities have continually watched as our members' pay has been eroded, both our full time members and our retained members. That is the fundamental issue that has resulted in the situation that we have today.

As I said, Scotland absolutely supports North Wales' resolution but how we as a union in a brigade such as ours records that statistic is going to be a significant challenge, particularly as we do not have the assistance of the employer in doing so, which I absolutely doubt.

So Scotland supports but the devil, as I said, will be in the detail of how we go about doing that, but we recognise how valuable it will be to many brigades.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John. Anybody else to speak in the debate?

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

Speaking for the first time – in a while. *Applause*. We discussed this at length in Bedfordshire. It was a resolution that strikes at the heart of what is going on at the minute over the last couple of years.

We had a situation in December 2020 where an appliance took 17 minutes to attend a house fire in one of our retained station areas. The fall out from that has been a suite of cover provisions have been provided by the service which we argue should be to employ enough people to crew the appliances, and they have not done that.

The only thing about this resolution that raised some concern with us was about the bench marking and measuring, because we do not necessarily believe that league tables are the best way forward. Bedfordshire, in principle, support the resolution and we would encourage you to do the same. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Jamie. Anybody else in the debate? No. AGS to give the qualification.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

It is a very minor qualification. I mean it is undoubtedly, the bureaucrat's qualification to the resolution and that is simply this: that we really do need 100% of returns.

Let's face it. We don't get everything done. We don't get everything done, and sometimes brigade officials don't get everything done. If we are going to challenge this in parliament, with government departments at select committees, we really do need to have a 100% return from brigades so that we can say with absolute confidence – and more importantly say these are assured figures – in terms of the data that we present to MPs, to select committees, to ministers, to the departments.

I just want to urge this, and it probably won't be for the first time at this conference, that we do say we will do this work undoubtedly. It is absolutely key; it is absolutely vital. Already one brigade this morning has come up (it was North Yorkshire) to say they are expecting more cuts, and the biggest issue is the one about retained cover.

I am spending a long time here on a very short qualification, but we cannot urge enough that when we put the survey out, when we ask for the data, whether you do it yourselves or you have got an anorak that can supply that data for you, please do return the information. It is absolutely vital, a key issue. Conference has said it many times today. It has been said quite powerfully today by the speakers from the floor. I just want to urge that: we do need the information and we need it returned. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. I will now put resolution 37 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 38, Maternity Policies, moved by Cumbria. The executive council support.

Resolution 38 MATERNITY POLICIES

Conference demands the Executive Council (EC) coordinate a campaign for national standardisation on maternity policies across all Fire and Rescue Services for the purpose of equality for all our female Members.

Due to the differences in maternity policies across the country Conference believes that there needs to be a strong national campaign of solidarity to ensure equal terms and conditions amongst our female Members. This campaign will include the EC negotiating with the National Joint Council to raise the minimum standards.

CUMBRIA

EDWARD BURROWS (Cumbria):

Moving resolution 38, Maternity Policies. Our female members are still seeing different conditions across services in maternity policies across the UK. It is ridiculous that you get full sick pay for six months when most policies don't even match that. This is unfair and needs seriously to be addressed.

Region 5 have done a table of comparisons. We ranged massively from 52 weeks paid leave in Cheshire including the leave down to Cumbria which is the worst, absolutely the worse. The excuse is it is a poor brigade. But there is massive recruitment in women across the UK. We are advertising that league table to our region. We know the chiefs see it and we are trying to embarrass and shame them. Is it working? Possibly, slowly, but we need to kick hard and we need to kick them hard and again and again until we get this right.

We need to support our female members. I cannot think anything worse than being given less pay than someone that has broken a leg. The EC must go to the NJC, demand the absolute best that is out there, maybe even go a little bit higher. Make it a national standard. Why should we have differences? A firefighter is a firefighter wherever they are. If they transfer, they should get the same rights wherever they go.

It is unfair and we need to reinvigorate and continue fighting for equality for our sister members across the UK. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ed. Does it have a seconder?

ROSA CROWLEY-BENNETT (NWC):

The National Women's Committee welcome and support this resolution which recognises the huge disparities in maternity provisions across fire and rescue services. This affects so many women members that we have. We thank Cumbria for bringing this motion to conference and we thank Ed for the work that he has done in region 5. We urge other regions to do the same by shaming those services which have the bare minimum maternity provision, and we hope that through this work we can really help so many of our women members to get equality for all women members across fire and rescue services everywhere. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rosa. That's open for debate. Anybody?

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you president, thank you conference. The executive council are supporting this resolution. It is entirely consistent with this union's commitment to equality, and commitments cannot be simply just that. We need to deliver on them.

It is absolutely scandalous that our members' maternity provisions are down to a postcode lottery or are dictated by the benevolence or otherwise of the boss and, as we have heard in previous debates today, there ain't too many of them out there.

This union, conference, as delegates will know, we do not await a benevolent boss to gift us fairness. If something is unfair in this union we organise, we demand it and we win it, and that is what has to be at the heart of this resolution and what we understand it to be asking for. Work is ongoing in this area. The NWC are doing some great work on the FBU maternity policy document together with head office and our legal team, and we hope to be able to deliver outcomes of that very soon.

I can also report that head office are working on our maternity claim and we will liaise with the NWC, we will liaise with the Fairness at Work committees in doing so, so the EC supports, please support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Riccardo. I will now put resolution 38 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on resolution 39, National Fire Chiefs Council, Direct Entry moved by Essex. The EC support.

Resolution 39 NATIONAL FIRE CHIEFS COUNCIL (NFCC) DIRECT ENTRY

Conference notes with concern the NFCC programme for 'Direct Entry' applicants into the role of Station Manager and Area Manager.

Conference acknowledges that one of the aims of this programme is to improve the diversity of Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in the UK and in isolation this is indeed an admirable goal. However, firefighting is a dangerous profession that is only made more so by placing managers in operational supervisory positions with little to no experience of actual incidents. Conference does not believe that this will have a positive effect on the diversity, culture or the operational capabilities of FRSs. Conference instructs the Executive Council to conduct research of our own, into redressing current barriers for promotion for firefighters from the equality sections within FRSs and publicly oppose the NFCC Direct Entry programme with the Home Office, National Joint Council, NFCC, Local Government Association and other appropriate bodies.

ESSEX

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

The NFCC Direct Entry scheme aims to take individuals from out of sector industries and create competent area managers in two years and competent station managers in three years. These are operational roles aligned to existing role maps. The Health and Safety Executive states that competence can be described as a combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely. Training can provide the skills and knowledge, but experience is the application of those real world and real time situations, that being for the fire and rescue service, operational incidents: incidents that can be highly varied, dangerous, fast moving and require an in depth knowledge of fire and rescue service policies, procedures, and potential hazards to resolve an incident in a safe and professional manner.

To allow operational supervisory managers to be in charge of incidents without the benefit gained over multiple years of attending incidents of increasing size and spans of control is irresponsible and dangerous for FBU members, the public and even to the wellbeing of the individuals themselves.

The resolution reads:

“Conference notes with concern the NFCC programme for ‘Direct Entry’ applicants into the role of station Manager and Area Manager.

“Conference acknowledges that one of the aims of this programme is to improve the diversity of Fire and rescue Services (FRSs) in the UK and in isolation this is indeed an admirable goal.

However, firefighting is a dangerous profession that is only made more so by placing managers in operational supervisory positions with little to no experience of actual incidents.

“Conference does not believe that this will have a positive effect on the diversity, culture or the operational capabilities of FRSs.

“Conference instructs the Executive Council to conduct research of our own, into redressing current barriers for promotion for firefighters from the equality sections with FRSs and publicly oppose the NFCC Direct Entry programme with the Home Office, National Joint Council, NFCC, Local Government Association and other appropriate bodies.” I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, do you agree to suspend your standing orders to finish this debate? *Agreed*. Thank you. Does that resolution have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That is open for debate. Anybody? No.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

I will keep it really quick. I was going to do that anyway. We are engaged with the NFCC on their Direct Entry project. I do want to thank the ONC officials for the assistance they have been giving us. It is still ongoing. They have not finalised it. As you know, historically there has been a number of direct entry schemes or programmes operated by individual fire and rescue services. They have not necessarily pooled those together and just amalgamated them. There has been some movement on the current NFCC project away from linking it to the diversity project, and that is quite useful in as much as if it does fail, we do not want it to be a failure that is associated with diversity projects.

The fact is whether it is part of a diversity project or not, there is a problem with direct entry. I think it was summed up quite well just now. Actually, we have got good people in this service, in our membership, male and female. They

have got all the attributes, all the skills, all the experience, all the commitment, who are not looking to increase their CV “I want to work for the fire service for a number of years at a quite high level and then leave”. Our people in this service, lifetime commitment, this is their career, this is your career, male or female. Direct entry, we are not too happy with it. We get the resolution. We support. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. I now put resolution 39 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, we have now come to the end of today’s business. I have just been passed a note. The Justice for Columbia Fringe is in the Charlotte Room at the back of conference at 5.45. It also says on it, “There is free cake”. And a free drink apparently. Thanks, conference. We are adjourned for today.

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Morning, conference. Are you all feeling fresh? Some bleary eyes out there after last night. I now call Phil Millar, chair of the standing orders committee, to give the standing orders report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Morning, conference. Can you turn to your programme of business please? Page 7, resolution 22 has been remitted. Also on page 7, resolution 7 has been remitted. If you could turn to page 9, resolution 41 has been remitted. On page 10, resolution 30 has been withdrawn.

Conference, would you please turn to your delegates List. Region 4, West Yorkshire, Martyn Bairstow has been removed and replaced with Matthew Heron. Region 5, Cumbria, Edward Burrows has been removed and replaced with Oliver Burrow. Greater Manchester, Dan Giblin has been removed and replaced with Matt Fryer. Region 7, West Midlands, William Atwell has been replaced with Alice Williams. London region 10, Simon Kenton has been replaced by Mickey Basi. In Region 13, Dorset and Wiltshire, Andy Corben has been replaced with Diane Critchlow.

Conference, the record of decisions for business moved yesterday has now been circulated in accordance with standing order 17, and emergency resolution 3 has now been circulated and I have to inform conference that the standing orders committee have ruled it out of order as it could have been submitted prior to the deadline of Friday at 2pm and refers to an issue that occurred well before that on 11 March. That is not to take away from the seriousness of the resolution but it is a procedural issue.

Conference, standing orders wish to thank you for the attendance last night at the fringe meeting. It was truly outstanding and thank you very much for that. There are two fringe meetings today, one this afternoon and one this evening. The one this afternoon is at 1pm in the Charlotte Room and it is the Institute of Employment Rights. The one this evening, we would really like to see your attendance at that if you could, it is the Cuba Solidarity Campaign also in the Charlotte Room, and if we could have a similar attendance to last night that would be superb. Thank you, president. That concludes the report.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. It is big congratulations to West Midlands because it is the first time in their history that they have got an all-women delegation to conference. *Applause*.

I now ask you to turn to page 7 of the programme of business and for those new delegates, what we have to do, as I said in the opening yesterday, we have to cover every paragraph within the annual report so there is a little bit of jumping about. Because we move debates and EC policy statements, when we do, we have to jump about. So we try to follow the programme of business as near as we can, but there is a bit of jumping about.

It is page 7 and we move into section A pay and conditions. Para A1. Can I now ask you to turn to page 8 of the programme of business and we are on to para A5 FBU pay claim, and I will be taking executive council policy statement on pay and the cost of living crisis and the following resolutions will all be taken in the same debate and all can carry together: resolution 10, Pay, from Cambridgeshire; resolution 21, addressing the need for an urgent campaign to deliver an increase in pay in fire and rescue services moved by Cheshire; resolution 12, adult social care and the future pay strategy from South Yorkshire; resolution 14, health and social care work moved by West Midlands; resolution 18 slips, trips and falls moved by Scotland. They will all be taken in the same debate.

I now call on executive council policy statement moved by the general secretary – pay and the cost of living crisis.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president, morning conference. Comrades, this is an absolutely central debate for our conference this year.

When the executive council decided to submit a statement on the cost of living crisis and pay, we knew that the situation was fast moving, and we are in an economic crisis and one in its early stages. It is a crisis that poses a

threat to the standards of living of our members and to workers across the country. In many ways it is likely to get worse before it gets better. The speed with which this crisis has taken hold has been staggering.

In February the Bank of England warned of rises in CPI inflation to take place during the spring and that has been confirmed with CPI rising to 7%. The answer of the Bank of England official, if you followed the press, was to call on workers to tighten their belts. That is the answer of the Bank of England, and indeed, as we will see, of our government. We expect worse to come as the inflation figures are released over the coming months.

The impact of this on domestic bills has been that domestic gas prices have increased by 28%, electricity prices by 19%, nearly a quarter of adults have reported that it is becoming increasingly difficult to pay their normal household bills which have increased up from 17% from November of last year. More than four in ten (43%) have reported that it is difficult to afford their energy bills. Of all adults, 17% have reported borrowing more money or using a credit card more than they did a year ago in March 2022.

In the press only this week we have had reports that some two million adults in the UK, one of the richest countries in the world, are going regularly without food for a day or more. The same article reports that some 7.3 million people are identified as food insecure. So we live in a society that can find billions for weapons of destruction but peanuts for working people's living standards.

The response of the Westminster government has been worse than useless. In March the chancellor issued his spring statement offering absolutely nothing to the majority of working class people. He is continuing with his planned national insurance rise which will increase taxes on working people and ensure that they get less in their April pay cheques than they had in March. He did offer a loan to people and a council tax rebate if you are lucky enough to qualify for it, a complete insult to the millions upon millions of people struggling to meet the cost of living and pay their bills, their rent or their mortgages.

Meanwhile, we discover that his partner has had non-dom tax status for years for which she paid thirty grand in order to protect millions and millions of her own wealth. Nice if you can get it!

They don't have to worry about paying the bills, paying the mortgage, feeding or clothing the kids. And we get told by these people that people like us preach class war but actually they are far too busy implementing class war, a war on ordinary people. If you look at every single policy that we see coming out of this government, it is designed to protect those in power and to make ordinary people pay the cost of their crisis. It is a government of the millionaires for the billionaires. That is the situation we face, and we need to create a movement that will challenge them and put the demands of ordinary working people first.

Within that broader context, as a union we face the particular problems facing firefighters and firefighters' pay. The central issue for us today is to discuss what we do about that. We shouldn't pretend there are easy answers. If there were easy answers, we would have solved that years ago, but like every other union in the country, we are struggling to grapple with austerity and the impact of austerity on our members and on our industry.

We have faced austerity policies for twelve years now and it has meant funding for our Service from central government has been cut by 30% over that period. Austerity continues. The truth is that the funding for pay rises for firefighters comes out of taxation, either central taxation provided by central government or local taxation provided by council tax payers. Different provisions apply in different parts of the UK outside of England.

They imposed, as we know, a 0% increase initially and then a 1% and then a 2% limit. Even last year the impact of that on our members has been over the course of the year since 2010 something like a 12% reduction in real wages, something like £4,000 a year. That is what our members are owed.

Last year we got 1.5% in a pay settlement. Many in the public sector got nothing. The truth is that inflation has now wiped out pay rises for workers all across all sectors. It is a class wide, movement wide, issue and we need a movement wide response. FBU members need a pay rise and all workers need a pay rise.

I think it is time for us at conference to review and assess the debates we have had over the years, the strategies we have pursued and the success or otherwise of those various strategies and tactics. We have seen significant developments in recent months in terms of the settlement in Greater Manchester and London on MTA work, an issue that has been with us for something like 11 years since it was first raised by central government with this union.

There are things to criticise in those offers that our members accepted but it was better than we had received before, and better than in place elsewhere across the country. It laid down an important precedent for us in discussions with our employers and it is this: yes, we will discuss new areas of work but to do that we demand negotiations, we demand the resources being put in, we demand acceptance that these are contractual matters and we demand pay for doing that work as well.

That is something we need to take into our negotiations on other matters. It confirms our strategy of addressing new areas of work that we can deliver even in the most hostile of environments and even with a hostile government and a hostile chief inspector who attempted to derail those discussions in those two brigades, because we have them and the chief officers and the NFCC saying to government time and again, “We can get these people to do all this work for nothing.” That is something that we have to challenge and take up.

So, yes, we need to review that strategy and we need to review the details of it, but that remains one of the key elements of how we seek to protect and improve our members in terms of pay and living standards.

Coming back to how that fits into the broader movement, we have to remember we are not alone. Every single public sector worker across the UK faces the same challenges that we do, so we have to look beyond the fire stations, beyond the emergency fire control to see if we can build a movement that can challenge this government, challenge its austerity agenda and turn the tide of the attacks on working people.

We have on 18 June a national demonstration called by the TUC to demand better, and we certainly need to demand better of this government and, indeed, of our own movement. Demonstrations can be used to mobilise. If you look at all the turning points where this union has fought back, in the run up to the pensions’ strikes, in the run up to the local disputes that we have had, mobilising our members to turn out, to discuss the issues, to organise and to turn out on demonstrations, to protest, to build that unity, that strength, that confidence, that strength of feeling, is essential to that. So we need to mobilise for that demonstration and that is a task, I think, that this conference should set itself from today that we will turn out a large demonstration of FBU members from across the country to support that TUC demonstration.

I will finish with a few words on where we are in terms of the aftermath of the pandemic. The pandemic has derailed many things. It disrupted us as a union, it has disrupted everyone’s lives. I am sure everyone knows people who have suffered or died as a result of the pandemic. It has altered some of our assessments of the situation that we are facing. It has disrupted us and prevented us from having conferences, and from pursuing some of our strategies in the ways that we would have wished to have done.

The reality of that is that that horrific pandemic has killed 150,000 people in this country and millions of people worldwide. The truth is this that many of those deaths were completely avoidable, and it says something about the people who run the governments of the world that they were willing to sacrifice so many lives because they were not willing to follow the correct policies. The failure to provide PPE, the failure to plan, the failure to invest. That gives you an indication of the world that we live in and the people who run it.

Now, in the aftermath of Covid, if you look at government economic policy, it is to make workers’ pay the price for the cost of the pandemic. The pandemic has pushed up public sector borrowing requirements and cost billions to the economy, and their answer is that you, your work mates and workers across the country will pay the price as the Bank of England tell us by tightening our belts and accepting further low pay rises and further cuts in our living standards.

So we have to say no to that. We do have to review our strategy. We do have to build our resistance in the work places. It is not enough to pass resolutions here. The question is what we do in every single work place to take the

argument of the conference here, to build confidence and convince people that they need to be ready to stand up and fight back if they want to win a pay rise.

The questions we will come on to, and we will address in the debate in a moment, on work outside of role. Yes, we need to review that. Yes, we need to build policies, advice to ensure that our members are not undertaking work for which they are not being paid or trained or resourced. We need to build that campaign in the work place, but ultimately it means building the confidence and determination of members to say no.

I think we need to look back at some of our own traditions in this union, the lessons that we can learn from the past. Between 2005 and 2010 we had strike after strike after strike in this union: to say we are not having shift changes imposed on us; to say that you are not going to fire and rehire us, if you try that we will take strike action; and we did that across the country. We saw strikes in Hertfordshire, in Suffolk, in Essex, in Merseyside, in London, in South Yorkshire, and we should remember all the lessons that we learned from those.

It comes down to this: to members deciding that enough is enough and we need to stand together and say we are not having this. We need a pay rise. Actually we need to look further back. The best and most long standing pay rise this union ever won was in 1978 in the aftermath of the 1977 strike. Those are the traditions that we need to rebuild, but let's remember what that took. That was a nine week all out strike. I think those are the sorts of levels of struggle that we are going to have to put to our members if we are going to win the sort of pay rise, professional pay mechanisms that we need.

The truth is that whether it is in 1977 or 2005 or 2011 people outside of this hall, people in government, people in chief officers' offices have always thought they could walk all over our members. Our job is to make sure that they cannot do it, because when we stand together we know that we are invincible. That is the job that we face today. We need to hear the various views, debates, concerns that people have about the work outside of the role, about the length of time we discussed pay. The challenges have to be in that broader context.

So comrades, let us have a lively debate. We want to hear the views of brigade committees across the country. We face a challenge on pay and our task today is to ensure that we set out in front of this union the mechanism, the strategy and the tactics to achieve pay rises for our members. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Derbyshire to second.

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

Seconding the EC policy statement on cost of living and pay in the fire and rescue service.

The level of detail has already been provided by Matt and I am not going to try to go into it or even attempt to take snippets from it. So I am going to look at this from a more simplistic perspective as though this is some kind of a branch meeting with an excellent attendance, so a very different perspective maybe.

I think we need to talk in that language, comrades. I think we need to talk in the language that our firefighters understand. Matt has detailed some of the difficulties that we have got, but we need firefighters on the ground who are different now. They are different from me, they different from you, they are a different type of people. They are younger people from all sorts of backgrounds and we need to be able to link up with them, speak the language that they are going to understand. For me it is important that we take away the message from today around this EC policy statement and how that translates into your stations.

So the cost of living. Frankly, that affects firefighters. It affects everybody in the UK right now, but for us, for the Fire Brigades Union, it affects our members and that is the most important thing. It affects everybody in this room. We are all different, we all have different pressures, but frankly it affects everybody in this room. And we have still got huge companies, multinational business, reaping huge benefits, huge profits and actually publicising them quite openly with the media frenzying on it whilst people are struggling to pay bills, literally choose heat or eat, which is a saying that is being thrown around. But we have to realise that there are probably firefighters, in fact I know there firefighters and I am sure most of you will know, in that situation.

So when we say these things we are not talking about the other people, we are talking about people, we are talking our members and we need to link up with those people and offer what support we can.

This government. Matt has said quite a lot about them already and a lot of people have said a lot about them already over the last couple of days, but they have done absolutely nothing to help working people, to help firefighters. Some of us, a lot of us, will probably have had £150 stuffed in our bank accounts to go towards our bills. Thanks very much; my bills have gone up 150%. 150%, comrades, not 150 quid. That 150 quid is an absolute sham. *Applause*. Conference, that is an insult. To pretend that is some kind of solution to the problems that we are facing is an insult, and we need to be broadcasting that really loud across our branches.

Our members are probably welcoming that money but we know it goes absolutely nowhere towards supporting their cost of living, and if their cost of living is being affected, then their work is being affected as well because they are having difficulties at home and they are having challenges at work.

So pay in the fire and rescue service – well, it is a massive challenge for us. It has been a challenge, I think, ever since I came to my first conference. I took on the role of maybe branch rep or brigade rep, I can't remember, and it was about 2007 and before you know it the banking crisis has hit. Ever since then I have been campaigning for nothing basically for about 12 years. So, you know, pay has been a constant subject of pain for us, certainly for me since I arrived here. But we do need to continue campaigning, we do need to continue organising and preparing, and I like what Dan Giblin said yesterday, you know, it is not about paying your fees, waiting until you are in trouble, it is about arming our members ready to fight.

We have just made reference to the nine week strike. It is not about saying, "Yes, I think I can make it, I should be OK." People need to realise that if they are not standing up for themselves, for each other and fighting on pay, then pay will never be improved to the levels that we as a union want to see. So it is no good sitting at station complaining about pay if they are not ready and armed to do that. We need to be the catalyst. We can't do it for them but we can educate, we can organise and we can agitate and get them ready to actually fight for pay for themselves as a union together and united.

The role of a firefighter is again ever changing. We have to look at the issues that this is presenting us, and there is going to be some debate in the other resolutions about the role of a firefighter. I have spoken on it before and I have felt the pain when I have listened to West Midlands and the struggles that they have had. We need to sort out this mess around the role of a firefighter. Let us be clear, our strategy has been to discuss the role of a firefighter so we have said we will continue to discuss that. Covid-19 pandemic hit and what happened? We discussed nationally what we can do as firefighters, as a service, as a sector to support that response. So the evidence is there that we will and can discuss these things, and we will ensure that we do that.

It is hard, comrades, it really is, but our firefighters are willing to help, they are willing to do extra and they are willing to do that, but they need to help themselves first and foremost so that they can help each other and help their own families and they need to be rewarded in due course.

If it comes to it we need to organise locally, regionally and that will feed into this national strategy that has been set out by the EC. So for me, investment in our service is vital – I am finishing up now, president, thank you – the Tories will never invest in our service so our political strategy is key as well that we continue with our political strategy to ensure that we campaign and pressurise any government that is coming in to ensure that we get the investment in our service.

Comrades prepare each other, organise those branches, educate, agitate and, if we need to, we will hit the button to take industrial action. Conference, I second. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. I now call on resolution 10, pay, moved by Cambridgeshire. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 10 PAY

Conference notes the strategy on pay has been one of constant flux since 2007 and firefighters today are financially worse off in real terms.

The work undertaken to date on expanding the rolemaps has not yet yielded a positive outcome nor an increase in firefighter pay, therefore a new direction is needed to achieve this.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to devise a new pay strategy, focusing on key areas of work, including but not limited to;

- ***environmental challenges including water rescue/flood response***
- ***working with other emergency services***
- ***line Rescue***
- ***MTA/MTFA.***

Conference instructs the EC to report back before Conference 2023.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

GEORGE WHITE (Cambridgeshire):

Resolution 10 instructs the EC to devise a new pay strategy and report back before conference 2023.

I am disappointed that I need to bring this resolution to conference because we already have a live resolution on pay. That resolution was passed at the last in-person conference in 2019. That resolution demanded that the EC take action immediately. It would appear that little action was taken and there was no withdrawal from non-contractual or non-agreed work.

In the nine months between conference 2019 and the first lockdown this resolution was not acted upon. It is now pointless to debate why this resolution was not actioned, but we are regularly reminded that conference is the parliament of our union. If our resolutions are carried and not acted upon, what is the point of holding an annual conference?

I realise that I am only talking about one resolution out of many: reclaiming annual leave, loss of sickness, prostate cancer and a national bonus survey; they are all important, of course they are. Work was carried out on them. But the pay resolution was arguably the most important one at that conference. Pay affects us now in our wages and later on in our pensions. We do need a proper pay rise. We need it now and for the work we currently do.

The previous resolution delivered nothing, so out of frustration we have submitted another on pay. Conference, please support this resolution and ensure your elected officials act upon it so this is not brought to conference a third time. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, George. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* I now call resolution 21, addressing the need for an urgent campaign to deliver an increase in pay in the fire and rescue service moved by Cheshire. The EC are seeking Cheshire to remit.

Resolution 21 ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR AN URGENT CAMPAIGN TO DELIVER AN INCREASE IN PAY IN FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (FRSs)

Conference notes with alarm the current cost of living crisis which has followed more than a decade of government imposed public sector pay restraint.

Estimates indicate that firefighter pay has now fallen more than four thousand pounds below where current pay rates should be had pay awards matched inflationary pressures over this period. It is already clear who is going to pay the price for the current failed economic model and poor political choices with working people expected to take the hit. This was made clear by the comments of Andrew Bailey the Governor of the Bank of England, who has publicly declared that workers should show restraint in the annual wage-bargaining process over the next few years. Conference is aware that a Fire Brigades Union (FBU) pay strategy has been discussed for more than six years yet has still failed to address this shortfall via an acceptable pay increase and a sustainable model moving forward. Conference refers to the last physical Conference back in

2019, whereby the following was agreed;

Emergency Resolution 1 – Fire service pay and the future of the fire and rescue service – moved by the Executive Council, which included

‘(4) To take every step necessary to prepare members for industrial action should negotiations with our employers prove unsuccessful. This will include regular reports to the executive council in regards to campaigning, state of readiness, balloting arrangements and related matters.’

Emergency Resolution 6 – Pay strategy – moved by Cambridgeshire, which included;

‘(5) That plans are drawn up for a major campaign of lobbying at local and national level to highlight the gross underfunding of the fire and rescue service and to make the case for investment and for significant increases in pay for Grey Book staff.

(6) That members are consulted on the need to prepare for industrial action. This includes the need to prepare for strike action as well as developing plans for a withdrawal from all non-agreed or non-contractual work currently undertaken within the service.’

The General Secretary in delivering the position of the Executive Council (EC) to the debate and motions on pay states: “But I can give assurance, the resolution is clear. There is no shirking from that from the Executive Council. That’s why this resolution has been brought here: to begin to set out in detail those timelines.”

Conference is well aware that three years have since passed and the pay settlement that is desperately needed in our profession is no nearer now than it was at the start of the pay strategy, that is something that all of us must take responsibility for, and something we must collectively address.

To this end Conference instructs the EC to organise;

- **a full political demonstration and lobbying of parliament on Pay in FRSs to take place within 6 months of the close of Conference 2022**
- **following the demonstration and lobbying of parliament above, a full consultative ballot on taking industrial action up to and including strike action will be conducted and the results kept confidential to the EC with a view to assess whether an industrial campaign and ballot can commence or whether work in specific areas or regions needs to be carried out in order to deliver a successful industrial ballot.**

CHESHIRE

THE PRESIDENT:

It should be the EC are seeking remittance or they oppose. I do apologise.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

As expected, thank you president. Declining the request to remit and instead moving resolution 21. Bluntly, this is a debate we must now have.

Since 2009 firefighter pay has risen by 15.7%. During this period inflation has risen to 35.8%. That has resulted in firefighters being approximately £5,000 below where they should be. It should also be noted that during this period MPs and chief fire officers’ pay has risen exponentially. The pay strategy in response to the austerity agenda that was – is the microphone on? *Technical difficulties with microphone*

In response to the public sector pay cap and the austerity agenda, in 2016 we initiated a pay strategy. That pay strategy has seen broadening the role of a firefighter, it has seen the publication of academic research demonstrating the value of our role and what it could look like. That has all been fantastic. We are certainly not from Cheshire criticising that work.

But let’s be honest, the strategy has failed to convince those responsible to deliver a pay deal or to secure the funding and investment required, but still we persist each year with a succession of EC policy statements on pay that have no real, material or binding actions, but rather mandates us to undertake all possible avenues to secure a pay rise.

The impact of this is unsustainable. Not only have we seen firefighters leave our profession for other industries, firefighters not being able to support families or have any real quality of life, but quite incredibly in five years a

firefighter who retired in 2009 with an uncommuted pension will draw more in monthly pension payments than a serving firefighter on a 42 hour week. Let that sink in. That is the level of where we are. That is unacceptable.

To remedy that deficit a firefighter to sort out pay stagnation needs to be on today £37,821. *Intermittent microphone problems* ... that our members deserve... that they desperately... an industrial campaign.

I would urge you to look at UNITE and GMB, the past few months during the same difficulties that we are facing with this government. Industrial disputes across multiple sectors of this country. We have had pay settlements of 6% on Manchester Metrolink, 11%, 17%, 25% for workers in Wigan, Co-op drivers 10%, 17.5% pay rises for Liverpool tanker drivers, DHL, Sainsburys, 14%, and only this week 22% for local authority workers in Manchester.

None of us want to strike or to threaten to strike but we have to be honest and realistic that we won't achieve anything if we don't accept that the strategy has failed to deliver what we had hoped and move on to the next phase.

The reason that Cheshire are not agreeing to remit this motion is because we tabled the request for firm commitments on dates for political lobbying and consultative ballots in 2019. That is page 53. The response was "The resolution says that this will allow us to assess the strength of feeling, assess the work done, assess region by region, brigade by brigade where we are in terms." That was the commitment given. We don't believe that has been undertaken.

We also put an amendment in 2021, last year's conference, page 31: We were thanked for withdrawing the amendment and in terms of the work called for "Cheshire make a good point. We need to ensure that we are engaging with every branch assessing where we are as quickly as possible and regularly."

So ultimately, conference, the reason we will not remit is because we cannot afford to be sat here in another 12 months in 2023. This motion calls for a time bound political lobby and a campaign followed by an indicative ballot – to clarify, that is not a trade ballot to take people out the doors – that is an indicative consultative ballot to see where the strengths and weaknesses are in our union at present.

We need to get off our knees and demand more than 1% year on year. Comrades, we cannot afford not to. Support the resolution. I move. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy, and we will check the mike out. Will delegates just use this one for now, hopefully we will not have the same problems on that one. Does that have a seconder?

BRIAN FLANAGAN (London):

I speak in support of this resolution. Pay is and always has been probably the most discussed about subject amongst members in ours and probably all your regions also. This is even more prevalent today with the spiralling cost of living and many firefighters in all areas of the country struggling to afford the most basic of household bills, even more so now some officials are not allowed to undertake part-time work.

The pay strategy that has been persisted with by our executive has clearly not worked and not delivered the improvements on pay that will make a day to day difference, and this is causing much frustration ... [*Microphone fault*]. We clearly need to put pressure on government and employers on pay and a consultative ballot ... Talk is cheap. Action is needed.

PRESIDENT:

Conference, we are going to take a short adjournment and see if we can sort out the sound problems.

BRIAN FLANAGAN (London):

I only had five more words to say. *Laughter*.

Short adjournment

THE PRESIDENT:

Fingers crossed that the glitch is fixed. Can I just remind everyone to make sure their phones are switched off.

I now call on resolution 12, Adult Social Care and the Future Pay Strategy moved by South Yorkshire. The EC are seeking remittance or they oppose.

Resolution 12 ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND THE FUTURE PAY STRATEGY

Conference applauds the ongoing efforts to secure a national pay offer, operating through a global pandemic whilst being attacked by a Tory government.

Conference is concerned that adult social care could be included as a viable expansion of the firefighter rolemap.

Whilst other areas of the pay strategy/broadening of the role fall close to the existing rolemaps, Conference believes that adult social care is a step too far with the potential to change the role of a firefighter beyond all recognition.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to remove adult social care from any future Fire Brigades Union pay strategy.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

MATT NICHOLLS (South Yorkshire):

Here to speak on resolution 12, Adult Social Care and the Future Pay Strategy. Conference, we currently have a pay strategy in place that has consistently failed to deliver.

The committee of South Yorkshire strongly believe that broadening of the role has actively encouraged chief fire officers to take advantage, to source inappropriate emergency work for our members. Let me be clear, conference, adult social care is inappropriate use of emergency responses time. A response to a non-emergency slip or fall often does strip fire cover for hours, leaving our core work uncovered. This in turn increases response times, allows incidents to develop to larger scales, increases delays of supporting appliances, culminating in larger fires and less firefighters to respond.

Every one of our brigades has shrunk over the last decade and, as a union, do we really want to support the activation of non-emergency nature work? Adult social care historically attracts some of the lowest wages and terms and conditions in the country and now we run the real risk of making inroads into a sector that will ultimately create unemployment for the lowest paid in society. Conference, we all know our members are desperate to see a meaningful pay offer but we need to be in a position that that offer can be successfully balloted for and accepted. How many more weeks, years, months, will we continue to send our EC members to negotiate at a table with mixed messages, and what is acceptable to our membership.

Conference, we need to be brave. The motion that South Yorkshire brought may be broad to a lot of members that sit before us. With that in mind, South Yorkshire will remit but we ask you to be brave, and remittance is not to fall in line with the executive committee. It is to open the door to small steps that will be brought forward in the debates from Scotland the West Midlands. South Yorkshire remit. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now call on resolution 14, Health and Social Care Work, moved by West Midlands. The EC are seeking remittance or they oppose.

Resolution 14 HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORK

Conference notes the industrial battle Members in the West Midlands had over the attempted imposition of out-of-role work through new recruit contracts.

Conference agrees that any new work agreed by the Fire Brigades Union should be undertaken through the National Joint Council and ratified by Conference.

Conference agrees that decisions to expand the role of a firefighter into care work and patient transport is inappropriate. Social care work and patient aftercare are occupations in their own right.

Conference agrees that a Fire and Rescue Service response to slips, trips and falls and patient transport are considered inappropriate for the role of a firefighter.

Conference notes that negotiations with our employers on the expansion of the role of a firefighter are ongoing and no elements have yet been excluded by Conference.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council (EC) to end negotiations on any work that may require our Members to physically intervene with members of the public in the event of a non-injury slip, trip or fall incident.

Conference further instructs the EC to end negotiations on any work that may require our Members to provide post-hospital patient transport.

WEST MIDLANDS

ALICE LANES (West Midlands):

First ever conference and first time speaking. *Applause.* Today I am moving resolution 14 and I am politely declining the EC's request to remit and I will tell you why.

This resolution was brought to conference in 2019. Now, the wording may be slightly different, but what we are calling for from conference is exactly the same. It had the resounding backing of conference back in 2019 and we see no reason why it should not have that same resounding backing today.

Due to subsequent events, the resolution was later overturned. Now, I am not going to go into that today, but others may wish to do so. What we are asking for from conference is very simple, it is specific, it is small scale and it is not open to any kind of interpretation. We are not here to take issue with the principles broadening the role, but what we do want to remove are two very specific areas of work from any negotiations that may take place around that broadening of the role.

I will re-emphasise this point for the avoidance of doubt if the motion passes: only non-injuries, slips, trips and falls and patient transport would be removed.

Now, on hospital transport this work was carried out in the West Midlands and was nothing more than an expensive, glorified taxi service. The idea that vulnerable people would be safely transported to their homes and be given fire safety advice when home. In reality, we had examples such as an American couple being driven back to their hotel room after a hospital visit during their holiday, we had people vomiting in fire brigades vehicles (and not firefighters) and we had well-meaning hospital staff rushed off their feet and, of course, using the service as a quick and easy way to get people off their books.

Post hospital transport needs investment and it needs planning. It doesn't need firefighters playing taxi drivers. *Applause.*

On non-injury falls the West Midlands was a trial location for this work during NJC agreed trials. It was absolutely clear that the work was not appropriate for firefighters and still isn't. It was a million miles from what our members felt comfortable doing. As firefighters, we only want to leave an incident when either we have got the job done and we have left members of the public safe and happy, or at least when we can hand over to another agency that we believe has the ability to do that for us. But in this work our members were attending incidents where, when they came to leave, it meant leaving elderly and vulnerable people still upset, still lonely and having provided no real solutions to their problems. Furthermore, we were not handing that over to someone who could provide that solution; it was just a sticking plaster for a system that had been run down and neglected by brutal cuts made by politicians whose own mothers and fathers will never be in that position that these poor vulnerable people are.

In the end our brigade reneged on the trial agreement and resorted to introducing flexible contracts to new recruits to prop up the work that managers had signed up to long term. Outrageous, open-ended contracts that I myself had to sign, that threatened all of our livelihoods and were only defeated by a 90% ballot from our members for strike action. *Applause.*

Believe me when I say this work broke our members mentally. I know first-hand because I worked on one of these fire stations, I saw it, I joined the job when this was coming in. Members were broken, on medication and crying to people like me and people like my fellow comrades from the West Midlands about how they couldn't go on doing this.

Now, if I were to stand here and say that shift patterns bring grown men and women crying to me, would we as a conference be allowing that situation to continue or would we be aiming, as comrades, to end that system once and for all? If I was here to tell you that the way our members were being treated by managers was bringing them crying to my door, would we as conference be looking at how we carry on allowing that in some form or another, or would we be saying this has to stop? I am here to say that something has brought grown men and women crying to our door. It is the work our resolution describes. So I am asking you, conference, together let us end this once and for all.

There will likely be arguments put forward by the EC that this removes negotiating options, and that is why we have been specific. We do not want to remove vast swathes of work which could be negotiated on. We just want specifically to remove the small areas of work which we know do not belong within our role. Our suggested areas to remove are tiny in the grand scheme of role broadening. We are not asking a lot and we do not believe that we stand to hinder national officials in any potential future negotiations.

It also has to be recognised among us as trade unionists that the people who ordinarily do the job roles that we are taking over are generally lower income earners, they are usually women, sometimes single mothers and it is the only way they can find work which fits around their family commitments. As trade unionists can we really advocate encroaching upon their work and even taking their jobs away from them? I don't believe that we can.

Conference, in summary I reiterate my earlier points. These areas of work are clearly not appropriate for firefighters. In 2019 we moved a resolution to end negotiations on non-injury falls and hospital transport. Conference then overwhelmingly supported and carried that resolution. All we ask from you is to do the same today and together we can put an end to all of this once and for all. Conference, I move. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Alice; well done. Does that have a seconder?

MIKE ALEXANDER (South Wales):

I second the West Midlands resolution. I don't really know how I follow that speech though to be honest, but I will do my best.

Most of us know that if you fix social care that will fix the NHS. Waiting times at A&E, ambulances stuck outside hospital for hours with their patients, but there is political will to do this, and we know that. As firefighters, we often play down the job that we do. We have the broadest skill set and competencies to maintain of any profession. We need to be sending that message that there is little capacity for much more. Slips, trips and falls or adult social care is simply not our business, and it is not about pay. In South Wales we have attended calls of this nature and our crews have found themselves in some very difficult and frankly absurd situations.

When a member of the public has fallen and needs assistance it is not just about picking them up and putting them in a chair or bed; they need a professional medical assessment. We cannot do this and we never will be able to do that.

Junior officers in our brigade have been put in the position where they have placed someone in a safe place and then must decide whether to stay with the person for six, eight, ten hours, waiting for an ambulance, or to use a backside covering exercise called the Incident Handover Form. The person who has fallen signs this form and the junior officer can hand the incident over. Both scenarios are unprofessional and unacceptable and where does the liability sit? Any venture into social care and slips, trips and falls must be taken completely off the table and that is the message from South Wales. I support West Midlands.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mike, I now call resolution 18, Slips, Trips and Falls moved by Scotland. The EC are seeking remittance and oppose.

Resolution 18 SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS

Conference notes the pay offer made by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service which Members in Scotland firmly rejected through a consultative ballot in February 2020.

Conference also notes that the offer included “developing interventions to co-respond to slips, trips and falls to assist other recognised agencies.”

Conference applauds the strength and unity of Members in Scotland in rejecting this proposal and congratulates the hard work of Fire Brigades Union Officials at all levels of the Union, ensuring that Members were fully briefed on the risks associated with this type of work.

Social care work and patient aftercare are distinct, separate and highly skilled professions, therefore Conference agrees that decisions to expand the role of a firefighter into Members providing either a primary or a co-response to a slip, trip or a fall and any form of domiciliary care, should be decided by Conference.

Conference notes the current position regarding negotiations with our employers on the expansion of the role of a firefighter and that no elements of work have yet to be excluded by Conference.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to immediately end negotiations on any work that may require our Members to provide either a primary, or a co-response to a slip, trip or fall and any form of domiciliary care.

Conference agrees that such a fire and rescue service response to slips, trips and falls, and domiciliary care are considered inappropriate for the role of a firefighter, and also fails to provide an adequate response to the public.

SCOTLAND

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

How do you follow contributions such as those? Probably a good place to start is conference 2019. I think it is important that Scotland is formally recorded at the rostrum as recognising the support this conference allowed our brigade to progress talks on pay within conference policy.

I think we owe a particular acknowledgement to the floor, but most particularly West Midlands for them allowing us to do that and I think you should acknowledge that.

What decision-making in 2019 allowed us to do in Scotland was to continue negotiations, or begin negotiations, with members' pay for role map expansion in Scotland. Where did that lead us? It led us to a ballot on pay over the start of 2020. Part of the service's proposal that was included in that was working for or on behalf of adult and social care providers. Who are these people? Private companies, some of them with offshore tax havens. Who does these jobs? Some of the lowest paid workers in our country.

Conference, I think we have to acknowledge the member engagement and engagement of this union in the lead up to and holding of that ballot, and the strength within our union. The EC advised members to reject that proposal. Our regional committee advised members to reject that proposal. Our officials went out on the ground and engaged with members and advised them to reject that proposal, and our members rejected that proposal.

We have to recognise the strength of the structures in our union but also what caused that rejection. Time after time, meeting after meeting our members told us that this area of work responding to slips, trips and falls is not appropriate for our role and they are right.

Conference, the EC are asking Scotland to remit. As with West Midlands, we will not do so. Conference, I fully respect the EC and our head office officials. They have key responsibilities in our union and we should have full confidence in them. But we must also recognise their role and ours. They are not at the coal face with our members. That does not undermine them, but it is our structure. You are. You engage with our members every day. We in Scotland engage with our members every day. This work is not appropriate for our members.

This is not the end of the pay strategy. We have to recognise how this has progressed. Conference, over the last six or seven years the decisions made at conference at 2015 and 2016 set a new direction for us to address the issues of our members' pay and how it has been held back to the extent it has.

With the government we have in Westminster, this was always going to be a challenge. Where we have areas to explore this and progress it in a bid to progress this ultimately for our own members, we must explore that.

What this is the evolution of the pay strategy. We can't expect that we got it all right in 2015 and 2016. If you support our resolution today, I would urge you to support West Midlands as well. What we are doing is improving the likelihood of the conference strategy on pay being successful in the long run, because we are taking out the stumbling blocks that will stop it from happening in the end.

Listen to the speakers who have been to the rostrum. Listen to their concerns. Listen to West Midlands whose members undertook this work. If your members haven't been exposed to this, listen to those who have and take heed from it.

Conference, what does Scotland's resolution say and what does it not say? What it says is that we will not be a primary or a co-response to a slip, trip or fall. We should not be mobilised to the event. We should be mobilised to the outcome. Conference, our resolutions would not end any negotiations in an emergency medical response. That is for a different debate. That is outcome focused. This is to prevent our members being mobilised to a fall.

Previous speakers have outlined the challenges that this can bring. Conference, this is not the right thing for our members. It is not the right thing for the public. We are not best served to carry out this work. We have to recognise the involvement of the pay strategy. The resolutions being brought today can help progress this.

Conference, I would urge you to support the resolution, listen to the debate and listen to those who are engaged in this. Conference, I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John. Does that have a seconder?

MATT NICHOLLS (South Yorkshire):

I will keep this short. You have heard from me. We need to be brave, conference. It is refreshing to hear the general secretary say that we need to review the strategy. What better way than to put a clear message to the EC, make it clear on what you are going to the table with and what is acceptable for our members. Back Scotland. I have had a mental block – hang on. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Well done, Matt. Right. That is open for debate. Please indicate.

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Speaking in opposition of resolution 21. Again, I am in a difficult position here because resolution 21 is a really good resolution. My brothers in Cheshire, other people in the room, my comrade in London – how do I follow that and try to oppose that? It is really important though that we bring this to conference and have this debate, and the last bullet point is the major problem that we have got as a region.

The last bullet point suggests that we will do a consultative ballot and keep the result secret within the EC. Comrades, we don't do our business like this. We do not run secret ballots. Can you honestly, as representatives, stand in front of your members in good faith and say take part in this ballot, we want you to take part in this ballot? Can you then stand there when they come back to you and say how did the ballot go, say I don't know and I am not allowed to know because it is secret, the EC keep it secret? That would look shady to say the least. It would undermine our members, it would undermine our reps, it would undermine our officials and it is really problematic.

Please think about this resolution. The resolution, comrades, is a brilliant resolution but that bottom bullet point causes us some serious issues with democracy. I am going to quote the president on the first day about the democracy of this union and upholding the democracy of this union. If we run secret ballots that we are not going to tell our members the results of, is that democracy? Because I don't think it is. Conference, please think about what we are going to do. Please oppose the resolution. Thank you.

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

Speaking in support of resolution 21 moved by Cheshire. The CSNC fully support and agree with the need for an urgent campaign to deliver an increase in our pay. We are all feeling the pinch with the escalating cost of living. Even more so for control members because we are only on 95% of an operational firefighter's salary. More on this later!

We cannot afford to be here in twelve months' time feeling like we missed an opportunity to address pay. We need concrete actions on pay, not more talking about it, thinking about it. Now is the time, conference. Support the resolution. I support. *Applause.*

MATTHEW HERON (West Yorkshire):

We support Scotland's motion. I was preparing to come up today and give my speech for South Yorkshire, but it also applies to this one as well. I personally got an interest in this. I have a wife, sister-in-law and niece that all work in this sector. Luckily for me, members of West Yorkshire have also decided to help out my wife, sister-in-law and niece. They do not want to weaken the terms and conditions of the pay of this sector. Therefore, we are supporting Scotland's motion. Thank you.

DONNA DONACHIE (CSNC):

Speaking in support of resolution 18 moved by Scotland. Whilst we understand the EC oppose this resolution, we must not forget our firefighter control staff. Duty pressures are not only part of ambulance services, we have also got social care. We are increasingly placed under moral pressure by requests for assistance for overburdened and underfunded services. We face cat and mouse conversations whilst seeking authorisation to help. Little happens before any fire crew is aware of an incident.

Many fire controls have already undertaken additional duties to justify their existence and provide additional income streams. By supporting this resolution, you are supporting your firefighter control staff to support you to attend our own emergencies and not be sidelined by other service workloads. I support. *Applause.*

STEPHEN TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

Speaking in opposition to resolution 21. Whilst we accept the previous resolution brought here in 2019, we did then enter a pandemic. I think it is really important to remember that. The work was started. It was being undertaken. During that pandemic we lost some of our own lives. We lost members' lives. If there is any reason to slow down progress on any resolution, surely that is the one. How can we stand here and talk about pay and say what we need to do now when we have lost lives through a pandemic, and that is the reason wasn't carried out in full?

The pandemic made face to face for members very difficult. It made face to face contact with family and loved ones almost impossible. It would not have been feasible during that time to go around visiting members, rallying members. We couldn't meet in groups of more than five outside. Throughout the pandemic in my own region, region 6, and region 7 as well, worked alongside the TUC throughout the whole pandemic and until four weeks ago we continued to meet with MPs across the Midlands lobbying for pay and all the issues associated with the cost of living crisis. I don't believe we need head office to do that work. I think we as officials in our own brigades can do that work for our members locally.

I also want to reiterate what my comrade in Cleveland has said that at the point that we run a secretive ballot to see if we are ready to do this work and don't tell the membership we are ready, what is the point in that ballot? I oppose. Thank you.

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Speaking in support of resolution 21. President, conference, we have all just heard the massive victories that have been achieved by our sister unions by waging sustained and coordinated campaigns. Conference, many of us sat in these rooms and were worried at the broadening of the role and the strategy and felt in all likelihood it would bear little fruit.

In the years that followed, our worries have been borne out and what little fruit we have gathered has turned out to be rotten. It was once said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Comrades, the time has come to stop. We need a new and meaningful strategy on pay and this

resolution from Cheshire will begin to point us in that direction. We simply cannot continue to watch year on year as our members effectively take a pay cut. Please support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. Any more speakers in the debate?

SIMON MORRIS (Shropshire):

We support the EC policy statement and therefore oppose resolution 21. Conference, we are sympathetic with Cheshire and support the words said today. Pay in the fire service is disgraceful and we as a Union have not tackled this sufficiently. However, we do not believe resolution 21 addresses this because we have concerns on the consultative ballot and how that ties our hands and the risks that come with it. We give the EC our support but not lightly. We agree we should continue our campaign as outlined in the EC policy statement but we demand to see action and progress.

What we say to the EC is this. We put our trust in your actions. This policy, if it does not happen, then we as a conference will have no choice but to make the decisions on our strategy for you. Thank you.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

Speaking in support of Cambridgeshire's resolution 10. Basically, I just want to say that we can't keep using Covid as the reason for why work hasn't been done. As George has explained, there was a period of nine months that went between the resolution being passed in 2019 by conference and the interim report on what had been done, and nothing has been done.

I have been in the job 15 years. We have been campaigning for pay since I joined. We have still got poor pay. Broadly speaking, another point to make about the debate which has been touched on by comrades in the CSNC is that there has been an absence of mention about control which has already been highlighted that they are 5% less, and I think that is something we must bear in mind when we bring these resolutions as brigades and committees and we have those discussions on those committees and on our branches.

I won't say too much more because comrade Cook is coming up to talk about that later. Support resolution 10.

STEPHEN HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

Speaking in support of resolutions 21, 18 and 14. Conference, I will start with resolution 21 and why we support that. We have heard from the EC time and time again around the pay strategy and how we need to keep it moving and how we need to keep doing this work. It is the same line every conference for about the last five years. It is getting boring. *Applause*. Our members are absolutely clear. This current pay strategy is not working and we need to change it and we need to change tack, and we need to get out and we need to organise, and we need to stop talking around adult social care as part of that package.

I will come on to my support of resolutions 18 and 14. North Yorkshire is a vast rural county, and the excuses used by the multi-agencies is that they are struggling to provide the care in those areas, and firefighters could quite easily pick up that work. Well, the message from North Yorkshire firefighters is adult social care has got no place in our role whatsoever. We are not there to pick up the jobs of the lowest paid in our society. The private companies should employ more people. They should improve their terms and conditions to get more people doing that work in those areas. We will drive that race to the bottom in that sector down.

I will then come on to a little bit more personal issues around it. I have got a severely disabled father who relies heavily on adult social care. Sometimes that care is brilliant and other times it is not too good, all for the reasons I have just mentioned in terms of the race to the bottom in that industry, in terms of the low paid work, the pressures that are put on people, the employers, driving them into the ground.

One thing that is really good about that industry is that the people that do it care. The people have got the training to deliver and to provide that extra support. I don't want firefighters taking some of their jobs and going just to tick a box for government to look after my old fella at times of need, and then just to put him back and then do one. I want him to have the proper care.

That area of care is also governed by the Care Quality Commission so if there is an issue they come in and they look and they talk. So are we now then going – if we venture into this area - to open ourselves up to further widespread government nit picking at firefighters, because we won't have the training and we won't have the expertise to deliver this role as we should? Conference, I would urge you to support resolution 21, support resolution 18 and resolution 14. Let's change the pay strategy, let's move forward together and let's end this massive pay deficit in the fire service. I support. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Are there any more speakers in the debate?

GUY TIFFIN (Northumberland):

Speaking in support of resolution 10. I just want to hit on a few points, the bullet points in resolution 10. Water rescue. We do water rescue in Northumberland as many brigades do and our view is that we have to get away from ARAs and separate payments and we are ending up with a culture of divide and conquer in our opinion in the Union. Lastly MTA and MTFA. Firstly, we would like to congratulate Greater Manchester and London on getting the 2% increase for responding to MTA and MTFA, but – and there is a big but – our members see it as another divide and conquer.

If you remember, following 7/7 there was a massive prevent, a massive prevent sort of came out to all fire stations within the country. Special Branch came to stations in Northumberland out in the sticks and gave training to everyone. What they said was that, yes, the bombs and things like, the attacks are going to happen in major cities like London, Manchester, Newcastle. However, the bomb makers, they are not making the bombs in the middle of London or in the middle of Newcastle; they are making them in the middle of nowhere in the sticks where nobody knows what they are doing, nobody can see them, and we have had at least two incidents in Northumberland where white supremacists have been making bombs. In one instance the bomb was activated mistakenly by the white supremacist terrorist causing severe damage. Our members were en route to that incident, RDS members who had very little training apart from the initial prevent training.

What they are saying to me loud and clear is, yes, we fully support London and Greater Manchester getting that 2%, but that risk is there for all of us. It is not just there for members in London and Manchester, in Birmingham or Newcastle: it is there for every single member of this fire service. If our firefighters had attended that incident five minutes earlier, they would have been there when that bomb activated and could have caused severe injury or death to our members. We have to get away from these payments. We all should get the same pay for the same job. We should be collectively negotiating. The EC should be negotiating on behalf of every single member to get that 2% for every single member in the UK fire and rescue service. Until then, my members in Northumberland just see it as a divide and conquer, that we are worth less than a firefighter in London or Greater Manchester, and I think that is a really important point for our members that we need some sort of assurance from the EC that they are going to act on behalf of every single member in the UK fire service and get that pay increase for all of us because we all have that same risk to a greater or lesser degree, but that risk is there for all of us. Please support resolution 10. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Guy. Anybody else to speak in the debate before I bring the general secretary back in, and then those who have had the opposition will have the right to reply and I will call you. Nobody.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president, conference, well, a lively debate as we would hope and expect. There are inevitably differences of emphasis, differences of opinion; that is to be welcomed as we thrash out what we are going to do next.

I will just run through both the EC's response but also the EC's position in terms of qualified support or opposition.

First of all, on resolution 10 from Cambridgeshire, the EC's position is qualified support, primarily because the new pay strategy which is set out in the bullet points at the bottom of the resolution aren't actually new points at all. They are all covered by existing policy, every single one of those points you have debated before at this conference. So it is not new; it is existing policy.

I will come on to more about non-contractual work. If there is non-contractual work taking place now and we can win the arguments with our members, there is absolutely nothing to prevent us balloting either members simply refusing to undertake that work – which certainly I have done in the past, and I am sure many of you have done in the past – or if that is not possible to ballot our members in the relevant brigades and say you are asking us to undertake non-contractual work, you are not paying for us and we are not going to do it. It is as simple as that. I know there are huge challenges in doing that.

Guy came in on some of the points he raised. I think the criticism of ARAs are absolutely taken. To be honest, this conference voted to bring ARAs into the system but, yes, ARAs are not an ideal mechanism for addressing pay issues within the fire and rescue service.

On the question of MTA, I think the question of definitions of what forms of terrorism are covered by MFTA or MTA, precisely our approach is what the Manchester and London settlements are about. The point is this: we won the principle that that work is clearly not contractual because two major employers have now agreed to change contracts to pay people for it which by definition means that in every other service across the country it is non-contractual and people are not being paid for it. So there is a clear case actually we should not be doing it in any other service and therefore there is a case for a national pay settlement as Guy set out on that particular point. That is exactly the approach that we are adopting.

In terms of resolutions 14 and 18, look, we are not daft, we pick up the mood of conference on some of these issues, but I think our job is also to alert conference to some of the risks in that. Conference will make its decision. Just to be clear, nobody will fall out over any of this. You will make your decision and we will implement the decisions. That is not a problem at all. That is what we will do. But it is our job, I think to alert you to some of the risks that we see.

Congratulations to Alice for a fantastic first speech. I think some of the things that were raised: there was a report there that people had been transported in fire engines and had vomited in fire engines. My understanding is that was never part of any agreement in the West Midlands in any case. Certainly, in terms of that trial, that trial was ended. The employer then did try, as was reported, to introduce new contracts. Let us be clear, we as a union nationally and particularly the West Midlands brigade committee organised and actually we balloted for strike action to stop that from happening. That is the only way to deal with employers who treat us like this.

The comrade from South Wales supporting, seconding, made points, and I think this is the problem we are going to have think deeply about, conference, what was said is we are attending or we have attended calls like this. The truth is this. If it is not currently contractual, we have to say to our employers why are you sending us to these calls? They are not appropriate. We are not required to attend them. If you want us to attend them, come and negotiate (and we will come on to that point in a minute), they are not within our contract and we will not attend them. It goes back to the earlier point. Actually if we need to ballot for action we can ballot for action and say we will stop undertaking that work. That is the answer to that.

The executive council has already got a policy. We have got a national position that we should, for at least the past four years, not be engaging in any new work anywhere in the country without negotiations and without those being reported to the executive council. So, to be clear, slips, trips and falls are not agreed work, nobody in the UK fire service should be attending them now at all. If it is happening in your brigade, I think you need to report them through your regional structures to your executive council and we will take steps to make sure that we put in place measures to campaign against them, withdraw from it and, if necessary, ballot for the necessary action. That is the approach that we will take on that.

The concerns about the wording – and I will come on to resolution 18 as well if you bear with me – the problem is in the wording in paragraph 4 of resolution 14. It is clear that a fire service response to slips, trips and falls and patient transport are considered inappropriate. That is fine. If conference takes that decision, as I say, we will respect it and the wording is very similar in the Scottish resolution 18, paragraph 4 again, that firefighters, members providing a primary or co-response to a slip, trip or fall should be decided by conference. In the final paragraph, that that is inappropriate for the role of a firefighter. So conference will be taking a very clear decision that that type of work – and people have expressed that view clearly at the rostrum, but what I think what we need to think about then is if that is the case we need to, first of all, accept that the employers may respond to that. We will deal with that.

Secondly, if we are saying it is inappropriate, it is inappropriate from the moment we vote on it and we need to start withdrawing from that work from today. If that is what we are going to work for, I hope that is what we start doing. That means all of us. It means crews, frankly, refusing to attend calls. It means control staff refusing to handle calls. Those are the sorts of actions that we will need to undertake to deliver this position if conference so decides. That is why I would urge conference to think carefully.

Finally, just in terms of resolution 21, again I would urge conference to think very carefully because it is important that our resolutions are worded carefully. I completely respect the anger that was expressed by Andrew on behalf of Cheshire members and other people speaking on that debate.

Just in terms of some points of accuracy. Andrew mentioned pay settlements – some quite high level pay settlements. Let us be clear, the pay settlements were people are exceeding inflation pay rises are in the private sector, or those who may have contracts with the public sector. In general, in the public sector the highest pay rise was in the NHS – think about this – in the aftermath of Covid, and in the two years when everyone including the prime minister had been out clapping for health workers, the NHS got 3%. No other large group of public sector workers has got anything like that at all over the past decade.

In local government where UNITE and GMB were mentioned, UNITE and GMB also organise in local government, the pay rises in local government have been lower than they have in the fire and rescue service, and including long periods where there have been no settlements in local government.

We need to be specific about what we are talking about in the economy, in the private sector, compared with what is going on in the public sector. That is not to say, however, that of course public sector workers have fallen behind. We have produced the figures ourselves. We are very well aware of those figures.

Secondly, and I think it was answered by Nottinghamshire in terms of lobbying, I have got to say that one factor why this union has not been lobbying for the past two years is we have been in lockdown for much of that time. We have not been able to meet as a conference through those two years as a result of that. Even in this conference you have been alerted to the risks of Covid and even now the precautions that we need to take.

You could not go into parliament to be frank. All our parliamentary groups have been Zoom meetings for the past two years. We held the first physical parliamentary meeting just about a month ago. So the fact is, comrades, and we all know it, we could not have lobbied parliament over the past two years.

But the biggest point, and it has been already raised in terms of resolution 21, is the final paragraph. Again, comrades, this conference, this union, knows how to organise demonstrations. This union has pioneered demonstrations. If you look back to 2001, the national pay dispute, it was the Fire Brigades Union who introduced the whole approach of union flags on demonstrations, branding and so on. This union pioneered that so we know, we have got a history of organising demonstrations. We have pioneered how you blockade parliament and so on. We can organise demonstrations. That is not the issue. As I say, the question of timing is.

It is that final bullet point. The first problem we have with it is a consultative ballot on taking action up to and including strike action. There is no such action as “up to and including strike action”. There are two forms of industrial action you can ballot. There is strike action and there is action short of strike. For thirty years or so, resolutions regularly came to this conference and the wording was this: “If the employers fail to deliver on this conference will be recalled with a recommendation for strike action.” We didn’t hedge that issue. We were clear. It is strike action.

So if we are talking about strike action, call it strike action. If we are talking about action short of strike call it action short of strike. If we are talking about that say so, but it is not action up to and including strike action. So we need to be clear with our members what we are talking about.

The second problem the executive council has with this is we will conduct a consultative ballot and the results will be kept confidential to the executive council. Well, first of all, again the union has records of how you consult members to ensure you can deliver a yes vote. We have been very clear and it is why we have a record next to none. Nobody

has a record as good as this union on winning strike ballots. We win our strike ballots. We win them with some of the highest turn outs anywhere in the trade union movement time after time after time, and we have time tested methods to deliver that. That is not necessarily by so called consultative ballots.

The idea that the government and the employers – because we passed this – know that we are holding a consultative ballot and then we don't announce any outcome, I will tell you what, they will very well judge what the outcome of that ballot is if we don't move straightaway to strike action. It is a mistaken tactic and I would still urge Andrew to withdraw or remit the resolution as we requested.

So those are our concerns about the resolutions, conference. We urge you to act accordingly, thanks. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Cheshire, right of reply. Conference, do you agree to suspend your standing orders? We will get this debate out of the way and then we will have tea break. Is that agreed? *Agreed.*

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cleveland):

Thank you, president, for the right of reply. Obviously, we were trying to anticipate the executive's response to the resolution. I have to say I didn't think of trying to ensure a scrutineer was checking the microphone was plugged in, and I also didn't anticipate the very benevolent and completely impromptu tea break. Fair play for that.

The general secretary has said in the debate that the level of industrial response we need would be to emulate the giants of 1977. I fully agree with that. That is why we have brought repeated resolutions to conference, I think in 2017 and 2018, about establishing a general strike fund which the executive opposed, and it was to bring it in line with other UK and European unions. That calls into account what kind of underpinning strategy we have going forward if we are not establishing a strike fund but we are talking about emulating a nine week, out-of-the-door strike.

On the wording of the action, I suggest that is something you take up with standing orders because they had no problem with it.

In response to my very good comrade in Cleveland about this issue about the consultative ballot, it is not a ballot about accepting a pay offer. It is not a ballot about accepting a change to terms and conditions. It is an organising ballot. So I don't really see what the issue is. They are totally different things. If you still think that is an issue then the executive council are welcome to change the tack to qualifying support and make clear that the results of any organising ballot can be made know to brigade committees. That is something we would welcome if you want to do that.

To my comrades in Nottingham, we have made clear it is not about blame. The resolution talks about collective responsibility for where we find ourselves after seven years of having these debates, but we don't accept that the pandemic means that organising in the work place and that pay deals are not possible. We gave examples of a multitude of other unions across the movement in this country that have had successes. They too have worked through the pandemic.

I think, look, I don't feel there is any credible real opposition to our resolution that has been advanced. It is about genuinely starting our pay claim with clear, tangible actions arising out of this conference. Please be brave, be proud, stand in the traditions of our union, stand in the traditions of our forefathers that have been here before, vote for the motion, support it and let's crack on. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. West Midlands right of reply.

ALICE LANES (West Midlands):

Thank you executive council and thank you general secretary for your replies. I am going to start with a correction, in fact a couple of corrections. What I said in my speech was fire brigade vehicles as opposed to fire engines. I should clarify that no-one was transported in a fire engine. However, I think we can agree that any amount of vomit in any fire service vehicle is probably inappropriate.

We are also moving to stop the negotiations, not stop work currently being carried. Work is not currently being carried out because we stopped it by threatening action just short of strike. So that is another clarification. It is not currently being carried out but you can guarantee it will be tried to be added back in.

The arguments against are slightly different to what we were expecting. A lot of them refer to hypothetical negotiations. There was some concern that moving this motion would stop potential future negotiations or hinder our progress in future negotiations with brigades. It doesn't make sense. It is hypothetical. The only actual tangible facts that we have given you are the ones that we provided earlier.

We have the support of our members. We have the stories of our members. We have broken members who have either left the job or are considering leaving the job, good firefighters and officers leaving a job they love because they were told maybe this is not the job for them if they refuse to pick up one elderly person from the floor or transport an American couple back to their hotel. Maybe this is not the job for us we were told.

Conference, I ask you to read the resolution again. It doesn't mean an end to special service calls, it doesn't mean an end to negotiations on broadening the role as a whole. It means an end to slips, trips and falls and to patient transport. It is tightly worded and it is a clear resolution. We know it is because we made it that way because these are the things that we oppose.

Please take the opposing views on board, absolutely, consider them, but I ask you to recognise that the real substance here lies in our arguments, no hypotheses, just the facts that we have learned from the facts and what is clear in the here and now.

We stand by the wording in our resolution that these actions are not appropriate for our members. We have countless accounts to prove that, countless stories. I will say it again. I am here to say that doing this has brought grown men and women crying to us, broken and considering leaving the job they have worked so hard for. To the executive council, you are all in the positions you are in because you fundamentally care about the same thing we do, our members. I am calling upon you to put yourselves in the shoes of our members and conference as a whole, to imagine how this feels and to empathise with all of us. Together let's put an end to this once and for all. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Alice. Are you sure it's your first conference? Scotland the right of reply.

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

I am beginning to wish we were one ahead in the running order because it is becoming very difficult to follow West Midlands. Look, I think our sister from West Midlands has made a really strong point. Matt spoke about resolutions 14 and 18 creating a risk to our members. There is no risk to our members in our two resolutions. There is only protection for our members in them.

The point was made that we should not be engaging in new work anyway. With the greatest respect, that is missing the point, for it certainly is in Scotland. Our members are not being turned out to these incidents just now. They are being turned out to different incident types that when they arrive on scene is the tip of the iceberg of what we are being turned out to if we were being mobilised for slips, trips and falls type accidents. That is the point. Our members are absolutely feeling the very tip of the iceberg on this and they don't like it.

We have been turned out to effect entry for sister agencies, and we are seeing what incident types respond to the slips, trips and falls would lead our members to be involved in. Examples of that don't require our crews to refuse to attend calls or refusing to take the calls because they are not being turned out to slips, trips and falls. This is about recognising the risk if we did take on this type of work.

Brothers and sisters, I would urge you to listen to the contributions from West Midlands. They have lived this. Think about the speaker who stood up here for West Midlands. She spoke about joining the service at a time when this is what she was exposed to. Do we want to be exposing our members to this? Is this the type of work we want our members to be joining the job and seeing?

Conference, I will repeat the strategy identified in 2015 and 2016 is the right strategy. We have the wrong government to deliver it. But it has to evolve and we have to recognise what we have got wrong and learn from it and amend accordingly.

Passing Scotland's resolution and the West Midlands resolutions ends the risk existing from some types of related work. You have to ask yourselves, additional work taken on through Covid there will be brigades up and down this country who felt this was the right thing to do, fundamentally the right thing to do given the circumstances at the time. But we will have brigades that will find it difficult to extract themselves from this. We will have chief officers who will see it as an opportunity.

Conference, Scotland and West Midlands resolutions help strengthen our position in that, they help strengthen our members in standing up to rogue chief officers who will abuse the good intent of our members and this union at the height of a pandemic and use it to continue work that is inappropriate for our members. This is a shield for our members by passing these resolutions. It is not a risk.

Conference, we have most likely all have experienced to some extent or other the type of work discussed in resolutions 14 and 18. If we haven't I would urge you to listen to the speakers who have contributed on it. But in saying that, I fully accept both resolutions to carry and I fully expect both resolutions to carry because nobody has come to the floor – with the greatest respect, other than the executive council – to oppose them. Conference, if we are going to oppose these resolutions, we have to come to the rostrum and outline why. We have to have the debate. That is why we have our conference. Given that, I know what the outcome for those two resolutions will be; it will be unanimous support, because if it wasn't going to be, we would have had the debate at the rostrum. Conference, Scotland continues its resolutions and we would urge you to support West Midlands as well. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John. Conference, we are now going to start moving to the vote. I now put executive council policy statement to the vote. All those in favour please show. They can all carry together by the way. I did say that in the beginning of the debate, they can all carry together. So I now put executive council policy statement to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now put resolution 10 to the vote from Cambridgeshire. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now put resolution 21, moved by Cheshire, to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That falls.

I now put resolution 14 from West Midlands to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now put resolution 18 moved by Scotland, to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

Conference, thank you for that. We are late on the tea break. We are going to take 15 minutes please but please be back in the hall sharpish on your seats because we have got to do business. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call Phil Millar, chair of standing orders committee to give a report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, can you turn to your programme of business. Resolution 69, page 11 that has been withdrawn.

Conference, if you can turn to your delegate list. Region 6, Leicestershire, remove Harry Brant and replace with Casey Legalle. In region 10, London, remove Karen Bell and replace with Simon Kenton.

Conference, the standing orders committee seek your permission regarding the issue of documentation that is being delivered to your tables and the conference delegates. I need to bring to your attention that since the opening of conference yesterday morning standing orders have issued every delegate, in line with custom and practice, programmes of business and delegate lists, emergency resolutions, composite resolutions and the list goes on. Standing orders need to report to conference that since Monday morning we have now used 20,000 pages of paper. A Google search would seem to indicate that a 45 foot pine tree would produce 10,000 pages, so we have already worked our way through two of those. So with your permission by agreeing this report, standing orders will only be issuing documentations one per delegation, and this includes the records of decisions issued after each session of conference and any emergency resolutions.

The result of the standing orders election is in and it is unanimous and it is for sister Rebecca Stadden, and I would like to congratulate her. *Applause*. Now, I would like to commiserate with her.

Finally, conference, can the delegate that is in Room 323 please come to standing orders during the next break. I will put you out of your misery – you have lost your key! *Laughter*.

Conference that concludes the standing orders report. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, is that standing orders report agreed? *Agreed*. Congratulations Rebecca. Now you will know the difference.

OK, conference, just before I move on to the business I know we have got a lot of new delegates and I did say at the beginning of that debate that they could all carry together. When I first called the first vote, there must have been 50% of this hall showed and that was for and against, and that is why I had to call it again. So please when I call the vote, put your hands in the air nice and clear and at least give me a fighting chance. OK. Thank you.

Right, conference, turn to page 7 of your programme of business and I will now call resolution 5, non-contractual work, moved by Warwickshire. The EC are seeking remittance or they oppose.

Resolution 5 NON-CONTRACTUAL WORK

Conference is concerned at the increasing fragmentation of the Fire and Rescue Service especially around the disparity of the work activities currently being undertaken by Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Members.

Conference notes that the Executive Council (EC) has been working on the various activities that are considered not to be part of a firefighter's role.

Conference agrees that should any expansion of the rolemaps be agreed then this must be undertaken through the National Joint Council.

Conference notes the recent trade dispute in the West Midlands where the Fire Authority attempted to introduce non-agreed work that was not part of a firefighter's role.

Conference also notes the content of the recent offer from the employers in Scotland which was rejected by FBU Members in Scotland.

Conference is concerned that our employers are content with being complicit in the effects of austerity by seeking to expand the role of a firefighter into public sector areas which have been devastated by central government budget cuts.

Conference agrees that FBU Members must not be used as a solution to paper over the cracks created by austerity in other public sectors and must only be considered as an additional strand to any public sectors that are appropriate for firefighters to be involved with.

Conference instructs the EC to immediately begin the process of withdrawing from any and all non-contractual work currently being undertaken by our Members.

Conference instructs the EC to work with Brigade Officials to ensure they have all the support and information needed to confidently withdraw from non-contractual work and to reject any future attempts by our employers to introduce non-contractual work until such a time that expansion of the rolemap is agreed.

WARWICKSHIRE

NEIL STUART (Warwickshire):

I think most of the things in our resolution were covered in the pay debate we had earlier which was good healthy debate. We have seen an increasing willingness from our employers in their attempts to expand the role to other areas on the public sector which have been devastated by Tory cuts.

Our members are fed up being used to paper over the cracks of austerity and with very real prospects of little to no pay rise would rather reduce the work they do. I suspect the EC are going to say that it is the job of local officials to oppose non-contractual work and to point out where this is and not to do it, but when neighbouring brigades are doing things differently, let alone other regions, it becomes increasingly difficult, and chief officers are arguing something is in your role map.

We understand there is an EC policy on this and in order to remit we are asking for an assurance from the EC will work to make members aware of the definitive role map that applies to the whole UK fire service. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

I will bring the AGS in.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

We certainly did cover an awful lot of the ground in the previous debate, and in the previous discussion. Clearly the main emphasis was around obviously a focus on non-contractual work, but in terms of where we go or where we don't go and how we approach, or how we deal with the employers if they bring issues to the negotiating table. In other words, going forward in terms of new work.

This resolution is a very distinct debate which is why it has been taken in a separate debate. A very distinct difference: this is about what we do about the problems that we face on the ground and how we deal with them.

Warwickshire is correct. The work involved in this resolution does fall primarily on brigade officials. I think as someone said in the previous debate, we are not on the ground either at head office or at EC, and indeed at regions as well. More so in the case of regions but in terms of the EC members, the EC as a body and head office, we are not on the ground, we are not in the work place. We don't visit work places much given the number of work places that we have.

Conference does know that we have done a large amount of work, actually unfinished, trying to establish what work is being done out there precisely in every fire and rescue service, and whether or not it has been agreed or it has not been agreed, and we have never had a full return on that information. I imagine, I am pretty sure, the executive council is pretty sure that part of the reason for that is that current officials, or rather the officials who were current at the time of us doing the survey, weren't entirely sure about what a previous generation might have agreed to, might have nodded to, but certainly had in some way, shape or form not resisted being introduced. We think that is why we have never got the full return.

It is not dishonesty on the part of the officials at the time. It was a lack of understanding of a knowledge of what had been done by the generation before, and since then. Look around at this conference. We have a new generation yet again of officials and you might equally be in the dark but it is something that we do need to take into account: that we do know from that survey that there are areas of work that have been agreed. There is another tranche as well, which I think Northumberland highlighted, where it has been agreed, it has been done for ARAs. So it is quite complex. It is not an impossible task but it is quite complex and I think conference does know that. It is a fact we have to recognise.

I tell you what we don't do is determine our policy as a conference on behalf of all of our members, on behalf of the work that needs to be done by all brigade officials on the basis of some anomalies, some difficult cases and certainly not on the basis of where we don't have full information. But we have to bear it in mind, especially as in the majority of cases the work has never been agreed and it is absolutely clear the work has never been agreed, where we do have a full return not just in terms of the work that is being done but also its status in terms of not being agreed. And that clearly is a fact.

We know also that most, many, almost all, probably all brigade officials are fighting hard to resist this work where it is being introduced or threatening to be introduced. I have got to say, and I will say it for myself, we may have been too slow. We have been too slow in assisting you on those issues. Only this morning, speaking to one of the delegates from Bedfordshire, been too slow. Full recognition of that, I say it to conference. That is why the emergency resolution was wanted. I will certainly step up. I have a year to go. I will certainly step up to the mark. Your national officials always step up to the mark. The EC always step up to the mark. The general secretary the same.

But we seek remittance in the light of those matters. Clearly it is a key policy position that we have set out before. Members know – it arose from the trials – that we ended the trials. All trial work should stop in order to give us some oomph, to give us leverage in the ongoing negotiations, which were not successful. They have not been successful so far on broadening the role. I am saying to members do not do the work outside of role. It undermines our position. We have put circulars out to brigade officials and brigade officials have acted on that resisting attempts by employers to introduce new work out of sight and not part of a national agreement. We do all know that.

The reason we ask for remittance – and I think it is really important that you understand why we are asking for it to be remitted or for it to be unfortunately opposed (because this executive council does not agree with work outside of role being imposed by fire and rescue services) – is we have to go with the written word on the resolution. The penultimate paragraph: “conference instructs the EC to immediately begin the process of withdrawing from any and all non-contractual work currently being undertaken by our members.” It then goes on to say “to assist brigade officials in doing that.”

The word is “immediately” and “immediately” isn’t defined as in the hour that conference ends, but it is very soon, very quick, quite imminent. I am not convinced – I don’t think the executive council is convinced – and we will know by the vote whether you are convinced, that actually if you can immediately and quickly get your members to respond to turn that ship round against FRSs that will threaten them, cajole them. In some cases, say, you need a ballot. In other cases, say, don’t care if you ballot or not, I’m just going to stop your pay. We saw that in Lincolnshire and we saw that in Nottinghamshire in 2006 where they stopped an awful lot of pay of our members. That is what the resolution says. It says we need to achieve it immediately. We need to start it. We need to insist. The work needs to stop dead. I don’t believe, despite your best efforts, that you will be able to achieve that as quickly as this demands, as quickly as this requires. For that reason we do ask you to remit.

It is clear, as I said at the beginning, that it is a complex picture out there, a not entirely unknown position out there. The fact is, as we know from the last debate, there is work ongoing now in terms of slips, trips and falls which I know is one of the biggest areas of focus and understandably so. It is being done in brigades and it is being done under the guise of persons trapped behind doors, a whole different range of different words used: its trips, slips and falls.

So we are not saying at all, in asking for it to be remitted – and when we are saying if it is not remitted it will be opposed – that we are opposed to what the resolution has called for. It has been our position as an executive council, but more importantly of this conference, for several years. It is the wording of the resolution.

So I really do ask on behalf of the executive council, given the impact it will have on our members, particularly in the control rooms where the job of resisting starts, of refusing to handle the call, refusing to press buttons to mobilise the appliances. That is where it starts. A huge amount of work involved. So for that reason we do ask you to remit. The assurance was sought that we will do that work. We will, and the emphasis I think within the resolution being brought here, is to reinvigorate the work from the executive council and we give that assurance.

If it is not remitted and it goes to the vote, delegates do need to understand what I have said – and I know you do – that whatever happens, remitted, supported or opposed, we still have our conference policy, our conference position of not doing non-contractual work and it needs to be done. With this resolution we want it remitted so that we have got the tactical flexibility that the onus isn’t upon you to achieve what in the short and immediate term we believe, despite your best efforts – and we know your best efforts – that you won’t achieve. We don’t want this union to set itself up for a fall by agreeing a resolution which ties us and binds us too tightly. Long speech. Please remit. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

That was quick for you, Andy. Warwickshire can you confirm with those assurances?

NEIL STUART (Warwickshire):

I appreciate your comments, AGS, and your assurance that you will do the work. I would like to push on publishing the details of the work that has already been carried out, already been done, and that the brigade organisers get some clarity on our role maps. If you can assure us of that, I will remit.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

I will give you this assurance. I said earlier that the – the answer is yes, it is coming to a yes, by the way –

THE PRESIDENT:

It just takes a long way to get there.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

There are a lot of houses to go round here. I said earlier that the work wasn't complete. What we will do is we will issue – whether we do it via the regional secretaries or brigade secretaries (we certainly won't be doing it as an all members) in terms of the data that we have to date, in the knowledge that it then needs to be brought up to date quickly. You are asking that the information is put out there. We will do that but, as you know, we need the full information. You want the full information so that we can deliver on the actions that I promised in asking you to remit.

NEIL STUART (Warwickshire):

Yes, it doesn't have to be immediately. We remit. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Neil. I now call resolution 20, Shift System Instruction Documents moved by Cleveland. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 20 SHIFT SYSTEM INSTRUCTION DOCUMENT

Conference recognises the difficulty local Officials have in resisting attacks on existing agreed shift systems from Fire and Rescue Services' (FRSs) senior managers.

Conference also recognises the excellent work local Officials are doing in defence of existing agreed shift systems.

Currently there are many different shift systems in use across FRSs, this leads to confusion and uncertainty when negotiating locally on proposed shift system changes.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to produce a national instruction document containing a set of clear guidelines and principles that all local Officials must adhere to when entering negotiations with local management on proposed shift system changes. This document is to be produced before the start of the Fire Brigades Union Conference 2023.

CLEVELAND

NICK CAIN (Cleveland):

Comrades, I would like to take a few moments of your time to speak about shift systems. Currently, we have such a mismatch across the UK fire and rescue service, so many in fact that it would probably take me a while to go through them all. Some of these systems do fall outside the grey book which from my point of view is quite a dangerous road to go down.

I know that if I was senior leadership team in Cleveland they would agree to coming out of the grey book terms and conditions, they would absolutely be rubbing their hands with glee, especially at the thought of the extra work outside of our role that they could have us doing.

Some duty systems across the UK have yielded a slight pay rise for taking them on, and we all know that in these hard times of austerity and with the problems being compounded by a dozen or more years of little or no pay rises, our members are feeling the pinch. This is wrong though. Our members should be paid a proper wage for the

professional job that we all do. We should not have to bear the brunt of cuts in central government in our take home pay. Yes, some of these shift systems have seen a slight uplift in pay, but at what cost? Lots more hours for a very small income rise in our wallets and purses.

Just in Cleveland, for example, we have fought off two attacks to our shifts in the last six or seven years, the first being a 48 hour system with three days off. It meant our members working over 800 hours more a year for just a 5% rise. Comrades, I do not see this as a pay rise. This was a massive pay cut meaning our hourly rate when down by over £3 an hour.

As a result of this we took our employers to the technical advisory panel and won. We got it kicked out. I would just like to reiterate that Cleveland members always have and always will stand strong and are 100% united against the attacks to our grey book terms and conditions.

We should be pressing for a major increase in our hourly rates and not cutting it. We need more recognition for the excellent work that we do now in our communities. This work came to the fore in the very recent tripartite agreement, an agreement that had us all helping out during the biggest pandemic this country has seen in generations.

Comrades, conference recognises the difficult and excellent work that local officials have to deal with, so all we are asking is the executive council explore the possibility of a national shift system instruction document and produce a document containing a clear set of guidelines and principles that all local officials must adhere to when entering negotiations, and for this to be produced at conference 2023. Then hopefully we could all have a more uniform shift system across the board, one that benefits us all together as one, and not the multitude of systems that we currently have which was previously mentioned: a plethora of combinations that actually weaken our bargaining power when brigade officials enter into negotiations with our employers over this extremely important subject.

Conference, please support this resolution. I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Nick. Does that have a seconder?

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

Conference, I would like to second this resolution. As a relatively new secretary I have just negotiated the removal of calls from Tyne and Wear. I would have found this hugely valuable, pulling together all the relevant documents and circulars was a task on its own and it would have cut down a load of correspondence between myself, the EC member and national officers. Conference, it is a really easy one to support. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate.

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

Just one quick point I wanted to ask. I support the resolution absolutely. Within the guidelines that it talks about, can we make sure there is something to publish around the working time regs. It is not easy to digest, certainly for members, certainly for new officials and for other people, and I think it would be useful if that was a contained part of it, specifically on those working time regs just to give us maybe something clearer than what is in statute somewhere in Brussels or wherever it has developed. Thanks very much, conference. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. Anybody else in the debate. No. AGS.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

The qualification really is to say that we believe that there are – the circulars that we have do provide the information already, but they are quite disparate and located in different places. I think there is a point already raised within this conference, newer officials trying to find the policies is quite difficult, and we might need to look at how we publish

or present them and that may be something we need to do via the share point system. The answer to the question is yes, the policies are out there and yes, we will consolidate them and make sure you have them in a consolidated form. It won't just be a question of whacking them together. It is to make it into a cogent document.

On the point that that Chris Tapp raised, quite ingenious really to move a different resolution in supporting one that is already on the paper, but the truth is it is something that our officials do need to have. I know we have issued something before but in answer to that point it is a key one. Guys are briefing with regard to working time regs and how you apply it in negotiations. We will agree to that too. Well done, Chris.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I now put resolution 20 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now call the following resolutions and amendments to be taken in the same debate. All resolutions and amendments can carry together. Resolution 4, fire and rescue services in breach of the working time regulations moved by North Yorkshire. The EC give qualified support. Resolution 6, Shift Negotiations, 24 hour working from Kent with an amendment from Humberside. The EC oppose.

Resolution 4 FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (FRSs) IN BREACH OF WORKING TIME REGULATIONS (WTR)

Conference instructs the Executive Council to conduct a study into duty systems and ways of working within FRSs which breach the WTR, to be completed by Conference 2023.

This will include;

- ***FRSs operating duty systems without collective agreement***
- ***FRSs operating duty systems with collective agreements whereby the brigade is not fulfilling the terms of the agreement and breaching the WTR***
- ***FRSs who employ staff as both Wholetime and Retained as a secondary role, whereby breaches in the WTR go unmonitored. For the avoidance of doubt this does not refer to the Grey Book Day Crewed duty system.***

If FRSs are found to be in breach of the WTR the Health and Safety Executive will be informed in writing by Fire Brigades Union Head Office.

NORTH YORKSHIRE

PAUL JAMES (North Yorkshire):

Moving resolution 4 and speaking at my first conference also. *Applause.* If I can achieve the standards of my colleague over here, I will have done half of what I wanted to achieve.

Conference, I am not going to read out my motion but I would just like to give you some reasoning behind it. Collective bargaining is the very foundation of the union. Protecting the welfare of our members, we believe that any duty system that works out of the Working Time Directive should not be allowed to happen, and if it does, we are asking the EC to inform the Health and Safety Executive in writing.

It has been shown that certain fire and rescue services have locally agreed to duty systems. These duty systems for fire and rescue services are not fulfilling the terms agreed and are therefore breaching the WTR. Such breaches are basically putting the health, safety and welfare of our colleagues at risk. These long arduous hours, archaic hours, echo the time that we worked in the mills over 100 years ago where the very foundations of our union movement started, protecting the working rights of our colleagues from working long hours. Conference are we really going to allow this to happen over 100 years later? We should not.

Conference, brigades allow whole time and retained cross over with little or no monitoring at all of the retained hours that are worked either side of the whole time shift systems. Let us be clear – we have mentioned this previously many times from the EC and from the floor itself – austerity and pay freezes are putting our members at risk. It is our job to protect them, and these duty systems that work outside of the Working Time Directive should not be allowed.

I would like to take you back to the time of the Great Heck incident which my brother Steve Howley reminded me. This had devastating consequences that came about by a man who had been working all day, stayed up all night and got carried away, and we all know the consequences of that incident. It is only a matter of time before this happens to one of our members and it should not be allowed to happen. They should not be allowed to suffer the devastating events by working these unacceptable shift systems.

Conference, I would like to remind you of section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act which clearly states it is the individual's rights and responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of themselves and others, and these are two words that I would really like to bring to your attention "by your acts or omissions". Your acts – you choose to do this duty system, you are 23 hours into it and you are called out to drive to an event and you fall asleep and have an incident, you are responsible. Your omissions – you chose to take on that act and you omitted the fact that you were going to protect the health, safety and welfare of your colleagues.

Conference, I would like you to please vote in favour of motion 4. I ask for your support and, President, I move.
Applause.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Paul. Does that have a seconder?

TRISTAN ORR-BERWICK (Surrey):

I support this resolution from North Yorkshire. I can see where some of the conversation is going with it, and there was a reference to a 23 hour shift and in your last shift something happens.

To give you some context with Surrey, the chief fire officers are not stupid, they are quite devious. So working time regs, new secretary, quite difficult to get your head round. Does a unilaterally imposed shift system breach working time regs? If I give you 2-2-4 and then someone says I am going to make you do 2-2-4 and I am going to give you a day crewing element on it, and you bang the table and say do you want a dispute, you go to the stage 1 dispute, they have invited you there: "Thanks for bringing this to our attention. We don't think we are in dispute." "Why are we not in dispute?" "Because we haven't breached working time regs." "How have you not breached reg 10, reg 6, which all require collective agreements to be overcome in order to get more than an 8 hour night shift?" So they are not stupid because they are relying on NJC agreed shift systems which have a collective agreement, but then they bolt other stuff on to it and go "We haven't actually changed anything. We are using a foundation which is already agreed at NJC." The reason for the support for North Yorkshire is entirely we need to have shift systems that are working time reg compliant but 2-2-4 is not working time reg compliant. It has a longer night shift than 8 hours. How do we overcome that? Via NJC national agreement for a reg 23 collective agreement. That is how you get over it.

So the principle that everything needs to be working time compliant agreed. Can we get everything or can we get working time reg compliant? Yes, we can and hopefully we will discuss that in the next resolution, but I support North Yorkshire. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tristan. That's open for debate. Anybody. No. I now call resolution 6, Shift Negotiations, 24 hour working, moved by Kent. The EC oppose.

Resolution 6 SHIFT NEGOTIATIONS (24 HOUR WORKING)

Conference notes that the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book) states the following in respect of shift duty systems;

'No rota system shall include continuous duty periods of twenty-four hours.'

A number of Brigades across Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) have implemented 24-hr shift patterns which have proved popular with Fire Brigades Union Members.

Conference recognises that 24-hour working can act as a favourable work pattern for Members which can offer benefits including but not limited to;

- ***a greater work life balance as extended periods of time can be spent away from work***

- ***a reduction in commuting times and related travel costs***
- ***reduced carbon footprint effecting a more positive impact on the environment.***

Conference instructs the Executive Council, via the National Joint Council to remove the restriction on working 24-hour shifts and negotiate a new set of principles, including any necessary agreements to ensure working time regulation compliance and allow for a safe, nationally agreed introduction of 24-hour shift working.

KENT

AMENDMENT

After 3rd bullet point insert a further two bullet points.

- ***security of establishment figures/ridership factors***
- ***maintaining 42 hour weekly average.***

HUMBERSIDE

DANNY BARRETT (Kent):

I am here to move motion 6 covering shift negotiations, 24 hour working. Conference, the current cost of living crisis is worsening and our members are continuing to suffer from below inflation pay increases. Rising fuel costs are now causing members to suffer and to make life choices based on their disposable income which is rapidly diminishing.

This problem isn't a new one and the constant attacks from the Tory government have now led to members leaving the service and, in Kent, the exodus of our members to London has been significant. The rising costs to just get to work and increases in child care costs are now a real problem. Something has to be done.

Twenty-four hour working is now being introduced in some fire services with many more looking to introduce. Members are calling for these ways of working as a way of reducing the increasing burden of their transport costs. I have seen first-hand members leave and many state the reasons as not being able to afford to get to work. They are forced as soon as they physically can to transfer to their local or closer fire and rescue services.

Twenty-four hour working does help reduce this burden and it is positive for our members. It allows our members to spend more time with their families and helps our members continue in our efforts in reducing CO2 emissions. Twenty-four hour working is a way of keeping members as it restricts the amount of shifts they have to attend a month. This is helping reduce the increasing burden of transport costs due to the ever increasing fuel price hike and the poor state of the country's public transport network. It also saves our members travel time which, over the course of the year, is substantial.

This type of shift undoubtedly can help create a better work life balance. Numerous surveys have been undertaken by Kent officials and nearly all responses received from members report the benefits of these shifts outweigh some of the disadvantages and the perceived risks that they may bring.

A recent stress/well-being survey identified members suffered less stress when being able to work these types of shifts and overwhelmingly seemed to be chosen by our members. The vast majority of our members with families can elect to work this way, helping them plan and reduce child care costs while increasing valuable time available to spend with their families.

It is essential that the FBU are involved in their inception with approved control measures put in place, with assurances from services, to appease our concerns. The time has come to stop rogue chiefs implementing this way of working without the involvement of the FBU to ensure essential control measures are put in place to protect our members.

Conference, I call on you to support this motion and allow brigade officials to explore this type of shift pattern for consideration by the executive council. I move. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Danny. Does that have a seconder? Humberside, are you going to move your amendment at the same time?

SAM MILLER-HODGES (Humberside):

Yes, I will be moving that. We are supporting this motion because of our 97% mandate from our members for working a 24 hour shift system which we strive to have supported by the FBU. For the last six years we have been trialling one of these systems with the intention to obtain the full support of the FBU and have this recognised as a Grey Book compliant shift system. This trial has allowed us to maintain our establishment figures during the peak of austerity.

Conference, I must stress that this has only been a trial. We as local officials have adhered to and supported conference positions and have refrained from signing this off without the approval of the national FBU. Therefore, we welcome this resolution from Kent without additions.

Comrades, as you will remember from the start of conference, we were told to be mindful of the effects on others when voting. Brothers and sisters, if this resolution were to fall this will result in the imposition of day-crewing shift systems which, although grey book compliant, promote job cuts. As trade unionists, how can we possibly deny a resolution which will save jobs as opposed to promote job cut losses?

Conference, in 2018 we requested a report from the EC to the benefits of a shift system that do not comply with the existing national guidelines, with the national duty systems set out in section 4, part A, paragraph 7 of the national conditions of service. This report is still outstanding and we would have reported back to conference regarding the benefits for all concerned of the 24 hour shift system. I urge you to not vote against the resolution based on rumour, what-ifs and hearsay. Accidents are down, sickness is down and there has been a huge uplift in work-life balance.

A report, as requested, would also shine a light on reduction in commuting times, travel costs and a reduced carbon footprint, all whilst maintaining a 42 hour average working week. We have protected our staff with a robust fatigue policy designed and produced by membership working within the system. We would urge you to back this resolution. A 24 hour shift system has only been beneficial to our members and has been, as described, a win for trade union values. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, does the amendment have a seconder?

TRISTAN ORR-BERWICK (Surrey):

Surrey support resolution 6 and the amendment from our comrades in Humberside. Essentially, this resolution asks for the executive council to remove restrictions and negotiate a new set of principles for 24-hour working via the NJC.

It is expressly stated in these principles that they will include the necessary arrangements to ensure working time compliance and for a safe introduction at a national level (not local levels). As the brigade secretary for Surrey, I am mandated to support Kent's resolution and Humberside's amendment. Not only do our members want to work 24s but the objectives of the FBU rule book, rule A2 mandates all of us here today to support it, the reason being, number three is to secure unity of action, four is settle and negotiate differences between members. We have already seen resolution 20 from Cleveland and Tyne and Wear. There are a number of different shift systems in play at the moment. Six is to secure only members of FBU are employed in NJC roles.

If we don't tackle this as a collective at this conference, it will usher in other unions. Seven, aid and join other unions or societies with similar objectives. There is clearly an agenda we can link this to. Fifteen, secure standards for health and safety and welfare. I have literally just supported resolution 4 from North Yorks for this very reason. It will mean that we can manage this at a national level and secure standards of improved health and safety and welfare.

Also under rule C2, I and every other brigade secretary, chair and brigade organiser, we must establish negotiating machinery through which matters of concern for our members shall be pursued and that is exactly what we are doing today. Essentially, 24s generates a platform for us to have meaningful discussions about ridership factors, establishment figures and also improve already dangerous situations that are going on. In Surrey regularly we are on commons for six, eight hours with a Mars Bar. I know I don't look as if I only live off a Mars Bar, but a Mars Bar and glass of water doesn't do it.

In Surrey we have seen first-hand senior leadership team's deceitful, disingenuous attempt to bring in 24s via the backdoor, canvassing our members directly on stations to come away from the FBU and grey book conditions. We have worked tirelessly to engage with local stakeholders and have agreed trials be put on hold until this conference has an outcome. We have seen resolution 106 yesterday from Dorset and Wilts. We sympathise with that. Surrey FBU has been set up to fail. If we negotiate locally we will be disbarred by the FBU. If we refuse to negotiate on 24s we will see instant service-wide propaganda. That rhetoric will be simple: the FBU's refusing to even consult 24s, you want it, the service want it, other unions will give it to you. Unless we have an immediate meaningful debate on this here and now we will lose members.

I am not a trained speaker, nor am I career unionist seeking advancement on to the top table (yet). In this debate you will hear from far more eloquent speakers than me. You will hear words such as "breach", "working time regs", "unlawful", "unsafe", "fatigue management", "non-grey book", "remit" and "oppose". I have no doubt that EC members will use *Mantell v South Yorkshire* in an attempt to draw comparisons for day plus, close proximity crewing which are entirely separate issues. The take home is collective agreement –

THE PRESIDENT:

Delegate, can you start winding it up please.

TRISTAN ORR-BERWICK (Surrey):

Sorry, president. In closing, there is a strap line for November last year. Firefighters on the frontline were the first line defence for climate change. Twenty four hours manages that by halving the carbon footprint of our members and clearly –

THE PRESIDENT:

Tristan, you know that winding it up means can you come to an end. You are well over.

TRISTAN ORR-BERWICK (Surrey):

It clearly links to the EC agenda for pay and living conditions. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference. That is open for debate. Conference, just before we start, do you agree to suspend standing orders to get this resolution out of the way? *Agreed.*

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Speaking in opposition to the 24 hour resolution 6. Conference, don't open this back door. Do not open these floodgates for 24-hour shift systems. Don't do it. We fought them off in Cleveland successfully and I do sympathise with my comrades in Surrey in that you may lose members. Well, flip it the other way.

We got approached by our management to do 48-hour shift systems. If you tell me in this room that there is not a chief fire officer out there that wants to bring in longer working because it is a pathway to cuts, you are kidding yourself. Why are chief fire officers wanting to do these shift systems? Do you think it is because they are benevolent? Do you think they want to give us a lovely shift system that supports what we do? No, they don't, they want it because it is an opening to cuts.

They came to us with 48-hour shift systems and they were told to do one was the polite way that we did it through the technical advisory panel, and I'll tell them to do one again. Then they came with 24-hour shift systems and, like my comrade said in Surrey, yes, some of our members did have a thirst for it. Yes, some of our members did say that they would like to do it. Yes, fire service managers did say we will go and speak to your members and we will get them to do it anyway. Guess what we did. We mobilised, we went out there, we consulted our membership, we worked tirelessly to tell them the dangers of the 24 hours. We worked tirelessly to tell them the dangers of coming off 2-2-4. We worked tirelessly to tell them the dangers of not doing what the brigade were going to do, and we got 100% consultation to say no to both 24s, 48s and self-rostering (which was 24s anyway).

Conference, please think about what we are doing here. If we open this floodgate on 24 hour shift systems, we are opening the floodgates to going back hundreds of years and having firefighters on fire stations for unsafe amounts of time. Do not open this floodgate, conference. Thank you. *Applause.*

JIM KEARNS (London):

Speaking in opposition to this resolution 6. I would ask that the EC report back, as promised in 2018, on the duty system of 24 hours. That is basically our position. We want to have an advanced debate next year, report back to our next conference so we can have an in depth debate literally with the information that is supplied by you guys. Yes, that's it. Cheers.

STEPHEN TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

I am standing here today to support resolution 6 from Kent with Humberside's amendment. Our members in Nottinghamshire want a 24/72 shift system. We previously brought a resolution to conference for a 24-hour system which fell. I am sure you will hear opposition today that 24 systems might not be family friendly. "Family friendly" is a very personal thing and it relies on personal circumstances. I can't speak for other brigades but I know in my brigade we have members who travel a considerable distance to work, and because of that travel time they end up staying close to stations between shifts, so they are away from home for 36 hours twice for a 2-2-4 system. If we introduce a 24/72 system they can do one day on and go home after three days with their families. I take on board the EC's things about unsafe work and things, but that's for us to negotiate locally. We can put safe practices and build compensatory rest into a 24 hour system and make it better than the 2-2-4 we have got now.

I would also like just to quickly recap on what the comrade from Humberside said as well. It does cut down travel, it does save money and it is greener. Thank you. I support. *Applause*.

STEPHEN HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

Speaking in opposition to this Motion. Conference, it is quite worrying to listen to some of the debate that is going on there. I will touch on the pay issue. So we are suggesting that we need our members to come and work longer, unacceptable hours purely because they can't afford to get to work. We just had a debate on pay. Surely, we need to address the pay deficit and then that prevents our members needing the requirements to come and work longer unacceptable hours. *Applause*. We are about work-life balance. I think if we are honest the work-life balance isn't really there because we all know the members want to work this duty system so they have got additional time to go out and do extra jobs, do the work to prop up the shortfall in pay that we have just talked about.

I am not going to go over the points that Karl made which I think were very valid, but we have not got to be naïve. Chief fire officers are not doing this because it helps every one of us and our members; they are doing it for their own ends. I think a really important part of this debate and whether conference decides to support or reject, is the EC was asked to do the work and the study into whether this duty system was safe or not in 2018, to report back by Christmas in 2018. That work has not been done. It has not been shared with any of us. So, conference, you cannot vote to support this motion now without that work. The EC need to go away, they need to do that work and we need then to debate the results of that work, whether it supports the 24 hour shift system being safe and family friendly, all the stuff that we have talked about. We need the evidence to prove that. We have not got that evidence so conference I urge you until we have got that evidence and we know what we are voting for, you cannot vote to support this. I see I am flashing, so there you go.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Can I just remind everybody to stick to their time and stick to the lights because we are now eating into your lunchtime. Thank you.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

Speaking for probably the last time at conference. I am speaking against the resolutions and I do thank my comrades over in Essex for remitting theirs. It might be that some of you will look at me as a poacher turned gamekeeper because I was part of a negotiation team in Bedfordshire that collectively agreed the 24 hour shift in 2012. But I worked very closely with the negotiation team, the brigade committee, the regional committee and I had significant support from my then EC Member, Keith Hansom, and the regional chair, Brian Cooper, who is an expert in health and safety.

So through that process we managed to basically bring about suitable and sufficient risk assessments and compliance with Working Time Regulations that have stood our brigade in good stead as we have gone through the last few years. Crucially, this did happen before the conference policy of opposing or not engaging in 24 hour negotiations.

What I would say is if this resolution passed, what we are going to end up with is 24 hour shift in the grey book with 7 hour stand down. So for those brigades that are moving the resolution, it might be fine for them to put it through and they might have strong ways of bringing about some of the safe measures and safeguards that we did in Bedfordshire, but there are going to be other brigades who will then have chief officers who could enforce it upon those members who may not necessarily want it.

Times are different as well. We are facing an evolving position. The chief's cartel run the risk of having autonomy to do what they want, and whilst you might have an agreement in principle with your current set of principal officers, time changes everything. As those principal officers move on and maybe your negotiating team moves on, you will then eventually be left with a new set of officials, a new set of principal officers who have different principles and different views about how you go about managing those working time rest periods and all the other stuff that you bring in originally. Those are the things that we are facing in Bedfordshire.

With autonomy there is no guarantee that you will either go back to something you once had before or that you will end up with something like we ended up in Bedfordshire where we managed to secure a 24 four watch system on a 9 and 15 hour split shift, but there is no guarantee that shift negotiations open up for anyone, especially with what is going on with the white paper.

Finally, I would just like to say that Steve has just mentioned about the cost of living. That is not a reason to enter into a debate or open up discussions on shifts. We should be having a fight on pay. We heard a few times today about going back to the members to encourage withdrawal from work to campaign for pay –

THE PRESIDENT:

Jamie, you have got the red light. Close please.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

But leadership comes from the top so we need to have more leadership from the top. Finally, I would just like to say if any brigade or regional committee want to talk about 24s, send me an invite and I will talk about it more in depth. Thank you.

RYAN BINKS (West Yorkshire):

Speaking in support of motion 6. As a brigade committee this was not a resolution that we took lightly at all. What we did was we made a decision to set up an online vote via email which we sent out to all our members. That vote returned a 60% response and of that returning result it was as follows: 77% of our members were in support, 16% opposed and 7% neither supported nor opposed.

On that note, going back to yesterday, this would suggest that online voting systems can work. Therefore, as mandated by our membership in respect of 24 hour shifts, West Yorkshire support. Thank you. *Applause.*

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

President, conference, we oppose. I have got personal experience working similar to 24 hours. This shift system wore me down both physically and mentally. It is not friendly to members, it is not friendly to family. I am not a parent but I am a devoted auntie. I missed a lot of my nephews and nieces growing up because I was working 24 hours. The next day I was tired both physically and mentally.

To have an horrific incident on a day shift and not be able to clock off or clock out of an evening and speak to my friends and my family, impacted me massively. It is about the wellbeing of us all. I now go to work, start my shift, I am happy to report and I can finish my shift in an evening and I have free time and down time. This is valuable to me and my members and everyone here should be opposing this.

The erosion of mine and your terms and conditions is not what I signed up to as a rep or a member. The very notion of demanding to work 24 hours should ring alarm bells amongst you all. I signed up to be able to respond to my community's need in an emergency. Are we seriously saying that working within 24 hour shifts we can do this to the best of our ability? I know we are busy after 11 hours, never mind 24s.

We have previously asked the EC to produce a report around the health and safety aspects of the 24 hour shifts. I ask the EC to report to conference how this is ongoing and you, conference, to wait to hear what the outcome is before considering or supporting. This does not save jobs. It lets fire and rescue services attack our terms and conditions to get us to work an unsafe shift system. I oppose. *Applause*.

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

First time speaker. *Applause*. I am speaking to oppose resolution 6. We must oppose 24 hour shifts at every opportunity. We already know that many of our stations are unfit for purpose with lack of adequate facilities and privacy for our members. We cannot subject our members to even longer shifts in these conditions. We have members who work shift patterns at 15 hour days already. Those shifts are exhausting, especially on busier months, especially when we have large protracted incidents which we have seen more due to climate change.

Doing 24 hour shifts in busy or unsafe conditions would pose a serious health and safety risk. Whilst we do appreciate this shift system might appeal to certain members, these shifts would exclude the majority of care givers, make it difficult to get private child care to cover these hours. This would disproportionately affect single parents and women who are often primary care givers and force them out of the workforce.

Many members have moved many miles to join the fire service, myself included. My family are 273 miles away. I do not have family on my doorstep to look after my children. I am sure everyone has seen my two-year-old whilst being here these last few days. So when I am not at work I have got my two-year-old, and I have got my four-year-old as well who is at school at the moment. To work 12 hours, a 12-hour busy night, I have got enough energy to get home, straightaway on a trampoline, blow bubbles with my two-year-old (that is what he wants, he doesn't appreciate I have had a busy night shift). To try and do that after 24 hours of a busy shift and go back home with my two-year-old, he would not have the same response. I would be absolutely shattered. I could not do it.

For that reason, I am opposing resolution 6. *Applause*.

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

President, conference. Essex have remitted our resolution on this matter in order to support Kent's. Our resolution was a result of a very tight brigade committee vote and only ever sought to provide FBU members with safe, workable and nationally negotiated options for 24-hour shifts.

Despite personal and brigade official concerns, democracy compelled us to bring this to conference. Although we do not have any immediate skin in the game, it is obviously an issue that is of interest to FBU members and it is not one that is going to go away. So regardless of the outcome, we urge the EC to address this before it spreads in an uncontrolled manner. Essex will be supporting. *Applause*.

MARK DRINKWATER (Leicestershire):

I note that a comrade earlier said this is not about close proximity crewing. Unfortunately, I believe – and I have to apologise – that that is naïve: to think that chiefs won't use this as a backdoor. It will be the thin end of the wedge. My chief came to me when he read our agenda and said "Oh, 24 hours, that's going to undermine your DCP position, isn't it?" They are well aware of this and well aware of the implications.

Within Leicestershire, we have had Covid as everyone has had. We have had another virus. It is called the Fire Officers' Association. *Applause*. Now the Working Time Regulations clearly supported South Yorkshire and they were the tools in our box. If we use the Working Time Regulations like a box of chocolates, picking and choosing, we are going to undermine the power that they give us. So I urge conference to oppose. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference. I am now going to bring in the AGS to succinctly give the qualified support and the opposition.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Whoever said that? I will – especially as it is the lunchtime – try to be succinct. I often break my promises.

I think there are a number of things we do need to say within this debate. Clearly we do oppose resolution 6 from Kent and we do oppose therefore the amendment from Humberside. You cannot support one without the other. We give qualified support to the North Yorkshire resolution No 4.

The qualification with regard to North Yorkshire is perhaps the easiest thing. We don't accept, which seems to be the essence of the resolution, that there is widespread introduction and practice of duty systems which should not be agreed. We do accept that there are some which are not as acceptable as others, shall we say, but the resolution seems to imply it as though it is widespread out there. So that is one of the qualifications.

I will say this. We will carry out the work. It will be supported. It will be passed. Just to emphasise again with my bureaucrat's head on, we do need a 100% return. We have actually tried to do this before and not had the 100% return. I won't bang that same drum any more, but please do ensure that we get 100% returns.

With regard to the 24 hour shifts, obviously we did discuss in 2018 as has been said, and a report will be produced. The Humberside resolution this time, which we are opposing, calls for a number of people from the floor who have said please give us the report. We will give the report. The report will obviously be determined by how you vote. On the one hand, the report will be if conference says support 24s, it will be how you try to negotiate a safe system of 24 hour working. If you oppose, as we hope you do, it will be giving you the reasons and arming you with the reasons to go back to those branches or to those members where they want 24 hour working as to the reasons why, if you like, a summary of what has been discussed here. That was agreed in 2018 and we will do that, and we will do it long in advance of 2023.

I think the key issue here is that we do have to remember, and someone pointed to it – I think it was North Yorkshire – resolution 5 from 2017 which was moved by Devon and Somerset. It said that in terms of the whole time shift system 24 hour cover non retained, we had to insist that it was section A, part 4, para 7, the historical 2-2-4. It enshrined it, it embedded it, put into capital letters, and in that same debate in 2017 it was in opposition to and taken in opposition to, accepted by conference, the Humberside Resolution for 24 hour shifts. Understand this. If this resolution passes because of the conference 2017 decision accepted by conference, it does mean that Devon and Somerset resolution with regards to embedding as sacrosanct the tradition 2-2-4 shift system falls. We will be reversing our decision that we made in 2017 as moved by Devon and Somerset. That is in the report of proceedings for those that want to read it.

We totally understand why some members are attracted to the 24 hour systems spelt out within the resolution. We understand that. We have all worked shift systems of one form or another at one time or another, but I have got to say our real issue is about safety, it really is. We have got problems with the 24 hour shift in itself, but understand this, and you know this. If you have got a 24 hour shift system your overtime shift is 24 hours as well. Every fire and rescue service is understaffed, so it might be 24/72 but when the overtime is done on another 24 it will be 24 and 24 and 48, or 24 and 24, another 24 hours working. That is the danger with this.

Actually, if we are doing 24s, and where they have been introduced at a time which was pre-2017, as in Bedfordshire, before we took that decision, since then the lessons have been learned. It is not such an attractive system. It is known not to be such an attractive system, far from it.

Where stands our policy on day crewing plus if you can actually do 24 hours and then 24 hours back to back when the employer says "Do you mind, member?" Where is our policy then on 24 hour shifts or, rather, DCP? I think we do need to bear in mind at this moment in time what protects is two things: our contract and what we do and don't agree under the health and safety legislation which is the working time regs.

We know where this government is with regards to contracts. We have seen this week that yet again they have put back the employment bill. They have put back the employment bill because they intend to shred employment rights rather than increase them and then shred them. We know that. The contractual element can be under risk. On the health and safety side, on the health and safety legislation, the working time regs, as part of the Brexit debate this is what happened. Johnson and other key ministers were quite clear the first on the bonfire would be the regulations that emanated from Europe to do with employment and safety. No question at all.

What we see again in this same Queen's Speech this week is the start of the bonfire of EU regulations. They have not started with the working time regs. How daft would they be to be so – so silly to do it, I can't think of the word. But that is what is coming. They are setting the agenda, they are starting off the bonfire of EU emanated regulations and soon amongst them will be the working time regs. Our protections disappear.

As the resolution calls for, once we agree that it is in the Grey Book, that brigade committees can go and negotiate, once it is agreed within a brigade, you can't get out of it. That is the nature of a collective agreement. We would then need the employers' agreement when our members – as in Bedfordshire, this is not such a good system, we don't like it quite so much – you can't get out of it; you need the employers' agreement, and they aren't going to be too keen necessarily to give it to you.

These are some of the arguments used. I think Nottinghamshire said clearly you have got members who live a long way away. Yes, they will do a long drive before the shift, they will then do 24 hours. Let us hope they don't have a really busy shift because then they are driving that long distance drive home and we don't want them wrapped around a lamp post, another vehicle, a lorry or whatever. That is the implication of this.

I have got to say in terms of 24 hour working, most of us whether in the control rooms or in the stations have worked busy shifts. The busiest shift I can imagine in recent times was probably Grenfell. If our members, our officers trying to exercise command control, our people in the control room trying to deal with that level of work, our firefighters trying to go up and down that building, if that had come at the end of a 24 hour shift, I don't think we would all be going and saying to each other how did we survive that without losing a member. I don't think it would have been 72 people who had died. There would have been more and they would have been our members. They would have died with a firefighter's uniform on their back. I don't think there is any question of that, and we have all faced incidents not as big as Grenfell but big all the same, and they don't have to be in buildings going, they don't have to be buildings going across, they can be wildfires, stuck there for a long time, extremely difficult hard working conditions.

We have lost members having heart attacks in the middle of wild fires. Reliefs – they are almost a thing of the past nowadays – relief crews for long incidents. We have all had them. We have all had the night in bed, but too many of us have had the call after the call after the call, even at so called quiet stations. But we are going to agree, conference – I can't believe it – we are being asked to agree to put our people on these 24 hour shifts.

I have got to say this. Everything starts in the control room. There aren't many control rooms with a bed. They work continuously, extremely understaffed. I have been at this for a long time. In certain control rooms, in many control rooms, "I have been at this for some time, can I have a break." There isn't a break because there isn't anyone to relieve them. We will be dumping the 24 hour shift systems not just on firefighters at the risk of their safety but also our members in control rooms. We need to bear that in mind.

We have had a number of debates. We are going to have debates later today as well, in terms of equalities, looking after the rights of women members, looking after the needs of women members. I don't know. I have done many, many shift negotiations, many, many referrals to the technical advisory panel with brigade officials, challenging management on a range of different duty systems. One thing is almost consistent each time. How does this affect women members that cannot get childcare on the hours that are being demanded, the start and finish times being demanded by the fire and rescue service? And that is just childcare. There is also elderly care, and you don't have to be a woman to have elderly care or child care either, let us not forget.

So what are we doing? We are condemning our people to look towards the door because if you can't leave your kids at home with a biscuit and a bottle of milk, and the horror stories we read occasionally in the *Daily Express* (if you were to buy the *Daily Express*) – I will be frank, I think conference knows this is an aspiration for our members. We know why some of them want it. This conference cannot go back to the health and safety committees with fire and rescue services, look them in the eye and say that this is an acceptable system. There are no safeguards. The 24 hour duty system itself is an unsafe system. It is as simple as that. I think you know it.

I do accept what you are saying that someone said that actually a big risk for us is day crewing duty systems being introduced to replace whole time 24 hour cover. Well, I have got to say to you, it takes members to agree to that.

Members have to agree: I will live close enough to, I will live to give the retained cover. They can't just impose the day crewing duty system on our members. Our members have to agree to it. The union have to agree to it in the first place, but more importantly, individual members have to agree they will provide that retained cover and live within the travel distance time.

I am spending too long, I know. I will come to a close.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Andy.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

I will take the hint. Please either withdraw the resolution, Kent – and North Yorkshire, I hope you accept the qualification – but if it is not withdrawn, it is not a resolution that can be remitted. If not, conference, please do oppose. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Kent, right of reply.

DANNY BARRETT (Kent):

President, conference, firstly, I just want to thank brothers and sisters both who spoke in support but those who also spoke against. It is clear that we need more quality debate around this issue. The EC can go away and do the work as instructed in 2018, and after listening to everyone's concerns and the problems that it may cause members in other regions, Kent FBU will be withdrawing this resolution. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I now put resolution 4 to the vote moved by North Yorkshire. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference, we will be done in one minute. There is the IER fringe which is in the Charlotte Room. That will start twenty minutes after we close, so if you are going to the fringe, go and get your lunch or grab some lunch and take it with you. We are going, with your agreement, to suspend your standing orders. Is that agreed? Agreed. You don't even know what I am going to say yet. We will reconvene after lunch at 2.30. OK, thank you, conference. See you at half past two.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference, good afternoon and sorry for the delay. As you have probably seen, there has been a lot of frantic activity; there have been a lot of delegation meetings, so hopefully we can now crack on with business. I will call Phil Millar, chair of standing orders committee, to give a standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, could you turn to your programme of business. Page 11, resolution 70 will be remitted with the right to speak. Conference, if you could turn to your delegates' list: region 1, Scotland, remove John McKenzie and replace with Gus Sproul. Region 3, Northumberland, Ash Fox, replace with Vanessa Robinson. Region 4, South Yorkshire, Stu Smith, replace with Alex Wilson. Region 5, GMC, Matt Fryer, replace with Daniel Giblin. Region 9, Bedfordshire, remove Jamie Newell and replace with Craig Carter. B&EMM, remove Dean Pounder and replace with Alex Kelly. LGBT remove Rebecca Savin and replace with Nicola Hobbs. NWC remove Georgina Fielding and replace with Kathryn Duncan. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Conference, I now move on to para H1 and we will shortly be taking the executive council policy statement on sexual harassment, and the following resolutions will be taken in the same debate: resolutions 60, 67 Our Union Tackling Misogyny, NWC; resolution 70, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Discrimination Bordering on Misogyny moved by Scotland (and I have just heard they have agreed to remit with a right to speak), and resolution 74, Toxic Masculinity from Merseyside.

Conference, just before I move on to this debate and I bring the general secretary in, obviously there is a reason why all of these resolutions and policy statements come into conference, and I have had a couple of references during conference to "guys" on the EC. We are not all "guys" so just be mindful of the language that we move. OK, Matt, thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, this is an important debate for our union, and I am sure we will give it the attention and reflection it deserves.

It is a sad state of affairs and a reflection on society that we have had to bring a new policy statement on sexual harassment to conference. If we look back at the history of the discussions on equality and diversity in our profession and in our union, they have taken place over almost four decades now. The first post-war moves on equality were introduced by the then Greater London Council under Ken Livingstone who began to discuss how work forces in the Greater London Council could be made more reflective of communities. Part of that change was that efforts were made to recruit into the London Fire Brigade women members to address equality, to recruit people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds and to address discrimination within the London Fire Brigade.

That forced this union to then wake up to some of those issues as well because, sadly, in the early 1980s there were a number of quite horrific cases of sexual harassment and bullying which in fact in some cases reached the national press and, sadly, some of those involved harassment by members of the Fire Brigades Union against other members of the Fire Brigades Union, and it was a very difficult and challenging time for all concerned.

In the conference of 1985, and certainly myself and the AGS were at that conference, the London region of the union brought an emergency resolution to demand that the union took up the issue of sexual harassment and developed policies around it. There was a ground breaking discussion within our union. I think we should be very proud that our London region in 1985 brought that and sparked that debate which has continued since.

Now, nearly four decades later the fact that we have to revisit the issue shows that the problem remains and that we have to do yet more.

Conference, sexual harassment is when someone is subjected to unwelcome and unwanted sexually related behaviour which has no place in our workplaces or in wider society. It may range from inappropriate material or jokes, unwanted propositions right through to serious sexual assaults. Regrettably, we have examples of all of these within our service and our profession. Sexual harassment persists despite laws and policies against it, and the executive council statement draws attention to the scale and depth of sexual harassment in society.

There is an enormous range of evidence of the extent of sexual harassment in the workplace. A BBC survey found that half of British women and a fifth of men had been sexually harassed at work or place of study. A Fawcett Society Review established that violence against women and girls is endemic in our society. A TUC report found a fifth of respondents saying that they had been sexually harassed by their boss or someone else in authority over them. Another TUC report found that seven in ten LGBT workers had experience of at least one type of sexual harassment in work. A further TUC Report last year recorded seven in ten disabled women saying they had been sexually harassed at work.

Sexual harassment may take many dimensions: men and women, black, white, gay, straight, people with disabilities and other dimensions. Conference, there is a massive problem of underreporting of sexual harassment in the workplace. 80% of women who said they had experienced sexual harassment did not tell their employer, and only 1% had told a union rep about their experience. We need to reflect on those figures in relation to whether women and others in the FBU feel confident enough in our structures to report through those structures.

I think something that strikes me whenever we talk about statistics or the scale of a problem, let us remember that behind every statistic are real people, people whose lives have been destroyed or damaged as a result of this behaviour.

We have – and you will read it in the annual report each year – women who are forced out of our service, forced out of our profession, because of behaviours taking place in the workplace that we have failed to adequately challenge, and that is shameful.

Conference, the executive council feels bound to bring this statement together because of events in wider society. Recently, a Westminster women equalities select committee reported on sexual harassment, and it has become a major debate in the trade union movement. You may have seen the report in the press, you may have read the report itself, the Monaghan Report into the GMB Union. It sent shockwaves throughout our movement. It reported on widespread sexual harassment within that organisation and described the GMB as institutionally sexist. It has forced the TUC to address that, and the TUC has urged all unions to address and consider whether policies within each union are adequate or need to be reviewed.

I myself sit on the TUC working group on sexual harassment that was established following the Monaghan Report into the GMB. In legal cases, an important appeal case, *UNITE v Nailard*, found that trade unions are legally responsible for the actions of their lay officials, in this case the sexual harassment of a member of UNITE staff by a lay official of the UNITE union. UNITE was found to be responsible for the behaviour of that lay official.

So these are serious matters not just for the people concerned, but for us also institutionally as an organisation. Getting our house in order is absolutely essential. We know that the fire and rescue service does not reflect the diversity found in wider society. Less than one in five employed in the fire and rescue service are women, only 5% from ethnic minorities, less than 4% recorded as LGBT. Women are 8% of wholetime firefighters, 6.5% of retained, 76 of control and 55% of support staff.

Although there are signs of improvement, the situation is still far from satisfactory. As I said from the beginning, the union has provided legal support to our members in sexual harassment cases for nearly 40 years. We get that annual report every year. Comrades, I would urge you to read some of the stories within there. There are cases of sexual harassment reported every year where this union has won compensation primarily for women members through the courts as a result of sexual harassment often by other members of the Fire Brigades Union. Yes, we should be providing that legal support, we should be winning those cases, but actually, you know what, we should be stopping that behaviour from happening in the first place.

Our officials have done work on sexual harassment through the Inclusive Fire Service Group formed through the National Joint Council and that carries out important equalities monitoring, and that work continues. These steps are important. They are not enough. We say openly at this conference that we have not done enough to tackle sexual harassment in our industry and in our union, and we resolve to do better from now on.

Conference, last year the executive council, in the aftermath of the Monaghan Report and the aftermath of the TUC raising this issue, established a working group to discuss how we improve our measures to tackle sexual harassment, particularly if it exists within our union. The working group has met twice this year. It is convened by a national officer. It is attended by the general secretary and president and it involves women officials, women members of staff and representatives of the national women's committee. It will discuss with all regions and all sections. It has appropriate support from members of staff including our office manager, because we have been asked to review our own policies in relation to our own staff to ensure that as an employer we have adequate policies and protections in place in relation to this issue.

Importantly, it is agreed – and if you read the policy statement it says – that it will seek external support as necessary. I will make some clarifications on those points in the aftermath of the debate. I know that is one of the issues on which there will be some debate during the course of today.

It will scrutinise a range of issues, internal and external, and the working group will report to conference 2023.

I am aware there has been a lot of debate this week on these issues, and there is a lot of strong feeling. I have got no doubt we will hear some very powerful contributions in the debate this afternoon, possibly including some quite upsetting and alarming accounts and stories. So in the aftermath of that the executive council just want to clarify a number of points to strengthen the statement that we have issued. The executive council agrees that the working group should be broadened to tackle broader issues of misogyny. That is implicit in the work already undertaken but we now make that explicit.

We will undertake, following discussions at conference this week, steps to ensure that the experiences of members and officials, including former officials, in relation to issues of sexual harassment within the Fire Brigades Union, are provided so that women who have something to say are able to say so to the working group.

We will work promptly to establish systems that give women members and women officials the confidence that their concerns and complaints will be dealt with, effectively some form of whistle-blowing policy, and we will work to achieve that rapidly.

We will review the debate around the question of the need for an independent review. We will review promptly the areas where we believe that we need independent support including a full review of that question, the question of whether the working group is appropriate or whether an external independent investigation is required, by September of this year, including a full discussion with the NWC. Hopefully, those strengthen the points that are made within the policy statement.

Conference, in conclusion, this is a trade union issue. This is about unity. Think about the slogans that our movement was built on, about unity and solidarity. The issue of sexual harassment is no different from that because sexual harassment is about dividing work places, dividing work forces and dividing workers. It is allowing people to be picked on, bullied, isolated and driven out of the workplace ultimately, and we cannot tolerate that.

We stand in solidarity with all those who have spoken out against sexual harassment, with our members who have suffered sexual harassment in the workplace, including on occasion from our own members, and I hope that delegates will support our work throughout the year and ensure that the necessary changes are delivered when the working group reports back.

This is about solidarity. This is about trade unionism because if trade unionism is not about defending all of us, then frankly it is not trade unionism. We know that we are better than that. That is why I know that you will pass this EC policy statement and that is why I know that we will implement the findings of that group when it reports back. Conference, thank you. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call on Cleveland to second.

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Seconding the EC policy statement on sexual harassment. Let me make one thing clear to you all right now. There is no place for misogyny in this union. There is no place for those who act in a way that makes people feel uncomfortable. There is no place for sexual harassment and I, and I expect all of you, do not stand for it.

Conference, don't just support this policy statement, don't just put your hand up and support it. Act on it. An act of omission is an act of commission, and what I would urge every single one of you to do is if you see it, deal with it, and deal with it robustly.

Let me challenge this floor right now. If there are people sitting in this room with misogynistic beliefs, beliefs that sexual harassment is OK, pick your free bag up and beat it. We will not stand for it. I will not stand for it, and I expect you not to stand for it.

Comrades, please indulge me. One of the most inspirational female officials that I have ever met retires today – my comrade from Dorset and Wiltshire, Karen Adams, has inspired more women and officers in this movement than anybody I know and I would like conference please to wish Karen all the best in her retirement. Karen, thank you very much. *Applause.*

Conference, let's empower our reps, let's empower our officials and what you end up with is more Karen's. More Karen's make this union a better place, and in turn make our workplaces a better place. Conference, please support this policy statement. Don't just support it, act on it. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Karl. I now call on resolution 67, Our Union Tackling Misogyny, moved by the National Women's Committee. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 67 OUR UNION TACKLING MISOGYNY

Conference has been shaken by the high-profile incidents involving male violence against women in recent times. Conference remembers the victims; Sarah Henshaw, Sarah Everard, Sabina Nessa, Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry to name a few, there are countless more. On average, a woman is killed by a man every three days in the UK.

Conference is shocked at the involvement and aspects of response of the police in these tragic incidents. An apparent misogynistic culture within police forces is now rightly being interrogated. Some claim that these are a few 'bad apples', however we exist in a society which contains misogyny so it is not surprising that these cultures would also be present in large traditionally male dominated organisations.

The GMB's independent investigation into sexual harassment within their union shone a light onto institutional sexism within the trade union movement. We cannot ignore this staggering issue.

Toxic misogynistic behaviours are also familiar to us as workers in Fire and Rescue Services. Jokes about rape and domestic violence are not uncommon, although perpetrated by a small minority. Colleagues and ex-colleagues of ours have also been convicted of these crimes.

The upholding of misogynistic cultures has also been demonstrated within our Union both historically and recently. Female Members have been treated in shameful ways, by fellow Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Members including Officials.

Conference must stand together to create safe workplaces for women.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to;

- ***support the campaign to make misogyny a hate crime***
- ***publicly condemn misogynistic behaviours seen in our workplaces and the wider world***
- ***encourage Members to challenge and report instances of misogyny or sexism in the workplace, home or elsewhere***
- ***be vocal to employers on what constitutes misogynistic behaviour, where it exists in our***

workplaces, how it must be quashed and how victims must be heard and supported to justice

- ***introduce mandatory sexual harassment training for all FBU Officials.***

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

ROSA CROWLEY-BENNETT (NWC):

I know that many people in this room have advocated for and fought for our women members. It is not a surprise that in such a male-dominant work force sexism and misogyny still pervade. However, I look around this room and I do see allies.

It gives me hope to know that there are many who stand with the national women's committee when we say there is no room for discrimination in our workplaces.

In the six and a half years I have been in the fire service and a member of the FBU, I have experienced some shocking treatment as a woman.

Going from being a teacher to joining the fire service felt like having culturally regressed by about 30 years. Prior to joining, I had not worried about frequently being the only woman in a group of men. The reality of this when many men have not stuck up for me and others, can still leave me feeling vulnerable.

On parade during my first week on station an officer on my watch called me a dirty bitch. Apologies for that language, but I was hoping you would be shocked by that. If you weren't shocked, if you know that this type of behaviour has happened, then I ask you: what did you do about it? What are you doing about it?

Our union must be at the forefront, must be setting the example that misogyny and sexism cannot be allowed in any of our workplaces. Thankfully, not all our workplaces are like this. Many people have led the way and undertaken this work historically to change the culture for the better. It is achievable.

So that's behaviour within the fire service. We must also hold a mirror in front of ourselves and our Union. Can we honestly say the FBU is entirely better than those workplaces stuck in the past?

Shockingly, we do not need to look far to find women who say they have been let down, ignored and even bullied by officials in the FBU. We cannot shy away from this fact or, worse still, brush it under the carpet. You must believe women when we tell you we do not feel safe, we do not feel protected, we do not feel that enough is being done.

While we cannot go back and right all the wrongs of the past, what we can do is say enough is enough.

The GMB carried out the work to expose the levels of sexual harassment in their union and set about addressing it through the Monaghan Report and resulting recommendations. The FBU must now lead the way for our members. Whilst the sexual harassment working group and EC statement on sexual harassment is a welcome step, we also welcome the announcement that it encompasses all forms of misogyny not just sexual harassment.

We have this chance to be at the forefront of tackling misogyny within the trade union movement. We must grasp this now. The longer we leave this, the longer we kick this can down the road, the more women end up as collateral damage. It is not easy for women to speak up about bullying, discrimination and misogyny. Do not reject this opportunity to listen and act. Misogyny rots our union from the inside out. If there are bad apples and we do nothing we all end up rotten.

Conference, it is my opinion and the opinion of others in the National Women's Committee that there is misogyny in our union. It is my opinion that there is misogyny in this room. I would challenge anyone who disagrees that there is shocking evidence of sexual harassment, sex discrimination, bullying and misogyny within the FBU. People in this room may nod along, may call themselves an ally, but will they vote for change?

Officials of this union are taking decisions when they don't understand the ramifications for women. There are some people who do understand yet do it anyway.

The culture of the FBU regarding women, both members and officials, needs to be interrogated. If we have nothing to hide, why are we afraid? If abuse and wrongdoing is uncovered, this is necessary to bring it out. I am disappointed that resolution 70 has been remitted, but if you consider yourself an ally, as I know so many of you are, you must vote in support of this motion. The only way we will end this treatment of women is for us to stand together, to be united, to be strong. Women cannot tackle this on our own. We need all of you standing with us.

Unity is strength: comrades, brothers, sisters. We must unite behind this motion and call an end to suffering of women in our union. Conference, I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rosa. Does that have a seconder?

KERRY McCRONE (Scotland):

Scotland seconds resolution 67 because for far too long have women been the subject of misogyny, harassment and sexism, not only within our workplaces but within society as a whole.

For far too long have women been living in fear of physical attack, of being scared to walk the streets, not only at night but also, following the murder of Ashley Murphy whilst out jogging in broad daylight, are now scared to walk the streets in daylight as well.

The figure of one woman being killed by a man every three days in the UK is absolutely shocking. By supporting resolution 67, we are supporting the campaign to make misogyny a hate crime and publicly condemning these behaviours in the workplaces and the wider world. We will be sending out a clear message that this will not be tolerated by our union.

By supporting this resolution we can make real changes to the lives of not only our members but for all the girls and women across our society. We therefore urge everyone to support this. Scotland seconds.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kerry. I now call resolution 70, sexual harassment, sex discrimination, bullying and misogyny, moved by Scotland.

Resolution 70 SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEX DISCRIMINATION, BULLYING AND MISOGYNY

Conference is appalled that instances of sexual harassment, sex discrimination, bullying and misogyny are still a reality faced by far too many women Members and Officials with devastating outcomes.

Research shows that 97 per cent of young women in the UK have been sexually harassed and 81 per cent of women of all ages have experienced sexual harassment in public.

While it is appalling, it is not surprising that these unwanted behaviours manifest within the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), often going unchallenged, unrecognised and unreported all too often passed off as banter and minimised, leaving the victims feeling bullied and ashamed and fearful of calling it out, or 'making a fuss'.

Conference calls on all Officials and Members to lead by example, call out any unequal and discriminatory treatment and recognise the profound impact this has on our democracy, the diversity of our Officials, our ability to protect our Members and to start to effect long overdue change for good.

Conference instructs that the FBU Executive Council (EC) should lead the change by;

- supporting and conducting an immediate independent investigation and review into structural sexism, bullying and sexual harassment within the FBU with terms of reference set by the EC, committing to adopt all recommendations from the independent review in full***
- ensuring that the appointment of independent investigators and any subsequent recommendations from the review involves the full democratic participation of the FBU national equalities sectional committees.***

This investigation should report back to Committees no later than Conference 2023.

SCOTLAND

KERRY McCRONE (Scotland):

Speaking on resolution 70, Sexual harassment, sex discrimination, bullying and misogyny.

This was brought to our regional committee by our women members as they felt that this was an extremely concerning issue within our union. This speech is not just my speech. These words are not just my words. This speech and these words are echoed by many women who are angry, scarred and exhausted by the sexist comments, sexual harassment, sexual violence and bullying that they have endured over many decades.

Our resolution clearly states that 97% of young women in the UK and 81% of women of all age groups have experienced sexual harassment in their lives. That is staggering, isn't it? So does it come as any surprise within this room that these behaviours manifested themselves within our union? Do we think that just because we are a trade union that we are immune, because if we do, we are very naïve in our thinking.

In the executive council's policy statement on sexual harassment, it states that reporting levels of sexual harassment are low and that TUC research shows that four out of five women who said they had experienced sexual harassment did not tell their employer, and only 1% told a trade union rep. 1% told a trade union rep! Stop and reflect on that for a minute. 1%.

So if women members of this union take the brave decision against all these odds to come together and call for action into the abhorrent treatment that they are receiving, including sexual harassment, sex discrimination, bullying and misogyny, we are then asked to remit it by an executive council that comprises of men bar one. Can you imagine how that has made those women feel? I can tell you how it has made them feel: like they are being silenced.

It has made them feel that our voices do not count, and our voices and experiences are being diluted and diminished by men in positions of influence and power. It is about time that all organisations, including this union, woke up and acknowledged that these archaic behaviours that have been going on for decades are still very much prevalent in today's society.

We need to seek and root out these toxic behaviours. Is it not what every single person in this room wants today? Is it not our job as a union to pave the way forward in making things better for all of our members? If we have nothing to hide, we have nothing to fear. If these behaviours and attitudes are identified, then surely every single one of us here today wants this stamped out. We must create a safe space for these women to speak openly and freely about their experiences.

We ask women to come forward and to challenge these unacceptable behaviours when this involves the fire and rescue service and to push for investigations and demand change. So why are we not doing the same when it comes to our own union? What are we afraid of, comrades?

We need to be bold and we need to be brave, and we need to show a serious level of honesty, integrity and self-reflection if we want to understand lessons and act upon the demands of our women members. This union has historically punched well above its weight in our movement in tackling equality issues. Now is the time to act, not just write rules, statements and policies. Let's see action. Let's see change. Let's show our members and the wider trade union movement that the Fire Brigades Union will lead the way in tackling toxic behaviours against women.

Scotland recognises the executive council's statement on sexual harassment. However, we did not feel it went far enough. We welcome the executive council's commitment to broaden their statement to include the areas that we asked to be recognised. As the executive council has addressed our concerns, we have remitted our resolution but I would say this. We are putting our trust in you and I implore you not to let our most vulnerable members down.

We have to go back – I have to go back – and explain to my women members that we have remitted this resolution and how it has been one of the most difficult decisions to make in the past couple of days. For many of our members it has taken years to get a resolution in front of conference with this content. Scotland is putting its trust in the assurances it has received from the executive council. Don't let us down. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Kerry. I will now call resolution 74, Toxic Masculinity, moved by Merseyside. The EC position is they are seeking remittance.

Resolution 74 TOXIC MASCULINITY

Conference notes that with continued support from the Fire Brigades Union, Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) are slowly becoming a more diverse and inclusive workplace. Whilst this progress is encouraging the rate at which we are able to effect further change falls far short of our trade unions aspirations.

Too many Members within FRSs are still being negatively affected and undermined by outdated practises, ideas and opinions, which in part can be attributed to toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity hampers the development and progression of all within FRSs as it seeks to reward behaviours ascribed to the so-called traditional masculine ideology. This covers a range of issues such as suppressing emotions, a lack of openness about mental health and the rejection of femininity in all its supposed forms.

For us to progress as a society we need to start seeing and expressing our emotions and seeking help as a sign of strength, only by acknowledging our behaviours can we begin to grow.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to devise, produce and disseminate a training package designed to assist in recognising and addressing toxic masculinity within FRSs. This work should be carried out as quickly as possible with the training package to be disseminated within the next 12 months.

MERSEYSIDE

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Moving resolution 74, Toxic Masculinity. President and conference, masculinity is not inherently bad or toxic. People can be masculine without being toxic or harmful. However, toxic masculinity kills. Toxic masculinity breeds an innate desire for power over others whether it be in the form of misogyny, racism, homophobia or any other minority group that can be attacked and dominated. It is so ingrained in society that most people will experience its effects at some point.

As a union we need to challenge toxic masculinity in our workplaces. To do that we need to understand it and recognise it. That is why we ask for education on this matter as once people understand what toxic masculinity is they can begin to help. Toxic masculinity does kill. It has killed countless women but it also kills men, men bound by the rules that they impose on themselves, unable to reach out and ask for help because to do that is weak.

In my own brigade we have seen teams set up on stations where toxic masculinity has been used as a management style. Now, as FBU officials, we are dealing with members who have been abused in this system, emotionally and mentally battered for years and told it was character building and that they needed to man up.

One member from that station told me how sat crying at his parents' home at the thought of having to go into work. His marriage has broken down due to the mental health issues he is dealing with because he couldn't ask for help. Conference, he told me he wanted to take his own life.

What has become clear in talking to comrades at conference, is that toxic masculinity is not understood. We need to change that. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lee. Does that have a seconder?

KATHRYN DUNCAN (NWC):

I am very grateful to be here with you today with all my fellow trade unionists. This is not my first time at conference but it is the first time I have spoken, so hi. *Applause.*

I am delighted to be seconding this resolution from Merseyside. Conference are probably going to be a little bit surprised with my next statement. I don't think this resolution is being tabled in the right place. I think it is currently in

section H, equality and fairness at work. I don't think it deserves to be there. I think it should be in section C which is operations, health and safety, and just to be a bit clearer than that, I think it should be in C10, mental health.

This is why. Toxic masculinity is a barrier to mental health treatment. That is commonly known. I wish there was better common language we could use, because toxic masculinity just kind of puts your back up when you hear it, doesn't it? It is like it is having a dig on men but that is not what it is about.

To be brief, some researchers use these three indicators when they are doing studies on it: suppressing emotion or masking distress, maintaining an appearance of toughness, and violence as an indicator of power. Do those things sound familiar to you?

These kinds of responses are developed over time. We learn these things as children so there are little boys that are being told, don't be upset, don't cry, don't let them see you are upset, don't tell anyone you are struggling – man up, carry on, get on with it. All of this results in a culture where our male members feel they cannot say, "I am struggling with this. Can we go for a walk and a chat? Do you know how this is affecting me? Can I talk to you about it?" They don't feel they can ask for help. They suffer, and more often than not they suffer in silence for years.

I am going to talk to you now about a friend and colleague of mine that we lost this year. He was a firefighter of 21 years when he finally retired through ill health. He had PTSD brought on from trauma from when he went to some incident in his younger career and he had a baby fatality. At the time he had a baby about the same age at home. So he had years of not being able to talk about this. We are doing such a great job now, we are talking more and more about mental health, but the toxic masculinity, that is what caused him to bottle this up and have PTSD, so then he went off. He confided in me after the first time he was off that he had tried to take his life but he had even failed at that, and that is one of the signs of PTSD.

Like I said, we suffer in silence for years. We lost him because he had a heart attack brought on by the stress of the PTSD and all of the battles we had with the fire service trying to get him pensioned out.

Sometimes, as you have already seen, are male members who have carried all this for years and feel they have nowhere to go but to take their own lives.

Conference, this can go on no longer. I ask you to support this resolution and help us, the FBU, make that clear statement: it is OK to be upset, it is OK to tell people and this does not reduce your masculinity. It makes you a stronger man. Conference, I second. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference that is open for debate.

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

I have not really got a great deal to say but I sat there listening to this and I thought putting my hand up in this case isn't enough, I need to hear my voice, so that is what I am doing.

The way I see it, if it is in the brigade and it is on the stations, then it is definitely in our FBU membership. Conference, I am going to ask you a question. If your wife or your daughter joined the fire service, would you be proud or would you be worried? If the answer to question is the latter, then we have definitely got a problem, haven't we?

Last year I listened to a female in my brigade who told me an emotional story during a normal meeting we held. It hit me hard. The person described how many years ago they were touched by a male firefighter. The person has only just plucked up the courage many years later to tell me this. Why is this? I think the reason we don't hear of many more is that women are afraid to speak out. They don't want to be that person that causes trouble. That is wrong.

I have been told many times the only people that can stop this behaviour are men. Women cannot do it alone, and you know what, that is true.

Conference, changes have got to happen and they have got to happen now. I support this. Thank you.

NICOLA HOBBS (LGBT):

Speaking in support of resolution 67. I want to start by thanking Rosa for her brave stories and sharing experiences. It is hard to hear but we need to hear them, so thank you for sharing that.

“You are a challenge”. You have not had the right man”. Spat on for holding hands with my partner. Physically assaulted on the water rescue course. The list goes on. And that is just my list – one person’s list. How many lists are out there that we do not know of?

Homophobic misogyny is real and has brought genuine fear. I walk with keys between my fingers and check my route before going home and I am not the only one.

Why do we need PRIDE? It creates a safe space. Thank you brother for your comments about what if it was your mother, what if it was your sister? Does it matter? It should not matter if you need to relate it to having a mother or a sister or a niece. It is wrong, full stop. There shouldn’t need to be a comparison and we shouldn’t have to think like that. Conference, I support.

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

Speaking to support resolution 67. The resolution from NWC really needs support. I will just ask for one point of clarity on the last line. As lay officials are not employees, it is how the word ‘mandatory’ would be applied. Thank you.

SONNY ROBERTS (B&EMM):

First of all, I would just like to say that it is awkward talking about male masculinity after hearing what has been said today, but I hope that everyone is listening and I hope that again we just don’t walk away with having listened to what we have heard today, and we actually go out and do something about it.

I am going to be talking in support of resolution 74 in relation to toxic masculinity. Men are often still defined by outdated and unfounded stereotypes, which create an unhealthy and unrealistic understanding of what it means to be a man in today’s world. By assuming men should be the protectors, the breadwinners or leaders, or associating men with anger, selfishness and aggression can be a problematic and damaging thing.

Young boys and men are taught falsely to believe them or to try to measure up to them, ultimately harming themselves and others in the process. In many ways, manhood, like womanhood, causes many expectations. As a society we value kindness, compassion and care in women more often than we do men. This does not mean that men cannot be caring, compassionate or emotional, but as a society we don’t value these traits in men and that can lead men to believe that these traits are not valuable.

Fragile masculinity is a term referring to the unrealistic cultural standard placed on men. These exist because many men feel they have to over-compensate or act in a certain way to meet these traditional standards, but we are all human. As human beings, regardless of gender, we have a combination of masculine and feminine traits.

What our society needs to do and needs to remember is that being a man doesn’t mean that you have to like sport or women. Being a strong man doesn’t mean you can’t show weakness or cry. Being a successful man doesn’t mean you have to marry. Sexual preference and gender identities, just like career and lifestyle choices, don’t make you less of a man.

As of 2018 men are far more likely to die from suicide than women. Men, like women, experience anxiety, depression and mental illness. However, men are less likely to seek help and support from mental health services. We need to eliminate the stigma around mental illness and remind men that asking for help, expressing emotions and seeking comfort isn’t just beneficial, it is necessary for the betterment of our society.

B&EMM supports and encourages the call for us as a union, as a conference, as comrades, to support resolution 74.

OLIVER BURROW (Cumbria):

I won't take too much of your time, conference, as we have already had some extremely powerful statements from our fellow comrades.

In Cumbria, I would be doing our members an injustice if we didn't support this resolution 67. It is one close to the hearts of our sisters with three live cases currently all directly relating to misogyny in our service. For obvious reasons we cannot divulge these cases for confidentiality purposes, but in the modern day fire and rescue service there is no excuse for such behaviour and we in Cumbria believe that the FBU should support this motion and lead the way in reforming these archaic prejudices and show the UK fire and rescue services are to create safe work places for women.

So we expect the working party to explore this and any evidence of this uncovered. For these reasons we support resolution 67.

DIANE CRITCHLOW (Dorset and Wiltshire):

Supporting resolution 67. We have heard the statistics before but they are really important. On average a woman is killed by a man every three days in the UK and almost one in three women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetimes. I personally am a survivor of domestic violence.

These figures are well-publicised. What is less publicised is the fact that 97% of young women in the UK have been sexually harassed. This is happening in the workplace, in our streets, to our sisters, our daughters, our friends. Imagine how you would feel if this was happening to your loved ones. You would definitely challenge it.

The first time I was sexually harassed, I blamed myself for wearing a T-shirt that was too tight. My colleague, on a works night out, tried to grab my boobs. The hardest thing for me – and the thing that hurt me the most – was that my other colleagues laughed, they thought it was funny.

We need to challenge this behaviour in both our work place and in our union. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, conference. There is nobody else indicating to speak in the debate. I am going to call the general secretary to detail the assurances sought by the various delegates.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks conference for such a powerful debate. Just in terms of the positions of the executive council, on resolution 67 from the NWC, the executive council is giving qualified support, and on resolution 74 from Merseyside, the executive council is giving qualified support.

The qualification on resolution on 74 just relates to the final paragraph about the need to design a training package. We can give an assurance it will be built into our education and training but how we do that is something we will need to consider in terms of other demands on education and training.

In terms of resolution 67, firstly I want to express we absolutely appreciate the strength of feeling and the anger, frankly, that has been reflected (measured anger) and presented in an amazing way but reflected nevertheless in this resolution. There are concerns the executive council has regarding the scale of evidence we have in relation to paragraph 4 and 5 on the resolution.

The final point was which was raised by Tyne and Wear in relation to the final bullet point on mandatory sexual harassment training for all officials. I want to be clear on that point. Some officials have expressed concern as to whether the union can require mandatory training. That is a matter still under debate. Just to be clear, the executive council has already agreed mandatory training for itself in relation to sexual harassment. That was the first step that we took following the sexual harassment working group.

How we pose it, we may need to change the wording, but certainly we believe it will be part of the essential skills for FBU officials, just as we require people conducting investigations, for example, under All Different All Equal, to conduct training, we will have the same requirements in relation to this issue.

I think the other point is that in theory we may have in excess of 300 officials if we count every official at branch level and above. There are very many of them. We would have to make a judgment about the degree to which we are able to deliver training.

Those are the qualifications. With those qualifications, conference, we urge you to support both resolutions and the executive council policy statement.

I don't want to take too much time, but as one example, you have got three years' annual reports that you were given at the beginning of the week. When you get a moment, look at pages 66 and 67 of this year's annual report. These are only examples, by the way. We don't report every single legal case we pursue. What we give are examples of the cases we pursue. There are two examples in there of a member bullied and harassed by work colleagues, awarded compensation, and a member's claim for sex discrimination settled for £10,000. So these cases are happening every single year in one or other fire and rescue service across the country, and this union provides that legal support to the members affected. If you look at the previous two years you will find similar stories in those annual reports.

I just want to finish on one point for me because I am absolutely sure what conference is going to do on all three policies that in front of you. I don't think this can just be a debate that happens here at this conference where we listen to some powerful speeches, we vote to implement policy and then we all go off and carry on as we did before. We have to wake up and actually change because one of the comrades mentioned women being touched in the workplace and reporting it years later. We have cases of that still happening in our fire and rescue services today and my question is what do we do about it? Do we pretend it didn't happen? Or do we face up to our responsibilities as officials and tackle it. That is the challenge to every single one of you. If you put your hands up to vote for this, then take responsibility and act accordingly. If you are not going to act accordingly, frankly, don't put your hands up for this resolution. It is as blunt as that.

I think you have heard powerful speeches, mainly from women comrades today. Don't insult them by voting for this and then ignoring the implications of what you are voting for. Conference, support the three policy statements.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put the executive council policy statement to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 67 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 74 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Thank you, conference. Conference, do you agree to suspend standing order 16 on timings? *Agreed*.

We have got a guest speaker coming in, so if you will all remain in your seats we will get standing orders to bring our guest through. *Pause*.

Conference, it gives me great pleasure today to welcome our guest speaker, Sarah Jones. Sarah was elected Member of Parliament of Croydon Central in 2017. She was re-elected in 2019. She is a long-standing Labour Party member and campaigner. When Jeremy Corbyn was Labour's leader Sarah held the position of Labour's shadow housing minister. She had the responsibility including social housing, private renting and response to the Grenfell disaster.

Since April 2020 Sarah has been labour's shadow minister for policing and the fire service and has worked very closely with the FBU over the Fire Safety Act and, more recently, the Building Safety Act, stood up for firefighters and for this union in parliament, so please give Sarah a very warm FBU conference welcome. *Applause*.

SARAH JONES MP:

Thank you so much. It is a real honour to be invited to speak to you today, and I know you were hoping for a tea break and you got me instead. Hopefully I won't keep you too long.

The fact that this is the first in-person conference you have had for three years makes it all the more special as well so thank you for inviting me.

I have been a Labour MP since 2017 and those five years have been shaped by the long shadow of the Grenfell Tower fire which happened days after I was elected in 2017. It was the subject of my maiden speech as shadow minister for housing under Jeremy Corbyn. We campaigned relentlessly on the changes that were needed on housing and on cuts to services, and as shadow fire minister now I took the Fire Safety Bill through parliament for Labour and have been working to campaign for large scale reform for building safety – proper regulation and proper funding.

Throughout that time I have really valued the briefings and the meetings with the FBU, so I want to thank Matt Wrack and all of his colleagues for your engagement and for your expertise and for all the work you do as a wider union. It has helped me to do my job.

Many of us are still reeling from the pandemic, the loss of loved ones, the isolation, the hardship and the stark exposure of inequality and the unequal state of our society. I know that firefighters went above and beyond during the lockdown to serve their communities in a time of national trauma. You had to work in incredibly difficult circumstances and, of course, you rose to the challenge, which makes it even more galling that at the height of the pandemic the conservative controlled East Sussex Fire Authority decided to try and push through sweeping cuts, ten pumps across the county, reducing whole time staffing levels and night time fire cover.

I was pleased to join with Lloyd Russell-Moyle, local MP and the FBU for an online public event which I hope played a small part in those cuts being dropped. The fact that it is even considered tell us everything that we need to know.

Twelve years of a Conservative government has taken its toll. Eleven thousand firefighters lost since 2010. Huge real term spending cuts and pay falling behind. The pensions' fiasco.

The reality of the last decade has been devastating cuts to firefighter numbers and fire appliances leading inevitably to slower response times. Fire inspectors, those we need to audit and enforce, have been some of the largest cuts. The numbers have fallen by a third since 2010, making the job of firefighters even harder. The mess of the unregulated marketed with freeholders hidden from view in offshore shell companies, leaseholders footing the bill for problems not of their making and a market in our cities frozen from a lack of good, trained people to fix the problems that we face.

It is no secret that Boris Johnson dislikes the fire service and distrusts the FBU. As a Londoner, how he behaved as mayor of London clearly demonstrated that. I have no doubt that he would ban, for example, the right to strike if he thought he could.

Yesterday's Queen's Speech showed he had no interest in learning the lessons from Grenfell, attacking regulation again when we all know that the bonfire of regulations in fire safety led us directly to the point where 72 people lost their lives in 2017.

We all saw Eric Pickles giving evidence to the Grenfell Inquiry when he couldn't even remember the death toll, embarrassing himself and shaming the memory of those who lost their lives.

As the cost of living crisis hits hard, inflation rockets and we head towards a recession, what answers does this government have to support working people? The only government in the G7 to raise taxes. Universal credit cuts, real term benefit cuts and a low growth economy that keeps people in insecure, low-wage jobs.

I fear, we all fear, that when it comes to the fire service, the government are on a mission to undermine the FBU and to continue the path of cuts. A fire White Paper is expected any day now. I will work with the FBU to make sure that

your collective voice is heard and represented in parliament, on fire reform, on governance and on potential changes to the National Joint Council.

Firefighter pay has also fallen behind and I will do everything I can to fight this and make sure you receive a fair wage. We will campaign against cuts and deregulation in the fire service.

Beyond the fire service the Labour Party has a plan for supporting working people. We have committed to a new deal for working people launched at our conference last year. This was an entirely collaborative process between the Labour leadership and all the TULO unions, including the FBU. We have committed to outlawing fire and rehire, raising wages, banning zero-hour contracts, repealing the Trade Union Act 2016 and making it easier for trade unions to gain recognition and organise in work places. All these are based in commitments of the next Labour government.

Contrast this with the Tory government. No Employment Bill again in the Queen's Speech yesterday despite promises since 2019. We would not have increased national insurance, we would not have cut the £20 a week from universal credit; we would do far more to tackle the cost of living crisis.

Labour's New Deal for Working People, I believe shows what we can do by standing together. Unions know – you know better than anyone – that we achieve more collectively. I hope that the relationship between our party and the FBU will continue. It will help Labour build a manifesto that supports working people. It will help create a fire service that you will continue to be proud of, and it will help deliver a government that you can work with.

Looking forward, I am glad to see Andy Cook in place as the new inspector of fire, and I hope that the new chief inspector has a less aggressive approach to the FBU than we have seen previously. I am proud that the FBU is continuing to hold the government to account on pensions. The union achieved a really positive win for its members in the McCloud/Sargeant case, and I will work hard to push the government to take retired firefighters seriously, to give them the respect they deserve and to fix the ongoing pensions injustice.

It is an honour to stand before you today. I know that tomorrow John McDonnell is coming to speak to you. He has been a strong voice in parliament for the fire service and a friend of the FBU. We all want to see well paid, well-trained, committed firefighters doing a job they love, whether it is responding to the new climate crisis, the challenges of flooding, delivering equipment to Ukraine, preventing fires through inspection and education or running into danger when most people would run away. You are a profession of honour and strength and it is my privilege to support you. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Sarah, on behalf of conference, I would like to thank you for giving up your busy schedule to attend the conference here today, and you are very welcome.

Just briefly, you will know that tomorrow we have got debates on our relationship with the Labour Party and I think, in the most comradely and friendly way I can, I would say that there are, to say the least, some concerns about the direction of travel in the Labour Party within this organisation. That is why we are having a debate, so I hope you can pass that on to the Labour leader in a comradely way, and we will have our debate tomorrow.

I want to say to our conference, in terms of our dialogue and work with Sarah and her team, it is extremely constructive and we have a great working relationship and we do a huge amount of work particularly around the post Grenfell agenda, building safety, fire safety and other matters that affect us in terms of our profession and our industry, and we are very pleased to work with you on that.

We have got a small memento that you can wear on behalf of conference from the FBU. So thanks very much for coming today. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Sarah. Conference, we are now on tea break until quarter past four.

Adjourned for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, conference. I now call Phil Millar, the chair of standing orders.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, can you turn to your delegate list. Region 6, Leicestershire, Casey Legall replaced with Harry Brant. Region 7, West Midlands, replace Kara Lansley with Billy Holland; B&EMM replace Alex Kelly with Dean Pounder. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. With that delegate change, I should say that it is the first time in Leicestershire's history that they have had an all B&EMM delegation. Well done, Leicestershire. *Applause*.

Can I now ask you to turn to page 7 of the programme of business. I now call resolution 16, Levelling Up of Maternity Pay and Provision, moved by Bedfordshire. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 16 LEVELLING UP OF MATERNITY PAY AND PROVISION

Conference notes resolution 10, 'End Pay Disparity' was remitted to the Executive Council (EC) during Conference 2019, with a view to revamping the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) policy for maternity pay and setting the standard for all Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs).

FRSs are still falling short. FRSs pride themselves on being family friendly, yet maternity pay on the whole does not reflect this. Some FRSs pay 52 weeks full pay, others the statutory minimum. If one can pay, all should pay.

Conference instructs the EC to resume the work to revisit the maternity pay provision within the Grey Book and support our Members in bringing a gold standard for maternity pay and provision across all the FRSs.

BEDFORDSHIRE

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

Moving resolution 16. Conference, why is it that the NFCC wants to standardise fire services, introduce national operational guidance so every brigade operates the same yet doesn't care how each brigade treats its employees when it comes to maternity pay and provision?

Surely, best practice way of paying maternity pay would be fair. Why is it in today's society chief fire officers think it is acceptable to pay their employees far less than other chiefs do in the next county?

For the last 19 years in my brigade I have watched countless parents struggle to make ends meet. They worry how they will cope financially. Every fire and rescue service prides itself on being a family friendly employer. In Bedfordshire where I also live I pass billboards and follow buses with signs on showing off what a great employer they are. Every word and picture is aimed at enticing everyone to come and join – a great team with great benefits for families.

What those glossy signs with smiley faces don't tell you is that if you want to start a family in a brigade you may be far worse off than when it comes to starting a family than you would be if you joined a brigade in the next county.

Across the UK most operational staff are paid the same wage so why, when it comes to maternity pay, is there a postcode lottery as to what you get when it comes to maternity pay and provision? Several people have assisted in putting together a mini-league, a table of the best and the worst. It is only a few brigades. I am not sure why. Maybe it was a lack of time searching for the policies. Or maybe it was the downright embarrassment of how little their brigades paid their employees.

Every pregnancy is different. Some women sail through the nine months while others are forced to start their maternity leave sooner due to health complications giving them less time with their new born. Add this to the physical and mental recovery from giving birth, struggles with nursing and potential post-partum depression, that financial ticking clock only adds to the pressure new parents face.

One of my colleagues struggled with health issues all through her second pregnancy, even having to undergo surgery. She then gave birth early via caesarean to a child born with a perforated lung who needed special care. Because of money she had to come back to her work when her child was only five months old. She was expected to pass a fitness test and go back on the run, but because she was still healing from a caesarean, this was impossible.

Why would any civilised society put someone through that? The outdated and draconian attitude that it is a woman's choice to have a baby is used as an excuse to treat women as second-class citizens in the fifth richest economy.

While we are on the subject of choice, being forced back to work early impacts on how a mother chooses to feed her child. Not all women are able to express milk adequately, so leaving their child to come back to work forces them to wean earlier than they would prefer.

In Europe by contrast, Scandinavian countries lead the way when it comes to the best places to live for maternity or any female giving birth. This was published by Moonshot: Sweden was top with the UK way down in 28th place. That doesn't sound great. Think of a parent not only living in the 28th worst country in Europe but also work for the 28th worst brigade in the UK for pay and maternity.

To rub salt into the wounds, depending on how long a parent takes off, they could receive £12,000 less than if they worked in a neighbouring brigade. Are we asking for special treatment for women? If you don't think that creating life and giving birth is amazing enough to warrant special treatment, then I suggest you don't share that view with your pregnant partner. Actually, no, we are seeking to improve provisions for the family unit as a whole which would include shared parental leave and adoption leave provisions.

If you have ever watched a partner growing and nurturing your child for nine months and then stood by feeling helpless while they give birth, being able to offer nothing more than the hand crush and helpful advice on breathing, then this is your way to help by supporting this resolution. Thank you conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. A seconder?

LEONI MUNSLOW (London):

Seconding resolution 16. I am grateful to Bedfordshire and Cumbria for raising these motions today. As probably the only woman here who is currently on maternity leave, I think it is quite important I share my view.

In my brigade maternity pay is 15 weeks of full pay followed by six months of half pay. I think many people still assume it is six months full pay and six months half. Trust me, it is not.

I got to half pay on Christmas Eve. My rent is £850 a month but obviously banks say I still can't afford a mortgage. My energy bills are £200 a month, which leaves me with a grand total of £165 per month or £37 a week for my daughter and I to live on. I would be considerably better off if I was to break my leg than having had a baby.

I have got a firefighter friend who is a single parent. She simply couldn't afford to be on half pay at all, so three and a half months after having a caesarean, major stomach surgery, she was back at work, back on the run and doing roof ladder training. This is simply unacceptable.

Maternity leave isn't just baby classes and picnics in the park. It is being there when your baby wakes every 45 minutes during the dreaded sleep regressions and those developmental leaps. Those nights it would be simply dangerous to get up the next day and drive a fire appliance on the bell.

You should be working out what your baby likes to eat or throw on the floor, not what you can afford for them to eat or throw on the floor. My maternity leave has been incredible, but it has also been one of the hardest things I have ever done. They say it takes a village to raise a baby. Support, including financial support, is crucial. Women

on maternity leave face hardship in so many ways they can feel isolated from their colleagues and isolated from their comrades. We need to be supporting our women at these times. Improving things financially is a strong start. If Cheshire can offer 52 weeks full pay including their leave, why can't our other brigades?

I am proud to say that London offered an additional two weeks paid leave to parents of babies born pre-term but we must ensure that a gold standard package is exactly that. Women on maternity leave are not replaced. We do not cost the brigades more. They actually save money. So let's get that money back in our members' pockets.

By improving maternity rates across the board, we will recruit and retain more women firefighters. That's a fact. By improving maternity pay you are also making things better for those parents who want to take shared parental leave.

As just mentioned, the World Health Organisation supports breast feeding a baby for two years minimum. By creating financial hardship brigades are forcing women to return to work sooner. This means that most women are simply unable to meet those health guidelines due to the carcinogenic nature of our job. By allowing women to spend longer on maternity leave will boost breastfeeding rates and therefore the health of our children.

We have had a really busy few years because of Covid but let us not use that as an excuse for a lack of action. We need the EC to step up now and support our members now and achieve this gold standard for maternity pay across the whole country. Please support this resolution. I second. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Leoni. That's open for debate.

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

Conference, fire and rescue services claim to want a diverse work force and are making a lot of noise about it, but for a large number of them they are only doing it because it is on the national agenda and they have been forced to do it.

We have had women in the modern fire service for over 40 years. 40 years, comrades! That is longer than some of us here have been alive (not myself). 40 years is longer than one of Andy Dark's qualified support speeches!

In many brigades when a firefighter gets pregnant it is often as if it has never happened before. This is evident by the fact that there is often little support, poor policy in place if any and a lack of alternative duties or inappropriate ones.

This can be a physically and mentally demanding occupation and our women members should be given the time and help necessary after childbirth to recover and return to work when they are fit and safe to do so.

Poor maternity pay and the fear of financial hardship should not be the deciding factor. These are our sisters, our sisters who become mothers. Conference, please support this resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Any more?

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Thank you, president. We got a mention there, so I just thought I would make a small contribution and also make you aware of some of the challenges that we face behind the scenes.

What we did a number of years ago now was we met with the service management team and said, 'You are going round saying to the HMI when we are getting inspected that you want to be best in class and you want to be leading and you want to have 50:50 diversity targets, 50% women in the services.' We said: 'That is all very well having campaigns. What are you doing to make the service and the job and the sector attractive to females?' They were quite astonished with that and said, 'Well, what exactly can we do?' We said, 'for a start, you can put decent maternity provisions in place'. And the response was a little bit bizarre. They said, 'we are complying with the Grey Book, what else do you want us to do?' We said, 'the Grey Book is quite outdated and it is far, far below the rest of

many industries". We sampled a number of various industries and showed them what was out there. To their credit, they did negotiate a very good package with us.

What is quite shameful is the chief fire officer has confided in us since that those hawks at the NFCC have told him that he has caused a problem because they are embarrassed and they are getting pressure from officials and they are going to come under cost pressures from other officials in the country for trying to offer decent conditions. So anyone wants a chat, please come up to us, but please go out there and hold your chief fire officers to account and tell them it is simply not good enough and you cannot put a price on family. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else wishing to speak in this debate. No. Riccardo to give the qualification.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, conference. I will try to be quick. EC are giving qualified support to this, not to the sentiment, but just on matters of accuracy. I might repeat myself because we set out commitments to this work in response to the Cumbria resolution yesterday regarding the ongoing work, the continuing work and the maternity claim that we are working on with the NWC tomorrow.

It is scandalous that this is a postcode lottery. It is scandalous that you will get that provision for breaking your leg but not for having a child. Our qualifying point is just on the numbers. We did research, as you heard yesterday, into the policies around the country. It has been set out already by speakers. The 52 weeks we believe to be inclusive of annual leave, and we don't believe there to be an FRS only paying statutory minimum. But with them qualifications we support, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I now put resolution 16 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 17, Domestic Violence Survivors' Paid Leave moved by Staffordshire. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 17 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS' PAID LEAVE

Conference notes that domestic violence can be physical, sexual or psychological abuse. Paid leave for domestic violence survivors should be a right for employees affected.

Conference demands the Executive Council (EC) seek discussions with the National Joint Council about the introduction of 'Domestic Violence Paid Survivors' Leave' as a right for Fire Brigades Union Members.

The EC should report back progress made by Conference 2023.

STAFFORDSHIRE

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

Moving resolution 17, Domestic Violence Survivors paid leave. Conference, in year ending March 2021 domestic violence recorded by police had increased 6% on the previous year and accounted for 18% of all crime recorded. It is believed that one in four women and one in six men will be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime and ultimately this can lead to be fatal. It clearly cannot be accepted.

Anyone who suffers domestic abuse and survives the ordeal should be supported. Their employer should support them. No-one should have to take sick leave, unpaid leave, special leave, emergency bank holidays, whatever it is called, to deal with the fall out of that situation.

We must remember that the survivors of domestic abuse are not to blame for the situation that they have found themselves in, and they should be supported as much as possible. Therefore, this resolution calls for employers to support survivors of domestic abuse by providing them with paid leave so that they can recover from the ordeal without the burden of worrying about their finances.

Conference, I ask you to support this resolution for the survivors of domestic abuse. President, conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder?

KATHRYN DUNCAN (NWC):

President, conference, I am seconding the resolution, domestic violence leave. Women's Aid provides data which includes that there is an estimated 1.6 million women in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in 2020.

Almost one in three women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime and two women are killed a week by current or former partners. That is in England and Wales. I am sorry, we couldn't get the data for it all combined because they use different ways of measuring.

National Women's Committee members and I am sure many others in this room have supported and represented members who have been victims of domestic abuse. This is a real issue which, although often hidden, spans age groups, cultural backgrounds, genders and classes. The FBU model policy on domestic abuse makes it clear that domestic abuse is a work place issue. We must support our members who suffer abuse.

Protected leave for victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence recognises that victims will need this time off after traumatic events. This time can be used to escape abuse, find a new place to live, protect children and other family members and get health and wellbeing support and treatment. Some organisations have already introduced up to ten days paid domestic abuse leave. This has also been introduced nationally in New Zealand.

We can make a real difference to domestic abuse survivors and lead the way in the fire service to recognise and address that this is a pandemic abuse. Conference, I second this motion.

THE PRESIDENT:

Open for debate. Anybody?

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking in support of resolution 17, domestic violence, paid leave from Staffordshire.

Two things I really dislike: Tories and bullies. Probably both the same thing to be fair. One thing that I really dislike is people being terrified in their own homes. It is just abhorrent. It is just not acceptable.

Please indulge me for a second. I have got some facts to quote here. The Office for National Statistics report that in mid-May 2020 there was a 12% increase in the number of domestic abuse cases referred to Victim Support. Between April and June 2020 there was a 65% increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline when compared with the first three months of that year.

Emerging evidence shows a change in those who perpetrate abuse. Between April and June 2020 there was an 8.1% increase in abuse from current partners, a 17.1% increase from family members. In April 2020 the home affairs committee said there was evidence that cases are escalating more quickly to become complex and serious with high levels of physical violence and coercive control.

Karen Ingala-Smith who runs the Counting Dead Women's Project estimated that during the first three weeks of the first lock down there had been 16 domestic abuse killings of women and children in the UK which is the highest reported for eleven years. Along with this, the rhetoric used by some public figures is alarming. We only have to look at the complete buffoon in No 10 and his long line of inappropriate comments. I believe to grant survivors of domestic violence assistance and support is imperative. Conference, please support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Trevor. Anybody else wishing to speak in the debate? No. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, conference. The EC are supporting this motion. The Domestic Abuse Act got Royal Assent

in 2021 but it didn't go far enough. For survivors and victims of domestic abuse, finding safe refuge, finding a new home, securing new school places for children, opening new bank accounts, accessing medical health, accessing counselling, it takes time and it takes money, yet the act didn't provide for paid leave to do this.

There was subsequent guidance that came with the Act and that set out the employers' need to produce policy, setting out clearly what support is being made available, and it goes on to say that support may include paid leave. "May" isn't good enough. We need to change that "may" into a "will" within the FRS and we need to commit to working towards achieving that.

We are not aware of any existing collective agreements on this, we have not done the full research yet, but we know there is international precedent, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Philippines. Just last month in Northern Ireland the Assembly passed legislation affording ten days paid leave as a day one right within the workplace. Back in 2020 the Welsh government urged public sector employers to give this leave but they didn't; they stopped at making it compulsory. So there is work to do. It is another post code lottery of rights, conference that we cannot accept. So there is work to do to level this up and we support this resolution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 17 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference. I now call para A2, annual report of the NJC independent chair 2020-2021. I call para A3, pay rates and CPD payments.

For the new delegates we are stepping it up a bit and it will get a little bit more confusing, so I am going to try and explain it as best I can. I will now take the following resolutions to be taken in the same debate: resolutions 3, 9, 11 with amendments from Scotland, and resolution 13 with the amendments from Suffolk and Scotland. Both amendments can carry. The EC are giving qualified support to resolutions 3 and 9, qualified support for resolution 11 and supporting the amendment from Scotland. The EC are opposing resolution 13 and both amendments. If resolution 3 carries then resolution 13 and both amendments fall. Resolutions 3, 9 and 11 with their amendments can stand together. Is that clear? Do you want me to say that again?

I will repeat it. The EC are giving qualified support to resolutions 3 and 9, qualified support for resolution 11 and supporting the amendment from Scotland. The EC are opposing resolution 13 and both amendments. If resolution 3 carries then resolution 13 and both amendments fall. Resolutions 3, 9 and 11 with their amendments can stand together.

OK, I will now call resolution 3, Underpayment of Continual Professional Development (CPD) Payments to Members.

Resolution 3 UNDERPAYMENT OF CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS

Conference notes that it is three years since Conference instructed the Executive Council (EC) to discuss with the National Joint Council (NJC) the need to equalise CPD payments across the UK, to raise them to the highest rate currently paid and to make CPD core pay.

Following on from this debate in May 2019, which highlighted the fact that some Members were having their CPD reduced due to working less hours or because of maternity, it became apparent that many Retained Members are simply not being paid the current correct level of CPD, as set out in the NJC CPD Scheme.

This scheme states that part-time employees, including those employed on the Retained Duty System, will be paid on an individual pro-rata basis, subject to a minimum payment of 25% of the full-time equivalent rate.

Many Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) are paying just this minimum rate and are not calculating the payment for each individual, resulting in a significant number of our Members being underpaid.

Conference instructs the EC to support Brigade Officials in mounting an immediate challenge to this detrimental practice within the relevant FRS. This challenge should secure the correct

calculation and payment of CPD going forward and should also secure payment of all monies owed through underpayment of CPD to our Members, going back to the scheme start date of 1st July 2007.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

SEAMUS McMAHON (NRC):

Before I start, president, I would just like to read this out: on behalf of the NRC chair, Paul Revill, and the National Retained Committee, we would like to pass on through this conference to region 1 our deepest sympathy to the family of our brother, Tom Mitchell. Tom was a great friend and colleague to all on the NRC. RIP Tom. *Applause.*

I would also like to thank all the delegates who brought resolutions with reference to the RDS yesterday. Welcome to the fight. Can you ask your NRC reps at your next regional meeting to come to the NRC meeting on 24 September in York? It would be much appreciated there too. Thank you.

Conference notes that it is three years since conference instructed the executive council to discuss with the National Joint Council the need to equalise CPD payments across the UK, to raise them to the highest rate currently paid and to make CPD core pay.

Following on from this debate in May 2019, which highlighted the fact that some members were having their CPD reduced due to working less hours or because of maternity, it became apparent that many retained members are simply not being paid the current correct level of CPD, as set out in the NJC CPD scheme. I actually have the document here.

This document states: that part-time employees, including those employed on the retained duty system will be paid on an individual pro-rata basis subject to a minimum payment of 25% of the full-time equivalent rate.

Many fire and rescue services are paying just this minimum rate and are not calculating the payment for each individual, resulting in a significant number of our members being underpaid.

Conference instructs the EC to support brigade officials in mounting an immediate challenge to this detrimental practice within the relevant FRS. This challenge should secure the correct calculation and payment of CPD going forward and should also secure payment of all monies owed through underpayment of CPD to our members, going back to the scheme start date of 1 July 2007. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Seamus. Do I have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 9, Continual Professional Development, moved by Northern Ireland. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 9 CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

Conference instructs the Executive Council to commence negotiations with the National Employers to ensure that Continual Professional Development payments form an integral part of core pay.

NORTHERN IRELAND

DERMOT ROONEY (NIFB):

President, conference, this resolution is about CPD and integrating it into core pay. A couple of issues with CPD we will all be very well aware of, and I am not going to take up more time than is necessary, but the annual application process we are all very aware is tedious and over-onerous on our members but also on management and the amount of money that our managements are putting into administering for the small amounts of money in some cases is disproportionate.

There are too many cracks in the system that members can fall through. There are a number of traps that those taking promotion, for example, can fall into between application windows and they can end up ruled out of CPD for a long period I would say that wouldn't normally be expected.

Pensionability in the stand-alone system is not as simple as it could be if it was integrated into core pay. We note the qualified support from the EC and we don't play down the difficulties around the different rates across all the different fire and rescue services, but we note that it is already policy to equalise up to the highest rate and then integrate it into the core pay. There is nothing more I want to say about it. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dermot. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you.

I now call resolution 11, National levelling Up of Continual Professional Development. Moved by Greater Manchester. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 11 NATIONAL LEVELLING UP OF CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

Conference notes that there is a significant disparity between rates of CPD across the UK.

The highest rate is £1,076, whilst the lowest is £320 with a whole range of rates in between. Clearly this disparity leaves most of our Members suffering from an unfair detriment through no fault of their own. After all, firefighters across the UK have the same rolemap and carry out the same tasks.

Since CPD was introduced, we have lost around 30% of Grey Book posts in the UK, leaving fire service employers with a significant saving.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to negotiate through the National Joint Council that all firefighters across the UK are levelled up to the highest CPD payment.

GREATER MANCHESTER

AMENDMENT

4th paragraph, 2nd line after 'all firefighters' insert 'and firefighters Control'

SCOTLAND

STEVE WISWELL (Greater Manchester):

Moving resolution 11 National levelling up of CPD. We want to thank Scotland for their welcome amendment. Thank you, Scotland.

President, conference, firefighters in Greater Manchester have noticed with some alarm the huge disparity between CPD payments in varying parts of the UK. How can it be right that firefighters and control staff in one part of the country get over £1,000 a year whilst others receive just over £300? I won't give the exact sums here for the brigades which are highest and lowest because there is no reason to. I think we all understand the point. It is a big gap and this cannot be right because firefighters across the UK carry out exactly the same role.

Conference, let's take this opportunity to instruct our executive council to address this issue through the NJC. We are not getting much good news in recent years with regard to pay etc and, as the cost of living soars, the levelling up of CPD will be a little of welcome news for our members. Please support this motion. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Secunder?

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire):

Seconding GMC resolution 11. Twenty nine years ago when I joined the service you would receive over £1,000 long service pay increment after 15 years. In the RDS you would receive a bounty after 10 years. When this was scrapped and CPD was introduced the country was split for, as Comrade Steve said, the service is now worth over £1,000 CPD and £320 a year.

We all do the same job so why are we receiving different rates? I support GMC.

THE PRESIDENT:

I call Scotland to move their amendment. The EC support the amendment.

KIMBERLEY FERGUSON (Scotland):

I would like to thank our comrades from Greater Manchester for bringing forward resolution No 11 to level up the CPD rate of pay nationally. However, Scotland believes that there is an accidental omission from the original resolution and we would ask conference to move our amendment to ensure the inclusion of our firefighter control members within the scope of this resolution. Conference, I move. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Kim. Does that amendment have a seconder? Formally seconded. Thank you. I now call resolution 13 Continual Professional Development moved by West Midlands. The EC opposes.

Resolution 13 CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

Conference notes the changing way that Members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) choose to work. Members may wish to use their right to request flexible or reduced hours of work for many reasons, however Conference notes that childcare arrangements or looking after other family members is normally the main reason.

Conference is concerned that even with our Members changing their working arrangements, Grey Book policy has not kept up with this, particularly with regard to CPD.

Conference agrees that there is no such thing as half a firefighter, and therefore there should be no such thing as half CPD payment. Firefighters who are deemed competent are no more or no less a firefighter based on the hours they undertake.

Conference demands that the Executive Council urgently raises at the National Joint Council the issue of reduced CPD payments to Members who are deemed competent and have chosen to work reduced hours to ensure that these Members receive the same CPD payments as their full-time colleagues.

WEST MIDLANDS

AMENDMENT 1

4th paragraph, 2nd line following 'Members who are deemed competent and have chosen to work reduced hours' add 'or who work other duty systems,'

SUFFOLK

AMENDMENT 2

4th paragraph, 4th line after 'these Members' insert ', inclusive of retained Members,'

SCOTLAND

PHILIPPA SMITH (West Midlands):

The number of hours you work does not denote how competent you are. We do not believe that CPD payments should be about the application of your competence but you achieve, attain and maintain it. If there were fewer shouts at your station would your competence be applied at such a reduced rate that your CPD was affected. So why is it deemed appropriate to reduce CPD if a member works fewer hours?

We hope conference agrees that there is no such thing as half a firefighter or firefighter control, so why is there such a thing as half a CPD payment?

Within our brigades if someone was to take unpaid leave for part of the year they would still get their full CPD payment, yet someone who works flexible hours is punished for their working pattern. We believe this issue disproportionately affects women as they are more likely to take part in flexible working. We do not believe this approach is fit for purpose and should be reviewed with a view to uplifting our members to their maximum CPD.

All we are asking is for this to be urgently raised as we have members who this directly affects. We ask conference to support us. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Have I got a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I will now call on Suffolk to move their amendment. The EC oppose the Amendment.

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

Suffolk's amendment is to include members within all duty systems. We believe that if someone is deemed competent then they are quite simply competent whether at work, on call, on leave or whenever. Conference, I move amendment 1.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is that amendment seconded? *Formally seconded.*

I will now call Scotland to move their amendment. The EC oppose.

BARRY JOHNSTONE (Scotland):

As my comrades have already said, we look to amend to include the retained members as well. I don't have to elaborate because my comrades have already put the position forward, so I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that amendment have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Thank you. That is now open for debate. Anybody? Nobody. I will now call on the AGS.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

If I could move the qualifications and the opposition, in respect of resolution 3 our qualification is there is a number, but in particular with regard to maternity pay, certainly it is not our position and it is not our view that anyone should be reducing the CPD for maternity pay. If we can address that we will address that.

The key important point is that the resolution does recognise the existing policy so we want CPD moved into core pay and we want CPD moved into core pay at the highest rate. I think that is one of the key issues why we are giving this resolution the qualified support.

The issue of how we address the resolution, we do need the information. As far as I know – and I will stand to be corrected – via the resolution is the first we had heard of it, and certainly if we have not heard of it, it is possible (and I will just use that phrase 'possible') that the brigade officials are where our retained members are being short changed. It is not moans to them. So we just need that information to be able to carry out the resolution to assist the brigade officials to remove this detriment.

There is a final one and that is I am not suggesting that we don't push for it, and we will assist in pushing for it, but if we are successful if they go legal it is unlikely that we would get the money back from 2007 unless the member had an ongoing grievance where they had registered the shortfall back to that time. Be clear, if we can get it back to then for any individual member, clearly that is what we would want to do.

The qualification with regard to Northern Ireland is simply that it didn't mention CPD at the highest rate. I have no doubt at all that was the intention but it doesn't say it, hence the qualification (a minor one).

In terms of Greater Manchester, a simple qualified support on the basis in terms of rates, for the lowest rate it cites in the resolution is not quite accurate. There are two other FRSs (according to the NJC schedule) at a lower rate. Certainly, we would not want to oppose it on the basis of a slight technical hitch, and we give that simple qualified support.

In terms of West Midlands resolution 13, we do oppose. It is possible for allowances to be not pro rata, for them to be paid as a block, that is very clear, but in the case of CPD if we go back to how CPD came about, it came about as has been said, each FRS had a long service increment pot which then got divided up according to national

agreement which we agreed in 2004 when we came out of the pay dispute that started in 2002. The agreement that we reached did say very clearly, as the NRC resolution says, that it would be pro rata. That is our national agreement that we made.

It was a divisive issue at the time, but at the end of the day the membership made the decision that we would pick up the outcome of that pay dispute on the deal that came out and the principle was that the NSI would be used to make payment to both whole time and retained members and the pro rata element was within that agreement which again was agreed by the members.

We would prefer actually that West Midlands did withdraw their resolution rather than conference vote against, but if not we ask conference to oppose for the reasons I have said. So that is the opposition to 13 and the qualifications to 3, 9 and 11.

I will just finish with some good news for conference, and particularly, so it would seem, Phil. Unless I have made a mistake with the paperwork or there are questions under paragraph remitted to me, this is the last time I will speak at conference – ever – so that's it. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

West Midlands right of reply.

PHILIPPA SMITH (West Midlands):

We acknowledge that there is a national agreement for the pro rata payment but we believe that it is outdated and we ask that it is revisited. We will not remit or withdraw.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Right. Listen carefully. I now put resolution 3 to the vote, and if resolution 3 carries then resolution 13 and both amendments fall. All those in favour of resolution 3 please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 9 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put the amendment to resolution 11 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 11 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference, that is the business but don't go running off. We have got a fringe meeting tonight in the Charlotte Room, Cuba Solidarity. There should be quite a few people attending because it does say that Havana Rum Cocktails will be provided free so there is a nice start to the evening.

We have got an announcement from Lindsay, our head of education, there is a collective bargaining negotiation course to increase knowledge and skills in negotiating members' terms and conditions at a local level, June 14-16 at Wortley Hall. So please see Lindsay if you are interested in that one.

Finally, conference, before we all depart, another delegate made reference to it early on today, we have one of our delegates who retires at midnight tonight – you lucky person – Karen Adams who has been 21 years a brigade secretary in Dorset and with the merged Dorset and Wiltshire. Karen was awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal in 2018 for moving forward industrial relations and in particular women's issues. She is renowned within her region for just getting into conference by the skin of her teeth sometimes, and the only way to achieve getting her actually on time was to promise a bacon sandwich. Conference, I am sure you will join me, and I thank you, Karen, on behalf of the national Union for all you have done for the members in Dorset and Wiltshire and for the members nationally. We wish you a long, happy and most importantly healthy retirement. Karen, thank you very much. *Applause.*

Thanks, Conference, we are now adjourned. See you in the morning.

Conference Adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Good morning, conference, all nicely refreshed. I now call on Phil Millar, chair of standing orders committee to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Morning conference. Conference, the record of decisions has been circulated in accordance with standing order 17 and should be on your desk, one per delegation.

The standing orders committee would like to update you as to where we are in relation to conference business. Business completed so far (you might want to jot this down): so far 26 resolutions have been carried, 20 resolutions have been withdrawn; 15 resolutions have been remitted; 4 have fallen; there have been two EC policy statements and one composite carried.

Conference, there is still a significant amount of business to be completed. This includes three EC policy statements, 44 resolutions, 1 composite resolution, 2 emergency rule changes and 2 emergency resolutions. As a result of this, we will be reviewing speakers' times and the standing orders will keep you informed, but we would ask conference to be mindful of time constraints going forward or we are going to be here till Saturday.

Conference, can you turn to your programme of business please. On page 13 insert at para 14 emergency resolution 4, Havana Explosion.

Conference, can you now turn to your delegate list. Region 3, Cleveland, remove Nick Cain and replace with Davey Howe. Again region 3, Northumberland, remove Vanessa Robinson and replace with Ash Fox. Region 4, South Yorkshire, remove Matt Nicholls and replace with Sue Smith. Again, region 4, West Yorkshire, remove Ryan Binks and replace with Martyn Bairstow. Region 7, West Midlands, remove Alice Williams and replace with Kara Lansley. Region 9, Bedfordshire, remove Craig Carter and insert Jamie Newell. Region 9, Cambridgeshire, remove George White and replace with Dan Foster. Still region 9, Hertfordshire, remove Rob Fortune; no replacement. Region 10 remove Simon Kenton and replace with Jon Lambe. Region 12, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, remove Dave Hunt and replace with Steve Burns. Region 13, Dorset and Wiltshire, remove Karen Adams and replace with Andy Corben. NWC remove Rosa Crowley-Bennett and replace with Georgina Fielding.

Conference, it is probably appropriate now to ask can you check that your phones are switched off.

The fringe meeting Stand up to Racism this evening will not be held in the Charlotte Room as planned but will instead be in the Consort Room and that is at 5.45. The Consort Room is on the left just before the entrance to Dining Room A.

The Left and Live Brighton Fringe will be held in the Charlotte Room tonight. The doors open at 7.30 and it is ticket only. Tickets can be purchased on line and the link is on the leaflet that has been circulated to conference. It should be on your desks.

Standing orders have been asked to inform conference that one of the performers, John Power, has had to withdraw due to personal reasons. His performance fee that would have been paid out of the ticket fees will now be donated to the Firefighters 100 Lottery. President that concludes the standing orders report. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.*

Conference, you have just heard Phil tell us that we have got a lot of business to do to cover in the two days, and for new delegates I would certainly start looking at potentially amending any speeches because we might have to cut down – it is highly likely we will have to cut down speaker times so be prepared for that. We will be a little

bit more disciplined on the top table. If you get a red light please stop speaking or look to finish off within a few seconds because we will be cutting you off. Then if you don't get off the stage, we can open the trap door.

We are on to para J12 Grenfell Tower Inquiry from p6 of your Programme of Business. I now call on executive council policy statement, Grenfell Tower, seconded by London with amendments from Hereford and Worcester, seconded by London. Could I also say if anybody has got any amendments that are just grammatical changes, we just move them formally to save a bit of time thank you. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, we are approaching the fifth anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire, which took place on 14 June 2017. It was a fire that killed the largest number of people in a single domestic fire incident in this country in living memory. It was members of our union who faced the intervention of the fire that night, almost everyone, almost 95% of those who attended that incident were our members.

Our first duty, conference, is to stand in solidarity with the people who suffered that fire that night, the residents who lived there and the firefighters who intervened. Our duty is to fight with every ounce of strength that we have for justice for the victims of the fire. Still, after almost five years, nobody who made the crucial decisions to wrap that building in flammable cladding has been brought to justice. The contractors, the politicians who made the mistake that led to the fire, have not faced those who suffered, those who lost their families, their friends and their homes.

Therefore, the executive council had no hesitation in bringing this statement to conference to renew our commitment to the people of Grenfell, to the community and to our members who attended that night.

But there are other reasons for bringing this statement to conference. It is not just a London matter and it is not just a matter for the London Fire Brigade. We said from the beginning that such a fire could have happened in many parts of the UK. Almost every fire service has some high rise residential buildings on their ground, but the problems are of course even wider.

In the aftermath of the fire we discovered that the same cladding is in place on buildings all across many parts of the UK in homes, work places, hospitals and schools. But we also discovered that the building safety crisis is wider than simply cladding. Hundreds of thousands of people today are stuck in homes with major fire safety problems. Hundreds of thousands of people living in accommodation with failings in compartmentation, failings in windows and fire doors and other basic requirements required by law.

Residents and leaseholders are now having to pay tens of thousands of pounds for remediation work. They are paying thousands of pounds for so-called waking watches which five years ago the Westminster government and its friends in the National Fire Chiefs Council promised would be a temporary measure – another failure delivered by the NFCC.

Meanwhile, the culprits who sold and manufactured flammable cladding get off scot free. The construction firms and the architects who installed it get off scot free. The landlords who profit from these situations, get off scot free, and the politicians who took the decisions that allowed this horrendous situation to arise, they get off scot free.

We are talking about the fundamental rights of people to live in secure and safe homes. The government in Westminster and its millionaire backers have taken a basic element of human dignity, the right to a home, away from thousands and thousands of working class people across the country. So this union stands in solidarity with the cladding campaigners which exist in many communities around the country, with the housing campaigners and the safety campaigners to fight for remedy. We have to fight to ensure that those who caused the damage are made to pay for it. Not the residents, not from their taxes but from the taxes of the wealthy and their profits.

Conference, if these injustices are not enough there is another reason we want to bring this to your attention again. For almost four years we have had the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (the GTI). This will soon become the longest running inquiry into the fire and rescue service in the history of these islands. It was launched by the government to look at the events of the fire and some of the causes.

We demanded a public inquiry, but we wanted an inquiry that would outline and identify the real failings and hold the real culprits to account. We applied for core participant status in that inquiry in order to fight for justice, for the bereaved, the survivors, the residents and to defend our members and to hold those responsible to account.

We criticised from the start the terms of reference for that Inquiry as being too narrow including focusing simply on the London Fire Brigade rather than the fire and rescue service across the UK. We criticised the Inquiry for starting with the events of the night rather than the real causes. We said from the start that the Inquiry was back to front, and we were right to make those criticisms and they have been proved right through the course of events.

For more than two months from July to September 2019 almost 100 firefighters, control staff, officers from the London Fire Brigade and other fire and rescue services gave oral evidence. Some 250 individual personnel records were read into the record. The Inquiry received another 700 statements from firefighters. Most were from the London Fire Brigade, but some from other fire and rescue services who assisted on the night.

The vast majority of those members of our union, the Fire Brigades Union, and this conference should pay tribute once again to our members who gave that evidence. We owe them all a debt of gratitude. The dignity, the honesty and the clarity with which they gave their evidence will be to their everlasting credit. They went through hell on the night of the fire, and yet when asked to explain what happened they gave the unvarnished truth with their responses, and we all owe them a debt of gratitude for it.

I want to thank those officials in London and elsewhere who supported members through that period and who continue to support members in coping with the trauma of the fire. It was a truly remarkable effort by this union to provide union reps to sit in that number of interviews. I want to thank the FBU officials from across the country who assisted in that process. I cannot imagine there has ever been another trade union who has faced such a scale of police interviews of our members and delivered that level of representation. It is something we should be proud of.

However, the testimony given by our members contrasts sharply with the miserable, evasive, monosyllabic answers given by the contractors and building owners when they eventually appeared. It contrasts with the callous indifference of ministers and former ministers who feigned ignorance, who blustered, who wanted the Inquiry to hurry up so they could be away.

In one case, Eric Pickles could not even remember how many people died on the night of the fire or even the name of the tragedy.

Another name familiar to us, Brandon Lewis, had mysteriously 'lost' his ministerial notes. He is now the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Heaven help the people of Northern Ireland.

Two months for our people to be on the stand, and just two weeks for the ministers who failed and made the key decisions. Just two weeks for those who deregulated, who cut, who ignored the warnings of fire specialists, the Fire Brigades Union and others. Just a few days for former chief officers like Dobson and McGuirk, a so-called expert witness, both complicit in implementing cuts, in fragmenting our service, in downgrading standards within our service, who used their platform to chip away at the Fire Brigades Union, rather than to acknowledge any failings on their own part.

Still, of course, no appearance by Boris Johnson, the former Mayor of London in the years before the Grenfell Tower fire, the Mayor who imposed the single largest cut in the entire history of the London Fire Brigade, a man who has made his career messing things up, ruining people's lives and then running away from responsibility. It is no wonder that we are sceptical about where all this will lead.

But the inquiry has uncovered some important matters that were previously not in the public domain and we will therefore continue to represent as firmly and passionately as we can the interests of firefighters, of the fire and rescue service, and of the communities we serve.

We have little confidence that the lawyers for the inquiry will get to the bottom of the real causes of the fire and who was to blame, but we will continue to fight our corner within the inquiry. We are not bound to agree with its

conclusions or recommendations and where necessary, as we said from the start, we will continue to raise our criticisms when we believe they have got it wrong.

Conference, we now need to prepare for the final stages of the Grenfell Tower inquiry. It is due to finish its hearings in July of this year. It will probably produce its final report this time next year. Its report will be almost certainly accepted by the government of the day. It may make some recommendations we can agree with, and it may make some recommendations we cannot agree with. It is almost certain that it won't go anywhere near far enough according to the views, analysis, and policies of this union. And it might make some proposals we cannot accept.

We cannot accept the privatisation of our service. We cannot agree any narrative which portrays the London Fire Brigade as a failing public service. No other organisation has criticised the London Fire Brigade like the FBU over many generations, but we will not stand by and have London firefighters, or indeed the London Fire Brigade, scapegoated for the failing of politicians at a national level.

We will fight to defend our fire safety teams and seek investment in them. We want government fire and safety research publicly funded and we want building control fully in public control and ownership.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry is likely to set an agenda for our industry for many years to come. Their report will affect every single emergency fire control, every single fire station, training department, fire safety department, all across the UK. Eventually, the police may bring prosecutions.

Eventually, the government and all administrations across the UK will make their responses, and the whole of our union has to prepare for that report and whatever they propose and our reactions to it.

We will also have to carry on fighting alongside the tenants, the residents of Grenfell and the community fighting for justice. I hope that everyone in this room will mark the anniversary in fire stations, control rooms, training centres and elsewhere on 14 June.

We need to be ready for what comes next and never give up that fight. We need our members involved, we have the arguments, we need to set out our case for a publicly owned, publicly accountable fire and rescue service, for a new regime of building safety and for decent, safe homes for all. I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. London to second.

JON LAMBE (London):

Seconding the EC policy statement. Conference, on 13 June 2017 firefighters across the London Fire Brigade reported for duty just as every other firefighter in the country did: BA sets tested, appliances tested, pagers and teleprinters standing by. They did what we have all done for many years, hunkering down in preparedness for a night of helping others. Meanwhile, all across the country control officers took to their positions ready to field a multitude of requests for help.

As the clock ticked past midnight nobody knew that one of the most significant events in British firefighting and political history was about to unfold, an event that would change hundreds of lives and would see the untimely deaths of 72 residents in their homes. The Grenfell Tower fire was 1,793 days ago today, almost half a decade. I urge you to think about that for just a moment – almost half a decade.

In the aftermath of the disaster, the Conservative government and some of its blindly following chief officers all talked of it being a game changer, a line in the sand they said. As I stand here today nothing has changed from central government. Fire services have changed, forced to adapt their policy to counter dangerous and unsafe homes in our built environment, in many cases a bodge of flawed policies asking firefighters to undertake even greater risk to counter the unsafe building practices followed by central government.

Today there are still large numbers of buildings in London and nationally with unsafe and highly flammable cladding on them, and worst of all the people and families living in those buildings know they are unsafe.

Nearly five years since this tragedy which is still awaiting justice, our communities, our families, our friends are still living in what we can only describe as a wholly unsafe buildings. Stop for a moment to imagine living with that fear, that incredible fear, for almost a decade. Imagine putting your children to bed at night knowing that the type of cladding wrapped around the Grenfell Tower is wrapped around your home.

Now imagine doing that for 1,793 nights because that is what people who still live in these buildings have done and will continue to do tonight. Everybody should have a decent and safe home, and the fact that this government hasn't ensured that people are not living in buildings wrapped in unsafe cladding almost five years after the Grenfell Tower fire tells us all we need to know.

In London we have firefighters of all ranks and control members who were involved in the incident that night. Many of them are suffering with severe mental or physical health issues. Some have already had to leave the service under ill health grounds and we have a large number in service still battling mental health issues. The issues are not always what society may like to imagine. They are not always severe dysfunction as many feel safe in thinking it is; they are drinking and substance misuse issues, risk taking behaviours and self-sabotage. They are arguments with loved ones, avoidance, and anxiety attacks at the sound of a bang or a pager. They still hurt, the burning guilt that they could have done more, the searing pain that even the most difficult circumstances and with odds stacked against them they still feel they could have saved more.

From the firefighter pushing up the last flight of stairs to the control officer listening to the final cries of the caller to come to the fire, we feel the pain and loss and everyone standing in solidarity with everybody affected. We must be prepared to continue to do all that we can for them. We must continue to do all we can for the survivors and the community and for the British public. We must continue to do all we can for justice for the victims of the Grenfell fire and for every person stuck, no trapped, in an unsafe building that they call their home.

Conference, I am proud that we as a union are still fighting for justice and for survivors and families, challenging government to do more, pushing for better building regulations and continuing to support firefighters and control members who have all been badly affected by the fire.

This is what we as a trade union do every time. It is the right thing. Conference, please support the EC policy statement. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks John. I now call Hereford and Worcester for amendments. *Formally moved.* Thank you. Formally for both? *Formally moved.* Thank you. Do I have a seconder? *Formally.*

Right, that is open for debate. Anybody? No. OK.

I now put amendment 1 to the vote. All those in favour in please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put amendment 2 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put the executive council policy statement as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Can I now ask you to turn to page 8 of the programme of business. I now call resolution 1 retaining fee, moved by the national retained committee. The EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 1 RETAINING FEE

Conference recognises the level of commitment that is given by firefighters working the Retained Duty System and that the retaining fee falls short of adequately compensating them for their commitment.

Therefore, Conference would like to remind the Executive Council (EC) of Resolution 7 from Conference 2019, which was supported by the EC.

Resolution 7 ‘Retaining Fee’ was carried. It instructed our negotiators “to make achieving a substantial increase in the current Grey Book retaining fee a priority”.

Conference acknowledges the increased workload experienced during the last two years but notes that it is three years since the resolution carried.

Conference instructs the EC to update Conference on the progress of Resolution 7 2019.

Conference also instructs the EC to formulate a time bound strategy for actioning Resolution 7 2019. The strategy is to be formulated and communicated to the National Retained Committee by the end of September 2022.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

SEAMUS McMAHON (NRC):

Speaking on the retaining fee. Conference, I am going to speak from the heart here. We have had a retaining fee that is, I don't know, unbelievable shortfall of any payment. South Wales spoke in here on Tuesday, the first day, about why the retained don't go out through the door. We don't have the people, and that is the reason. Our retained fee is a load of... and I am going to stop at that.

Just to let you know, where I live in region 2, 10 miles away south into an EU country is a fire station for retained. Their annual retaining fee for first two years is £8,359. Up to five years £9,289. Five to ten years, £10,450. Ten years plus is £11,446. Me as a Watch Commander with 30 years' experience £3,119 or whatever it is. I can't even tell you because it is a shocker. A retained turn out fee in an EU country ten miles away is £44.10 for the first hour and then it is £22 for every hour after that. Go into the weekends, £88 for a turn out fee and then £44 for every hour afterwards, and we are stuck on this £3,000 something. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Seamus. Does that have a seconder?

GUY TIFFIN (Northumberland):

Seconding resolution 1. Northumberland, similar to a lot of rural brigades, have a huge issue with staffing retained appliances often at a weekend as little as three or four appliances on call.

The way that fire calls have dropped for retained members who, like every firefighter, just wants to get out the doors and serve his community, the retaining fee is sometimes all that these retained members rely on, and it is something like £300 a month. It is pathetic.

Unless we raise the retaining fee to what our comrade from the NRC said to something reasonably aligned to the European Union we are not going to have a retained service in this country. People are packing in and they are not prepared to give fire cover for sometimes 90 and 120 hours a week for £300 a month. It is just not on and we will have to change this culture.

I said the same thing in previous conferences. This has got to be a priority. The retained service is a huge service in this country, and unless we start addressing the issue with pay, we are just not going to have a retained service to rely on in the future. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Open for debate.

WILLIAM BURTT (Scotland):

Speaking at my first conference in support of resolution 1. *Applause*. Speaking as a dual contract firefighter, I am fully aware of the commitment expected of our retained members.

Considering the fact that not all members can be on call whilst doing their normal day to day work, could easily be working 35 to 40 hours a week, our RDS firefighters purely on availability plus their work could be at 150 to 160 hours in any given week. Given that there is only 168 hours in a week, that leaves these members with only a fraction of their time, a mere 5 or 10%, for themselves, their families, their activities and their ability to be off call.

I should point out that in Scotland currently a competent firefighter gets approximately 50p an hour to be on call which obviously doesn't take into account their call outs, but that said 50p an hour for a commitment of up to 120 hours per week significantly undermines the value that should be recognised of the importance of what our retained members do. Putting it bluntly, without retained firefighters in North Scotland we would have just 13 fire stations covering 13,500 square miles which would just not be enough to provide suitable fire cover.

Being that this resolution was carried in 2019, region 1 strongly recommends conference to support this resolution, show solidarity with our retained colleagues and show them the value that we place on the commitment that they give to their communities and ensure that the EC make every effort to actively progress increasing the retaining fee currently paid under the grey book. Scotland supports resolution 1.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Will. Any more in that debate? General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. Thanks to the NRC for bringing it, and I just want to set out some of the thoughts of the executive council and the slight qualification.

In terms of the scale of the problem, I think that is acknowledged and all services who have retained fire stations will be aware of some of those problems of recruitment and retention and then the knock on problems of availability which were touched on in moving. If you go into emergency fire controls in many parts of the country you will see whole swathes of fire cover removed at certain times of the week and certain times of the day, and communities are being conned by being told there is fire cover when actually for much of the week there isn't fire cover.

Clearly, as the NRC have set out, a key element of that is the payment and reward to retained firefighters, and we do have to address it. Hands up. We have been slow in addressing some of the points that are raised, and it does require some considerable research. If we are going to make the case to the employers, I have to be clear it is not going to be easy, so we are going to have to do that research. We are going to have to explain the problems that we face in terms of recruitment and retention of retained firefighters. We will certainly liaise with the NRC before September of this year. Whether we can do all that work, I think we are not quite sure but our aim is to actually begin to address this issue in terms of this year's pay claim.

We need to raise at the NJC as soon as possible the issues that the NRC have raised and we give that commitment. So with a slight qualification on the September date about whether all work is completed by then, we support the resolution. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 1 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now call resolution 15, Firefighter Control Review, moved by Bedfordshire. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 15 FIREFIGHTER CONTROL REVIEW

Conference recognises the great work, often in challenging circumstances, by our sisters and brothers in Emergency Fire Controls.

Conference calls for the Executive Council (EC) to hold an Income Data Research review into the modern role of the Emergency Firefighter Control, taking into account the upskilling and ever-expanding work within but not exclusively, the following areas;

- ***knowledge and understanding***
- ***mental skills emotional challenge***
- ***initiative and independence***
- ***increased responsibilities for personnel***
- ***skills and technology.***

Conference instructs the EC to produce this report and report back before Conference 2023.

BEDFORDSHIRE

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

£1,612 – that is the difference in pay between a competent firefighter whole time and a competent firefighter in control. Firefighters on station know the impact of suffering £4,000 real term pay cuts over the last ten years. So imagine how our comrades feel in control about being another £1,612 short.

Conference, the Bedfordshire resolution calls for a review into the role of firefighters in control, the first being done in 2003, the last in 2017, prior to the tragic events of Grenfell.

Since then the role of firefighters in control has changed dramatically calling on our members to be multi-skilled across a variety of new technologies and procedures. Some of our members in control are required to attend the incident ground and are subject to the same toxic effluent contaminants that have been highlighted in the recent studies conducted by UCLan to the members on call whole time and the flexi duty system.

By definition they are Grey Book employees tasked with the job of resolving emergency incidents. Every incident starts and ends with our members in control. Can you imagine the emotional stress of listening to someone trapped in a room by intense heat and acrid smoke, the caller desperate to reach a child trapped in an adjacent room? The control operator listening to what could be the caller's last human contact, keeping a desperate caller calm while they talk them through fire survival guidance, but still maintaining that all important positivity.

The operator listens to the noise in the background, listening for the sound of hope in the form of a siren from an appliance and telling the caller to stay back from that window where it enters the room, hopefully completing the rescue in time.

The FBU funded an award winning short film. The operator perfectly demonstrates the calls that our control staff never forget: to go from high emotion and pressure to taking the next call with nothing more than a quick, deep breath in between is a skill few can master.

If fire crews have a difficult shout we have the option to come off the run and process it. Control doesn't have that luxury. There are no relief crews coming to take over for them. When we hear stories of compassion and dedication like this, how can we not support control firefighters? This discussion ultimately ends up centring around pay parity, which causes debates around mess decks and whether the risk faced on the incident ground is the same as that in a control room. The risks are different, but the risk is present all the same.

Our members in control provide lifesaving fire survival guidance. They are subjected to white noise level conditions when dealing with incidents and alarms, hearing the public cries for help.

Whilst the physical risk associated with both roles may be a subject for nuanced debate, the risk associated with psychological is undeniable.

There might be 1,612 reasons to support this resolution but solidarity does not require understanding. It requires solidarity. As a union built on "an injury to one is an injury to all", we urge conference to back this call for a review of firefighters in control. It may not result in pay parity. Indeed, that is not what this resolution is calling for. This review may eventually lead to an uplift in pay and put our comrades in control at much closer to bridging the gap and surely that is something we can do and something we must united behind. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. Does that have a seconder?

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

Thank you Bedfordshire. We weren't actually going to stand up and second it from the rostrum, but I think after that we can't just sit there. It is leading perfectly into the next resolution which is the control staff pay, but thank you for everything you said. We really appreciate it. We second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sherri. It is open for debate. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

We support the resolution. It is clarification more than a qualification in terms of reminding and reassuring conference that this has not gone away. This agenda has been taken up every time it has been raised in discussion and coordination with the CFMC at all stages. The work was commissioned with IDR. That was discussed with the CSNC. Amendments and further work was suggested by the CSNC and that was then undertaken. We are happy to continue to do that, and I think correctly, the question of two major developments, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the Manchester Arena Inquiry, I think are elements that we will put into that work in the future.

Obviously, we will discuss that closely with the CSNC including how we frame that research and the changes in demands on control staff members. With those points of clarification, yes the executive council supports the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 15 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on resolution 19, Control Staff Pay, moved by the Control Staff National Committee. The EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 19 CONTROL STAFF PAY

Conference recognises the work previously carried out by our Union in relation to pay parity for Emergency Fire Control staff.

As part of all future pay negotiations Conference instructs the Executive Council to make closing the pay gap between Emergency Fire Control Staff and the equivalent operational firefighter roles, a fundamental pillar of the demands in those negotiations.

All progress regarding this matter should be reported back to Members on a regular basis.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

President, conference, moving resolution 19 on control staff pay.

During conference 2019 I stood up at the rostrum and asked North Yorkshire to remit their resolution regarding equal pay for fire control. It wasn't particularly easy for us as the CSNC, especially given the fact that several of our comrades in the room lined up to support the resolution, and for that we are still very grateful. I was at the back of the queue and I had to ask them to remit.

Prior to the resolution being moved, we agreed as a committee with our national officer at the time that we would ask North Yorkshire to remit, and the rationale behind it was that work was already ongoing. We made it clear to our national officer at the time that if we were not satisfied with the efforts we would come back to conference and we would open it up again. So here I am conference, three years later on behalf of the CSNC, on behalf of your control room colleagues asking for your support again.

What we want is for the executive council to make closing the pay gap between emergency fire control staff and the equivalent operational firefighter roles a fundamental pillar of all future pay negotiations. So notice what we are asking for this time – for the pay gap to be closed, not necessarily parity of pay. We didn't want to make it too difficult.

We want to be recognised in pay negotiations not just swept along. I have said it before, but I feel it is appropriate to say again: our role is very different to that of an operational firefighter, but it is equally as important. You have a fire, you need a fire engine, control sends them. You are on a fireground, you need more fire engines, control sends them. You are at an incident, someone is being aggressive, you need the police, control requests them. A firefighter is injured at an incident, you need an ambulance, control requests them.

We are one team and we are always there for you behind our two, three or sometimes even four computer screens with our headsets on and now, conference, we need you to be there for us.

The EC are giving us qualified support, likely because our resolution is aspirational but isn't that like everything we do in the FBU. We are always wanting the best for our members and to quote the national officer, Riccardo la Torre, he said on Tuesday if we want something we demand it and we win it. *Applause*.

GMC and London have recently received 2% for agreeing MTA work and that 2% has not made its way to control staff despite the fact that we will have to handle those calls. We also have control members in region 5 from North West Fire Control who have to attend the Manchester Arena inquiry and face questioning.

We are very much involved with that new area of work, so conference please support our resolution, and I would like to ask the EC to give us their full support, so can I ask you please to remove the qualification? I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sherri. No pressure, Riccardo. Has that got a seconder?

STEPHEN HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

Conference, president, probably no surprises that I am up here seconding this motion given what Sherri has just said.

We brought the motion in 2019 asking for pay parity for our sisters and brothers in control, as you have just heard, at the request of the CSNC section and with the qualified support from the EC guaranteeing this work would be done by next conference.

Unfortunately, as we have heard – although there may be a bit of confusion because Matt seems to think the work has been done (but Sherri is telling us the work hasn't been done) – it does seem this work has not been carried out.

We find ourselves yet again debating control pay equalisation. We have heard in numerous debates about the pressures on our control members' pay as a result of cuts to staff, increased workloads, unreliable turn out systems such as Vision and Systel, all applying significant pressure on our control members.

Nobody disputes our members in control save as many lives as firefighters and face the same pressures, if not greater pressures, than firefighters when carrying out survival calls. I defy anybody to suggest they don't deserve the same pay.

Conference, we listened yesterday to some very powerful and moving debates around sexual discrimination, and how 76% of control staff are women.

Conference, I will leave you with this. We need to end the discrimination, remove the gender pay gap and demand equal pay for control. Conference, I support this motion.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, that is open for debate.

MELANIE GIBB (Scotland):

Speaking in support. It would be very remiss of Scotland not to get up on this particular subject. We have the largest amount of firefighter control staff in the United Kingdom in our region.

I am not going to talk about why, and I think we all know why, control staff deserve pay equality with operational firefighters. I cannot say any more than Sherri has already done. Thank you very much to the brother who seconded it. I am a little bit worried because the closures and treatment of control staff not only affect the public who we are all here to serve, why we all joined this job, but it is endangering firefighter safety because we don't have the time, we don't have the resources and we are not giving as much care as we used to give to frontline firefighters and that is very dangerous for us all because the job is getting more complicated and more dangerous as time goes on.

In addition to that, when Sherri is asking the EC to do a little bit more, I have to support her in this. In Scotland we got the Queen's Jubilee Medal. The people that dealt with Grenfell in the control room in London and the Manchester Arena did not. What in the name of God is that all about? *Applause.*

Men and women in control deserve to be treated equally up and down the country. We need a little bit of standardisation here. Please support your control room staff because we will support you.

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

I am a firefighter. I have been a firefighter for 25 years but more importantly I am a firefighter control. A lot of people think I am a fit young man, but I am not. Importantly, our job is crucial. I cannot emphasise that too much. It is crucial to you. We need your support.

My first conference, Bridlington, end of the 90s somewhere we were talking about pay parity almost then and we have talked about it every conference since. I agree with Sherri, we are not actually asking for parity, just to recognise what we do.

When I look at my comrade in control last January, we had an incident where somebody had fallen into a river and everything failed in control. Just imagine that. Screens went blank, everything, radios the lot. We looked at each other. When she started to wobble, then I started to wobble. Thankfully, we saved the chap's life by a miracle really, but that is what we are up against, so it is a difficult job. And just to add insult to injury, it has made me deaf in the ear that I wear my headset on. Thankfully management said it is nothing to do with my headset, so that is all right then.

More importantly, when people say about why we should get pay parity, I always say my favourite saying from a little key ring, *why, because we are worth it.* Please support.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Speaking in support of resolution 19. I have worked in fire control for three years. I have also worked as an operational firefighter for sixteen years, and I would take being committed into any fire above taking a telephone call from a terrified member of the public trapped inside a burning building – every time.

Our comrades in control are highly skilled and dedicated firefighters and they should be paid as such. Conference, in Merseyside we are fighting to keep our control room properly staffed. These attacks, along with the levels of pay, have seen firefighters leave that job.

Supporting this resolution will not make our members in control rich, but it will show solidarity to our comrades in control. Conference, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else? No. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks comrades for those contributions to this important debate. Just to clarify a few points. Trevor helpfully mentioned the debates that we had back in the 1990s on this issue. Of course, we did make pay parity one of the four pillars of our pay campaign in 2002 and we went on strike, and that is one of the things we went on strike over. We made progress but we didn't make the progress that we intended to make on that and on other issues as well.

To clarify some of the points that Steve raised, just to be absolutely clear, the work that we coordinated fully with the CSNC in terms of the research that we agreed to conduct, the research that the CSNC had asked for we conducted with IDR, and that was fully consulted with the CSNC, it was suggestions for further work were made by the CSNC, that further work was also undertaken and that report was provided back to the CSNC. So that work as requested by conference was undertaken as we explained in relation to the previous debate.

The two debates are clearly related. If we are going to go to our employers then we need to make that case, we need to develop. Evidence doesn't win everything but it is part of building a case. In terms of the reference that

Steve made to sex discrimination, clearly if there are cases of sex discrimination this union has a proud record of challenging sex discrimination legally or otherwise and we would do so.

I welcome the contribution from Scotland because I know there are discussions on the questions of reimbursements and payments for control members in Scotland, and again the reference to the Manchester Arena Inquiry and the GTI. So all those points are important points that are part of our considerations and, Sherri, you made a good point so I may get told off after this, but I on behalf of the executive council will remove the qualification. Support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 19 to the vote. All those in favour please show? All those against please show. That is *carried*.

I now call para A4, IDR research; para A6, Pay lobbying; para A7, Fire employers' pay offer; para A8, Executive council assessment and consultation; para A9, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service pay; para A10, Non-Grey Book FBU members; para A11, Queen's Platinum Jubilee; Para A12, Marauding terrorism attacks; para A13, NJC agreement on Covid-19 work; para A14, HMICFRS State of Fire and rescue reports; para A15, NJC – FBU and employers' reps; para A16, Middle Managers Negotiating Body (MMNB).

I now call resolution 40, Redeployment Opportunities to be moved by Dorset and Wiltshire. The EC are seeking remittance.

Resolution 40 REDEPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Conference notes that an ever-increasing ageing workforce highlights the need for redeployment opportunities for Members who find themselves unfit for work through no fault of their own and outside of ill-health retirement processes.

Conference calls on the Executive Council to engage with the Employers to ensure redeployment opportunities are maintained, rather than lost as is currently happening.

DORSET AND WILTSHIRE

DIANE CRITCHLOW (Dorset and Wiltshire):

As a result in changes to our pensions with the retirement age of 60, we have a real concern as to how we protect our members who are no longer fit for work through no fault of their own.

We know Penny Mordaunt stated in the House of Commons that no firefighter would lose their job due to no fault of their own, but do we really trust anything that the Tories say? In Dorset and Wiltshire we used to have two roles in prevention for redeployment. These have now gone due to pay parity or equal pay claims. We currently have success with ill-health retirement but with an ageing work force this is likely to change.

Conference, we need to protect our members and this resolution is asking the EC to engage with employers to explore opportunities for redeployment. We do understand that this is going to be hard to achieve but as a union we must strive to protect our members working until they are 60. Because of the work this would involve, we are remitting this resolution but we do ask the EC to engage with our employers to try and achieve this aim. I remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Mark Rowe.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Yes, thanks Diane and thanks Dorset and Wiltshire. I will just explain for conference the reason why we are asking to remit. It is not that the EC does not recognise the situation; we do. But what we don't believe is that we don't need to engage with the employers on this matter. As Diane mentioned, we have the guarantee written into Hansard from the then former fire minister, Penny Mordaunt, and her comments to parliament in December 2014.

The concern is the union opening up a debate with the employers when we already have that guarantee may be problematic and provide the employers the opportunity to approach the Johnson government to seek to try to wriggle out of that or amend it in some way.

Our position is that that guarantee is there and we simply enact that every time a member finds themselves in a situation that Dorset and Wiltshire and Diane refer to. The guarantee was clear and, as you recall, it was stated in parliament in response to a question during the early day motion 454 which saw, in my view, and in the executive's view, one of the most impressive pieces of lobbying of parliament that has ever been undertaken by this union when we forced parliament to attend in its entirety to try and block that resolution. That was a fantastic bit of lobbying and does show what we can achieve.

The guarantee from Penny Mordaunt herself said if somebody fails a fitness test through no fault of their own and they do not qualify for ill-health retirement, they will get a redeployed role or unreduced pension. That will be put on a statutory footing in the national framework. A full unreduced pension is not an alternative role. Now, of course, as Diane says, we are aware that politicians lie to get themselves out of a fix on any particular day, none more so than the current government, but her response, according to Hansard, was clear and cannot be interpreted in any other way than what it says. We know that Johnson tries to wriggle out on the nuance of the words he uses, but that is unequivocal.

The route the Scottish government has followed is to alter the scheme regulations and that regulation is now in Scottish firefighter's pension legislation, but of course we have had a lot more difficulty with the Westminster government not surprisingly. What we will say is if there are any issues, please raise them with us and we will use the court to pursue them with the guarantee if we need to. We have our answer from parliament. As I say, they can't wriggle off the hook. It is not like Penny Mordaunt has disappeared, she is now the minister of state for trade, so she is still in office and she is still accountable.

As you know, if government ministers are proven to have lied or misled parliament, they are expected to resign or face being sacked, so please bring these to us. Nothing more would bring joy to myself personally and to the EC and conference than to get Penny Mordaunt sacked, so if you do have any of that evidence, please bring that to us. Thanks to Dorset and Wiltshire for that reassurance and we do give you the commitment, we do give that guarantee and please bring those issues to us and we will pursue Penny Mordaunt. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark, I now call para D2, Marauding Terrorist attack (MTA); para D3, Manchester Arena Inquiry; para D4, HMICFRS Covid-19 report; para D5, HMICFRS State of Fire and Rescue Report 2020; para D6, HMICFRS Letter on MTA; para D7, HMICFRS local inspections; para D8, HMICFRS State of Fire and rescue report 2021; para D9, Fire Safety Act; para D10, Fire safety consultation; para D11, Building Safety Bill; para D12, Welsh government consultation; para D13, Fire safety design for schools; para D14, Covid-19 NJC agreement.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

We had a national officials meeting on line in 2021 some time when we were still part of the tripartite agreement and I raised a concern there about members who were facing delays to get NHS treatment due to Covid. We had a situation in Bedfordshire where we had members facing dismissal because they couldn't get back on the run because of the delays in the NHS. That is also happening again now with another member.

I did ask at the time in that meeting for the EC to do something about it, and I believed that question went directly to you, Matt, when we were discussing that, so I just want to see if there has been any movement. Thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Jamie, with respect, I didn't know that question was coming. I will have to research the issue and respond to you outside of conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, thanks Matt. We are now moving on to section G, Education, Para G1.

KATHRYN DUNCAN (NWC):

President, conference, just a wee thing to say that on 15 June in London national women's committee are holding a training day for all our brigade women secs, not just the regional women secs. So while I have got you all in the

room, can I ask the brigade secs to put their hands up if they have got a woman brigade rep. Can I ask you to put your hand up if you don't have a brigade woman sec. Do you think you could get somebody between now and 15 June to attend?

On that, if you have a woman's brigade rep it is really important that you have their FBU email address set up for this event because it is a training event and it is about organising. What was alluded to earlier is that we have got a new maternity policy read to go, we are just checking on the language, so when we discussed earlier about getting pay parity for women on maternity, we are ready to go. So this is the beginning of the organisation so please do your best to try and get the women to the event, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kathryn. I now call resolution 60, Positive Action, moved by B&EMM. The EC support.

Resolution 60 POSITIVE ACTION

Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) nationally suffer from under-representation of black and minority ethnic firefighters, failing to build a workforce reflective of their community demographics.

The benefits of having an appropriately diverse workforce are well known, they improve public confidence in the Service and help forge stronger connections within those communities, allowing for more effective fire safety and prevention work which in turn lead to fewer incidents and fewer injuries and deaths.

Many FRSs have initiatives aimed at redressing this balance including 'positive action' where they attempt to engage with under-represented communities. These programmes are often poorly understood by the workforce and wider public, leading to controversy.

The Fire Brigades Union with its proud tradition of promoting equality must acknowledge the value of these initiatives and support the underlying principles.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to create a training package to deepen understanding around the scope, limitations, approach, need and effectiveness of 'positive action', including 'myth-busting' and best practice and make it available to all Members by Conference 2023.

B&EMM

DEAN POUNDER (B&EMM):

Delivering resolution 60, Positive Action. Fire and rescue services nationally suffer from under representation of all equality sections, failing to build a workforce reflective of their community demographics. The benefits of having an appropriately diverse workforce are well known, they improve public confidence in the service and help forge stronger connections within those communities.

Many FRSs practise initiatives aimed at redressing this imbalance including 'positive action' where they attempt to engage with under-represented communities. However, these programmes are often poorly understood, thus poorly applied leading to controversy and resentment.

The FBU has a proud tradition of promoting diversity but let's take a good look around this room. How diverse are we? How diverse is the union? How diverse is our leadership?

We are all aware of the benefits of having an appropriate diverse workforce so should we not guide our members and service managers, with the necessary tools to address and improve upon the lack of diversity which in turn can have a knock on effect with our union? I like to believe that.

Should the majority of black and brown faces attending conference year after year be those of the B&EMM section?

In 2020, according to home office statistics here in England 7% (2,451) of firefighters were women and that 4%, 1,410 were from an ethnic minority, out of around 35,000 full time equivalent. That is 93% men and 96% white.

There are reasons why people from minority communities tend not to consider the fire service as an occupation. These reasons need to be explored, discussed and effectively addressed. There are some FRSs who have done

some great work in this area and we can learn, educate and collaborate, so we do not make the mistake that leads to controversy and/or resentment which often results in the spread of ignorance and misinformation and which also results in us struggling to gain allies, and we cannot do this without you, our allies.

When positive action is poorly applied, it is often assumed you cannot join the profession if you are white male. That is right: I have heard it, I have read it. But that could easily be shut down as nonsense. All you have got to do is take a look at all the recent pass out parades and group photographs and they are still are majority white male.

We need to remove throwaway comments as mentioned in resolution 41, paragraph 2, because these comments are not helpful at all.

While I am up here I would like to congratulate Nottinghamshire FRS for the brilliant work they have done in diversifying their workforce. I am sure many of you would have read how Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have recruited the UK's first hijab wearing active firefighter. That is brilliant work.

In one article our general secretary contributed by saying firefighters are no strangers to breaking down barriers and Uroosa is no different paving the way for more Muslim female firefighters to join the service. Uroosa, like her colleagues, is a highly trained professional who would put her life on the line to save others. I was pleased to see more people from ethnic minority communities are joining.

Although it is a step in the right direction, there is still a woeful lack of race and gender diversity that needs to be addressed. Fires do not discriminate and neither should the fire service. There is much competent talking the talk, however with national guidance available to all services at their fingertips there can be no excuse not to walk to walk.

Conference calls on this union to create a training package to deepen understanding around the scope, limitations, approach, need and effectiveness of 'positive action' including 'myth-busting' and best practice and make it available to all members of Conference by 2023.

I like to believe that if my son in the next 15-16 years so decides to follow in my footsteps that I can issue him my blessings instead of warnings. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dean. Does that have a seconder?

DANIEL GIBLIN (Greater Manchester):

I have to get up and speak on this. It wasn't actually planned until Dean got up and made that contribution, and I will be dead quick, president, because I know we have got time constraints.

We talk about positive action, and it is a bugbear of ours in our region, it is a bugbear of ours in our brigade, and we've made the comment at the recent anti-racism events in Greater Manchester that we arranged to coincide with the anniversary of the assassination of Stephen Lawrence that positive action applied by the fire service in the forms that I have experienced is so haphazard – I can't remember the words being used to describe it, but the application is horrendous for me. I can say from personal experience that the reality is we just look at the tick box exercise and how they apply it. It is not done properly.

The service will look at their diversity figures to prove that they are a caring and sharing employer, that they share the same values that the Fire Brigades Union does about increasing diversity in the job, but actually when they have the positive action days they don't consider the differences in our B&EMM members. They don't consider the cultural differences, they just look at one application. They don't see the difference between black Caribbean applicants, the Bangladeshis, the Pakistanis etc, we could go on. I don't need to list everyone.

Not everyone's situation is the same and, like we say, in equality, there used to be this trope, I suppose, that they treat everyone the same, but we shouldn't be doing that should we? We treat everyone according to the conditions to ensure that these things are improved.

I won't go on too long but I just want to make one final point that these are some of the concerns that we have got. Look at this lanyard here. This and other paraphernalia, thanks to Tam and others who helped us with this, we had them round fire stations around our anti-racism event. We wrote to every chief fire officer in the regions and asked them to support it. There was nothing controversial there. We were simply saying support our members wearing our show of anti-racism around fire stations, support our event, give people release to come so we can discuss these issues. Out of all the brigades in our region, Greater Manchester decided to respond at the last minute because they got put under pressure and I got an email back, and in all fairness he said yes, we will support it. But I don't know how far that support went. He just didn't stop people wearing these.

Phil Garrigan from Merseyside, I just want to stand up here now and say he is a disgrace, an absolute disgrace, because he turned round and said: "We can't show political support around fire stations so your members are not allowed to wear these colours." What an absolute disgrace.

Cumbria's chief responded to me three weeks after and said we'll support it. Thanks for that. The other two or three brigades we would have written to were the Isle of Man, Lancashire and Cheshire – not even a letter of response. They ignored us. Where does that fall in the industrial relations protocol for a start, ignoring a regional official addressing the chief fire officer, didn't even bother responding? That is how they care about it.

Dean, you were spot on about the issue over diversity in the trade union movement. We raised it at the North West TUC not so long ago, and it is the same picture there. Since I have been around it has never changed. You hit that nail on the head. We made a commitment in the North West TUC to do something about this. Things have got to change. You were right about the executive council. We have got one B&EMM member. I might be inaccurate on that, but I believe brother Shek is actually the first B&EMM brigade executive council member. I may be wrong on that but things have got to change.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else?

GARETH TOVEY (South Wales):

Speaking in support of resolution 60. Conference, can we just note the appalling responses by Roy Wilsher, Tom Winsor and the new NFCC chair at the Home Office select committee on 2 March on these very issues when questioned about their failure to overcome the challenges around diversity and recruitment they had no answers and appalling responses. Conference, I just thought it was important to note that. Thank you.

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

Speaking in support. Rule A2 objects of the union, part 3: "to secure the members of uniformed employees of the fire brigade, members of the union, appropriate post holders within the union as far as reasonable, practicable, representation of diversity in regard to society." Conference are we doing this? Are we doing that? Can we look around this room and say we are representative of diversity in society? Can you say the same in your workplace?

Thanks for bringing this resolution but we cannot forget the LGBT+ section. Although the FBU are not responsible for recruitment in our fire service, this is still our work. Our union cannot reflect the diversity of society unless our fire brigades do. Positive action is a powerful tool when used properly. When abused, misused and misunderstood it can deepen divisions. Let us do the work and use positive action as a tool to improve representation within our work places. I support.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

Speaking in support of the B&EMM resolution 60 and positive action. In 2006 they looked to standardise national recruitment and they brought in aptitude tests for English and Maths, and what I started to see in recent years is a move back to prescriptive grades, A-C English and Maths. That in itself is a barrier to recruiting and certainly from our diversity sections. We are trying to improve that.

The reason why they got rid of those standards in the first place is because not having an A-C in English and Maths wouldn't necessarily stop you from being a good firefighter. If there are chiefs out there that want this, station

commanders and above to have A-C in English and Maths, then they should put in a process to develop firefighters once they have joined. It is a question for you to go back as officials and see what is going on in your brigades with your recruitment standards.

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

I just felt I had to come up as our resolution submitted was mentioned in the original speech. I just wanted to make a few points of clarity really for conference.

I don't profess to be an expert in the matter in any way, shape or form, so I welcome the resolution and speak in support of it. I think the wording is accurate in terms of providing the training to educate ourselves and our services in this area.

Our resolution recognised the positive action and the positive impact that can have, but as a comrade from the B&EMM section said, bad understanding, poor understanding, poor application is what leads to poor outcomes if you like. So in Derbyshire we worked closely with our previous B&EMM rep, Ronnie Stanley, and if you look across the evidence then it suggests when you look at the photographs of our recent training courses there are 50% women, 50% men; there are members from B&EMM section within those courses as well. Within our brigade we are actually using that positive action, working with our service and doing it well.

So in no way was our resolution seeking to upset or attack anybody in this area, and if required I am happy to make that apology if that was the case. On behalf of Derbyshire, the branch that put the resolution together, the amendments that were made along the normal route, we would have welcomed any amendment from any section, any brigade, or anybody else for that matter to ensure that the wording was correct.

My final point that I want to make on this is that our resolution was always about achieving safe standards for everybody and that is what it was always about. You know, it was never about anything else so, as I said, I think I have explained it there. We remitted or withdrew the resolution and I have spoken with a number of individuals from over here and across the floor since. I think my descriptions have led to the exact same conclusion that our resolution had good intent for the right reasons for everybody and nothing else, and in my view it could have been amended and changed and gone through conference with the right commitment from all of us.

So hopefully that helps, hopefully to my colleague in the B&EMM section, the whole B&EMM section, the Women's section, wherever, hopefully that clears any of that up – and the LGBT section, sorry, Maria (we have spoken many times). Yes, that is enough, I have waffled enough. So that is where we are at and hopefully conference understands that and takes it on board in the spirit to which I present it. Thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, thanks for all those fantastic contributions on this important issue. It touched on the long running debate in our profession and in our union on equality and diversity, and we faced many challenges over the years. It is hardly surprising people have concerns if you look back at some of the incidents that have happened.

Sometimes occasionally, as we have discussed in other debates, in our union, when you have fire authority chairs who make racist and sexist comments and nobody does anything about it, it is hardly surprising that the people are sceptical about equality in the fire and rescue service.

A key turning point in this was the year 2010 because whatever we thought of them, under the previous labour government, there were various targets put in place and fire authorities in England at least were being held to account over the development of their policies.

The first thing that Bob Neill, the elected minister after 2010 said in relation to the fire and rescue service was this: "We will not give any advice or instruction or requirement to any fire authority in England about how they recruit, who they recruit and how they promote and who they promote; it is a matter for them only."

Instantly, every single service dropped much of their equality agenda. CFOs again, and I think it was helpful, the response of the NFCC in parliament on this issue was mentioned – CFOs were part and parcel of doing that.

So, yes, we have much to do ourselves. We don't shy away from raising that. I think it was helpful that Dean mentioned the issues that we have covered in the magazine. We have covered trans issues and trans members in our magazine in a very positive and proud way. We have covered other diversity issues.

It is interesting actually, occasionally we get nasty comments back from one or two members, but we don't get huge nasty comments back and I think that is a good reflection on our members.

One point that was said in terms of executive council members, I think the first B&EMM executive council member was Gordon Vassell who was elected in 1992 as a London EC member and played a key role in the development of the B&EMM Section during the course of the following year.

In terms of the demands in the resolution, we are very happy to support those, and we will discuss with Lindsay how we build the requirements of the resolution into our education and training package. So support the resolution. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 60 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference, it is tea break. Quarter past eleven back in please.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I now ask you to turn to page 4 in the programme of business. Para L5, Elections. I will now take the executive council policy statement, national officers, with amendments from London and the following resolutions will all be taken in the same debate. The EC are opposing all three amendments from London. The resolutions to be brought into the debate are resolution 93, Fire Brigades Union Organisation and Structure, moved by Hertfordshire, executive council oppose; resolution 101, national officer positions moved by Cleveland, the EC are seeking withdrawal or the EC oppose.

Now listen carefully. Resolution 93 can stand with the EC policy statement but is in opposition to resolution 101. Resolution 101 stands in opposition to the EC policy statement and resolution 93.

I will now call the general secretary to move the executive council policy statement, national officers.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks Ian. President, conference, we are here at conference to set our goals and policies and define our policies for the coming years some of which affect our members' day to day working lives, some around broader political and international issues and finally we have to address how we organise, how we operate as an organisation within the Fire Brigades Union.

Part of that is we need to ensure that our structures are sustainable, democratic and accountable. I am aware that we discussed several times that something like half the delegations are made up of new attendees at conference so it is important, I think, to put some of this into context.

If you look back through annual reports you will see that in 2010 this union had just under 44,000 members. Of those, 33,000 were whole time, 9,000 were retained and 1,500 were control members. You can see from the annual report today we have fewer than 33,000 members, 25,000 whole time, 6,000 retained and less than 1,000 control members. So we have lost something like a quarter of our members overall.

As we have discussed in other debates we know that that is the result of job losses. We have generally very high density levels and those are the results of job losses within the fire and rescue service arising out of the austerity policies pursued by successive governments over more than a decade: recruitment freezes, station closures and other cuts.

Our density hasn't changed much during that time although there is still work to be done as we have already discussed and will discuss in one of the other debates later this week. But the point is that the service is still being underfunded, it is still not recruiting anything like the numbers of firefighters and emergency fire control staff that are needed, and all of that translates into our financial situation.

In 2010 the general fund of our union was more than £13 million a year. Now our general fund income in a year is around the £9 million. So there has been a significant reduction in income in our union reported in the accounts. It means crudely that a third of our income has been lost in little more than a decade. Note that none of that takes account of inflation. Allowing for inflation, it would probably be about half, halving of our real income as a union. That is a serious situation that all of us have a responsibility to take account of.

That has meant that we have had to take some very tough decisions in order to keep this union afloat. We have had to reduce our spending in every area of work. That goes for head office too where we have substantially fewer staff in place than we had in 2010.

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say to conference that if we had not taken those difficult decisions at the executive council and here at conference frankly we may not be here today. It is as serious as that. The viability of this union has come into question at various times and we have had to take measures.

So when we are discussing and debating policy statements like this and the related resolutions, we have to put it into that context of the continuing viability of this union.

We set out an aim in one of the policy statements some years ago to maintain the Fire Brigades Union as an independent specialist industrial union representing those working in the fire and rescue service, because if you look at what has happened to other unions who have taken ill-thought out decisions, they end up losing money and end up being pushed into mergers, and there is a whole history of smaller unions. So we need to think strategically in this debate and other related debates.

Again, the threat of austerity hasn't gone away. If you look at the figures on central government funding, it went up by 1% in April. Yet inflation, as you have already discussed, is 7% this year. So that will have an effect on the numbers employed and therefore on this union's membership and future income.

In terms of turning to the current situation, again for those who are new we need to discuss how we have got ourselves into the position that we have in terms of the current position with national officers. Some of the history is set out in the paper and I urge people to read it carefully.

We used to have in our rule book four elected national officers. There were considerable cost problems that the executive council identified, and we have had to change the way we employ national officers. We are just in the process of finally changing the pension scheme that officials are entitled to become part of, a whole range of changes have been made, including to the conditions of service and how we recruit national officers.

One of those decisions was to reduce the national officers to three. That was a decision taken here at conference. It is still reflected in the rule book. Many of you will remember a resolution was brought by the West Midlands instructing us to appoint a national officer and then further discussions took place about appointment of further national officers set out in the paper. So the position we are in today is as a result of conference decisions and we have a position whereby we have three national officers, one of whom is an elected national officer, two appointed in accordance with the decisions taken by conference, and that is an important point.

As I say, they are a fantastic team and many of you work with them and you know them very well. I think they do an outstanding job on behalf of you, on behalf of our members, on behalf of the executive council.

One thing I want to say to conference delegates before you vote, have any of you taken the time to speak to the national officers about their views on this issue? It affects their future and, to my knowledge, there has been no discussion with the national officers. I have discussed it with them and it is out of those discussions that we drafted the EC policy statement.

I think those who are bringing resolutions or amendments I would strongly urge as a courtesy, if nothing else, and as respect to your colleagues, your comrades up here, take the time to speak to them as a group or individually about their experiences working as a national officer, the demand it raises and the best solutions that might be offered for the way forward.

It is as a result of that that the executive council is recommending the measures set out in the paper including a continuing and finalising a review of how many and in what format we have national officers. It proposes that we will commence an election for a further national officer which would lead to the position of four national officers being in place. So if you came here wanting an additional national officer to cover the workload that they face, then you would get that by voting for the executive council statement. If you came here wanting four national officers you will get that by voting for the EC statement. If you want to maintain the continuity and expertise we have with the two appointed national officers, then again you should vote for the executive council statement.

If you want to be able to review the structure, including some of the debates we have had here, for example, about diversity, then you should support the executive council policy statement.

The EC statement gives the union the additional resource of a national officer but does not tie our hands, allows the executive council and yourselves to review that situation, taking all views into account and conference will make the final decision. I move the policy statement.

THE PRESIDENT:

Scotland to second.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland):

Seconding the EC policy statement. As the general secretary has said, we are a relatively small union with a small number of full-time officials, and a national officer has significant workloads that require that continuity in expertise mentioned by the GS.

Those workloads include pensions, DECON and the work on toxic contaminants, the cancer registry, the membership database, legal, health and safety, equality, finance, IT, education and courses, government policy and legislation, fire and rescue service policy and not least this our conference.

If conference is concerned with what is being proposed in the policy statement and would like to bring the argument for the four posts to be elected, then we have the opportunity to take part in the review and, following that, bring the debate back to conference next year. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

London to move their amendments.

ROSS McLAREN (London):

Proposing amendments to the EC policy statement for national officers, page 2. We would really like to support this but London will only support if our amendments are included. We believe it is really important that national officers are elected into position by our members. If our members cannot vote, then to quote Karl's words from yesterday, there will be serious issues with our democracy.

Conference, we ask you to support our amendments to ensure we maintain the tradition of our democratic union and protect our members' voices. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does amendment No 1 have a seconder?

STEPHEN HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

President, I want to second all three amendments at the same time.

THE PRESIDENT:

Yes, that's fine, Steve.

STEPHEN HOWLEY (North Yorkshire):

Conference, I think what we need to be clear is what London's amendments are asking for. London's amendments are asking for any change to the detail that Matt's provided around the structure of the union around additional national officers and around the resources that provide. What London's amendments are asking for is to maintain the democracy of this union and for those members to be elected.

Before I go on, I need to say what I am about to cover has no slant or disregard to the great work that Tam and Mark do as the current national officers, and I have no doubt that if they are put up for election that they will, given that great work, get the full backing of our members. *Applause.*

I urge you all to oppose this policy statement should London's amendments not be accepted. Our union is built on the strong foundations of democracy. That democracy must and should be enshrined from the bottom to the top of our union. Remember we are a proud member-led union. Our members are the ones who decide what individuals they want in what positions via the election process. We all hate the fact that chief fire officers surround themselves with their cronies, surround themselves with individuals who are hand-picked and selected by them. I am not suggesting that this will happen in this immediate instance but it is one thing that we have got to be well aware. If we remove the democracy of this union we become at risk of that happening at the very top of our organisation.

Do not let this come to the top of this union. When we agreed the temporary appointments to national officers, the EC agreed to carry out and provide a report on the review of the union structure. In the current EC statement they openly admit that that work has not been carried out. Conference, we do not blindly make changes that seriously affect the democracy of our union. There is no reasonable rationale to oppose these amendments put forward by London. I urge you to protect the democracy of our union. It is your responsibility as a member of the parliament of our union to support the amendments on behalf of our members. If these amendments are not accepted, we must oppose the EC policy statement.

Let us be clear. Whether officials are elected or not, this should not have an impact on the finances of the union that Matt gives the background on there. This is purely about democracy. Conference, I support the amendments.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call Resolution 93, The Fire Brigades Union Organisation and Structure, moved by Hertfordshire. The EC are seeking withdrawal or they oppose.

Resolution 93 THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

Conference notes the Executive Council (EC) Emergency Resolution 2 at Conference 2019, with regard to FBU organisation and structure review, notably the move to two elected National Officers. Conference also notes the workloads for National Officers, following the vacation of the second elected post in the summer of 2021.

Conference further notes the many fronts opened up by our detractors, along with Covid, which has highlighted a strain on the workloads at Head Office. This may in part be reflected in the growing delay for information responses and assistance that is requested from Head Office Officials.

Conference instructs the EC to run the election for the vacant National Officer post without any further delay.

HERTFORDSHIRE

TIM DEEGAN (Hertfordshire):

Conference notes the executive council (EC) emergency resolution 2 at conference 2019 with regard to FBU organisation and structure review, notably the move to two elected national officers. Conference also notes the workloads for national officers, following the vacation of the second elected post in the summer of 2021.

Conference further notes the many fronts opened up by our detractors, along with Covid, which has highlighted a strain on the workloads at head office. This may in part be reflected in the growing delay for information responses and assistance that is requested from head office officials.

Conference instructs the EC to run the election for the vacant national officer post without any further delay. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 101, National Officer positions, moved by Cleveland. The EC are seeking withdrawal or they oppose.

Resolution 101 NATIONAL OFFICER POSITIONS

Conference recognises the hard work that National Officers do on a day-to-day basis not only nationally but assisting local Officials also.

Conference also recognises that workloads have increased for all Officials of the Union including National Officers.

Conference believes that the present position of having three National Officers (one elected and two appointed) is unsustainable and undemocratic.

Conference agrees that there should be four elected National Officers and instructs the Executive Council to enact the points below in order to carry out the will of Conference;

- ***make any consequential rule changes to the rule book arising from this resolution***
- ***commence a National Officer's election no later than three months from the conclusion of this Conference to bring the number of National Officers to four (two elected and two appointed)***
- ***allow the two appointed National Officers to complete their agreed term and then commence elections for these two National Officer positions.***

CLEVELAND

DAVE HOWE (Cleveland):

Moving resolution 101, national officer positions. Let us start with that this is not about money. If the last few years have taught us anything at all it would be that we are all getting busier and busier, and I remember the difficult financial arguments that we have had at conference; this is my eighteenth. But the EC agrees in its policy statement that we should move back to four national officers. That is all we want to do but we want to do it quicker and more democratically.

We are busier from branch reps through brigades and regions right up to head office, and at the sharp end of that are our national officers and, again, I echo Steve's words, that this is not an attack on any of our national officers, and I have spoken to at least one of them this week and I have spoken through my EC member to them as well, just to clarify that general secretary.

Conference acknowledges the EC policy statement and welcomes the proposal to move back to four national officers. But, conference, our resolution goes further and it does so simply to protect the democracy of our union. Yes, we want four national officers to alleviate workloads. Yes, we want the current national officers to complete their current terms in office. But, yes, we want to go further. We propose that an election for a fourth national officer be held no later than three months from conference close. We propose that the rule book is changed accordingly by the EC and, most importantly, we propose that when all current appointed terms are served that we return to having elected national officer positions.

Conference, we are a democratic union. We pride ourselves on being such and rightly so. Take back control of your union's democracy. The members out there on branches deserve the right to elect their leaders and national officers are just that. Conference, strengthen the democracy of our union.

Cleveland supports the amendments that London have brought so just for your information, conference, if you support London's amendments to the EC policy statement, Cleveland will withdraw resolution 101. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dave. Do I have a seconder?

DANIEL GIBLIN (Greater Manchester):

Disappointed, to be honest with you, with the movement of the conference policy statement from the executive council. We know how hard our national officers work and it was alluded to that we have to go and speak to them to check on that or have a conversation with them. I am pretty upset about that to be honest with you because I have a personal friend who is one of the national officers at the moment. I have got great respect for the other two national officers at the moment.

We referenced the pensions, the Hertfordshire comrade referenced the work we did on pensions. I had personal experience of working with Sean Starbuck for a number of years. I know how hard he worked, long before even Lord Hutton (just for reference for later on) before he made that disgraceful review into public sector pensions. How much work went into that before we were even talking on fire stations about industrial action. As the general secretary rightly alluded to, that created from that hard work I think £17 billion put into the pockets of working class people in this country.

So please don't suggest that this resolution or the amendments from London is any criticism of the great work that our national officers do and I absolutely respect every single last one of you. It is not about that at all.

I am going to do a little bit of a Scotland here. We are seconding this but I don't think it goes far enough for me. I think we need more national officers, I genuinely do. That is what we really need to do. The vital work they do is used for this union.

The general secretary referred to conference as being 50% new delegates. I am not sure on that mate. I trust the delegates in this room whether brand new or not, whether you have been around for years, to make the right decision on democracy. You are democrats. That is what we all are here. If you are a democrat and you don't support this resolution or, like Cleveland said, the amendments, you have got to question that position you are taking if you genuinely believe that.

At the end of the day I have seen the numerous reorganisation papers. I was in exile for the last four so I didn't really get to make my point. The problem is I probably need longer to speak today but I know the president probably won't allow that, to get out all the things I have been dying to say.

The point is them reorganisation papers, it was the same thing. When it was referenced about mergers, I cringed. I thought not again, are we going down that road again about mergers. Are we taking finances over democracy? I never supported it then. Like I referenced Sean Starbuck before, a personal friend of mine, but I was disappointed and appalled when us as a union, Conference agreed, that we were stopping national officer elections. I didn't believe in it then and I don't believe in it now. Like I said, to suggest it is an attack on our national officers, I am really disappointed. I can't stress enough that we are putting the faith in this conference to say enough is enough.

The point on diversity, I don't get it if I am being dead honest. I don't get how supporting the policy statement increases diversity. I have not seen that personally yet and this is the position we took for many a year now. An election actually, we should be making the right choice, we should be encouraging diverse candidates to be sticking themselves forward, to nominate diverse candidates for these roles. Surely a democratically organised election makes sure we have got a better chance of democracy, we have got a better chance of diversity. It is huge. It is absolutely massive. Please do not downplay the importance of supporting the amendment or, in respect of not

doing that, Cleveland's resolution. We have to bring these elections back to our union. You wouldn't accept it at your branch. Your branch members wouldn't accept it at your branch. You wouldn't accept it in region if we just walked in and said no, we are appointing him. You wouldn't accept it. Don't go back to your stations and say to your members at the next branch meeting, "By the way, we stood and voted to say we don't want elections for national officials" because you may as well start doing it in your branches if that is the sort of attitude we are going to take. It has got to stop.

The EC policy statement said we will review it. It is not good enough. At the end of the day we have heard this before: "It will be reviewed, it will be reviewed, White Paper, White Paper, this that and the other, Covid, next thing." Put it in the hands of this conference today. Make that decision back to elections. That is what we are asking. I support. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dan. That is open for debate.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

Speaking in support of the London Amendments and against the EC policy statement if they don't go through.

Conference, will you indulge me for a moment please. If you are an elected official on the conference floor, will you stand up.

THE PRESIDENT:

Excuse me, delegate, just keep it to a debate. I call them to stand up.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

I am just trying to prove a point, president, because the majority of people in this room have been elected by the members. The point here, like Daniel has just said, is we won't accept it on a brigade committee or the regional committees that the exec appoint people amongst themselves, so we cannot accept it for our national officers either.

Like Daniel, I am disappointed that the three national officers sitting up here have been brought into this discussion as well. I don't think it is fair. We all see the work that is being done on DECON, BA safety. We all see the work that is being done in pensions. I feel I have been sending a legal letter once a week for the last nine months, and we see the work being done with the new membership system. So I don't think that it is appropriate for that suggestion being put to you have you gone and spoken to them. We have not done that with previous officials that have lost challenges so I don't think that was fair.

Ultimately, we are a democratically led union. I urge you to support the London amendments and without them the EC policy statement must fall.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Like everybody else, it is absolutely clear this is not about personalities. It is a great privilege for everyone to be here. It is an honour to come here on behalf of your members to take part in the discussions in the future of our union that is rooted in democracy. The general secretary, in moving the statement, himself said that the structures must be democratic. But removing the right of our members to choose who represent them in a democratic union, in a member led union, cannot and should not be accepted.

I would just like to refer to a great friend of the FBU and to the union movement, Tony Benn, and I would like to make you aware of his final speech as an MP in the House of Commons where he so eloquently, as he always would, moved the following on the role of democracy in this country. He said for any democratic society you need to answer five questions: what power have you got, where did you get it, in whose interests do you exercise that power, to whom are you accountable and how can we get rid of you. If you cannot answer those questions and you cannot get rid of people who govern you, then you do not live in a democratic system. Support the London amendments. Thank you.

STEPHEN TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

I will keep it short and sweet. I have not got much written down for this. As Bedfordshire said when they asked you all to stand, if you would indulge me for a moment I would like all our elected EC officials to stand, because they are the people who appoint the national officers. So if you are willing to elect your EC official for them to carry out work on your behalf or you now think you do not trust the decisions your EC official make for you. Conference, I support the EC statement.

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Supporting the London amendments. I always struggle to go after Dan mainly because the GMC official sounds more like a scouser than I do.

Comrades, for me this is really simple. We are all elected officials of this union as others have just said. We are elected by our members to work on their behalf and this should be no different for national officers. These amendments don't unseat current national officers; they simply state that at the end of their term the positions become elected positions once again.

Conference, I repeat, we are all elected into these posts. So should national officers be. Conference, please support the amendments.

ALEX WILSON (South Yorkshire):

Speaking at my first conference. *Applause*. South Yorkshire as a county has a proud history of trade unionism. From the battlegrounds of Orgreave and the melting pots of Forgemaster Steel, and even to the silver screen in the *Full Monty*. I know this history is shared with comrades across the UK in this room.

The shop stewards in the pit, in the melting shops and indeed in our union were and should be democratically elected. So, given our proud history, not just in South Yorkshire but in this room, we cannot in good conscience on behalf of our members endorse the continuation of non-elected national officers. Thus I support London's amendments.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anyone else in the debate? No. General secretary right of reply.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks conference for all those contributions. It is a difficult issue to address and I will start by repeating some of the comments about viewing this in terms of previous decisions that we have made, i.e. that you have made – you may not have been here yourselves – but this conference has made, and the history of the structure.

The structure has evolved reflecting the position of the union in relation to membership density, membership levels and so on. I will address the points individually as they come up.

Some people claimed that they had spoken to national officers and it is putting people in a very unfortunate position. We have got two appointed national officers. Let us be clear. That was not a decision made or initiated by me or the executive council. In fact, when that proposal was brought by a delegation from West Midlands, the executive council opposed that resolution. Conference overturned the executive council to create appointed national officers. That was a decision of yourselves, conference: it was opposed by this executive council.

Respecting the democracy of the union, the executive council of course implemented it. We warned conference there were complications as to how it would work and we eventually found ways of doing it, but it was a decision of yourselves to create the appointed national officers. I think there is a little bit of rewriting of history going on as if this was an invention of head office. It was not. It was your decision.

I have got to say, Steve, I know you were referring to chief officers, the use of the word "cronies" in this debate is really unfortunate and I hope you will reflect and take that back because nobody is going to accuse Mark or Riccardo or Tam of being cronies of anyone I hope in this conference today.

Reference was made about “handpicked” and “selection”. That is not what happened. I don’t know what reports back people have had. The process that was eventually developed was extremely complex. A number of people in this room applied for those posts. It was rigorous and the ultimate decision was made by the executive council. That was the process that was gone through.

In terms of the comment that was made that costs are not relevant, conference, that is not the case. Let us just remember why we took some of the difficult decisions we did. When I came into office, this was the position that we had. It is not easy listening to go through some of these things – and we run two pension schemes: the pension scheme that we had for full time officials was probably, in terms of employer contributions, one of the most expensive pension schemes. One of our actuaries said probably the most expensive pension scheme in the world. That is how unviable it was. So the pension scheme was not viable. It has taken us about ten years. We created a new pension scheme, new officials were going in, and this year we will finally close that pension scheme. It has taken a huge amount of work to do that.

We have provided interest free mortgages to full time officials, to national officers, sorry. The problem was that when people lost office they still had the interest free mortgage. Again, I don’t want to personalise this, but because of the questions that have been raised, I have to go into some of the details. We had cases where people had not worked for this union for more than a decade but were still enjoying an interest free mortgage from the Fire Brigades Union. That is not sustainable and it has taken a long time to get rid of that. The executive council had to face up to this and said we will not be doing that any more.

There was a system of protected pay whereby if people lost elections the provisions were extremely generous, and we had positions where people had gone off, and again, not worked for this union for some 10 or 15 years being given protected pay from the Fire Brigades Union when they were in other well paid jobs. The executive council came to conference, reported all this and said these are not sustainable positions for this union. Because if we are tightening our belts as a union as a whole, we all have to tighten our belts, and we have done that at head office. I mentioned that we had fewer staff working at head office, we have changed the conditions of service of myself, of the assistant general secretary, of the national officers; they have all been changed, and people have made sacrifices to ensure the viability of this union. That was why conference took the decision. It wasn’t the executive council. Conference took the decision to suspend elections at a certain point. People may or may not agree with that, but it was a conference decision and therefore it was a democratic decision.

The point was raised that there was no threat of merger. We have just signed off our accounts. You have seen our accounts. They are very healthy. We sat down with our auditors through the first four months of this year. They were in conference the other day. I can assure you Tam was in that discussion with them. What they said to us is if you go back a decade this union was on the verge of bankruptcy. That is not misleading conference. That is telling you the truth and you have a responsibility to be aware and alive to the viability of this union. It cannot just rest with me or the executive council, we all have to take that responsibility.

Those decisions were difficult, they did come to conference, they were all taken at conference or reported to conference so we don’t accept the suggestion that they are undemocratic decisions. They were your decisions, conference.

Reference was made to Tam and Mark, and I don’t want to embarrass them. I think they are doing an absolutely fantastic job. I will tell you what, they have both said to me this: that they are disappointed that people have not had the courtesy to speak to either of them on this issue. One of them before being appointed and deciding to apply to be appointed was an executive council member. If at the end of his term of office he does not win election, he will not be an executive council member because somebody else is in that executive council position. That is why we are asking you to think carefully about this process.

The other was a regional secretary. He gave up that role as a regional secretary. He may well have been an executive council member in the future, but he is not, he gave that up in order to serve this union in a different role as a national officer, and I pay huge tribute to them that they did that without the provisions that applied to previous national officers of the interest free mortgage and the protected pay arrangements and the very generous pension.

They have done all that without that, so I pay tribute to them and I would urge conference to listen very carefully and, to be honest, show some respect to them because the truth is the executive council hasn't yet considered their view. That is why the executive council is saying we are not ruling anything out.

By the way, the suggestion was made that this policy statement ends elections. It does not. What it asks is to continue the review, to report back to this conference with the options and you will make the decision. Don't fall for the suggestion that this is an attempt to be undemocratic. Conference will make the decision. I urge you to oppose the London amendments and support the executive council policy statement. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Hertfordshire right of reply. No. Cleveland right of reply.

DAVE HOWE (Cleveland):

Conference, a very simple right of reply. The financial argument should never have been brought to this debate today. This is not going to cost the union any more significant money by doing what London's amendments say or what Cleveland's resolution says. It will still be four national officers. It is not an argument about money and it is certainly not an argument about personalities. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I am now moving to the voting. Point of order?

ROSS McLAREN (London):

Do I not get a right of reply for moving the amendment? I thought we would get a right of reply.

THE PRESIDENT:

No. Not an amendment. You spoke in the debate. It is one delegate speaks in the debate once.

Right, we are now moving to the vote. I now put amendment 1 from London to the EC policy statement. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put amendment 2 moved by London to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put amendment 3 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put the EC policy statement as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Cleveland, you said you would withdraw if the London amendments passed. Are you withdrawing? *Withdrawn*.

Resolution 93 can still carry. I now put resolution 93 to the vote. If resolution 93 carries – did somebody say something? No. I am now putting that resolution 93 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls*.

Conference, can I now ask you to turn to page 9 in the programme of business. I now call resolution 62, Equality Impact Assessment, moved by Tyne and Wear. The EC supports.

Resolution 62 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

Conference recognises that EIAs are a well established and credible tool for demonstrating due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which is required by law.

These assessments and their application therefore must become core business of the Fire Brigades Union.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to add EIA training into our national trade union education programme to support those in elected roles. Education should begin as soon as is reasonably practicable and a report on progress should be delivered to Conference 2023.

TYNE AND WEAR

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

Moving resolution 62. This resolution speaks for itself so I won't take up too much of your time.

Our services have equality impact assessments to comply with their public sector equality duty. Therefore it should be included in our education programme. If our services use it, we should be Ninjas of it. Can we as soon as possible introduce this work into our education pathways. Conference, support the resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. Has that got a seconder?

MARK DRINKWATER (Leicestershire):

Seconding resolution 62. Equality impact assessments are a fundamental way to ensure that underrepresented groups are not just considered in the decisions that fire and rescue services make but they are protected from any discrimination. This training will give the skills and ability to all of our officials to scrutinise these vital EIAs and make them truly meaningful. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

It is open for debate. Anybody?

DEAN POUNDER (B&EMM):

Supporting resolution 62. We all recognise that education is vitally important for our roles as reps, officials, from the top down to grass roots. Without the education we cannot further our knowledge and skills to provide a service that is expected of us.

EIA is defined as "an equality impact assessment (EIA) is an evidence based approach designed to help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation."

I have to ask. Was an EIA carried out for conference? Why do I ask? Because the decision making processes for this conference has resulted in inequality, unfair treatment and barriers preventing full participation from conference business. I support this education programme for our selected reps, however, I support education to run and govern our union. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else? No. I will now put resolution 62 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on composite B, National Organisers School, moved by Humberside, seconded by Derbyshire.

Composite B NATIONAL ORGANISERS SCHOOL, ORGANISING EDUCATION

Conference recognises the continuous hard work being carried out with the new professional recruitment presentation, online recruitment and the introduction of 'Phoenix' the new membership system. New ballot thresholds imposed on trade unions following the implementation of The Trade Union Act 2016 have highlighted that organising has never been so important. Education goes back to the very roots of trade unionism. It is only through education that we can hope to improve the lot of the working person. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has an enviable education provision ensuring that our Officials are well prepared to work on behalf of the membership.

To ensure that our Brigade Organisers are enthused, prepared and equipped to make the best possible use of their time, Conference calls for the Executive Council to explore the viability, effectiveness and possible options for an annual organising school, education days or event where the latest and best practice can be learnt and shared. Details of this should then be shared at the earliest opportunity via the FBU structure.

HUMBERSIDE

LLOYD AKERS (Humberside):

Moving Composite B. First time caller, long time listener. *Applause*. Following the Trade Union 2016 Act we are all too aware of how restricted unions are in carrying out our mandate for our members.

From meeting with members to carrying out votes on industrial action, unions have to jump over increasingly high hurdles loading the balance of power even further in favour of the employer, pushing working conditions down and creating a race to the bottom. Creating a national organiser school would allow brigades to share knowledge, expertise and best practices with each other leading to a more engaged membership and a more powerful voice at the table.

Having recently given a new national presentation, *Safer and Stronger Together*, to new recruits, what we can offer them, and why they should join our union, what we have fought for and what members have died for in the past, the decision for them was an easy one. Now, moving into the 21st century, it is an easy one in practice.

We have all had those conversations with members on station though which shows that it is engagement moving forward after initial contact that takes the work. The national school although not necessarily leading to an increase in members would lead to a more engaged, enthused and show some more powerful membership.

As a branch rep moving forward and looking to become our brigade's organiser, I can honestly say that a school such as this would be invaluable. To be able to move into a role with the knowledge and help of every brigade behind me, would let me and others in my position hit the ground running. I move.

DAN CARTER (Derbyshire):

Seconding composite B. Conference, our members are the lifeblood of our union and without them we wouldn't exist.

As mentioned this week, the days of being able to guarantee that every firefighter and firefighter control joins the FBU on day one of their career is over. Those days are gone. We must now work and work hard to gain and keep our members. It has been shown many times within this union and other unions that the organising method is the best way to achieve this. It has been used with great success by many unions.

Organising, however, is not just about getting our members to sign on the dotted line and become a member of the Fire Brigades Union. Organising is about getting out there amongst the membership, educating our membership and agitating our membership. Organising is a large and evolving subject. Currently, the FBU has no centralised education provision for brigade organisers.

Conference, this resolution is calling for the provision of an annual school for learning events to both give our new in role organisers an initial induction, and to develop experienced organisers using the latest knowledge and shared experience. The FBU has already made great strides with our organising strategy. The work of the organising group on the Phoenix system and *Safe and Stronger Together* has laid a foundation for our organisers.

This resolution seeks to give our organisers the tools to build on that foundation. I urge you to support composite B. President, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dan. That is open for debate. Anybody?

KIMBERLEY FERGUSON (Scotland):

Thank you comrades from Humberside and Derbyshire for the contributions to this composite resolution.

As an education and learning organiser I cannot impress enough the need for education within the FBU. We need to establish a comprehensive education pathway to help our reps begin and progress with their union careers so that they are best equipped to represent our members.

Trade union education has been great with assistance over the last two years not only through the government's unacceptable withdrawal of funding for life long union learning, but like many other learning providers FBU education was prior to the review and advisory learning platforms to maintain validity to still be able to provide a required training significant to online learning.

Whilst allowing online training to be continued, it emphasised the benefits to our national skills. As my comrades have highlighted, the need for organising has never been greater. National skills provide shared learning and that success has been continually demonstrated over the years.

Scotland fully supports this resolution to enable further exploration of viable education events and recognises the valuable role that the brigade organisers play on behalf of their union and its members. Conference, please support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kim. Anybody else in the debate?

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, and thank you conference. It is now time to move past the slight awkwardness of a few minutes ago and bring joy into the hearts of conference delegates, once more into *Safer and Stronger Together*. *Applause*.

I seriously want to thank Humberside and Derbyshire for bringing this resolution together and specifically I do want to name check a couple of officials, officials that were key to developing this whole *Safer Stronger* – sorry, Lloyd, you are my personal hero by the way – strategy, a strategy that I think has really taught us the benefits of combined working because it is a strategy that has been designed by brigade organisers for brigade organisers, so a big shout out to Dan Carter, to Scott Blandford from Dorset and Wiltshire, who isn't here, to Gavin Marshall and, of course, Peter Heather and Anna Hernes who have been key to developing this strategy and this whole package that was put together.

It combines three really key elements, a high definition presentation. As I said yesterday, presentation even during the height of lockdown has seen us sweep up over 1,600 trainee firefighters and firefighters control during the height of lockdown. Just a word to our control comrades. We have had feedback that the modules that we used, we do need a control specific module and we are working on that now and I want to thank Sherri for helping us get that. That should be ready, hopefully, in the next couple of months. It is a great option for control members.

That package, of course, connects directly on to our online joining portal. You can join the Fire Brigades Union online. You don't need a pen any more, extraordinary movement in the 21st century. Of course, a membership pack has been put together with the advice of brigade organisers that comes from the internationally renowned, one stop boutique for all things fire and rescue, that is the FBU Shop – high quality merchandise at a reasonable price. *Applause*.

The most advanced membership system of its kind in the UK trade union movement, Phoenix, a system that has come in from America but has been specifically amended and altered by brigade organisers to make sure it fits exactly what the Fire Brigades Union needs. Phoenix, a fantastic package of IT, of practical documents, of the posters, but I just want to be clear these are just tools. Organising goes far, far beyond that.

We talked about the school and that is a school we are going to put together. Just a word of warning. I have had a conversation with our magnificent head of education, who you all know, Lindsey McDowell. We won't be able to fit that school in this year, but next year it will be rocking like no-one's business.

I will finish by this president. These are just tools and, do you know something, it is one of the things that I have learned when I was helping to research and put together the centenary, the Fire Brigades Union, this wonderful union has no God given right to exist. It exists because there were generations of previous comrades who were actively campaigning, working, recruiting and most of all organising in our union, and they passed this union with over 30,000 members on to us, and we have to do the same against a political background of a decade of

devastating cuts, against a background where many trainee firefighters have either not even heard of trade unions or have heard negative impact of trade unions. We have got a job of work to do but it is our job, and I hope with these tools it inspires all of you to do what you now need to do: get into the fire stations, get into the control rooms, get into the fire and rescue work places, recruit more members of the Fire Brigades Union but, most of all, support and inspire them to bring this back to where we need to be: a fighting, strong Fire Brigades Union fit for the 21st century. Thanks for bringing the resolution. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

We have come a long way. Quality merchandise, it used to be Tam's tat.

I will now put composite B to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I will now call para G2, Strategy and programme.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking under para G2, Strategy and programme. The National Joint Council's mechanisms, known as the joint secretaries, TAP and RAP, have valued resources.

The technical advisory panel, for example, has been used by numerous brigades when no agreement has been reached over a proposed duty system. Conference heard from a comrade from Cleveland on this matter. Brigade officials appreciate the help and support of national officers, executive council members and regional officials when it comes to putting together a submission to the technical advisory panel. However, in 2018 when we, brigade officials from Hereford and Worcester, formulated our submission we were very much starting from scratch. We were not the first brigade to have ever gone through that process even that year as we followed Cumbria.

Conference, we should learn from our experiences and provide current and future brigade officials with the resources they need to put them in an informed and strong position when they enter into any one of these NJC processes. We therefore ask that these processes are included in the education programme and that examples of good practice and proformas are provided to enable and guide brigade officials.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call para G3, introductory offer; para G4, health, safety and welfare education.

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Conference, Tam has just told me, I just want to pay tribute on behalf of our members to our head of education, Sister Lindsey McDowell. To those of you who don't know Lindsey, we don't realise how lucky we are to have Lindsey. *Applause*. A proper socialist, teaching proper socialists our values. It is so important, so Lindsey, thank you.

Health, safety and welfare education, please conference get as many safety reps as you can on those courses, get as many safety reps as you can going through that education pathway. As my colleague from Tyne and Wear said, let's make them Ninjas of health and safety so that we can beat those chief fire officers that are trying to undermine our health and safety with regards to BA things that we are doing. DECON is coming, DECON is moving. We need more safety reps appointed to get that DECON going through and making sure that the DECON is the future. I will use my comrade's words, they are a bit cheesy but they are true, we are going to be the DECON generation. We will save so many lives but we need safety reps to do that. Conference, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Para G5, Progression education; para G6, short course and webinar series; para G7, regional education and learning organisers; para G8, Union Learning Fund.

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Speaking on para G8. I would just like to take the opportunity to give the Tories a kick for stripping away funding for worker education. Union learning had a huge impact on many people in this room and not just us, it was our

family members as well. It was hardly surprising that they don't want to see well educated workers. The fact that they removed it is an absolute disgrace, but what I would also like to do while I am up here is take the opportunity to place on record our thanks to Mark Dunn who was instrumental in setting up and running the Union Learning Fund. *Applause.*

I am sure if he was here he would be incredibly embarrassed by that, and those of you who know him and have met him, you know, funny looking fellow with white hair, normally wandering around giggling to himself, eating biscuits, all he wanted to do was get out there and help people, so we just wanted to place this on record. Thank you conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. Section C, operations, health and safety. I will call para C1.

KATHRYN DUNCAN (NWC):

The work that has been done on the DECON project is amazing. It is brilliant. The posters are fabulous in the fire stations and people are paying attention to it.

What you may have forgotten from 2019 was a resolution that the women put in which came about from a random conversation where there were four female BAIs in a room. They all had fertility problems. So I took this back and had a discussion at our AGM and it turned out that actually every single female BAI at our AGM had reproductive health problems.

As much as I absolutely appreciate all the work that has been done, when we keep referring to the database as the cancer database and then sometimes we say cancer and other diseases database, what we are not seeing is the uptake of people putting their details in and monitoring their health over a period of time. We really need to engage with all of our membership to do so even if they have no health issues just now because this is monitoring going forward, so the women that I spoke to then they weren't even aware of this database, the cancers and other diseases database was about them. So I urge you to go back to your branches and regions and push this, not just for myself from the national women's committee. We need you urging all of our members for all of the cancers and other diseases to do that.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you for that, comrade, and for highlighting the importance of the registry. I will respond but I am going to be doing it on a resolution later on. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I will now take the following resolutions in the same debate. All resolutions can carry together. Resolution 24, Inadequate and Dangerous Crewing Levels, moved by the national retained committee (the EC give qualified support); resolution 27, Five on a Fire Engine, moved by South Wales (the EC support); Resolution 29, Opposing three person crewing, moved by Cumbria (the EC are seeking withdrawal or they oppose). I now call resolution 24, Inadequate and Dangerous Crewing Levels, moving by the National Retained Committee.

Resolution 24 INADEQUATE AND DANGEROUS CREWING LEVELS

The NRC have consistently voiced concerns regarding the dangerous practice of deploying fire appliances to incidents with insufficient crew. Pumps being sent out with less than five riders, and often with just three riders, is becoming commonplace. Added to this, the practice of dual role of the driver and OIC or the driver and BA Team Leader, has also increased alarmingly as our employers continue to neglect the recruitment and retention required to maintain Retained staffing levels on stations.

Conference is aware of the critical shortages in Retained cover across Fire and Rescue Services. The solution to this will not be achieved by the removal of safety critical crewing levels. This practice puts our Members' lives at risk and the lives of the public we serve. The only solution to the shortage of available crews on Retained stations and appliances is for our employers to recognise that investment is required.

The Fire Brigades Union has been at the forefront of the health and safety agenda and has been the only Union to successfully campaign for our Retained Members.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to compile information from all Brigade Secretaries, which will provide an up-to-date picture of how widespread these practices are.

The EC will then formulate a national strategy aimed at reversing this safety critical trend. This strategy will be published by the end of 2022.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

SEAMUS McMAHON (NRC):

The NRC have consistently voiced concerns regarding the dangerous practice of deploying fire appliances to incidents with insufficient crew. Pumps being sent out with less than five riders, and often with just three riders, is becoming commonplace. Added to this, the practice of dual role of the driver and the OIC or the driver and BA team leader, has also increased alarmingly as our employers continue to neglect the recruitment and retention required to maintain retained staffing levels on stations.

Conference is aware of the critical shortages in retained cover across fire and rescue services which was actually brought up in resolution 87 the other day from Lancashire. The solution to this will not be achieved by the removal of safety critical crewing levels. This practice puts our members' lives at risk and the lives of the public we serve. The only solution to the shortage of available crews on retained stations and appliances is for our employers to recognise that investment is required.

The Fire Brigades Union has been at the forefront of the health and safety agenda and has been the only union to successfully campaign for our retained members.

"Conference instructs the executive council (EC) to compile information from all Brigade Secretaries, which will provide an up to date picture of how widespread these practices are. The EC will then formulate a national strategy aimed at reversing this safety critical trend. This strategy will be published by the end of 2022."

On a personal note in region 2, we are not allowed to go out with three. That is the way our brigade has seen it. They have taken action to protect me and to protect the public we serve.

President, on another note, I just want to say thank you because this is my last conference. I retire after 32 years, and I would just like to thank the members. *Applause*. So for the last time, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Seamus. Secunder?

WILLIAM BURTT (Scotland):

Seconding resolution 24. Firstly, I would like conference to acknowledge the amazing commitment of our retained brothers and sisters and the role they perform in providing essential fire cover up and down the UK.

In the north of Scotland there are 11 RDS stations to every one whole time station, a total of 147 stations and that is just the north. There are and continue to be a number of unsafe practices that seem to fly under the radar for retained stations that would be challenged if ever applied to whole times, OIC drivers being the most prominent. The OIC has a very clearly defined role on route to an operational incident. However, his focus should not be split between driving under emergency response blue lights and attempting to brief the crew and gather essential information prior to arrival.

Region 1 fully support the national retained committee in their resolution and conference should ensure everything is done to correct these habits within our retained crews. In my previous role as area health and safety, following an area committee meeting in 2021 after a number of concerns raised by members, I undertook a scratch the surface investigation, the primary appliances being crewed with four personnel and dropping of second appliances to maintain crewing levels.

This was done initially as only a whole time investigation in the first instance. There are only 13 whole time stations in the north area of Scotland and over the period October 2021 and into 2022. I should also point out that not all

stations and not all watches replied with figures so this is very much a best case investigation with the caveat that the problem is probably significantly worse than the reported figures.

During the period of October to December there were 133 instances of either primary appliances riding with a crew of four or second appliances being dropped. In fact, in December not one day went back when at least one of these events occurred in the 13 stations in the north of Scotland. Every single time that puts our firefighters and our members at risk and that is unacceptable.

This led to the north area taking a motion to the region which is now being discussed with the service, and I want to read a short part from that motion:

“The Scottish regional committee is deeply concerned that fire appliances across all service delivery areas within the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service continue to be removed from operational availability where our crews are below the agreed safe crewing model due to crew shortages during this pandemic. These crewing deficiencies limit the ability of firefighters to carry out training, negatively impact public safety and delay our members from immediately implementing a proactive recognised safe system of work when resolving operational incidents. Therefore, the Scottish regional committee instructs regional officials to exhaust all internal SRF mechanisms in pursuing an immediate return to the agreed safe crewing model prior to the regional committee meeting on 14 June 2022.”

I would like to take this investigation further and explore the data from the retained stations where they are running with a crew four, where they have an OIC driver or they have an OIC BA driver team leader or where a firefighter has a ticket to ride and take the fire appliance out due to the shortage of available officers.

To that end, Scotland fully supports the national retained committee's instruction to compile information across all brigades and regions to gain an up to date picture of just how widespread these issues are. Given that region 1 has already undertaken some scratch the surface work on this with some rather damning results, region 1 strongly recommends conference supports this resolution for a full compilation of all brigade areas.

There is not and never will be an excuse or any situation where it is acceptable to put our members at unnecessary risk and conference should challenge this with every avenue at our disposal. Formulating a strategy to reverse these practices should be a key focus of this process. I and Scotland support and second resolution 24.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Will. I will now call resolution 27, Five on a Fire Engine, moved by South Wales.

Resolution 27 FIVE ON A FIRE ENGINE

Conference reaffirms its strongly held position that a fire engine should be crewed by a minimum of five firefighters (supervisory officer and four firefighters).

Conference recognises the dangerous delays in the time it takes for firefighters to carry out rescues as a crew of four and that in some circumstances firefighters, in a crew of four, will have to wait for back up before committing fire crews into a burning building.

Conference notes that throughout the Covid-19 pandemic many brigade managers and Chief Fire Officers, all too easily, took the lazy unsafe option of dropping fire engines to four when faced with crewing pressures in Services already cut to the bone by 10 years of Tory led austerity.

Conference condemns this dangerous practice that is becoming all too common place. The public we serve deserve better. Our communities deserve a fully crewed fire engine of five firefighters, ready to safely effect rescues and extinguish property fires. Our Members deserve the safety of five firefighters on a fire engine.

Conference calls out the inactivity and dereliction of duty by so called ‘public good’ organisations, such as the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Fire Standards Board, in this area.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to pursue a national standard of a minimum of five firefighters on a fire engine.

SOUTH WALES

MICHAEL ALEXANDER (South Wales):

I will start by saying we can wholeheartedly agree and echo those speeches given by our brothers from the national retained committee in Scotland. There is some really shoddy and disgraceful practices going on up there.

Simply put though, conference reaffirms its strongly held position that a fire engine should be crewed by a minimum of five firefighters, a supervisory officer and four firefighters, simple.

We are fortunate in South Wales that our service shares the position. As officials we cannot get complacent and we ensure that shared belief is upheld and we do not have to suffer a degradation in standards seen in other brigades around the country.

This degradation in standards is detrimental to both firefighter and public safety. It has, and it will, cost lives. All too often it is the FBU that is the only voice that stands up for standards in our services.

Conference recognises the dangerous delays in time it takes for firefighters to carry out rescues as a crew of four or less, unbelievably, and in some circumstances firefighters in a crew of four must wait for back up before committing crews into a burning building. This serves no purpose.

More appliances committed to an incident reduces fire cover, increases our carbon footprint and the expenditure of the service.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic many brigade managers and chief fire officers all too easily took the lazy unsafe option of dropping fire engines to four when faced with crewing pressures in services that had already been cut to the bone by ten years of the Tory-led austerity lie.

Conference condemns this dangerous practice that is becoming all too commonplace. The public deserve better, our communities deserve a fully crewed engine of five firefighters who are ready to safely effect rescues and extinguish property fires. Our members deserve the safety of five firefighters on a fire engine.

When we campaign within our services it is these points of firefighter and public safety that are undeniable and will resonate most when we invite the external lens of scrutiny to view the practices of unscrupulous service managers.

Conference calls out the inactivity and dereliction of duty by so-called public good organisations such as the national fire chiefs' cartel and the Fire Standards Board in this area. When their recommendations jeopardise firefighter and therefore public safety, we have to say no.

National standards have actually been a theme throughout conference so conference instructs the EC to pursue a national standard of a minimum of five firefighters on a fire engine. Conference I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Has that got a seconder?

GUS SPROUL (Scotland):

Seconding the resolution from South Wales. Will Burt was just discussing we had passed a motion at a regional committee that we took to the senior levels of the fire and rescue service. We submitted that to those management in the chief officer's very public absence. Will gave the first two paragraphs, but I thought it was important to tell you what the motion was asking the service to do. It said should a return to that safe agreed crewing model not be delivered by the date aforementioned the Scottish regional committee will begin a coordinated political and public campaign aimed at bringing this practice to an end up to and including the necessary action to ballot members for industrial action short of strike. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 29 Opposing Three Person Crewing, moved by Cumbria.

Resolution 29 OPPOSING THREE PERSON CREWING

Conference notes with dismay the complete disregard the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) shows towards firefighter safety in their pursuit of financial savings, as evidenced by the NFCC 'Working Patterns Project' which appears to be a bragging rights demonstration into how best to carve up safe systems of work.

Conference is also aware of the push towards three person crewing, small incident units, rapid response units or other such terms.

This highly dangerous response is putting firefighter and public safety at risk and must be opposed at all costs.

At Conference 2019 Resolution 40 'Critical Attendance Standards (CAST) Scenarios' was carried, it called for a review of the CAST scenarios along with the intervention windows and task analysis, to be shared by 2020. This doesn't appear to have been done.

Conference is aware that this practice of riding three is occurring whilst no employer risk assessment or task analysis has been completed.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to;

- assign the relevant National Officer to work to advise a brigade committee where three person crewing is being undertaken or is proposed***
- commit to explore legal action under health and safety failures in any Fire and Rescue Service where three person crewing is being undertaken or is proposed***
- publicly shame the NFCC for putting firefighters and the public at risk and prepare campaigning materials for any brigade or region where maverick Chief Officers are advocating such a response model.***

CUMBRIA

OLIVER BURROW (Cumbria):

I am here moving resolution 29 opposing three person crewing. We have been asked to withdraw our resolution to second resolution 27. We do support fully resolution 27 and we will vote for it, but the reason we will not withdraw is because three person crewing is a real and substantial threat to the FBU and its members' health and safety.

Calling for a standard level of crewing of five has the unanimous vote in this room. In our union the reality is three person crewing is here and what is to say the next step isn't two person crewing? This escalating issue comes at a huge threat to our members' health and safety and now is the time to see a nationally coordinated front from our national officers against the NFCC dissolving the standards.

What compounds this is we know of services placing more pressures on staff to respond as crews of three due to the poor response standards. It is outrageous to reiterate the urge to move this resolution nationally so again, brothers and sisters, three person crewing is here, we have seen it in our region and region 5, and unfortunately this extends further afield. As we see this extend across the UK fire and rescue services, this comes at a great risk of becoming custom and practice.

We fought this locally in Cumbria with regional support but it is now bigger than a regional issue. Conference, let's not bury our heads in the sand. Let us accept that this is a big issue. Let us deal with it and fight for our future. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Oliver. Does that have a seconder?

STEVE WISWELL (Greater Manchester):

Seconding Cumbria's resolution 29, opposing three person crewing. Conference, President, we second Cumbria's resolution. Three person crewing is an alien concept to us in Greater Manchester. Our members regularly challenge us when appliances are dropped to four. We in Greater Manchester are genuinely baffled and upset how – and it seems to have happened a long time ago – any fire appliances have ever been allowed to ride out with three firefighters.

We actually believe the resolution should go further and that our union redraws the red lines and ensures by whatever means necessary that no fire appliance ever goes out the doors ever again with just three firefighters on it. But for now we are happy to second Cumbria's resolution. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. That's open for debate. Anybody?

SEAN PICKLES (NRC):

Fully support Cumbria's resolution. I have sat on the National Retained Committee and national health and safety committees where the riding of threes has been brought to the table previously.

Nationally, we have had instances of near misses reported where there have only been three people on a pump. There are reports of fire services training their firefighters to ride threes and then pulling it due to safety concerns. I urge the EC to carry the Cumbria resolution through. I also urge branches, regions and the national health and safety committee to come together once and for all to put a stop to this ridiculous breach of health and safety and what is more, complete disregard for our firefighters' safety. Conference, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, do you agree to suspend standing order 16 to get this debate out of the way? *Agreed.*

CALLUM HODGKIN (Cambridgeshire):

Speaking in support of Cumbria's resolution. Riding with crews of three is something that affects us in Cambridgeshire. We do it in a very limited capacity at the minute but it is being looked at as a viable crewing system going forward for the retained.

My role as a retained firefighter is very different to my role as a whole time firefighter. I undertake it in a community that I have grown up in for 27 years and with that I respond with a variety of people, some of which are my closest friends, and I also respond to those same people as well, some of my closest friends and family.

Crew of three just seeks to undermine everything and the safety of everyone involved, the public and the firefighters themselves. There are national safe systems of work for crews of five. There are also reduced safe systems of work for crews of four. There is nothing on the table anywhere for crews of three. Brigades just make it up. Each brigade will do something similar.

When the public dial 999 they expect a fire engine, but they don't potentially know how many people should be on that fire engine. They just expect us to turn up and do a job. But shipping a crew of three to an incident puts abnormal pressures on those crews and especially the OIC. We have been told in Cambridgeshire that we can effect a rescue with a crew of three which is baffling because you are now telling me that the OIC can be an OIC, a driver, a pump operator, entry control and everything else while two people don BA and go into the building. That to me is completely mental and should not be allowed to happen.

The problem is people will die and this will cost lives of firefighters and members of the public, and it is not acceptable and needs to be challenged nationally and in the regions as well.

As a firefighter on a close knit retained station I am not going to sit back and allow my chief to put my friends in that position whether that is as a crew or as the people I am responding to. It is outrageous, it is dangerous and needs to be fought with everything we have got. It is purely done for the sake of penny pinching, ticking boxes and a big pat on the back with the rest of society's charity when they turn up to their little meetings.

Conference, I urge you to support this resolution. Let's fight it.

KEVIN DRIVER (Suffolk):

Supporting resolution 29. Conference, in Suffolk we already have crews of three. We had them imposed on us by our previous chief fire officer. We ran a campaign against the imposition of this unsafe and dangerous practice that puts our members at unnecessary increased risk, and the general secretary actually came and spoke at our rally.

Conference, we know we have safe systems of work and we have them for a reason. All our training is based on crews on five. There is no training for crews of three. It is unsafe practice. There are no suitable sufficient and robust risk assessments for this unsafe practice of crews of three and there is also little consideration given to the undue and overwhelming moral pressure which is put on our firefighters attending incidents as crews of three.

For these reasons and many others we lodged a critical notice with the Health and Safety Executive and our chief fire officer at the time who imposed this unsafe practice on us and who wilfully undermined the health and safety of our comrades in Suffolk was Mark Hardingham. As you may well know, Mark Hardingham is now the chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council. Mark got his appointment to the NFCC lead on the back of reducing the number of fire engines in Suffolk, reducing the budget of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, and more importantly reducing the health and safety of our comrades in Suffolk.

If any fire and rescue services are looking to impose crews of three and they want any of our information or any of our resources we sent to the HSE, then please contact me. I must admit it does stick in my throat a little bit and annoy me that we are having to talk about the NFCC at our national conference, but we must recognise and oppose all of their dangerous impositions on us. For this reason I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I have just been informed that the EC's position is changing to qualified support. They didn't oppose the actual content of the resolution, which Riccardo will cover in his response. Obviously, the change of position is qualified support.

ANDY MURRAY (Durham):

I just want to speak in support of resolution 27 five on a fire engine. In Durham we have a lot of fire engines out there but because of the cuts we are riding four and our retained uptake is dwindling and the amount of time you have got to wait for another fire engine to come to an incident due to travel distances. It just increases every time that we go out.

Beyond that we also need to look at the experience of those members who are riding on the fire engines because we are also riding with two development firefighters in the back with a crew of four, so we need to make sure that as we go forward we are not undermining the safety of our crews and of the public. I support 27. Thank you.

TIM LLOYD (North Wales):

Just quickly, we want to support all three resolutions that have been brought forward this morning as an RDS predominant service. There is a cross over from all three of those that has been presented this morning. In North Wales we have to have a very clear and blatant dual standard: whole time teams cannot respond with a crew of fewer than five but RDS crews always respond with four and virtually never have five.

How can we even accept that? We know that it is unsafe to turn out with four which is why whole time pumps are not allowed to respond with four. So I think, coming back to what our NRC colleagues have asked for, we should be embarrassing chief fire officers. I feel we should be naming and shaming those chief fire officers who allow pumps to turn out with three. It is disgusting. It should not happen and they are putting their own staff at risk.

As the FBU we have concerns about our members but everybody. We are being put at risk. We should name and shame those people. And actually talking about the HSE, riding with three should be reportable. It is not safe. That is how serious it is and we should consider talking to the H&SE and raising our concerns at that level because that is how important it is, that is how strongly I feel about it and we support all three of those resolutions, so thanks guys for raising them.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thanks president, thanks conference. Apologies but I don't think I am going to be offering quite as much joy as brother McFarlane did. In fact, I am going to be pretty angry throughout the whole thing as I am sure you are, conference.

The issue we are talking about now, and let's call it what it is, it is a disgrace. It is a complete disregard to our safety, to our profession, our professional role and the safety of the public that we respond to. The executive council welcomes the fact that these resolutions are here, the fact that we are discussing it and the fact that this is obviously a big issue back in your regions and brigades.

I was speaking to one of our Italian comrades earlier and telling him about what motions are coming up, and when I told him about this you should have seen his face. Professionals know that this is a disgrace and they are shocked to hear that we are even having to discuss it.

It is the result of cuts that we pay for, we pay for with our safety. I was at the LGA a few weeks back with the general secretary. You had chief after chief coming weeping into the rostrum about how they haven't got enough firefighters to deliver, they haven't got enough fire inspectors. Not one of them mentioned it was them at that same rostrum the year before, the year before that, the year before that and the years ahead saying that we were over resourced and we were underworked and they could happily cut firefighter numbers to deliver the cuts of their masters. We were the only voice opposing this. We have discussed it before at conference, and as I say, I am glad we are discussing it now.

With regard to the qualification and changing to qualified support: it is on the issue of the national officer being assigned. This, in the first instance, is for brigade committees and regional committees but I absolutely assure you that you will get our support as we have done already. I had it myself as a regional secretary in the very campaign that Kevin was talking about, the rescue Suffolk fire. Head office gave us resources, the general secretary attended, the AGS attended, they put out videos for us, they brought the fire engine and they assisted us with everything through that. So I can assure you on that qualification we will give that support as we have done before.

The comrade was talking about naming and shaming. I will name and shame now as Kevin did: Mark Hardingham, the chair of the NFCC pushed this. A comrade said will we see two next. We saw two via Mark Hardingham in Suffolk. Comrades, if we want to look at how seriously they take our profession, when they reduce crews to two in Suffolk at a station, they couldn't even fulfil their own banks person. They didn't put enough firefighters on a fire engine to be able to reverse it, let alone put out a fire, an absolute disregard to our profession and our safety.

Comrades, how did we stop that there? Our member refused to do it. He didn't feel safe, he didn't ride when there was only a crew of two. That has got to be at the heart of this. We will do our bit. We need to give members confidence. We need to organise, we need to discuss this and that is where it comes down to the brigade committees, the regional committees and the branches. We absolutely have to take this on. We will. It is safety critical. On them qualifying points, conference, we support.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 24 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I will now put resolution 27 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I will now put resolution 29 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference that concludes the business for this morning. I will remind you all that there is a Stop the War fringe at lunchtime in the Charlotte Room. We are back in here for speakers so I do need you back in at 2 o'clock please. Thank you.

Adjourned for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks conference. I now call on Phil Millar, chair of the standing orders committee to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Good afternoon conference. Can you turn to your delegates List please? If you can go to region 3, Durham, third delegate Guy Tiffin, delete. I don't expect there to be any comment about this whatsoever but that is a standing orders typo. He is not actually in that delegation. Region 4, South Yorkshire, remove Stu Smith and replace with Matt Nicholls; region 6, remove Mark Drinkwater and replace with Casey Legalle; region 7, remove Simon Morris and replace with Tariq Hussain; region 10, remove Jon Lambe and replace with Chris Cheeseman; region 13, delete Stuart Pullen, no replacement.

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Point of order. You have removed Guy Tiffin from Durham's delegation but you also need to insert him into Northumberland as Guy Tiffin still is a delegate for region 3. *Pause*. Apologies, conference, apologies, chair, I will withdraw. *Applause*.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, conference. Can you turn to your programme of business please? That is the first time anybody has cheered for standing orders winning something! If you go to page 3 between the last rule change and just before section L, internal administration, can you please insert the emergency rule changes, and they are G2(1)(i) and rule G3(1)(i).

There are a number of consequential rule changes that arise from the emergency rule changes and these have been circulated. If the emergency rule changes are agreed then the consequential rule changes will also carry.

Can you go to page 13 of your programme of business? After emergency rule 4, insert emergency resolution 5.

Conference, in order to expedite the business of conference, the standing orders committee ask you to agree to partially suspend standing orders 20 and 22 in relation to speakers' times. Proposed speakers on paragraphs will be limited to two minutes. The mover of a resolution will be limited to five minutes. The seconder will be three minutes and other speakers will be limited to two minutes.

Tomorrow morning please check out of the hotel before you come to the conference hall at 0930. Take your baggage to the concierge and they will store it in the Consort Room and it can be collected from there at the close of business or whenever you are leaving. President that concludes the standing orders report.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you.

We now move to page 3 of the programme of business and I will be taking the two emergency rule changes together and I will call the general secretary to move emergency rule change 1, rule G2(1)(i) on behalf of the executive council and also emergency rule change 2 rule G3(1)(i) moved by the executive council.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. Conference, apologies for bringing an emergency or special rule change to you. It arises out of some events and considerations the executive council has had to take over the past few days.

We told you that the rules are competent but we found a point on which they are not competent, and it relates to the disciplinary rules which are covered in rules G1, G2 and G3. What the executive council identified was a contradiction between rule G2(1) and the rule which immediately follows it which is rule G2(2) and it relates to the position of the national chair and secretary of the six sectional committees.

The resolution that the executive council has identified and recommends to conference is that the position in relation to the national secretary and chair of the six sectional committees, that since they are accountable to and report to the executive council, disciplinary matters relating to them should be moved to rule G3 which covers the executive council, full time officials and, if you agree this, the national sectional officials. The rule changes proposed would resolve an anomaly in the existing rules and clarify the position for the national secretary and chair of each of the six sectional committees.

On that basis, president, I move the two rule changes and the consequential rule changes.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does emergency rule change 1, rule G2(1)(i) have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. Emergency rule change 2, rule G3(1)(i), does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. That is now open for debate.

BRIAN FLANAGAN (London):

Executive council, I would like to ask on what grounds and circumstances these rule changes are being tabled as emergency. Can you show conference where standing orders allows this? After a look at the list, all I was able to see in section 4 is that all amendments to the rules must be submitted to conference within 14 days which these haven't, and in section 8 that emergency resolutions are permitted but no mention of emergency rule amendments. Is there something being withheld from conference by the EC that is enabling such a clear contravention of standing orders?

As stated by yourselves on the first day, the rule book is a legal document and standing orders are there for a reason and both should be respected, and it is for this reason we oppose these rule changes.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Brian. However, you are too late. You should have challenged the standing orders report on the issue of why is it of an emergency nature. You have agreed the standing orders report so that is it. OK, anybody else wishing to speak in the debate?

DANIEL GIBLIN (Greater Manchester):

Talking in opposition to the rule change. Same point. It should have been a point of order but we are back to that same position again here, conference. I don't know what the background to this is. I don't think half of us know what the background is. I don't know where in standing orders there are emergency rule changes. It is all a bit bizarre, and again we are coming back to that word again 'democracy'.

We have had rule changes ruled out by standing orders, we have had emergency resolutions that were cut a little bit there and ruled out of order for not being of an emergency nature. Conference needs to know the devil in the detail about this to understand where this rule change is coming, because if you don't understand it – and like we said before, there has been confusion on a number of issues this week – how can you vote on something you don't understand? I will tell you what, we have had a chat round our regional delegation and I am not sure any of us understand why suddenly there has been an emergency rule change banged in at conference. If something has gone on, we need to know the details of it so we can actually have a proper debate and thought and conversation between our delegations on whether we support this or not.

I can speak first and say it is related to internal union discipline. I know exactly what that is like. It is a horrendous time. I would never come here and oppose anything that I thought could make things better for that situation because when you have been through it, it is one of the worst times I have ever had in my career. But I will tell you now, I don't even understand what this is about. If we can get the clarity on that, may be it can be explained properly and we can make a proper decision on it. We oppose.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Daniel. Obviously, by the very nature it is under rule G3 so it does involve internal union discipline so we have to be very careful with our language and because there is still a live IUD potentially ongoing with that. I will bring the general secretary in.

KATHRYN DUNCAN (NWC):

Conference, president. I have spoken to the other sectional secretaries in equality sections and just so you know what this does – and we talk about democracy – it means that an EC member who is regionally elected does not have the power or the authority over a nationally elected official to suspend him. So I don't think anybody in this room would agree that a regionally elected official from region 1 could suspend a nationally elected official. I speak in support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kathryn. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

There is no great mystery at all and it is not the only time the executive council has brought emergency rule changes to conference. Clearly because it relates to discipline it arises out of a disciplinary matter, and if you read the rule book as it is currently written there is a contradiction between rule G2(1) and G2(2) in that in G2(2) the powers of the executive council covers officials holding office within the region. The sectional officials may also hold office within a region but they do not hold office within a region.

So this is about actually in terms of democracy protecting the rights of the individual – it actually benefits individuals – to ensure that they are covered correctly by the rules. It follows us taking legal advice on the matter, that interpretation that I have explained if someone does not hold office within a region a sectional official could not be covered by rule G2(2), so it tidies up that anomaly. As I say, there is no great mystery. It clarifies the position for the two national officials of each of the six sections and clarifies that if subject to disciplinary matters enquiry would be required to be carried out by the vice president as with other rule G3 enquiries.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, I am now going to put emergency rule change 1, rule G2(1)(i) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. A card vote has been called. Has a card vote been called? Did somebody call a card vote?

DANIEL GIBLIN (Greater Manchester):

President, a card vote was called. The rule book is clear. A card vote is called. Conference is notified. The bell rings. It is a card vote. If it has been withdrawn, then we will call it but give us the option to do it.

THE PRESIDENT:

A card vote has been called. Could all tellers and scrutineers come to the front please? *Card Vote*.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Conference, just for clarity, the sections will not be voting in this card vote. Can those who are voting for please bring their cards up and put them in the box.

THE PRESIDENT:

Just for clarity, this is for those voting in favour of the rule change.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, conference. Can I ask those voting against the rule change now to come up and put their card in the box.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right conference. I now cannot proceed to the second vote on the rule change until we know the result of the first vote. So I am going to propose that we proceed on with business and as soon as we get the result of the card vote in, we will return back to rule change.

We are now coming on to some solidarity presentations. We have got some guest speakers here and I am going to hand over to the vice president, and me and the general secretary are moving.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I call you to order for a special award session. I am taking the chair for this session as the president and general secretary now prepare to undertake a presentation. The genesis of this session began in December 2019 when the executive council agreed a proposal to introduce a special solidarity award within the Fire Brigades Union which will be undertaken on an ongoing basis.

Against the background of chief fire officers and FRS politicians receiving establishment medals and awards for introducing cuts, the executive council believed it was time for the voices of FBU members to be heard and for a set of democratic trade union awards to be introduced. In stark contrast to the establishment, these awards will be based on solidarity, democracy and integrity and all FBU members and branches would have the opportunity to nominate potential recipients.

Although initially halted by the pandemic, now that restrictions are lifted, the executive council are working towards launching the awards more widely and have been working with regions who were first involved in the initiative. However, we felt it important that the first of these awards were made here, at the parliament of our union, in front of delegates representing all FBU members from across the UK. It is hoped that in doing so interest in the awards will become mainstreamed across the union.

Called the Solidarity Medal, the awards will be made on behalf of all FBU members and although inclusive of serving and retired FBU members, the criteria for this award also include persons or groups outside of our structures. The criteria are clear: to recognise or dispense solidarity or specific acts of solidarity on behalf of members of the FBU which are clearly of exceptional merit.

Conference, the first two recipients of the Solidarity Medal meet and demonstrate these criteria in abundance. It is fitting that the very first award goes to an FBU member and a currently serving Nottinghamshire operational firefighter who has inspired us with his life saving actions of refugees in the Mediterranean and his tireless campaigning for solidarity and compassion on behalf of those fleeing war and persecution. For several years brother Brendan Woodhouse has utilised his fire and rescue skills as a water rescue volunteer, mobilising to save the lives of people who find themselves in mortal danger whilst fleeing war and/or persecution in small boats across the Mediterranean.

Whilst saving the lives of many people in the most dangerous of circumstances, Brendan has also witnessed many tragedies and has used his experiences to bring home the terrible realities of the so-called refugee crisis. He mobilises people to that campaign politically demanding safe passage and humane treatment for refugees from governments across the world. This campaign has included speaking at our fringe meetings, at our conference, where his impact has inspired many FBU members and officials to action.

Comrades, for life saving actions in the Mediterranean and exceptional campaigning work to raise awareness of the migrant crisis, the very first FBU Solidarity Medal is awarded to brother Brendan Woodhouse. *Applause.*

Brendan, if you would go to the podium to say a few words.

BRENDAN WOODHOUSE:

I am really not used to this kind of attention. I feel awkward about it as well. Everybody in this room does amazing things on behalf of our members and beyond. But here I am and the FBU want to recognise the work I have done, and I will talk a little bit about that.

I have been to Calais and back, 15-20 times, taking donations and stuff. I have done a lot of kind of campaigning but I have also done 10 missions mainly in the central Mediterranean and also in Greece and have been part of the rescue of over 8,000 people. I have also seen hundreds die. It has been brutal.

The FBU has always backed me though. In 2019 when the Italian authorities wanted to criminalise the rescue workers, they wrote to the foreign secretary to demand my release. I really appreciate that and I really recognise that as well.

I want to use this opportunity now to invite you to a fringe meeting later on. I think it starts at 5.45. When I am there I am going to talk about a shipwreck that I attended just a few weeks ago where not everybody made it, and we will talk specifically about a boy called Samuel. He is one of the ones that died. His name is added to the growing number of people who have been killed on that border – 24,000 people have died out there, and it is not by accident. It is orchestrated by government, by this government included. When I first started doing this in 2015 we had rescue boats out there, we had naval boats, we had coastguard boats.

In 2017 they had changed the policy and took those boats away. 24,000 people have died. The Mediterranean has become the deadliest border on the planet. Not some border miles away, not something that happens in some continent on the other side of the world, our border. It is the deadliest border in the world and we have made it happen. Politicians in this country have made it happen. They have decided also to fund the Libyan coastguard that is also in cahoots with the smugglers. They get paid three times. They get paid once when the refugee pays for their journey. They get paid the second time when Europe pays them to return them to hell. How immoral is that? And then they get paid a third time when those people that are captured are then taken into torture camps where they are tortured in video calls to their families back home, demanding ransoms.

I have written a little poem and I am going to read it to you now. This will challenge people with white fragility issues. It is designed to do that. I make no apologies.

If they were white, if they were white, if they were white there would be no need for these speeches, no deaths on our beaches, no sucking leaches, no idiot preachers, spitting words that aren't true like they come from a zoo, like they've escaped and they're dangerous, they'd be such a change in us; we'd see it with clarity if only we lived in a world with race parity; if they were white there would be no need for rescue, they'd just get on a plane like they come from Ukraine, we wouldn't just allow them to drown in the sea if they looked like me, we'd open the gates to the walls that we've built, and we'd see it's a sin to do anything other than just let them in; if they were white there would be no deals with Rwanda, Priti Patel would see it just like Uganda with Idi Amin, we'd just let them in, there'd be no deportations to far away nations, there'd be no wave machines but it has become so routine to treat pricing people so incredibly mean; every time without fail that the prime minister fails, you will see it splashed on the front of the Mail "Look, a refugee boat has set sail"; if they were white, if they were white they'd still be alive, Samuel who I'll talk about tonight, he'd still be alive if he was white; if they were white, can you imagine that all of a sudden the papers went silent and nothing was said; do you think that they'd ever mention the dead? Can you imagine if those faces were pale, what would they say in that rag Daily Mail? Do you think they would print words like cockroaches or may be there'd be buses and coaches, if they were white, if they were white; if they were white there'd be no need for the drownings, no Daily Mail frowning's, we'd build bridges not walls, and the names that they are called, all would fall, there'd be none at all; there'd be boats and planes to whisk them away to a place where they're safe and people would meet them, wholeheartedly greet them, if they were white; if they were white they'd be allowed to work, no-one would smirk saying that they're here for a massive fake benefit system, that just isn't true but it's sticking like glue because it is repeated over and over and over again, every one of them has a name but we've allowed their names to be numbers and the numbers are high and 24,000 people have died, 24,000 mothers have cried, say it out loud for those that never survive, if they were white.

Conference, thank you. *Applause.*

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, conference. The second recipient is from outside of our union and our service but has been an inspirational leader of our movement. Today we present a solidarity medal to someone who has been a friend of ours, of firefighters for decades. When it was unfashionable to stand on picket lines as a Labour MP, this person stood on them. When it was important to raise the issues faced by firefighters in parliament, it was often this individual that would do so. John McDonnell is a long standing friend and comrade of our union. He was a founder member of the Fire Brigades Union Parliamentary Group and pioneered this approach with the FBU and with other unions, allowing us and others to systematically raise workers' issues in parliament. He was, under Jeremy Corbyn, appointed shadow chancellor and he introduced policies aimed at turning the tide of anti-worker economic policies, for public ownership of utilities and an end to privatisation. Conference, we are proud to present this Solidarity Medal to our comrade, John McDonnell MP. *Applause.*

JOHN McDONNELL MP:

Do you want me to announce the ballot result? What I like about the FBU conference is it is always healthy to overturn the executive every now and again, isn't it?

It is a privilege to be mentioned in the same breath as the previous person who has got the award, and I want to just say thanks to him for what he does, the heroic work that he has done amongst refugees, not just the physical work in terms of ensuring their safety but challenging the appalling politics of this country and the way that they treat asylum seekers. I just want to say to him this union will always say, and I always say on their behalf, asylum seekers are welcome here and they always will be. *Applause.*

Brendan, you have left your phone up here as well. I am just ordering a cab, hang on a second!

I just can't tell you how honoured and how grateful I am to receive this medal. I will cherish this medal and I will cherish this moment throughout the rest of my life. The union and its members I have been proud to serve for the last 25 years in parliament and especially, as has been said, all those years I helped to found the parliamentary group.

I want to say thanks to people. I want to say thanks and pay tribute to the officials and the staff of the FBU who week in, week out have provided us with the briefings, the raw materials, that we have used in parliament. I just want to thank them and on your behalf. They have worked so hard. So thanks for all you have done, all the staff who have worked so well with us.

It means that with their support when we speak in parliament or in meetings with government ministers or civil servants, we are better armed than any government minister with knowing what is happening on the ground, the reality of the fire service and the issues our members face. Also we know as a result of the century-old experience of this union, the solutions to the problems of the fire service and where we go from here. So I want to say thank you all for that.

Over the years I have worked with you on a number of big campaigns of political issues on pay and pensions and terms of employment and we have taken on Tory ministers and, yes, labour ministers as well as a union to ensure that we secure advance for our members.

I go through it: the Pitt Review into floods in 2007; the threat of regional fire control centres – whatever happened to them; the proposals to put you under the control of police and crime commissioners (some of whom got arrested, but never mind, that is another story). And I remember the Lakanal House fire as well, and of course I remember at conference at some time ago when we had the debate over Grenfell and we had the victims here, but also we had representatives of our members who were taking those telephone calls that night when people were dying.

I always said, and I promised this union, that I would be with you in parliament and on the picket lines. That is my job. That is the job of any Labour MP. I have also been with you when we have experienced tragedy, when our members have lost their lives or been injured and bravely tried to save other lives. I have also been there when the bereaved families of our members who have lost loved ones and they have courageously gone on to lobby government for greater investment in safety to prevent other families going through the same experience as them.

This union is a family; it is my family, and I am immensely proud to be part of it. We founded the FBU Parliamentary Group because we recognised we had to take our industrial struggles into parliament because so many of the issues that our members faced needed political solutions. They needed legislative change. To strengthen our political influence, the union took the decision to re-affiliate to the Labour Party, and I will be frank, I was pleased you did because it strengthened our role as a parliamentary group. It also enabled us to draft directly not only Labour's policies on the future of the fire service but also the trade union employment rights programme that we endorsed. That was under Jeremy and myself.

OK, times have changed. Times have changed with the change in the leadership of the Labour Party. So it is right, and you are doing this, that we take stock and we discuss where we go from here, and I know later in the

conference you will have the debate about the motion to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. But I just say this. The overriding priority of this union is always what is best for our members and our community. I have to be honest with you, my view is that you have the power as a Labour affiliate, institutional power that you should not give up easily.

I gather from the motion that you are not particularly enamoured by Keir Starmer. *Applause*. Let me just say this. With the disgraceful treatment of my friend and comrade, Jeremy Corbyn, I am not particularly ecstatic with him either to be frank. *Applause*. And as a born scouser (and a Liverpool supporter – I said that in Liverpool last weekend, it was murderous. I tell you, there were so many blues, anyway another story) I was bloody furious when I saw that Keir Starmer had written for that gutter rag *The Sun*. *Applause*.

But times change and we will have to see what our comrades in the Durham Police Constabulary have to say about the future! Let me just say this. The Labour Party is not about one man or one person no matter high the office is that they hold. We are a movement and within that movement there will always be the ebb and flow of politics. At different times, different tendencies and different ideas will come to the fore and dominate, but things change. If Jeremy Corbyn proved anything else, change can improve and move and happen rapidly. During Jeremy's period as leader this union secured a manifesto pledge that Labour would recruit 5,000 more firefighters. Your reps negotiated that commitment from Labour, and remember it was against the Tory cut of 11,000 of our members.

As a Labour affiliate you have the power to secure the adherence to and implementation of those commitments, the power to vote at conference, the power to change policies and yes, if necessary, the power to elect a new Labour leader. I know you have had Sarah Jones speak to you yesterday, and I think she will make an excellent fire minister in the next government. She served loyally under Jeremy Corbyn as she is now. You know that working with her on the Building Safety Bill, the Fire Safety Act and other issues, she will always have your backs and make sure you have full access.

So let me just say this. For all the complaints I have, for all the anger I feel at what has been happening in this recent period, nevertheless we may have next a Labour government, and that Labour government as a result of the negotiations that you undertook remains committed. Let me go through it: giving workers full employment rights from day one on the job, a policy from this union, repealing the Trade Union Act, a policy from this union, we supported RMT in bringing rail back into public ownership and developing the Green New Deal. I want to work with you in the coming years to build on those commitments.

Those were not policies before 2015, but they are policies now as a result of the work that this union did as an affiliate, and that is because trade unionists, activists and socialist MPs have organised for those policies and they have proved time and again that they are popular.

I just say the more we walk away, the more we leave the path clear to others who want to rip up those commitments. I am not walking away and I just say this to you, neither should you. I also want to say look, I sing as often as I can *you will never walk alone* at Anfield, so I want to tell you this. For years ahead I will be walking alongside you whatever you decide because that is the strength of our movement. It is a strength that comes from solidarity, solidarity brothers and sisters. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Wow! I don't think anybody would disagree that there are not two more worthy recipients of our first two solidarity medals than Brendan and John, and we thank them for all that they do for the FBU and for people of this country and abroad. OK, card vote. Are we ready for that? We will now announce the results of the card vote. Ian.

IAN HIBBERT (Chief Scrutineer):

President, conference, the result of the card vote on emergency rule change G2(1)(i): Yes vote, 18,626; No vote, 13,214. That *carries*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. We now put emergency rule change 2, rule G3(1)(i) to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, can I now ask you to turn to page 10 in the programme of business. I now call para 6, DECON project. I now call resolution 25, Hazards to firefighters' health from exposure to PFAS and PFA substances and PFO chemicals, moved by West Yorkshire. The EC give qualified support and I am looking forward to actually how you pronounce these. Martyn.

Resolution 25 HAZARDS TO FIREFIGHTERS HEALTH FROM EXPOSURE TO PERFLUOROALKYL AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS) AND PERLUOROOCCTANOIC ACID (PFOA) CHEMICALS

Conference commends the work and action carried out under the DECON campaign.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to expand this campaign to include action based on the research studies and reports that have been carried out internationally on PFAS and PFOAs that have been proven to be hazardous to health.

WEST YORKSHIRE

MARTYN BAIRSTOW: (West Yorkshire):

Conference, for this resolution I would like to start by thanking and commending the DECON campaign. It has been truly enlightening to witness how there has been such a cultural change in the fire service in the last few years with the DECON campaign. Every station in West Yorkshire on every wall and every door there is one of our DECON posters. It has been truly fantastic, so thank you.

Also for this I would like to do a few thanks and thank London for their help with the information I have gathered for a lot of this as well. Thank you, London.

We want to see that campaign expanded to include research into these toxic PFOAs and PFAs that are still in use in our foam capabilities and also, worryingly, our fire kit too.

This resolution came about because of a branch which has that foam capability. Now they noticed they were all coughing on station a lot more so it prompted them to think what's going here. So they did the research into this. They came to us and we obviously took this regionally and locally and tried to tackle it, but they were so passionate about it that they wanted us to bring it nationally to conference, so here I am. They are worried about the harm to other firefighters and also the links to many cancers.

Only last week, conference, in fact it was last Wednesday, it was a regional meeting and I had to leave to attend a funeral of my old pal, brother Steve Mitchell, who sadly passed away due to cancer at 56. I was standing there in the funeral at the back and what hit me most was seeing his little grandson who was 10 years old and seeing the impact it had on him.

What I will say is that all the stories about his special relationship with his grandson is what was important to me at that point, and what is important to this resolution is what I want to see is for conference I really urge you to support this resolution, these horrible toxic chemicals and contaminants that are killing us early. Your support on this would not only help us but would also help our children, grandchildren, like Steve's grandson, to spend a bit more time with us. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martyn, does that have a seconder?

BARRY JACKSON (London):

I am a first time speaker. *Applause.* You might not be applauding me afterwards, especially taking on a subject like this – polyfluoroalkyl substances, there you go.

What are PFAS. Basically a lot of guys, people in this room, I have engaged, and they have not a clue what this is. This is your enemy my friends. This is your true enemy. I will explain why. It is a synthetic manufactured chain of chemicals produced by industry that persists in the body and in the environment.

Where is it? Where it is in your cookware in Teflon. It is in your masks for Covid. As Matt said there, it is in your fire gear and it is in your foam and it is in you big time, and it will be big time because of your constant exposure to it.

What happened in Australia just before 2015, they tested for PFAS in their blood and those high indicators basically forced change, and the change was they realised their foam was contaminated, this legacy foam, anything containing the word fluoro in your foam is an indication of PFAS or in anything fluoro, that word, C6 C8 foam, it is all bad.

So they got their foam changed to non-fluorinated in 2015. So we are behind the times here. 2017 was the last of the stations to change. The good news is they have actually worked out how to get the PFAS out of the system and they have done that through blood transfusions and that has been, I think, in the last month or two. So they have done it, they have identified it and they have got rid of it.

In London we are now testing for non-fluorinated foam and the results are staggering. It will change the way you firefight. You can use these products. The thing is now this isn't a choice for your fire and rescue services. Go to them, put it at the top of your health and safety agendas, I would recommend, because in a few years' time you cannot use this foam, you cannot buy this foam and you cannot store this foam. So it is really highly important that you think about this, and I am quite happy to talk to anybody about this. I have got a little bit of knowledge. I work in a contaminants working group in London and, like I said, this isn't a choice. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate.

TRISTAN ORR-BERWICK (Surrey):

If anyone is still struggling with how nasty this product is and what has gone on behind it, go and watch a film called *Dark Waters*. An environmental lawyer took on Dupont and you will see what those communities and industries suffered through things like this. Surrey second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else. Riccardo is going to respond to all of the resolutions at the end. OK. I now put resolution 25 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 26, DECON, moved by Oxfordshire. The EC support.

Resolution 26 DECON

Conference commends the progressive work undertaken by Professor Anna Stec, the University of Central Lancashire and the Fire Brigades Union to identify and mitigate firefighter exposure to cancer causing carcinogens.

Conference also acknowledges the absence of decontamination within National Operational Guidance (NOG).

This lack of inclusion falls short of protecting firefighters from exposure by not recognising it formally within national guidance documents.

NOG must include DECON principles to effect positive and necessary cultural change on the fireground enabling all firefighters to decontaminate and remove carcinogens effectively throughout the process of an incident.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to ensure that the principles of DECON, where relevant, are integrated into NOG at a national level.

OXFORDSHIRE

LEE NEWPORT (Oxfordshire):

Conference, I speak to you today in light of the fantastic work undertaken by Professor Anna Stec and the University of Central Lancashire, work that has tied clear and scientific evidence through sampling and testing to the undeniable increase in the likelihood that firefighters face of getting cancer.

Year on year we see amendments to service policies on national operational guidance to address the ever changing risk profiles amongst our communities. The building crisis is an example of such amendments, and I express solidarity with those brigades who speak out against the degradation of their safe working practices in a misconceived attempt to address the national building safety crisis.

Conference, why is it that it is so easy to relax the provisions that are there to protect us in order to promote the inadequacies of others? This resolution calls on all amendments to national operational guidance to include wherever appropriate DECON principles.

Firefighters should be certain that health and safety is given the fullest consideration in every aspect at operational incidents. By including the DECON principles and the eleven steps within national operational procedures, firefighters can be certain that as a consequence operational procedures will include measures to mitigate exposure to cancer-causing contaminants at all operational incidents.

The inclusion of DECON principles within the national operational guidance ensures a cultural change in the way that we as firefighters recognise and address cancer-causing carcinogens. This needs to change culturally from the top down as well as from the bottom up.

This speech was written two weeks ago, but the powerful resolution delivered yesterday by brother Lee Hunter, Merseyside, moved me to add the following. Each and every one of us in this room will know a comrade who has been diagnosed with cancer.

On 1 July 2010, following 27 years of service, two years of battling a rare form of oesophageal cancer and nine days prior to retirement, we lost a comrade, a brother, brigade health and safety rep and a friend. The consultant oncologist attributed the work he had done as an operational firefighter as a highly likely contributing factor to the illness and his subsequent death. The pain and heartache felt by his family, friends and colleagues was at times unbearable.

Conference, I urge you to support this resolution so we can help reduce the number of families and comrades who will receive this devastating news in the future. Hopefully I can return home at the weekend, look his wife in the eye, my mother, and tell her that the fire brigades conference has supported this resolution. The comrade I have just told you about was my father. *Applause.*

I am not unique. This is an experience I also share with a friend, a former colleague and my EC member. Our dads worked together. Both gone too soon.

Conference, DECON can and will save lives through cultural change and inclusion of DECON falling within national operational guidance can only make that change more effective. Support this resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Lee. Does that have a seconder?

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

I was asked by my comrade to support this resolution and when he showed me his speech this morning before breakfast I nearly fell off my chair, to be honest, and the courage that he took to get up there and move that resolution, fair play.

While we are here we need to discuss this and we need to realise how much this is going to change our industry for the better. Every time we lose a comrade, a colleague, a friend, a father, we need to take stock of what we are doing to ourselves – read the report – and to our families as well.

Comrades, since the start of DECON I have chaired a couple of health and safety courses. People in this room will know how passionate I am around this DECON project. I moved a resolution at TUC North a couple of months ago in memory of firefighter Richie Kelly. I am not trying to take anything away from that speech but we found out last week the sad news of the passing of brother Tam Mitchell from Scotland. Tam was on the health and safety

committee when I first joined the national safety committee and he decided that because my name was Karl he couldn't pronounce it and it made it sound like Carol so Tam called me Shirley. I worked with Tam for quite a few years and he never called me Karl, he called me Shirley every time he spoke to me, every time he addressed me, every time he texted me.

The reason why we have to remember these people is every time we lose one of our own through illness or through any reason, we have to double our efforts to make sure we do not lose another one. This DECON mark is to prevent and protect and stop us from losing our comrades, our brothers, our sisters, our firefighters, our families.

At the beginning of the DECON project I was approached by a lady called Angela Thompson. Her dad was in a hospice and she asked me to go and see her dad in the hospice. She got my details off the FBU website through me being the regional health and safety rep. To be honest I was blown away. Her dad was a firefighter and his last wish was for me to go in there and to speak to him about this problem.

In the room next door to him in the hospice was a firefighter whose wife had also died of cancer. His wife had cancer and his daughter had had cancer. He spoke to me and told me the risks of our profession, and it was like looking at somebody who had all of the information at the wrong time in his life. He told me that we must do everything in this union, we must do everything to make sure that there wasn't another one of him, we must do everything to make sure there isn't another father lost needlessly, we have to do everything to make sure there isn't another Richie Kelly lost.

Comrades, I speak about DECON like this every single time and I make no apology for getting emotional about it. It is one of the most important things in our union at the moment. Don't just support this resolution, do something about it, challenge unsafe practices, fall in line with the principles that are outlined in the report, fall in line with the principles outlined in DECON, make sure that is on every single fire station you attend. This branding needs to be seen by every firefighter to make sure they understand the dangers that they put themselves in.

Comrade, first speech, well done, outstanding, and I am proud of you and I am sure your dad will be too. *Applause.*

Conference (the president is flashing me), support this resolution, support DECON, let's do something about and let's stop people needlessly dying. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

I wasn't flashing you at all. It is the vice president (he is the nasty man with the timings). OK, that is open for debate.

BARRY JACKSON (London):

Voting in support of resolution 26. Exactly what we are looking for to see that in more sort of clinical terms is a unified approach to this across the board which is what the NOG alliance possibly will bring. But you go to the length and breadths to communicate with other reps at every chance I can, and everybody is doing things differently.

London is about getting there. We have got a policy which I helped write when Covid started, it was about two and a half years ago and it is just coming out now. Other brigades don't have a clue, other brigades are really on point.

I will give you an example. We are now at the stage where we are in training, we are practising the DECON, the FBU have been so involved, and we are liaising with management and it is really looking good for us. Then we go off to Moreton-in-the-Marsh and in two days it is all out the window. We need to get out on things like that and we need to have that unified approach and this resolution will really help with that, so support it please.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Barry. Anybody else?

KIERON THOMAS (Buckinghamshire):

Brilliant. I am really proud. We are doing some great work in region 12. We have got the DECON working group. We

have got management hopefully pretty much eating out of our hands taking on the great training package that the union has put together. All I would say from there, you have probably already done it, get everybody to watch that training once a month and just get it ingrained. It is really, really important. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else? I now put resolution 26 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 34, DECON, Fire Station Building Design Principles, moved by Hampshire and Isle of Wight. The EC support.

Resolution 34 DECON – FIRE STATION BUILDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Conference commends the progressive work undertaken by Professor Anna Stec, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and the Fire Brigades Union to identify and mitigate firefighter exposure to cancer-causing carcinogens.

Conference also acknowledges that many of the 11 steps promoted by the UCLan interim best practice document can be undermined by outdated fire station building designs that fall short of protecting firefighters from exposure.

Conference also recognises that many stations fall short of providing facilities that enable firefighters to decontaminate and remove carcinogens effectively post incident.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to ensure that every Fire and Rescue Service embeds the principle of DECON in all future fire station designs. That retrospective work is undertaken where current building stock is unlikely to be replaced and to ensure, where identified, that any shortfalls that undermine DECON and the mitigation of exposure are addressed.

HAMPSHIRE and ISLE OF WIGHT

STEVE BURNS (Hampshire and Isle of Wight):

Speaking for resolution 34. DECON, Fire Station Design Principles.

I have, unfortunately, had a long and difficult journey with cancer in my bladder. I was diagnosed ten years ago after blood showed up in my urine. This led to over 30 surgical interventions under general anaesthesia, and 19 sessions of chemotherapy. I can assure you that was no fun.

The consultant in charge of my care asked me what I did for a living obviously, an eminent urologist. When I told him he mentioned he had seen an increase in the number of patients going through the urological process within hospital systems and he wasn't surprised. He went on to state it was without a doubt linked to my role. We must make a difference.

If the current recommendations had been in place when I joined I am in no doubt that it would have made a difference to me, my family obviously, and many colleagues who suffer with or who have lost family members to this hideous disease.

It has been a difficult decade for sure but I am forever indebted to the wonderful NHS we have whose devotion and resilience during my illness has been inspirational, to be fair. They have been truly remarkable, and I feel humbled that these people walk amongst us. *Applause*.

In January this year I came off the run within Hampshire and Isle of Wight and was sort of dedicated into undertaking a contaminants role. So my specific role now within the organisation is purely contaminants, a first I believe. The job has proved to be really successful and things are changing, slowly, but they are absolutely changing. There is a want, there is a need, a corporate need more than anything if I am being cynical, but I don't give a toss about that sort of stuff, I am looking out for us as individuals so you don't have to have 19 lots of chemotherapy.

In Hampshire we have three new fire stations in the process of being built and I have really pushed the eleven steps to be adopted from the UCLan report. They will be incorporated in the design. These steps, in light of Professor Stec's study, are being implemented and the buildings are being future-proofed because things all change, things are evolving, this is a huge subject. This needs to be done; it makes us safer.

The risk to all people on fire stations is very real and our employers have a duty of care to keep us safe. We already know the study has proved firefighters are at much greater risk of life changing health conditions like respiratory illness, neurological disorders, infertility (as I found out earlier today) and cancers obviously. The fact is we are a staggering four times more likely than Joe Public to have a cancer. There is a lot of new evidence but many other countries have adopted a range of measures and principles around staff safety. We in the UK are still woefully behind others. We need to catch up.

America, as we know, tragically lost 343 firefighters that dreadful day in 9/11. The sobering fact is more firefighters have died of cancer from 9/11 than died during it – more than 343 people have died of cancer because of that job.

It really is disappointing that in 2022 it takes so much time and energy to implement important changes to staff safety across the country. There is loads and loads, and I am encompassing it all the time, red tape. We are ploughing through and we need bigger scissors really, so bureaucracy around changes in the public sector, it needs to be done, we need to move these things forward faster. This is something we must do differently. At an organisational level our lives literally depend on it.

There needs to be a period of investment to upgrade fire stations. Fire stations must be reviewed with a plan to implement adequate facilities for all staff including provision for appropriate showers, the basics of appropriate showers. Some stations don't have that, remarkably. We are falling woefully short and we don't cater for the very basic needs of contaminated personnel. We need to raise that there is a real risk to health at some stations where there is no way of adopting, in some cases, any of the UCLan's report findings.

In my service there is an expectation that all stations will see a period of investment and add facilities where possible or adapt current changes to make them safer. We must lobby for change. Please support resolution 34. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Do I have a seconder?

CHRIS COOK (Tyne and Wear):

First of all, I would just like to say to my brother from Oxfordshire, I am so sorry for the loss of your father, and to my brother from Hampshire, thank you so much for sharing that. I understand how hard that must have been. Massive respect, and if you need anything, please, the support is there.

My regional chair loves that new speakers get up and he loves to support them, and this is my first time speaking at Conference as well. *Applause.* I just want to second the motion moved by Hampshire which is DECON fire station building design and principles. It is really good. We have stood in this conference for three days and we have talked about our services and we have given a bit of a kicking for the things that they don't do very well, we are like a bunch of FBU Ninjas, and I really feel that using good work and trade union relationships in Tyne and Wear at this minute in time we have created something.

We used the interim best practice reports along with really good trade union working relationships and Tyne and Wear are set to break ground on a station with DECON at the forefront, Hebburn fire station is set to open in 2023, taking the clean cab procedure one step further. The Fire Brigades Union working with TWFRS have laid out as in the best practice interim guide page 52, designated zones, a fire station that minimises the risk caused by toxic effluence. All areas of the fire station will be colour-coded with designated routes in prohibited areas limiting the spread of that contamination.

Decontamination showers have been added to the ground floor in the transitional area easily moving from the dirty zone to the clean zone. These showers will be unisex showers with hair dryers in an undress section. Personnel would disrobe putting all contaminants in sealable bag and step into the shower. After washing thoroughly they will

dry using a one-use towel and then slip into a paper suit which is provided. Once you have been decontaminated and you are in your paper suit, you are then free to move into the green zone of the fire station where the lockers are. You would then simply redress, put your clean uniform on, you would place your paper suit in the recycling (recycling is really important – look at all the paper on the table).

This fire station not only minimises the members' exposure but the exposure time pushing DECON right to the forefront of our members because we are there to change their hearts and minds. We can do this until we are blue in the face and put posters up but we have to change the mindset of a firefighter.

I just want to close. Since 1918 the Fire Brigades Union have used health, safety and wellbeing to create a faith in modern day fire service. These principles and values are still being upheld to this day. Tyne and Wear, I second. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Open for debate. Anybody?

BARRY JACKSON (London):

We are voting in favour of the resolution to support it. A little aside of what we do in London. I would urge you as reps to get involved at the point of design. So when you get a new build, get involved because these guys haven't a clue and these builders don't understand your DECON.

At the minute we have got some stations where the BA runs besides kitchens that we are retrospectively trying to get rid of. It is absolutely ridiculous. So get involved, get there, get the pressure on them, quote the laws, know your health and safety laws.

The other thing I was going to say at the end of it just coincidentally, just talk to people as well, because I had breakfast with Matt, just by utter coincidence, and Robbie, the two guys who spoke previously, we just happened to sit down together and have these conversations, and it is all about the sharing. Thanks very much.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Speaking in support of resolution 34. We really need to get involved with this. Some stations in Merseyside still have communal showers for men. Men are forced to shower together when they get back from jobs. We fought against this for years but nothing is changing.

Our dirty kit goes in the same room where the fire engine is kept and sits there in an open bag gassing off. Merseyside have said that they will trial bins. We need to trial bins alongside the fire stations to put your kit in it. Do we not know how to use bins already?

I would also like to speak to my comrade in Oxfordshire for what he spoke about earlier on with the loss of his father. I am so glad that our resolution yesterday opened up the chance for him to talk about that. Thank you, comrade. Conference, I support.

BARRY JOHNSTONE (Scotland):

First of all, I want to thank my comrades for sharing their stories. Region 1 would like to commend the vital work carried out by Professor Anna Stec and UCLan and thank all the officials who are promoting the DECON methods across branches and stations up and down the country.

We as a union need to keep spreading the DECON message and it has been good to see so many brigades getting on board with DECON measures. However, sadly, there are many brigades who are not participating as much as we would like and we need to continue putting pressure on these brigades to do so where DECON measures are falling short. Some services are putting zoning in and other such measures, however, stations within Scotland still don't have running water unbelievably. This has been raised at conference before. It is a basic health and safety right that they must conform to. The fire station, how rural they are, the amount of shouts they attend has no relevance. Firefighter safety is paramount and is most important.

Conference, any future design must embed the principle of DECON and the current stations must have action taken to mitigate exposure. Conference, region 1 supports.

THE PRESIDENT:

Any more? No. I will now put resolution 34 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

Conference, I now call para C7, Cancer and diseases database. I now call resolution 32, Firefighters Effluent Exposures, moved by Berkshire. The EC support.

Resolution 32 FIREFIGHTERS EFFLUENT EXPOSURES

Conference notes the outstanding work completed by the University of Central Lancashire and Professor Anna Stec in the area of helping protect our Members against the long-term health effects of repeated exposures to toxic fire effluents.

In line with the recommendations made in the interim best practice report for 'Minimising firefighters' exposure to toxic fire effluents', Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to continue to work towards bringing all of the recommendations made in this report into practice across the UK.

Conference instructs the EC to progress the following recommendations as soon as possible;

- ***to work towards cancer and other illnesses being recognised as occupational hazards within Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs)***
- ***to work towards all FRSs being required to monitor toxic fire effluent exposures across all of their staff***
- ***to work towards a national policy of enhanced cancer screening for all operational personnel within FRSs once they have served a set number of years or, where suitable monitoring exists, where they have been recorded as having a set number of toxic fire effluent exposures.***

BERKSHIRE

JAMES HUNT (Berkshire):

The risk of these toxic effluents needs no introduction. We have seen the interim report. We have seen the DECON campaign. We have heard motions and speakers who have come before and, as we have heard, too many people have suffered. I know people who have suffered from illnesses from these cancer causing chemicals.

This motion aims to build on the work that has already been done and support the work that is yet to come. By having cancer along with other illnesses related to these exposures recognised as an occupational hazard in the fire and rescue service our members can be left in no doubt of the need to change our ways of working and our employers can be left in doubt of the need to put their hands in their pockets and provide the safety measures we need.

By providing that all fire and rescue services record each occasion our members are exposed to these toxic chemicals, as we already do with Hazmat, which is existing practice elsewhere, our members will be able to understand their exposure levels at any point in their career and we will begin to get an understanding of the link between these chemicals and the cancer rates. This itself will form a basis of evidence to justify further action.

With this base of evidence, my third point on this resolution, is that once we identify this and have had a set number of exposures or a set time of career where there is not enough tracking, we can start to require our employers to provide health screening for life. So if there is going to be a cancer, it is going to be caught early on so has the best chance of being treated and we can make sure they get good health care if it is diagnosed early on. Please support this motion. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Do I have a seconder?

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

Seconding this resolution. We are lucky enough in Tyne and Wear that our principal officers have taken on board all of the recommendations from the DECON project, although they won't take the barn down as such, but they do note the recommendations.

Through lobbying of our fire authorities we have an opportunity to take this a step further and our service are prepared to cost up some form of cancer screening. So I would like to take this opportunity for a friendly nudge to get out to Tyne and Wear and have some kind of talk about what cancer screening looks like, I think we could make some real progress. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

It is open for debate.

BARRY JACKSON (London):

Speaking in support of the resolution. Let's get clear about the history of this. It is a very political animal we have been dealing with over the last number of years. The EC actually supported in 2019 with the Industrial Injury Board acknowledging the link between firefighting and cancer. Of course, the politicians at that time turned round and said beforehand there wasn't enough research done in here. The reason they never took any notice of the research in America and places like that all over the world, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, who all have this presumptive legislation, oh, they're different fires over there. That is why UCLan came along and said "We have got the evidence now. 10,000 people. We made it a scientific study." Brilliant work from Anna Stec again and the FBU."

My chief looked me in the eye last week and said "Well, we'll take it on but the evidence still isn't there." If the evidence isn't there, it is because they are not looking at it. It is overwhelming and it is getting more.

Sorry, I am being flashed, so just on this last point they actually use in the US cancer dogs. So you send away your urine samples and the dog sniffs and barks as an indicator, and that cost \$10 a time. That is in place at the minute. Ten grand to train one of those dogs. Just putting it out there. I support.

GREG ASHMAN (ONC):

I thought I would quickly get up and, for those who don't know, I actually serve in London and one of my teams is fire investigation. It should be noted that our fire investigators in this country are exposed to the effluent more than anyone else. I have 26 station officers, watch manager ABs that work for me, they go out and they dig through fire scenes. I have recently been to four fatalities in Sutton with four children. I went to that with that crew to see what they actually do. I have never seen such dedication from a team of people if I am honest with you, and they were covered head to toe in contaminants. So me, as their boss, I really have to do something about it and ensure that one of the things we are doing at the moment is making sure with the building design where they are at Felgate. When they come back in their vans the vans get washed out and then we will put all of their contaminated kit in an area so that it is moved away from them straightaway.

In other fire and rescue services a lot of our senior officers carry out this role, and we quite often see senior officers that just take the kit off, throw it in the back of the car and drive off, go and pick the kids up from school or whatever they do, and their kids, their families are all being exposed to the contaminants that are gassing off in their cars. Although this is a problem for firefighters and fire engines, it is a real problem for senior officers as well and, as in London, we have got 187 Members that are station commanders, group commanders, that are FBU members out of 220 people.

Please don't just think it is just about firefighters and fire engines. It is also about the senior officers as well. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

I am now going to put resolution 32 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *carried*.

I am now going to bring Riccardo la Torre in who is going to respond to all four resolutions.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president. Thank you, conference. Wow, what a debate. Again, thank you everyone who shared what I know must have been difficult stories throughout that. It is overwhelming, I will be honest, to see how much conference and our members and our safety reps, our members and branches, have taken on this campaign.

I am going to speak about evidence quite a bit in this. I want to be clear though: evidence of the links between the occupation of firefighting and cancers and diseases. I am talking about the evidence required to meet the requirements laid out by government and by bosses. As we have heard from the rostrum today, and as you all know, no-one in this room requires any more evidence about how big a risk is posed to us, how much cancer affects us in the fire and rescue service, than that which we already have tragically through our lived experiences.

I watched a friend and a brother die of this disease. It took his tongue before it took his life. Another very good friend of mine on exactly the same watch as Steve got the exact same cancer, base of tongue and throat. He never smoked in his life. He fought for his life and luckily he won and Sid is still with us, but he bears the scars of that forever, and you can see Sid's story if you go out to the DECON stall. He is one of our members in that training video. That is just me. Every delegate in this room, every EC member and official sat up here, will have their own story and still, as Barry mentioned, there are those out there who don't want to put the preventive steps in place, don't want us to have the legislation to protect us, who still say the evidence isn't there. Frankly, how dare they, conference?

When you hear stories like we have heard today, the evidence is there, it is just evidence we wish we didn't have. Sadly, we do have to prove to others that this is a risk that affects firefighters everywhere and it is not unique to us. Research and data does exist internationally and that has led to prevention and legislation and other advancements elsewhere in the world. But here at home no-one was doing it: not the government, not the NFCC, not the employers. So we did what we do best in the FBU, we look after each other. We are doing it ourselves once again proving we are the professional voice of the fire and rescue service. We are the voice that stands up for firefighters.

Without evidencing and understanding these things properly not only are we not able to take preventative steps to reduce and eliminate these exposures, but government will continue to deny our unwell, our dying, our dead and their families, the proper compensation and fairness that is due to them. That will never, of course, replace a loved one, but it certainly goes some way in helping those left behind.

A huge risk requires a huge commitment and we are giving that in our union. Thanks to the Firefighters 100 Lottery, I urge you all get as many people playing that as possible. I have said before, no-one else was doing that. This does not continue if we don't have the funding of the Firefighters 100 Lottery. Get members, friends and family, as many as you can, playing that.

We used that to commission Anna Stec from the University of Central Lancashire as you know, and we undertook the biggest project of its kind domestically. We surveyed only 11,000 firefighters. We did a literature with you, a literature that found out by the way that only a tiny percentage of fire stations even had any literature on the walls about this risk, and most of that was a poster printed by the Fire Brigades Union some years ago. We tested fire stations, work places, training centres, vehicles and we launched a Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry to get that important data that we need. It is the data the Americans have and use for their advancements. We cannot work without this data and I would also urge you to push that registry as hard as you can.

This is a bitter sweet task, conference, because we are desperately hoping to find something that we would wish was never there in the first place but, sadly, our research shows that it is. The interim UCLan Report shows that this danger is everywhere for us: it is on the incident ground, it is in our vehicles, fire service and personal, it is in our fire stations, it is on our food, it is on our clothes, it is in our hair and it is in our homes. We heard the story about the firefighter's family that Karl spoke about, and most frighteningly I think, we realised it is in our bodies in more ways than most people think. We are not just breathing it in, we are ingesting it, we are absorbing it through our skins.

From our survey respondents we showed we are nearly four times more likely to be diagnosed with certain types of cancers and at a young age, and in an otherwise healthy state, than a member of the general public, simply because of our work.

That was only the start of the project. We could not do anything about this. That is why the interim report has come, and it is just that; it is an interim report, and from that we launched the DECON prevent and protect campaign. That was born from the recommendations in that report. We used our members, we used our reps, to develop the behaviours, to develop the training videos, the posters and stickers to put in the proper places in fire stations amongst other resources. Thanks to your work, conference, thanks to your work, thanks to your reps and your safety reps, we have driven that into nearly every single work place in the fire and rescue service. I cannot remember the last time I went to a fire station and I didn't see a DECON campaign up front and centre.

You can be confident that work you have done is preventing other firefighters having stories like the ones we have had heard today, and it is going to continue to save lives as we go forward and I think you should applaud yourselves for that.

The DECON campaign has reached far and wide but this is only the start. We launched it live from a fire station. We put the campaign in nearly every workplace. We have taken it to parliament, we have taken it to the press, with the help of EPSU comrades and the firefighters' network who you are going to hear from later, we translated it into languages all over Europe and that is now being used by firefighters all over Europe to protect themselves and each other.

We have got DECON working groups set up in our fire services. It has been debated in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Scotland have got a trial on as a result of our work but we have not. Later this year we are publishing more research. We are going to publish the final UCLan report. We have got peer review papers come out on the effects of mental health of this specifically on PPE, on culture, on the prevalence of cancer and to the exposure of specific incidents like Grenfell. That contains statistically significant proof that people simply cannot ignore any longer, and we will make our demands as set out in these papers.

That best practice will talk about how we build our fire stations or change the ones we have already got. We will demand the health screening. I was in a meeting in London just the other week sitting in there with two firefighters dying of blood cancer, and it was found by the simplest of techniques. One actually went to donate blood when they discovered it. Yet we are not doing those tests even though we know this much. We will demand that health screening and we will demand presumptive legislation. We will demand it in the name of every firefighter that has fallen to this disease.

We are also going to start blood and urine tests of members who have filled out the cancer registry and, yes, we are looking into PFAS and, in accordance with that resolution, we have already started the discussions, but we need you, conference. We are going to need samples of every fire used in the FRS. We are going to need samples of every piece of PPE used in the FRS to test, so when we come calling for that, as I know you will, please assist us in getting all of that.

I just want to mention Anna Stec and her team. It is clearly more than a job to Professor Anna Stec. She is tireless in this campaign. She is tireless in protecting firefighters and their families from these cancers and diseases and I think it is important that we put that on record.

Also, without head office staff – and you will see flapping my guns on the videos about the DECON – but without the comms department, the research department, the education department, tirelessly working behind the scenes to push this, it would not have been possible to even get to where we are now. I thank all of our staff who are heavily involved in this as well.

Comrades, I am wrapping up, I promise. I urge you to please continue pushing this campaign. Karl said it is cheesy, but it is true. We can be the DECON generation, we can be the generation that makes this safer, and this shows that the bosses, the politicians, they give us nothing, they will gift us nothing. We have proven we can do

this ourselves. We look to the FBU member to the left of us, the FBU member to the right of us, collectively we will organise, we will make our work safer and we can do that. There is a well-known saying in our movement, you have all heard it, *Remember the dead and fight for the living* and that is exactly what this fight is, and it is our duty that we continue this campaign. We owe it to this generation of firefighters. We owe it to the future generation of firefighters and we owe it to Matty's mate, Steve, we owe it to Lee and Steve's dads, to Richie, to the firefighters' families in the hospice that Karl spoke to, to brother Steve Burns. We owe it to every single firefighter who has fallen in the line of duty to one of these diseases, conference, so thank you for those resolutions.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. As I said in my opening address, the DECON project will save thousands of lives so it is incumbent on all of us to get out there and push it in every single brigade and let's start saving them lives.

Conference, we are going to have tea break until 4 o'clock. Please come back because we have still got lots of business to do. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I would like you to put your hands together and welcome our comrades from Europe who have come to address conference. *Applause.*

The FBU has a strong and long relationship with firefighters from across Europe, Mauro Giulianella and Andrea Nevi are serving firefighters from Italy and trade union reps. They are members of the CGIL Union Federation which organises firefighters in Italy.

Please also welcome Paola Panzeri. Paola is a policy officer in the European Public Services Union, known as EPSU. EPSU coordinates the European Firefighters' Network so the FBU regularly meets with firefighter unions across Europe. We have gained enormously from their battles, we have seen control rooms fire stations training centres. We have also shared our knowledge on health and safety, on firefighters' cancers, climate change and many other matters. We are internationalists and we will always offer our solidarity. Please give them a warm welcome.

It just happens that we have a national officer who can speak fluent Italian (Essex Italian anyway) so we are going to speak and then Riccardo will translate.

MAURO GIULIANELLA (FP CGIL):

I would like to thank everyone who made it possible for the FP CGIL to be here today, the Italian fire brigade, and to participate in this important conference organised by the FBU. I would particularly like to thank the general secretary, Matt Wrack, comrade Riccardo la Torre and comrade Paola Panzeri who leads the EPSU firefighters' network. I also bring greetings from the FP CGIL general secretary, Serena Sorrentino.

I would like to start by bringing my solidarity to the women members of the FBU for the vote and the commitment made yesterday to tackle misogynistic attitudes, bullying and violence within the workplace, and also within the union. Improving working conditions and protections for women's rights is not only the duty of the union but it is the duty of men comrades as well. Real change can only happen if men are aware that active involvement comes and we come alongside each other together with women members.

Today, more than ever in these times, we need to campaign for safety. We see the images on TV every day showing the accidents and incidents that men and women have in our work. As firefighters, we made a profession out of risk and from our unity a FP CGIL life is priceless, and I am convinced that with the firefighters' network working together is the correct way to go ahead in achieving our goals that we want to achieve.

In Italy my union has a dispute and a campaign to get firefighters recognised by the INAIL system, which is the equivalent of our industrial injuries awards council that recognises occupational diseases and injuries. We started

this with the collection of signatures, with the general secretary of the CGIL, Maurizio Landini, the first signatory.

By being covered by the INAIL system they can start to understand the occupational diseases how firefighters are getting ill, when firefighters are getting ill and this allows them to access the services that they need for treatment and also economic.

We recently held an initiative in Naples, DECON Italia, inspired by the FBU's DECON campaign and Riccardo la Torre contributed to it by video. It comes from a report that was published called 'the crazy particle' and that started a five year campaign from the FP CGIL union. It is time that we started linking up and making sure everyone understands these links and makes sure that our counterparts across Europe understand it by working together.

The discussion has already started in Europe. The European parliament have recently agreed to lower the occupational exposure limit from 100,000 fibres per cubic metre to 1,000 fibres per cubic metre and this is a protection that needs to be extended.

We need more safety to safeguard the health of the men and women in the fire and rescue service during work and once they finish. We also cannot forget the risk this poses to our families as well by taking contaminated particles home.

We need to understand more the effects, the toxic effects, the toxic particles and being exposed to the risk. We need to get national standard on the disrobing because there is no accepted standard. We also need more PPE because we haven't even got enough to get it replaced in time. In Italy we are just at the starting point. The daily habits of firefighters is a very helpful project in understanding what we need to do going forward.

Occupational diseases but also the effects on mental health have to be considered in talking about this. We need the data and we need the statistics as only then can we truly call for our rights and our protection.

When a firefighter gets ill at work they are doing it protecting property and territory, they are a resource to the state, and therefore it should be the state's responsibility to look after firefighters. They find themselves in that position. That is what we are demanding in CGIL and that is what the work of the EPSU firefighters' network is trying to achieve.

We are also exploring other projects of combining pandemic and fire services, or the potential of having a medical expert on part of the crew which would be a useful resource to fire crews. Projects like this, the DECON project, what we are trying to achieve, the health and safety of workers must come first. Long live the fire brigade. Long live the FBU. Long live CGIL and long live the EPSU firefighters' network. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks. Paola.

PAOLA PANZERI (EPSU):

Conference, president, comrades, good afternoon. It is an honour to be here and represent EPSU today. The FBU is a very active player in EPSU firefighters' network, and I would like to thank on behalf of EPSU and our secretary general the FBU secretary general, Matt Wrack, the national officer, Riccardo la Torre, the president and all of you today for your commitment and for your invitation to be here with you today.

The European Federation of Public Service Unions represent eight million workers across Europe. Nine of the unions we affiliate are in Ukraine and I would like to open my intervention by expressing our solidarity with firefighters in Ukraine: women and men who are tirelessly working to respond to the needs of their community during this ongoing conflict. Thank you also to the FBU for your solidarity to the Ukrainians, for your support and assistance that you have given in this month.

I would like also to express our solidarity in support of those firefighters that have along the years taken part in the search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean, and later charged by the authorities for smuggling and trafficking.

Among others, Jose Rico Rodriguez, Manuel Blanco and Julio la Torre, firefighters from Spain that were arrested in Greece in 2016, or Miguel Roldan who was arrested in Italy in 2019. They faced respectively charges to 10 and 20 years of prison because they saved lives. At this conference a firefighter and FBU member who has volunteered and rescued refugees at sea has been awarded with a medal. I would like to join you in thanking our comrade, Brendan, and saying out loud that saving lives is not a crime. *Applause.*

Coming to one of the core discussions of this afternoon, and one crucial area of work of the network, carcinogens and decontamination, I would like to present you with a fight that we won, Mauro already introduced it. For the first time in a European parliament resolution on asbestos firefighters are explicitly mentioned as a group of workers at risk. This is a precedent. In the same text, the occupational exposure limit without protection has been lowered by a thousand times from 100,000 fibres per cubic metric to 1,000 fibres per cubic metric. We won this thanks to the mobilisation of firefighters and their unions across Europe. We won this together.

This, however, is only the first step of a longer process. Later this year the European Commission will present a proposal for the revision of the current legislation on asbestos. We will ensure that the same result will be included in the future law. It will not be an easy fight but we will not shy away. Our delegation of the EPSU network will go to the European parliament on 14 June, in a month, to present the demands of the firefighters and their unions to the members of the European parliament who are working on the text.

We will fight for better legislation to set a bench mark and a precedent and also use these precedents because in those new member states we bring a joint voice as EPSU and we fight for a good legislation but this will assist also firefighters elsewhere. The workers' movement has no borders and our fight for workers' rights has no border. While the UK is no longer in the EU, it is still in Europe. We build common solidarity around trade unions rights for all of us in the broader Europe and there are still so many who do not have those rights of firefighters and will leave EPSU in a moment when trade union rights are brought back, are cut in so many countries. And we have to fight not only to increase them but also to keep them.

In the same way we would like to thank the FBU for the great research on minimising firefighters' exposure to toxic fire effluents. We have just heard about it. They contributed a great deal in providing a scientific base for our work. EPSU translated part of this research in seven central and eastern European languages, and disseminated it to the unions and firefighters in those countries, in Czech Republic, in Hungary, in Bulgaria, in Russia, in Ukraine, to provide them with the scientific material in their own language and support them nationally. Again, one movement, no borders.

I would also like to congratulate you for the DECON campaign but also for the discussions and the contributions this afternoon. That was very inspirational. The Italian comrades have launched a campaign, DECON Italia, following your launch. On 15 June the EPSU firefighters network will meet in Brussels and discuss on how to bring this forward and possibly launch a DECON Europe campaign in the next year.

Before closing, I would like to mention how great it was to see such an important FBU delegation in Glasgow last November during the climate summit, to walk together as firefighters and public services unions, to underline that climate change means what it means for our lives daily.

I would also like to express my support and congratulate you on your motions on sexist and racist discrimination, violence and harassment in the workplace, your rights for equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, and we also heard about that this morning. Women's rights are workers' rights. No worker should be discriminated against or be a victim of violence or harassment, because of their age, origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. Thank you, comrades, for this fight for equality that you are doing.

My last words come from a statement adopted by the executive committee on 4 May, ten days ago, on international firefighters' day. EPSU shares its solidarity with firefighters who have died while serving our communities and who dedicated their lives to protecting the safety of us all. To their families, colleagues and comrades, EPSU executive committee salutes their courage and commitment. They will not be forgotten. Thank you. *Applause.*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, I think we have heard quite a bit about internationalism over the past day or so and sometimes it sounds a bit like a high idealism, but I think the contributions we have heard this afternoon and from the two comrades here demonstrate very clearly that actually it is a practical part of building the solidarity that is necessary to go forward as a movement. On behalf of the FBU conference I thank Mauro and Paola for their contributions this afternoon. Thank you very much for coming to our conference, you are very welcome, I hope you enjoy the rest of your stay. We have some small gifts of FBU mementoes and comrade McFarlane has some gifts of high quality FBU merchandise. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference, now this is my job where it gets like herding cats. We are going to take a DECON photo. You should all have one of those. If the executive council can come down in front of the stage please. *Pause.*

Thanks for that, conference. I will now call the chair of standing orders committee, Phil Millar.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, can you please turn to your Delegates List. Region 12, remove Steve Burns and replace with Jenna Shergold; B&EMM, remove Dean Pounder and replace with Alex Kelly.

Conference, for information purposes there are now 31 resolutions left of business which include the two emergency resolutions and one EC policy statement. It is entirely likely therefore that conference will run until close to the scheduled 5.15 finishing time on your programme of business. It would help with the smooth running of conference and assist with moving business if those delegations seconding resolutions or moving amendments would consider doing so formally when they feel it appropriate to do so.

Standing orders have agreed that there will be a bucket collection to raise money for the Pinderfields Hospital, Pontefract Burns Unit, and the request for this came from the North Yorkshire delegation. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.*

We now move to page 12, Section F, and I now call resolution 47, Right to Food Campaign, to be moved by Oxfordshire, amended by Hereford and Worcester.

Resolution 47 RIGHT TO FOOD CAMPAIGN

Conference notes that the UK is experiencing a crisis of food poverty born out of the political choices and systemic failings created over the past four decades, which have now reached a tipping point for so many in our communities.

This is a scandal in one of the richest nations in the world and highlights the inequality of the UK in 2022.

The 'Right to Food' campaign led by Ian Byrne MP and 'Fans Supporting Foodbanks' aims to make access to food a legal right for all, to have 'Right to Food' enshrined into legislation in Parliament and to end the scandal of hunger and foodbanks once and for all.

Conference notes the use of food banks was increasing before the pandemic and has risen dramatically during the pandemic. It is likely that the situation will get worse.

The Trussell Trust Foodbank data collected between April and September 2021 shows that the need for emergency food remains well above pre-pandemic levels. The number of food parcels for children has increased at double the rate for adults, compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Conference, enshrining a 'Right to Food' into law would confirm Government obligations on food poverty and introduce avenues to hold Government bodies accountable for violations.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to;

- *join and support the ‘Right to Food’ campaign, which aims to put the human ‘Right to Food’ for all onto a legislative footing in Parliament*
- *add the Fire Brigades Union as a signatory to the ‘Right to Food’ Campaign Pledge*
- *actively support Ian Byrne MP and ‘Fans Supporting Foodbanks’ in this campaign across the UK.*

OXFORDSHIRE

AMENDMENT

5th paragraph, 1st line after ‘Conference’ insert ‘believes that’ and delete the comma.

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

LEE NEWPORT (Oxfordshire):

Now a second time speaker. Conference, the right to food campaign and Fans Supporting Foodbanks has been a tremendous success as people across the country recognise the poverty around them and have recognised having food is a human right and is one that nobody should ever be denied.

This campaign has been driven by the excellent MP, Ian Byrne, who was rightfully recognised as MP of the year. Many trade unions are adding their signatures to the pledge and supporting this campaign to make access to food a legal right and we must continue to campaign for all trade unions to sign this pledge. The fact is food insecurity is set to get worse as the cost of living crisis bites.

As Ian has stated in parliament earlier this year, we have got more food banks than McDonalds in this country – scandalous. And people now face starving or freezing in their homes because of political choices made by this Tory government.

Research from the Food Foundation in 2020 showed that 20% of adults in the UK, that is around 11 million, face food insecurity each year and a third went without to make sure others in the house got a meal. This is a national scandal.

Enshrining the right to food into legislation in parliament would transform millions of lives. Hunger and fuel poverty are political choices. Yesterday I was appalled to see a viral post on line showing a group of shameless Tories celebrating the opening of yet another food bank. Conference, let us support the Right to Food campaign and Fans supporting Foodbanks at all levels of the FBU.

I am pleased to say Merseyside will be seconding this resolution. Support the amendment, support this resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Merseyside to second.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Seconding resolution 47, Right to Food Campaign. The levels of food poverty in the UK are at levels that should cause shame for this government. However, we know that they don't do shame. They continue to allow the most vulnerable in society to suffer. Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 foodbanks in the Trussell Trust UK wide network delivered over 2.1 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis. This is an increase of 14% compared to the same period in 2019/2020. 832,000 of these parcels went to children.

Comrades, hunger is a political choice and it is a choice this contemptible Tory government will continue to make unless we stop them. Time and time again we are forced to listen to over privileged Etonian schoolboys preaching financial restraint and fiscal responsibility whilst at the same time being so divested from the real world they are unable to state the price of a can of beans or a pint of milk.

Tory MPs are only interested in helping those in need when there is an opportunity for political gain, a quick photo and then they are gone into the wind, any promise of change quickly forgotten. You only have to listen to their

thoughts on those forced to use foodbanks as a direct result of their political choice. Dominic Raab said people who use foodbanks don't do so out of poverty but because they have the occasional cash flow problems. Michael Gove said people use foodbanks because they are unable to manage their finances due to decisions they have taken, and just yesterday Ashfield Tory MP, Lee Anderson, told the House of Commons that people use foodbanks because they cannot cook and cannot budget – horrendous. Then everyone's favourite idiot, Jacob Rees-Mogg, said 'I don't think the state can do everything. To have charitable support is rather uplifting.' Conference, we would like to remind Jacob Rees-Mogg and his nanny of the famous quote by Clement Atlee's biographer, Frances Beckett: "charity is a cold, grey, loveless thing. If a rich man wants to help the poor, he should pay his taxes gladly not dole out money on a whim."

These statements not only show the government's disdain for those who live in food poverty but a complete lack of understanding and empathy. Eleven million people in the UK experience food insecurity. A study in February 2022 showed one million adults per month went an entire day without food due to not being able to afford it. Soaring energy and grocery prices along with the removal of a £20 universal credit uplift have left one in five households facing the heat or eat dilemma whilst Boris Johnson orders in £27,000 worth of takeaways in the eight months to May 2021.

Children are stuck in the poverty cycle, too hungry to learn. In 2021 a survey of 510 primary or mixed age teachers in the UK found a huge 93% report that children struggle to concentrate if they have arrived with an empty stomach. This has seen nine in ten teachers speak to the child with concerns that they had about how little the children were eating. It also emerged that if a child needed something to eat 81% of teachers have offered them some food.

Ian Byrne MP and Dave Kelly who started Fans Supporting Foodbanks have done brilliant work in Liverpool and beyond. Ian has continued to fight for the vulnerable in society through his term as an MP and have the right to food enshrined into legislation and we support him fully with that. Conference, it is our duty to support the work that Ian started and ensure that no person in this country has to worry about where their next meal is coming from. I urge you to support this resolution. Conference, I second. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lee. Hereford and Worcester to move their amendment. Formally Moved. Thank you. Can I have a seconder? *Formally Seconded.*

That is open for debate. No. Conference, I now put resolution 47 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries.*

Conference, it now gives me great pleasure to welcome Ian Byrne MP to address conference. Ian was elected MP for Liverpool West Derby at the December 2019 general election and sits on Liverpool City Council as a councillor in Everton. Before entering parliament Ian worked as an organiser for UNITE and in 2015 co-founded the charity Fans Supporting Foodbanks which organises food collections at Liverpool and Everton matches for local foodbanks.

Since arriving in parliament Ian has sat on the environment food and rural affairs select committee and the levelling up housing and community select committee. Ian sat on the public bill committee scrutinising the Building Safety Bill at which he specifically raised firefighter concerns. Ian is a big supporter of the FBU in Parliament. Please give Ian a big warm welcome. Thank you.

IAN BYRNE MP:

Thank you conference. Greetings of solidarity from the socialist republic of Liverpool. It is an absolute privilege to be here today. It is probably as thrilling that I got the opportunity to step on to Anfield. It really means a lot. I know a lot of people in the FBU, certainly in my great city, we are great friends, and I am absolutely thrilled that I am standing here before you.

It is a real privilege to speak about what we are going to speak about today because the importance of the trade union movement in helping to get the right to food should not be underestimated. I would like to thank region 12 for putting this forward, seconded by my magnificent friends from Liverpool who, since 2015, as many people on

this platform know, have helped transporting foodbanks grow from a couple of wheelie bins outside Goodison and Anfield. You can see with my smile that they are Fans Supporting Foodbanks. We grew into something which is now a national movement fighting food poverty.

Some may not know me in here. I was elected in 2019. I am a proud socialist trade unionist Labour MP. There are still a few of us around. *Applause*. As I said in 2015, the Fans Supporting Food Banks we started from very humble beginnings, but that experience of fighting food poverty both in my community and then taking it out into the country with transport and food banks shaped me as an MP, so when I landed in parliament in 2019, the price of food was on the agenda, it was in the magnificent 2019 manifesto and we had to keep it in. That was my aim but as we progressed we have seen the campaign build because it had to because of what is happening in all our communities, and it is extremely important that this fight continues. So it is hugely significant if the FBU can officially back the Right to Food Campaign today which I am absolutely delighted about. I have had three texts already from Liverpool asking what has happened. I said it was never in doubt – like us on Saturday beating Chelsea. Sorry to any Chelsea fans.

But look, joking aside, you have to look at what we have seen this week alone. Monday, the Food Foundation, the lads are quoting figures but, you know 57% cutting back on food, people skipping meals, one in seven adults insecure (that would be FBU Members as well), that would be people in the public sector. More than two million adults have gone without food for the whole day, parents are regularly skipping meals. It just cannot carry on.

In my great city of Liverpool we fed 40,000 people last year with Fans Supporting Food Banks, mobile food pantries. We are going to expand again this year. We just can't carry on. One in four in my city are food insecure. This will be replicated right across the country. The system is completely broken. You cannot carry on with it as it is. The status quo cannot prevail.

Last month, Sunak in his spring statement, and this week the Queen's Speech, the government set out its plans – nothing, absolutely nothing. After the statement last month I did my first interview in parliament, the first time they let me on tele live, and I said Sunak would be back within a month because that was absolute garbage, it wasn't even, you know, tickling round the edges. It was awful, and I believe he will have to come back. Sunak doesn't like me because every time he hears my dulcet scouse tones rising up he knows what I am going to be saying to him, what is he doing about 12 million people in our country that cannot put a meal on the table. You have got to keep putting it into their faces about what they are doing to our people. People say it is class war. Starving 12 million people into submission can certainly be termed as that.

The fear is palpable. I will give you an example. Last week I had a constituent phone me up. I am getting battered, absolutely battered with emails with people struggling so badly over Covid and now obviously with the cost of living crisis, but this really hit home to me. A constituent, severely disabled, phoned me up and said, "Ian, I don't know what to do." So he outlined he is choosing between putting heating on – he is a severely disabled man and his partner – or putting his electricity on only to power up his electric wheelchair. They are the choices that are getting made in his house because of the political choices that are being made in Westminster. They are the things that you will be seeing on the front line. You will be seeing things like that and it is only just starting. This will get worse which is really worrying. I think never ever forget we are the fifth richest country in the world. So how can we allow this injustice to happen?

I have got a great friend, Professor Ian Sinha, who works in Alder Hey Hospital, children's hospital. This is what he wrote to me. "Food poverty leads to health and life expectations inequality, malnutrition. Poverty destroys the life chances of future generations of our poorest communities. It affects children's educational attainments and life chances. Less measurable but no less important is the effect on the individual human dignity and social cohesion in our polarised nation of foodbanks next to investment banks." How can we collectively accept that?

So all the choices being made at the moment by this government like the cuts to universal credit, benefit sanctions, the erosion of workers' rights, all alongside austerity, cut our services to the bone. The time for sticking plasters truly is over and we need systemic change. It is a humanitarian crisis which demands permanent solutions, not tinkering round the edges with a system that is broken, and I am sending that message to the Labour Party as well. I am going to speak to them.

In March the campaign called directly on Sunak to deliver a right to food. We took a letter to 10 Downing Street before the spring statement. The letter was signed by trade unions, general secretaries, obviously you will be involved now as well which is great to see, Liverpool Football Club, Everton Football Club – these people don't do anything political, but they realised what they are seeing in our communities, and also the magnificent Millwall Football Club. If there are any Millwall fans in here, put your hands up, you have been absolutely tremendous at the forefront of what they do in the communities. That sort of movement is really important for us as a Labour Party and a trade union movement. There are lots of people we can galvanise and bring along in this campaign, and that is we plan to do.

Just to touch on what the right to food is if people are asking what you are up to today. We put a plan together with Shami Chakrabarti which we put into the government in 2020: universal free school meals for every child; benefits that will actually ensure that the recipient can feed themselves in a dignified manner; community kitchens; meals on wheels; there are five elements of the right to food. We want to build on that. But that is what we continually ask of the government, but as a trade union movement we must fight against the cost of living crisis together, and the success that the right to food has built on, community organising and community campaigning with the trade unions at the very heart of it along with those I have outlined, football clubs, community groups, health workers, you name it; people are signing up right across the country and getting involved.

I am absolutely delighted to say it – I didn't want the comments on the other fellow's nonsense in parliament yesterday – but we have had three people contact me from his constituency today who want to push the right to food through their local council, so that is how you fight back against the nonsense that we saw in parliament yesterday.

The motions on the right to food was passed at the TUC. We have also had councils up and down the land, Liverpool, Manchester, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Liverpool Combined Authority, Rotherham, Brighton, Haringey, Preston, Lancaster, Durham, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Stoke, Coventry, Sheffield and Cornwall will be coming on line, elements in Cornwall. They have all signed up to a Right to Food councils in town. This movement is growing. I am absolutely delighted that you are a part of it today. I couldn't be prouder that the FBU are now an integral part of the right to food movement and that is how we will effect change.

To finish, I would like you to listen to the words of the great Nelson Mandela with a quote I love so much. He had it painted on the side of the constituency office. These are the words we need to heed, not some right wing Tory seeking advance at the expense of our most vulnerable. "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings." Thank you for taking the time to hear about this campaign today conference and thank you for voting the resolution through. Solidarity. *Applause.*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Well, conference, what a fantastic contribution from Ian there. The 2019 general election was a blow to our movement and to working people across the UK. One of the slight redeeming feature was that a number of less than socialist MPs were elected, and one of the stars of that intake is comrade Ian Byrne. He has worked with us, as was said, attended the building safety bill committee and Ian worked with comrades on there to make sure that our questions were asked and we worked together to raise our issues in parliament. That is what workers' MPs should be doing.

Ian, thanks for coming today, a small memento of your visit today, and we wish you all the best and we will be participating fully in that campaign.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks conference and thanks Ian for that great speech. Conference, can I now ask you to turn to page 10 of the programme of business. I now call resolution 28, Coordinated attacks on Firefighters Safety to be moved by Hampshire and Isle of Wight. The EC support.

Resolution 28 COORDINATED ATTACKS ON FIREFIGHTERS SAFETY

Conference notes a coordinated increase in attempts to dangerously degrade safe working practices, policies and procedures that have been developed over decades to protect firefighter safety.

These attempts, commonly attempted through National Operational Guidance documents, compromise safety measures in order to address avoidable issues such as the building safety crisis, often prioritising private industrial profiteering before the welfare of our Members.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to utilise all avenues, resources and opportunities to resist any and all attempts to degrade the safe working practices we have collectively strived to develop and implement.

An attack on one is an attack on all therefore all Fire Brigades Union committees must unify to oppose these attacks.

HAMPSHIRE and ISLE OF WIGHT

JAMIE KELLY (Hampshire and Isle of Wight):

Moving resolution 28, coordinated attacks on firefighters' safety. This conference recognises and understands that a firefighter's role is a dangerous one. We put ourselves in harm's way on a daily basis. This throwing ourselves into the flames is, however, not of Hollywood movies.

When we as firefighters decide to enter a building, or more crucially as a commander, committing our comrades into the risk area, we put ourselves and our teams in situations with potentially life-changing outcomes. We do this with as much mitigation as possible and using every bit of information and training available. We do this balancing risk and reward.

Our colleagues at the NFCC quote the firefighters' safety maxim. I will quote them directly: "Where the incident has a high risk but with a low benefit commanders should only tolerate a limited risk to firefighters." I want you to remember that quote.

Our decisions are based on decades of training and practices instigated following the tragic deaths of brothers and sisters including Jack Fourt-Wells and Richard Stocking at the Smithfield Market Fire in 1958. To date we have had 64 years of development and progress to try and make our brothers and sisters in BA as safe as possible. Despite these developments we still suffer unfortunate losses. I have already alluded to the fact that our role is inherently dangerous.

Recently in 2010 within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight we lost brothers Alan Bannon and Jim Shears at Shirley Towers. As a result of this tragic loss in Southampton, changes were made to BA procedure and practice reducing the risk of becoming entrapped by tables. I do not need to remind the conference of what happened at Grenfell Tower and the resulting and ongoing tribunal, but would hope that any changes that come not only make it safer for us as firefighters to enter a building and carry out our statutory duty to save life but also make life safer for those within the risk area, those who are the communities that we serve.

Despite what I have just said this conference has seen proposed practices and policies which fly directly in the face of these observations. In some cases these have been implemented in a direct and coordinated attack on the safety of us firefighters.

A number of brigades and services including London and West Midlands tried to implement new high rise or tall buildings procedures. It is currently only Hampshire and the Isle of Wight that has implemented this procedure while other services look on waiting in the wings to follow suit.

Given what I have already mentioned about the 64 years of continuous development and improvement to BA safety procedures based on tragic incidents and operational learning, this conference could ask what learning situations or incidents our employers are basing this degradation of fire safety on. Cynically, can we link these practices as an affordable short cut to dealing with a housing crisis? Is it a cheap fix for that building safety crisis, or a way for private industry to profit at the expense of our members' lives?

As professional firefighters trained and experienced in the wearing of BA, it is clear for all of us to see how going beyond the entry control not under air and then starting up in an environment that is potentially contaminated with invisible and carcinogenic particles is a recipe not only for disaster but also shows a blatant disregard to recognised learning, a learning that clearly identifies the danger of that deadly cocktail within those fire gases, our contamination with them and both the long and short term effects of this.

Going back to the NFCC and their use of the safety maxim, are these things I have mentioned now considered a tolerable, limited risk to firefighters?

I was going to tell a very quick story about while I was writing this resolution I explained to my girlfriend, another member of a different emergency service, someone who doesn't wear BA, someone who doesn't understand going into a building under the circumstances we do, not understanding what was going, I explained this to her – not in any great detail – and I won't give you her exact reply, but it was along the lines of "They will send you there, risking your life and they couldn't care less if you die." So you see, executive council, this is immediately clear to all of us. If this is allowed to continue, I envisage the floodgates of ill-thought out practices being used paying no heed to the firefighters' safety across the UK. These firefighters include the very members who have trusted us to represent them this week. If this is allowed to continue, where and when will it stop? An attack on one is an attack on every single one of us. For the sake of Jack, Richard, Alan and Jim and all those who have come before, between and since, we the conference instruct the executive council to oppose these practices. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Jamie. Do I have a seconder?

SAM MILLER-HODGES (Humberside):

I wish to support this resolution. Humberside was one of those brigades who attempted to introduce the stairway protection team, or human canaries. Because of the resources which we were provided by the national team, we were able to challenge this. Because of the presentation's information, we find it much easier to challenge the lies, fabrications and claims that the union agreed this, put out by our brigade to force unsafe practices on firefighters. We were successful because we could work together. Conference, I support this motion.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, that is open for debate.

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Supporting resolution 28. Conference, we heard earlier about the incursions into our workplaces by the NFCC and the dangerous policies and practices which they are working to introduce together. Conference, we all like to ignore chief fire officers. In fact, I think we should probably suggest we make it our official FBU sport. We cannot ignore the dangerous attacks though. I literally just received an email myself earlier that the flood gates are open and our service are now looking to introduce one of these policies the likes of which we have seen in Manchester, Hampshire and Kent, policies which will make our places of work more dangerous, it will strip away hard won protections from our members by deploying them beyond the bridgehead without going under air.

Conference, we must organise and fight with all the means at our disposal. We simply cannot afford to allow these dangerous practices to go unchecked. How long before one of these ridiculous NFCC policies kills one of our members? Conference, let us continue to organise, mobilise and fight to stop the degradation of firefighter safety. Please support.

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

Supporting the motion from Hampshire and Isle of Wight. I just want to note that we have got a similar problem going on in region 9. We have two brigades, and I will note them because I think it is worth noting them due to the work that is being done there by the local officials, but Bedfordshire and Essex have at the minute been in a position where they are refusing to adopt this latest suggestion that has been put forward by the cartel.

Now, the other four brigades, we are watching you and we see what you are doing. What I would urge you to do is get behind this motion, and head office, I would like you to look again at the legal situation down in region 9 with regards to what is going on with the other four brigades in terms of promoting and pursuing this dangerous practice.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, thank you conference, and thanks to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight for bringing this. Hampshire has been the most recent front of this battle. They are well in the middle of it, and I am not exaggerating when I say this is potentially the biggest attack on our safety in our history.

We have heard of a lot of attacks today and perhaps naively I assumed that some things would still be sacred, our BA procedures. They weren't plucked out of thin air, conference. BA procedures were born from the deaths and the injuries of firefighters – from the deaths and injuries of our sisters and brothers, and CFOs sat behind desks at headquarters sending us above the bridgehead without BA would do well to remember that.

Crooks, conference – crooks have been allowed to build unsafe buildings for decades in the name of profit, and what is the NFCC's answer, what we now know, that we may not be able to trust the building to behave as it is designed. They paper over those cracks with our safety, with firefighter safety.

Not only is this procedure born from the NFCC, been adopted by brigades throughout the union, lowering the level of firefighter safety to lower than that which we know is practicable to achieve. We know it is practicable to achieve because we have been doing it for decades. It has been keeping us alive for decades, and that is what the NFCC are trying to take away from us. But in addition to that, everyone here knows how to put a BA set on. It is not just that PPE they are taking from us. They are asking us to take our helmets off in these incidents, our gloves off in these incidents, and just our fire hood in these incidents, with just our tunics in these incidents. It is unprofessional madness, and I think the most scandalous part of this, not one chief, not the NFCC and not one chief who has proposed this, has yet to give us an answer of how the hell do we rescue a BA team in distress if they are beyond the reach of a BA set. They are putting us beyond the reach of rescue in one of the most dangerous situations we can go into and they are doing it intentionally and haven't even attempted to answer it. *Applause.*

There are those, conference, that would love nothing more than to be able to stand in front of a camera and say "don't panic, Britain, the building safety crisis is over." We have developed a fire service policy that is going to fix it. Don't nick any of our mates, don't pay any money to rectify this. If we have a fire, we have just taken some safety off firefighters, it is fixed, let's all move on.

Conference, I will put this on record, I have been doing this role two years now. In that time I have seen the NFCC and some of its members work harder to take the BA mask off firefighters' faces than they have to get flammable cladding off people's homes, and it is an absolute disgrace, conference.

Our safety is not for sale, not to the NFCC, not to their political masters, not to anyone. Not only is this unsafe but it is unprofessional, and quite frankly it is unlawful. I thank conference and the reps who have not budged an inch on this when it has come up. We have challenged it everywhere it has raised its head and we have been defeating it, conference. We have kicked it out of London. We kicked it out of GMC, we kicked it out of West Midlands, we kicked it out of Humberside. Thanks to the work of local reps and head office working together, we are defeating this. It is telling that some chiefs won't even touch this with a barge pole because they know and understand how unsafe and how unprofessional it is.

We heard from region 9, we have heard from Merseyside, we still have our problems in the South West. We will continue to challenge this by any means necessary, and we have heard the whispers in back rooms, a few chiefs running around bragging that they have won the JR. This is clearly stuff for the record, conference. They have won nothing. What they have done is managed to avoid legal determination on this. If they were so convinced by their arguments, you would think they may have wanted that test to prove them, but when they got their chance to put them forward they did everything they could. They didn't argue it on safety and say no it is safe and this is right. They said this is not the place for it to be tested. They found a procedural backdoor out of it being tested.

The judge, as per usual, as we have heard earlier in this conference – rarely friends of workers – told us to go to the HSE, an underfunded, severely cut, arguably toothless HSE hasn't been forthcoming in looking at this. We are not going to wait around and wait for one of our people to get injured or killed. We have got our submission. You see Gerard at the back. We thank Gerard for his work with us on this. Interestingly, speaking to the legal team about this and to repeat the point, they are not professional firefighters, they saw how ridiculous and unprofessional this was instantly, let alone unlawful.

I just want to touch on DECON quickly again before I finish because it was such a good debate earlier and we were out there saying what chiefs support and what chiefs don't. Let us be clear. You cannot support the DECON campaign at the same time you are taking the BA masks off firefighters' faces. The two things cannot exist together.

So, comrades, for every single name on a red plaque, for every firefighter we have lost at an incident, for every firefighter we have lost to one of the diseases or cancers that we were speaking about earlier today, I urge you all to hold the line on this like hell. Do not budge an inch. We are going to go through that process with the HSE. If that doesn't work we will find another way, but ultimately we have to organise and we have got to refuse this policy wherever it raises its head in our union. I have said it before, it is relevant again here: remember the dead, fight for the living comrades. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I now put resolution 28 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, I am going to ask a favour from you. If you agree to suspend standing order 16 and we do two more resolutions we get to the end of the section. What that might mean is that you get away just that little bit earlier tomorrow. Is that agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you.

I now call resolution 31, Research into Suitability of Breathing Apparatus Communications moved by Lincolnshire. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 31 RESEARCH INTO SUITABILITY OF BREATHING APPARATUS (BA) COMMUNICATIONS

Various resolutions surrounding standards of fireground radios have been discussed over recent years, notably a resolution from Scotland as amended by Shropshire at Conference 2017.

Research by Officials in Lincolnshire has highlighted serious concerns around the suitability of communication equipment used with BA, to a point where the manufacturers of BA communication equipment will only guarantee their products to a temperature of only 60 degrees Celsius.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to continue the research into this area to ensure these vital pieces of equipment are fit for purpose within the hot fire environment and report their findings back prior to Conference 2023.

LINCOLNSHIRE

SIMON THOMAS (Lincolnshire):

Speaking on Research into Suitability of Breathing Apparatus Communications.

President, conference, I am not going to read out the whole of the resolution. I am just going to pick a little bit out of the research that we have found. I believe it will resonate with us all. I don't need to go into much more detail on that.

So this is part of the research that we found. Because of a lack of standards for portable radios, operational guidelines and performance criteria have been left to the radio manufacturers. Many of the manufacturers list maximum operating temperatures of 60 degrees Celsius for the radios to be used by firefighters. This temperature falls well below temperatures that a firefighter could encounter whilst operating in a fire environment.

Conference instructs the executive council to continue the research into this area to ensure these vital pieces of equipment are fit for purpose within the hot fire environment and report their findings back prior to conference 2023. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*.

Thank you. That is open for debate.

ELLIOT WHITSON (Scotland):

Speaking at my first conference. *Applause*. Conference, Scotland fully supports resolution 31 and welcomes the call for further research into the suitability of breathing apparatus comms.

As we all know, good communication on the incident ground is absolutely paramount and is one of the basic foundations for maintaining firefighter safety. Our members deserve the reassurance that their equipment is not only of the highest standard but is fit for purpose when faced with their most challenging scenarios.

Our comrades in Lincolnshire referenced Scotland's resolution in 2017 and while we acknowledge that slow progress is being made, there is still significant room for improvement. Again, conference, Scotland supports this resolution and would urge you to do likewise. Thank you.

LLOYD AKERS (Humberside):

I didn't think I was going to speak on this issue but last year I was involved in a building collapse in my home town where the radios completely failed. Now, I support the resolution and I would urge the EC to go further than this and look into the general ability of fireground radios to work. Nobody was injured that day but it could have been so much worse. We were completely unable to contact the entry control board, we were unable to speak to other teams in there. On exiting the building, luckily everybody was accounted for. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, conference. Yes, qualified support on this. We just ask that the research reference in the resolution is passed on to head office and our research department, and this work will be done through the Health and Safety Committee, so I just ask for providing information as and when the requests come. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 31 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 33, Health and Safety, moved by Shropshire. The EC support.

Resolution 33 HEALTH AND SAFETY (H&S)

Conference applauds the work carried out by H&S Reps across the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) during the Covid-19 pandemic. The work carried out was vital in keeping our Members safe at work whilst still completing more regular H&S duties.

Conference agrees that H&S work carried out by FBU Officials is vital and a highly important part of the objectives of the FBU.

Conference demands that the Executive Council write to all Fire and Rescue Services to lay out H&S expectations and the rights of the FBU afforded to our Members and representatives under H&S law.

Conference agrees that any FRSs who ignore H&S rights or mistreat FBU H&S Reps will be robustly challenged by the FBU using all means available including industrial and/or legal action.

SHROPSHIRE

LOUISE FLETCHER (Shropshire):

Conference, we all know how important health and safety and welfare is to this Union and our members. It is a core part of everything we do. Health and safety and welfare forms a great deal of our work.

Engaging with the employers during the Covid-19 pandemic tested our health and safety structures to the limit. Those here at conference involved in that work will know how much was carried out by health and safety reps supported by the brigade and regional officials.

It is important that conference recognises and applauds that work often undertaken by Officials working long hours through the evenings and weekends whilst still balancing the day job. We welcomed the resolution on Tuesday to revisit the Simon Sapper report as an ideal opportunity to look brigade and regional structures with a view to gaining more provenance for the health and safety reps, their work and to better integrate them into the structure of the union.

Conference, the rule book states that our aim is to secure the highest standard of health, safety and welfare at work and we strive to secure just that against quite often hostile employers. As the president pointed out in his address on Tuesday, safety measures are being downgraded by fire and rescue services across the UK, and we are expecting all manner of other attacks on our unions via the imminent White Paper.

Health and safety reps along with brigade officials are on the front line defending our members against the employers' onslaught and often find themselves under attack despite protections in law that are supposed to protect us and our work. Health and safety reps do robustly challenge employers' attacks on our health and safety and, in return, we expect the executive council to robustly challenge the mistreatment and attacks on our health and safety reps using all legal mechanisms available, most specifically the right to take the employers to employment tribunals when they fail to allow time off with pay as is necessary or to fulfil our functions. But this right appears not to be widely understood or recognised. Please support the resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Louise. Do I have a seconder. *Formally seconded*. Thank you. Open for debate.

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

President, conference, I never thought I would hear myself say these words, but I am quite interested in health and safety. Apparently, as you get older you go towards the right really, don't you, and become a Tory but I am definitely not that, but I've got this fascination with health and safety. I have done an introductory course, I have just done a middle one and I just wanted to say a massive thank you to Karl Wager wherever he is who made health and safety interesting. What I want to say to people is don't be afraid of it, it is quite interesting, especially as you get older. So get on a course, get yourself some work and also a massive thank you to Louise because she is our regional health and safety person and does a magnificent job. Thank you very much indeed. Support the motion.

TIM DEEGAN (Hertfordshire):

Supporting resolution 33. The importance of health and safety in the fire and rescue service is paramount. It is an inherently dangerous profession so we can't take health and safety lightly.

Recently in Hertfordshire we demanded the role of health and safety rep receives the respect and legal standing it deserves in the fire and rescue service. I have personally been repeatedly obstructed in carrying out my role in as brigade health and safety rep. This is in clear breach of several pieces of legislation including safety reps and safety committee regs, the Employment Rights Act as well as several others. I could go on for ages but it actually ended up with me being disciplined which went on for about two years, and basically all I had done was fulfilled my role as a health and safety rep for keeping firefighters and control members safe. So in conclusion, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thanks, president. Thanks conference. I agree with Trevor. I think the health and safety rep is a rock star. The executive council are supporting this and thank Shropshire for their resolution. I just want to add though that yes, of course, we will do what the resolution asks, but a letter alone isn't enough. These are our rights, some of our strongest in fact, and we need to be demanding them in the workplace. If this is happening, delegates need to go away and set up strong committees and start discussing this with members. If we are not being afforded these rights by the bosses, we need to start discussing what we are going to do about it, and we will do what the resolution asks, if it passes, to support those demands locally. Thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 33 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, 37 years ago yesterday 56 people lost their lives in the Bradford City fire and we agreed earlier on to hold a bucket collection for the Burns Unit. Obviously, nowadays we are living in partly a cashless society so I

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don't think so many of you will carry cash like we used to. We might have to get a card swipe machine for these collections on the way out. But what I would urge you, I am going to ask standing orders if we can put the buckets out again. If you can get hold of some cash tonight and put some cash in the bucket, I have genuinely forgotten my wallet upstairs, so Dave Williams if you stick a tenner in for me, I will give you the tenner back tomorrow and that is a promise. Conference, if we could do that it would be great to send a good donation to the Burns Unit.

Just to finish off we have got the Stand Up to Racism fringe at 5.45, so you have got 15 minutes to get some food down, in the Consort Room, and then after that it is our big concert night tonight Live and Left at half seven in the hotel. Make sure you get everybody there. Apparently there are discounted drinks. We have managed to get that secured. See you all there. Conference is adjourned.

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Good morning, conference. Are we all recovered? Some bleary looking eyes, even on the top table, Riccardo! I will now call Phil Millar, chair of the standing orders committee to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Morning, conference. Can you turn to your delegates list please? Region 1, Scotland, replace Melanie Gibb with John McKenzie; region 3, Cleveland, replace Dave Howe with Nick Cain; Still region 3, Durham, replace Andrew Murray with Lindsay Blake; region 3, Northumberland, Ash Fox replace with Vanessa Robinson; region 7, West Midlands, Philippa Smith replace with Steve Price-Hunt; region 9, Cambridgeshire, replace Dan Foster with George White; region 10, London, replace Brian Flanagan with Jon Lambe and remove Chris Cheeseman; region 12, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, replace Jamie Kelly with Robin Richardson. *Point of Order*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Yes, come up.

FROM THE FLOOR:

Region 7, Shropshire, Tariq Hussain replaced by Simon Morris.

THE PRESIDENT:

Are you doing that here?

FROM THE FLOOR:

No, it was done last night for today.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Simon Morris is on this.

FROM THE FLOOR:

Yes, it was Tariq Hussain yesterday. He was changed for today. You have to call it out now.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

No, because it was on the list as Simon Morris. It is written here but disregard if Simon Morris is on the conference floor.

FROM THE FLOOR:

If you are happy that he is on the conference floor that is fine.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

I have Simon Morris and Louise Fletcher. Thank you. Conference, can you turn to your programme of business please. Page 12, resolution 64, amendment 2 by Scotland has been withdrawn.

Finally, conference, just for your information in relation to business still to be moved, there are now 25 resolutions, seven amendments and one EC policy statement to complete. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*.

I would like to congratulate Hampshire and Isle of Wight on their first all-female delegation. Well done, Hampshire and Isle of Wight. *Applause*. Just for clarity, I think it was Wednesday I congratulated West Midlands on their all-female delegation. It was the first time in West Midlands history but the first all-female delegation was Dorset and Wiltshire and that was Kate Scott and Karen Adams. Well done to everybody on that one.

OK, conference, can I now ask that you turn to page 12 of the Programme of Business. Section F, Trade Union and Labour Movement. Para F1. I will now take the executive council policy statement, Political Challenges facing the FBU and the Labour Movement, seconded by Dorset and Wiltshire, with Amendments from Hereford and Worcester and the following resolutions in the same debate: resolutions 59 and 57 (we are on page 13 of the programme). The executive council are opposing resolution 59 and supporting resolution 57. If the executive council policy statement carries then resolution 59 falls. Resolution 57 can carry with the executive council policy statement. If the executive council policy statement falls, resolutions 59 and 57 stand in opposition. I will now call the general secretary to move the executive council policy statement.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, Ian. President, conference, we have been here this week discussing a whole range of issues, industrial matters, internal matters and, of course, we come to politics. It has been mentioned several times, the liars and cheats running the government of the United Kingdom currently. They are our enemies and we have to take them on in whatever we decide today.

We have to remind ourselves that the fire and rescue service is a public body, public service funded out of public money, out of taxation, and we cannot avoid politics. Our service is run by politicians, decisions about our wages, about investment in our service are taken by politicians. We cannot avoid political debate, whatever our views.

But, wider than that, as workers our rights, our employment rights under employment legislation, our rights as trade unionists to take industrial action, to strike, all these are governed by political decisions. We discussed the Grenfell Tower fire, a whole background to that is based on political decisions made by politicians in Westminster. So we cannot avoid politics.

It means that as a union we have to campaign. I think it was John Horner who first used it, but we may also have heard it from Ken Cameron, that there is a whole world outside the fire station doors, and it is a world we cannot ignore because it won't ignore us. We have to find, identify our issues and you set them out here every year at conference. We have to campaign on them. We have to find allies primarily among other workers, from the organised labour movement and from the wider working class.

We set our goals and we take our own actions but need that solidarity. We need solidarity building in the labour movement and beyond, and we also need to stand in solidarity with other people when they are in struggle. That is why this statement talks about reaching out, working with long standing and new campaigns. You have had a whole series of fringe meetings this week which set out the sort of debates that we have had for many decades in this union about the need to be involved nationally and internationally in political matters. The union has to turn outwards in everything we do if we are going to win what our members want.

But we also need a voice in politics. We have to lobby ministers. We might not like them, we might hate them, we might want to get rid of them, we might want to imprison some of them, but we want to change policy. We have to attend meetings, put our arguments, go to parliament, put your arguments in front of committees in the House of Commons and other assemblies and parliaments around the United Kingdom. It is a lazy assumption to say all politicians are the same. We have had members of this union make it to Westminster and they weren't all the same either. John Horner, a former general secretary of this union, became a Labour MP in 1964.

An old friend and comrade certainly of myself and the assistant general secretary, and Les will have known him well and Mark, Terry Fields, the former executive member for the old Merseyside and Cheshire region, an outstanding working-class socialist Labour MP who ended up going to prison as part of the anti-poll tax campaign in 1991, an MP willing to put their career and their livelihood and their freedom on the line for their principles. Those are the sort of people we want to see in parliament fighting for our people. They never forgot where they came from.

Others coming through the ranks of the trade unions, including this one, may be didn't stand up for firefighters in the way we wanted them to, and we don't forget that either. We have also worked with many MPs and politicians who have never put out a fire but nevertheless stood with us on picket lines consistently, McDonnell and Corbyn.

We heard yesterday from Ian Byrne. Some of you heard at the fringe yesterday Zara Sultana, the Socialist Campaign Group, they need our support in the battles they try to find within the parliamentary Labour Party.

These relationships that we have built with politicians over decades are part of our strategy to have a political voice in politics. Without a political voice we will not be heard. Whatever else we discuss this week or agree this week, and where we disagree on tactics, I hope that every delegate will agree that the FBU has to do politics and has to have a political voice.

I want to turn to the most contentious part of this statement, the question of our affiliation to the Labour Party, but I would draw people's attention to the other element of the statement that sets out some of the campaigns that we have worked with over the past year, two years. Delegates should know that the FBU affiliated to the Labour Party in the mid-1920s, not long after we were founded. Our predecessors who built this union understood that firefighters needed a political voice, they joined the TUC, they affiliated what was then called the Fireman's Trade Union to the Labour Party. Eighty years on we were betrayed. We were betrayed by Tony Blair and his government in 2002-03. It wasn't just us he betrayed, by the way, he betrayed all sorts of principles and led this country into a disastrous and criminal war against the people of Iraq, and he should never be forgiven for that either. *Applause.*

In 2004 we had a very lively debate in this conference and we took a decision to disaffiliate, and it was entirely understandable. There was a huge amount of hurt and anger at the way the Labour government had treated an affiliated union simply because we asked for a pay rise, and we dared to ballot for strike action, and the condemnation we faced, so we disaffiliated. But even in that time a group of Labour MPs stood solidly side by side with us, and you heard about it yesterday: John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn formed the FBU Parliamentary Group, a group of Labour MPs who work with us and have done since 2004 to put our case into the House of Commons, to liaise with us about raising your issues in parliament.

Then in 2015 something that nobody thought would happen: Jeremy Corbyn out of nowhere – it wasn't supposed to happen – won the Labour Party leadership, and it inspired tens of thousands of people around the country, young people, to get involved in politics as they never had before. It inspired people in this conference to join the Labour Party because they thought of the possibility of changing politics in a different direction.

On the back of that we called a special conference in 2015 and we took a decision to reaffiliate and that is what we are debating today. But I want to just emphasise the impact that this small union has had as result of our affiliation. This union has fought our corner in the Labour Party, even under Jeremy Corbyn. We fought for pledges, unprecedented pledges in the 2019 Manifesto, on a commitment to jobs and investment in the fire and rescue service. There were difficult discussions including that members of staff had to have with policy officers in the Labour Party, and myself and Ian then had to fight for in the various stages of the Labour Party manifesto preparation, but very clear commitments that no other party gave and no party had given before. Those were the sorts of things we achieved: commitments on public services.

This union led the way in Labour Party debates, two years running in fighting for the socialist green new deal and avoiding any backtracking, and that battle still needs to be had. On workers' rights, again I don't know if you all know this, but the role that this Union has played in demanding that Labour commits itself to the repeal of all anti-trade union laws, not just the 2015 Act but all laws that restrict our rights, we have played a key role in ensuring that that commitment went into that manifesto and we should be proud of that.

We know that there are challenges. It is known that we did not support Keir Starmer in his election campaign, and it is known that we are dissatisfied with the direction in which he is taking the Labour Party. It is our job to challenge that leadership, and I can assure you that myself and Ian and others do that regularly. I can assure you that the issue that is going to be raised in a while, the question of his interview and article in *The Sun* has been challenged directly face to face with him by your representatives.

Our president, Ian Murray, sits on the national executive committee of the Labour Party fighting the corner against unjust expulsions and suspensions and the other undemocratic practices that are being brought in by the right wing of the Labour Party. He is doing a sterling job there and let us keep him there – he doesn't particularly enjoy it.

Applause. I know he doesn't particularly enjoy that job but he doesn't shy away from a fight. He is there and he is doing a job on our behalf, both on behalf of ordinary Labour Party members and trade unionists who want the party to do what it should be doing. He is a thorn in their side and let's keep it so.

It is no secret that we were disappointed, all of us, with the outcome of the 2019 general election. We are not soft on the current Labour Party leadership. We take those criticisms, we make them in person and in writing and in policy every week of our working lives. But we do this knowing that the Labour Party, for all its flaws, is still the only party based on a link to the trade unions, and for all its weaknesses and flaws – and we have arguments with other affiliated unions, by the way, some of whom don't always, in my view, do the right thing in terms of challenging Keir Starmer, but there is a fight on in the Labour Party. In our view, to walk away – I tell you what the Blairites would do if this Union walked away, the Blairites would be cheering to the rafters if the FBU walked away from the Labour Party. The RMT was expelled from the Labour Party. I myself was expelled from the Labour Party in 1991, represented by my comrade here – unsuccessfully represented by Andy Dark. One of his great success stories that was. And it took me a while to get back in the Labour Party. They eventually let me although there are people who have written to Starmer saying I shouldn't be allowed in the Labour Party. They don't want this union in the Labour Party, these people. So my view is if they don't like it, let's keep sticking it to them.

There is no big socialist project outside of the Labour Party. There may have been in the past, but there is next to nothing today. To walk away from Labour with no prospects of an alternative would leave this union and its members in the wilderness for years to come. We have to look at political realities. We want Johnson out. We want the whole Tory government out. The only current alternative to the Tories is a Labour government, and it would be different to the Tories, and I well remember the betrayals and let down of the Blair years. None of us should ever forget what they did to this union and their failure to address the issue of trade union rights among other things.

But if we fight to make it so, and politics is a fight, if we fight we can make it a different government to the one we have today. We need to demand, in the Labour Party, our ability as trade unionists to influence policy, to influence government direction, to shape its policies and directions. A Labour government is an opportunity to build our fight. It is not the end of the fight. We should never put our trust in electing a Labour council or a Labour government or whatever. Whenever you elect them you have to carry on putting the pressure on them.

On the outside we will have less of a political voice and that is not in the interests of our members. I don't prettify the situation we are in. It is bleak, but we are where we are. We have to face realities starkly in the face. We have to fight to make the Labour Party a party which does represent working class politics, a party that is actually worthy of the votes of our members because truly it is not always the case. We have to fight to make the Labour Party worthy of the votes of working class people. We need to fight to make an incoming Labour government side with workers against the bosses. We need to fight to make them implement their policies that will benefit our members and other workers.

The Labour Party isn't the only channel we use to advance members' interests. We campaign inside and outside Parliament with a range of campaign organisations. However, the Labour Party remains a terrain on which we organise and fight. It is a battleground and we don't back away from the battle. So when you are discussing our political work this week, I ask you to look at that bigger picture and the lack of alternatives. I hope that delegates will support the executive council's statement. I hope you will take the policies we agree this week into every political avenue, including the Labour Party.

Conference, we have to have a political voice. Politics is a fight. Politics is a struggle. This union never runs away from a struggle. We fight. We carry on. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Dorset and Wiltshire to second.

DIANE CRITCHLOW (Dorset and Wiltshire):

Seconding the EC policy statement on political challenges. Conference, political engagement is a key part of trade unionism, especially for trade unionists who serve in and organising a front line public service which is financed and accountable at both local and national level by politicians, exactly the situation faced by FBU members.

The decisions that drive our service and impact directly on our members are made by politicians, mostly at fire and rescue authority level, who vote on everything from budgets, shift systems and distribution of fire cover. This is why we need a strong and effective political voice.

In the South West region we have seen the key benefits of effective political engagement through a deliberate strategy of engagement in our Labour Party branches. We have seen FBU members and officials becomes active to the extent of being elected as local councillors and subsequently serving on fire and rescue authorities. From Avon to Somerset to Wiltshire we have seen former FBU secretaries sitting as Labour councillors on fire authorities. Comrades, never under-estimate the impact on a chief fire officer when he or she has to answer questions and justify plans to the former FBU brigade secretary on a fire authority. Political engagement at every level is a necessity if we are to achieve our aims, represent our members and progress our agenda across the fire and rescue service.

Politics can be perceived as a dirty word especially to members suffering at the hands of the Tory Party, but it is also the only way to achieve progressive change across our society. But to achieve this we need to engage, influence and be involved. We welcome this EC statement and urge conference to vote for it.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Diane. Hereford and Worcester to move their amendment. *Formally moved.* Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Hereford and Worcester the second amendment. *Formally moved.* Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Thank you. I now call resolution 59, Labour Party Disaffiliation. *Pause.*

I now call resolution 57, Workers Rights Manifesto (Labour Party) moved by Cleveland. The EC support. I am sorry, we are going in numerical order from the programme.

Resolution 57 WORKERS' RIGHTS MANIFESTO (LABOUR PARTY)

Conference recognises the clear support the Labour Party, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, gave to the Fire Brigades Union and the commitment in the Labour Party 'Workers' Rights Manifesto' (2019) to repeal anti-trade union legislation, including the Conservatives undemocratic Trade Union Act 2016 amongst many other positive commitments regarding workers' rights. Conference instructs the Executive Council to gain a commitment from the current leader of the Labour Party that the 2019 Labour Party 'Workers' Rights Manifesto' be included in the next Labour Party General Election manifesto.

CLEVELAND

KARL WAGER (Cleveland):

Moving resolution 57, opposing 59 and supporting the EC policy statement.

Conference, the moving of the resolution is very simple. Unfortunately, for me Sarah Jones made my speech the other day. She is already committed to doing it. What I would ask the EC to do is please hold that pledge to account. Please make sure that it does get done. A workers' rights manifesto within the Labour Party is really important so please hold them to account. It won't be the first time we have been promised something by a politician who has not delivered. Sarah, by the way, will not do that.

Conference, my speech is around the opposition and the support of the policy statement. I will be quick because this this was the only speech I wrote for this week, to be honest, and I have had to cut it down a lot.

First of all I send my solidarity to our comrades in Merseyside who move the next resolution. The fact that you have got a leader of the Labour Party at the minute writing for that filthy rag is an absolute disgrace. The fact we see Labour Party politicians crossing picket lines, Labour Party politicians, scabs, conference. What on earth is going on? But, conference, I urge you to listen to the general secretary. The Labour Party and our position within the Labour Party is a weapon that we need for our members. Think with your head today when you are voting for this resolution. We need that for our members. We are not here for our own – by the way this card, conference, I hold

with such pride. I was a Labour Party youth member and it was with absolute pride that I joined as an adult, and I have nearly thrown that in the bin so many times over the last two years.

As a socialist I feel excluded from the party that I love. I would rather be kicked out of this party than leave. Conference, with all due respect to the top table, I don't agree with what our leadership says, but what I don't do is I don't leave. I organise within, I challenge, and by the way, we overturn them now and then.

Conference think of my political status at the minute. I live in Hartlepool – Hartlepool. My dad lives in Blythe. So if anybody knows the Labour Party at the minute, trust me, it is me, but, conference it is not about me and it is not about you. It is about our members. Please think about it, conference. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 59, Labour Party Disaffiliation moved by Merseyside. The EC oppose. Ian.

Resolution 59 LABOUR PARTY DISAFFILIATION

This Conference recognises that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) re-affiliating to the Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn was a proactive step in our collective struggle to bring about a more just and progressive socialist government.

However, since the election of Sir Keir Starmer, we have watched with a growing sense of unease as the Labour Party has seemingly attempted to purge itself of socialists, actively distance itself from working men and women and sought to align itself with big business.

Conference is no longer convinced that the aims and objectives of the Labour Party reflect those of the FBU. With this in mind Conference demands the FBU disaffiliate from the Labour Party nationally with immediate effect.

MERSEYSIDE

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Moving Resolution 59, Labour Party disaffiliation. Here we go. Conference, I will begin with the glaringly obvious reason a Merseyside official is up here moving this resolution. In 2020 Keir Starmer stood on a hustings in Liverpool and declared "this City has been wounded by the media and I certainly will not be giving an interview to *The Sun* during the course of this campaign." I will be honest, comrades, to even utter the name of that Murdoch rag from this rostrum fills me with shame. For years the people of Liverpool have suffered through the lies and hatred fuelled by Murdoch and his utter right wing comic of a paper. Merseyside members and officials have, and always will, stand shoulder to shoulder with those who have lost and those who have campaigned for truth and justice.

Conference, the events of that day didn't just lead to the tragic deaths of 97 people. It cut deep into the very soul of our city leaving wounds which will never truly heal. Conference, the people of Merseyside will never forgive or forget and neither should we. *Applause.*

So imagine our absolute horror when we discovered not only had that paper been allowed back into the Labour Party but Keir Starmer had decided to write an opinion piece for them. Conference, this can only be seen as one thing. Keir Starmer, pulling back the Union Jack bedcovers and jumping into bed with Rupert Murdoch.

When we re-affiliated to the party in 2015 we did so to support the likes of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell who brought with them progressive socialist policies and a drive and determination to change the face of British politics. Sadly, comrades it wasn't to be. Following months of infighting and sustained smear campaigns, Corbyn was out and the dream was over. In the months that followed we have seen Labour begin the slow slide back to the right, socialists expelled, policies and promises rolled back on and that all too familiar stench of New Labour in the air. Corbyn, the very person we rejoined to support, had the whip removed and even now still languishes on the Labour naughty step following ridiculous accusations of Russian NATO equivocation. How can we as a union remain affiliated to a party who attack our brothers and sisters for speaking out against escalating aggression on the world stage?

In 2021 mayoral elections in Liverpool, the selection was started after the departure of Joe Anderson. Three candidates were shortlisted: Anna Rothery, Wendy Simon, Anne O'Byrne. The process was delayed and suspended without explanation. All three short listed candidates, progressive left candidates, were removed. Another stitch up of the left. Conference, Labour is once again becoming a party of abstainers, fence sitters and Tory enablers.

In 2019 Starmer stood with striking McDonalds' workers and pledged support for a £15 living wage. Why in September was Middlesbrough MP Andy McDonnell left with no choice but to resign his post after being instructed against the £15 living wage? In February of this year the young Labour Party twitter account was suspended for daring to suggest that the Labour Party had to answer for some questionable conflicts. This wasn't Russia or Putin they were coming out and supporting, they were just stating the facts that Labour has walked us into some rather questionable conflicts in the past.

The third reading of the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Bill, Labour MPs whipped to abstain. Thirty four of them, including Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Liverpool MP Dan Carden defied the whip. Comrades, everyone in this room should know only too well what the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Bill is. This is a Bill which allows agents of the state to commit despicable acts in the name of national security. Think special demonstration squad, think blacklisting, think Bob Lambert, think raped by the state. As members of a trade union how can we in good conscience continue to fund a party that abstains on such pernicious, harmful and downright dangerous legislation, legislation which will no doubt once again be used to suppress, infiltrate and attempt to destroy the very movement for which we stand?

Conference, if you support this resolution we will not be the first to disaffiliate. Nor will we be the last. In 2021 the Bakers Union took the decision to disaffiliate. Later this month ASLEF will debate a motion of disaffiliation at their conference. CWU have reduced their funding, as have Unite, the latter considering leaving Labour over the cost of living crisis.

Conference, the writing is on the wall. Labour are no longer interested in promoting progressive socialist policies. They are too concerned with supporting big business and moving the party back to the right. We know there are those who will argue that along with others we are steering the Labour Party, but despite their best efforts, changes to Labour leadership nomination rules still passed. The new 20% ballot threshold which requires nominees to secure the support of at least 40 MPs means it is unlikely we will see another progressive socialist party leader any time soon. We are not saying there are not good people working in the party. Nor are we saying that we should stop working with the movement. In the years that we were not affiliated we still worked to bring about change within the movement and like the RMT, who never reaffiliated even under Corbyn, we will still have a voice.

Conference, all we are saying is that as things currently stand Labour do not represent the interests of our members in policy or deed, and until such a time as they do we must withdraw our affiliation as we would withdraw our labour. Conference, I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Do I have a seconder?

STEVE WISWELL (Greater Manchester):

Seconding resolution 59, Labour Party disaffiliation. President, conference, when our Merseyside comrades asked us if we would support their motion for Labour Party disaffiliation, we thought long and hard about it. We understand both sides of the debate and accept that there are merits on both sides. However, after much deliberation we agreed to second Merseyside's motion.

I myself am a Labour Party member so you may think it strange that I am standing here supporting a motion to disaffiliate from my own party, probably in breach of some rule somewhere, but hey ho.

I am not here to give you my own views. I have been sent here to vote on behalf of Greater Manchester members and I know that when this issue is discussed and debated on fire stations in Greater Manchester or at our brigade committee, the vast majority of our members do not agree with being affiliated to this current Labour Party.

We know and supported the reasons why we rejoined in 2015 and they were right at the time. Jeremy Corbyn led a Labour Party that actively tried to advance the pay, recruitment and conditions of firefighters. Sadly, that Labour Party has gone and this latest version has lurched if not exactly to the right, then definitely to the centre ground where there is little good news for FBU members.

As Merseyside's motion states, the new leader has purged many of the left wing Labour socialists, the very people that are in line with the values and beliefs of the Fire Brigades Union. We in Greater Manchester share the disgust of our Merseyside comrades when Starmer recently wrote an article for *The Sun*. The FBU has been a long standing ally of the Hillsborough Campaign. As a result, I am proud to say that you won't see a copy of that rag on Greater Manchester fire stations. We stand with comrades everywhere calling for justice for the 97.

To this end we would welcome Ian Byrne MP to speak at GMC brigade committee on the Real Truth Legacy project showing that we will commit to continue working with Labour MPs even whilst disaffiliating. The current Labour Party has displayed too many lapses in judgment. It is time to disaffiliate until the Labour Party moves back onside with our aims and values.

This current Labour Party is a throwback to why the FBU left Labour in the first place. This current Labour Party is not a friend of workers. It is not a friend of trade unions and it is not a friend of firefighters. Please support this motion. GMC second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Steve. That's open for debate.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Supporting the EC policy statement and opposing resolution 59 from Merseyside. I think this is the first time I have ever had to speak in opposition to my good friends and comrades in Merseyside, but I think we need to be very clear. The catalyst for the Merseyside brigade committee bringing this resolution was the Labour leader speaking to that vile, lying and destructive rag called *The Sun* that has no place in the workplaces or on breakfast tables of any working man or woman in this country.

I understand the decision to speak with *The Sun* has caused a lot of hurt and rubbed salt in the wounds for the people of Merseyside. However, I would just like to remind you briefly, conference, of the support we get from the Labour Party.

Both Merseyside and Manchester have spoken about disaffiliation. Dan Carden in the Parliamentary Group; Kim Johnson, huge activist on anti-racism, and has spoken on FBU events; Paula Barker MP, Merseyside, has opposed Merseyside cuts, spoke in defence of our union and only recently spoke in the select committee debate on the new appointment of Her Majesty's inspectorate chief adviser; Ian Byrne who spoke at our conference and whose pioneering work on food poverty; in Manchester, Jim McMahon, Angela Rayner, Andrew Gwynne, Rebecca Long-Bailey, who spoke at our fringe this week. And, of course, Andy Burnham who is responsible for fire in Manchester and who has supported the FBU against the chief fire officer a number of times.

Across the country in all of your brigades and regions you will have MPs who are friends of the Fire Brigades Union. The focus shouldn't just be on the parliamentary group because let us not forget the thousands of councillors that work for the FBU and stand up for our rights on fire authorities. The Labour Party was formed to give ordinary people a voice. By our affiliation we have our union's president on the national executive. We have got a parliamentary group to advance firefighters' interests in Westminster where we have 49 MPs exclusive from the Labour Party. We have access to relevant ministers, shadow ministers, parliamentary and policy advisers to shape the legislative programme.

It was founded, rooted in worker representation. By all means, use ...

THE PRESIDENT:

That's enough, Andy, thank you.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Ten secs, president. Use this conference to send a message to the leadership that we need to develop more policies to transform lives but do not send a message that we cannot lose the influence, support and solidarity that our affiliation brings. We oppose the resolution and support the EC.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I just remind delegates we are really tight on time so as soon as you get the red light please wind it up at that point.

AMIT MALDE (B&EMM):

Speaking in opposition. First time speaking in conference. *Applause*. I would like to open by thanking our comrades for bringing this discussion because we do need to have this debate whichever side of the fence you stand on.

There are just a few points I want to make. 2004 was an exceptional time. Now we have a leader who is not aligned with us but it is very different to the attack of 2004, and just affiliating and reaffiliating were right at the time, but I don't think this particularly is strong enough to trigger a disaffiliation. Starmer's tenure is temporary. We have been here for 104 years, and don't forget the Labour Party is the political arm of the trade union movement. It is not the other way round; they don't control us; we should in principle be the ones calling the shots within the Party. We shouldn't let other people take our movement and make us feel unwelcome within it.

I believe we are more effective within and I do believe the future is socialist. Jeremy Corbyn whipped up a frenzy amongst youth, and demographics of the vote in 2019 for Tories was weighted hugely with the elderly, so at some point in the future all the people who were inspired by Jeremy Corbyn will make up the largest block and a socialist future will come in. Sorry, time's up.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Amit.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

Listen, I oppose it personally but I am not here for that. I am not here to take any passion away from the debate or what the resolution actually says. I am here to remind you about our female members the other day that came up and asked you to support and stand up for their resolution. I am standing up for that now, and I ask my comrade from Merseyside in solidarity to remove and apologise for the term 'rape' to describe anything in this resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Any more speakers?

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

Scotland is speaking in support of the EC policy statement and Cleveland's resolution 57, and is abstaining from resolution 59 from Merseyside. I will be brief but you couldn't but sympathise with the hurt and anger both from our comrade from Mersey and also our comrade from the LGBT section.

The political landscape in Scotland is such that it would be wrong to do anything other than take the position than we are on resolution 59. Scottish Members know what it is like. Grassroots members know what it is like for the working class not to be listened to by the Labour Party. A decade ago it almost split the movement.

That said, Scottish members recognise that the grassroots of the Labour Party, the vehicle of the Party, is the best interests of our members, the best way of delivering political change for our members. Leaders come and go. Power comes and goes but the movement remains.

Conference, as we said all week, think long and hard about the decisions you are making. You have a right to be angry, your members have a right to be angry, but we must think what is in the best interests of them in delivering the change we all seek. Scotland supports and abstains.

THE PRESIDENT:

Any more speakers? Right of reply. General secretary.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

I will try to be as quick as possible. I said we don't prettify the situation. Let us be absolutely clear. I think it is actually worse than some of the comrades said. The situation is appalling in the Labour Party, and I am not trying to gloss that over. I think we are facing the worst witch hunts in the entire history of the Labour Party in terms of people expelled, suspended, parties closed and so on. So let's not avoid.

Reduced funding. I don't think Keir Starmer's expecting a great deal of money out of this union for anything he does to be clear. Let us be clear, the Labour Party has never been a socialist party. Even the much vaunted 1945 Labour government which introduced the NHS also sent troops in against striking workers and also had a colonialist foreign policy. If we are telling the truth to ourselves let us tell the whole truth to ourselves.

The RMT was mentioned. I have got good comrades in the RMT but the RMT has been working with the TUSC alliance and I have good friends and comrades who have been involved in TUSC for many years. But TUSC is getting 100 and 200 votes in elections. It is not an avenue to change government.

Steve said that it is a drift to the centre. Actually, I think it is worse than that, Steve, it is a drift to the right. I am absolutely clear in my mind that what Keir Starmer wants to do is to make the Labour Party entirely safe for the British establishment. That is his project.

Now, that doesn't mean it changes my assessment. I am just aware of the scale of the opposition and the struggle that we have got, but when we face up to how big that struggle is, then we know what we have to take on.

People mentioned Labour MPs. Let us be clear what will happen under a Starmer leadership. They will make moves against those MPs. In some cases it is already happening because the Starmer leadership does not want the thorn in the side of socialist MPs in Parliament who actually will break the whip. I support those who broke the whip on several of the Bills, one of which was mentioned there.

I mentioned my friend and comrade, Terry Fields. Terry Fields was expelled while he was a Labour MP from the Labour Party because he stood up for his principles. As I say, we are not glossing over any of it.

Starmer stamped down on the Socialist Campaign Group people who had signed the Stop the War statement, as you will recall. I confronted him directly over this, because if you read the EC policy statements on Ukraine, you can see within that there is criticism of NATO. I drew to his attention and I said, 'I tell you what, Keir, if you don't like it and you want to try and expel the Fire Brigades Union bring it on because we are not backing down. We make our own decisions in this Union about what policies we support.' *Applause.*

We will continue to battle for Jeremy Corbyn. I don't know what will happen on that front, but I tell you what, I suspect everyone in this room hopes that after the next general election Jeremy Corbyn is a member of parliament and we wish him all the best in that.

So comrades, it has been a good debate. We need more on this. Support the EC Policy Statement. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cleveland, right of reply? No. Merseyside, right of reply?

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Just before I start, there was absolutely no offence intended by that statement. It was actually a statement to give it context that was coined by a victim of one of these undercover agents of the state. A man called Bob Lambert entered into a sexual relationship with an activist to gain entry to those activists in the movement. He then disappeared leaving that female with child, so I absolutely apologise if it has caused any offence. *Applause.* But there is context to it and it does need to be highlighted, the despicable lengths that these people will and have gone to.

Very quickly, I am going to get wrapped up. Thanks again for the debate everyone, genuinely, we have had some really good debates not just in here but outside. I think what is very important is the message that goes back to the Labour Party now regardless of which way this goes (I think I know which way it is going to go) which is we are watching you. If you don't start doing and behaving in a way that our members see fit, we will come for you and we will take you out.

We have heard delegates reference the great relationships they have got with MPs and councillors which is to be commended but honestly do we think this will stop if we disaffiliated, that we stop having those conversations, those meetings, those lobbies, those relationships when we were not affiliated last time? It doesn't prevent us working with good party members. It doesn't prevent us from working with people who are sympathetic to our needs and concerns.

We stood in solidarity with Ian Byrne for the Right for Food Campaign and we would continue to do so even if we disaffiliated, not because we are affiliated but because it is right. We do not have to continue to hand over members' money to a party that on the whole doesn't appear to have our members' best interests at heart.

Conference, when we look at things as the lesser of the two evils, there is a saying, isn't there, that if you always vote for the lesser of two evils, you will always have evil and you will always have less. Conference, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. I am now going to put that to the vote. I now put amendment 1 to the EC policy statement to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put amendment 2 to the EC policy statement to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put executive council policy as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

So that means that resolution 59 *falls*.

I now put resolution 57 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call Phil Millar, chair of standing of orders committee to give a standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, now that debate is over the standing orders committee are asking conference to agree a further change to standing order 22 in relation to speakers' times to assist with the completion of conference business today. With your agreement, the mover of a resolution will have three minutes, the seconder two minutes and subsequent speakers one minute.

Also, conference, the stewards have found an iPad in the Charlotte Room where the fringe was held last night, so if any delegate thinks that theirs it is in standing orders and you can come and collect it.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*.

Thanks, conference. As we have said, we have got a lot of business and we don't like cutting the times down but we feel we have to get through business. We didn't want to do it before the political debate because we wanted to give that the time it warranted.

OK. Can I now move conference to page 10 of the programme of business? I call para C2, High rise safety in London; para C3, Health and Safety Advisory Panel; para C4, NFCC and other high rise safety; para C5, Covid-19 firefighters' health and safety; para C8, FBU health and safety committee meetings.

KEVIN DRIVER (Suffolk):

We all know the importance and power of health and safety. It is one of the most powerful tools we have to use against management, and members' health and safety is something that as FBU reps we will also fight to defend.

In region 9 this has been drilled into us by our EC member Brian Hooper, and he has worked tirelessly to protect not only our members in region 9 but also members throughout the whole union writing risk assessments to protect our members notably through the Covid pandemic. This is actually brother Hooper's last conference. So conference please indulge region 9 and myself in a round of applause to thank brother Hooper for his dedication to help protect all members of the FBU. Please conference join me. *Applause*. Conference, please remember health and safety is everyone's responsibility.

THE PRESIDENT:

I call para C9, Memorial days; para C10, Mental health.

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

With mental health being prevalent in our members, especially since Covid compounded it even further, I ask is there plans to restart the research project including the pan membership survey? Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Nobody else?

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank, you president, thank you comrade. Yes, there is. The EC made a decision to commission that research, that study, that project. It was in its early stages so it has not completely formed what the final approach would be, but together with the Nottingham Trent University, it was the advice of the experts from the university that said the period we have just been through and the pandemic would scupper any results that we got from that, and that we were to postpone it which we did. Being in discussion with the general secretary and the executive council, we do plan now to reinvigorate and speak to the university and start the project again. So, yes, we can give you that assurance, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I will now call resolution 35, Support for Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Brigade and Regional Officials. The EC are seeking remittance.

Resolution 35 SUPPORT FOR FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) BRIGADE AND REGIONAL OFFICIALS

Conference notes that approximately one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year, with one in six in the UK reporting experiencing a common mental health problem such as anxiety or depression in any given week. It is also well-established that poor mental health can often lead to physical ailments which only serve to compound existing problems.

Conference is aware of the stresses placed upon Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Officials of all levels in the pursuance of their daily duties, and understands that more often than not those engaged in helping others may be the most in need of help themselves.

The stresses placed on FBU Officials are at times disproportionate to the levels of support and training that is provided, and it is not surprising so many struggle to gain purchase in the face of ever increasing workloads. For the FBU to continue to function we must address the issues of health and wellbeing of Officials, the expectation placed upon Officials and the level of training provided to carry out the myriad of tasks required.

In addressing these issues Conference instructs the Executive Council to devise and conduct a simple survey of Brigade and Regional Officials to ascertain what support they require and how they feel that support should be delivered. Conference further instructs that this work is completed within the next 12 months, that a report of the findings is compiled and that regional meetings are then convened to discuss implementation.

MERSEYSIDE

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Conference, as the president stated in his opening address, it is good to see lots of new faces in the room alongside many of the weathered usual suspects. Like it or not, taking on a role in this or any union is stressful, time consuming and the work leads over into all aspects of our lives.

Given the retirement profile within the fire service and subsequently the FBU, we are beginning to see a turnover of officials at an accelerated rate. Along with this turnover we stand to lose years of hard won knowledge and experience. In many brigades it is compounded by the increased workload which makes succession planning not only difficult but in some instances impossible.

These two issues often see inexperienced officials thrust into positions and in effect forced to tread water, fend off attacks sometimes with little or no support. I know it has been said repeatedly from this rostrum over the years but it bears saying again; it is OK not to be OK. It is OK to ask for help and it is OK to take a step back should you need it.

Conference, we brought this resolution in an attempt to address some of these concerns and highlight the fact that officials at all levels of this union are overworked and sometimes overstretched to breaking point. We do understand the worry over this issue inasmuch as once we ask the question what do we do with the answers. Conference, just because asking the question might provide a difficult answer, it does not mean we should not ask that question. We must support each other if we want to continue to support our members. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. Does that have seconder?

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

Supporting and seconding resolution 35 moved by Merseyside. I am not going to be able to speak as quick as you, Ian. I have very real and personal experience of what it is like to suffer with mental ill health. When I had my beautiful baby boy six years ago I suffered with post-natal depression to the point where I was considering which way would be the least traumatic for my then husband to find me dead. *Applause*. It is weird saying that out loud.

I never actually made an attempt to take my own life. Thanks to the NHS I was lucky enough to have a great health visitor who recognised that I wasn't well and with her help and help from my GP I was put on the road to recovery. I wasn't an FBU official at that time. I was an official a year ago when my marriage broke down and due to previous experiences I recognised that my mental health was beginning to suffer again. So I had to take six months off work, and I am lucky enough to have comrades that I consider friends on the CSNC and on my regional committee, and they kept in contact with me when I was off work and Ed Burrows didn't even try to get me to investigate an ADAE. He was just checking in with me, inviting me into the regional office for a cup of tea and a catch up.

Fast forward to the present day, I feel well again and I am happy. I got stuck back into FBU work which doesn't come without its own stresses. My problem is I can take some issues on personally if it affects, and if an issue I have written 'pees' (can I say 'pisses') me off completely –

THE PRESIDENT:

No. *Laughter*.

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

Strike that from the record. She said 'pees'. One of two things is going to happen. I will either get angry and a number of you in this room have seen me thump a table, or the other thing that could happen is that I will cry. Imagine that. Quite a few of you have now been unlucky to see that as well.

The point I am trying to make is that being an FBU official is bloody stressful at times, and while I am happy to openly talk about my mental health, Merseyside spoke the day before yesterday about toxic masculinity, so it is well-known. I think the survey that Merseyside is calling for is the least that we could do, the same way our employer has a duty of care, I hope the FBU as an organisation has a duty of care for its officials. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks again, Sherri, you've done it again. I have to speak after your speeches, remember. Thank you. That is open for debate.

KEVIN DRIVER (Suffolk):

I would like to speak in support of this. It is actually one of the reasons why this will be my last conference for a while. I am stepping because I have just found the last few years absolutely incredible, the workload, especially during Covid, and I think any programme or any survey we can do just to get the feeling of how officials are at the moment and where their mental health sits I think would be really healthy.

We have a go at our services to have regard for our own mental wellbeing so why not our executive council, and also in Suffolk at the moment we have got ongoing issues with officer workloads. Again, we are under undue strain as reps ourselves, so I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president. Thank you, conference. The executive council has listened to the debate and, yes, the executive council has changed their support to qualified support to this resolution, the only qualification being as we responded to the point on the paragraph earlier that we are starting to reinvigorate our mental health work with the professors in Nottingham Trent University and they have already pulled it back once when we probably would have gone ahead ourselves. The experts said no this will scupper the results, postpone it.

So we don't want to be too restricted about how we deliver this, so the qualified support is we have heard the debate, we hear the resolution, we will weave this into the ongoing mental health project that we are about to start, but practically to have it as part of that is much less restrictive than how it is in this resolution. With that qualification, we hear you, we will follow this up, we will include it in the ongoing work. With that qualification the executive council support. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 35 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now move on to para C11, Safety reps survey.

I now call resolution 68, Station Facilities, moved by Devon and Somerset. The EC support.

Resolution 68 STATION FACILITIES

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to ensure that Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) are maintaining the standard of facilities on fire stations that are set out in the Fire Brigades Union minimum facilities document.

The equality and inclusion work should not be used as an excuse for FRSs to revert to solely unisex facilities which should be provided as an addition to male and female facilities, not an alternative, to ensure that women's safe spaces are maintained.

DEVON and SOMERSET

DAVID ROBERTS (Devon and Somerset):

The FBU minimum workplace facilities documents is as relevant now as when it was adopted by the EC back in 2008. The qualification behind this, well, it is aligned to the workplace regs. That dusty little document that sits at the back of an office somewhere.

This alignment means that our best practice document is still current, it is relevant and it makes provision to foster diversity and ensures dignity in the workplace for all of our members.

Equality and inclusion directives, or quotes from the Gender Recognition Act, should not be used purely for the means to change a sign on a door. Any unisex facilities should be in addition to male and female facilities because they carry unique requirements. They also provide safe spaces for all. So conference, in the interests of dignity and recognising diversity for all members, please support this resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dave. Does that have a seconder?

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

We speak to second resolution 68. National Women's Committee welcomes the resolution to protect separate facilities for privacy and dignity for all members. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

It is open for debate. Anybody?

NICOLA HOBBS (LGBT):

Just a quick one. The unisex facilities aren't to be inclusive. It is to save brigades money. It is easier for them and they are using LGBT+ section members to get cheaper facilities. If they wanted to do that and be all inclusive it would be male, female, and extra. Thank you. I support.

SONNY ROBERTS (B&EMM):

We are in support of resolution 68. Gender neutral facilities have numerous advantages and we actually support increasing the number of unisex facilities for firefighters to use, but as this resolution states this should be in addition to gender specific facilities and not replacement.

Single sex spaces are important for some observant religious groups before praying. Muslims perform ablutions and this cannot be done in mixed sex spaces. Let us not allow our services to present our Muslim comrades with the intolerable choice of exposing themselves to opposite gender in clear contradiction of their faith, worse still abandoning their prayers.

Up and down this country fire services work increasingly hard to remove cultural perceived barriers via positive action to open people's eyes from a number of diverse backgrounds to a potential career in the fire and rescue service. Equality and inclusion is about removing these barriers. It is not about moving them for one protected characteristic and putting them in front of another. We ask you to support resolution 68.

KERRY McCRONE (Scotland):

In Scotland the prospect of unisex facilities prompted numerous firefighters, both male and female, to express their intentions to transfer into stations with separate facilities. I was one of those people. I was a crew commander in a holding pool for a watch commander's post. I was in a watch commander's position at a station which, unknown to me at the time, had unisex toilets. I felt so uncomfortable using it that on my very first day I asked to go back to my previous station even though that would mean I was giving up my promotion.

With firefighters being reluctant to use unisex shower cubicles, this will be detrimental to firefighters' health and safety. It is imperative that we do not deter firefighters from showering after incidents. With the current work into cancer epidemic in firefighters and the DECON campaign we cannot allow fire and rescue services to change to unisex facilities. Scotland supports.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks. I now put resolution 68 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. That carries.

I now call para H2, Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG); para H3, B&EMM section report; para H4, LGBT section report.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

Thank you, president. I would just like to speak again to remind conference and the EC about the importance of having LGBT+ in our rules and publication documents of our union.

Paragraph 2 of H4 clearly states that our own TUC has already included and adopted, accepted the plus. I fully accept and understand the reasons why our rule was ruled out. I am still not sure my members will. The implications of asking our section to go back to members and explain that this tiny little sign has been ruled out is frankly, for me, humiliating: to me, to my reps and the people in this room.

Whilst I understand talks are continuing to ensure we leave this conference with something, and I would like to thank my national officers for all their assistance with this, again I reiterate this is for the inclusion of members that do not identify with LGBT but are part of our membership and part of our community, our sisters, our brothers and others. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Maria.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking under paragraph H4. We recognise the importance of the language we use to ensure our union is inclusive and that we can create a safe place for members. Language includes the written word as well as the spoken and therefore all literatures produced and published by our union should be inclusive. Our rule book should set the example when we consider the language we use. However, in its current form with gender specific pronouns, the rule book cannot be deemed to be inclusive. Can I please ask when the EC reviews the rule book do they intend on making it inclusive by replacing gender specific pronouns such as “his/her”, “he/she”, “himself/herself”, “him/her”, with general terms such as “their”, “them”, “they”, “themselves”, and is there a plan to do this between this and the next conference? In summary, we just need to say “them”. Thanks for your support.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president. Thank you, conference. We hear that, Neil, and we will look at all of those issues when we do review it.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 71, Fire Service Provision for Fire Ground Catering moved by the LGBT Committee. The EC support.

Resolution 71 FIRE SERVICE PROVISION FOR FIRE GROUND CATERING

Conference notes with concern the increasing use by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) of voluntary sector organisations to provide food and refreshments to Members of the service attending prolonged incidents.

Conference is concerned that some of these organisations do not uphold the core values of FRSs in their commitment to inclusivity.

One such organisation ‘Rapid Relief Team’ (RRT) were established by Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (PBCC).

Research into PBCC reveals that they operate policies that exclude Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people from their membership and that they have actively campaigned against LGBT equality.

Conference believes it is wrong for our Members to be expected to accept charity from people who do not share the values of inclusion and respect for difference.

It is the responsibility of FRS employers to ensure that firefighters receive food and refreshments during prolonged deployment at incidents and that they are failing with regard to their obligation to ensure partners embrace the Services’ core principles.

Conference calls on Brigade Officials to raise their concerns with their FRS should they be engaging the volunteer sector to perform this role.

Conference also calls for the Executive Council to raise the matter with the National Joint Council as some Services are potentially failing in their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

LGBT COMMITTEE

NICOLA HOBBS (LGBT):

I urge conference to read about Craig Hoyle's story who was forced to be excommunicated because of his sexual identity. He struggled to be himself as well as keep his religious beliefs and his story of being forced by his leaders into conversion therapy which seeks to change a person's sexual identity. Telling us what we feel is wrong, and I for one know what I feel is not wrong. *Applause.*

Early in March of this year the Plymouth Brethren wrote an open letter to the government objecting to the government's ban on such therapy. The Brethren are openly and publicly against the ethos of our community. The Brethren openly exclude the LGBT+ community and will not allow same sex ceremonies. To have this organisation on a fireground being able to air their views on our section is giving a voice to the very people we speak against.

Our job is to keep our members safe whilst at work. Allowing this organisation amongst our members is not and will not keep us safe. Conference, fundamentally, firefighters should never be relying on charity to have their welfare needs met at operational incidents especially when the value and beliefs of those organisations are not aligned with our own. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder?

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

Conference, I believe the views of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church that provides for fire brigades at incidents is also called the RRT. This organisation has views that are in direct conflict with the FBU. The values of the RRT are in direct opposition with those of the Fire Brigades Union and its members. Many of the Brethren's values will also be in opposition declared by many fire and rescue services across the UK.

Last night I attended a fringe event, Stand up to Racism, and an organisation was mentioned there, called the English Defence League. The EDL was formed in the town where I work, Luton. This far right organisation many of you have probably heard about, its organiser, Tommy Robinson (his proper name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) – if that organisation brought a couple of nice red gazebos and a burger van and started attending incidents and offering welfare, how would you all feel about that? Would it be acceptable? How would people react if a fascist organisation started working for the emergency services? Do you know what, they undermine the values, as I have mentioned before, of myself, the FBU and all the fire brigades across this country. I, for one, would rather go without than accept welfare from this organisation that don't share the same values as us. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate. No. I now put resolution 71 moved by the LGBT committee to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 72, Promoting Inclusion, challenging sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia, moved by the LGBT Committee. The EC are seeking remittance.

Resolution 72 PROMOTING INCLUSION, CHALLENGING SEXISM, RACISM, HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

Conference notes with concern an apparent increase in sexist, racist, homophobic and transphobic abuse of Members and Officials of our Union.

Conference further notes that on occasions this abuse is being perpetrated by Members and Officials of our Union.

Conference acknowledges that the Executive Council are already taking a proactive approach in establishing a working group to look at the issues of sexual harassment and wider equality issues. In addition to the working group Conference also believes our Union would benefit from further external independent assistance to advise on how as a Union we challenge and tackle the issues we currently face and instructs the Executive Council to explore this.

LGBT COMMITTEE

MARIA BUCK (LGBT):

Our resolution speaks of issues, as do others, of sexism, racism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia, and I am here today to let conference know that our members are being subjected to this on a daily basis.

We spoke in depth about the detriment to members regarding their mental wellbeing and looking after one another. Being affected by any of these issues does disproportionately affect members of the equality sections including our comrades in control, the RDS section, the officer section, everybody here today.

We applaud the commitment by the EC by setting up the working group thus far. This shows that the EC has recognised the issues our members are facing and I thank them.

As a rep, I hear the stories. I see the members and I know exactly how it feels, and it is impacting both their work and their personal lives. Living with this not only affects mental well-being but it can affect physically too.

EC, we are not asking for much. We are asking that you explore the benefits of seeking assistance from experts. I am not asking for a review. I am not asking for someone to come and tell us what we are doing wrong. I am asking for the subject matter experts to help.

We ask the EC to only explore the benefits of this. We must acknowledge our own problems and, despite our best efforts, the problem still exists. We must have the courage and conviction to open ourselves up and ask for help. This sends a clear message that we genuinely have a desire to resolve the issues facing me, our members, you, our sisters, our brothers and others. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Do we have a seconder?

CASEY LEGALLE (Leicester):

I am a proud black woman but there are only two black women here. My mum is white British. My dad is black Caribbean. My dad retired from LFB last year and he experienced direct racism. I have experienced indirect racism.

I encourage you all to challenge sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. I support this resolution, I second this resolution, I salute you all. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Casey. I have just been informed that the executive council are now giving qualified support to this resolution. It is open for debate. Remember speakers, you have only got one minute.

STEVE WISWELL (Greater Manchester):

I will get through this as quickly as I can. I thought I was going to be seconding that one. In support of resolution 72 promoting inclusion, challenging sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia.

With concerns of this nature outlined in the resolution's title people often say in response, "show us the evidence, there is no evidence." We in Greater Manchester have got the evidence. We got the evidence from one particular station, which I won't name, as the situation is ongoing. The evidence though was nasty, disgusting, unpleasant, toxic, WhatsApp messages. In one instance a watch manager referred to a member of his own watch with the "N" word. Needless to say, the victim of that comment had not been allowed into the WhatsApp group. It was all there: sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, all the component parts of the toxic masculinity discussed the other day.

As I have said, these messages were disgusting, unpleasant and toxic. The whole situation had and is having a huge impact on the reps and officials involved in this situation so I can only imagine the impact on the victims of this hateful abuse. We can't just blame service managers on this and we do have concerns in Greater Manchester about service managers, but these hateful messages were being circulated by FBU members and we must not lose sight of that fact. The problem is still very real. You can bet your bottom dollar if it is happening in our brigade, then there is a good chance that it is happening in yours. We welcome resolution 72 from the LGBT committee. External assistance is still very much needed. We support.

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

As the debate has already covered, members of our equality section are suffering in our union. The National Women's Committee recognises the abuse experienced by our comrades in the LGBT+ section. They need the same support and prevention we have been asking for our women members.

This resolution does not ask for an independent inquiry but to explore the benefits of external independent assistance. I would argue we have even smaller representation in LGBT+ members in mainstream union structures than our women. This external assistance would address this lack of representation in truly tackling sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and promote inclusion. Conference, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, do you agree to suspend standing order 16? *Agreed.* Thank you.

SONNY ROBERTS (B&EMM):

I am going to tell you something really strange now. Obviously, when I look in the mirror I can see what my skin colour is. I know where my culture comes from. I know where my family comes from, but before I joined the fire service I was never made aware as much of what my colour was and how different I was. I was met with inappropriate comments that I have had to defend numerous times with my colleagues, and I put it down to ignorance. These happen over and over again. Whilst now I have established myself in the fire service and I have been able to stand up to these people and those comments have stopped, I have started to see them continue towards other people, and not just people of colour but also women, LGBT+ people, you know. We are lying to ourselves if we say that we don't see it happening or at some point we have not seen it. Please support.

DAVE WELSH (Durham):

This is the first time on the rostrum so please bear with me. *Applause.* Conference, I will keep this short. We have had some excellent debates over these last few days, some of which have pulled on my heart strings. I am sure they have pulled on yours. Again, I will bring to conference's attention our sisters and the appalling misogynistic behaviour they are facing on a daily basis.

So conference I present this to you all now. As officials of the Fire Brigades Union inaction is intolerable on all areas of racism, homophobia and transphobia. We all need to play a part when we go back to our service brigades and stamp this rot out. Let's all go home, challenge all areas of sexism and stop this rot in its tracks within our fire and rescue services. I stand here empowering you all to promote inclusion, educate all members and weigh in the benefits of speaking out on this. Conference, we are all leaders. We are leaders of this fantastic Fire Brigades Union. Let's get this done. This is an exploratory exercise. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

President, conference, qualified support comrades. We were never against any of the sentiment within this resolution. All we ask in the qualification is when we approached the Sexual Harassment Working Group it was done methodically. We had evidence. We had the Monaghan Report. We had the TUC Working Group. We ask that we are not restricted from approaching this in that same way. So we will liaise with the sections to explore the similar steps we did going into the other working group. With that qualification we support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I now put resolution 72 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, we are now going to have a short two minute video. *Video shown.*

Conference, I want you to give a warm welcome to Frances O'Grady, the general secretary of the TUC. Frances is a great friend to this union. She has been a regular at our events, our picket lines and our conference over many years. She spoke to conference before when she was the TUC deputy general secretary and has spoken many times at our conference as the TUC general secretary.

We are sad to learn that Frances is stepping down at the end of the year because there is still much to do for the TUC and I am sure that work will carry on as we face many battles ahead. We know that workers' solidarity and unity is the only answer. Frances, I welcome you to our conference to explain what the TUC are doing to respond to the situation.

FRANCES O'GRADY (General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress):

Thanks very much for that welcome, Ian, Matt, sisters, brothers, thank you for the invitation.

Just in case anyone from Downing Street is looking for a bit of advice, can I just point out that this is what a real work-related event looks like? *Applause*. No karaoke, no suitcases of booze, no cheese on sticks and no porky pies; just decent men and women who, like all key workers, worked right through this pandemic making personal sacrifices, putting your health and sometimes your lives on the line, just as you have always done, and too often paying a high price as your red plaque scheme now makes visible in our communities.

Delegates, if there is any justice in this world, it is high time the firefighters, control room staff, key workers, all working people, get the respect and the real pay rise that they have well and truly earned.

On behalf of the TUC and executive general council, I want to begin by thanking your general secretary, Matt, for his comradeship and his commitments, and I want to thank you, delegates, for everything you did for us during the pandemic and for the work that you continue to do in your workplaces, your branches and your communities. You are the standard bearers in the fight for fairness at work, and never forget how much the rest of the movement looks to the FBU for your leadership. After all, your union sets the standard for rock solid organisation. The chances are if you work in a fire station or a control room, you will be carrying an FBU card.

Every day of the week your reps deliver better working lives, from pensions justice for retained firefighters to vital health and safety improvements. And your union has led the way on key challenges for our movement and for our country born of real life working experience and expertise, not least in speaking up so powerfully about the dangers of climate change, including flooding and the risk of catastrophic wild fires, and demanding that socialist green new deal to put people on the planet before profits.

I also want to pay tribute to your internationalism. This union has a proud record, second to none, of working for peace and offering the hands of friendship to working people around the world. Most recently you have delivered fire engines and equipment to Ukrainian firefighters facing, frankly, the most unimaginable horrors, humanitarian aid when and where it is needed most. Trade union solidarity and internationalism at its best.

The rest of the movement also looks to FBU to set the standards for dignity at work and in our movement. Whatever our race, our religion, our background, men and women, all working people deserve respect and solidarity, and this is not just words, delegates. Bosses will always try to pit worker against worker, trying to divide us by our job, our grade, or the colour of our skin. All our history teaches us is that strength relies on unity and that means in everyday life sharing the power that we have.

Let's remember all forms of discrimination, they have a human cost. So if you take prejudices, for example, and behaviours like sexism, they make doing a tough professional job even harder. As our TUC survey showed, over half of women experience sexual harassment at work: that's mothers, that's daughters, that's our sisters, and it feels – and I say this from personal experience because I reckon every woman in the room has had this experience and may be some men too – but it feels humiliating. It chips away at your wellbeing and your self-confidence and ultimately that weakens our union too. As a movement we have to lead by example so let's do everything in our power to ensure that at work and in our unions everyone is seen as equal, everyone is of equal worth and everyone is treated with respect. *Applause*.

Delegates, last time I spoke at your conference was in the aftermath of the Grenfell disaster, a time when we saw a disgraceful attempt from the usual suspects to blame firefighters for the failure of government to regulate obscene corporate greed. Since then the FBU has played a critical role in the public inquiry demanding that that inquiry considers the wider politics and economics of what led to the disaster. Five years on we are still waiting for

the answer, for truth, for justice. Hundreds of thousands of people are still living in unsafe buildings. Ministers and developers are still refusing to foot the bill for dangerous cladding, and Grenfell survivors are still not getting the support that they need. That this could happen in the richest borough of Europe's richest city speaks volumes, and I tell you that is what makes some of our evidence to the Inquiry from politicians so difficult to stomach.

Take former secretary of state for communities and local government, Eric Pickles: on camera complaining to the inquiry chair about having to stay longer for questioning, never mind the feelings of the bereaved and survivors. He is a very important man! He would have to change his schedule. He has an extremely busy day. I don't know what this man has running through his veins, but whatever it is it is icy cold. *Applause.*

Don't forget, this is the same Eric Pickles who four years before Grenfell stripped away section 20 of the London Building Act, fatally weakening fire safety requirements for high buildings. Yet he has the sheer arrogance, the bare faced cheek, to tell the Inquiry that this disaster was nothing to do with deregulation. Conference, it is time to set the record straight because Grenfell was no act of God; it was a disaster driven by deregulation accelerated by neglect and powered by austerity.

We all know the Tories have cut the fire service budget by 30%. David Cameron axed one in five firefighters and closed scores of stations, and under this Tory government both response times and fire deaths are up. Delegates, let's be clear. This is no way to run an emergency service.

Now we have got a Tory going on the attack again, not just giving more powers to police and crime commissioners to run fire services, not just giving chief fire officers more powers to dictate workers' terms and conditions, but looking to shut you out of collective bargaining by imposing a pay review body, at a time when we are in the midst of the worst cost of living crisis in generations. As the TUC exposed, energy bills already rising 14 times faster than wages, inflation surging towards 10%, families are struggling and children are going hungry. As we saw, two million people in the UK, many of them children, cannot afford to eat every day. What does that say about this country?

Frankly, they don't need cooking lessons from Tory MPs; they need more money. And, of course, it is not just the poor. Everyone can see the crisis in the price of the weekly shop, in household bills and on bank statements. In fact, perhaps if the chancellor spent a little less time on Instagram he could see it too.

But what has been the government's response to working families? Tax hikes and benefit cuts. Instead the TUC has called for an emergency budget. We want a proper living wage and fair pay agreements, decent sick pay, a boost to universal credit, a windfall tax on greedy energy giants, and the equalisation of capital tax with income tax, because, yes, we all want to see more money for the NHS and social care. But conference it is time to raise tax on wealth not workers. *Applause.*

Whether it is public or private, working people everywhere are demanding better. The prime minister said that Britain would be the best place in the world to work. Well, try telling that to the 800 sacked crew members at P&O Ferries: unlawfully sacked over Zoom and replaced with exploited agency labour on 12 hour shifts, seven days a week, paid less than half the statutory minimum wage in this country – gangster capitalism at its worst.

We said that P&O must be a turning point on workers' rights, because if P&O can get away with it, then no worker is safe. I used to say that if the P&O had sacked our members then the government should sack P&O. Well, I have to say I have got to the stage where let's cut to the chase, let the people sack the government. *Applause.*

Because whenever this prime minister's lips move you know he is lying. Three years ago he promised us an Employment Rights Bill. Well, there was no sign of that in the Queen's Speech. A kick in the teeth for workers, a godsend for rogue employers who treat their staff like dirt.

The government said it can't find the parliamentary time. Funny that, because they found plenty of time to implement the so-called unfinished business of the 2016 anti-Trade Union Act. Every Tory government ever since the 1980s has brought in anti-union laws, each one designed to worsen working conditions, weaken workers' bargaining power and fix the odds in favour of bad bosses.

I see the recently retired chief inspector of the fire and rescue service, Sir Tom Winsor – what do you have to say to get a knighthood these days – he recommended consideration of the removal of the right of firefighters to strike. Well, we have a message for him and for those who speak from the whole movement: the right to strike is a fundamental human right and if you attack it, we will fight you tooth and nail. *Applause.*

Conference, whatever happens at Westminster, our best defence will always be growing union membership, building organisation and backing our reps to win justice for workers. We demand fair shares of the wealth that working people create. We want strong public services to protect us all and strong rights, proper safety and financial security for working people.

And we need to learn the lessons from that terrible pandemic. At the TUC, the whole movement, we campaigned for an independent public inquiry and we got one. Together with the bereaved families we are now demanding answers: why it was that key workers on the front line were left so badly exposed with poor PPE and ventilation and unions were the only people who provided hope of protection, why it was that so many lucrative contracts ended up in the pockets of ministers' VIP mates? And why from unemployment to death rates black and ethnic minority people bore the brunt.

The TUC's anti-racism task force with Matt in its membership, led by Patrick Roach, is making anti-racist action a priority for the whole movement, improving the way that we organise, bargain and campaign for race equality, making our own movement more inclusive for reps, officers and staff. Just to say on behalf of that anti-racist task group, thank you FBU for your *All different All equal* work, putting equality at the heart of everything you do. Thank you.

I know that when we work together in unity, when we combine our power we are unstoppable. Who was it who won the furlough schemes that at the height of the pandemic protected the livelihoods of 12 million workers? We did, the trade union movement did that. Who has proved that carrying a union card still makes a massive difference to pay, pensions, safety, paid time off and learning opportunities? We have. That is the trade union movement that has done that.

And who has recorded net membership growth from public services to the likes of Deliveroo and Uber? We have recorded net membership growth for the last four years in a row. Together we have done that.

Now on 18 June, as you have heard, the TUC general council has called a national demonstration in London demanding action on the cost of living, a decent pay rise for all and a new deal for working people. So delegates let's spread the word in our workplaces and in our communities. Let's make this the biggest, the best mobilisation this movement has seen in years, men and women, black and white, whatever our background or job, a real show of strength and friendship between all working people because together, united, we will win. Thank you and solidarity. *Applause.*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Frances, on behalf of conference thanks so much for giving up your time to attend today. I think you can see the response, the warmth, friendship and comradeship that the conference has towards yourself and the role that you have played in the TUC.

Frances has been a pioneer. If you look at the trade union movement today compared with when Frances became general secretary, we now have the two biggest unions in the country led by women general secretaries. That is a complete transformation of our movement compared with 20 years ago, for example. Frances has led much of that work that has allowed those debates to flourish and develop.

You have been a good friend to this union. She has stood on our picket lines. We did a tour of East London fire stations, stood on picket lines at Shoreditch and Bethnal Green and elsewhere during our London disputes, and again in our pension disputes. So I thank you for all that solidarity. It is sad to see that Frances has announced she is moving on. I am sure that conference will wish you all the best for that. We have got time to say farewell. I remember the Boston sing song story that she told conference last time. We have got time to say farewell to

Frances but I know conference will wish you all the best for your retirement for the future, and I have a small token of our appreciation. *Applause.*

PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Frances. Conference, we are going to have another photo opportunity, so will the executive council go down to the front again please. *Pause.*

conference photo.

Let's get back under way. I now call resolution 73, An Inclusive Union, Keeping the T in LGBT, moved by the LGBT Committee. The EC support. Just before that, Phil, standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you president. Just some delegate changes and arrangements for lunch. conference, can you go to your delegate List. Region 5, Greater Manchester, replace David Pike with Sam Merriott; region 7, Shropshire, Louise Fletcher, replace with Matt Lamb; and region 9, Bedfordshire, replace Mark Cook with Craig Carter.

Conference, regarding lunch, there will be a shortened lunch break today as close to 12.45 as we can make it, and that will be in the form of a packed lunch which will be out on tables in the hallways. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.* Thank you.

I now call resolution 73, An Inclusive Union, Keeping the T in LGBT, moved by the LGBT Committee. The EC support.

Resolution 73 AN INCLUSIVE UNION, KEEPING THE T IN LGBT

The Fire Brigades Union has a proud history of standing up for equality and diversity and fighting to make Fire and Rescue Services inclusive workplaces.

Conference notes with concern the emergence of some political lobby groups who seek to exclude Trans from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans equality movement.

Some of these lobby groups are growing in influence and are making demands for reform of the Equality Act 2010. The Conservative government has long hated this legislation and reforms by them would water down the protection people with protected characteristics already benefit from. Conference calls on all Officials and Members to be vigilant of these groups. Our Union is built on inclusion and we will continue to represent all minorities.

LGBT COMMITTEE

NICOLA HOBBS (LGBT):

Since the review of the Gender Recognition Act, our members have noticed with concern an increase in action appears designed to exclude the trans community from the LGBT+ equality movement. New campaign groups have emerged that are intent on dividing our section members or more specifically isolating our trans friends.

Their influence may give this Tory government the ticket it needs to water down protections by reforming the Equalities Act. Our members feel strongly that the societal and work-related issues faced by people with non-normative expressions or experiences of either gender or sexuality are inherently interconnected. Our members are always stronger together.

Conference, it is paramount that we now reaffirm our commitment to representing all minority members and remain vigilant to any threats posed to unity. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Nicky, does that have a seconder?

KATHRYN DUNCAN (National Women's Committee):

Conference, president, I am really happy here to be seconding this motion, and I feel it is really important with all this toxic behaviour seen in the media and within some of our own women's groups.

However, I think it is really important that National Women's Committee stands with the LGBT+ section because we will not be divided. The Tory government took away the equalities performance. We do not want to be siding with them. It is important that we stand by our trans friends and our plus friends. So we need to keep the 't' because we are stronger together and if they divide – I was just looking at that video earlier – because divided we will fall, and I hope that our conference stands together with the 't'. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kathryn. That's open for debate.

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

Just very quickly, Scotland supports the LGBT's resolution for LGBT+ committee's resolution. I made exactly the same mistake. I am here for two things: one to support the resolution. We should fight division anywhere within our movement, our committees, throughout our union and the wider structure and we always have to be alive to that.

I am also here to apologise to our sisters. When I was speaking in the previous debate on the EC policy statement this morning, and I think this probably underlines the point they were making earlier throughout this conference in referencing our agenda, our referencing was the LGBT committee. I acknowledge their preference LGBT+ committee. I hope they will accept my apology at the rostrum. If we are going to lead our movement, we have to recognise the errors we make at the rostrum where we put them. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, John. Nobody else? Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you president, thank you conference. The EC are supporting this resolution. We heard Frances speak earlier about attempts to pit worker against worker. Conference, the tactic of dividing working people over the issues like the one set out in this resolution is a tactic as old as time, to get us kicking at each other rather than kicking up at those truly responsible for our struggles, and this union rejects that tactic. It is a tactic of the bosses, it is a tactic of our class enemy. This rejects it. This conference has made firm commitments over the last few days to reject, and therefore we reject any groups that promulgate or facilitate that. We support this and solidarity forever with our LGBT+ comrades.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Riccardo. I will now put resolution 73 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Para H5, Women's section report. I now call resolution 65, Residential Course Blocking Recruitment and Promotion for Primary Care Givers moved by the National Women's Committee. The EC support.

Resolution 65 RESIDENTIAL COURSE BLOCKING RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION FOR PRIMARY CARE GIVERS

Women have been working as operational firefighters since the 1980s. Recruitment and retention of women firefighters has slowly improved since then. However, women still make up a small minority of operational positions.

This is even more noticeable as progression through the ranks is considered.

This is due in part to individuals being forced to attend residential courses as part of the training required for promotion. Some recruit courses for trainee firefighters are also held on a residential basis. This process is a barrier to many who have caring responsibilities, disproportionately affecting women and as such has a negative effect on women applying or being successful.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to conduct a national survey on current residential

courses, promotional and otherwise attended by Fire and Rescue Service staff. This will establish whether these are able to be offered at more accessible locations on a daily attendance basis ensuring better support for all our Members who are the primary care givers. The results of this survey are to be reported back through the Fire Brigades Union structures within 12 months of Conference 2022.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

GEORGINA FIELDING (National Women's Committee):

Conference notes that many of our future members are being blocked from entering our great service. Many of our current members are unable to engage in specialist roles or take part in training required for promotion. It is simply due to their inability to attend residential courses.

What single parent or primary carer can leave their responsibilities at home in order to attend a residential course for a week? I couldn't. I have got my two-year old here. Thank you for the crèche being here to be here today to debate important issues. Residential courses like are SRTs in Nottinghamshire, we go to Wales for a week. For me to leave my two-year-old for a week, I couldn't do it. But people have younger children months old. To leave them for a week is not possible for feeding reasons, but for more reasons than that. For this reason, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder?

CASEY LEGALLE (Leicestershire):

In support for 65 and seconding. I am a primary care giver. My daughter is 7 years old. She cooks, cleans, walks to school on her own, doesn't need a baby sitter! Obviously, that's not true – all while we are on residential courses. If I wanted to join Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service now I wouldn't be able to for this reason. I want to join technical rescue. I am unable to for this reason. I went to women's' school last month, and I was able to do that along with a few members in here because the FBU put on a crèche and child care which was fantastic.

If we continue to hold residential courses we stop primary care givers not only from progressing and expanding their skills, but we also stop them from joining the fire service. Because most primary care givers are women, this will stop us from diversifying our service and our union. So NWC I support you and I second you. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Open for debate.

LINDSAY BLAKE (County Durham):

This is a great resolution and it is helping to create and ensure fair opportunities and helping create a diverse work force and more diverse leadership in our fire and rescue services. I absolutely support this resolution.

DIANE CRITCHLOW (Dorset and Wiltshire):

Supporting resolution 65. Residential courses are a barrier to promotion and to experience which leads to promotion. This means that we have less role models in higher positions. That means that we have less chance of having a more diverse work force. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, conference. The executive council are supporting this resolution. One small comment. It requires us to do the survey within a time period. We will do that, but conference it is you we are surveying so we urge that when we do put the request out, please do get the information back as comprehensively and as timely a manner as possible. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference. I now put resolution 65 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now move to para H6, All Different All Equal representation requests. I now call resolution 64, All Different All Equal (ADAE) Training and Application, moved by the National Women's Committee with one amendment from Scotland. The EC are giving qualified support and support Amendment 1.

Resolution 64 ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL (ADAE) TRAINING AND APPLICATION

As Members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) it is 'the duty of every member to treat others with dignity and respect and to challenge offensive behaviour of any kind' (Rule B3(3) of the FBU Rule Book). We proudly have an ADAE policy which allows us to challenge racism, sexism, and all forms of discrimination but these behaviours are still seen in our workplaces and within our membership. Conference should be aware that there have been great inconsistencies in how the ADAE process is implemented and executed. Often this is down to misconceptions or unfamiliarity with the process, possibly due to time elapsed since training.

There have also been clear breaches of the policy including Members being given representation after the ADAE process has determined that representation should be withdrawn.

Our Union provides a thorough three-day training course available to train reps in becoming an ADAE investigator. This training is for reps who have experience within the Union and are Fairness at Work trained. Therefore, there are numerous reps earlier on in their Union pathway that are unfamiliar with the ADAE process and how vital it is for our Union and the values it represents.

Many regions within our Union believe it to be best practice for one of the two investigators carrying out the ADAE investigation to be from our equality sections. Reps from Equality sections can bring their lived experience of being from an underrepresented group to the process ensuring fairness and equality. There is also a lack of qualified Officials to carry out the ADAE process in many regions.

To make sure our ADAE process is fit for purpose, Conference instructs the Executive Council to;

- provide initial training on the ADAE process as part of the 'Introductory Branch Officials Course' so that Reps are aware of the process and able to support Members without being trained as an investigator*
- provide 'refresher' training to all those who are currently ADAE qualified, to address misconceptions and cement understanding*
- provide courses and push for more ADAE qualified Officials in each region*
- reword the All Different All Equal Policy on Page 13 to include that one investigator of the ADAE process must be from an equalities section wherever possible.*

In cases where the ADAE policy is misused, abused, or wilfully ignored, Internal Union Discipline should be applied as per the Rule Book.

This work should be completed as soon as possible and before Conference 2023.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT 1

7th paragraph, 4th bullet point, 2nd line delete 'must' insert 'should'

SCOTLAND

KATHRYN DUNCAN (National Women's Committee):

All Different All Equal is a very divisive policy within our union. Two days ago I stood here and I had one speech. Yesterday I changed the speech because the solidarity I felt in that room two days ago changed yesterday – not completely, but a little bit.

A lot of the arguments, the confrontations, the upset caused is as a result of All Different All Equal and the application of it.

Yesterday there was opposition to a vote that was clearly only about 12 members of our union, 12 officials of our union, and I was one of them. Yet that vote yesterday turned into a political statement. People got up and argued against a regionally elected official no longer being able to suspend a nationally elected official, and that I believe was down to politics and down to people's misunderstanding (in some cases), and in some cases some members and officials of our union believe that our union card is a get out of jail free card no matter for what you do.

So I am now going to give you some examples of what has happened up and down our country which has led to some All Different All Equals either being carried or not being carried, or then representation being given and then withdrawn on appeal. In your executive book it tells you what regions have done for All Different All Equal investigations. Just remember an All Different All Equal investigation is carried out when somebody has been a bully or somebody has sexually assaulted somebody. So these are the things that have happened up and down our regions.

Women have been sexually assaulted on stations where their assaulter has said they did it but we are still giving them representation. Does that sit with you? Women have been sexually harassed across brigades and what's more, oh – so if you stand in solidarity, put the politics aside, let's forget that we don't like All Different All Equal and get behind it because you are supporting us, you are supporting the sections and you are supporting your men that are being bullied as well. So we need better training and people all need to know how to apply the All Different All Equal because our membership will no longer tolerate our officials representing bullies and people who sexually assault women on stations. It will not happen. It will not go on. Conference, I move. *Applause.*

THE PRESIDENT:

Well done, Kathryn. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is open for debate. I am sorry, Trevor, just sit down. I have got the amendment there from Scotland. *Formally moved.* Thank you. Has the amendment got a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Trevor.

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking in support of this resolution. I cannot sit and listen to that without getting up and supporting it. Myself, as many of you have, have conducted interviews. It is not easy. I have had the training for it. I have put my best into it, but I would like to reassure every member of this conference that we wouldn't tolerate that. We are not supporting bullies and I would urge everybody else to act that. If something has gone wrong, put your foot down, stand up, call it out and do the right thing. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thanks president, conference. It was quite difficult to listen from Sister Duncan, and probably reaffirms how important this policy is and why we can be proud of it and why it is looked at around the movement as something that we can be proud of. The EC are offering qualified support to this resolution, and we are supporting Amendment 1. It is unworkable with Amendment 1 simply. The 'must' has to become a 'should' or it won't be able to be put in place into regions where we have not yet quite got our full contingent of reps.

We also know there is a bit of a commitment here to work together with head office and the equality sections on getting our sectional members trained and being able to deliver the aims of this resolution.

I think the final qualification is we will be developing some guidance on this because in those areas where we do not yet have our full contingent of equality reps, we may only have one we may have none, we don't want our activists and our reps within our sections simply doing back to back ADAE investigations constantly and not developing their skills, not representing, not doing their other work and their other activism.

So with that sentiment and that qualification, conference, the executive council support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I now put amendment 1 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 64 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 66, All Different All Equal (ADAE) moved by B&EMM. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 66 ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL (ADAE)

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have been leaders in the struggle for equality and fair treatment for all. The ADAE concept, unique within the trade union movement, has at its very core a commitment to oppose, challenge and eradicate all forms of discrimination within the workplace. Equality is embedded into every union activity.

The principles of the policy are to uphold fairness at work for all and to ensure inappropriate behaviour is not welcome amongst our membership. By doing this, it provides security to those with protected characteristics in Fire and Rescue Services.

Whilst Conference can recognise that the implementation of this policy was ahead of its time and highly commended, in reality it is not fully abided by, carried out successfully or enforced in a number of cases.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to fully review the ADAE policy bolstered and enforced including thorough consultation with the B&EMM, NWC and LGBT Sections of the FBU. In particular, we need the equality sections to be more integrated into the process, including introducing a mandate to notify the relevant secretary of a section when one of their Members is the complainant in an ADAE investigation so appropriate support can be provided by the section.

B&EMM

SONNY ROBERTS (B&EMM):

Looking to move resolution 66 All Different All Equal. The FBU has a long and proud tradition for leading the struggle for equality and the fair treatment for all in the workplace.

We can take pride in the battles won and the improvements made over the year, but we need to be honest. We can do more. This is an ongoing issue that needs constant amending and updating due to the dynamic and ever changing diverse workforce.

The All Different All Equal concept has at its very core a commitment to oppose, challenge and eradicate all forms of discrimination without the work place.

As our general secretary says in his introduction to the All Different All Equal document, every worker within the fire and rescue service has everywhere the right to come to work and be free from feelings of discomfort or anxiety because they are different in some way. The FBU is fully committed to the eradication of all discrimination in the work place from outright bullying and harassment to mockery and inappropriate jokes or comments.

Fairness at work must be a practice not just a policy so that all members can flourish and fulfil their potential in an environment free of prejudice. The FBU has led its way in the trade union movement with the landmark and unique All Different All Equal policy. As many of you are aware, this policy deals with the representation of members when issues of bullying, harassment and discrimination are involved.

As spoke about earlier, this policy is the envy of the trade union movement. TUC tutors often comment and commend at how pioneering we are as a union for having such a forward thinking commitment to equality and we should take a moment to rightfully accept this praise. But the All Different All Equal policy has been in for a while and we should be mindful of complacency.

The intention of this policy was not to be a tick box exercise or a one off commitment to equality, but an ongoing dynamic policy that forms part of the core of the FBU's commitment to equality. Whilst conference can recognise that the implementation of this policy was ahead of its time and highly commended, unfortunately too many times the process is not carried out successfully or enforced in several cases, leading many members to feel let down, marginalised or even feeling that they are in the wrong for reporting the mates of their reps.

Conference, can we instruct the executive council to now fully review the All Different All Equal Policy which should incorporate with B&EMM, the National Women's Committee and the LGBT+ section of the FBU? In particular, our equality sections should be better integrated into the All Different All Equal process. We recommend introducing a mandate –

THE PRESIDENT:

Sonny, can you start winding up please.

SONNY ROBERTS (B&EMM):

Yes. We recommend introducing a mandate to notify the relevant secretary of the section where one of the members is the complainant in an All Different All Equal investigation, but this support would need to be agreed with the relevant member as maintaining their wishes is paramount. Conference, I ask for your support. I move resolution 66.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sonny. Does that have a seconder? Conference, we have still got lots to get through so please when you get the red light just wind it up as quick as you can.

KAREN BELL (London):

First time speaker at conference. *Applause*. Conference we wish to support resolution 66. We are delighted that B&EMM have brought this resolution to conference and that the EC have permitted the resolution to remain with the understanding that the wishes of the members are paramount and, as such, the sharing of the complainant's information with section secretaries is with the consent of the complainant.

With that now clarified, firstly, it is important that recognise that ADAE is complex and the process long and somewhat daunting, especially for the complainant possibly going through a particularly torrid time affecting both their professional and personal life. By engaging with the appropriate sectional secretary an additional arm of support can be offered outside of the ADAE process itself. This additional arm of support often from those who have lived experience of discriminatory practices would offer support and advice at a deeper level.

Additionally and crucially, the ADAE process isn't evidentially processed underpinned by the all-important 2010 Equalities Act. The appropriate section within the Union, namely B&EMM, LGBT+ and NWC pride themselves on their extensive knowledge of the Act often embarking upon additional education beyond what is required of them as elected officials. They live, breathe and regurgitate aspects of the Equalities Act on a daily basis and as such are best placed a review of the ADAE process. They have actually utilised our extensive knowledge that we have within our union and built on this ground breaking ADAE policy to make it as robust as humanly possible so that we can confidently say that with a policy that is fit for purpose, this would enable the reps to concentrate fully on providing representation appropriately. Conference, I urge you to support. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Now if you can all be as quick as that and as precise as that, we will be all right. OK, that is open for debate.

KATHRYN DUNCAN (NWC):

I absolutely support, we all support B&EMM's resolution. Karen touched on what I wanted to say, but I wanted to reinforce it to you. The people that are brave enough – and what was it, 1% that was mentioned earlier that people facing discrimination are likely to tell a union rep – if they are brave enough, they come forward. No more should the sectional representative that support these people in hearings be told to leave the room. No longer should these people be grilled by union reps who believe that you have a get out of jail free card with your union membership, because that is not true. Divided we fall. Solidarity.

THE PRESIDENT:

Riccardo to give the qualification.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

President, conference that is the quickest I have heard you speak, Karen. The executive council are offering this qualified support. Sonny covered one of the issues in that the member's wishes are paramount here if they don't wish for it to be passed on, and the other qualification is that the EC say the provision should apply for the applicant as well to inform the relevant section as well as the complainant, but with those qualifications, the executive council support. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I now put resolution 66 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 75, All Different All Equal (ADAE) moved by London. The EC support.

Resolution 75 ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL (ADAE)

Conference recognises the importance of the ADAE Policy. Conference also notes that it is important as a Union we continue to learn, evolve and improve and that transparency and accountability must be at the heart of all that we do.

Conference notes that Section 4 of the appeals section of the ADAE policy states:

'If, upon the basis of all the evidence before it, the representation appeals committee considers that the regional committee should not have refused or granted representation, it may reverse or amend the decision as it considers appropriate, in its absolute discretion. The decision of the representation appeals committee will be final and shall be conveyed in writing to the parties, the general secretary and the regional secretary'.

Conference notes that it is important that we are accountable and transparent, it is equally important that we learn from our mistakes or we will continue to make them.

Conference therefore demands that section 4 of the appeals section of the ADAE policy be amended to read:

'If, upon the basis of all the evidence before it, the representation appeals committee considers that the regional committee should not have refused or granted representation, it may reverse or amend the decision as it considers appropriate, in its absolute discretion. The decision of the representation appeals committee will be final and shall be conveyed in writing to the parties.

The general secretary, and the regional secretary will also receive a full written report from the representation appeals committee detailing reasons that the decision was reversed or amended, that they may share with their regional committee'.

LONDON

ROSS McLAREN (London):

Officials that are asked to carry out an ADAE enter the process with integrity, equality, impartiality and the focus to carry out a fair and unbiased investigation of facts and evidence as taught on the course.

With this resolution we are plainly asking that in the event of an outcome of an official's ADAE investigation that if it is overturned then we would simply receive feedback and reasoning as to why it was overturned. How are we meant to learn if we are not told what we apparently got wrong to justify it being overturned?

If you overturn it, provide feedback to the officials that you asked to conduct it so that we can develop for our members. Conference, I ask you to support resolution 75 so we can better ourselves for our members. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ross. Can I have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

That is open for debate. No.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president, conference, just simply on behalf of the executive council and as the secretary to the representation appeals committee, I can assure conference that the union does keep very detailed records and minutes of all of the appeals, so providing this information isn't going to be a problem and it will be provided to conference. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I will now put resolution 75 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, can you now turn to page 12 on the programme of business. I now call resolution 46, Support for the NHS, moved by Humberside. The EC support.

Resolution 46 SUPPORT FOR THE NHS

Conference knows all too well the pressures put on public services, none more so than our NHS. Following years of purposeful and malicious underfunding and degradation, conditions for the Doctors and Nurses (who pulled our country through this pandemic) are at an all-time low, leaving some workers with no choice but to leave the profession they love. This Government continues to lurch further and further to the right and, in doing so, continues to force privatisation on our NHS. Conference instructs the Executive Council to actively and unwaveringly stand with the NHS and their associated Unions and reaffirm the Fire Brigades Union support by strengthening our ties, nationally and locally, in the spirit of solidarity. An injury to one, is an injury to all.

HUMBERSIDE

LLOYD AKERS (Humberside):

Before I start, this is a very personal one for me so please just indulge me and save your solidarity for the vote at the end thank you.

It is very personal to me because on 18 September last year my wife gave birth to my son Euan with the help of numerous nurses and midwives of our local hospital. We were lucky because that day, although Scunthorpe was open, Grimsby maternity ward was shut due to short staffing levels. This was nothing new. This happens on a rota between the local hospitals, Scunthorpe, Grimsby, Doncaster and Goole. Whilst there, we were horrified that it was expected that staff members were unable to eat during their 12 and a half hour shift because there was not enough staff to relieve them. Me and my wife pleaded with the midwife that she would eat in our room so she could have a break and some rest. Her manager came in and told us that if she did this she would be formally disciplined.

After eventually finding someone so they could have a five minute meal break of their shift, they came back into our room and sat on a cold hard steel stool to complete their notes and carry on their checks for the rest of their 12 hours. Then when my wife gave birth the midwife went back down on to the maternity ward, spreading themselves thinly amongst 12 women.

No wonder these people are leaving the jobs they love in droves. My wife and I couldn't believe what we were witnessing, heroes in our eyes being forced to work in degrading conditions whilst MPs partying in Downing Street clapped them. This government are laughing at the very people that saved the life of this sorry prime minister. I promised those midwives that I would take this to Scunthorpe FBU members to see if we could do anything for them and provide solidarity. They held out no hope but appreciated my sentiments. Since then I have made links with the reps of the RCN, Unite and Unison and requested the reps in Humberside do the same.

At the last round of voting only 23% of eligible members voted in the indicative ballot for industrial action. This is poor. For what they have endured and continue to endure, this should be much higher. Friends in A&E and the maternity ward say what is the point, nobody cares.

A nurse's main calling is the care. They are there for you when you need them. It is time that we are there now that they need us. We cannot stand idly by whilst the most kind and caring in society are walked all over. Conference, I understand other motions today put forward about solidarity and they will have my full support. The least we can do is to actively put our arm of solidarity around those in the NHS, the nurses and the midwives and make sure they know they are not alone and people do care, and I urge you to support us and spread the roots of our unity and put our arms of solidarity around them.

As I wrote in our resolution an injury to one is an injury to all. I move. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lloyd, does it have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you, that's open for debate. I now put resolution 46 to the vote. All those in favour please, please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 48, Defend the right to strike, moved by Warwickshire. The EC support.

Resolution 48 DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

Conference notes the Conservative Party manifesto of 2019 contained plans to legislate for minimum train services during periods of industrial action.

Conference agrees that this can only be seen as an attack on train workers right to strike.

Conference condemns any attack on any workers right to strike and

Conference agrees to support our brothers and sisters in the railway industry with defending themselves against this potential authoritarian attack.

Conference agrees that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is likely to face similar threats on our profession and our right to strike in the coming months and years.

Conference therefore agrees that the FBU should be prepared and poised to take this fight on immediately should it materialise.

Conference agrees that should our right to strike be threatened, the FBU will consider all options available to defend ourselves against such an attack, including industrial action.

WARWICKSHIRE

AMENDMENT

1st paragraph, 2nd line after 'legislate for' insert 'the maintenance of a minimum level of' and delete the word 'minimum' before 'train'

HEREFORD and WORCESTER

NEIL STUART (Warwickshire):

I did have a speech written out, but conscious of the time and also that we mentioned 'immediately' in the resolution, I don't want the ire of the AGS again, so conference with the impending white paper and the continued attacks on the Grey Book conditions of service it is a very real prospect that our right to strike may be removed.

Sarah Jones MP said on Wednesday Boris Johnson would love to remove it. He is my favourite idiot, by the way. Our right to strike is threatened, the FBU will consider all options available to us including taking said strike action. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder? *Formally seconded*.

The amendment from Hereford and Worcester. *Formally moved*. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you, that's open for debate.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Actually, just very briefly, we are now informed the White Paper will be released imminently after endless delays. I think the delegate is absolutely right, we need to be prepared for what is in there and for the attacks on our rights should they come. We don't know yet. They have kept it very secret. We know the chief officers know what is in there. We don't. So I think it is watch this space next week. We thank Warwickshire for bringing the issue to conference's attention.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put the amendment to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 48 as Amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 50, Democratic Public Ownership of Banking & Finance. Moved by South Wales. The EC support. There is an amendment from Scotland which the EC supports.

Resolution 50 DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF BANKING & FINANCE

Conference condemns the 'business as usual' approach the banking and finance sector has taken post the 2008 crash, the UK still has a substandard banking system and there are numerous concerns around the lacklustre regulation and measures that have been introduced in the past decade.

Conference applauds the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) 2012 pamphlet on public ownership of the banking and finance sector in the UK, as a contribution to the debate after 'The Great Recession.'

Conference reaffirms the FBU motion that was successfully moved and passed at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) 2012. It helped facilitate debate and discussion on the issue across the labour movement and build opposition to the Tory-led coalition government.

Conference believes that the Covid-19 pandemic has shown that the levers of the state are required and most effective at responding to crises. Regulation alone is not the antidote to a dysfunctional and corrupt banking and finance system, there must be full democratic ownership.

Conference believes the salience of the case to tackle the existential threat of climate change signals the need to reignite the discourse on public ownership of banking and finance.

Conference supports the demand for public ownership to extend to banking and finance like other privatised sectors including energy, water, mail, broadband and transport.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to commission research that will make a renewed case for full public ownership of the banking and finance sector and the creation of a publicly owned banking service, democratically and accountably managed in the UK.

SOUTH WALES

AMENDMENT

7th paragraph, 1st line after 'Conference instructs the Executive Council to' insert 'work with the TUC and the wider trade union movement to'

SCOTLAND

GARETH TOVEY (South Wales):

Conference, it has been 14 years since the financial crash of 2008, a crisis caused by gambling bankers who work in the interests of fat cat bosses and big business. Over these last 14 years the damage caused to people across this country from the fall out of the financial crisis and ideologically driven Tory party austerity, that damage is incalculable.

Huge cuts in funding to local authorities resulting in cuts to health and social care, the mental health sector, welfare, the closing of libraries and youth clubs, underfunding of schools and public services, a narrowing of opportunity and a widening of inequality. A financial system that relies on the free hand of the market guided only by the profit motive and greed is not fit for purpose.

It is not fit to play its important part in tackling the pressing challenges we face in climate change and inequality. Conference, we need to move away from this faulty and failed system. A move away from the London centric model of investment and towards a green industrial revolution, high skilled, well paid jobs supported by trade unions in areas of the country that have been left behind after years of underfunding, a lack of investment and Tory Party austerity.

We need to move towards a financial system with banks, publicly owned working for working people, helping families, supporting local sustainable, ethically run businesses, and providing the resources for the much needed investment in the green renewable energy sector required to start to take the steps to challenge arguably the biggest threat facing all of our futures and our children's futures, climate change.

So, conference, let's demand this from our banks and let's demand that we get a say and let's use our platform to give people a voice in this important area of their lives. Thanks, conference. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gareth. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you.

Scotland to move your amendment. *Formally.* Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. That's open for debate. No. OK.

I will now put the amendment to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 50 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 52, Building Solidarity, moved by Shropshire. The EC support.

Resolution 52 BUILDING SOLIDARITY

Conference believes that solidarity is at the heart of building a strong Union and a strong trade union movement. Solidarity should be built into all activities of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). This should include building links with other workers and other trade unions, and this should be done at branch, brigade, regional, national, and international level.

All branches and all committees of the FBU are urged to build solidarity into all activities and meetings. It should be on the standard agenda of every committee of the FBU.

Building solidarity should include;

- ***building links with local branches of sister unions***
- ***affiliating to local trades councils***
- ***building solidarity with local strikes***
- ***workplace collections for striking workers***
- ***organising FBU delegations to picket lines.***

Conference instructs the Executive Council, in order to build that solidarity, to increase the notification to Members of strikes and disputes and to utilise resources such as 'Strike Map' to assist with this.

SHROPSHIRE

SIMON MORRIS (Shropshire):

Moving resolution 52, Building solidarity. Conference, this resolution is pretty straightforward in principle but something we rarely get right or achieve. Most of us remember the pension dispute of 2012-2014 which affected all public sector workers who were all being hammered by the Tory coalition government with cuts of austerity.

Trade unionists have an ideal opportunity to coordinate action. I think – and I will stand corrected – there was only one occasion when several unions took action on the same day but I lost count of how many times we were out the door. The trade union movement is about strength and unity standing side by side. We need support from our fellow workers and in turn expect more support from them when we are in dispute.

In Shrewsbury the NEU have been on strike and campaigning to reinstate their member at Shrewsbury College who was dismissed on trumped up charges but in reality was dismissed due to trade union activities. The picket line organised through the trade unions council was visited by members from sister trade unions and brought their flags to support in solidarity, and we hope and we know when the FBU adds its weight it really is something to fighting against the ruthless bosses and employers. This is one example where it went well, but I know there are many other opportunities missed not through indifference or not wanting to help but through a disconnect of information sharing and organising.

Our solidarity is for other workers who struggle to fight the same cause as we have to. This resolution isn't necessarily about huge rallies in London but they do help. This is about creating cohesive links with other workers, their trade unions and using trade councils, social media and other information sharing devices such as strike map to coordinate better locally and make us stronger as a movement. I know the hall will support the resolution, but more than that I hope it will inspire and encourage all officials and reps to engage and organise better in their local areas. President, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Simon. Does that have a seconder?

JAMES LESLIE (Devon and Somerset):

I would like to second this resolution. We have got strong links with our local trades councils where we are and they have been invaluable in every fight we have had. Unfortunately, we have got a bit of a reputation in the FBU for only going to the trades councils when we need them. We need to be there when they need us. So I second this one. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Jim, that's open for debate. Nobody. OK. I now put resolution 52 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now call resolution 53, A Socialist Green New Deal, moved by Shropshire. The EC support with amendment from Hereford and Worcester and the EC support the amendment.

Resolution 53 A SOCIALIST GREEN NEW DEAL

Conference notes the United Nations latest climate report predicting that temperatures are likely to rise by more than the vital 1.5C limit in the next two decades, bringing widespread devastation and extreme weather.

Conference applauds the work of firefighters in tackling the catastrophic effects of the climate emergency.

Conference believes, as with Covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis exposes sharply the inequalities in society in the UK and internationally and we must ensure that workers are at the heart of any future programme which includes unshackling trade unions from restrictive anti-trade union legislation.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to support and campaign with organisations that share the following aims creating a 'Socialist Green New Deal' that will shift power from capital into the hands of workers, and will include;

- ***creating millions of secure, well-paid, unionised green jobs***
- ***a workers-led 'just transition' from high emission jobs to alternatives***
- ***just climate adaptation, investing in Fire and Rescue Services, flood defences, and resilient infrastructure***

- ***retrofitting all homes by 2030 with mandatory building standards including removal of all unsafe cladding***
- ***public ownership of energy creating an integrated, democratic system. Large-scale investment in renewables, rapidly phasing out fossil fuels***
- ***public ownership of transport - majorly expanded, integrated, free, including rail electrification, high-speed rail and electric buses***
- ***universal basic services including Mail, Broadband, National Nature Service and National Care Service***
- ***repealing all anti-trade union laws, so workers can freely take industrial action over wider social and political issues, from public safety to climate change***
- ***a global 'Socialist Green New Deal', cancelling debt and freely sharing technology and resources internationally.***

SHROPSHIRE

AMENDMENT

3rd paragraph, 1st line before 'Covid-19' insert 'the'

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

SIMON MORRIS (Shropshire):

Moving Resolution 53, a Socialist Green New Deal. Firstly, conference, we need to recognise the super work done by the FBU delegation to the Labour Party conference, not only to get the socialist green new deal into Labour Party policy, and their manifesto during the Corbyn era of hope, but also for reinforcing the further establishing of the socialist green new deal at last year's Labour Party conference under the extreme pressure from the dark Starmer leadership of misery.

Conference, the resolution speaks for itself. This is a fire service issue. This is an environmental issue. This is an image issue. This is an issue for all workers, an issue for the existence of our society and how we want society to operate in the future.

We all know that the world is changing through the environmental impact and that action is needed to avert potential disaster which will affect every one of us, but a socialist green new deal is about so much more than that; it is about taking the opportunity from the change that is required not only to save the planet but to build a better world, a better society, a socialist society. Conference, this is not just a theory, it is important and it needs to be at the forefront of our minds.

The capitalists can see the same opportunity when change is needed to save the planet and have no conscience when it comes to exploiting it to make huge profits for themselves, stealing everything they can from the weak hands of the poor. They will take the opportunity to make profits in the same way they did with their PPE contracts during the pandemic, the same way they are tearing apart our NHS for profit, the same way they are commercialising our education systems into tiers, reducing the life chances for the likes of our children whilst those who already have plenty continue to get the best facilities and opportunities over everyone else.

Conference, this resolution about how the fundamental question in our society should be set up during and how mankind behaves on the planet in order to secure its own future is probably the most important and central plank of our movement. It is not easy for a dyslexic to read fast. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Well done, Simon. The amber light does mean you have still got a little bit of time though. It's fine. OK, does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Thank you. That is open for debate. Oh, there is an amendment there from Hereford and Worcester. *Formally moved.* Thank you. Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Now it is open for debate. Anybody? No. The EC support.

I now put the Amendment to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 53 as Amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 55, Covid and Key Workers – Clapping is not enough. To be moved by Buckinghamshire. The EC support.

Resolution 55 COVID AND KEY WORKERS – CLAPPING IS NOT ENOUGH

Conference notes that the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed sharp inequalities in our society. Some big businesses have made huge profits and some individuals in the UK and across the world have increased their enormous wealth significantly.

Meanwhile, the pandemic has disproportionately hit working class people and communities and especially black and minority workers.

Conference notes that millions of workers have been designated 'key workers', including Fire Brigades Union Members. Such workers have been required to carry on attending the workplace with all the additional risks that this brought.

Conference notes that key workers are in both the public and private sector and we reject any attempt to create divisions between different groups of workers.

Conference notes that despite the huge contribution made by millions of key workers many face appalling attacks from their employers or from government in the form of fire and re-hire, redundancies and continuing pay restraint in the public sector.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to build a campaign for all workers in response to the sacrifices made during the pandemic;

- ***for unity of public and private sector workers***
- ***to oppose fire and re-hire***
- ***to scrap public sector pay restraint***
- ***for pay rises for all workers***
- ***for investment in public services.***

Conference instructs all committees and Officials of the Union, including the EC, to support such initiatives in any way possible.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

KIERON THOMAS (Buckinghamshire):

President, conference, this is my first conference – *applause* – second time speaking – enough said!

I am here today to move resolution 55, Covid and Key Workers, Clapping is not good enough.

As the resolution states, millions of workers have been designated key workers including our own members. Throughout the pandemic key workers have had to carry out still attending their place of work to ensure the delivery of essential services is carried out and to ensure this country kept moving and its population did not avoidably suffer.

As key workers every emergency stood up to the plate and delivered. We continued to do so with pride and always with the public's interest in the forefront of our minds. We have delivered not only our core function but we have also supported many initiatives to bolster other services and respond to community needs from PPE manufacturing, food delivering, public health training, medical response, secondment of our staff to drive ambulances and run Covid vaccination centres, to name a few.

Services openly admit that if we had not stepped up then they would not have coped. How were we thanked as key workers? A clap – started by a member of the public to show their support to key workers. There is no doubt that this was heartfelt and appreciated by all, and I think we can all agree this. This became a national thing overnight and not long after it was used as a platform for the prime minister and his government who jumped on a bandwagon. Then the clapping stopped and the government hid back behind their doors as it now transpires partying.

Four out of ten key workers earn less than £10 per hour. Our trainee firefighters earn £11 an hour. Seven out of ten care workers earn less than £10 an hour. One million children in key worker households now live in poverty – one million children.

Covid has affected our service like all others. Staff have suffered not only from the illnesses this unprecedented disease brought, or the loss of loved ones, and in some cases we have lost colleagues and comrades, not forgetting the continued financial hardship that has now endured for two decades and it looks like continuing.

Covid may be fading away, but the cost to the key worker remains. Government happy to clap when the TV cameras and social media captured them, the clapping now nothing but a distant memory. Is the government willing to step up and put those clapping hands in their pockets?

We have heard loads of statistics and talk about the effects of Covid –

THE PRESIDENT:

Wind up delegate, please.

KIERON THOMAS (Buckinghamshire):

I end then, conference instructs the executive council to build a campaign for all workers in support of the TUC campaign winning a pay rise for key workers. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kieron. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. That is open for debate.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Thanks, president. I just wanted to make a very quick point to this because it is not widely known across the movement and it is not shouted about enough. My wife works in the NHS. Covid was a really difficult time, and whilst the government were very quick to try and get nurses, doctors, specialists vaccinated, there are large groups of workers in our hospitals such as porters that because the private hawks have come in again and taken those contracts such as Sodexo for example, they were left and cut adrift.

My wife worked with three porters that lost their lives in one hospital – one hospital. If they are all in the NHS, this campaign needs to build, that we need to build very clearly, kick the private sector out of any public institution, and that should be a central strand. Thank you. Support the motion. *Applause*.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 55 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on resolution 56. Conference, do you agree to suspend standing order 16. *Agree*.

Just for information, as soon as the packed lunches arrive we will get you out there. Do you agree to have a half hour lunch? *Agreed*. OK, as soon as the packed lunches arrive, we will stop at the end of that debate.

I now call on resolution 56, Cost of Living Crisis, moved by Staffordshire. The EC support.

Resolution 56 COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Conference notes with concern the escalating crisis in the cost of living.

Conference notes that inflation is set to soar to its sharpest increase in decades alongside huge increases in the cost of energy. At the same time, workers are being hit by a National Insurance hike leaving some paying hundreds of pounds more each year.

Conference also notes the impact this will have on Fire Brigades Union Members which added to a decade of below inflation pay rises will be catastrophic.

Conference recognises that the root of this crisis lies in the hands of the global political elite and billionaires who continue to drive a neo-liberal agenda exploiting and squeezing all workers across the globe in a never-ending pursuit of profit.

Conference also recognises that successive governments here in the UK have assisted and been complicit in driving down the living standards of firefighters.

Conference believes that without a united approach by all workers, reversing this sustained attack and increasing the standards of living of firefighters, including fair pay rises, will be impossible.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to develop a campaign and education programme with this in mind which will include approaching and encouraging other unions to join us in organising on pay and living standards for all workers, including the option of joined up industrial action on the issue.

STAFFORDSHIRE

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

Moving resolution 56, cost of living crisis. Today in the fifth largest economy in the world, 13.8% of households are facing food insecurity and we have all heard “heat or eat”. Families are now choosing on which days of a week they can eat.

This is not just the unemployed and those on minimum wage. It could be, in fact, and it is in fact some of our members. I am sure you have all seen the paper the other day with the MP saying that people who can’t cook use food banks, it costs 30p. What does he know? On his £220,000 that he claimed last year in expenses, it doesn’t cost him 30p per meal does it?

I guess the Imperial College of London and the University of Liverpool were wrong they found a direct link between austerity policies and the rise in food banks. This comes on the back of rising energy prices, fuel prices, food prices, a hike in our national insurance contributions coupled with years of austerity and the low inflation pay rises. This is a crisis and this is all going on whilst the political elite and the billionaires continue to fill their pockets. Shell just announced 14.7 billion – 14.7 billion, that is a number I cannot even fathom – in profits. They paid no tax for the fourth year in a row. Four years no tax, but they got £92 million back in tax refunds so they could decommission some oil rigs.

On top of this we are now also facing the highest increase in inflation seen since 1982. The Bank of England has said it may go as far as 10%, possibly pushing us into recession, and we know who pays for them. It is not the rich. It is not the political elite.

As the years go by, the standards of living for our members and other workers across the country are decreasing, and they seem to be decreasing at an ever quicker rate, and successive governments in the UK have been complicit and even assisted in this. We believe that workers across the country in conjunction with their unions need to take a united approach in reversing the sustained attacks to improve the standards of living for our members and secure fair pay rises.

Conference, I ask you to support the resolution. President, conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

That is open for debate. No.

I now put resolution 56 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para F2, TUC Congress; para F3, TUC women’s conference; para F4, TUC LGBT+ conference; para F5, TUC black workers’ conference; para F6, ICTU biennial delegate conferences; para F7, STUC Congress; para F8, Wales TUC; para F9, Labour Party conference; para F10, Labour Party women’s conference; para F11, Labour Party leadership; para F12, Labour left; para F13, Party conferences; para F14, International solidarity.

I now call emergency resolution 4, Havana Explosion, moved by Bedfordshire, the EC support.

Emergency resolution 4 HAVANA EXPLOSION

Conference notes the disaster at The Hotel Saratoga, a hotel in Old Havana, Cuba. The hotel was preparing to reopen after being closed for two years when an apparent gas leak ignited and blew the outer walls into the streets below.

In the last 24 hours the fatalities have risen to 40 and conditions are significantly deteriorating for workers on scene since the initial explosion. This is an ongoing and developing situation for firefighters and all those affected.

Conference applauds the work of firefighters working on the scene and salute the actions of those people who sought to help those injured.

Conference is dismayed to learn that the death toll currently stands at 40 people and many people have been seriously injured.

Conference sends its deepest condolences to the families of the dead and injured and also sends our solidarity to firefighters, other public service workers and firefighters in the UK stand with you.

The working class is international and in solidarity Conference calls on the Executive Council to explore if assistance is possible to offer via the firefighters 100 lottery.

BEDFORDSHIRE

CRAIG CARTER (Bedfordshire):

Conference, from opposing apartheid, our solidarity trip to refugee camps, our work with the ETSU firefighters' network and much more, this union has a proud history of internationalism and understands its value to our class.

Conference, I send condolences to the Cuban people who are mourning following a suspected gas explosion at the Hotel Saratoga in Havana which has so far killed more than forty. The explosion took place on the morning of Friday 6 May and destroyed the front of the hotel as well as damaging several buildings in the vicinity, including the school and residential buildings which had been evacuated. Although the hotel was closed for restoration, it was due to open in a few days. Hotel staff were working in the building at the time of the accident including several working basement storerooms.

In addition, one hundred people have been injured and twelve remain missing as rescue teams continue to search for survivors. The Havana Fire Department has confirmed that the basement of the hotel has completely collapsed and that debris removal and victim rescue work is being carried out with extreme caution and will not be considered completed until the last person, who could remain trapped, is found.

This resolution sends strength and solidarity to our sisters, brothers and others in the fire rescue teams who have been working tirelessly to rescue survivors. Our thoughts are with the families of the deceased and missing at this tragic time. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is open for debate.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Very quickly, conference. Thanks to Bedfordshire for bringing the emergency. Obviously, the union has got a long tradition of discussing solidarity with the Cuban people and it is very welcome that you highlight this horrific disaster. In terms of the final point, yes, the executive council will raise that with the lottery distribution panel, and I think one of the purposes of the lottery is precisely to provide solidarity to communities in relation to humanitarian disasters and such like. I will just take the opportunity to plug again, when you are discussing this with your committees and members in branches, urge them to play the lottery, to participate in the lottery, because the bigger the participation is, the more such work we can do. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks. I now put emergency resolution 4 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call emergency resolution 5, Israeli Aggression Targeting Journalists, moved by Bedfordshire. The EC support.

Emergency Resolution 5 ISRAELI AGGRESSION TARGETING JOURNALISTS

On Wednesday 11th May, Al Jazeera correspondent, Shireen Abu Akleh, was fatally shot during an Israeli Defence Force (IDF) raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank.

Conference is appalled at this act by the IDF to target journalists in pursuit of the suppression of free speech.

Conference calls on the Executive Council to raise this with our political allies and to challenge the oppression of free speech regarding the Israel and Palestinian conflict at home and abroad.

BEDFORDSHIRE

JAMIE NEWELL (Bedfordshire):

Moving emergency resolution 5 on the latest aggression by Israel. On Wednesday of this week a journalist with Al Jazeera, Shireen Abu Akleh, was shot and killed in the West Bank, and I am sure you will join me in sharing condolences with her family and friends. Al Jazeera maintain that the journalists in the area were being targeted, and I believe another colleague has also been severely injured.

When James Foley was executed the world was rightly outraged and people spoke up out loud. When it comes to the Israeli Defence Force, people aren't so quick to come forward. To be clear, being critical of the Israeli Defence Force is not the same as being antisemitic.

In 2014 during the Gaza assault, a friend of mine, a member, was dismissed from the service for speaking up against the IDF and at that time I asked for a statement to be released informally to support members who have emotional reactions to such events, and it wasn't forthcoming, so I am asking you conference to request the EC to release a statement similar to the one we had for Ukraine recently and challenge these attempts to suppress the freedom of speech. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder. *Formally seconded.* It is open for debate. No.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, I thank Bedfordshire for bringing the emergency resolution to the attention of conference and this appalling incident. Let's call it out for what it is, it is a murder by the Israeli Defence Forces of Shireen Abu Akleh. Yes, we have got no problem in issuing the statement and taking the actions set out in paragraph 3 of the resolution. Jamie made reference to accusations of antisemitism. Clearly, we take the issue of antisemitism – and I am sure everyone in this room takes issues of antisemitism – extremely seriously, as with all forms of racism, but I don't think there is any remote link between that and the issues that are raised in this resolution and we will implement the action set out in the final sentence. Thanks conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put emergency resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on resolution 49, Solidarity across borders, moved by Hereford and Worcester. EC support.

Resolution 49 SOLIDARITY ACROSS BORDERS

Conference is appalled by the treatment and conditions that refugees suffer and are subjected to whilst taking refuge in the camps of Calais.

Conference agrees that refugees deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and opposes the populist and xenophobic attitudes directed at refugees by the far right and Conservative Party.

Conference recognises the very many reasons why those fleeing war, persecution and the increasing effects of climate change would want to seek asylum and refuge in the UK. Many refugees have family in the UK, speak English and have been unable to settle elsewhere due to persecution and hostility. All they seek is an opportunity to live and thrive in safety.

Conference resoundingly rejects the false narrative that refugees are risking their lives in order to reach the UK to access free welfare and housing provisions without any desire to contribute to society and the economy.

Conference applauds the solidarity visits by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to the refugee camps in Calais. It is right that our Union's solidarity does not recognise borders and our solidarity is not confined to our profession.

Conference condemns the small minded and bigoted attacks on this initiative and utterly condemns any cowardly anonymous attacks.

Conference also recognises the important educational aspect of these visits. Listening to the refugees personal stories and understanding their circumstances is crucial in tackling the false and divisive rhetoric that is pushed by the right-wing media and those who are ignorant to their plight.

Conference instructs the Executive Council that the FBU solidarity visits to the refugee camps in Calais are vitally important, justified and must continue.

Conference agrees that these visits should expand when possible and may involve solidarity visits across any other borders where our solidarity is needed.

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Moving resolution 49, Solidarity across borders. Conference, our members are appalled by the treatment of refugees and those seeking asylum and the degrading and dehumanised language the UK's government chooses to use when talking about them.

From being locked in former military barracks that were deemed not to meet the acceptable standards for accommodation to the latest policy that seeks to send those fleeing war and persecution to Rwanda, a country the UK government has itself raised concerns about over its record on human rights.

Care for Calais report that 75% of those considering crossing the channel will not be deterred due to this policy, and whilst politicians pat themselves on the back for doing something, they completely miss the point that what is needed is safe passage. We need to end the illegal and frankly abhorrent practice of pushback where those fleeing are returned to where they came from. Without safe passage, we will continue to see bodies washing up on the shores of the UK and Europe.

It is estimated that five and half million people have fled Ukraine since the invasion of Russian military forces. We witnessed the UK government's response to this claiming to have sent a Home Office team to help people on the ground in Calais. The fact of the matter was that this operation was just three men at a table in the deserted departure hall with bags of ready-salted crisps and chocolate bars.

There has been frustration and despair amongst those trying to navigate the bureaucracy including UK residents who have signed up to house Ukrainians. These crises bring out the very best and worst of human nature, but we know we have more in common in with those fleeing than those who profit from such events.

Working people always suffer in conflict and the pursuit of peace is a fundamental trade union value, an essential condition to secure safety, social justice and workers' and human rights.

You will all have witnessed the efforts taken by emergency workers including members of the Ukrainian fire service who are working to protect and save people in the most hostile of conditions. We send them a message of solidarity and hope they know they are in our thoughts. Conference, support this resolution and vote not only in favour of maintaining the solidarity visits to refugee camps in Calais but to expand on this work across any other borders where our solidarity is needed. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Neil. Does that have a seconder? Formally seconded. Thank you. That is open for debate. I now put resolution 49 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now call resolution 51, End the Blockade, 60 years too long, moved by Greater Manchester. The EC support.

Resolution 51 END THE BLOCKADE – 60 YEARS TOO LONG

International trade union solidarity has a proud history of supporting comrades in need and saving countless lives.

This year marks 60 years of the US led inhumane economic blockade of the Republic of Cuba. The impact of the blockade on the lives of Cubans has been brutal. In 1997 the American Association for World Health reported that it had “dramatically harmed the health and nutrition of large numbers of ordinary Cuban citizens” and “caused a significant rise in suffering, and even deaths, in Cuba” through “critical shortages of even the most basic medicines and medical hardware.”

Conference supports the statement from Bruno Rodríguez, Cuban Foreign Minister when speaking at the UN, June 2021;

“The human damage of the blockade is incalculable. No Cuban family is spared from the effects of this inhumane policy. Nobody could honestly state that it has no actual impact on the population... The blockade is a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cuba’s people. According to Article II c) of the Geneva Convention of 1948, it constitutes an act of genocide... This is an extraterritorial economic war against a small country, already adversely affected by the recession and global economic crisis caused by the pandemic that has deprived us of much-needed income.”

Conference instructs that an All Members’ circular is produced as soon as possible encouraging members to:

- *join the ‘Cuba Solidarity Campaign’ and attend events and meetings in their respective areas*
- *take part in the boycott of anti-Cuban companies and encourage others to do so*
- *add their names to the ‘Cuba Solidarity Campaign’ letter to US President Joe Biden urging him to end the blockade.*

Additionally, Brigade Committees should invite a speaker from the ‘Cuba Solidarity Campaign’ to their respective committees if available in their area.

GREATER MANCHESTER

DANIEL GIBLIN (Greater Manchester):

I will obviously be as quick as I can with this now. We are proud to bring this. It wasn’t actually easy to get it through the brigade committee at the time as you can imagine because there were a lot of other things going on, and you have also heard the stuff that the general secretary has referred to this week about international solidarity and about what has it got to do with us and shouldn’t we be supporting the bigger issues that are going on in the world? Actually, we opposed that strongly at the brigade committee, saying that we don’t challenge these issues one against the other. These are all serious issues, and anyone who knows anything about what is going on in Cuba and the blockade that has been going on for years and years, particularly in the 90s and again in this period, people are literally being starved by this blockade and people are suffering from lack of medical equipment and normal things that you are thinking about in schools and everything that we take for granted, just because a certain group of people don’t like the political system. It is, quite frankly, a disgrace.

Just a quick thing on international solidarity and why you take this back to the branches and pass it round. It was referenced the other day in the Cuba meeting about the coup in Chile in 1973, and it was down to East Kilbride workers who blacked Rolls Royce engines on aeroplanes and stopped a murderous fascist air force murdering people, and it literally saved countless lives. We will never be able to quantify that. That was trade unionists, a couple of trade unionists in a factory in East Kilbride in Scotland who made that difference, so remind your members of that when they question these issues, and the stuff for Calais and the other things that we talked about. This is why we do this and it does actually make a difference, you know I mean, so I just say I don’t want this resolution to be nodded through it. Read it, have a look at the instructions and go back and do it. Too many times we come here, we vote on something and we forget about it. We are talking about actually building the links with Cuba Solidarity, getting affiliated every branch, going out and getting speakers at your committees and getting firefighters spoken to about what is going on and supporting people in Cuba.

We have got in our rule book about aspiring to a socialist society. We have still got a few of them socialist societies existing in the world and we should be showing solidarity with them and coming behind them. I was nervous of this, bringing this, in the last couple of years, you know, I have looked at the records of decisions and things didn't always just pass as they did once on Cuba, but I just plead with you and hope you support this today and go back and do the work when you get back to stations. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder?

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Supporting resolution 51. This government first introduced economic and financial restrictions in Cuba in 1960. Implications and effects of the blockade are far reaching. In 2009 Amnesty International called for the blockade to be lifted stating it is highly detrimental to Cubans' enjoyment of a range of economic, social and cultural rights such as food, health, sanitation. It particularly affects the weakest and most vulnerable members of the population. The blockade is highly detrimental to Cubans' enjoyment of human rights.

Conference, since the introduction Cuba estimates the cost of the blockade is now over 753 billion. This is simply unacceptable. Conference, the blockade must end. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. That is open for debate.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking in support of resolution 51. Comrades, I would urge you to support this resolution. I am here stood now as a member of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. I would urge you to refer to bullet point 3 towards the end which refers to Cuba Solidarity Campaign letter to the US president. I believe that this letter has actually been sent on 9 February this year. However, it is still a live document and you can add your names. I would again urge you to sign that letter, take it back to your branches, take it back to your regions, get other members to sign this.

If you just have a look at the campaign itself, just Google the title of the excellent resolution: 60 years too long, end the US blockade. Google that and you will find the letter, sign the letter and support the campaign. Support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Neil. I now put resolution 51 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

We are going to have one more and then we will be breaking for lunch so they are actually getting put out there now. So I now call resolution 58, Care 4 Calais, moved by Lancashire. The EC support.

Resolution 58 CARE 4 CALAIS

Conference demands that regular support for 'Care 4 Calais' is set up by the Executive Council, so that Regions provide a voluntary contingent to be sent on a regular basis on a rotating basis akin to Grenfell silent walk before lockdown, in order to provide support and donations collected within the region.

LANCASHIRE

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire):

Moving resolution 58, Care 4 Calais. Millions of people have been forcibly displaced around the world as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations according to the UN's refugee agency.

The Fire Brigades Union holds a proud tradition of standing up for those who do not have a voice. We as a union support all those seeking asylum and encourage refugees into the country, a country that has had opportunities to support those who have nothing and lost everything.

Firefighters across Europe and in the UK are getting involved at great risk to themselves. The FBU wholeheartedly supports Care 4 Calais as a voluntary run charity delivering essential and support to refugees living in the UK, Northern France and Belgium.

Operating year round, the focus is to provide warm clothing, bed and food and medical assistance to people in desperate need. Care 4 Calais collects items and funds to provide for those who have nothing. They rely on volunteers to transport and deliver these goods. At the end of 2019 the FBU sent a solidarity mission with supplies to the Care 4 Calais warehouse in Calais to witness first-hand what it's like to be a refugee in a modern democratic Europe. It was shameful to see how humans are being treated by the French authorities. Covid has had a dramatic effect on this aid. The winters are still cold and these people have nothing. They cannot go back and they can only forward. Please do all you can to support Care 4 Calais, collect the items they need and visit them by delivering this much needed aid. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kev. Does that have a seconder?

SAM MERRIOTT (Greater Manchester):

Seconding resolution 58, Care 4 Calais. Conference, with the rise of right wing politics and the absolute evil of Priti Patel who is trying to deport refugees and asylum seekers to Africa, we need to support the victims fleeing conflict and oppression. Care 4 Calais's unwavering support for the displaced needs our support and Lancashire's resolution provides that commitment.

Conference, these people are not immigrants and no human is illegal. Just pause for one minute to think how bad your life in this country would have to be for you to risk taking our children across the English Channel or the Mediterranean in dinghies. Conference, we support this.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sam, it is open for debate.

AMIT MALDE (B&EMM):

I don't want to delay my lunch and I don't want to delay yours so I will be very brief. Clare from Care 4 Calais talked with us at the fringe event yesterday and Brendan was there as well. There are a couple of important points that were made. Some people that have been on it before and have talked about how they have heard of the crisis and they are aware of what is going on in Calais, but to go actually go out there and see it was a life changing experience.

Brendan also told us the story of a time when he was sitting in a trainee centre and someone else in another part of the room had a conversation and said the only thing they hate more than something is refugees. He could have got angry. We all know his commitment to the humanitarian need of refugees. Instead he challenged her. He took her down to a warehouse that he volunteers at in Derby close to where they are based and he asked her to participate in it, and it instantly changed her outlook. So I think the initiative as suggested by our comrades from Lancashire would have a great two pronged attack in helping us go out and reinforce our message of solidarity for this humanitarian cause.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

I will be brief, president. I don't want to stand between anyone and their packed lunch. Thanks for bringing this resolution and thanks obviously to Neil for bringing the previous one as well. Just to be clear, conference, following the conference decision in 2019 the Fire Brigades Union did undertake a solidarity trip to Care 4 Calais. We took the FBU fire engine out on two occasions. We took out over 30 officials now from both our regions and our sections, the idea being that they were going to act as leaders to take forward further delegations from the workplaces themselves.

Look, just to be clear about this, a message that the Care 4 Calais people themselves told us: you can hand out blankets all day long. It will not change things. What will change this is solidarity, getting into these places, hearing

the stories and taking them back to our work place, building a movement against clearly a narrative that is both disgraceful and so damaging. There is an element of culpability here. This country was part of the movement that set fire to the Middle East and now we have locked our door against people that are still burning. We cannot tolerate that. We have all been to fire stations and seen the media that is laid out there, our Members and the *Daily Mail* etc, and the stories and the bile they are getting fed. Let me tell you we will restart these trips and I hope you go in them. It will change your lives and hopefully it will set a fire burning within you that creates a solidarity in our workplace that then creates a situation where this current situation becomes intolerable.

Thanks very much for bringing it, I have got the clock ticking against me. No human is illegal and we have to be part of a movement that makes that clear.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 58 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I call para F15, Affiliations; para F16, Undercover police spying on unions. Right, conference, just before you dash out the door, Greater Manchester have got a Red Plaque unveiling tomorrow, 14 May, for Brother John Ogden who fell from an appliance on 15 May 1996 on the way to an incident. There is a ceremony at Gorton Monastery at 2.30 so anybody is welcome to attend that if they can.

Right, conference, we are having lunch. We have 30 minutes, back for 1.45. Thank you.

Adjourned for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order. Right, conference, I call Phil Millar, chair of the standing orders committee, to give the standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president, and thank you conference. Can you to your delegates list again please? Region 6, Leicestershire, replace Casey Legalle with Mark Drinkwater, and in Lincolnshire, Richard Wright with Carl Cornickey.

Conference, thank you very much for the bucket collection. Just for your information, it raised £197.65. If the delegates from, I think it was North Yorkshire, who proposed that, could you come to standing orders when you are finished and collect the envelope so you can make the donation.

Conference, just two things from the standing orders committee. It has been mentioned in here throughout the week there were 27 rule changes out of 30 that were ruled out of order by standing orders. There were probably 65 resolutions that went back in some shape or form from standing orders. It is just to make you aware that standing orders are going to be meeting in August and that meeting is to pull apart the guidance that goes out and the forms that go out. For instance, that is the form you to make an alteration to the rules, and yet that is the way it goes to conference, so why doesn't the form look like that. It is just to make you aware that there are going to be a lot of changes in the guidance and help, and even we are looking at education because rolling the conference matters cost more for people.

Finally, the standing orders committees would just like to thank you all for the way you have conducted yourselves this week. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Dave Williams, did you seriously put my twenty quid in? No. Phil, can you add twenty quid into that and I will give you it. Thank you. It's gone up from a fiver to a tenner to twenty quid. OK, right. Thanks conference.

I now move on to section E, Government Policy and Legislation. Para E1 Introduction. I now call resolution 42, Abolish the House of Lords, moved by West Midlands. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 42 ABOLISH THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Conference notes that the current Parliamentary system does not work in the best interests of Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Members. The House of Lords is an important part of the legislative process which has seen legislation passed that negatively impacts on FBU Members.

Conference notes that the House of Lords is made up of unelected Peers.

Conference is opposed to having a chamber that is part of our democracy and law-making processes that involves unelected representatives.

Conference agrees that the House of Lords should be abolished and replaced with a smaller and democratically elected second chamber.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to campaign for the abolition of the House of Lords and argue for a democratically elected second chamber.

WEST MIDLANDS

BILLY HOLLAND (West Midlands):

President, I will be brief. As working people ourselves and, more importantly, as advocates for working people, we should see the House of Lords as it is, it is an antiquated institution which looks nothing like the society that it purports to represent. The Lords is a dumping ground used for repaying favours and sorting out politicians' mates and their business acquaintances. The trouble is their mates don't look anything like us and don't think anything like us. They don't look or think like much of society at all.

Politicians representing us must be elected by us. Any group of people whose decisions have an impact on the lives of working people, must include voices who know what working people want and what working people need. So we call upon the executive council to campaign for the abolition of the House of Lords and to argue for a democratically elected alternative. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Billy. Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That is open for debate. No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

It is a bit worrying. We are discussing major constitutional matters and we are all trying to get home. The only qualification the executive council has is about the final paragraph. There are various views on the House of Lords. We have got no problem in supporting abolition and we absolutely welcome the West Midlands resolution and I think we should be discussing these, what sort of government structures, what institutions we should have in the country.

There are views that you should not have a second chamber, for example. If you look at the second chamber in the United States, the Senate, it is supposedly democratically elected but it is not democratic; it has been used traditionally as a blocking mechanism for any progressive measures. Equally, there may be arguments – there are arguments in the debates in British politics about federalism and so on – so I think that discussion needs to be part of what we would say needs to happen in the event of the abolition of the House of Lords.

Just as a final aside, we do have some allies in the House of Lords, some of the Labour Lords, Christine Blower, a former general secretary of the then NUT, and one that I find particularly amusing and tease him about, John Hendy, lifelong socialist and leading Labour lawyer, but under pressure from Jeremy Corbyn accepted his place in the House of Lords, so Lord Hendy – it is good to see, but I think he would probably accept losing his seat in the Lords with abolition.

So, with that slight qualification, conference, we support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 42 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now call resolution 43, Recognition of the Role of Emergency Fire Control Staff moved by the CSNC. EC support with Amendments from Scotland. The EC support the Amendments.

Resolution 43 RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE OF EMERGENCY FIRE CONTROL STAFF

Conference recognises that Emergency Fire Control Staff (firefighters Control) are a vital part of Fire & Rescue Services frontline response.

Conference is appalled that the United Kingdom Government Home Office do not share the same view, something which was clearly demonstrated by the omission of Emergency Fire Control Staff from the eligibility criteria for receipt of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal.

Conference calls for the Executive Council to take immediate action to ensure that the role of Emergency Fire Control Staff is acknowledged as 'Frontline' by Government and Employers.

Progress regarding this work should be reported back no later than Conference 2023.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT 1

1st paragraph, 2nd line delete 'frontline' and insert 'operational'

SCOTLAND

AMENDMENT 2

3rd paragraph, 2nd line delete 'Frontline' and insert 'operational'

SCOTLAND

DONNA DONACHIE (CSNC):

Moving resolution 43. It would appear that a firefighter is a firefighter except when they are a firefighter control. Emergency fire control staff, firefighter controls to give their proper title are a vital part of any fire and rescue frontline operational response. It is disappointing when the UK Home Office do not agree.

As conference is aware, this was clearly demonstrated, despite our best efforts, when so many of our firefighter control members were informed they were not eligible to receive the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal.

Criteria states you must deal with emergencies as part of your conditions of service. Firefighter control members do that all day every day. What is the purpose of an emergency control room if not to deal with emergencies? However, when further clarification was sought the Home Office stated that dealing with emergencies is defined as being called to the scene of 999 calls and personnel who are potentially placing themselves in danger and/or saving others from dangers.

When I say that control members do not attend incidents, there are brigades who previously had members attend the incident ground in command support units. Some brigades still do it, albeit they are few. While the rest of the firefighters on the incident ground should not be forgotten, it should be noted that firefighters who are seconded work in various departments of our fire and rescue services do not physically attend incidents and therefore do not place themselves in danger, but they are still recognised by the Home Office as frontline operational staff.

The level of responsibility held by firefighter control members should not and cannot be underestimated as they are the frontline of every fire and rescue service and every operational incident begins and ends with them.

Not only do we save others from danger every time we provide survival guidance to protect those trapped in fires until a rescue can be effected, potentially exposing ourselves to danger and stress and mental health risks, we certainly do not just press buttons as was suggested by the AGS last week. *Applause.*

Often they are and will continually find when a firefighter control will hear the last breath that a person takes and will hear the last words that a person speaks. I have been that firefighter control. Therefore, on behalf of myself and every firefighter control I call for your support and ask the executive council takes immediate action to ensure that the role of firefighter control is acknowledged by the UK government and all employers as frontline operational staff. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder?

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

Seconding resolution 43, Recognition of Emergency Fire Control Staff. Brief, concise, that is what your message is to be, so this will be it. I have it before, I am a firefighter like every other firefighter, I just work in control. We are frontline, we are operational, we are governed by the Grey Book, we are disciplined, we are professionals. That is all we are saying. We are understaffed, we are overworked, the system is failing around us. We need your support. As I said the other day, we don't ask, we demand your support. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Trevor. Scotland to move their amendment 1. *Formally moved.* Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Amendment 2, Scotland. *Formally moved.* Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Thank you. That is open for debate.

VANESSA ROBINSON (Northumberland):

I also work in fire control. I wasn't planning on getting up. This is my first time conference, first time speaking. *Applause.* I am winging it. I just want to say that I work in fire control 100%. I give 100% to my brigade. I give 100% to the union, and all I want is for everyone to give us 100% back. I want everyone here to think some time when you have been on your appliance or you been at an incident and something goes wrong or you just need anything, it is fire control, so fire control needs you now. That's it. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else. No. Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thanks, president, conference. Press and media reporters are still in the room so the executive and conference will be explicitly clear to them so that they can report it accurately. There is nobody, not one single person in this room, that is in any doubt that fire control is a vital part of our operational response. The risk to members in control is absolutely indisputable, and the fact that the government intends to divide us by utilising separate definitions is absolutely shameful, and we have heard this week how they tried to do that with the Platinum Jubilee Medal by referring in the royal warrant to operational staff, seeking to exclude our control.

In doing so they have clearly no understanding whatsoever of the operational role of our control staff and the danger they face every single day, not potential danger, very real danger, and the stress experienced by control absolutely negatively impacts on mental health and long term psychological health and exposure to the traumatic calls which negatively affects control members. Although they are not always – because we do have control members who attend the fireground – exposed to physical danger, they suffer trauma vicariously.

A recent study that has just come out into those who work in control rooms shows evidence of those in the control room experiencing fear, helplessness or horror in relation to 32% of the different types of calls received, never mind the problems associated with mobilising and resolving incidents. That is just in relation to the calls they receive.

A key stressor was identified as lack of control over workloads due to the unpredictability of calls and the study found evidence that control room staff are at risk of burnout due to high workload, inadequate training and a lack of overall control of workloads. Control are clearly operational and should be treated as such.

We will make this point every single time we meet with the government and every single time we refer to our control members. Thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark, and Vanessa, you definitely didn't sound like you were winging it. Winging it is what we have done all week, by the way. Right.

I now put amendment 1 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put amendment 2 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 43 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call on resolution 44, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Opposition to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill moved by Cheshire. The EC support.

Resolution 44 FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) OPPOSITION TO THE POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS' BILL

Conference notes the arbitrary and vague nature of the Policing Bill's restrictions on 'noisy' and 'annoying' protests and its provision to limit protest if it is 'disruptive'. Conference also notes the fact that the Bill could lead to fines on protest organisers.

Most alarming is the fact that the Bill threatens freedom to protest and potentially to picket. This could present clear legal restrictions to workers and FBU Members exercising their right to organise and protest.

Conference is clear that the right to protest, noisily or otherwise, is essential in a democratic society and that the Policing Bill is a conscious effort to undermine this right and criminalise opposition.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC);

- ***to join the call for the revocation of the Bill (to Kill the Bill)***
- ***to support, and affiliate to any organisations where it is in the Union's interests, subject to the discretion of the EC, and make provisions for regions to support protests against the Bill***
- ***to encourage FBU Members to become involved in demonstrations against the Bill.***

CHESHIRE

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Moving resolution 44. Conference, we are in the midst into a fascist state under the Boris Johnson government, be under no misunderstanding about that.

We have a takeover of the Electoral Commission, we have a tax on the free press, we have got a nationalistic agenda and, of course, we have got this particular bit of draconian legislation that is the substantive motion of the debate today.

The dangers to society, to civil liberties, to the trade union movement, and of course the FBU is patently clear, outlawing the means of protest or the lack of support by the state in all but name, that is what this is, it is about suppressing dissent.

Unfortunately, since we submitted the motion and the publication of the final agenda, the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill has now received royal assent, but it is not the end of the fight against legislation. It is the beginning of a new fight to challenge how it is used and how it is policed on our streets and in our communities, so we ask that all officials, reps, members, link up with, affiliate to and support any demonstrations against this legislation and push back, because the future of our democracy and, indeed, our movement could well depend on it. I move. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Can I have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. That's open for debate. Anybody. No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Very quickly, comrades. Look, I very much appreciate bringing this and, again, it is a shame we are rushing because it is an extremely important debate, an extremely important issue that Cheshire have brought to our attention. This is a deeply, deeply authoritarian and undemocratic Act. It is designed to resist the ability of ordinary people to protest. It is racist against the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community. The idea that you should be banned from noisy protests, for example, and you give the police the power to do that – what they want to do is shut down effective protests, and we need to remind ourselves that our movement and democratic gains were built by such protests including winning the right to vote in the first place, the suffragettes had to engage in protest and occasionally breach the law.

You will know that in a number of cases recently we have had actions by Palestine Action against institutions producing arms for the Israeli Defence Forces and we have intervened to ensure that FBU members are not used to assist the police in removing protesters like that from such premises, and I think we should be proud for the stance we have taken on that, and we have got a good dialogue with those people. But this will be used to criminalise people like that and to actually put them in prison and that is where we are heading with all of this, and I think we need to build a movement of resistance.

I just remind you of one thing which I know many of you would have been on. We discussed with the former president during the pension strikes when we had the rally in Westminster Hall and decided spontaneously to walk

across Parliament Square, and we took some advice on that and Thompsons solicitors said to us you are not allowed to do that Parliament Square without permission and if you do any of that you will be lifted straightaway. Interestingly, the whole afternoon we blockaded Parliament Square and nobody was arrested so actually that showed that the power is in numbers and organisation and that is what we are going to build a movement with others to ensure that we are able to ensure this Act becomes meaningless because people actually ignore it. Thanks for bringing it, Andrew.

THE PRESIDENT:

I can tell conference on that day we did, we tried everything we could to get the general secretary and the former president arrested as a publicity stunt, and we failed. We couldn't get any of the coppers to touch them.

Right. I now put resolution 44 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 45, Building Research Establishment, Public Ownership, moved by Nottinghamshire. The EC support.

Resolution 45 BUILDING RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT – PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

The Grenfell Tower disaster has exposed multiple failings in the building safety regime in the UK, including in the development, testing and certification of materials for the construction industry. The privatisation of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) has been exposed as a disastrous decision, opening the testing regime to commercial pressures and commercial interests. Conference instructs the Executive Council to lobby for the BRE to be returned to full public ownership. This shall ensure greater accountability, including a clear obligation to act in the public interest and without pressure from business and commercial interest. Oversight of this restored public testing and research facility should be by a board, representative of tenants and residents, local and national government, trade unions representing workers in Fire and Rescue Services and the construction industry.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

STEPHEN TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

Moving resolution 45. The Grenfell Tower disaster has exposed a multitude of failings within the building regime safety in the UK. Following 75 years as a building research agency of government, the BRE was privatised in March 1997 by what was at that time a Tory government.

Reactions from across the construction sector were unequivocal with many stating at the time that the BRE won't survive because nobody will pay for private research. Independent of government size, the BRE was now also able to certify and approve products that it tested and so the BRE certification was born in 1999. Comrades certification is independent confirmation by an expert third party that a product, system or service meets and continues to meet appropriate standards.

In 2015 the BRE were commissioned by the DCLG to carry out research on the flammability of cladding. The research conducted basically involved placing internal plaster board to the outside of a building, not that aluminium composite material widely used for high risers, nothing involving a combustible polycarbonate filling and nothing to test a cavity. There was no evidence that the BRE looked at international incidents or other examples of fire spread from the use of such cladding either, but even then the test showed that unprotected windows could still fail and this could lead to fire spread and a breach of compartmentalisation. So why then did they conclude that the media attention about the risk of such fires was a common misconception?

Just two years later in 2017 our members were faced with the Grenfell Tower disaster. Conference, the privatisation of the BRE puts their business profits above not only our safety but the safety of our members and the public who are forced to live in these unsafe buildings.

Conference instructs the EC to lobby to the BRE to be returned to full public ownership. Oversight of this restored public testing and research facility should be by a board of representatives made up of residents and tenants, local and national government, trade union reps, the fire and rescue services and the construction industry. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Does that have a seconder? Formally seconded. Thank you. It is open for debate. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Again, an extremely important resolution, Steve, and I thank you for bringing it and setting out very well the arguments against privatisation of BRE and for bringing it back into public ownership.

I think that the sickening state of affairs was summed up after the Grenfell fire when the BRE had to announce that they were no longer going to sponsor the annual cladding industry awards. Think about that. The body tasked with testing and researching into the cladding sector was sponsoring an annual award for the industry itself, an entirely corrupt relationship.

The second point I make is they will notice this being passed, by the way. Shortly after the fire I saw a tweet that made a point about public ownership and was immediately contacted by the BRE to ask to visit them, which I did, and what we discovered was that all these developers were using these desk top exercises to avoid engaging in the large fire test. They suddenly had to start applying for the large fire test, one facility which is done at the BRE, and I witnessed one of those tests. In test after test after test they failed, which again exposed the fact that the desk top tests were entirely unsuitable and the whole testing regime has been exposed as an utter disaster and is part of the story that led to the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

So I think it is an extremely important resolution that Nottinghamshire have brought and urge people when we raise the issue as a campaign issue, raise it with MPs and demand the restoration of public ownership. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Matt. I now put resolution 45 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para E2, Government responsibility for the fire and rescue service, England; para E3, Government responsibility for the fire and rescue service, Northern Ireland; para E4 Government responsibility for the fire and rescue service, Scotland; para E5, Government responsibility for the fire and rescue service, Wales; para E6, Local government settlement in England; para E7, Northern Ireland Assembly; para E8, Scottish government.

JOHN McKENZIE (Scotland):

I will be very quick; I know everybody wants to get away. I just want to put on record the thanks of the region in Scotland for all the work that head office have put in, but particularly staff employed at head office for the documents EC referenced within our submissions to government and participation within that. We couldn't possibly do it. It is a huge body of work. We would not have been able to achieve without assistance, and I think it shows the importance of the staff there. I just wanted to put it on record. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Para E9, Welsh government; para E10, Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 2 hearings; para E11, Grenfell Tower Inquiry, Modules 1-3; para E12, Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Module 5 – firefighting; para E13, Westminster political action; para E14, White Paper on Fire Reform; Para E15, FBU parliamentary group; para E16 Trade Union Co-ordinating Group (TUCG).

Conference that concludes the business. There is still a bit more so don't all start packing up and jumping up.

As I said to you at the beginning of the week, we have now got to endorse the 2022 annual report. Is that agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you.

Right, conference, I have now got some votes of thanks to do. I have got a big long list to read out so save all of your applause until the very end, OK. Right, as usual, we have got a list of officials who will be retiring. We have got Steve Goulds, region 7; Spencer Gear, region 12; Karen Adams, region 13; Karen Critchlow, region 13; Arwel Roberts, region 8; Tim Lloyd, region 8; Clive Roberts, region 8; John West, region 5; Dominic McGlynn, region 6;

Paul Reames, region 3; Seamus McMahon, who served 32 years (well done Seamus); and we have two recently retired EC Members, Matt Lamb and Richard Jones. I would like to thank them all for what they have done for this union over the years. Nobody knows until they actually do the job what it involves and the commitment that you give. It is a thankless task most of the time, but we do thank those officials for all their hard work over the years and to all of you on the list, have a long, happy and most importantly, a healthy retirement.

To all of you in the room, the executive council, the stewards, the head office staff who work tirelessly behind the scenes, Mascols, the hotel staff, also the guest speakers and obviously our standing orders who work tirelessly throughout, and just before I finish, I have got some special mentions: Brian Hooper the EC member for Region 9 is a health and safety extremist. He was on the national health and safety committee. He somehow finds it really interesting, some of the most dour subjects, but he is brilliant at it, he is passionate about it, and undoubtedly has contributed massively to the health and safety of our members, and that is his main driver, he just wants firefighters to be as safe as they possibly can be.

A special thanks goes to Paul Reames. Paul is in standing orders. He has been on standing orders for 13 years. He has done an outstanding job on that committee for the members of the union. Over recent years he has been my guru advising me, script writing, generally anything that I have needed at conference, he has sorted out for me, so it is a really special thanks from me to him on behalf of the national union.

Finally, our AGS Andy Dark. How long have you been, 17 years now an AGS? He retires next April so this is his last conference after 42 years in the fire service. He is a friend and a comrade and like anyone he can be annoying, he can be a right pain, he takes ten minutes what can usually be said in a minute, but what I can say about him is our members and the union will have a huge void to fill when he retires next year. His knowledge, his expertise on just about everything in the fire service is second to none, and even greater to be honest, and sometimes when we have had our moments at head office or even on brigade committees or when we have had conciliation meetings at the joint secretaries when everybody seemed to be scratching their heads and thinking what the hell do we do now, Andy can pull a rabbit out of the hat as a way forward.

As I said, he is a good friend, a mate, and I will certainly miss his counsel. I won't miss his rights to reply. Seriously, he has done a hell of a job for this union, he has gone over and above on behalf of our members and I thank him, and I am just going to invite Matt now to say a few words.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. A long time since Andy walked through the gate of the training centre as an 18 year old to join the London Fire Brigade, and I have known him for a long time as an activist in this union, as an official in the London region and then in head office. Yes, he has a unique approach and style. Shall we put it that way?

He went through a phase as the AGS which I think we described as his surfer look. He actually grew his hair at one point, wearing bandanas and stuff. He has now brought his belt and braces look that he is more familiar with and he is famous for his 'gilet' – the body warmer thing. Anyway, he knows what I am talking about.

There is a different aspect to Andy. I remember attending anti-fascist events with Andy in the past. We were both on the big anti-fascist demo that shut down the BNP bookshop in Welling and quite a nasty confrontation with the BNP in Bermondsey on one occasion. As AGS it is not always a popular role. Something that John McKenzie said reminded me of this point when he urged conference to think about the implications of what you vote for, and I think that is very much Andy's approach in terms of warning brigade committees and brigade officials to be careful about what disputes you approach, because as well getting into the dispute you have to find a way of resolving, either winning or finding a way out of that dispute.

That is not always popular. It is something that we need to hear different views including notes of caution and so on, and he has brought that approach to his role doing the joint secretary work and many of you, he has assisted many people in very difficult circumstances at local level and at national level in that role.

It also means that he knows chief fire officers a lot better than I do. I can just slag them off in the background. Unfortunately, Andy has to talk to them. I have to say it also means he gets tipped off occasionally about very useful information.

I think he played a remarkable role in the pay discussions in Scotland. OK, that did not result in a resolution, but I think it came very close to it. And then he played a particular role obviously in terms of the MTA settlement. We have been discussing some of those things for many years, several years, and we actually made a breakthrough (not solving everything) in terms of those arrangements in Greater Manchester and in London.

I have seen him in negotiations lots of times. His style is a bit like what you see at conference. Sometimes he can just outlast the other side. Let's put it that way. I have also seen at least two occasions where, without notice – I think Ian was there – he suddenly got up, issued a profanity and walked out of the room leaving the other side flummoxed as to what to do next, but on one occasion me wondering what I was supposed to do next and me and Ian thinking, hmm, what do we do here?

I think those who talk to him will know that he has got an allotment. I am sure he will devote a great deal of time to his allotment and he has promised that he intends to stop smoking when he retires. He has made a unique contribution to this union. On behalf of myself, Andy, the Executive and I hope all of the union, thanks very much for your contribution, comrade. He says he will only say something if you don't want to get away.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference, just before we go, last paragraph. Thanks all of you for staying. I hope you all leave here invigorated to carry on the brilliant work you all do. On behalf of our members and on behalf of the national union, I thank you all. Conference is closed. *Applause.*

Conference closed



Established 1 October 1918

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

MAY 2022

OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

PRESIDENT – Ian Murray

VICE-PRESIDENT – Ben Selby

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

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

REGION 1	Colin Brown
REGION 2	Jim Quinn
REGION 3	Tony Curry
REGION 4	Pete Smith
REGION 5	Les Skarratts
REGION 6	Ben Selby
REGION 7	Andy Scattergood
REGION 8	Cerith Griffiths
REGION 9	Brian Hooper
REGION 10	David Shek
REGION 11	Joe Weir
REGION 12	Steve Wright
REGION 13	Val Hampshire

REGIONAL SECRETARIES

REGION 1	John McKenzie
REGION 2	Phil Millar
REGION 3	Brian Harris
REGION 4	David Williams
REGION 5	Edward Burrows
REGION 6	Adam Taylor
REGION 7	Billy Holland
REGION 8	Arwel Roberts
REGION 9	Jamie Newell
REGION 10	Jon Lambe
REGION 11	Andy Petch
REGION 12	Mark Chapman
REGION 13	Guy Herrington
B&EMM	Amit Malde
CSNC	Lynda Rowan-O'Neill
LGBT	Pat Carberry
ONC	Peter Traynor
NRC	Shaun Pickles
NWC	Kathryn Duncan

REGIONAL CHAIRS

REGION 1	Gus Sproul
REGION 2	Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Jim Bittlestone
REGION 4	Neil Carbutt
REGION 5	Daniel Giblin
REGION 6	Mark Stilwell
REGION 7	Steven Price-Hunt
REGION 8	Steve Saunders
REGION 9	Rebecca Lewington
REGION 10	Gareth Beeton
REGION 11	Tim Green
REGION 12	James Wolfenden
REGION 13	Scott Young
B&EMM	Karen Bell
CSNC	Caroline Saunderson
LGBT	Maria Buck
ONC	Gareth Cook
NRC	Paul Revill
NWC	Rachel Rogers

REGIONAL TREASURERS

REGION 1	Seona Hart
REGION 2	Chris Blayney
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	Vacant
REGION 10	Jason Hunter
REGION 11	Andy Petch
REGION 12	Robyn Richardson
REGION 13	Amanda Hills

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 1	Scotland	William Burt Kimberley Ferguson Melanie Gibb Barry Johnstone Simon Leroux Scott MacRory Kerry McCrone Steven Weir Elliot Whitson
REGION 2	NIFB	Jake Drinkwater Chris Blayney Thomas McCaul Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Cleveland	Nick Cain Karl Wager
	Durham	Andrew Murray Dave Welsh
	Northumberland	Ash Fox Guy Tiffin
	Tyne & Wear	Wayne Anderson Chris Cook
REGION 4	Humberside	Lloyd Akers Sam Miller-Hodges
	North Yorkshire	Adam Lee Stephen Howley
	South Yorkshire	Matt Nicholls Stu Smith
	West Yorkshire	Ryan Binks Martyn Bairstow
REGION 5	Cheshire	Andrew Fox-Hewitt John West
	Cumbria	Oliver Burrow Hal Fell
	Greater Manchester	Matthew Fryer Dave Pike Steve Wiswell
	Isle of Man	
	Lancashire	Tom Cogley Kevin Wilkie
	Merseyside	Ian Hibbert Lee Hunter

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 6

Derbyshire	Dan Carter Chris Tapp
Leicestershire	Harry Brant Mark Drinkwater
Lincolnshire	Simon Thomas Richard Wright
Northamptonshire	Chris Kemp John Wadsworth
Nottinghamshire	Nick Hardy Stephen Tucker

REGION 7

Hereford & Worcester	Neil Bevan Trevor Connolly
Staffordshire	Craig Elson Martin Starkey
Shropshire	Louise Fletcher Simon Morris
Warwickshire	Adam Hemmings. Neil Stuart
West Midlands	Billy Holland Steve Price-Hunt Philippa Smith

REGION 8

Mid & West Wales	Daniel Bartley Deiniol Lloyd
North Wales	Tim Lloyd Duncan Stewart-Ball
South Wales	Michael Alexander Timothy Monkton Gareth Tovey

REGION 9

Bedfordshire	Craig Carter Mark Cook
Cambridgeshire	Callum Hodgkin George White
Essex	Andy Knowles Martyn Wager
Hertfordshire	Tim Deegan Rob Fortune
Norfolk	Kevin Game Alan Jaye
Suffolk	Kevin Driver Phil Johnston

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 10

London

Greg Ashman
Karen Bell
Brian Flanagan
Jim Kearns
Ross McLaren
Leoni Munslow
Martin Thompson
Simon Kenton
David Young

REGION 11

East Sussex

Ben Ashton
Simon Herbert

Kent

Danny Barrett
Dave Turner

Surrey

Karl Jones
Tristan Orr-Berwick

West Sussex

Edward Fox
Antony Walker

REGION 12

Berkshire

Stephen Collins
James Hunt

Buckinghamshire

Kieron Thomas
Chris Wycherley

Hampshire & Isle of Wight

Dave Hunt
Jamie Kelly

Oxfordshire

Nick Bourke
Lee Newport

REGION 13

Avon

Steve McGreavy
Amanda Mills

Cornwall

Martin Murt
Stuart Pulley

Devon & Somerset

James Leslie
David Roberts

Dorset & Wiltshire

Karen Adams
Kate Scott

Gloucestershire

Richard Champ
Benedict Gwyer

LIST OF DELEGATES

B&EMM	B&EMM	Dean Pounder Sonny Roberts
CSNC	CSNC	Donna Donachie Sherri Kitson
LGBT	LGBT	Tracy Doyle Rebecca Savin
NRC	NRC	Darren Halpin Seamus McMahon
NWC	NWC	Rosa Crowley-Bennett Georgina Fielding
ONC	ONC	Peter Trayner



Established 1 October 1918

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