

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS 2023

94th CONFERENCE

10 – 12 MAY 2023



CREDIT: ROD DORRINGTON



Established 1 October 1918

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94th CONFERENCE 2023

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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 2023'

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



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94th CONFERENCE 2023

BLACKPOOL

10-12 MAY 2023

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Good Morning, conference. I now call Phil Millar, chair of standing orders committee to give his standing orders report. Phil.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, good morning. The standing order committee welcomes you to conference 2023. Can anyone who has a vehicle parked in the grounds of the Imperial please ensure that you have it registered on the data terminal at reception. You will not be charged for parking. However, if you do not register your vehicle you may subsequently receive a letter after conference from the hotel asking for payment. Should this occur, please email the standing orders secretary, Mark Rowe, to inform him and he will advise the hotel accordingly.

Conference, last year in my standing orders report on the second day of conference, I informed you that the standing orders committee, in line with custom and practice, had issued documentation to each delegate. I also informed conference that documentation issued in one day amounted to 20,000 pages which, according to a Google search at the time would be equal to two 45 feet pine trees. In that standing orders report I asked conference permission to step away from custom and practice by allowing the standing orders committee to provide one piece of documentation to each delegation instead of one to every delegate. This year conference – and I note resolution 92 in the final agenda from Derbyshire (who were obviously paying attention to the standing orders report last year) – the standing orders committee would like to be proactive rather than reactive.

It was the intention of the standing orders committee to try to transition to a paperless conference this year and introduce the use of tablets instead of paper. However, one or two small things came up since last May, which took up a lot of everyone's time. To that end conference each delegation has one folder for the leading delegate and one between a maximum of three delegates in which to place any documentation that standing orders determine absolutely must go out to conference floor.

The Fire Brigades Union are trialling the new FBU app at this conference and the standing orders committee would encourage delegates and visitors to download it using the QR code on your programme of business as some documentation that would normally have gone to each delegate will be uploaded and available for information purposes to view throughout conference on the app. Once you open the app for the first time at the log-in page click on reset password. You will then be asked to enter a personal email address and an email will be sent to you to allow you to create a password.

Can delegates that have a folder now please remove the delegate list and record the following changes. Region 5, Cumbria, remove Oliver Burrow and replace with Steve Radcliffe. Region 10, London, remove Martin Thompson and replace with Adam Jones. Again, region 10, remove Dave Young and replace with Jon Lambe. Region 11, Surrey, remove Graham Kitchin and replace with Simon Harris. Region 13, Dorset and Wiltshire, remove Scott Blandford and replace with Adam Moss. ONC remove Tony Walker and replace with Gary Belfield. LGBT+ remove Shelly Morgan and replace with Maria Buck.

With regard to credentials, each delegate has now received their credentials individually at the standing orders committee room. Delegates with business for standing orders committee should inform the steward of the nature of their business and you will either be called by the standing orders or advised when to come back because they are in session.

The standing orders committee would like to stress the importance of delegates stating their name and brigade or section when addressing conference at the rostrum as this will assist the president and the verbatim report. We also ask you to speak clearly into the microphone when at the rostrum.

Standing orders committee would also like to remind conference that the whole of the Imperial Hotel is a no smoking building, and I trust this will be adhered to. Also may I request that all delegates, officials, stewards,

visitors and observers switch off mobile telephones, laptops, tablets and any other portable device whilst conference is in session.

In line with standing order 16 conference will be in session from 9.30 to 5.15 every day. Standing order 16 also clearly states assembly, adjournment and comfort breaks times, all of which must be adhered to, and can be found on the front cover of your programme of business. To facilitate the smooth running of conference business, the president may at times ask you to agree a temporary suspension of standing order 16.

I would also like to bring to your attention the provision of meals and breaks. Tea and coffee for all is to be served in the hotel reception lobby during comfort breaks. Breakfast, for those staying in the Imperial Hotel, will be from 7.00 to 9.00 in the Palm Court which is situated directly opposite this room in the corridor behind you. Breakfast, for those staying in the Grand Hotel, will have been explained in your hotel welcome packs. Lunch for all is at 12.45. Evening meal for all is from 6.30pm until 8.30pm. All lunches and evening meals are here in the Imperial Hotel regardless of where you are staying, and served in the Washington Suite which is located through the doors behind you, turn left along the corridor, pass through reception and follow the corridor to the left to the door on the left which is clearly marked *Washington Suite*. On Friday there will be a packed lunch provided for all by the Imperial Hotel. If business is to work through lunch on Friday there will be a short comfort break.

Conference, the list of scrutineers and tellers has been circulated and is in your folders, as has the list of the final appeals committee. These lists are now placed before conference for endorsement. With regards to COVID, a head office circular was issued on 4 May 2023 outlining the procedure to follow if you become unwell during conference and suspect you have contracted COVID. A copy of that circular can be found on the FBU app.

Stall facilities. The standing orders committee have agreed stall facilities for the following organisations: Bookmarks, Stop the War, Stand up to Racism, Fight Bladder Cancer, Free our Unions and Palestine Solidarity Campaign. The stalls will be situated in the Derby Room, which is just off the main hotel foyer, and I would ask you to please make an effort to visit all of the stalls and show your support.

The standing orders committee has agreed the facility of the FBU shop at this conference. It is located through the doors behind you. Turn left along the corridor and through the door on your left which is clearly marked. This year a special solidarity initiative is being run through the FBU shop to support our comrades and Care for Calais who have been subjected to specific and vicious targeting and intimidation by far-right groups. To raise money for Care for Calais and also to show our support for their working ideals, a joint FBU Care for Calais T-shirt has been produced and is available for delegates to purchase. All proceeds from this T-shirt will be given to Care for Calais to continue their important work, and the standing orders committee hope that delegates will support the initiative.

The FBU media and research department are in attendance at conference and whilst conference is in session they are at the back of the room. When conference is not in session, they are located through the doors behind you, turn left, carry on along the corridor through the reception area and through the last door on the right which is clearly marked, if you wish to see them for any business you have.

Fringe meetings have been arranged for the following: tomorrow at 5.45 *Enough is Enough*; and Thursday also at 5.45 Stand up to Racism. Both meetings will be held in Imperial Suite 3 which is located downstairs and signage is in place in the main corridor behind you.

Conference, for your information a number of resolutions have been withdrawn prior to attending conference. Depending on when they were withdrawn, some resolutions within the final agenda may not be in the programme of business.

Can you please turn to your programme of business? So, page 2, resolution 24 has been withdrawn; resolution 4 has been remitted without the right to speak; resolution 5 has been withdrawn; resolution 23 has been withdrawn; resolution 12 has been withdrawn; and resolution 8 has been withdrawn. Page 3, resolution 18, resolution 25 and resolution 26 have been remitted with the right to speak; resolution 9 has been withdrawn; resolution 17 has been withdrawn, and resolution 3 has been remitted without the right to speak. Page 4, resolution 1 has been withdrawn

and resolution 59 has been withdrawn. Page 5, resolution 88 has been withdrawn and resolution 93 has been withdrawn. On page 8, resolution 71 has been remitted with the right to speak. On page 11, resolution 75 has been withdrawn, resolution 73 has been withdrawn, and by default the amendment falls; resolution 74 has been withdrawn, and resolution 83 has been remitted.

Speakers' times. The executive council policy statement *Firefighter Pay Building on our Campaign for the Future*, that will be the general secretary, 20 minutes. Executive council policy statement *The Fight for Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service*, general secretary 20 minutes. The executive council policy statement *Fire and Rescue Service Duty System*, general secretary 20 minutes, and the executive council policy statement *Preparing for a General Election, again*, the general secretary, 20 minutes.

Regarding a vote on a challenge to the chair of conference, I would draw conference's attention to standing order 15. The number of delegates in conference this year is 126. Therefore, the number of delegates voting to carry a challenge is 83. Please note that NRC delegates, ONC delegates, CSNC delegates, NWC delegates, B&EMM delegates and LGBT+ 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.

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

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

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

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

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

policy should come from, and be written by, the brigades that submit them. It should be your words and your words alone in that final agenda, and not the standing orders committee.

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

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

Finally, conference, there are to be two elections this year to the standing orders committee. Both myself and Gary Lennie have both now served our term of four conferences and are both prepared to stand for re-election although I have no idea why. The first election will be my own position on the committee which will be held tomorrow. Nomination forms will be distributed tomorrow morning and can you place them in the ballot box that will be at the rear corner of the hall during the morning comfort break. President, if that report is agreed, then that concludes the standing orders report.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Conference, any speakers? Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you.

Conference, we now move to section M, obituary. Conference will shortly hold a minute's silence for our brothers and sisters who are no longer with us and have sadly passed away in 2022, and we were tragically reminded of that earlier this year with the tragic loss of firefighter Barry Martin up in Edinburgh. Scotland, I thought you might have wanted to speak on that paragraph? Thank you.

CHRIS MURPHY (Scotland):

First time at conference, first time speaker. Conference, we recognise the obituaries cover 2022 and the importance of taking time to remember these members. Barry Martin will receive similar recognition in conference obituary 2024, however, region 1 wishes to put on record their thanks for the messages of solidarity and support received from all regions and for those attended Barry's funeral earlier this year. Line of duty deaths are a stark reminder of the risks of our chosen profession and, sadly, Barry Martin's name is now added to the roll call of nearly two and a half thousand firefighters who have gone to work and not made it home. Our thoughts remain with Barry's family, friends and comrades and all members recognised in this year's obituary.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, and I would like to point out to conference that there was a typo in the annual report. It referred to firefighter deaths in 2021. It wasn't, it was 2022. Right, conference, if I could ask you all to stand now we will hold a minute's silence.

Conference stood in memory of those who had died.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

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

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Morning, conference. A warm welcome to all delegates, observers, staff and conference guests at the Imperial Hotel here in sunny Blackpool. I have been informed by the hoteliers they have just taken on extra staff

to deal with the expected influx from regions 3 and 4 this week. For those of you who don't know it, I would suggest you go and have a look at it; it is a life experience. Conference, joking aside, you are here for serious business so that is your priority this week. So don't be missing any of your meetings or any sessions of this conference. We have got a lot of important business to get through this week, and this is your opportunity to shape and decide what we, the Fire Brigades Union, do going forward, setting the priorities and playing your part in conference, that is the parliament of our union.

It is good to see some new faces, and obviously we have got the old ones here as well, but what is good is we have got good new officials coming through carrying on the good fight and looking after the best interests of firefighters. I especially want to thank all of you here today and those officials who are not here, and of course all of our fantastic staff for all of their hard work over the last year in what has been difficult circumstances, but what seems to be the norm of late.

The Fire Brigades Union is the professional voice of the fire service, not the NFCC or those other tin pot organisations that profess to represent firefighters. I will tell you, conference, if firefighters had listened to those organisations over recent months we would have ended up with a far lower pay rise than we achieved this year, but thankfully firefighters don't listen to them.

Conference, there have been some really huge issues raised over recent months in the media regarding the culture within the fire and rescue service. I will say something about that in a minute but before I do I want to make comment on conference itself and proceedings.

As I have just said, conference is the parliament of our union and the ultimate decision-making body, and as such it should be given the respect it warrants and deserves. That means that we, you, all of us, play a part in the proceedings in its entirety. You as delegates are elected by your brigade committees, your regional committees in London, Scotland and Northern Ireland, they are entrusted with responsibility of making key decisions on behalf of all of your members that you are representing this week.

So with that in mind, I ask every delegate to respect conference, respect the standing orders committee who work hard behind the scenes to get us through the business. They are your standing orders committee. You elect them and they are there to ensure that the rules that you set them are adhered to. Remember, respect every delegate. Even if you don't agree with them, give them the respect you yourself would expect when you will be making your contributions.

My job as your president is to make sure the debates are carried out properly, comradely, and every speaker gets the opportunity to have their say. That also means you stay until the very last piece of business on Friday afternoon. So no dipping out early. It is not fair on those whose resolutions, through no fault of their own, are the last ones to be called as conference nears finishing.

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

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

Conference, I have just reminded you of the importance and responsibility you have been entrusted with by your members back in your brigades while you are here, so I feel I must make comment on the issue of being a delegate and the responsibility that comes with it. You have all been advised in the circular from national officer Mark Rowe

the process and the criteria for delegate changes. Conference, after last year the matter had to be addressed. Rule c(2)(ii) of the union is very clear. Delegates to conference are elected by the brigade committees to represent their respective membership here in the parliament of our union. Last year we had 65 delegate changes. I am certain most of those were made out with rule c(2)(ii) and those delegates were not elected by brigade committees. They were chopping and changing like you wouldn't believe them. For me, who presides over conference, obviously it makes it an absolute nightmare. I have to ensure that the only ones entitled to speak do so, and that is delegates. Last year there had been a delegate change earlier in the day and we realised at the very last minute that someone queueing up to speak was actually listed as an observer. The VP was quickly despatched and it was stopped, but the rules and the standing orders are clear: only delegates can speak in the debate; observers can only observe. There is a clue in the title.

Conference, there should be no delegate changes unless it is for exceptional circumstances. We are not saying there cannot be any, for example, if there is illness or a delegate has to return home, obviously go to the standing orders but it must be agreed by the standing orders.

To finish on conference proceedings, stick with the time you are given and explain your point clearly. The VP will be in charge of the clock. You will be on a green light when you start. It will change to amber when you have got a minute remaining and a red light when your time is up. Finish it up quickly because we will press the button and there is a trapdoor on the stage where you will just disappear.

Also I ask every delegate and every delegation to consider very carefully every vote you cast here. Think about the overall priorities of the union and the threats we face. Think about the costs of your demands in your resolutions that you make here both in terms of time, resources and, of course, money. Don't set us up to fail and don't treat head office like Father Christmas who are here just to give presents. When we vote for a resolution we are all responsible for carrying them out. I have seen so many resolutions call for surveys to be carried out via the EC. They get agreed here and then a national officer is allocated a task and then we are chasing for weeks and weeks and weeks, and then sometimes months, for getting responses from yourselves. If you agree a resolution here, take ownership of it when you get back.

The last point on conference proceedings, let's use this conference to renew and reinvigorate our union, leave here united and not giving our enemies more to gossip about to attack us.

Conference, it now gives me no pleasure whatsoever in what I am about to talk about because I thought this sort of thing was something we had cast away into the dark of fire service history never to come back. What we have seen in the media, misogyny, racism, homophobia, and the list goes on, is still within our midst within the fire and rescue service. Conference, it saddens me to say it, but some of the absolute abhorrent behaviour will be being carried out by our members: not all of it, but some of it. Some of it is being carried out by senior managers, and some of it is being carried out by those who are not our members, but undeniably some of it will be being carried out by our members, and no matter who is dishing it out, these despicable behaviours, we, you our members, all have an obligation to stop it, to eradicate it from our work places, to make our work places safe for our members who, undoubtedly, are the overwhelming majority of the victims of these appalling behaviours.

Every worker has a right to be safe in the work place and should not fear being mistreated because of their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, neurodiversity, etc, or bullied or abused while merely going about doing their job and this is where, conference, I challenge you – I challenge each and every one of you to be part of the generation of officials that fixes it, that eradicates these disgraceful behaviours from the fire and rescue service once and for all. I don't want the next president, or the one after that, to be repeating what I am saying here, because if they are, that is many more of our members who have been victims, the victims of despicable behaviours, and they are the ones going through the misery being inflicted upon them.

Conference, I challenge you to go back to your brigades, go back to your work places, and if you see something, say something. If you see something, do something, and if you see something, don't turn the other cheek and allow that inappropriate behaviour in whatever form to continue. Let's rid the fire service of any forms of discrimination, any inappropriate behaviour and make every single one of our members feel safe going to work. Conference, that is my challenge to you as you leave here on Friday.

Conference, challenging the culture in the fire and rescue service is not the only challenge we will have to confront head on. We face many impending threats. The Westminster government's assault on firefighters' pay and conditions accelerated in 2022. Using the inspector in England and the NSCC as their conduit, ministers have plenty of ideas on how to attack our union and how to make matters worse. The Home Office tossed their own special grenade into the fire service via the White Paper on fire reforms, and not a word on how to improve the service to our communities. Instead, it was a chief fire officers' charter that can be summed up as, do as you're told, when you're told and, basically, all power to the chief. Not to mention the threat of scrapping the NJC and imposing a pay review body. I will tell you this conference, if we had had a pay review body in place last July we would undoubtedly have been on strike before Christmas judging by the other sectors whose pay is determined by them.

Conference, the White Paper will result in nothing but pain for our members who do their job on the front line day in and day out and we must be ready to resist these attacks. The HMI, CFRS and the NFCC have carried on as mouth pieces for ministers, parroting the same slogans while doing down the FBU. These bodies claim to be independent but they dance to the same tune and are funded by the same paymaster's coins. Instead of blaming firefighters for the state of the fire service, the same service they claim to be in charge, they should listen to the workforce and come with the investment that is greatly needed, and that we the FBU have repeatedly called for.

Conference, the White Paper is not the only threat we face in the coming months. The Tory Westminster government is pushing through the Minimum Service Levels Bill and, let us be clear, the Home Office is planning how to make strike action by firefighters almost impossible. But they just don't want to render our action ineffective, they want to go further. They are effectively talking about a strike ban because they plan to force the majority of our members to work even when they voted for legal strikes and this union cannot accept such an imposition. We will fight them with every weapon in our armoury to oppose this denial of our right to strike, and we will carry on fighting until the laws are scrapped.

Conference, I am pleased to say that the Labour Party have said that they will repeal this law and the anti-trade union laws should they form the next Westminster government. We, as your union, will be holding their feet to the fire to ensure they stick by that commitment. Conference, we have got an EC policy statement this week on preparing for a general election and we, as a union, will be ensuring we do our best to get that much needed investment in the fire and rescue service with a new incoming and much needed Labour government.

We also have joining us tomorrow the deputy leader of the Labour Party, Angela Rayner, and I am sure, like me, you will be listening very carefully to what she has to say regarding repealing the Minimum Service Level Bill should it become law and also repealing the anti-trade union legislation.

I know there is some debate going on within our members again around the value of the union remaining affiliated to the Labour Party, but my own assessment of that is we can better influence from within than what we can from the outside and I am pleased there have been no resolutions calling for disaffiliation being put to this year's conference. But that doesn't mean that the leadership of the Labour Party have not been closely scrutinised by our officials and our members to determine whether that affiliation remains in the future. We need a change of government from this Tory self-interested millionaires' club. Yes, there is lots our union would like to change about the Labour Party but ultimately they will be better for the working class than the current government, and we will not stop campaigning to change the Labour Party to reflect what we want to see in our political voice in government.

Conference, to finish with some positives – and we have had some great wins – on pensions we had more successes in the courts with over 9,000 of our members set to receive thousands of pounds in compensation in the injuries to feelings claims, and I want to place on record again our thanks to the legal team, all of head office and national officer, Mark Rowe, for all of that hard work: brilliant stuff!

Our DECON project is going from strength to strength and getting adopted in various fire and rescue services and there is no doubt in my mind that this work will save thousands of firefighters' lives in the future. The outcomes of the UCLan research led by Professor Anna Stec are being taken on board and recognised worldwide and we will be hearing more on that throughout this week.

That brings me on to the pay campaign. Conference, the cost of living crisis engulfed the entire working population during the last year, with inflation higher than anything we have seen in decades, and I am proud of the campaign the union undertook to secure significantly better pay rises than we were offered last July. It started out as a measly 2%, we then got it up to a 5% to then reach 7% backdated to July 2022 with 5% from 2023. That is a huge shift forced on the national employers. No-one is trying to kid anyone here that is an inflation-busting pay rise; it wasn't. But key to winning the improvements that we did was our members' solidarity and our ability to act decisively as a unified organisation. We delivered the magnificently turned out strike ballot showing our members were prepared for the fight if the employers didn't up their offer, but as we know they did. I am also pleased to record discussions at NJC level on retained and control pay, pay progression on other matters conference has raised over recent years, and it is certainly the first time in all my years as an official that the employers have agreed to such talks to take place at NJC level. As a union we are fully prepared for that and those discussions, and alongside our sectional officials, to try to achieve the best outcome for our members.

I commend the executive council and our lead negotiators at the NJC for their conscientiousness, their unrelenting commitment to squeezing the very last ounce from the employers on pay. I believe we did get the maximum we could have achieved. At the last meeting of the NJC we had with the national employers, it went on late into the night, and when we were coming out of that room, I honestly believed we could not have got any more. When you look at what our fellow trade union comrades are facing in their struggles for better pay, with their employers, some of which have taken significant periods of strike action, yet disgracefully they are currently being offered a pittance to settle those disputes including attacks on their terms and conditions, job cuts etc, and I think it makes what we achieved even more remarkable.

Conference, it goes without saying, the Fire Brigades Union stands in solidarity with all these workers being forced to take strike action. I think in our pay campaign the union got it absolutely spot on, from the executive council, head office officials, the staff in every department, not to mention you as officials who did the groundwork on the front line to achieve the results we did in the various ballots we held.

Let us not forget the turnout on the Westminster lobby. If ever there was one moment that brought the whole campaign together in readiness for a strike ballot, it was seeing thousands of firefighters, be it wholtime retained, control, officer members, all showing solidarity in taking over the streets of London and marching around Parliament Square. What a fantastic day that was, and I applaud each and every one of you for the part you all played in it in making it the success it was.

Conference, there is so much to do. We have got a win for the negotiations with the employers and, as I have said, the union is ready for those discussions. Let's remember: we need to start preparing for the pay campaign in 2024 because it will be here before you know it. To finish, we are still facing massive battles ahead of us. The Westminster government is slowly decomposing but it still can hurt us. Let us not kid ourselves that a Tory government with the majority that they have, no matter what state they are in, are a danger to all of our members and the trade union movement. The best defence against these attacks on us and the best way to make any progress is to unite together as a union.

We showed in the pay campaign what can be achieved when we stick together and that is the only way to win and make the fire service as good as it can be for the communities that we are here to protect and serve.

Conference, that is enough from me and we have got a lot to get through so have a good week, enjoy conference, enjoy Blackpool, and we will try to get you away as early as we can on Friday after all business is concluded, and we do realise that some people have got long car journeys with the trains being on strike. Conference, thank you, enjoy the week and deal with the business. Thank you.

We now move on to section M, financial accounts, para M1, para M2. Conference I would just also like to point out there is a typo in the annual report on page 125. Paul Revill has been listed in the wrong place in there and he should have been listed in the sectional chairs allowance which was below the one he was listed in. Thank you.

I now call on the national treasurer to move the financial statement, Les Skarratts.

NATIONAL TREASURER (Les Skarratts):

Thank you, president. Good morning conference. Comrades, 2022 was another challenging year for the Fire Brigades Union similar to previous years. Thanks to our finance team headed up by Michael here the accounts have been fully audited and with the executive council's annual report for conference agreement, some brave director of our auditing team is in attendance at conference also. Again, comrades, we have faced some key issues in 2022, government COVID restrictions eased and, unlike the year before, costs unwelcomingly increased to the union due to physical meetings required and travel and accommodation expenditure. As a trade union we resumed all our physical meetings, education courses and, of course, we had conference in Brighton in 2022.

We got through the COVID period with historic agreements reached and put in place and in a stronger strategic position, so when the NFCC showed as being the senseless mob they are, as a trade union we should be proud how we looked after this union through the COVID period and the professional manner in which we did it.

Conference, that return to some form of normality along with increased legal and accident and injury fund costs, meant our expenditure increased from £8.9 million to £13 million for the year 21-22. Of course, we had the significant issue of the national pay campaign. We were the only trade union to campaign to increase firefighters' and firefighters' control pay as the president said, which in itself required substantial financial investment by the union via the comrades' contributions which, of course, brought about the successful pay settlements of 2022 and 2023.

Comrades, that campaign required a number of consultative ballots and, of course, the national pay dispute strike ballot, and whilst this Tory government still resists the use of electronic voting for trade unions for statutory ballots, for obvious malicious intent, and despite their own leader, the prime minister being elected in part by electronic voting, we, the trade union movement, still have to rely on the incredibly expensive postal balloting system. This meant that costs related to ballots for members increased from £36,000 to £128,000 in 2022. Conference, I am sure, like me, you will agree that that ballot, that trade dispute and its costs, was still a smart investment for the benefit of our members in terms of a lever for better pay.

As a consequence of being appointed national treasurer, conference, I am pleased to say that reflects the Fire Brigades Union stated aims and objectives as laid out in section M of the annual report on page 95.

In relation to a more holistic approach to the annual accounts, I report the following, comrades. As a result of our constant campaigning on a number of fronts, along with the professional and skilled approach of our officials, our ordinary membership levels rose by 195 members in 2022, but with new recruitment policies the union has implemented, the increase has yet to filter through into the contribution revenue stream, with membership income from contributions slightly decreasing from £10,300 to £10,200, but overall the union's total funds have increased by £1,117,000, from £11,310,000, to £12,480,000.

Comrades, the accident and injury fund has slightly decreased to £5,290,000. The political fund shows a slight increase to £810,000, and the lottery fund is showing a slight decrease to £150,000 all, as I say, mentioned in the accounts.

In concluding, president, the general fund for 2022 stands at £6,230,000 up from £4,810,000 in 2021. Comrades, this is caveated with a note of caution, however, as included in that improvement is a positive re-evaluation of the FBU pension schemes that occur from time to time and, as we all know, that can be a negative re-evaluation as well as a positive re-evaluation, so we welcome it but we are certainly extremely cautious about that issue.

To emphasise that note of caution, comrades, I draw conference's attention to the statement of comprehensive income on page 104 of the report which identifies that our actual operating deficit before being financially assisted by the actuarial gains I have previously mentioned, was £2,108,757, and that amplifies the need to be vigilant and prudent. However, conference, we will remain professional and vigilant spending our members' money to protect the union and our assets, and in a manner that best protects the interests of our members. So, president, conference, I move the accounts for 2022. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

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

Conference, after the tea break we are taking the debate on pay and to give that as much time as we can get I am going to call an early tea break, so I don't know if Mark can let the hotel know. Just bear with us because it might take them a little while to get the teas and coffees out because we are calling it early. Right, conference, depending on how quick they get the teas out, I would like to reconvene at quarter to eleven but if not it will be 11 o'clock but I will get the stewards out calling everybody in. It all depends how quick the hotel can react to me just calling this impromptu tea break so we have got longer for the pay debate. For that to happen, you have to agree to suspend standing order 16. Is that agreed? *Agreed.*

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, we are now resuming and we have got the chair of standing orders, Phil Millar, to give us a report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, for those that have them, can you please turn to your delegate list. Region 1, Scotland, remove Kim Ferguson and replace with Gus Sproul. Conference, can you turn to your programmes of business. Page 9, resolution 49 has been remitted without the right to speak. Finally, conference, there are coloured overlays, such as these, that are available and are known to help with dyslexia. We have some of them in the standing orders committee room. If anyone wishes to avail of them come to standing orders at one of the conference breaks. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.*

Conference, we are now moving on to section A, pay and conditions. Before we begin our debate I would like to introduce a short film on the FBU pay campaign.

Film

Thanks for that brilliant film. Conference, I now call para A1. Conference, we are now going to take one of our big debates of the week and, as I mentioned in my address to you earlier, our members have overwhelmingly voted to accept the latest pay offer. That doesn't mean we can sit still until 2024. As we can see from the EC policy statement and the resolutions we have in front of us today, there isn't any intention of doing that. Conference, we do have new delegates here and, in order to try to make proceedings as easy to follow as I physically can do, but within the parameters available to me (because, as we know, if policy statements and resolutions have an impact or conflict with each other, they need to be taken in the same debate and when some carry others will automatically fall), I will explain what can and cannot carry together in a moment and I will repeat after the debate and just prior to moving to the vote.

Conference, at this point I remind you that if you disagree with my decisions on resolutions and where they stand in relationship to the debate, you should first raise a point of order and not call out challenge from the floor in order for you to raise your disagreement. As soon as anyone calls challenge I have to vacate the chair and there is no further debate. The VP will move straight to the vote. If you have got an issue to raise, raise a point of order first, come and explain it at the rostrum.

For clarity, the following will be taken in the same debate and in the following order so movers of other resolutions can prepare themselves: executive council policy statement *Firefighter Pay: Building on our Campaign: Building for the Future* is to be taken in the same debate with the following resolutions: resolution 13, Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) Remuneration, moved by Staffordshire, with amendments from Bedfordshire and Scotland; resolution 7, Broadening of the Firefighter Role, moved by Merseyside; resolution 10, Non-Contractual Work, moved by Warwickshire; resolution 14, Pay for Skills, moved by Staffordshire with an amendment from South Yorkshire; Resolution 18, Recognition for Firefighter (Control) as Frontline and Operational, moved by West Yorkshire; resolution 25, Bridging the Gap for Firefighter (Control) Members, moved by Humberside; Resolution 26, Fire Control Pay

Parity, moved by Hereford and Worcester. The last three, as the report of standing orders stated, they are remitting with the right to speak so I will still call them in the debate.

Now I will inform you of what can and cannot carry together. If the EC policy statement carries, then resolutions 13 and 7 will fall. Resolutions 18, 25 and 26 would fall also, so if the delegates change their mind on the rostrum and they don't remit, they will be taken in the vote and they will fall. Resolutions 10 and 14 can carry alongside the EC's policy statement. If the EC's policy statement falls, we will move to resolution 13. Resolutions 10 and 14, 18, 25 and 26 can carry alongside resolution 36. However, resolution 7 stands in opposition to all of them in the debate.

In order to try to avoid things getting really complicated, I will reiterate each of the voting steps should the EC policy statement fall, and at each step of the voting I will reiterate what falls and what will carry. I now call executive council policy statement, Firefighter Pay Building on our Campaign: Building for the Future. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks very much, president. President, conference, I am moving the executive council policy statement *Firefighter Pay: Building on our Campaign: Building for the Future*.

Over the past year since last conference this union, our members, our officials have put in an enormous effort campaigning on pay, and I want to congratulate every single one of you in this room who put in a fantastic shift over the past twelve months. We should all congratulate all our members. Without them we would not have made any progress whatsoever on the question of pay. The executive council has brought this statement to conference to draw up a balance sheet on what we have achieved so far and what we still have to do. The EC is clear that the pay campaign is not over. Indeed, we are stating here that we are simply moving on to the next stage of our battle for decent pay for firefighters.

While it is vital to reflect on our activities over the last year, the main reason for bringing this statement to conference is to face forwards and to prepare our next steps. You will all know the outcome of the pay agreement as set out in the film, but it is worth reiterating certain points. It is worth reflecting on how far we moved our employers from an initial offer of 2% to the offer of 5%, the intervention of the London Fire Commissioner with a 6 and 5% offer to London members only potentially a divisive move, but signalling a breach in the united front of our employers. And after intense negotiations at the NJC in February the employers nationally offered 7% and 5% with other matters tabled formally for discussion at the NJC for the first time.

Significantly, there are no strings to this pay settlement. That is particularly important and relevant when we look at the challenges faced by some of our comrades in sister unions in other sectors who are often facing demands for job cuts and so called flexible working as part of pay negotiations.

The key to winning that progress – and that progress we don't say is sufficient – has been the organisation and mobilisation of FBU members. After the initial offer we held consultations, meeting with members who made it clear they would not accept 2%. Further meetings in the autumn when the union began to prepare for strike action, led to the improved offer, and members made it clear again through the first consultative ballot that the 5% offer was not acceptable, and the figures again are quite remarkable: 79% voting to reject on a 78% turn out. And the strike ballot, a crucial turning point in our discussions with our employers: 88% voting for strike action on a 73% turn out, and of course an even higher vote in Northern Ireland, sending the message to our employers that this union was united and determined and prepared to take action.

Without the mobilisation of our members, we would have won absolutely nothing.

So the key lessons that we take from this is that it is FBU members who have won everything we gained from this dispute. It was the strike mandate that forced employers to move and to make their revised offer.

In March our members voted overwhelmingly to accept the employers' pay offer. 96% of members voted on an 84% turn out. The fact that four out of five of every single FBU member voted to endorse that agreement is a remarkable testament to the collective will and unity demonstrated throughout that campaign.

Soon after the vote the executive council began to debrief on the campaign so far, and a substantial agreement on many points. I think there is a widespread sense of unity. We have had remarkable dialogue with members, and I am sure you have all reflected on this on fire stations and emergency fire controls in discussing the outcome of the pay campaign and an enormous positive response from members.

Many of our members have experienced for the first time the fact that collective action through the union has significantly shifted their employers from where they started with the 2% offer. Because we were told there is no more money than 2%. Then we were told there is no more money than 5% and actually we have proved them wrong. We have proved chief officers wrong and we have proved the employers wrong.

The campaign was delivered in a professional and effective way. The executive council at every stage alongside regional and brigade committees, assessed the strategic and tactical challenges at every single point. Frankly, while there were occasional debates and some disagreements, I don't think as a union we put a foot wrong throughout the past year, and that is something we need to reflect on very carefully for the future.

The union campaign was based on clear research. Bulletins and briefing notes were provided through the structures so that every single FBU rep could brief members and prepare members on the ground for the campaign to come. We presented a case as set out in our claim letter, but we avoided some of the pitfalls of the past, and I hope that this settlement lays to rest whatever may be left of some of the bitterness of the 2002-2003 dispute.

The ballot results in all of the three ballots showed remarkable levels of unity, discipline and loyalty towards the union. Don't underestimate the importance of that. The film mentioned collective bargaining. When you look across the table at the other side, at the employers, we need to be able to say if you do this we will do that, we will ballot, and we need them to know that we don't play games with this. When we say we will ballot, we will ballot. When we say we will win a ballot, we will win a ballot. And when we say we will go on strike, we will go on strike. Those are three vital aspects to sitting across the table in negotiations, and we delivered on every single one of them.

A significant layer of our members have never been through such a campaign before, not previously participated in a large scale mobilisation such as the lobbying of the Scottish parliament or the lobby and rally at Westminster. All brigades and regions have experienced a growth in the number of activists: new officials, new members coming through to take up positions at branch level, and we need vitally to consolidate that. Those are the lifeblood of this union. Those people are the future of this union. They are precious, they are gold dust, and we need to make sure that we all work to consolidate and to build on that progress, and in coming weeks, the FBU education will be vital to developing such new layers. We are already putting in place measures and events to achieve this and during this week Tam and Lindsay will be speaking to officials in regions about building for some of those events coming up in June and July.

Conference, we should take a moment to acknowledge the successes we have won through this campaign, but we should also reflect a little on the state of play in other sectors. We know there are significant differences between unions in health over their offer. We have seen civil servants had derisory offers despite significant strike action. We know that in railways and Royal Mail, despite significant strike action and a very high media profile, workers in those industries have been offered less money than we were offered with a great deal of strings attached to those proposals. Our job, of course, primarily, is to offer comradely support and to be on the picket lines and demonstrations alongside comrades in those unions, but we also need to learn the lessons from their experiences as well as from our experience. We cannot afford to sit on our laurels.

Austerity has had a long term and devastating impact on our service. We need to make the evidence-based case for investment in order to begin to reverse the attacks on our service, on jobs, on pay and on conditions. The president mentioned earlier that a general election is looming. A general election is likely to take place at some point in 2024, the last possible date is 24 January 2025, and we have been clear to our members we all need to hammer home the message at every opportunity. We made progress because of those two things: the right to collective bargaining through the National Joint Council and the fact that we have the right to strike, and both of those are under attack from the Westminster government.

We face the challenge to our collective right to strike through the strike Minimum Service Level Bill and the White Paper on fire and rescue remains a threat including a threat to our collective bargaining rights through the national joint council. We will discuss both of those issues later, but these are vital and essential campaigns in terms of making progress on pay as well.

We need to start planning for a pay campaign for 2024 and that needs to start from this conference today. There are significant challenges and opportunities arising from the pay settlement. More obviously, there is a need to commence the work of the various tasks and finish groups that the employers have agreed to establish. You will recall from the letter that we received setting out the offer that we have discussions now on retained duty system firefighters, on firefighters' control, on pay progression, on new roles, on continuous professional development – all areas where this conference has set out concerns and policies, and this is now our opportunity to pursue those discussions. That doesn't guarantee we will make progress, but it is an opportunity to pursue our aims.

In relation to each of these areas, the executive council has established a task and finish group to consider each area in turn. We are also drawing on the advice of the FBU trade sections, officers, control and retained, and I thank them all for the work that they have done already. Some meetings with our employers have already taken place. Others are planning in the coming weeks. By this autumn we need to be in a position to make the case on a national stage for our service, for investment in jobs and investment in pay. These arguments need to be taken, for example, to the TUC in September, to the Labour Party conference in October and to government in Westminster and across the UK. We should be planning now the idea of local lobbies of fire authorities as they begin their budget setting process. We have all heard them say when it comes to pay offers, "Oh, the pay offer can't be any higher because everyone has only budgeted for 1%" or "Everyone has only budgeted for 2%." We need to say to them this year, you had better start budgeting for more than that, you had better start budgeting for a pay rise for 2024 because if you don't you will face exactly the same challenge that you faced in 2023 including preparation for a strike ballot, and you now know that when we ballot we will win that ballot and if necessary we will take that strike action.

So we need to build those lobbies of every single fire service employer, of the government in Westminster, in Scotland, in Wales, in Northern Ireland, we need rallies and events, nationally and locally. We have begun to plan along those lines.

To conclude, I want to return to the point I made in starting. The strength in this campaign has laid in the mobilisation of our members. We have to build on that momentum from last year and make gains in the coming year. You did a fantastic job. Your brigade committees did a fantastic job. Your branches did a fantastic job. Turning out on that rally in Westminster at just a matter of a couple of weeks' notice effectively, what a remarkable achievement, and people who never attended that, as you saw on the film – because we work in small teams – and people don't generally meet firefighters necessarily from other services, or firefighters' control, or even people in their own service on different shifts or in different parts of the brigade, and to bring people together at a single point gives people that sense of strength of unity and of power, and that is what we have to mobilise.

I have heard rumours that chief officers are a bit disgruntled at this pay settlement. Shame! I have heard that they feel that they weren't listened to. Shame! Because they didn't think the pay offer should have been as high as it was. Shame! Well, our task is to make them feel even more upset for 2024 and that work starts now. I move the statement. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Scotland to second.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland):

Seconding the EC policy statement *Firefighter Pay: Building on our Campaign: Building for the Future*. Conference, in Scotland the pay campaign has energised and galvanised the membership in a way not seen since 2002 but without the acrimonious fall out, bringing forward a new wave of reps and officials and has reversed the mood of apathy and mistrust that had been able to build up among certain sections of our membership.

FBU Scotland, as mentioned by the general secretary, organised a demo outside the Scottish parliament last October and we had 800, 900 firefighters there meeting the Scottish government that we were serious about fighting cuts in the service and that we were willing to strike over pay. That kick-started the campaign and as that campaign progressed, we had three strike training days in Scotland, we had 60 reps from across the country getting a brief introduction to the industrial history of the FBU, input from Thompsons on the legalities of striking and picketing, media training with these new reps even conducting mock interviews in front of a picket line. We had FBU members from all over Scotland, from Inverness in the north to Hawick in the borders, to London for the demo in Westminster, and a further 41 members that had the meeting that led to the employers upping their offer that was eventually accepted by our membership.

To see so many FBU members proudly wearing T-shirts, flying the flags on our event and on the picket lines of our sister unions has been truly inspiring. As the campaign progressed further, as well as all the branch meetings going on, we held mass meetings in every area of Scotland with at least one regional official attending to answer questions and inform the members. This face to face engagement is where this was won, not on social media where members of Scotland were disheartened to see some officials of our union advocating acceptance of the 5% despite the EC recommendation. And again, when the London Fire Commissioner attempted to split the membership and undermine collective bargaining in the NJC. So, respect to London for making it clear that any deal for firefighters had to be put nationally, and we should recognise that this was done while under some real pressure from members and from the pages of Facebook and Twitter. Thankfully, the social media posts were representative of the views of the wider membership who backed the need for unity and giving our negotiators the strongest hand at every stage of the campaign.

There are always going to be differences of opinion and there are mechanisms that exist within our union to disagree and challenge debate, but when we are dealing with matters of such significance as pay, social media is not the place. We should all put on record our thanks and recognition to the comms teams who throughout the campaign developed and delivered information, and materials that kept members informed and engaged. That relatable content was reproduced to help and inspire a new layer of our membership keen to take on branch official positions across the union and confident enough to have the debates on branches with members, councillors, MSPs, MPs and in the media.

Throughout this campaign there were numerous difficult tactical decisions to be made. Should we focus on grass roots organising or should we recall conference to guide decisions? Should we call an immediate strike ballot or apply pressure for an improved offer? Should we allow special dispensation in North Ireland to avoid UK troops being put back to provide limited strike breaking capacity? Should we ballot London members on the Fire Commissioner's offer to smash UK collective bargaining and bring forward the Home Office and NFCC-backed White Paper?

It is our belief that on the big decisions collectively from the branches to the executive council we made the right calls. Led by the membership at every stage, we won the most significant pay award we received since 2003, this time with no strings attached and a commitment from the employers and the working groups as mentioned for control pay, pay progression, CPD, RDS and role development.

So aside from the immediate benefit of increased pay in our members' pockets we now have the opportunity to capitalise on the unity that this campaign has created, the energy on branches and the fact that the bosses now know that when pushed our members will stand up and be counted and get in a fight and take action to demand fair pay. They now know that it is not just empty rhetoric when we say it is fair pay or fire strike. The UK government has recognised that the trade union is a necessity and they are now trying to legislate against our very rights to take strike action without which we would never have been able to secure the pay offer that we did.

This pay campaign has returned us to the level we should have been at if we had not have suffered over a decade of ideological wage stagnation inflicted by an increasingly right-wing and anti-union government. As the policy statement says, this must be the starting point, not the end of our campaign for fair pay. Twelve per cent over two years does not resolve the cost of living crisis for many of our members. So conference, support this EC policy statement and back the continuation for the fight for fair pay for the fire and rescue service. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gus. I now call resolution 13, Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) Remuneration, moved by Staffordshire with an amendment from Bedfordshire and an amendment from Scotland. The EC are seeking withdrawal or they oppose.

Resolution 13 MARAUDING TERRORIST ATTACK (MTA) REMUNERATION
Conference notes the existence of two collective agreements with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and London Fire Brigade regarding MTA.

Conference recognises that there are other fire and rescue services around the country where crews are training for and maintaining skills to respond to MTA incidents. The existence of these collective agreements clearly show that MTA is not within the rolemap of a firefighter and Conference reinforces that MTA currently sits outside National Joint Council (NJC) rolemaps.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to seek arrangements for all firefighters carrying out this work to be remunerated for it. If this requires an expansion of the rolemap, the EC should explore for this work to be included in NJC talks around the expansion of role and pay.

STAFFORDSHIRE

AMENDMENT 1

In paragraph 2, after: 'The existence of these collective agreements clearly show that MTA is not in the rolemap of a firefighter', add: 'or firefighter control' In paragraph 3 after: 'Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to seek arrangements for all firefighters', add: 'and firefighters control'

BEDFORDSHIRE

AMENDMENT 2

2nd paragraph, 4th line – insert the words 'or firefighter Control,' after 'firefighter' 3rd paragraph, 2nd line – insert the words 'and firefighters Control' after 'firefighters'

SCOTLAND

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

So, after some discussions with members of the executive council and other delegates here, we will be withdrawing the resolution. However, I think it is important to state that the intention of this resolution is not to separate individual groups of firefighters, those who are currently doing the work, and the intention behind it was actually to try to provide some licence for the executive council to negotiate on our behalf. Obviously, the resolution did not quite achieve that.

However, as it stands right now, we do have two brigades with collective agreements on marauding terrorist attacks, London and Manchester, and we do have other brigades currently working and training firefighters for those incidents with no remuneration whatsoever. So we believe that following the successful pay campaign that we have just had, now is the time to push the matter for the benefit of everyone. We believe this could be done as part of the working groups. All we ask at this point is that it is considered moving forward. President, conference, I withdraw.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martin. With that, the amendments fall. I now call resolution 7, Broadening of the Firefighter Role, moved by Merseyside. The EC are seeking Merseyside withdrawal or they oppose.

Resolution 7 BROADENING OF THE FIREFIGHTER ROLE
Conference notes Conference policy in relation to broadening of the role and firefighter pay.

Whilst Conference can point to successful local examples of this work in Manchester and London, Conference must also note the disastrous effect this has had in fire and rescue services such as

Merseyside, where employers have sought to broaden the firefighter role through non-agreed contractual obligation.

Following the recent commitment given by the employers' side of the National Joint Council to develop the work of the fire and rescue service through agreement, Conference demands that no further talks take place until all non-agreed, out of role work, imposed at point of entry is removed from all firefighter and firefighter control contracts.

MERSEYSIDE

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Moving resolution 7, Broadening of the Firefighter Role. President, conference, over the years Merseyside delegates have made no secret of the fact that we have not always agreed with broadening of the role. In fact, I myself stood on this rostrum in 2018 to question exactly what we had brought upon ourselves by taking the lid off Pandora's broadening-of-the-role box. Unfortunately, as with many things, the Merseyside delegation seems to be in the minority with many believing diversification to be the future of the UK fire and rescue service.

Despite what this resolution may appear to be, or what some may suggest it to be, it is not an attempt to collapse the broadening of the role strategy. Nor is it an attempt to undermine the work currently being undertaken by the EC and other officials around the country. It is simply an attempt at a hard reset to ensure whatever the outcome of the discussion, we all start on a level playing field.

In 2018 Merseyside fire and rescue service altered the contracts of new entrants to include a paragraph that states, "You will be required to undertake such duties as determined by the chief fire officer as required for the implementation of the authority's integrated risk management plan including, but not limited to, terrorist attacks, terror related incidents, response to flood and other water related incidents and emergency medical response." These impositions were challenged at the NJC. However, unable to reach agreement those contractual elements have remained.

Conference, the ongoing industrial action in Merseyside: one of the main tenets of our dispute centres around the fact that our employer has sought to broaden the role of the firefighter at a local level on an *ad hoc* basis by introducing this non-agreed work, at point of entry on an offer and acceptance basis. Our employers have taken a stance they are not required to negotiate or agree any new work with the Fire Brigades Union.

Those who were working during the broadening of the role trials will recall there was a massive disparity across the UK fire and rescue service around the activities and the scope of workstreams. In some places emergency medical response is limited to cardiac arrest incidents which are always responded to immediately by our comrades in the ambulance service. In other services the scope of emergency medical response is far broader, often seeing FBU members deployed to anything from slips, trips and falls all the way up to serious trauma. Conference, during the last broadening of the role trials, the scope of the medical response in particular was largely determined by local officials and their ability to negotiate the activities in their area.

Following the pay campaign and the subsequent reinvigoration of those discussions, Merseyside members have now been placed in an incredibly precarious position. Our employer has clearly stated that should the medical response and the scope of the work once again be subject to some local determination, that work will be dictated by Merseyside fire and rescue service. They have even gone as far as to state in writing that they will only ever consult and not negotiate with the FBU on these matters.

Following the campaign it was stated that both sides would seek to explore new work through agreement, yet in Merseyside we find ourselves in the situation whereby our employer can ride roughshod over any agreements by virtue of non-agreed work simply being placed in contracts at point of entry.

Conference, we are all constituent members of the NJC and the rules and procedures should be applied fairly to all. If our employers would like to seek to introduce new work, it must be done through the National Joint Council, but most importantly, it must be done through agreement. We cannot allow chief fire officers to dictate the role of firefighters or the parameters of those roles.

This resolution is seeking protection, not only for Merseyside members but for all members as where one service starts others will undoubtedly follow. Since broadening of the role began, we have all seen manners of all work creep in across the UK fire and rescue service, and despite the best efforts of local officials, some of this work has managed to take root and, in the worst cases, made it into contracts of our members.

The intent of this resolution is clear: should the national employers wish to explore new work, they must first get their own house in order. We must see this as an opportunity to place pressure on services that are not acting in good faith and issue an ultimatum to chief fire officers that are essentially seeking to dictate the terms and conditions and the very job role of firefighters at local level.

Conference, we simply cannot continue to negotiate in good faith with our national employers on new work when elements on their side are actively undermining collective bargaining. By holding talks on broadening of the role until chief fire officers remove all non-agreed out of role work placed in contracts at point of entry, we can make it the job of our national employers, and even other chief fire officers within the NFCC, to demand that their counterparts honour the nationally agreed negotiation machinery.

At this moment in time we have leverage. We have the ability to right some of the wrongs that have been done to our members and to ensure that in future no services seek to alter the agreed role of a firefighter without negotiation.

Conference, Merseyside members are challenging attacks on our terms and conditions and we are challenging employers who believe they can undermine collective bargaining, but we can't do it alone. By supporting this resolution, we can send a strong and lasting message to fire service employers. We will not be dictated to, we will not be silenced and, until all services honour the nationally agreed terms and conditions of firefighters, we will not discuss any further broadening of the role. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. Does that have a seconder?

DAVE PIKE (Greater Manchester):

Seconding Merseyside resolution broadening of the role map. President, conference, everyone in this room knows and understands the importance of collective bargaining. It is embedded within the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act and it is fundamental to everything we do as officials. Whether it is at local level with negotiations on policies and procedures or national bargaining on pay. Comrades, any attempt to undermine the ability to collectively bargain must be resisted and challenged at all costs.

Be under no illusions. This is what is being attempted in fire and rescue services across the country. None more so than with our comrades in Merseyside. Chief fire officers up and down the country are circumnavigating collective bargaining and imposing additional out of role work at points of entry. We are starting to see this in Manchester but the level of contempt shown to our comrades in Merseyside is beyond belief: MTA, EMR, swift water, the list goes on.

Conference, the FBU is a campaigner for equality. Fire and rescue services that mandate additional skills create barriers to entry to many sections of society. One in five men and one in three women don't drive; one in three adults cannot swim. The ability to achieve life skills such as these are predicated on wealth. Fire and rescue services that mandate such skills are excluding large swathes of communities and are potentially being discriminatory.

We hear all too often from the bosses that fire and rescue services need to be representative of the communities we serve, yet they enforce contractual change behind the scenes to restrict exactly that. We must call this out. We must ensure the voices of the unrepresented are heard and that we do see a fire and rescue service that represents these communities.

Conference, the policy of the FBU is to defend national collective bargaining. The same should be happening at a local level. The alternatives are quite clearly worse. Comrades, be under no illusions: the NFCC are watching. If this resolution does not carry, they will be giving the green light to every employer in the country to continue to impose

out of role working at point of entry in every UK fire and rescue service. Conference, this is not about stopping pay progression discussions, and it is not about opposing EC policy statements; it is about kicking closed a back door route to implementing the White Paper. Comrades, in familiar words, we campaign together, we bargain together and we stand together. Comrades, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dave. I now call resolution 10, Non-Contractual Work moved by Warwickshire.

Resolution 10 NON-CONTRACTUAL WORK

Conference recognises the Executive Council's (EC) stellar work throughout the pay campaign and acknowledges the employers' intention to continue discussions around the broadening of the firefighter rolemap in their recent offer.

In light of this, Conference would like to revisit resolution 'Non-Contractual Work' from 2022 which was remitted following assurances from the EC around publication and clarity of the firefighter rolemap.

The concerns remain regarding the increasing fragmentation of the fire and rescue service, especially around the disparity of the work activities currently being undertaken by Fire Brigades Union Members.

Conference notes that the EC has been working on the various activities that are considered not to be part of a firefighter's role.

Conference instructs that should any expansion of the rolemaps be agreed, then this must be undertaken through the National Joint Council and then ratified by Conference.

WARWICKSHIRE

ADAM HEMMINGS (Warwickshire):

First time speaker. Conference applauds the executive council's outstanding work during the recent pay campaign and acknowledges that the employers are continuing to discuss the expansion of the firefighter role map as referenced in their recent offer. The resolution around non-contractual work in 2022 was remitted following assurances from the EC around publication and clarity of the firefighter rolemap.

Conference is concerned around the increasing fragmentation of our service. Our members are undertaking a number of diverse activities often well outside our role. We understand that the EC have been looking at various activities that are considered not to be under the firefighters remit. So in relation to the rolemap, stop doing more for no more. Conference, in the interests of unity and considering any potential impact on devolved areas, Warwickshire withdraws this resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Adam. I now call resolution 14, Pay for Skills, moved by Staffordshire with amendment from South Yorkshire.

Resolution 14 PAY FOR SKILLS

Conference notes that pay scales within the fire and rescue service are relatively flat except for roles of watch manager and above. This has been highlighted by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) during pay negotiations. However, it cannot be forgotten that this lack of pay progression for firefighters does nothing to encourage the learning of new skills.

Conference also notes that FBU Members across the country have taken on skills to aid the fire and rescue service in providing a response to a wide range of incidents. On most occasions, firefighters take on these skills purely based on which station they serve from.

Outside of the fire and rescue service, employees may take on additional skills to improve promotion opportunities or to progress their pay. Within the fire and rescue service, taking on skills such as driving, animal rescue, aerial ladder operators or swift water rescue does not come with increased promotion opportunities or remuneration. It is simply another skill to maintain, more equipment to check and more calls to respond to.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to pursue a fair system of pay to remunerate individuals who take on additional skills beyond what is required to maintain competence as a firefighter or officer.

The EC must include this in the further negotiations with the aim of implementing for the 2024 pay award.

STAFFORDSHIRE

AMENDMENT

In 1st paragraph, 2nd line – delete ‘except for roles of watch manager and above’

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

As you will be aware, when we join the fire service, we go off, we attend the school and we learn the core skills to carry out our role as a firefighter. Upon completion of that you get assigned a station and go there and begin your development. You do that development until you become a competent firefighter. At many stations all you will during that time is you will ride the PR rail to learn your trade, learn your job. Once we become competent, many times we then get asked to take on additional skills and additional roles, and that is to assist the fire service in meeting its own strategic needs. That could be anything from driving to any other number of specialist skills that could be rope rescue, it could be becoming an ALP operator, there are loads of skills out there.

If you are in a private business in industry, you might take on those additional skills because it would improve your pay or because it would give you more promotion opportunities and career advancement. In the fire service a lot of the time that doesn't exist for taking on those additional skills and those additional roles, you become an ALP operator, you sit on fire station, you check the gear, you look after that ALP, you maintain your competence and you don't really get anything for it. If you don't take on that skill though, you might be seen as not being a team player. You could be overlooked for future opportunities, people might not consider you, and you could actually potentially face a forced move away from your watch or even away from your station because they say if you are not going to do the skill, we will put you somewhere where there is no additional skill required. That could mean moving to the other side of your county or wherever they deem.

That is why we would like to instruct the executive council to explore and negotiate a fair payment for anyone who takes on those additional skills and roles. I would also like to take the opportunity to recognise the amendment put forward by South Yorkshire. Again, the intention of the resolution is not to separate anybody. It was just merely to highlight the fact that once we got to the rank of a watch manager and above, there are different scales depending on job sizing. However, for firefighters and crew managers, it is a single pay rate regardless of those skills that you take on. We would like to say that actually we fully support that amendment in reflection. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martin. Conference, just for clarity, the EC are giving qualified support and they support the amendment. I will call South Yorkshire to move their amendment. Sorry, have I got a seconder for that one? *Formally seconded.*

MATT NICHOLLS (South Yorkshire):

I don't intend to speak very long moving the amendment to delete the watch manager. We in South Yorkshire spent a long time uplevelling all watch managers to just one level, the highest possible level. As it read without the amendment it saw an isolation of the front line of our workforce and for that reason we would like you to support the amendment to recognise the importance that it is one crew – we ask you to support the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that amendment have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 18, Recognition for Firefighter (Control) as Frontline and Operational, moved by West Yorkshire. They have agreed to remit with the right to speak, so would you confirm that from the rostrum as you finish please.

Resolution 18 RECOGNITION FOR FIREFIGHTER (CONTROL) AS FRONTLINE AND OPERATIONAL
Conference commends the continual great work carried out by sisters and brothers, nationwide, in emergency fire controls.

Conference welcomes the working group being set up to appraise the joint, National Joint Council and Fire Brigades Union, job evaluation. Sector wide recruitment and retention in control operations is suffering. Control brothers and sisters must be recognised on the same hourly rates and pay structure as firefighters, to improve future recruitment and retention.

Conference demands work is carried out by the Executive Council to establish a report, which identifies firefighter (Control) Members being recognised as frontline and operational.

WEST YORKSHIRE

ROB RUTTER (West Yorkshire):

First time conference speaker. This was moving Resolution 18 Recognition for Firefighter (Control) as Frontline and Operational. The resolution was written in both frustration and anticipation: anticipation to see what impact a joint job evaluation will have on control brothers and sisters being given the recognition that we deserve as equals to our firefighting brothers and sisters; frustration at the fact that I stand here today at conference another year down the line where much talking has been done but little progress has been made.

Conference, the time is now for the FBU to take action for fire control. Control members are sick and tired of being told that they don't qualify for medals, angered that they sit in our control rooms nationally, shift after shift managing resources, dealing with stressful emergency calls, yet somewhere a fire minister who has no understanding of fire control deems our members as not important and not classed as part of the front line service that the public receive. I want to make it abundantly clear, as soon as a distressed member of the public dials 999 they are put through to the front line, to a dedicated, highly professional, highly trained individual, no less professionally trained or dedicated than firefighters. I am in the fortunate position of having served previously as a firefighter and I serve, and continue to serve, in fire control. So, unlike fire ministers, I have a deep understanding of how control members and firefighting members contribute equally to a first-class service. I would urge those people pigeonholing control as second class citizens to go away and improve their understanding.

Before I conclude on resolution 18, I have a question that I would like to put to EC if I may, and that question is: is the report going to be carried out before conference in 2024 that will enable control brothers and sisters to be recognised as front line and operational? [Yes] Conference, with this answer in mind, I will remit this resolution to support the collective campaign for control. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rob; that will get clarified when we respond to that.

I now call resolution 25, Bridging the Gap for Firefighter (Control) Members, moved by Humberside. Humberside have agreed to remit with the right to speak.

Resolution 25 BRIDGING THE GAP FOR FIREFIGHTER (CONTROL) MEMBERS
Conference believes that the recent pay dispute has highlighted again the disparity between firefighter (Control) Members and those employed elsewhere in the fire and rescue service.

Our firefighter (Control) Members are not only a vital part of the emergency response but they are the first point of contact and the last person that closes down the incident. The skills and pressures that they must contend with are no less than those faced by operational firefighters.

Conference asserts that one of the main reasons that this Union was able to show such strength in the recent pay dispute was because of our unity. We owe our brothers and sisters in Control that unity in supporting their demands to be paid at the same level as firefighters.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to ensure that pay parity for firefighter (Control) Members is of paramount importance in the working group discussions, and that this issue is made an integral part of the Grey Book so that we are all paid as one. Control Members must be paid at the same level as other firefighters and this must be enshrined in the Grey Book.

HUMBERSIDE

SAM MILLER-HODGES (Humberside):

Humberside brought this resolution because of the support that control gave us during the pay dispute. We have talked many times about control parity at conference. This resolution was to show control tangible support and unity and a way forward for pay parity. Control members are the first point of contact in an emergency and the last person to close that. We agree to remit this resolution because there are definite discussions on pay, but we urge the EC to grasp the chance to bring pay parity forward for control. Conference, I remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sam. I now call resolution 26, Fire Control Pay Parity, moved by Hereford and Worcester, who have agreed to remit with the right to speak.

Resolution 26 FIRE CONTROL PAY PARITY

Conference notes that should the revised pay offer be accepted that the Executive Council will establish a working group to focus on Control Pay.

Conference demands that one of the priorities of this working group should be to reaffirm the demands of resolution 'Pay – Control' agreed at conference 1997 and resolution 'Control Pay Parity' agreed at Conference 2017 and achieve pay parity for Fire Control staff.

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking on the fire control pay parity. The president is right, we do agree to remit this. There are two caveats: as long as we have got a guarantee from the EC that the sentiments behind our resolution are incorporated into the new working group, please, and also we implore the EC to seize this opportunity and address the long suffering imbalance of fire control members. Thank you. We remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Trevor. Conference, that is now open for debate.

STEVE TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

Nottinghamshire applauds the EC on securing a significant pay settlement, and I think I speak for everyone here when I say nobody wanted to take industrial action this year. The potential impact it would have had on our members was always a worry. However, despite the risk, we knew what we had to do and we put our trust in the EC to devise a plan moving forward to secure pay for everyone.

A number of positives have come out of the organising for this action. Our members in Nottinghamshire came together, existing reps inspiring new reps, and for a short time it was a workforce united. Unfortunately, there were some posts on social media that didn't present such a united front. I think that is something that we must learn from.

Moving forward, we need to take the positives from this campaign and continue to fight for better pay, terms and conditions for firefighters and firefighter control. Conference, I support the EC statement.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Can I just remind conference what the chair of standing orders said regarding mobile phones on the conference floor. Thank you.

GARY BELFIELD (ONC):

Speaking in support of the executive council policy statement *Firefighter Pay: Building on our Campaign: Building for the Future*. The ONC commends head office, the executive council and all our officials and, above all, our members, for their strength, their commitment and their solidarity throughout our pay campaigns and its continuation. To distil the words of the president earlier today, you have been magnificent. So president, conference, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Andrew.

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

Apologies for some confusion then, we were going to speak on the withdrawal of our resolution but I am actually now speaking in support of resolution 7, Merseyside. I will keep this short. The general secretary has spoken today, quite rightly, on the importance of unity across our union with regards to pay and how vitally important that is, but by not supporting, by opposing resolution 7 from Merseyside, we are effectively signalling to the Merseyside employers – and anyone else in the country – that gunboat diplomacy is acceptable; that collective bargaining is merely an aspiration and not a right and fundamental requirement of the Fire Brigades Union. I will remind you all that our comrades in Merseyside are fighting an industrial dispute, as we speak, on this issue. So this motion sends a clear message to any maverick chief fire officer that expanding the role without agreement has consequences for them and their service, and it is not about the rest of the UK. Support the Merseyside resolution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else?

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking in support of the EC policy statement *Firefighter Pay: Building on our Campaign: Building for the Future*. Comrades, we entered into the pay campaign united and we came out of it galvanised. The rhetoric from the government and right-wing press, chief fire officers, the NFCC and our employers failed to divide us.

For many of our members, this was the first time of the possibility of industrial action. They saw the true power of their union and that there really is strength in unity. Other unions who battled against pay review bodies, something the government had added to their wish list of resentment for firefighters, also known as the fire reform White Paper. Unions such as the teachers' union, the NEU, look at our successful outcome accepted by 96% of FBU members without the need for a day's strike, achieved through the NJC. This gives power to their argument that pay review bodies don't work, but also strengthens the FBU position that we oppose the White Paper and any imposition of a pay review body.

Conference, I stand here supporting the EC policy statement, but I am somewhat baffled as to why resolution 7 falls if the EC policy carries. What I would like is some clarification from the EC as to the reasons why that happens: why does resolution 7 fall if the EC policy statement carries. What the resolution is asking for is that discussions cease around broadening the role, not around pay. These are two separate, although combined, issues that can in my mind carry together. In Hereford and Worcester next week I am representing a collective of our watch commander As who are being forced outside agreement to undertake exercise planning, including inspections in business fire station sections. All three elements fall outside of their role. This is being implemented without agreement. Conference, I cannot stand here and oppose resolution 7 and be representing my members next week. Conference, please support both and please can we have clarification on why both cannot carry.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Neil. I will do that at the end. Anybody else in the debate?

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

So, I know that the EC policy statement is looking at –

THE PRESIDENT:

Martin, you have already spoken in the debate.

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

Sorry?

THE PRESIDENT:

You have already spoken in the debate.

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

It is to support the EC's policy statement.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, carry on.

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

I think it is important to note that the EC policy statement is talking about looking towards the future, but we also have to look to the past, and the very recent past actually, and the pay campaign that we have been through so far has done wonders really to pull brigade committees together, reps and members. From what I saw, people acted in unity and it was fantastic to see our union unite on the issue of pay. I would also like to pass on my thanks for all the meetings and briefing notes provided to assist us, and this was the first time that I was facing taking my members potentially into strike action, and everything that we were provided with really helped to pull the brigade together on this matter.

I think we should maintain our momentum and we must continue that work. I am very much in the same position as Neil where I feel that both the EC policy statement and resolution 7 need to go forward, and I would also like that clarification. I understand that resolution 7 may delay some of those negotiations but we keep talking about unity, and I think we should stand in unity with the issues that Merseyside are facing. That is what a union does. But I also want the pay campaign to carry on, so I do support both of those. I support resolution 7 and I support the EC policy statement. President and conference, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I would just like to clarify it is usual to only speak once in the debate. Anybody else in the pay debate? No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, President, thanks to the delegates for the contributions. Thankfully, with the withdrawals it was less of a complex debate than it could have been. It would have been a bit difficult but thank you to those who did withdraw and thank you to Staffordshire for withdrawing 13.

I will come on to the Merseyside issue in a second, but just dealing with some of the other resolutions where the executive council has some concerns or qualifications. On resolution 14, I just want to be clear on the concerns that the executive council has around the term "payments for skills" because we need to be very clear. We have got a unique opportunity to go in to try and reshape the pay structure in our industry, and those who went through 2002-2003 know that actually if you don't plan ahead for that, you can live with unintended consequences. We have the provision for employers making skills payments now, they are called ARAs, additional responsibility allowances, and we have those in some services, and we have had them introduced by employers for skills. It is exactly the sort of payment which an employer would prefer because it means they only pay the person the time they are using that skill, they are non-pensionable and they can be removed when the employer no longer sees fit. I am sure everyone agrees that we don't want structures like that going forward.

That is why I think the terminology is important. We are talking about systems of pay progression which may take account of additional skills but are linked to permanent, non-removable and pensionable pay. Whether we can achieve that, we don't know, but we just need to be clear with conference that that is the approach that we think we need to take and we do not give licence or encouragement to employers who, at local level, may want to go down the road of some sort of temporary removable or non-pensionable skills payment. We don't want payments that are reliant on the goodwill of the employer. So that is the qualification in relation to Staffordshire.

In terms of the three resolutions, 18, 25 and 26 on control members, I think there are some important points to make on this. First of all, on Rob's point, yes, we absolutely can give the commitment that we will produce a report along those lines. What I have to say is that does not necessarily mean our employers will endorse this report, and I know you understand that. But I want to remind this conference, and some of you will remember it, of the work we did around the part of the team campaign which was precisely on that theme: that the role of the emergency service starts in our emergency fire control, and it is an integrated emergency service including our members in emergency fire control. So we have made that a key part of campaigning over many years, and we will continue to do so. Whether we can convince or force our employers to shift is something we obviously do not know.

I just wanted to touch on the question of what we have in place and the work around job evaluation, because there is an important role for our control organisation, for our control section, control reps and the CSNC in terms of that process. Job evaluation is not something that we have great experience of in the fire and rescue service. The only previous time we have engaged in one is the 2002-03 pay settlement which did include a job evaluation process in relation to control staff. It is common elsewhere, and I think we need to do a lot of work to prepare for this, but job evaluation is precisely introduced in order to address issues of potential discrimination. We will have to have a discussion with our employers about who does that job evaluation, the factors which get fed into the job evaluation and I think that is where the work of our own control structures are going to be absolutely essential. Job evaluation will not say how much a job should be paid, but what it can do is compare a job with other jobs within the same employer, and that is the value of it, and we will need to prepare a lot of work around that.

I think the advantage is that we have got the employers to agree to a job evaluation. We have had initial discussions with them about what the process will be for identifying who carries out that job evaluation, and we will need to work with the CSNC and our own task and finish group to develop our parameters for that.

In terms of the Merseyside resolution, look, I think the very first thing we need to say is – and I am sure conference will join us – I think we need to congratulate our Merseyside members, brigade committee and officials, for standing up to their employer against the imposed work. Ian, I say this genuinely, it is absolutely fantastic to see and, frankly, we need more of it. We have debates here every year about work that is not agreed. Actually, the answer to work that is not agreed is being demonstrated as we speak by Merseyside members of saying actually, if you do that to us, we will take action against you. By the way, it is not rocket science for us to work out what is and isn't in role. If you want to identify something where there is a concern, we can confirm that at the drop of a hat, and if our members are prepared to take action and say we are not willing to do that work because it is not agreed, then that is precisely what we should do: we should ballot and we should tell the chief we are not doing that work, it is not agreed, take it to the NJC for national negotiation.

So I think the approach that Merseyside comrades have taken is entirely correct. I think the difficulty in terms of carrying of resolution 7 which is a matter the president will address, the question of the statement and the resolution, I think the risk is this: that actually on an area where we have identified the possibility of discussions at a national level with our employers, voted for by 96% of our members, we risk the possibility of handing an effective veto to one of those elements of discussion to a rogue chief officer in Phil Garrigan.

Instead of forcing them to move and to agree to NJC discussions as we all want to see, what we risk is actually a chief officer – and as we all know, he is not the most friendly chief officer towards this union either at a local or at a national level – has the officer to say, well, of course, I am not going to do that, and delivers one of the aims of the NFCC which is to ensure that such talks do not take place through the NJC. Let us be clear, the NFCC have been very clear for years that there should be no NJC discussions about what is and isn't in role. Their view is this: we as chief officers will determine what is in role and we will impose that locally. That is very clear in all the discussions in the role of the Home Office and the discussions on MTA, for example, and I will come on to that in a minute, where the NFCC has said very clearly, don't even discuss with the FBU whether MTA should be paid for because we think it is already within role: just order them to do it. That is the position of the NFCC, and the resolution unfortunately risks handing a powerful weapon to one of our opponents in that regard.

I have got to say in terms of the approach, I think it raises some concerns – and I will say this, comrades, to the Manchester comrades – that actually if this is the approach we are taking, frankly we should not have entered

negotiations or a settlement on MTA in either London or in Manchester because they are actually local agreements precisely on broadening the role; we have reached a collective agreement on broadening the role in two large fire and rescue services in conjunction with local officials.

In terms of the concerns that Ian raised, I completely respect those concerns, and we are very happy to sit down and discuss first of all how do we take forward the Merseyside dispute? It may be that this tactic is one we want to consider. By the way, I am not ruling that out at all. It may be a tactic that we want to consider, but there are also other tactics that we will need to consider including what we do on other issues where people are being asked to undertake work which is outside of role. I say in the most comradely way that is why we have concerns about the Merseyside resolution and would urge, even at this stage, Merseyside to withdraw it and to agree to those discussions about how we take forward the entirely valid issues around which members are campaigning and taking industrial action.

On that basis, president, I would urge conference to support the executive council's statement.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Merseyside right of reply.

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

President, conference, as previously stated, the intent of this resolution isn't to undermine the current pay strategy; it is an attempt to preserve collective bargaining for everyone. We have fought for years to protect the NJC and dutifully attended all meetings, conciliations, arbitrations, quite frankly even when we have had a kicking and it has done us no real favours. But we continue to engage in good faith because we believe in collective bargaining.

It is now abundantly clear that some chief fire officers not only don't believe in it, they don't recognise it. How can we continue to negotiate with those who seek only to impose the statutory minimum on our members? Conference, we are not trying to crash broadening of the role; we are seeking to use our collective strength and power and unity as we have discussed here to bring rogue chief fire officers back into line, and to make their own side do it for us and with us as they should do.

We are all constituent members of the NJC, and if our employers want to discuss new work, they must do so in the same good faith that our negotiators show. Conference, as the EC has taken a position that should the policy statement carry, the Merseyside reso falls, I regretfully have to ask you all to vote against the EC policy statement: vote against imposition, vote for unity, vote for solidarity. Please support resolution 7, support Merseyside members, oppose the EC policy statement.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. Look, a couple of delegates have now raised the issue of why can't 7 stand alongside the EC policy statement. My job as president and that of the standing orders who assist me in putting the timetable together, we look, me and the VP and two members of the standing orders committee have been working on it for the last probably two weeks since we got the final agenda in, and we have been working on it non-stop. While we don't look at the arguments within the debate, we look at the technicalities of the resolution because I have to sit in front of you and justify why we believe that certain ones stand in opposition to others.

So we have been looking at the technicality of the wording and, bearing in mind, up until probably midnight last night, we had 14 resolutions in the pay debate: some could carry together, some stood in opposition to each other, and in reality it could have been 18 resolutions in the pay debate. So you can imagine how difficult and complicated that would be getting when I would be trying to explain what can carry against each other and what can't. As I say, we look at purely simply the technicalities of the wording in a resolution: not who it is from, not what it is about, it is the technicality of whether they conflict or they can stand against each other.

I believe that resolution 7 cannot carry with the EC policy statement as it stops the work of the working group. The resolution calls for no further talks taking place until non-agreed and out of role work imposed at the point of entry is removed from all firefighter and firefighter control contracts. The EC policy statement contains the agreed position that new roles will be considered and a progress report given to the June NJC meeting as part of the 2022-23

settlement and as such it would force us to have no discussions with the employers on broadening the role, which is conference policy by the way, and if 7 carries that couldn't happen. One of the delegates just said it: well, it might delay the pay campaign. So just by that comment, you can already see it stands in conflict with it. The EC policy statement on bullet point two, "EC working groups including support for the relevant sectional committees, progressing the additional pay issues, including control retained, CPD, pay progression and the future role of, and demands on, the fire and rescue service" which is obviously what firefighters do.

That is why, conference, we determined after lengthy consideration over the last few weeks, and even up until gone midnight last night we were considering if resolutions fall, we then have to look at what is the next stage of the voting sequence. That is why we believe that technically, and due to the wording within the resolutions, that 7 cannot stand and carry alongside the EC's policy statement.

As I said, conference, I would explain what the voting stages would be. Now with the remittance of the three resolutions and the withdrawal of all the other resolutions, it is purely between the EC policy statement and resolution 7. If the EC policy statement carries, resolution 7 falls.

OK. I now put the executive council policy statement *Firefighter Pay: Building on our Campaign: Building for the Future* to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. Resolution 7 *falls*.

Conference, I now put the amendment to resolution 14 from South Yorkshire to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. I now put resolution 14 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. Conference, can you make sure that all your delegates do put your hands up one way or the other. I am looking and some people don't appear to be voting either way.

OK, right, I now call para A2, para A3, para A4. I now call resolution 2, Campaign to Secure Correct Continual Professional (CPD) Development Payment for Members, moved by the National Retained Committee. The EC give qualified support. NRC, thank you.

Resolution 2 CAMPAIGN TO SECURE CORRECT CONTINUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) PAYMENT FOR MEMBERS

Conference notes that resolution 'Underpayment of Continual Professional Development (CPD) Payments to Members' from Conference 2022 instructed the Executive Council (EC) to support brigade Officials in mounting an immediate challenge to the detrimental practice of underpaying our retained Members' CPD.

Conference notes that little progress has been made on this matter.

Conference demands that the EC conduct a survey of all fire and rescue services to establish current levels and methods of payments. This survey is to be completed within six months. On completion the EC will launch a campaign to work with affected brigade Officials in providing them with the necessary resources to take their fire and rescue services to task and resolve this situation.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

PHILIP WILLIAMS (NRC):

Moving resolution 2, Campaign to Secure Correct Continual Professional (CPD) Development Payment for Members. At our last conference, Seamus McMahon moved resolution 3 on behalf of the NRC which instructed the EC to support brigade officials to mount immediate challenge against any service while paying incorrect levels of CPD. Conference, NRC members are simply not being paid the correct level of CPD as set out in the 2007 NJC scheme. This states that part-time employees will be paid on a pro rata basis subject to a minimum of 25% of full-time equivalent rates whichever is the highest.

Fire and rescue services in many cases are simply paying this minimum rate and not the pro rata level resulting in significant underpayments. Conference, we cannot allow this to continue. Our RDS comrades deserve to be paid fairly and correctly for the commitment that they provide. For clarity, this is not a resolution to level up CPD payments

and bring them into the highest rate currently being paid; this is not a resolution to argue for 100% payments to the RDS as you cannot be quarter of a firefighter; this is not a resolution to make CPD awards on an automatic right or make them an integral part of core pay; this is a resolution asking for a challenge to secure the correct payment of CPD now and secure all moneys outstanding through underpayment of CPD going back to 2007.

Conference demands that the EC conduct a survey of all fire and rescue services to establish historic levels of CPD underpayments. Further, conference demands that the EC launch a campaign to work with brigade officials to bring the fire and rescue services to task to recover these historic underpayments for our members. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

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

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president, and thanks to the NRC for bringing this. I think there was some confusion initially and we apologise for that, as to whether this related to the working group or, as Phil has explained, the current position and historic position in relation to the existing agreement. Thanks very much, Phil, for that clarification. On that basis, the executive council supports the resolution but with, I think, three qualifications.

In terms of the evidence, the question here – and it is a question for every single brigade committee – is, is your fire and rescue service applying the agreed CPD scheme properly in relation to RDS employers, because if they are not, that is a matter which we will have to take up with each individual FRS who is applying the scheme incorrectly. As Phil has explained, this is not about the scheme itself. We will have discussions about the scheme itself and what we want for the future of CPD. Is each employer unfairly withholding payment under CPD from RDS employees? So that is the first task: the evidence will need to be collated and it reflects on the point that the president said, that will require brigade secretaries to ensure that information is identified and passed through in the survey that is set out in the resolution.

Secondly, in terms of the ability – and I think the resolution does explain this but we just need to emphasise it – this is not a matter which will necessarily be resolved through the national joint council. We may raise it there, but this certainly on an initial viewing is a matter that sits in each fire and rescue service because it is they who are failing to apply the agreed terms and conditions to their employees and therefore it is the responsibility of our brigade committees to take that issue up with the support and guidance of the executive council and, of course, of the national retained committee. So the final point really is one of achievability, but it does require those elements to come together for us to pursue this, but on that basis we are happy to support the points that Phil has raised on behalf of the NRC and urge conference to support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 2 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para A5, para A6. Conference, I will take the following two resolutions in the same debate. Both can carry. Resolution 19, Improvement of Provisions under Section 4, Part D of the Scheme of Conditions of Service Sixth Edition 2004 (Updated 2009)(Grey Book) moved by Cleveland, and Resolution 28, Maternity Pay, moved by the National Women's Committee with an amendment from Scotland. I now call Resolution 19, Cleveland.

Resolution 19 IMPROVEMENT OF PROVISIONS UNDER SECTION 4, PART D OF THE SCHEME OF CONDITIONS OF SERVICE SIXTH EDITION 2004 (UPDATED 2009) (GREY BOOK)

Conference notes the shockingly low levels of paid leave provision for Grey Book employees when paid leave is required for maternity, childcare, and dependents.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to raise this issue at the National Joint Council, seek improvements and to report back to Conference 2024.

CLEVELAND

NICK CAIN (Cleveland):

Speaking on resolution 19, Improvements to paid maternity, child care and dependant leave. I would like to start by thanking the EC on their excellent work and recent circular regarding maternity provisions and the request to take it up to 12 months are welcome ideas and one that I am sure the whole of conference welcomes.

To be honest, I have taken a good chunk out of my speech, which is probably a good thing, but we still need to improve the provision for paid child care and dependants' leave. Currently, the Grey Book states: "An employee is entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during his or her working hours in order to take care of a dependant." "Unpaid" – surely the bare minimum requirement there should read "A reasonable amount of paid time off."

I won't make any apologies for getting up on this rostrum and fighting for improvements and fighting for improvements to our members' terms and conditions. It is what we are here for. Conference demands an assurance that this will be looked at, and can they raise the matter with the national joint council and report back to conference 2024. Please support this resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Nick. Conference, the EC are supporting that. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 28, moved by the National Women's Committee. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 28 MATERNITY PAY

Conference notes that since 2017 there have been five resolutions passed on maternity pay ('End Pay Disparity' Lancashire 2019, 'Maternity Policies' Cumbria 2022, 'Levelling up of Maternity Provision' Bedfordshire 2022 and two from the National Women's Committee in both 2017 and 2018). These resolutions have not been actioned and the Grey Book has not been improved.

Conference believes that if women are to be truly valued within the fire and rescue service, that the postcode lottery on maternity pay must end.

Conference is saddened to see that resolutions are being passed through Conference numerous times with no action taking place. This must stop.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to commence negotiations through the National Joint Council immediately following Conference 2023 to raise the minimum standards within the Grey Book and to report back the progress to all Officials by November 2023.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT

Delete paragraph 3.

SCOTLAND

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

Speaking to move resolution 28, maternity pay. Previous resolutions to end pay disparity, Lancashire, 2019; maternity policies, Cumbria, 2022; levelling up on maternity provision, Bedfordshire, 2022, as well as two resolutions from NWC in 2017 and 2018. These are all resolutions which have been brought to conference and passed in the last five years, but yet no action has been taken on them on the Grey Book to be improved. Maternity pay, NWC 2023.

Conference, it is both saddening and shocking to hear stories from women members who have had to rush back to work soon after giving birth due to the standard of the Grey Book: stories such as the woman back operationally wearing BA in jobs just 15 weeks after giving birth to twins; hearing about women rushing back after dealing with the trauma of a miscarriage or stillbirth during early stages of recovery; women whose bodies are still producing the hormone relaxin which cause their joints and ligaments to loosen. As a result, any high impact exercise, such as weight training, potentially leaving them prone to injury, strains and sprains and prolapse. According to health experts, the hormone relaxin remains in a woman's body up to five months after giving birth.

Women are better off injuring their knee than to have to go for a C-section, simply to be sold by a service, like my service did, that don't recognise a C-section as a major operation under their maternity policies. Women who have C-sections are advised to wait until at least six weeks after post-natal checks before starting to drive again. In the Grey Book at this stage the pay drops significantly. Women shouldn't be left embarrassed or ashamed when ultimately they have to sign off sick to return to work far too soon.

We are on the front line. We are dealing with life and death situations. Our jobs require full attention. Our maternity pay must reflect this. I have been on maternity leave twice, both times on the minimum standard of the Grey Book. My second maternity leave happened just before COVID. My husband lost his job due to the first lockdown. We were left in a household of two adults, two children, two dogs, on my statutory maternity pay of just £140 a week. I was exclusively breast feeding, so if I had to cut my maternity leave short I would have to return to full duties to full pay, and I would have had to stop.

There is no formula in any of the shops. I watched the stress and upset of new mothers who couldn't get formula for their babies due to panic buying. It simply was not an option for me. We ended up signing on to universal credit so that we could afford to pay for our mortgage whilst my husband searched for work. If anyone had told me that I would be in a situation where I worked for a professional body government, I wouldn't believe them. Instead of enjoying time with my new born I felt humiliated and ashamed. Conference, our members deserve better. We demand better. The postcode lottery must end, but while this Grey Book minimum standard remains as it is, our reps are struggling to improve their service maternity policies as these services just recite the Grey Book minimum standards back to them.

Conference acknowledges and thanks the executive for lodging the recent claim with the national joint council for improved maternity arrangements for firefighters. The NWC give our full support and assistance and look forward to hearing about progress. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Georgina. The EC is supporting. Does it have a seconder?

KASEY LEGALL (B&EMM):

Well done personally to the NWC for all the hard work on the maternity policy, but let's not forget the partner and paternity leave. Statutory paternity pay is one week at 90% pay, and your second week is unpaid. So, I mean, best practice would be six weeks full pay. I think that would be quite nice. Your services will say it is a financial burden but I do think we also do need to be looking at this part of the maternity policy parenting procedure, so I would also encourage conference and reps to go back to your brigades, get your fairness at work reps to look at that section of the maternity policy; it is very, very important. I support your resolution 28. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kasey. Scotland to move their amendment.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland):

I realise this might seem slightly unpopular at the moment. Conference, we fully support the pursuit of the highest level of maternity to be paid across the country and standardised at that level through the Grey Book. The reason for the amendment is the language used. We still suggest that the same has not been realised due to lack of effort or care by conference, and by extension the FBU as a whole, and to say that this must stop is to say that there have been intentional blocks put in place and the employers and the NJC has allowed that postcode lottery suggestion in the first place. We understand the frustrations and share the frustrations but our amendment does not annul the intent of the resolution, it just removes language that we feel is unnecessary as conference policy. Please support the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gus. The EC support the amendment. Is there a seconder for that? *Formally seconded.*
That is now open for debate.

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

On behalf of the CSNC I would like to oppose Scotland's amendment. Paragraph 3 is a statement of fact. As a woman member, albeit from a different section, I feel like the deletion of paragraph 3 does not improve the resolution as you have stated. It is, however, how the members of the NWC feel, so, for that reason I oppose the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sherri. Anybody else?

STEVE MATTINSON (Cumbria):

Speaking in opposition to the amendment in resolution 28. President and conference, Cumbria are disappointed by the amendment offered by Scotland to resolution 28. While we agree it adds nothing to the resolution itself, we feel it appropriate to raise the point that after a number of years all the resolutions to improve maternity provision, including our resolution from last year, seem to fall on deaf ears with no action by the EC.

We are pleased to see that the EC has now approached the NJC to improve the maternity provision. However, that was just before conference but we must allow our sections and brigades to criticise when criticism is deserved. We ask Scotland to withdraw their amendment. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve.

ADAM WHITEHEAD (Cornwall):

First time speaker at conference. Speaking to support resolution 28, maternity pay, NWC. President, conference, Cornwall welcome and support the resolution which again raises the issues where we have huge disparities within the fire services throughout the UK. We thank the NWC for bringing this motion to conference and for their ongoing work trying to resolve this issue. We find it hard to believe that fire services throughout the UK continually, and rightly so, look to recruit more women so that our fire services can represent the communities which we live and work within while the maternity pay displays huge disparities.

The Grey Book must be revised and minimum standards uplifted. Fire and rescue services within the UK are constantly promoting that they are inclusive and diverse workplaces, yet the majority of policies do not support nor reflect this. We fully support the motion that instructs the EC to commence negotiations through the NJC to raise the minimum standard within the Grey Book for maternity and adoption pay. We support. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Adam. Anybody else? No. I do apologise. AGS. The new AGS is going to speak.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Hopefully not as long as the last one. President, Conference, I will just start off with some of the frustrations. I think we understand some of the frustrations. We are here today with a maternity claim that was lodged a few weeks ago. I am sorry to disagree slightly with Cumbria. The reason that is there is built off the back of your resolution from last year. Thanks for bringing that last year. There will be a year to work within the conference time frame, and we brought a claim on the back of that, but thank you for doing that last year and for all those that have moved resolutions previously.

Finally, the executive council are aware that maternity policies are a postcode lottery and have looked to readdress that. There are some good examples. I think Staffordshire and Derbyshire sit right at the top of those league tables that the NWC have put together. We applaud the officials' work in brigades like that, and I know there will be others, but there are far more bad examples of minimum levels of maternity provision being offered.

That is why we set about doing some work to look at how we present a factual claim, and that work was done, much as the DECON work that the union has done in looking at fire contaminants and how that can affect those breastfeeding or chestfeeding.

Looking at the advice the National Health Service provides to mothers in terms of how long they should breastfeed for, and that advice talking about moving into the second year, and also ensuring that we make sure that our work place in our sector is a place for members to feel that they can join our workforces and be firefighters. We lodged a claim to increase the minimum provision to 52 weeks paid leave. We have lodged that claim. I am sure delegates here have read it. It was sent in a circular recently. Thanks to both Cleveland and the NWC for raising it again, and we will keep you informed of how that progresses.

Broadly, in relation to the other aspects, the other provisions, Cleveland spoke of, thanks for that, Nick. Yes, we will look at those aspects too and also the matter, Kasey, of paternity leave and bring a report back next year.

PRESIDENT:

There is no right of reply, Gus, on an amendment unless you are withdrawing it. Scotland, you are withdrawing the amendment? Yes. Thanks, conference. Do you agree to suspend your standing orders to finish this debate. *Agreed.*

I now put resolution 19 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *carried*.

I now put resolution 28 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference, we are going to break for lunch there. We have got a couple of things I need to tell you. As you are leaving the hall, can you all grab T-shirts from the corridor to wear after lunch please – equality T-shirts. Also we have been told by the stewards quite a few delegates have removed their lanyards and left them on the tables in front of them when they went out. Can you please wear your lanyards and your ID at all times. It makes it easier for the conference stewards as to who is and who is not allowed back in. Finally, we are back in here at 2 o'clock. Thank you very much. Break for lunch.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference, come to order. I now call the chair, Phil Millar, to give his standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, can you please turn to your programme of business. Page 4, resolution 30 has been withdrawn. That's it. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.*

Thank you. Conference, we are now moving on to section H, equality and fairness at work. The majority are wearing red T-shirts and we are going to have a photo session at the end of the debate.

I am going to ask all of the EC to come down to the front and everybody to stand up, holding up the cards I think, and we will do some photo opportunity on that. It will be like trying to herd cats at the end of this debate, I know, but we will do our best.

We are now on to section H, equality and fairness at work, para H1. Conference, in the same vein as the pay debate in this morning's debate, we will be taking the following resolutions with the executive council policy statement, *The Fight for Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service* with amendment from Hereford and Worcester, resolution 79, Misogyny in the Fire and Rescue Service, moved by West Midlands, resolution 72, Challenging Bullying Harassment and Discrimination within the Fire Brigades Union, moved by London, resolution 76, Independent Fire Brigades Union Culture Review, moved by B&EMM, Resolution 86, Fire Brigades Union Disability Section, moved by North Wales, resolution 87, Disability in the Fire and Rescue Service, moved by Greater Manchester.

I will now inform you what can carry together and what cannot. If the EC policy statement carries, then resolution 87 falls. Resolutions 72, 79, 76 and 86 can carry alongside the EC's policy statement. Conference, for reference, if the EC policy statement falls then resolution 86 and 87 stand in opposition to each other. OK, I will now call executive council policy statement, *The Fight for Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service*, Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, the executive council is deeply saddened and worried to bring another statement on these issues to our conference, but we believe it is absolutely essential to face these issues again and to reconfirm our commitment to tackling every manifestation of harassment, discrimination, bullying and other unacceptable behaviour wherever it is found.

I want to set out the FBU's evaluation of the evidence and, in particular, to discuss the findings of reports commissioned by other organisations within our service. I want to make clear that the FBU unreservedly and unconditionally condemns any and every aspect of misogyny, sexism, any aspect of racism, any manifestation of homophobia, transphobia or, indeed, other forms of discrimination, bullying and harassment. I want to make clear that the FBU condemns and opposes acts of discrimination and oppression against women, against black and minority ethnic people, against LGBT+ people, against people with disabilities and any other unacceptable behaviour.

Finally, I will explain what the executive council has begun to do and intends to pursue relentlessly so that we together stamp out forms of oppression within our service. It will not be lost on anyone that over the past few months we have seen various reports into our service, both published reports and media coverage. In November 2022 the London Fire Brigade published the independent culture review which took evidence from current and former staff and the public. That report found that the LFB to be institutionally misogynist and racist as well as evidence of homophobia and disability discrimination. It provided some horrific examples of which I am sure conference has read and is familiar with.

Since the executive council statement was written, we have also had the report by the Inspectorate of Constabulary of Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). In early April they produced a report entitled "Values and Culture in the

Fire and Rescue Services". Conference will have many criticisms of the inspectorate in England, but none of our criticisms detract from the seriousness of some of their findings. Again, the report found widespread discrimination, harassment and bullying across fire and rescue services in England.

We then turn to our own evidence. Our equality sections have raised concerns about these matters over many years. The FBU's anti-sexual harassment working group agreed at last year's conference, has also heard horrendous reports of some of the incidents faced by some of our members in various fire and rescue services.

The truth is at every FBU conference, at our schools, at our sectional meetings, a light is shone and reports are made of unacceptable behaviour within our service. The inclusive fire service group which was set up by the National Joint Council in 2015 did some valuable, irreplaceable work before the inspectorate or chief fire officers began to look at this issue again. It produced guidance on social media in 2016. The IFSG carried out a survey and published improvement strategies in 2017. In 2017 the FBU and fire service employers signed a memorandum of understanding committing the fire and rescue service to take action to create a more inclusive work force and culture. In 2018 the IFSG wrote to ministers setting out actions that we felt should be taken at that point.

The point about the IFSG is it was broad ranging. It included employers, it included chief officers, it included the FBU and it also included the FBU's equality structures as well. There is nothing that has replicated that in any of the reports that have been conducted since.

There is no question then that the FBU, the executive council, our officials and, in particular, our equality sections have collected huge amounts of evidence that these experiences of oppression are real within our service. We face two truths when we approach these issues. The first is that our members are the overwhelming majority of those on the receiving end of bullying, discrimination, harassment and other unacceptable behaviour. Our members are, by and large, the victims of this. They are the ones who are suffering and many have turned to the union for support. This is partially demonstrated, for example, each year by the fact, the hard fact, that each year we win cases in employment tribunals against fire service employers because of bullying, harassment and discrimination that our members have faced within the workplace for which the employer has been found to be responsible.

However, we also face another unpalatable but nevertheless real truth. Given our high density levels, the number and proportion of the workforce who are members of the Fire Brigades Union, then a very high number of perpetrators, at least some perpetrators, are also members of the Fire Brigades Union. Conference, our union is 100% crystal clear that in this situation our members are being damaged by this behaviour, but while other members carry it out or join in or stay silent, the union cannot and will not be neutral. We cannot sit on the fence or stand on the side lines in the face of such behaviour and such oppression of groups of our members. The FBU must always stand with the victim and against the perpetrators.

Our rule book and our policies are clear as set out in the statement. We have a whole raft of rules and policies that cover these issues. I won't repeat them here. But conference, this is not enough. We cannot be complacent about our own situation. There have been strong efforts, particularly by this union since the 1980s to tackle these issues, to challenge discrimination, harassment and bullying. But the problem continues, and nobody can be complacent and nobody can say nothing can be done. Conference, every single one of us has more to do, to pay more attention, to take more action to drive out such behaviour.

The executive council statement is clear. Some in the fire and rescue service hold attitudes, but more importantly take actions related to those attitudes, which are outdated, offensive and discriminatory. But let's be clear as a union: those actions also undermine and weaken this union, and there is a starting point for a discussion. If we are divided, we are weakened. If some of our members are picking on others, we are weakened. If we allow harassment and ignore it, we are weakened. We are weakened as a union. Our ability to fight on all the other issues that we will debate this week in conference are weakened and undermined by such behaviour and such attitudes because we are stronger if we stand together.

The EC policy statement and our assessment also identifies significant long term failings from politicians and from chief officers in addressing such matters, and we won't stand for that. One of the key turning points indeed was

a political event, the 2010 election, and the incoming coalition government which scrapped fire service equality structures on a national level, targets and other measures which had begun to change the situation in our service, and the first Tory fire minister after 2010 sent a very clear message when he said, “We will not tell any fire service who to recruit or how to recruit, or who to promote or how to promote; it is none of our business.” That sent a very clear signal to chief officers and employers that they were taking the foot off the gas in relation to equality matters.

Our values are based on the need to build working class unity. It is written in our rule book. That is what our union is about. At least, that is what our union should be about. And the truth is, comrades, that diversity and equality are, and should be, fantastic strengths for this organisation, and fantastic strengths for our union, as they should be in our workplaces, in our culture and in wider society. They will be central to guiding us as we address these issues and we seek to build better workplaces and a more united and inclusive union.

We believe that the FBU has to get its own house in order. The union and our members, all of us, each and every one of us, has to do better in the fight for diversity and for equality. We are asking the executive council to support the executive council’s working group on the culture review, which includes representation from our equality section as the key driver of new work in this area. I want to thank our equality sections for all the work they have done over recent months which has included helping in discussions behind the preparation of this statement.

I must ask conference to consider the important sections of the statement on page 3. The numbered points on page 3 are the key part of this executive council statement. I want to particularly refer to point 3 in terms of some of the questions that have been asked of us in the run-up to this debate today. It is about the review of our structures, and I want to be very clear on this. What we mean by what is included in the words of the statement is that this review will be from top to bottom. It means that our equality sections will be fully involved in this work and the discussions around it. I mean that it will look at our head office, I mean that it will look at our executive council, I mean that it will look at our regional committees and our brigades committees, I mean that it will look at our conference, I mean it will look at our branches. It will be a thorough-going review in which our equality sections shall have their say and be a full part of the process.

I ask some questions. Why can we not have equality reps in every single workplace branch in this union? Or set that as a target. I want to note the ground-breaking work – without embarrassing people – that has been done in region 7 in the West Midlands with the aim of having women reps in the workplace, not just sitting on brigade committees but built into the work place, and you saw that at last year’s conference with the women delegates and the comrades again here today. I have seen many of those women brought into activity through that approach attending at our education events. It is something we could all learn from and that experience needs to be brought into this discussion as well.

If we develop such work, we could seriously transform the workings and frankly also the culture of our union, and that is the sort of aim that we need to set ourselves. I also want to address the issue of independent reviews or examinations. To be clear, we have worked closely with the TUC on the issue of sexual harassment. There is, as reported, a TUC working group on this issue on which I was invited to sit. National officer Riccardo la Torre and the AGS have also been involved in close discussions with the TUC and we have sought external advice throughout our approach to preparing this document alongside our discussions with our own equality section.

The FBU’s anti-sexual harassment working group is a group predominantly made up of women. It includes officials of the union. It includes officials of the union from our equality sections, it includes members of staff of the union. I want to look at how we have approached the issue of the independent climate survey which has been announced and reported in a circular just recently. That has taken the approach of seeking independent external support for that work. We have been guided by them. It is no use seeking independent support if then head office or the executive council determines we are going to do it this way. We have taken external advice and as that survey is developed and launched, it will be guided by that external organisation.

We now state the following from the executive council and following discussions with comrades from B&EMM and delegates from B&EMM. We will undertake exactly the same approach in relation to race and racism and we give that commitment today to conference. This will mean identifying an external organisation and seeking their advice on how to conduct surveys or any other activities which are deemed to be necessary for pursuing this work.

The statement also commits to a review of FBU cases of internal union discipline and All Different All Equal to ensure that any failings are identified and that any potential inconsistency might be addressed. Again, that will be done independently. It will not be carried out by the executive council. It will be done with external expertise.

Comrades, I want to point particularly, as we draw to a close, to points 8 and 9 on page 3 of the report because, in many ways, these are some of the most important areas that we need to address. Clearly, there have been, and there may be, failings within our own organisation and we need to address any such failings and improve our structures and improve our workings and to improve our culture and our diversity within this organisation. But also we work within the fire and rescue service, and our job is to change the fire and rescue service. The truth is we don't recruit anyone for the fire and rescue service. We don't discipline anyone in the fire and rescue service and we don't promote anyone in the fire and rescue service. The people who are in charge of that are chief fire officers, and what has been missing in this debate is an identification of the failings of chief fire officers for many decades.

The alarming thing is when you hear what the Westminster fire minister says on this issue: the plan apparently, having identified through these reports that there are problems, is to give even greater authority and greater control to the very people who have been running the fire and rescue service for decades: to the current generation of chief fire officers and to the National Fire Chiefs Council. These are the very structures that have failed within our service.

So points 8 and 9 are particularly important. Point 8 says that we will work with our equality sections and brigade committees to identify and establish best practice standards for the fire and rescue service, against which they can be tested. We do not intend to leave this to His Majesty's Inspectorate. What we are saying is that we, collectively, as an organisation representing the professionals on the ground, representing underrepresented groups, we will say what we expect of the fire and rescue service and we will measure fire and rescue services against those standards that we begin to set.

Then, once that is in place, we will carry out a review of all fire and rescue services. We will inspect them against the standards that we collectively have set. That is a new departure for how this union intends to approach this issue if you agree this statement.

It will be a lot of work. It will be challenging, and it will mean some difficult discussions internally. It might mean difficult discussions on brigade committees. It might mean difficult discussions on our branches. We have had those before and we should not shy away from them.

Conference, we have to face these issues squarely and accept that they are huge, massive problems.

We then need to commit to tackle the issues and to keep going as long as it takes and by whatever means necessary to put an end to discrimination, harassment and bullying of every type. The T-shirts that we are all wearing today say equality matters. We now have the challenge, if you agree this statement, to turn that slogan into a reality. That is the responsibility that rests with every single person in this room. Thank you. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt, National Women's Committee to second.

KATE YHNELL (NWC):

Conference, president, we are speaking to second the executive council policy statement on equality.

I would like to draw your attention to the general secretary's discussion on point 3. This remains the reason why we remit our resolution 83. Can I remind conference that this was our decision as the National Women's Committee and how we choose to support our members should be supported. The National Women's Committee recognise the commitment to equality within the fire service. However, this is not new for us and something that we, as women, have been challenging for decades, often against peers within the FBU.

The top table still echoes the traditional masculinised trade union structure and this must change to be a reflection of our diverse and very valued membership. The National Women's Committee must have the proper support in place to deal with the increase in cases where representation is needed which is constant and has been shown this

year. The National Women's Committee welcome an independent review into the FBU. We know it will only be a matter of when and not if women's officials come forward.

As a section, we remain concerned about the public face of our services and union. To face these issues head on and improve our image, we must take steps to recognise this and do something positive and constructive from all parties. Without more women in the elected committee table it could be determined that we are not taking our equality duties seriously. We remain resolute that the best way to ensure our members feel supported, that they have a voice, is for them to have more women on the elected committee tables. Look at the conference room around you. Times are changing. There are more women standing in brigade official roles and there are sure to be more added to you next year. Let the change from the top, as well, follow our lead and change the table that remains so top heavy with middle-aged men.

These building blocks will be crucial to enable and empower women officials to push through the next set of structural changes necessary to challenge the traditionalised, masculinised model of trade unionism.

Speaking from the National Women's Committee, the current chair and vice-chair are only acting in these roles. There is a reluctance to commit as they have seen too many other officials before us how much hard work is needed for us to improve policies, practices and remits. Ironically, doing this work and campaigning for change, takes us away from our families and the main reason we joined the fire service, which would be to stand in line with every other firefighter and serve our communities with pride. We need a full-time elected committee member for women that will be our voice at the table, that understands our struggles and gives us capacity to fight to improve equality.

Before I finish, can I highlight the progress and investigation and improvement that needs to happen for all equality sectors. Although I have championed women in the statement, we stand for all. We are more than just a tick box exercise in inclusion. We are a more important, ever growing part of your membership. You say equality matters. However, now it is time to prove it. Conference, the National Women's Committee encourages you to support the executive council policy statement on equality, but we eagerly await movement forward and through investigation. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kate. I call Hereford and Worcester to move their amendment.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Moving amendment 1 and amendment 2 to the EC policy statement, *The Fight for Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service*.

Conference, I support the EC policy statement and I stand in solidarity with our equalities sections. I also want to thank Matt and the EC for the leadership they are showing on this important issue.

I was going to move these two amendments formally from the floor, but because one of them, amendment 2, might be new to you, you might not have heard it, I thought I would just give some context behind that. In terms of amendment 1, that is purely, as Matt was saying, taking the review outside the union so it is truly independent rather than us carry out our own report, commissioning a report would be more appropriate.

Amendment 2, reference to the Sisters to the Front General Secretary's Charter, Sisters to the Front is a professional network for women workers directly employed by trade union, including non-binary and transgender workers. Signatories to the charter are asked to adopt a number of steps to prevent and tackle sexual harassment within their own unions. Currently, this has been signed by a number of different unions, the Foodworkers' Union, the RCN, GMB, TSSA and a number of others. This seems appropriate that in this review, in this piece of work, that we too sign that charter.

Conference, I ask that you support the amendments, but I urge you to not just support the resolution but get behind it and help fight for equality in the fire and rescue service. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Neil. Conference, the EC support amendment 1. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

They also support amendment 2. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 79, Misogyny in the Fire and Rescue Service, to be moved by West Midlands. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 79 MISOGYNY IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Conference notes that Conference 2022 resoundingly carried the National Women's Committee (NWC) resolution on Misogyny, the resolution set out that:

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.***

The Membership has not been adequately updated on ongoing work to ensure this resolution is enacted, particularly on mandatory sexual harassment training for all Officials.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to distribute communications to the Membership, within three months, of work done to date and with a clear timeframe of further work to be undertaken to ensure the NWC resolution is addressed.

WEST MIDLANDS

CARA LANSLEY (West Midlands):

Unfortunately, the topic of misogyny is coming up again and again. It is completely unacceptable. Over the last twelve months we have seen more and more evidence of misogynistic behaviour across the fire and rescue sector. Evidence from London, Dorset and Wiltshire, and Avon brigades cannot be ignored. These brigades, I have no doubt, are not alone in their misconduct. Brigades are continually talking about wanting more women in their services and progressing towards a more diverse and inclusive workforce yet their initiatives do little to demonstrate this. Actions speak louder than words. In the last twelve months there appears to have been little work in this area so I am here today to raise the crucial resolution passed by the NWC at conference last year. The resolution addresses the issue of misogyny in the fire and rescue service and I believe it is essential that we discuss it here again today.

So, the resolution sets out clear guidelines for action. It instructs the EC to support the campaign to make misogyny a hate crime, publicly condemn misogynistic behaviours, encourage members to challenge and report instances of misogyny or sexism and introduce mandatory sexual harassment training for all FBU officials. It must be noted that the membership has not been adequately updated on ongoing work in this area to ensure the resolution is enacted. The resolution calls for the EC to distribute communications to the membership within three months outlining the progress made to date and further work to be undertaken to ensure that NWC resolution is addressed.

Now, a bit awkward. Since writing this resolution, it has come to light that the EC has sent out a circular regarding update of their work to combat misogyny in the fire and rescue services. This circular was sent out just a few days prior to this conference on 5 May. It was only sent to brigade secretaries and not sectional or even regional sectional reps. Not overly convenient but thank you for the last minute update. Please could computer updates be more often and consistent. Nevertheless, we all have the same goal in mind. By supporting this resolution we can create a safe and respectful working environment for all members. It is crucial that we condemn misogynistic behaviours and stand up to employers and colleagues on this issue.

As we move forward, we must be vocal in our condemnation of misogyny and sexism. We must encourage members to challenge and report instances of misconduct of this nature in the work place, home or elsewhere, and we must provide mandatory sexual harassment training for all FBU officials.

In conclusion, I urge all members to support resolution 79, Misogyny in the Fire and Rescue Service. Let us work together to create a safe and inclusive workplace for all members. Let us stand against misogyny and create a culture of accountability and support for victims. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Cara. Just for clarification, that was EC support with explanation, not qualified support as I have just said. Does that have a seconder?

MATT NICHOLLS (South Yorkshire):

I will try to actually say something this time. President, comrades, speaking on behalf of South Yorkshire to second resolution 79, Misogyny in the Fire and Rescue Service. This morning we have heard from the president, general secretary and now the floor about the acute issue of culture in the fire and rescue service and, indeed, that some of the abhorrent behaviours including misogyny is amongst our membership.

Given this, South Yorkshire stands shoulder to shoulder with our comrades from the West Midlands. We ask that the EC makes progress and reports in a timely fashion. We second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now call resolution 72, Challenging Bullying Harassment and Discrimination with the Fire Brigades Union moved by London, seconded by B&EMM. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 72 CHALLENGING BULLYING HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU)

Conference notes that the FBU is known for challenging bullying, harassment and discrimination in the fire and rescue service, however there have been reports of inconsistencies with how these issues have been dealt with within our own Union.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to commission an independent review into the FBU on how complaints and concerns raised have been handled. This must be carried out by an external body and any reps and Members who provide information to the review should be allowed to do so anonymously if they choose to.

Conference instructs the EC to complete this work prior to Conference 2024.

LONDON

JON LAMBE (London):

Thanks, president, I was going to ask about that on the way up. Conference, we welcome the EC's policy statement, particularly section 5 but it does not go far enough. It calls for a review of, well, IUDs and ADAE cases. Our resolution is quite simple. It asks us to go further. It is quite clear. We need to have an independent review into how complaints and concerns are dealt with when they are raised. This is important. We cannot afford to leave anyone behind. It is not just enough to go when it goes through. We need to make sure when someone makes a complaint it is dealt with appropriately and in the correct way, and it is dealt with fairly in all regions all over. So, conference, this really is about the terms of reference of the independent review. The independent review is going to come and it is whether that independent review is for complaints alone or is actually how we deal with these as a region. I would urge you to support, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Jon. B&EMM to second. I have been informed B&EMM that you are going to withdraw 76 from the rostrum as well? Just checking, just checking.

KASEY LEGALL (B&EMM):

I am going to make no apologies if you become uncomfortable with what I am about to say. First of all, let's be clear, complaints and concerns haven't always been handled the best. Why? Why haven't they? A review can only be credible if it is impartial to give members confidence and belief that such disgusting behaviours will be rooted out from the core.

We have officials and reps who believe that there is no problem, that have thankfully been able to get rid of certain complaints. That is not OK. We will only get to the bottom of these discrepancies and poor handling by an independent review.

Now, you mentioned about the fire services across the UK getting to the problem and about it being fire service employees. The fire service is the FBU. We hold a very large majority of members. We have systematic racism. It is still here. Unconscious bias is in this very room. You have only got to look around this entire room to see the lack of shading of skin colour. We only sit in the B&EMM minus a few. We have a few dotted around, not many. If B&EMM isn't present in conversation, the narrative doesn't change. We talk about equality matters. We have members not wearing equality matters T-shirts. Why? We will be withdrawing resolution 76 and B&EMM do support resolution 72. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kasey. I now call resolution 86, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Disability Section, moved by North Wales. The EC gives qualified support.

Resolution 86 FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) DISABILITY SECTION

Conference is aware that the FBU currently has six sections representing Members from various walks of life, from LGBT+ to Officers section and Control to name a few. One section of the workforce that is currently not included but does have an ever increasing number of people is that of the disabled community.

Disability can be categorised into two sections, physical and mental. Approximately 14.6 million people in the UK are registered disabled, that's 22% of the population (source Office of National Statistics). Neurodiversity makes up a large section of that figure, with statistics showing up to 15% of the UK population are Neurodiverse (Source Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder Aware), with many more being undiagnosed. That equates to 1 in 7 adults in the UK (Source Acas diversity in the workplace 2016). Using that example ratio, it may be that in a fire and rescue service that employs 1,000 personnel, at least 142 could be Neurodiverse.

It is understood that certain professions attract more neurodivergent people than others, and the fire and rescue service is one of those due to the dynamic nature of our job (Source ADDitude: Inside the ADHD Mind). It is perceived as a very hands-on job, which can attract neurodivergent people who generally may avoid jobs with lots of written tasks for example.

The current approach to disability within the fire and rescue service is very sporadic, with different fire and rescue services taking different approaches. Although, legally under the Equality Act 2010, an employer must support the employee and consider reasonable adjustments, this again is very different across different fire and rescue services. A more standardised approach is needed to help our Members who live with these conditions by supporting their welfare and development.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to explore establishing a new FBU section to represent and support Members of the FBU with disabilities.

NORTH WALES

STUART STANLEY (North Wales):

First time conference, first time speaker. Perhaps slightly unusual in that I read the following resolution on behalf of the North Wales FBU vice-chair, Dan McNulty, who is sitting over there raising his hand. We were unable to change our delegation at the last minute.

President, conference, I read the following statement verbatim. I am Dan McNulty, brigade vice-chair of North Wales. Although this is not my first conference, this is my first time speaking in front of you today. When you think of disability, what does it look like to you? When I joined the fire and rescue service eight years ago I did so because it had been a lifelong passion for me and because I was following in my father's footsteps. But two years ago I found

out I was disabled. I was diagnosed with dyslexia and autism, something which I had never even thought about during my life, but it was only when a close colleague of mine mentioned this that I explored it further.

When I went to my fire service for support I was met with a very mixed approach. Some staff were very supportive whilst others were very resistant telling me what is the point in making changes, you have made it this far. I knew something had to change. I reached out to other staff members who told me of their horror stories. One member of staff who was refused any adjustments for an exam because their diagnosis was during childhood and therefore the organisation had no proof of his disability. This is a breach of the Equality Act 2010.

Another member of staff who is a fantastic, hardworking individual who lives with ADHD was told by a senior fire officer to tone it down and, during a meeting, that they were too excitable. This is not the approach of a friendly and helpful fire and rescue service who value their staff. This will not be the only example, I am sure, and I am sure people in this room will be able to think of examples of their own organisations not meeting their legal or moral requirements when it comes to disability.

Just to put this into some numbers, according to the ONS and ADHD aware, it is believed that 15% of the UK's population are neurodiverse, and 22% are registered disabled. That is one in seven of us in this room. However, that figure may be a lot higher as many people don't know or have never sought an official diagnosis. That figure is believed to be around the 40% mark according to the NFCC. This is because as our understanding of neurodiversity and disability has improved, and as it continues to do so, more people may come forward. We are in a unique position within the fire and rescue service as it is believed we recruit and attract more neurodiverse people than many other industries due to the perceived nature of our role.

It is understood that the fire and rescue service recruit five times as many people who are neurodivergent than any other career, so it is only right that we should be allowing our staff to get the very best support available, to get the most out of our fantastic members.

Currently, we have six sections, three of which are equality sections within the FBU who do some fantastic work as we have seen here today, supporting people from every walk of life. However, one section of our members, which I believe is still not represented fully, is that of the disabled community. Although other sections will be supporting those with disabilities anyway, I do think that this is such a specialised area that a specific section should be established to help and support our members. I hope that today you will help support this resolution for the benefit of us all who live with disabilities within the fire and rescue service and, for me, personally stood in front of you all today, this is something close to my heart and means a lot to me. I hope I have done you justice, Dan! Thank you for your support. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

You certainly did, Stuart. Do we have a seconder?

DAN CRESWELL (Nottinghamshire):

First time speaker and first time conference. Comrades, I second resolution 86. Stigma, a lack of awareness and a lack of appropriate infrastructure such as an office set up or staffing structures can cause exclusion of people with disabilities, neurodevelopmental differences, understanding and embracing different disabilities and neurodiversity in workplaces can improve exclusivity for all people. It is important for all of us to foster, recognise and emphasise each person's individual strengths and talents whilst also providing support for their differences and needs.

Neurodiversity. What is it? A publication from Harvard Medical School, "Neurodiversity" explains the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in different ways. There is no one right way of thinking, learning or behaving, and differences should never be viewed as deficits.

Dyslexia. Dyslexia is one of seven of the more prominent learning disabilities and, it is covered by the Equality Act 2010, and influences one in ten people. It is a genetic difference in individuals' ability to learn and process information. Dyslexia discrimination is often unintentional. When employers lack dyslexia awareness and simply provide everyone with the same basic tools and information, they inadvertently put people with dyslexia at a disadvantage. Despite lack of intention, it is a discrimination nonetheless.

A lot of maintenance and competency platforms provided by the fire and rescue services do not take into account individual learning needs. Promotion in the fire service often comes with strict criteria, set procedure and little room for adjustment. Dyslexia could be a barrier, especially with an individual who has not received a diagnosis.

What we are asking for is to ensure that all members receive the best support possible, a safe place where they can feel able to be open, honest, without judgment. We all deserve an equal representation regardless of an individual's disability. Comrades, we second resolution 86 to improve our union and workplace and our future. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dan. I now call resolution 87, Disability in the Fire and Rescue Service, to be moved by Greater Manchester. The EC are seeking Greater Manchester withdraw or they oppose.

Resolution 87 DISABILITY IN THE FIRE and RESCUE SERVICE

Conference notes that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has a proud history and commitment to ensuring every Member is treated equally and stands firmly against discrimination and inequality.

Conference is concerned that those Members who have disabilities remain underrepresented and do not have the support of a section to turn to.

Members with disabilities, particularly those with hidden disabilities such as neurodiversity and chronic mental ill health are particularly vulnerable. This is primarily due to heavy-handed capability processes and lack of will on behalf of the employer to accept the legislation for identifying disabilities set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to survey and map the FBU Membership to identify those Members with disabilities.

Conference also instructs that before Conference 2024 the Executive Council ensures a section is founded for Members with disabilities and identifies relevant rule changes to be made to ensure the section is recognised equally within the Rule Book.

GREATER MANCHESTER

MATT FRYER (Greater Manchester):

First time speaker. Very similar lines to North Wales' resolution but I will be tying the EC down a bit with this one. Our equality sections are set up to give a voice to those who are underrepresented within our union and face diminished opportunities within society at large. However, it is clear that there is a large group of people and members who are still significantly underrepresented. Current figures estimate that a quarter of the population will suffer from some form of mental health problem this year with figures in the fire service likely to be much higher due to operational stress and trauma triggers. With the vast majority of members hiding their symptoms and feelings due to stigma, by my calculation that is about 32 people in this room will suffer from mental health in the next twelve months.

Mental health issues within the neurodiverse community are much higher than the general population. For example, two-fifths are diagnosed with ADHD and also have associated anxiety disorders. Fifteen to twenty per cent of the population have some form of neurodivergence which potentially equates to 4 to 5,000 of our members. Due to bullying, stigma and concerns about losing their jobs, members with mental health and neurodivergence are scared to disclose this information which is why it is important to do so, and they are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Later life diagnosis is also becoming more common. Gone are the days when we are the class clowns and just seen as a disruptive kid. Women, trans and non-binary people are also significantly underrepresented in research and disability as are those from minority and ethnic communities. This means the diagnostics are mainly based on the experiences of men and boys.

The result is other members of our union are less likely to be diagnosed with neurodivergent conditions despite being neurodivergent. Women often mask or camouflage neurodivergence as they already feel they must fight for and justify their place in patriarchal work places. Masking requires great effort and can result in physical, mental and

emotional exhaustion. This union has a proud history and commitment to ensuring every member is treated equally and standing firmly against all forms of discrimination and inequality.

This disability section needs founding now as soon as possible in our opinion. It is time for us all to recognise and support these colleagues. One final point, we are seeking clarity as to why the EC are saying that the resolution will fall if your resolution carries. Thanks very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder?

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Unintentionally standing against another EC policy statement apparently. Conference, president, there has been a lot of talk in this conference hall about equality and working towards the fire and rescue service that we would be happy to recommend to our friends and families. Those of you sat in this room when you think of some of the things that we talk about, would you honestly be happy to recommend to your child, to your partner, to your friends, to come and join the fire service given some of the issues that we are currently facing and going through?

As the comrade from Manchester eloquently said, those with disabilities are often overlooked and underrepresented not only within the fire and rescue service but within all walks of life. Conference, current figures suggest one in five of the population are disabled and approximately 80% of that have a hidden disability. People with invisible or hidden disabilities are in almost every workplace. These disabilities do not always manifest in ways that are immediately obvious to others. Disgracefully, in 2023 members with disabilities, in particular, those with hidden disabilities are still being discriminated against. They are accused on a daily basis of lying or faking their disabilities just because they are not visibly present every single day.

Conference, we have come a long way in the last twenty years. However, we still have an incredibly long way to go. Merseyside officials voted against the removal of sectional representation from the executive council and believe despite the obvious cost savings it was a mistake, and removing the voice of our underrepresented sections at the highest level of this union was a mistake.

This resolution is asking two things. It is asking to conduct a survey so we can help identify and assist our members who are living with disabilities, and it asks us to found a section for those members with disabilities. Conference, the TUC has a disabilities section. The question was asked at a north west TUC meeting recently, which other unions represented there had a disabilities section. I am sure you will be disappointed to hear that every union in that room apart from the Fire Brigades Union had a disabilities section.

Today we have the opportunity to give a voice to those members who are underrepresented. Conference, as yet another middle-aged white male with no noticeable disability that I am aware, I can assist and represent members in almost everything. However, I do not have the lived experience of those in the underrepresented sections within this union, and that is why it is so important that we have a section for all of the underrepresented members within this union.

Conference, in 2023 the fire and rescue service should be an open and inclusive workplace for all. This can only be achieved by smashing the barriers to change that stand in the way of all underrepresented sections of society and in our union. Conference, collectively we have the power to change the world. We have but to reach out and take it. Conference, support the resolution, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, that is now open for debate. Anybody?

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+):

The fire and rescue service has significant problems with discrimination, harassment, bullying, oppression, sexism, misogyny, racism, homophobia and transphobia which are all real issues that exist.

What is most disturbing is that these issues were identified in 1999 with HMI's thematic report into fairness and equality in the fire and rescue service. That report back then identifies that the only organisation doing anything positive to challenge these cultural problems was the Fire Brigades Union.

An enormous amount of effort was put into addressing the issues and various plans and policies were produced working with government, fire services and the NJC. In 2010 that progress was undermined when the coalition government took power and the new Tory fire minister, Bob Neill, immediately scrapped the equality and inclusion strategy and told fire and rescue services that it was not for the government to tell fire services who they should employ and who they should promote. That message told chief fire officers that equality and diversity no longer mattered and they ceased in their commitment. All discussions between the FBU and central government on equality and diversity ceased, and the only body that was proactively sought to make improvements was the inclusive fire service working group where we, the FBU, had input.

Recommendations from that group were largely ignored by the chief fire officers and certainly the HMI wanted nothing to do with promoting the recommendations from that working group. The first report to come out was the cultural review into the LFB and that report we believe has the most substance as it was compiled independently from the fire and rescue service. The subsequent report from the HMI and the National Fire Chiefs Council, whilst acknowledging some of the issues, carries a clear political agenda. Whilst the HMI report acknowledges instances of racism, sexism and homophobia, the report also seeks to attack the FBU by likening such abuse to the use of a certain four letter word to describe those who by choice decide to work during strike action, and even criticises a T-shirt for FBU members having backbone.

Abuse and harassment based on your gender, your race and your sexuality are not choices. Choosing to cross a picket line often to considerable financial personal benefit is a choice and it is absolutely offensive to attempt to make any comparison.

The NFCC in their report and recommendations cannot bring themselves to mention the role of the FBU. They fail to mention anything about homophobia. They talk about engagement with key stakeholders such as women in the fire service and the Asian Fire Service Association, but make no mention of engagement with the existing democratic bodies that we have in the FBU.

It should further be noted that all three reports fail to mention the issue of transphobia, and given the profile of that debate currently, there is a clear issue of that type of abuse. We would further call for an overall independent review into the homophobia and transphobia within the FBU.

We also note and support the NWC in its call to ensure a review of the union structures from branch to EC to include the reinstatement of a seat within the EC. It is clear that there is an attempt to make this opportunity by those who have consistently failed and created the problem to try to attack the FBU without any acknowledgement that they created and perpetrated the issue. We cannot allow the HMI and the NFCC to be the voice on this issue. We have a genuine commitment to make positive change. We have demonstrated our capacity in the past to make progress. It is by the joined up working with all the stakeholders that progress can be made to deal with this very problem and that needs to be through the NJC. Conference please support the policy statement.

CRAIG CARTER (Bedfordshire):

President, conference, speaking for resolution 86. Recently, one of Bedfordshire's officials represented a member at a grievance hearing. The member had ADHD and this caused an issue during the meeting due to the stressful nature of it. At various points our FBU rep had to interject to assist the member such as defending her when a manager got frustrated at her interrupting him. When the member struggled to articulate the situation our official was able to help clarify for her and when the member became distressed and began stimming, a self-soothing behaviour, in this case manifesting as clenching and unclenching their jaw, our official halted the meeting to allow the member to centre herself before continuing.

All of these behaviours are traits of ADHD. Our official was able to recognise them as she herself also has it. But it was only a few weeks ago that the official felt comfortable to tell me about it, something so deeply personal and often misunderstood and, for many women, still very much underdiagnosed. Hidden disabilities like ADHD

impact on the working lives of our members and can lead to performance management disciplines and absence management. Imagine if that member had not had our official to help them. Would I have been able to adequately represent them? People with disabilities need a section they trust who understand them and will advocate for them. They have a voice and they are asking for this section. I believe we should be listening.

Bedfordshire fire and rescue staff started a working group pushing for better accessibility in all aspects of the service for those with different abilities including those in limbo waiting for diagnosis. The only people not at the table are the FBU. Conference, it is time we took a seat. Conference, I support.

CALLUM HODGKIN (Cambridgeshire):

Speaking in support of London's resolution 72. I welcome the EC statement and with that Matt's comments about how the FBU intend to move forward. The FBU is about holding brigades to account and rightly so. The FBU is about stamping out all forms of discrimination with the UK fire and rescue service and beyond. The FBU needs to be following what we ask of our brigades and to create those standards, and to lead the way and set examples for others to follow. We have to make sure that our house is in order first and then push our respective brigades to get their ducks in a row.

London's resolution is not about a witch hunt against FBU members and officials. It is about moving forward, leading from the front, practising what we preach and representing all of our members no matter who they are. That is what the FBU is about. Conference, I support.

KERRY McCRONE (Scotland):

Supporting the EC policy statement, *The Fight for Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service*. Region 1 brought a resolution to conference last year asking for an independent review into sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying and misogyny. We agreed to remit our resolution and put our trust in the EC to create a working group and tackle behaviours.

We welcome the EC's creation of an anti-sexual harassment working group and recognise progress has been slow because of various factors including the pay campaign. However, we have to ensure that serious issues in regard to abhorrent behaviours do not fall off the table and are given the union's full attention. We also welcome the climate surveys that should be completed by the latest in autumn of this year.

Scotland are now supporting this policy statement and they are glad to see the EC are taking further steps in the fight for equality and the eradication of sexist, bullying, homophobic, racist and misogynistic behaviours.

The London Fire Brigade culture review found it to be institutionally misogynistic and racist as well as evidence of homophobia and disability discrimination. Further to that, a review of all fire and rescue services across England show disgraceful examples of these types of behaviours. Have no doubt and be under no illusion that where these behaviours are found within fire and rescue services, they are found within our union.

As a women's rep I can assure you that these behaviours do exist, and women across the UK experience them on a daily basis. They often find it extremely difficult to report this for fear of repercussions of a complaint. I have seen first-hand, and I have experienced, the repercussions of raising issues relating specifically to women. The rumours put out to discredit you and the gaslighting behaviour of others are all too familiar.

So I am glad to read in this policy statement the FBU will not sit on the fence in the face of such allegations and that we are on the side of members. The statement also commits to putting our own house in order, the strengthening of equality structures within the FBU and reviewing our fairness at work representation as well as creating a more diverse union structure as necessary to fully represent our minority groups and giving them a voice in which they can be heard.

What this policy statement does is make a commitment to create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all. I look forward to a time when these behaviours are a distant memory. For eighteen years I have witnessed or been on the receiving end of

them. I am glad the FBU recognises the scale of the problem. All we can do now is ask for real action and that real change is made. Conference, I support.

CHRIS COOK (Tyne and Wear):

I haven't got anything pencilled down and I wasn't actually going to get up and speak around it, but I think it is really important. I have got dyslexia. I would never have known that I had dyslexia if it wasn't for the Fire Brigades Union, if it wasn't for the support that I had from my brigade secretary, Wayne Anderson, in a very tough conversation that he had to have with us when I wasn't quite getting things. I think that disability section would be a fantastic thing because it is all about support.

There are people out there like myself who do struggle on a daily basis but the Fire Brigades Union have been fantastic. I have got a yellow keyboard overlay, and I just want to say, you know, that it is OK as well. Since I sort of talked to my membership, we have had loads of people come forward and use our screening tool which is fantastic. Our screening tool screens for dyslexia and dyspraxia and it is absolutely fantastic. You can put it in your reasonable adjustments with your service. You come under the Equalities Act and the service cannot say no.

I just want to remind everyone, you know, it is OK to talk about it. I kind of just wanted to get up and humanise it. You know, it is quite a heavy subject, but I am speaking in support of resolution 86. Thank you very much.

ANDREW MURRAY (Durham):

I am speaking in support of resolution 72 and it is pretty simple for me. The FBU should be an exemplar of equality. Without a doubt. If we want to hold fire and rescue services to account, we have to be above them on equality. So we do need to take a step back. We need to have a look at ourselves. We need to do an independent review into where we stand, to gauge where we are and let us move forward, because unless we do that, we cannot speak to fire and rescue services about where they are. Durham supports 72.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Any more in the debate.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, President. Thanks, conference, for such a fantastic debate and putting some of those very powerful contributions.

In terms of some of the other resolutions and the executive council's statement, on resolution 72, the London resolution, the qualifications I think are as follows. First of all, the executive council is not aware of some of the points made in the first paragraph regarding reports of inconsistencies. That issue has not been raised with us so we clearly will look at any concerns that are raised but are unaware of such suggestions.

I think secondly and most importantly, on the question of an independent review, the executive council have set out very clearly what we think the independent review needs. We have already started that in relation to the work including with the equality sections on the independent climate survey as it is called, the survey in relation to sexual harassment, and that is the approach as I set out in moving that we would adopt in relation to other areas of work including in relation to race and racism, and I do acknowledge the point that Maria made about homophobia, transphobia, and we haven't got licence from the executive council to say that today, but the point is noted and we will certainly take that into that discussion.

The final qualification, clearly there may be a case. Surveys, for example, will generally be anonymous. I think once things get beyond a certain point then anonymity may or may not be appropriate. If, for example, there were to be hearings, then clearly you don't have anonymous hearings with anonymous accusations being made within a process. So there needs to be some caution as to what we mean by anonymity.

Clearly, if you take the climate survey that is now being prepared, then anonymity is a factor that is being considered within that, so those are the qualifications in relation to that point.

In relation to 86 and 87, look, the executive council – and I think again some very powerful contributions were made

during this debate in relation to both the resolutions that are in front of you. I want to assure you that this issue is not being and has not been ignored. We have already started work on the question of what other unions do. We have begun research on what exists within other unions in terms of support for, networks for and sections for members with disabilities, and how different aspects of that are dealt with within unions, but that is at an early stage currently.

Some of those include sections, some of those include networks, some of those include specially designated officers of the union to address such matters. We have started the process of a dialogue with some of those but, as I say, it is at a very early stage. It would not be sensible, in our view, to proceed without having those discussions with other unions on their experiences. That is essentially why the executive council's view is that 86 is the preferable resolution and we would urge you to support 86. That is not to dismiss or in any way take anything away from the points that were made in relation to people speaking on both of those resolutions.

I think, president, those are the qualifications. Look, just finally in closing conference, this is clearly a huge debate. What I would ask people to do is, the level of work that is necessary and frankly that has been done – I will just take one slight issue in terms of reporting that was mentioned in one of the contributions. There are different ways in which we report. There are circulars. There have been articles in *Firefighter* and also there is the responsibility of executive council members to report back through their relevant structures, so there are various ways and we clearly take on board an account of the points that have been made here today in terms of future reporting back of those structures.

I want conference to be alive to, and I am sure we all are, the scale of what we are taking on today. This is not simple work. It cannot be resolved easily. None of the aspects of the statement or the resolutions that will or are likely to be passed, or the comments that have been made, can be dealt with overnight, and they will require time, resources and huge amounts of effort, and I think it is in that context that I urge people to support the executive council statement and give qualified support to resolution 72 and support resolution 86.

THE PRESIDENT:

Greater Manchester right of reply. Matt, you did ask for clarification. I will give that after the debate is finished before I go to the voting.

MATT FRYER (Greater Manchester):

You said you are going to give some further clarity after this. Basically, the only difference between 86 and 87 is that 87 asks for the formation of a disability section this year. It is at least the early stages of looking into this, it actually sets out the establishment levels of the section. It is basically giving the urgency to this rather than we will look at it. It could be in two or three years' time and nothing has been done again. We need to get on top of this because we are already falling behind as a union. Other unions are all over this. It is really important as you can see, to a lot of our members so we would really like to move on resolution 87 as much as you can. Thanks very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I think you hit the nail on the head yourself when you said it is different to the other resolutions. Obviously, as I said earlier on the pay debate, conference, I look at it and I have the VP assisting me and standing orders. We look at the technicalities of the wording of the resolution purely on the basis of how they conflict with each, how they stand in opposition or how they might impact, can they or can't they carry. We don't look at any of the content. It is just if they have conflicting outcomes. As I said, when I introduced the debate, resolutions 86 and 87 couldn't carry together because one calls for the exploration of a section being created and the other one calls for the section being founded by, I can't remember the date, September or whatever it is. So they are conflicting. That also conflicts with the EC policy statement because the policy statement calls for the union to develop the union's work on disability, including neurodiversity and mental health, to widen support for members facing discrimination in these areas. For us 86 can carry with the EC policy statement. Resolution 87 stands in opposition to both of those. That was the decision of those long discussions into the night last night. That gives an explanation of that.

OK, conference. I now put the EC policy statement, *The Fight for Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service*, to the vote. All those in favour please show? All those against please show. That carries.

Conference, with that, just to clarify, resolution 87 *falls*.

I now put resolution 79 from West Midlands to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 72 from London to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show.

I now put resolution 76 – which has been withdrawn. I don't put that one to the vote. Sorry.

I now put resolution 86 from North Wales to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show.

Ah. Conference, I have made an error. There were amendments from Hereford and Worcester. For clarity, I am going to start it again so that we have got the record of decisions absolutely correct.

I now put Amendment 1 from Hereford and Worcester to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show.

I now put Amendment 2 from Hereford and Worcester 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 *The Fight for Equality in the Fire and Rescue Service*, to the vote.

All those in favour please show. All those against please show. Thank you. Just for clarity, I am going to cover the others because, as I said, resolution 87 *falls*.

Again, I now put resolution 79 from West Midlands to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 72 from London to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 86 from North Wales to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, perfect timing. We are now having a tea break and we will reconvene at – ah, conference, before you do that we are going to have a right laugh now with me trying to herd you lot into positions where we can get a photograph. Then we will be going on to tea break as soon as the photograph is done, so I am going to ask the executive council to come round the front if everybody else can stand please. There is a card on your tables "Equality Matters" if you could stand up and hold them please.

Break for tea

Right, conference, come to order, not long to go. It has been a long day. Right, I now call resolution 91, Update Best Practice Document on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence moved by Devon and Somerset. Oh, hold your horses. I now call Phil Millar, chair of standing orders to give a standing orders report.

THE CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, can those of you have them please turn to your delegate list. Region 1, Scotland, remove Steve Weir and replace with Seona Hart. Then, conference, can you turn to your programme of business. There are now five emergency resolutions which have been agreed by the standing orders committee and were distributed during the break. So in your programme of business can you go to page 12. After resolution 78 insert Emergency Resolution 3 which is Protect the Right of Free Speech and the Right to Protest by Durham. Still on page 12 at the bottom of the page insert Emergency Resolution 2, Voter Identification, from Nottinghamshire, right at the bottom after resolution 63. Then beneath Emergency Resolution 2 insert Emergency Resolution 4 which is Campaign to Defeat the Strikes Minimum Service Levels from Scotland. On page 13 immediately after para F11 insert Emergency Resolution 1, Solidarity with Jeremy Corbyn from Merseyside. Then staying on page 13 after resolution 65 insert Emergency Resolution 5, Free Julian Assange from Mid and West Wales. Thank you president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*.

Resolution 91 UPDATE BEST PRACTICE DOCUMENT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

Conference recognises that the impact of domestic abuse and sexual violence is as real and damaging now as it was in 2015 when Conference passed resolution 57 'Best Practice Document

on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence' calling for the Executive Council (EC) to endorse the best practice document to provide Fire Brigades Union Officials with the necessary tools to implement policies within individual fire and rescue services.

Many fire and rescue services still have no policies on this subject, and those that do often have policies that are outdated and insufficient.

Conference instructs the EC to work with all relevant sections to update the current best practice document on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence to include changes in the law such as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the overarching framework of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

DEVON AND SOMERSET

DAVE ROBERTS (Devon and Somerset):

Moving resolution 91. The domestic abuse and violence best practice document provides valuable guidance for reps since it was passed by a resolution from conference back in 2015. However, with significant changes in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and further best practice coming from the violence against women and girls framework, now is the time to update our document to reflect the duties of employers and provide reps with the tools needed to effect positive policy change.

Why bring this resolution? In my own brigade a recipient, a member who was being represented, of coercive behaviour found themselves being disciplined for a data breach under GDPR for taking and sending a screenshot of a Teams meeting she was attending to appease her controlling, abusive partner. The Domestic Abuse Act outlines standards to protect recipients of abuse within the judicial system. These same protections, if adopted, would have secured safeguards, mitigation and signposting for the member that was being represented.

Those experiencing domestic abuse often require additional support through internal discipline or investigation processes. Reasonable adjustments are applied around protected characteristics. The same adjustments need to apply here.

The Domestic Abuse Act also imposes a duty of care on employers to identify, support and protect staff who may be facing domestic abuse. Employers should be training staff to recognise any behaviours displayed by colleagues that may be experiencing abuse. Equally, training staff to recognise negative behaviours that staff display can lead to recognition of perpetrators.

In summing up, it is not enough for employers to call themselves diverse and inclusive and indulge themselves in social media virtue signalling, if they will not recognise their duty of care and they don't support diversity in the specific challenges that being diverse brings. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dave. Can I have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is open for debate. The EC support. Anybody? Then we will move straight to the vote. I now put resolution 91 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. I now call para H3, para H4, para H5, para H6, para H7, para H8. I now call resolution 78, Review of All Different All Equal Policy (ADAE) moved by Cleveland. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 78 REVIEW OF ALL DIFFERENT ALL EQUAL POLICY (ADAE)

Conference notes the vital importance of the ADAE policy.

To ensure that the ADAE policy is fit for purpose both now, and in the future, Conference instructs the Executive Council to complete a full review of the ADAE policy involving all sectional and regional committees in this review, to put before Conference 2024.

CLEVELAND

NICK CAIN (Cleveland):

Speaking on resolution 78, Review of the All Different All Equal Policy. There is no doubt about this ground-breaking document has done a lot of good for members of this union. It has rooted out bullying, harassment and discrimination which has absolutely no place within our union. When I speak to the reps of other unions, they say "Then what now? Please could you signpost me to this policy as it is something our union needs to look at." Moving forward with it though is a must.

Conference instructs that there is a full review by the executive council to ensure this policy is fit for purpose both now and in the future. We would like to see both regional and sectional reps included in said review. Why not use the skills of those people on the ground who are using the policy on the most regular occasions? Have them tell us what works and what doesn't, what to add to it and what we need to take out. Hopefully, after this review it would futureproof the policy and make it relevant for the next twenty years or so.

Conference instructs the executive council to undertake a full review of the All Different All Equal Policy including regional and sectional reps and report back before Conference 2024. Please support this resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Nick. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is now open for debate. Anybody?

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

Speaking in support of reso 78. Conference, we have heard about the importance of ADAE policy and ensuring that this is fit for purpose. As part of this review, conference asks for clarification on the appointment of ADAE investigators. Those of you here today who have been involved in All Different All Equal investigations know how difficult and time consuming they can be. Unfortunately, in the present climate such investigations are becoming more frequent and this is putting a huge strain on brigade officials. Many try and shoehorn investigations into their already congested diaries, spreading them thinly between disciplines, appointments with branches and consultation meetings with managers. All this as well as carrying out duties for their services, whether that be day crewing, control, retained, support or operational duties.

Regional secretaries, how difficult is it to find two investigators in your region and complete it within the timeframe? How often have you had to look further afield in other regions? If we are to hold account and maintain standards we as a union need to work smarter to find a way to relieve workloads. So I am looking for assurance that this review will help increase the capacity of available investigators and that the EC will do their utmost to ensure all regions participate. Conference, I support. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. Anybody else in the debate? AGS.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, thanks to Cleveland for bringing it and also thanks to Bedfordshire for withdrawing that. I will cover some of the points you have made in your resolution though and in that contribution now. We are broadly supporting the resolution from Cleveland. The qualification is solely really around the expected timescales. There is an issue with trying to organise 19 different committees, as you have asked in the resolution, and doing that in a timely fashion. It may be difficult to bring that back to conference next year, but if that is the case then we will provide the report to conference next year.

Some of this work has already begun in relation to changes in legislation and ensuring that our policy meets GDPR regulation 2 and then just in relation to Bedfordshire, yes, thank you very much for withdrawing yours. What the executive council's view is, and we hope conference leaves this week and goes back to regions and brigades to try and ensure that this is the case, we are asking that you all go back and you encourage brigades and regional representatives and take on the course of All Different All Equal, become trade reps. This will ensure we have got more investigators out there, but it will also ensure that when we are hearing those matters at committees, that our committees are fully trained and understand and have a greater depth of knowledge. There is a qualification on the expected timescales, president, but thank you conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ben. I now put resolution 78 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

Conference, I now call Emergency Resolution 3, Protect the Right to Free Speech and the Right to Protest, moved by Durham. The EC support.

Emergency resolution 3 PROTECT THE RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH AND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST
Conference notes that on Saturday 6th May 2023, a number of republican protestors were arrested in central London, whilst attending an approved demonstration of the Coronation.

Conference believes that the right to assemble, the right to free speech and the right to protest are essential democratic rights and must be defended.

Conference condemns this attack on citizens exercising their democratic rights.

Conference notes that the current Westminster government is introducing further undemocratic restrictions through the new Public Order legislation.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to oppose and campaign against this legislation.

Conference further instructs the EC to research the recent arrests and, where appropriate, support those arrested.

Conference believes that the underlying reason for the arrests made on Saturday 6th May 2023, is the unwavering government support of the inherited rights and privileges of unelected positions at the head of state.

Conference further believes that these inherited rights and privileges have no place in any democratic system.

DURHAM

ANDREW MURRAY (Durham):

I will start by reading the resolution because I think it is only right that everybody has got a fair understanding of it.

“Conference notes that on Saturday 6th May 2023, a number of republican protestors were arrested in central London, whilst attending an approved demonstration of the Coronation. Conference believes that the right to assemble, the right to free speech and the right to protest are essential democratic rights and must be defended. Conference condemns this attack on citizens exercising their democratic rights.

Conference notes that the current Westminster government is introducing further undemocratic restrictions through the new Public Order legislation.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to oppose and campaign against this legislation. Conference further instructs the EC to research the recent arrests and, where appropriate, support those arrested. Conference believes that the underlying reason for the arrests made on Saturday 6th May 2023, is the unwavering government support of the inherited rights and privileges of unelected positions at the head of state. Conference further believes that these inherited rights and privileges have no place in any democratic system.”

So on Saturday 6 May 2023, for some it was a day of celebration. However, for the UK it was a day where democracy was chipped away. It has been brought further and further away from a democratic system to a totalitarian system, and it is going to stand as a blight on British history that day. The arrests of 47 people in total and most notably six republican protesters who were arrested for suspicion of conspiracy to cause a public nuisance, and this was whilst they were preparing to attend a sanctioned protest. They had gone through all the correct channels. They had done everything that was necessary. All they were doing was getting ready to attend that peaceful protest. This was a targeted attack on the right to protest, on free speech and on democracy. The right to peaceful protest is fundamental to democracy in the UK. It is an abhorrent and chilling violation of that right.

Going forward, if we do get a Labour government, they are not committed to repealing the Public Order Act. We need to protest. We need to get out there. We need to make sure that this doesn't stand. There are going to be no charges brought against those who were arrested. They were arrested purely and simply to get them off the street, stop them from protesting. I will finish using a quote from John F Kennedy: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution necessary."

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Andy. Him off the tele, if you remember him from Question Time in our pay campaign doing a grand job. Right, does that have a seconder? Andy is available for autographs, by the way, in the foyer after conference.

SIMON LEROUX (Scotland):

Seconding Durham's Emergency Resolution No 3, the Right of Free Speech and the Right to Protest. When commentators and legal experts warned that the legislative changes pushed through parliament by this Tory government were a full frontal attack on our basic human rights and the fundamental principles of a functioning democracy, they were derided as fear-mongers and the loony left. Part 3 of the Police, Crime and Sentencing Courts Act 2022 allows police forces broad authority to place restrictions on public assembly and protest. This removes the need for police to show that protests will cause serious public disorder, serious damage to property or a serious disruption to community life. The Act allows police forces to place significant restrictions based entirely on their belief that protests would constitute an existing offence of public nuisance. Protesters disobeying instruction from the police may now be committing a criminal offence. You know there is an issue when even the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners registered disagreement with the bill. Former chief police officers have publicly spoken in opposition to this legislation including the former chief of Durham Constabulary who said this will threaten civil liberties, and the former chief of Greater Manchester police said this constituted a politically motivated move towards paramilitary policing.

The Bill that led to this Act was funded by grubby donations to right wing conservative think tanks such as Policy Exchange who were reportedly paid \$30,000 by US oil and gas giant Exxon Mobile to target climate protesters. The Public Order Bill goes even further giving police even greater powers to stop and search without the need for suspicion and giving only vague, broad definitions as to what constitutes a criminal offence under this Act while imposing disproportionate criminal sanctions on individuals organising or participating in peaceful protests.

So concerning is this draconian legislation that the United Nations Human Rights High Commissioner described it as deeply troubling, incompatible with the UK international obligations regarding people's rights to freedom of expression, peaceable assembly and association.

The new laws include serious disruption prevention orders that allow courts to ban individuals from certain areas at certain times, ban them from being with certain people or using the internet in certain ways. Such orders could lead to individuals being electronically monitored to ensure compliance. Remember, these orders can and will be applied to individuals who have never been convicted of any criminal offence. They are pre-emptive orders taken straight from jackboot minority report Hellscape.

These oppressive and unnecessary pieces of legislation are already being used to prevent reporting of process with journalists being arrested and their camera equipment being confiscated for covering climate protests infringing on the rights of free press.

Protesters who unveiled a banner over the Dartford Crossing have been handed jail terms of between two years and seven months and three years. As previously mentioned, on 6 May protesters and leaders from the campaign group Republic were arrested at around 7.30 am ahead of planned protests, despite previous liaison with Scotland Yard and their designated liaison officers. They had campaign materials and placards confiscated, they were held in custody until late on Saturday night and had their mobile phones and electronic equipment confiscated. Community volunteers were arrested and held for being in possession of rape alarms that they hand out to vulnerable people on the streets which is part of a Home Office funded community safety project.

These examples happened in the first week of this legislation being passed. Ask yourself what is to come? Ask yourself what happens when the Tories force through the strikes minimum service legislation that we are going to move later on. What happens to you as a union organiser or a member attending an FBU demonstration or organising to picket workplaces during legal strikes? This tells us that legislation is being enacted due to changes and tactics from protesters. The reality is that protesters had to change tactics in response to previous laws that had restricted the right to protest.

We may not always agree with the cause, we may not always agree with the message or the approach, but we must defend our democratic and human rights, the right to freedom of expression, the right to assembly and association. After all, it will be ourselves who are front and centre of our own potential future disputes in the firing line. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Simon. Any more in the debate?

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

In support of the Emergency Resolution. Conference, president, over the last couple of years we have seen a concerted attack on the rights of working men and women and all people: the right to free speech is being undermined on a daily basis and we are slowly sleep walking into an authoritarian state. Conference, this has not happened by accident or by chance. This began in its current guise during the COVID pandemic where this government used the uncertainty and the fear within the population to implement a raft of new draconian legislation.

Off the back of that they have continued to move on to even more oppressive legislation. This has happened countless times around the world where governments and those in power use economic shock or natural disasters or terrorist attacks to push through legislation that stops working people. It stops ordinary men and women and robs them of their right to protest.

We saw this happening in America after 9/11 when they introduced the Patriot Act, something which they had been trying to push in for years to strip away the civil liberties of Americans. Off the back of the fear generated by 9/11 they pushed through all of those changes that they had been fighting to get in for years.

We now have laws which allow police as discussed there, to lock up protesters just on the suspicion of potentially going to protest. They have even been locking up members of the press who have clearly identified themselves as members of the press. When you live in a society that is silencing the free press, you have to question why. You have to question what the reason is that these people have to undertake these.

This government are trying to silence people. We need a government that is willing to repeal these disgraceful legislations, but as we stated last year from this rostrum, Keir Starmer is a man who abstained on the covert policing Act. This is an Act that has been used to infiltrate the trade union movement for years. This has led to our members being placed on blacklists. It has led to our members, even our general secretary, having a file on him. This is not something new. What we need now is a Labour Party that are willing to get off the fence, a Labour Party that are willing to get up, stand up and repeal this legislation.

You are protesting your rights, whatever you are protesting for, whether you are protesting for black lives, LGBT+ rights, climate issues, all serious issues, you will find yourself quickly placed on a register and labelled a subversive and even a domestic terrorist in some of the worst incidents.

Comrades, we must fight any and all attacks on our civil liberties. We must demand legislation is repealed and we must demand the leader of the Labour Party get off the fence and fight for everybody's rights. Conference, support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, anybody else in the debate? No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. Ian, I know I am on a Special Branch list, but I bet I am not the only one in this room.

Conference, first of all congratulations to Durham for bringing this timely resolution for us to think about. We fight for bread and butter issues for our members but we have to look at the context within which we operate, and that includes the right to protest, the right to organise, the right to go on strike and so on. The truth is the state already has more than sufficient powers, too many powers to police protests, and you can see that from an issue which again our National Women's Committee raised a couple of years ago on the policing of the Sarah Everard protest which, I think, has been exposed again as completely undemocratic and inappropriate.

They can see growing resistance to the attacks on working people and they therefore want to control us and prevent our ability to fight back. That is what this latest legislation is about. I think people set out well what happened on the Coronation day and so on. I think we need to look at it in a broader context as well.

Protests have been central to the building of this movement. The chartists who fought for the rights to vote. We wouldn't have the right to vote as working people if people hadn't gone out in their hundreds of thousands to protest and demand it. Women would not have the vote if suffragettes had not taken direct action to demand the right to vote. This legislation includes provisions against people who go supposedly prepared to lock on with equipment to lock themselves to railings. Locking on was a tactic pioneered by the suffragettes, so people need to remember where they are going with legislation like this.

Those fighting against apartheid disrupted, deliberately disrupted in a most distressful way for people for example watching rugby games at certain points, and disrupted sports events, but they were right to do so and we defend their right to do so. The trade union movement has been built on protests. We will be debating the Minimum Service Level Bill, and you look at the last piece of legislation to be defeated of that nature in the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. It was defeated by mass strikes and mass demonstrations. We have to defend the right of people to take that action.

It has been mentioned about Keir Starmer. I think it is very timely, president, that you have taken this today because the deputy leader of the Labour Party will be here tomorrow, and I think we should send a clear message that actually what I believe Keir Starmer has said over the past couple of days, that he will not immediately repeal this legislation, needs to be challenged, and that message needs to come from this union today. Thanks very much comrades. Support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put Emergency Resolution 3 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *carried*.

Right, conference, we are now moving on to section K, Organising and Membership, and before I begin this we have got a short film on the FBU control. Yes, come to the front. *Discussion off mike* OK, can we start the film please. *Film* Wow, powerful stuff, very powerful. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Thanks, president. Huge thanks, first of all to Claire Moyes who is also an on-call firefighter and a crew manager in control in region 12 by helping us facilitate making that film, another power film, which I hope shows the reality of the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire Service because the fabric of the fire and rescue service is the fabric of the Fire Brigades Union, it is our members that do the job on a day to day basis. So we are one and the same, our union and our industry, and I think that is a very powerful film. It is on YouTube now. Please share it widely across your networks. Not only does it show the reality of the union in Clyde and the fire and rescue service, but also highlights a fantastic lifesaving and, indeed, frontline job that our brothers and sisters and comrades in emergency fire control do for us.

We wanted to quickly show that film and first of all bring it to your attention and hopefully use it. It came as part of our Safer, Stronger, Together strategy. I hope it shows that we have taken feedback and we are acting on it. The genesis of that film came from feedback from our brigade organisers who were taking the normal presentation out into different environments and said, no, we need something specific for control, and we delivered it. I hope it does

show the continuing development of that strategy which, combined with our online joining system together with the presentation and the three months' free membership at the very start, is helping to build our membership.

Look, conference, it is working. Last year we got 4,631 new members, an extraordinary number, and also 450 rejoined. But, of course, last year was an extraordinary year and the reason for me standing up now is to, on behalf of the executive council, recognise the work of our unbelievable brigade organisers last year because the pay campaign put the spotlight on organising and our organisers like never before, where they had to build networks, building strength in networks, encouraging engagements in our workplace and in our membership, and what a job they did. The facts, conference, speak for themselves. Through direct engagement our brigade organisers registered over 800 new branch reps on our system. They achieved 28,689 (I have been counting them) members who registered with us through their personal emails, and a further 29,672 members who registered their personal phone numbers with the union.

By building these networks, by brigade organisers building these networks, it meant that our comms team could send – wait for it – 792,955 emails and communications direct to members over the course of that campaign, achieving a massive engagement with our members and, of course, also achieving significant savings which were then directly redirected into building resources for the campaign.

Our organisers didn't stop there either because, following advice and engagement from our sister unions at RMT, the UCU, the TUC and others, we also engaged – and many of you did this – peer to peer text messaging, direct messaging with members. Not machines but officials text messaging members, and receiving responses back. I have got to say the first three in December when we did it, we absolutely smashed it, 27,646 texts were sent with an engagement rate well above the normal of other sister unions, a process that was repeated in early January with even better results.

Then, we didn't stop there either, because then as we moved into the strike the brigade organisers had a very significant job to do and that meant that they had to do the detailed work to produce legally compliant matrices because we could not get tripped up by the Tory anti-trade union legislation. So they updated primary work places right across the system. They updated the roles of all our members right across the system, all the things that Thompsons told us in some detail could have tripped us up and, indeed, which led to injunctions across other unions, but it didn't happen in the Fire Brigades Union. Why? Because of the commitment, dedication and hard work of our organisers.

Comrades, in the Fire Brigades Union we are a team. We are a team right across our structures and I do need to mention our unbelievable staff, all of whom were involved in that campaign, producing 140 matrices in a very short period of time, and our head office staff even volunteering over the Christmas period to come in and engage with members who were having difficulty with the balloting. Over that period 2,075 ballot requests were received and were processed by our staff. A fantastic joint organising team effort which, I have to say, builds an effective model for the future and that is where I am going to finish, in the future, because we have got a model now. We have built it. We know it works. Our strategy has always been very simple: to give officials the tools and support to turn every workplace into a strong, active FBU branch. I will be frank, I don't care what the question is, the answer is always organising. We have shown what we can do when we stand together as a union, an organised union, nationally. Now what we have to do is to replicate that locally. I don't know what the fights are in your workplaces or in every brigade, but I know that by organising we can take those fights on and we can win them, because the one thing that we proved through the work of organising our union is that our members are always safer and stronger when you stand together. A big shout out to our brigade organisers. Well done!

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tam, I now call para K1. I now call resolution 81, Branch Officials Handbook, moved by Scotland. The EC support.

Resolution 81 BRANCH OFFICIALS HANDBOOK

Conference notes the excellent Fire Brigades Union educational pathway that has expanded over the years, giving Officials the opportunity to learn and progress through various roles within the structures of our Union.

Conference also notes the important role that the Branch Officials Handbook plays in this process.

Conference will also recall Resolution 79 'Branch Officials Handbook' moved by Durham and Darlington at Conference 2019 and passed with the support of the Executive Council (EC).

This resolution agreed that the current Branch Officials Handbook was out of date and therefore unfit for purpose and called on the EC to update or replace the present handbook, with this work to be completed by Conference 2020.

To date this work is yet to be completed.

Conference instructs the EC to provide all necessary resources, and to work with regional committees, to ensure that this work is completed no later than Conference 2024.

SCOTLAND

CHRIS MURPHY (Scotland):

Second time speaking. Moving resolution 81, Branch Officials Handbook. Conference, region 1 has seen a resurgence in interest for FBU educational courses and we have put 35 new reps through branch intro courses recently. This is further underpinned with a full complement and waiting list for the upcoming rep members' course. Those reps have left their courses and they are motivated to return to their branches and start organising and, as we all know, one of the main tools for new reps is knowing where to find relevant information. The handbook is a vital tool for those branch reps at stations and in control rooms. It currently has a lot of excellent information in it but it is in desperate need of updating. The picture of the gen sec with a full head of hair is possibly the starkest example of this. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cheeky. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Open for debate. Anybody. Anybody else want to insult the general secretary. Nobody?

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Just briefly, president, we have got a couple of comments on it. By the way, Chris is absolutely right. I had a look through it and there is a teenage Matt Wrack in the middle there. Not so middle-aged there I have to say. It definitely does need an update, but I do want to update conference, work has previously been done on it, but I will be absolutely up front, it did stall. But I do have to mention there is a group of regional secretaries who we have brought together as a team to go through it in some detail, compare it with the policies we have now, the rules that have undoubtedly changed since it was revised, and then put together a list of documents, a list of papers that need altering.

That was Phil Millar from region 2, Adam Taylor region 6, Guy Herrington from region 13 and the then regional secretary in region 4. But that work, as I said, did get stalled and we will be picking it up. However, I do want to say something else as well. We will be working closely with Linda, head of education, because this new document has to form the basis for forthcoming branch official schools as well, and also there is another little point conference, we do want to turn it into an electronic document: not just to save costs on printing etc, but also to make sure we can update it easily and hopefully a new way of working, maybe even standing orders will let us turn on the internet some time and you can look at it as well. With those caveats, as it were, with those bits of information, we do support it and we will get on with that work. Thanks region 1.

THE PRESIDENT:

Even put it on the app, Tam. Right, I will now put resolution 81 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, I will be taking the following resolutions in the same debate, both can carry, resolution 84, National Organising Strategy, moved by Staffordshire, and resolution 85, National Organising Strategy, moved by West Midlands. I now call resolution 84, Staffordshire. The EC support resolution 84 and are seeking resolution 85 is withdrawn or they will oppose.

Resolution 84 NATIONAL ORGANISING STRATEGY

Conference notes that at Conference 2022, Greater Manchester submitted a successful resolution regarding the organising approach of our Union.

Amongst other items, the resolution instructed 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**
- **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.**

However, today, organising is still done on a relatively ad-hoc basis. Whilst the Fair Pay or Fire Strike campaign undoubtedly made us work in a uniform way across the brigades, a similar approach has still not been seen on a day-to-day basis.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to consult brigade organisers and the responsible National Officer within three months of close of Conference 2023 to develop a strategy to assist in organising at the 'grassroots level' and to bring the substance of Greater Manchester's 2022 resolution to fruition.

The strategy will be distributed and available for implementation by November 2023.

STAFFORDSHIRE

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire):

So, conference, one of the things that the recent pay campaign highlighted was the strength of our union when it was well-organised, and the brigade organisers did a fantastic job whether it was bringing new people into the union, organising the membership that we had or sorting out those emergencies which looked like absolute hell.

In 2022 Greater Manchester submitted a successful resolution regarding the way we approach organising within the union. That resolution asked for – there were four main points to it, and those points were that each region appoints an official responsible for organising within that region. The national officer responsible for organising should convene a national committee consisting of those 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 to set out its targets and campaigns for the current year.

That organising committee should then meet quarterly and each region should submit an organising report to the relevant committees following executive council business meetings. The regional official responsible for organising should ensure the organising strategy is implemented and expected work carried out alongside the brigade organisers.

So today on a relatively daily basis organising is done kind of *ad hoc*. Each brigade might do it differently, each region might do it differently, and the campaign that we had over pay showed how strong we could be if you just went with one way of dealing with it and you standardised that approach.

So conference instructs the executive council to consult brigade organisers and for the national official to develop a strategy to bring Greater Manchester's resolution to fruition, and for this strategy to be distributed and available for implementation by November 2023. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martin. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 85, National Organising Strategy, moved by West Midlands. The EC are seeking withdrawal or they oppose.

Resolution 85 NATIONAL ORGANISING STRATEGY

Conference commends brigade organisers for their tireless work in communicating to our Members. They often organise not only branch reps, but also assist sectional reps, health and safety reps, and others, to set up lines of communication with our Members and activists.

Conference wishes as many Members as possible to hear about the work the Union does and to be inspired to be more active. This requires solid lines of communication in every region and section of the Union.

Conference instructs the Executive Council, in conjunction with Head Office communications department, to provide a template and the relevant support for every region and Section to produce a twice-yearly bulletin for our Members to inform them of what is happening within our Union, to celebrate and inform about the work of the Union and to maximise the ability of Organisers to reach all Members and drive forward the Union's aims.

WEST MIDLANDS

PHILIPPA SMITH (West Midlands):

Communication is our biggest tool yet we are restricting ourselves by not communicating with every member in an efficient way. There shouldn't be a postcode lottery of information. Every member, regardless of where they are, should be able to access information specific to them. Whilst we know every region and section can approach head office for guidance, this resolution is about providing a uniform approach so every member can have the same format as local and sectional news. All we are asking from head office is a template and some guidance on the information that we could include. The rest is down to regional, sectional and brigade officials. Educate, agitate and organise – Elizabeth Andrews' motto. She was a trade unionist and a suffragette and a pioneer of the Labour movement.

All this resolution does is seek to improve organisations with increasing education and eventually agitating members into action. The recent fair pay or fire strike campaign demonstrated just how effective good communication can be in our union. It meant pay was talked around every control room and every mess table. Imagine if we could agitate all members about the use of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church on the fireground and get them to stand in allegiance with the LGBT+ section. Imagine if we could educate all members on the importance of wearing specific fire kit due to differing burn patterns identified by the NWC's lobbying to get a female manikin for fire testing. The list is endless and it all starts with twice-yearly bulletins that could highlight pertinent information to sections and regions.

Equality sections could rely on the publication dates for specific dates for celebration if they wanted. A bulletin can have a calendar of events for the next six months that highlights more than just national schools. Updates for the recent women's school was overwhelming to the point of applicants being turned away, and whilst that is an excellent show of members being interested in the FBU and becoming more active, we risk losing their interest and their passion if we don't keep them engaged. Let's not risk it.

When members ask why we need sections and why we need schools, we can address it in the bulletins. We can celebrate our wins, we can promote upcoming elections, we can engage our members and encourage them to get involved. The FBU and members have been working hard for over 100 years. Let's not wait until our bicentenary celebrations to collate what we want everyone to celebrate with us. It wouldn't solely be down to regional and sectional officials to celebrate a bulletin. They could ask for submissions from all members within their areas to submit ideas, ideas such as highlighting the international women's day event hosted by West Midlands or a "you said, we did" section.

Educated members become active members who become engaged reps and officials. More reps, more interested parties mean more competition for roles, people who want to carry out roles rather than simply doing them

because nobody else wants to. Throughout this conference we have heard numerous requests for resolutions to be withdrawn or remitted because there are ongoing working groups, there is imminent information coming out or a task force is in operation. Why is it only when conference is imminent that we find out these things?

It starts at the top, and whilst we are not a top down structure, the lack of information reaching them makes our members feel like it is. To remedy that pattern and to educate our members twice a year rather than just when we are held accountable at conference, let's enable brigade, regional and sectional officials to improve communication in a uniform manner so every member gets local updates relevant to them. Let's lay the foundation for the next hundred years. Conference, our members deserve more. Let's give it to them, but we will entrust the EC to provide the tools to be able to do this and trust that they recognise the sentiment of the resolution. On that basis we remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Philippa, that is open for debate. Nobody. Right, conference, I now put resolution 84 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para K2.

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

I promise I will be quiet tomorrow. I just wanted to give conference an update on the local industrial action that has been going on in Merseyside since December last year. I would like to thank everyone who, following our ballot result with an 86% yes vote on 82% turn out for action short of strike, contacted us to send us your solidarity.

The basis of this dispute is simple; we are fighting for equality for all members. We are fighting to ensure that all of our members are treated equally regardless of when they joined the fire service. It is completely unacceptable that new entrants to the fire service are now being given worse terms and conditions than those of us who have been in the job for a while.

So since December 2022 we have been taking action short of strike in an attempt to address the rampant inequalities that have crept into our service over the years. In that time we have seen over 2,600 hours of fire appliance unavailability and station closures in a busy metropolitan fire service. We have received overwhelming support from the public, local councillors and MPs, but despite all that our employer has still refused to move on over half of the stuff listed on our trade dispute.

Like many fire and rescue services across the UK, Merseyside fire and rescue service professes to be a fair and equitable employer at the same time as actively pursuing an agenda of undermining agreed terms and conditions and treating some firefighters less favourably than others. We have seen changes to working conditions brought into offer and acceptance at point of entry, we have seen collective agreements torn up, our right to external assistance from the NJC for dispute resolution roundly refused, and we have seen the very job role of a firefighter being amended on an *ad hoc* basis in front of our very eyes through contractual obligation.

Comrades, as we said earlier, we are supposed to be constituent members of the NJC. The role of firefighters is supposed to be determined by the NJC and this is not what has been happening in Merseyside. Conference, a substantial number of our members are now employed on contracts which, at the whim of our employer, will make them undertake all of the non-agreed work we discussed before. In short, our employers found a way to legally circumvent collective bargaining through contractual obligation at point of entry.

Conference, these issues will not remain the sole preserve of Merseyside forever. In fact, as we spoke about earlier, we are already seeing other services starting down this path. I cannot emphasise this enough, if this is happening in your brigade you need to act now and you need to speak up, because attempting to reverse engineer several years of poor practice is incredibly difficult. You need to stop it before it grows roots.

Our Dan Giblin said from the rostrum last year we have got to get back to industrial organising and stop placing our faith in a legal system that has let workers down again and again. The law of this land is not set up to help workers. The game is rigged and the pieces are set against us. Merseyside fire and rescue service in a Labour led fire authority are leaning on their legal ability to treat some firefighters less equitably than others. They are leaning on

their legal ability to erode the terms and conditions of firefighters, and they are leaning on their legal ability to alter the very job role of a firefighter at local level.

In short, what I am saying is this: our employers are legally allowed to treat some members like crap, and they will continue to do so until we stop them. With that in mind, we are now once again seeking permission from the executive council to re-ballot members and potentially look at a new ballot for our control members.

Our control members have had a night time staffing reduction imposed on them since May last year. There were collective agreements in place to protect the staffing numbers within fire control. Our service have ripped that collective agreement up and they have walked away. So, with the support of the EC, with the support of this conference, FBU members in Merseyside will continue to demand fair and equitable treatment for all firefighters, and we will continue to fight to maintain the terms and conditions that were fought for by those who came before us.

Conference, these are not our jobs. We are simply holding them for the next generation so let's make sure when we leave they are in as fit a state for those who come after us as they were for us. Thank you conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks Ian, for raising that very important point about the dispute. I am sure everyone is following on social media the reports of the appliances not being available in Merseyside every single day of every single week. On behalf of the executive council I want to congratulate Merseyside members and brigade committee for that action.

Ian is absolutely right. The agenda that is being pursued in Merseyside is part of a wider agenda against us. It is driven by a key operator in the National Fire Chiefs Council, and you can see the sort of measures that we will face if, under the White Paper, the chief officers are granted operational independence. That is about granting more and more power to chief officers to determine local matters including potentially local conditions of service. That is already at play in Merseyside.

I think what we – Ian flagged this up in a very timely manner – while we are here, Ian, we need to sit down and discuss with your EC member, your regional secretary, how we build support for the re-ballot and what we can do to spread support for the Merseyside action, and what we can do at a national level to challenge what is going on through the NJC or by whatever other means we can identify. Well done to our Merseyside members and brigade committee.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Para K3. I now call resolution 82, Structures of the Fire Brigades Union, moved by Merseyside. The EC oppose.

Resolution 82 STRUCTURES OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

Conference notes the two recent consultative ballots which have taken place in relation to firefighter pay.

Conference understands the need to employ technology to consult and communicate with Members, it must not be allowed to replace the structures of our Union.

Conference demands that in all future matters requiring full Membership consultation that the Executive Council first consult and reach agreement by majority vote with regional committees;

- ***the appropriate means by which to conduct any proposed full Membership consultation***
- ***the appropriate time frame within which to conduct that proposed full Membership consultation.***

MERSEYSIDE

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Conference, president, since I attended my first branch meeting as an FBU member, I have always been impressed at the level of local accountability within our union and, admittedly, as a small union our ability more often than not to sit face to face and debate issues is something I believe sets us apart from a lot of larger unions.

I think this is why many past officials and present have extolled the virtues of member consultation and organisation through the structures of our union. As a brigade official, I welcome the ability, however uncomfortable it can sometimes be, to attend branch meetings and reach consensus through debate and free exchange of ideas. I have genuinely lost count of the number of times I have walked into a meeting holding a particular point of view and had it tempered or changed entirely through discussion and debate with members and officials.

When we visit new entrants to the fire service and we explain the structures of our union, we do so in a way that lets them know that each and every member has the power to bring about change, not only within our union but within the fire and rescue service as a whole. All that being said, we realise we have to be alive to the fact that the world is changing and the union must adapt to new technology and the evolving attitudes of the next generation of FBU members.

During the pay campaign we saw a staggering round on the consultative ballot which rightly saw the 5% offer for last year kicked firmly into touch. This was an example of how new technology can be utilised to work alongside the structures of our union to ensure the voices of FBU members are heard and understood. However, that online consultation was not a stand-alone entity. It went hand in hand with weeks of in-person branch meetings, member meetings, committee meetings, national Teams meetings, to ensure the correct result not only for the ballot outcome but for FBU members.

Conference, regardless of our thoughts and feelings on the eventual pay settlement, many members in Merseyside and, indeed, the North West, felt that the offer should have been brought back to members and consulted on at branches through the structures of our union. Even though Merseyside officials were already on branches for our ongoing local consultation, we were inundated by members who did not feel they had received the relevant information or had the time to process exactly what they were voting. We even spoke to large numbers of members at subsequent branch meetings who had already voted who said they felt they would have voted differently had they only had time to debate and discuss the matter further.

Comrades, whilst we absolutely must adopt new and emerging technologies to engage with members, we must not allow it to replace debate and discussion. That can only be achieved through the structures of our union. Whilst we realise such activity takes time, we do not believe the process of consultation through the structures to be prohibitive. Nor should the task of ensuring the democratic processes of our union be treated as an onerous one.

I have no doubt that the executive council suggest that by insisting the manner in which full membership consultations are conducted is first subject to consultation with regional committees, will introduce unnecessary time delays to future consultations. However, with the advancement in technology such as we have seen, we can reduce these delays massively.

Conference, we believe it is entirely reasonable for regional committees to have a say, not only in how future consultations take place but also the timescales involved to undertake those consultations. All we are asking is to ensure the democracy of our union is not by-passed and that we do not lose the ability to debate and discuss on branches in favour of ticking a box on line.

Organising, educating and mobilising members at branch level is the lifeblood of this union and if we want to ensure the buy-in of members at grass roots level, they must feel they are being included in all conversations. Conference, by all means adapt new technology and adopt new ways of working, but let's protect the structures of this union and let's protect our ability to debate and discuss and move forward together in unity. Conference, please support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian, does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*
That is now open for debate. Nobody? Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, the executive council is asking you to oppose the resolution and we think although much of what Ian said we would agree with, there are also some significant dangers in what is in front of you in the resolution.

We have no disagreement whatsoever about the importance of our structures, of the importance of the workplace branch. If you read the rule book of the Fire Brigades Union it makes clear that the workplace branch, whether it is a fire station, a training centre, emergency fire control, is the heart of our democracy, and there is no difference at all between us there. Indeed, one of the problems that we face in terms of organising is a drift away from organising through branches so we need to return and strengthen that absolutely.

Also, absolutely no difference whatsoever on the question of the need for discussion, face to face discussion, in branch meetings or watch meetings or around the mess table, whatever it might be. Let's be clear, WhatsApp is no substitute for talking to people, organising meetings and allowing people to put their questions and actually to put their hands up in a vote. It is a hugely empowering thing to do to have people voting following those discussions. I think Ian's contribution raises some of the risks where we have drifted too far away from those workplace structures. Absolute agreement on that.

I think also agreement on the question of the need for a consultative ballot, for consultative ballots in general, to go hand in hand with that workplace organising and workplace discussion. Indeed, one of the difficulties we had when we balloted – and the national officer may correct me on some of the timings here – on the 5%, and no disrespect to the executive council, I think they set us unrealistic targets because of the need, first of all, to organise logistically an online ballot but, secondly, we needed the opportunity exactly to go out and make the case that members should not vote to accept the 5%. So we had to adjust our timetables accordingly. The question of workplace branches, workplace organising and explaining that face to face engagement and discussion that Ian has talked about was built into what we did around the 5% offer and it worked. Members rejected it.

I spoke to officials around the country who were quite surprised that the executive council recommended rejection of the 5%, and there was some hesitation around that, but we were shown to be absolutely right, with the explanation, with the face to face meetings and with the ballot, we showed that remarkable unity again.

I think the difficulty arises in relation to the final ballot because I have to say I don't think we can accept that there is anything undemocratic about the decision of our members to accept by 96% the pay offer. That was the decision of our members and it is one of the biggest votes we have ever seen in this union in any ballots that we have taken. Indeed, some of the criticisms that we faced on an *ad hoc* basis of members, why did you need a two-week ballot, everyone knows everyone was going to vote yes. It was immediate as soon as the report was issued on the offer. Criticism for us was that actually the ballot was too long because it would delay money getting into people's pockets. That was one of the concerns that the executive council had.

We had a battle already. We had already flagged this up with the employers. We had asked every brigade committee to raise the question with employers. If we agree this, if we get an offer that is agreeable, can you make sure that it is in the pay packets as early as possible. These are real practical issues for people who were struggling. The proposal in the resolution would inevitably have delayed that by some two or three weeks. If you apply the other conference policy that we already have in place where consultation through structures is a minimum 21 days – that is existing policy – then that ballot would have been delayed by at least three weeks. I have got to say I don't think that would have gone down well with our members. But what hasn't been explained – I said in the previous debate on pay – that actually I don't think we did put a foot wrong during that campaign. You accepted that in that debate. It seems that something different is being said here. I don't think we did get anything wrong. I think the executive council called it right. It was correct to ballot and that is demonstrated overwhelmingly by the turn out in that ballot and by the vote to accept the pay offer. So, comrades, on that basis we urge you to vote against the resolution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Merseyside right of reply? Conference, do you agree to suspend standing order 16 so I can complete this debate and get the last few paras of this section? *Agreed.*

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Conference, president, I will be brief because I am sick of listening to me now at this point. All we are asking for is the time to put any consultation to members. All we are asking for is the time to have the debate. All we are seeking to do is maintain the structures of our union and ensure accountability. By supporting this resolution in future it will give branch reps time to have that discussion, to have that debate and to ensure that we do have that accountability within our union. Conference, please support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. I now put resolution 82 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls.*

I now call para K4.

MARTIN MURT (Cornwall):

President, conference, I just wanted to give you a brief update on something that took place in Cornwall this year. I was called to an informal meeting with fire control and our senior management. On arrival nobody knew what the meeting was, it was short notice, they were surprised I could turn up. After a few minutes our chief informed us that fire control would be shutting in six months with the loss of all jobs.

Me, being in the job a few months, in the FBU chair role, was a little bit shocked. Started recording. From this point we had a lot of anger, upset, people did not know. Christmas was coming. There was absolutely no information at all. They had no answers. This was put to them. This is the way it was going to go. There was no negotiation. There was no consultation. This was the only option. There were no other options.

We were given two weeks' notice to discuss before it went to Cornwall Council. All FBU members, control members, regional and national support, put together a short hard-hitting campaign. After two weeks we contacted all local MPs, there was a comprehensive social media campaign and a national survey that had thousands and thousands in response which was so good to see. We had full FBU member support across the county for that next two weeks. After two weeks Cornwall Council suspended our fire services plan to shut fire control. They could start seeing through. There was no planning. It was a sham. They looked at it and they wanted to put a scrutiny committee in place to get a proper understanding of what was going on. The campaign continued and got stronger and stronger through the winter. In this time many staff went sick, felt underrepresented by the management. The FBU locally, regionally and nationally supported them throughout.

The FBU continued to support right up to the decision in March. On 23 March this year Cornwall Council dismissed all proposals from Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. Cornwall Council chose to support keeping fire control in Cornwall through the FBU campaign. They also chose to improve IT systems which was one of the reasons control was going to shut, increase funding for staff – because we didn't have enough staff, as we have heard before – and improve welfare facilities for control staff.

On the successful conclusion of this meeting, we were all there together, we discussed this with our senior management and our chief fire officer – a nice relationship. They told me how this was the plan all along. I disagreed with the previous statement in the nicest possible way but I did agree it was a great result from Cornwall.

From where we were in September to where we are now it just shows it is worth fighting and sticking together even when times are bleak. Many thanks for all your support for Cornwall control.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martin, for that and that was a fantastic result there definitely.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thanks, president. Conference, I think what was so impressive about the response from the FBU in Cornwall and from the officials and their members in Cornwall was the speed with which they organised the response and the resistance, and a very quick campaign was brought together there, so I think that was absolutely fantastic and it does show again that we are best when we challenge. That is what the FBU does. It shows that the FBU once again is the only point of protection for our members. No other association, or whatever they call themselves who purport to represent firefighters, stand up and challenge these attacks. It is only the FBU. So just simply from us, absolutely fantastic work, Cornwall. Well done.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call para K5; para K6; para K7; para K8; para K9.

Conference, that takes us to the end of section K and we are going to wrap up in a few seconds, but I have just to remind everyone there is “*Enough is Enough*” fringe meeting tonight at 5.45. It is in the Imperial One room which is downstairs, and that will last approximately 60 minutes and there are some excellent speakers there, so if you could attend that, if you available to do so, please do.

Conference, thanks for today. It has been a difficult day obviously with two big debates we have had, so we will see you back here tomorrow at 9.30 – not too many drinks tonight. Thanks everybody. Conference is adjourned.

Conference adjourned.

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order please. Thank you. Apologies for the late start. We just had a bit of business we had to deal with. Conference I call Phil Millar, chair of standing orders to give a report. Phil.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Good morning, conference. Once again, for those that have them, can you turn to your delegates' list please? So delegate changes, region 1 in Scotland, remove Chris Murphy and replace with Steve Weir. Again, region 1, Scotland, remove Kerry McCrone and replace with Barry McCourt. Region 4, Humberside, remove Lloyd Akers and replace with Jan Hayton. Region 8, North Wales, remove Stuart Stanley and replace with Dan McNulty. Region 10, London, remove Jon Lambe and replace with Dave Young. Region 10 again, remove Ross McLaren and replace with Vaughan Gunn. Region 11, Surrey, remove Simon Harris and replace with Graham Kitchin. Region 12, Buckinghamshire, remove Chris Wycherley and replace with Kieron Thomas.

Conference, nomination forms for election to standing orders have now been distributed, one per delegation. Can you please place them in the standing orders election box that is located near the door at the 11am comfort break. Conference, can I please remind everybody that all mobile phones must be turned off whilst conference is in session. Can you please check your phones now and make sure that they are off. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

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

Conference, I will give you a bit of a running order today because we have got some guest speakers. We are going to get on with business very shortly, but at 11.15 we have got the solidarity medals presentation. Then immediately following that presentation we have got Paul Nowak, gen sec of the TUC addressing conference, and straight after lunch at 2 o'clock we have got Ed Kelly, general president of the IAFF, who will be speaking to us, and then we are going to take the EC policy statement on preparing for the general election, and then at 3.45 we have got Angela Rayner speaking.

Conference, we have still got two EC policy statements and around 60 resolutions so we are on track, but obviously keep your contributions short and sweet, very succinct. Hopefully, we won't have to adjust speakers' times but just be mindful, don't just get up for the sake of it, if it has already been said what you were going to say. OK, right. We will now get on with the business. I call section B, Pensions. Para B1. Conference, I will be taking the following resolutions in the same debate. Both can carry: Resolution 31, Access to Fire Service Specific Pension Scheme for Firefighters (Control) moved by the CSNC with an amendment from Hereford and Worcester, and Resolution 32, Pensionable Pay moved by West Yorkshire. I now call resolution 31 from the CSNC.

Resolution 31 ACCESS TO FIRE SERVICE SPECIFIC PENSION SCHEME FOR FIREFIGHTERS (CONTROL)

Conference acknowledges that as members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, firefighters (Control) are required to work until they reach state pension age, with the Government planning further increases in state pension age between 2026 and 2028.

Given the stress and additional pressure being placed upon firefighters (Control) it is obvious that many of our Members, especially those with longer service, may be forced to leave their jobs early and therefore may lose a portion of their pension as a result.

These Control Members, like those in the Firefighters Pension Scheme, will have planned their retirement around the rules of their pension scheme when they joined the fire and rescue service.

Current Fire Brigades Union policy, as affirmed in the Executive Council (EC) Policy Statement to Special Conference in 2012, (and re-affirmed at Conference 2017) is “that Emergency Fire Control Members should be granted access to a Fire Service specific pension scheme”.

Conference recognises that there have been discussions with the Government in the past.

Conference believes that now is the time to press forward towards achieving this aim.

Conference calls upon the EC to work towards gaining access for firefighters (Control) to the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme with a normal pension age in line with operational firefighters.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT

Final paragraph, before “operational firefighters” insert “other”

HEREFORD and WORCESTER

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

I am moving the resolution. We are talking control staff having the right to access the firefighters’ pension scheme. We know that increases in the state pension age affect firefighter control members in the LGPS with the government planning further increases in the state pension age between 2026 and 2028. This will affect fire control staff. Given the stress and additional duties and pressures placed upon fire control staff, it is obvious that many of our members, especially those with longer service, may be forced to retire early and may lose a significant portion of their pension as a result.

These members will have planned their retirement around the rules of the pension scheme when they joined the fire and rescue service similar to those in the firefighters’ pension scheme. Current Fire Brigades Union policy affirmed in 2012 and then reaffirmed in 2017 that emergency fire control members should be granted access to the fire service protected pension scheme. We recognise there have been discussions in the past, but we now believe it is time to push forward with this.

Can we call upon the EC to work towards gaining access for firefighter control to the firefighters’ pension scheme with the normal pension age in line with operational firefighters. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sherri. The EC are giving qualified support. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call Hereford and Worcester to move their amendment. *Formally moved.* Thank you. Does that have a seconder? The EC support the amendment. *Formally.*

I now call resolution 32, Pensionable Pay, West Yorkshire. EC support with explanation.

Resolution 32 PENSIONABLE PAY

Conference notes and commends the historic work carried out by Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Officials on ‘Pensionable Pay’ and the legal victories achieved thus far regarding this matter and recognises the far reaching and evolving consequences of these legal rulings.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to clarify which payments made to firefighters constitute ‘Pensionable Pay’ and report this back to brigade secretaries so that they can assess if their respective fire and rescue services have adopted these payments as ‘Pensionable Pay’.

Conference also demands that an immediate review be undertaken to explore what other firefighter remuneration may be deemed as ‘Pensionable Pay’ under all existing Firefighter Pension Scheme (FPS) rules as a result of the legal rulings.

WEST YORKSHIRE

MARTYN BAIRSTOW (West Yorkshire):

I have got a big long speech here, but I will summarise it bearing in mind what the president said earlier.

Basically, the sentiment behind this is to ensure that all our members receive the right pensions. As a rep trying to look at pensionable pay, different FRSs, different pension schemes deem different things pensionable. We have got multiple pension schemes now with different rules. We have also had several court cases and ombudsman rulings. So what we are asking for is basically a report or information so that we can ensure that our members get the right pension. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Martyn. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*. Thank you. That is now open for debate. Anybody? No. Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

President, conference, so on the CSNC resolution 31 Sherri moved there, the executive council qualification is the recognition that this is going to be a tough task but nevertheless the EC give assurances that is a task they will happily take on. On behalf of the executive I spoke with the CSNC delegation at their delegation meeting on Tuesday evening and updated the delegation on the progress of the task and finish group in relation to agreeing who is going to conduct the job evaluation, so it is going to be prudent to complete some of that work and reassess after that and then pursue access to the firefighter pension scheme for our firefighter control members. That is not a delay, by the way, that is a tactic because we can start the work following conference, by looking at this again. So again, another slight qualification is that if this is achieved it has clearly got to be a choice for those members whether they move over from the LGPS into whatever scheme we can achieve for them. Work has been undertaken previously on this issue but it ran into the sand slightly with government actuaries department as they struggled to come up with suitable conversion tables, so if you were transferring from the LGPS to a fire service pension scheme what would the conversion rate look like and what would be the contributions potentially you would have to pay? They have a problematic government legal department and the reasons are simple. This union costs them £17 billion in having to rectify remedies across the public sector. When they say “costs” we just say you are putting back what you stole off us. There is that qualification as well but the executive can certainly assure control that with those qualifications we will pursue this.

In relation to resolution 32, Martyn from West Yorkshire, yes, we give the reassurance that will be done so the explanation is simply that we do put that information out as best we can, an example of which was *Booth v Mid and West Wales*, and we put the information out in relation clarity for pensionable pay purposes for use in training allowances, and we sit on the advisory board so when you get the scheme advisory board positions on things, that in large part is the FBU position on things because we have four seats on that.

What we will do, Martyn and West Yorkshire, we will draw that information together, put it into a repository for brigade officials to access so from doing that work we will ascertain what is actually being worked out there. There will probably be an information request from myself for you to feedback what is being worked and the problems you are faced with, whatever is pensionable, and we will then be able to give a more positive and clear view of what is to be deemed as pensionable pay. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. Conference, I will now put the amendment from Hereford and Worcester to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 31 as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 32 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para B2. I now call para B3, B4, B5, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11. Conference, we now move on to section C, Operations, Health and Safety. I call para C1. I now call resolution 34, Cancer Screening, moved by London. The EC give qualified support.

34 CANCER SCREENING

Conference notes the extensive and thorough testing and report back from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and Professor Anna Stec during the DECON work.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to raise immediately at the National Joint Council the requirement for an agreed in-depth cancer screening process, to include Galleri testing, to be introduced to all firefighters during routine periodic medicals given the enhanced likelihood of contracting the disease due to contaminants.

This screening will hopefully detect cancers a lot earlier in firefighters, making it more manageable, and will follow on with the work done by UCLan keeping detailed files on cancers in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation.

This process is to be completed by Conference 2024 and reported back.

LONDON

BARRY JACKSON (London):

Conference, president, a bit of a good news story actually to start with. I have literally just found out that the London Fire Brigades have signed up to the UCLan blood and urine sampling for the 100 firefighters. I found that out this morning. That is basically for analysis for biomarkers for cancers and other diseases and toxic chemicals. The importance of that cannot be understated really. We want to follow up with our motion that comes in nicely for that in terms of cancer screening. We want this to be applied across all fire services in the country.

There is a difference between screening and testing. For those of you who don't know, screening is designed to pick up people who are asymptomatic, meaning people who don't show signs or behaviours but may have cancer. The NHS screens people who are 50+ years of age anyway, so we would propose that voluntarily people could go to a cancer screening on retained periodic medicals taking place from the ages of 35 to 49, which is an age bracket where firefighters are disproportionately affected by cancer as highlighted by UCLan's research.

San Francisco screened 1,200 firefighters and found that nine had cancer. Based on that, London alone in those figures would have about 36. Once you have a cancer detected from that point, it would cost approximately £5,000 for a proper diagnosis privately. In terms of that, in money terms, that is about £135,000 for 36 firefighters, and that is the price of 36 firefighters that would need replacing by the fire services during treatment and recovery.

In terms of employer, and I love this when you are creating these arguments, it is a cost saving exercise, never mind the absolute moral obligation to do this. We propose the Galleri testing as mentioned in our motion and that simply is because of the fact that it picks up on 50 types of cancers. Others are between about 12 and 30. Once the diagnosis is in place, there is something that they do in Miami where they have a cancer survival package, and that can be implemented and that is basically support throughout your cancer. I speak to loads of our members who have cancers, and particularly the retired members who are just left on the shelf, which is absolutely disgusting really, the way they are treated. In terms of that the employer has an absolute obligation to look after them, and not just leave them alone and abandon them for years or whatever. Let us draw a line in the sand and say no more by backing this resolution. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Barry. Does that have a seconder?

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

I wasn't planning to speak on this but we have got to start our own cancer scheme. We were lucky enough in Tyne and Wear to host the pilot for UCLan. All I am going to say to you is when you see how easy and achievable this screening actually is, when you see the actual process of what needs to happen, it is almost criminal that we are not doing it already, it genuinely is. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. That's open for debate. Anybody? No. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Morning conference, morning president. The EC are giving qualified support to this resolution. We started conference yesterday with our obituary – 25 names, 25 of our sisters and brothers no longer here, and a large percentage of them were reported to us as cancer cases. We spoke about this at length last year. We had comrades over from the firefighters' network from EPSU and we had a fantastic debate at this conference, and then we knew the evidence that existed despite those out there denying it.

Since then, since we had that debate, we have been inundated with yet further evidence of the links that our occupation is making us ill. We have had the World Health Organization's body IARC categorise our profession as carcinogenic to humans. Our profession causes cancer. We have had the Scottish excess mortality paper showing that firefighters are dying at significantly higher rates compared to the general public. We have had the four papers which give statistically significant breakdowns of the findings of our project, the biggest project ever done in the UK on the links between toxic fire effluents and cancer, and that showed yet again the rate at which firefighters are getting diagnosed with cancers in excess of that of the general public.

We have had the HSE PFAS report which asked directly for action although, note, we have our concerns around the definition that PFAS were using in the UK compared to elsewhere. It asked directly for further action to be taken on firefighting fires because of the cancer causing chemicals that they include. We have got the Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry showing that we are getting diagnosed with rare cancers at a higher rate than the public at a young age, and we are being diagnosed at a late stage. So there won't be a person in this room who isn't sick and tired of being told we are behind the US on this, we are behind Canada on this, we are behind New Zealand on this, we are behind Australia on this, we are out of step with the World Health Organization on this, and there is absolutely need for it. Firefighters are dying far too young and we are dying far too often, and fire bosses are asleep at the wheel on an issue which is killing us.

Be assured, conference, this is now on the agenda of our sector and there is only one reason why it is on the agenda of our sector, and that is us. That is our research when the bosses have done nothing. It is our project when the bosses have done nothing. It is our campaign when the bosses have done nothing. It is our lottery, our registry, and I think you can be proud of that even though it is completely perverse that this is self-funding. We are, in effect, by way of a lottery, self-funding our own health and safety on an issue which is killing firefighters.

When we look at the Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry which is showing beyond doubt that we are being diagnosed late at a much more untreatable stage, at a much more unsurvivable stage, cancer monitoring is vital; cancer monitoring is vital to making sure no more names go on to that obituary that do not have to be on there. So, look, we are giving this qualified support, and the qualifications are this. This is a small one but the UCLan team have been clear on this and we have been in discussions with them recently. They want us to avoid the use of the word "screening" and they want to start to talk instead about "health monitoring" and "health surveillance" because of the more routine nature of that and the actions that will come as a result of the findings.

Health monitoring is just one of our demands. Of course, we want to prevent it, proper prevention. I won't go into this too much because I will talk about it later on in the debate, but we want to prevent this. We want to mitigate it as much as possible in the first instance. But understanding that we can't eliminate this risk from our profession, monitoring is vital to make sure that we are diagnosing this at a stage where we can do something about it. Ultimately, and hopefully, we are going to hear our deaths – we will talk about this later – we need to legislate, we need presumptive legislation to make sure that those of us that do still fall ill get the exact medical and financial support that we require and we deserve by being made ill or worse by the result of going to work.

A few further qualifications I just want to add to this. I mean, it mentions Galleri in particular. We have made approaches to Galleri. There are reasons why our project didn't fit with it at the time so we don't know if that is the best outcome yet. You heard there from Tyne and Wear, we are carrying out – and conference, be proud of this, this is your work – we are putting needles in arms as a trade union. We are carrying out the biggest testing project on

firefighters that has ever been done in the United Kingdom. The NFCC are not doing it, government are not doing it, the HSE are not doing it; the Fire Brigades Union are doing it. We started in Tyne and Wear as we heard, we put 100 needles in arms in Greater Manchester just last week. We have just got the agreement in London. We are in talks with West Midlands. We are going to test 1,000 firefighters, and the professional academics at UCLan are going to take that and we are going to have a bespoke test, and when we are going in demanding this monitoring, we are not just pulling demands from the air. We are saying this is our data and this is exactly what we want to be testing for firefighters.

Qualified support on the fact that we want to be monitoring rather than screening, it might be but we don't know that Galleri is the answer, allow our project to finish, allow the great work that you are doing having the discussions via your joint safety committees, you are moving the bosses to take action on this, you are getting the monitoring done in your brigades, and let that inform us. We are the professional voice of the fire and rescue service. Let our project finish and we will go forward and that will be the monitoring that we take to our bosses and ministers and we demand. Conference, qualified support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 34 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 54, National Standard on Annual Firefighter Health Monitoring, to be moved by Greater Manchester. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 54 NATIONAL STANDARD ON ANNUAL FIREFIGHTER HEALTH MONITORING
Conference notes the Fire Brigades Union alongside the University of Central Lancashire have worked tirelessly on research surrounding firefighter exposure to contaminants and the direct links to cancer. What is now world-renowned research, DECON is the single biggest shift in how we approach everything we do in our role as firefighters.

Conference recognises that the World Health Organisation International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has officially declared firefighting as a cancer-causing profession. A move that has major implications for the manner in which cancer is managed for firefighters and fire services across the world.

Conference instructs the Executive Council through the relevant National Officer to establish a National Standard, negotiated through the National Joint Council, on annual firefighter health monitoring for all UK Fire and Rescue Services.

GREATER MANCHESTER

DAVE PIKE (Greater Manchester):

Moving resolution 54 asking conference to instruct the executive council to establish a national standard on annual firefighter health monitoring for all UK fire and rescue services.

President, conference, very much building on the debate which was had, Ken Long was a firefighter. He served in region 7 and our own region, region 5. He no doubt attended thousands of incidents throughout his career. Ken was 44 and recently passed away following a battle with cancer. Ken had two adoring children, a wife and will be incredibly missed by many families, friends and comrades.

Conference, the Fire Brigades Union, alongside the University of Central Lancashire, and in particular, Professor Anna Stec, have worked tirelessly on research surrounding firefighter exposure through contaminants and the direct link to cancer. Conference commends the work that region 1 have done on DECON and to bring this research to the attention of the Scottish government ministers and securing a debate in the Scottish parliament.

As has been mentioned, Greater Manchester, we have just seen 100 firefighters participate in the next phase of the English UCLan project testing the contaminants in firefighters, and we await the results.

What is now world renowned research, DECON is the single biggest shift in how we approach everything we do in our role as firefighters, from wearing the correct PPE and RPE and how we clean ourselves and our equipment after incidents. The evidence in relation to exposure to contaminants is stark comrades. Age specific cancer rates are up four times in firefighters compared to the general population. Firefighters are dying from heart attacks at five times the rate of the general population. Firefighters who serve more than 15 years are 1.6 times more likely to develop cancer than those who have served less time than this.

What the UK Firefighters Contamination Survey also explored was the association between contaminants and self-reported mental health disorders among UK firefighters. The results revealed that firefighters who noticed soot in their nose and throat from the day after attending fires were twice as likely to report mental health disorders, increasing anxieties and depression, sleeping problems. These firefighters were 4.2 more times likely to report any other mental health disorder.

Conference, the World Health Organization has officially declared firefighting is a cancer causing profession, a move that has major implications for the manner in which cancer is managed for firefighters and fire services across the world.

Comrades, there is work to be done. The research shows that attitudes amongst firefighters still exist where it is felt acceptable to remain in contaminated PPE. It is our duty as representatives of the FBU to challenge these badges of honour and highlight at every opportunity the links to cancer that our own research has proven.

Comrades, fire and rescue employers up and down the country must now act too. The NFCC and chief fire officers across the country refuse to acknowledge the research. They refuse to put in place policies and procedures that protect us as firefighters, our members who risk their lives on a daily basis and continue to be exposed to these cancer causing contaminants. Comrades, the disparity we see amongst fire and rescue services across the country today when it comes to quality and quantity of health monitoring is vast. Many have some things; many have nothing. Access to the very best health monitoring should not be a postcode lottery. Every firefighter deserves to have that disease, that mental health condition, that cancer, discovered at the earliest opportunity. No longer should we see the families and friends of our comrades grieving through loss that could have been prevented.

Conference, I ask for your support in establishing a national standard through the NJC for annual health monitoring for all UK firefighters. Firefighters risk their lives on a daily basis to save others. All we ask is that our lives are given the same chance too. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dave. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* It is now open for debate. Anybody? No. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Comrades, president, again look, thanks for bringing this. I am not going to repeat the points I just said about what an important role health monitoring is going to create in making sure we add no more names to our obituary. There is one qualification. I mentioned the three demands earlier: one, prevention to mitigate these exposures in the first place. We know where that sits today. That is a workplace issue for our employers. Our third demand of legislation, presumptive legislation to make this recognised as an occupational disease. We know where that sits. That sits with IIAC in government. With monitoring, we are still not completely sure of the best route to take it. That is why we are doing the data, we are in discussions in Scotland, we have had discussions in the Northern Ireland Assembly, so whether this is a government issue, whether this is an employers' issue locally, that is the one qualification. We don't know if the NJC is the best route to achieve this particular ask just yet. It may well be. But that is just the one qualification. Support the resolution. Thank you conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Riccardo. I will now put resolution 54 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. I now call resolution 41, Health Monitoring of Firefighters (Control) moved by the CSNC. The EC support.

Resolution 41 HEALTH MONITORING OF FIREFIGHTERS (CONTROL)

Conference demands that the Executive Council, assisted by the Control Staff National Committee, should carry out research into effective health monitoring for firefighters (Control) with a view to providing a best practice document to be used by all fire and rescue services.

This research should look at current practice and must take into account the suitability and level of hearing protection provided by headsets.

The resulting best practice document should be scheduled for release no later than Conference 2024.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

JENNA SHERGOLD (CSNC):

Moving resolution 41, Health Monitoring of Firefighters (Control), first time speaker.

President, conference, when I started work in the control room for Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service almost 20 years ago, back then it was a condition of employment to pass a medical which included hearing tests and this was repeated annually thereafter.

When our occupational health department merged with Hampshire County Council, these assessments ceased. We no longer had any health checks, and new recruits no longer had a medical. During my 20 years all of our headsets have only been replaced once. This was approximately 15 years ago. They are now replaced basically if they fall apart, and have never been tested to ensure they protect us from acoustic shock.

Thames Valley control have their headsets tested weekly which has to be signed off by a manager. In our partnership, Dorset and Wiltshire continue to have a full medical every three years and yet ourselves and Devon and Somerset have nothing. Although we have managed to get a basic medical questionnaire for new recruits reinstated, and we now have a voluntary online questionnaire we can complete as night shift workers. But this is not satisfactory. We need to value our firefighters' control and monitor their health, safety and welfare, and give them an opportunity to discuss any medical concerns they may have. This is become more prevalent as at times we are often short-staffed with our workload increasing.

We have just had the busiest summer I have ever experienced together with a noticeable increase in mental health callers. Our firefighters control need to be fit and well to deal with the pressures we are under. Our headsets are our PPE. In my control room, we have one firefighter currently on light duty suffering profound hearing loss and a number of others with hearing conditions such as tinnitus. When this individual requested a hearing test they were advised as we have more modern headsets it was deemed unnecessary due to the limiters in place and we have the ability to quickly mute and decrease volumes through the systems now available. Therefore, exposure to excessive noise is greatly reduced. This is unacceptable. Our headsets are old and not being tested. If hearing tests had continued to be available, the deterioration of hearing for this firefighter may have been identified earlier and appropriate measures put in place.

As the executive council endeavour to undertake to ensure control are recognised as front line operational firefighters, this should include bringing us in line with station based firefighters with consistent health and safety monitoring, compulsory for firefighters' control. It should be seen as a positive step. Monitoring our health and safety and identifying issues will hopefully lead to reduction in sickness absence.

Conference, we are asking for the EC to investigate and carry out research into effective health monitoring, recommending we have modern headsets using the latest technology to protect our hearing and ensure these headsets are tested regularly so we know they continue to offer us protection in the future. We request a best practice document should be scheduled for release no later than conference 2024. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Jenna. Does that have a seconder?

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

President, conference, bearing in mind what the president just said, I want to keep this sweet and short. Twenty six years I have been in firefighter control. Take that with fire calls, AFAs, white noise, sirens, people screaming and shouting, acoustic shock, and tinnitus, and you get this – deaf in one ear. The monitoring that found that cause for me was my wife. I was in the garage messing around with my spikes and she kept shouting at me and I couldn't hear her. She said something about selective hearing, but I don't know what she was on about, but there you go. Don't tell her I said that for God's sake. Thanks very much, please support resolution 41.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Trevor. That is open for debate. Anybody? No. Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Absolutely, the executive council are more than happy to support. A large amount of this work has already been undertaken in the 2019 report, auditory health and acoustic shock, which will assist us in producing the best practice document the CSNC want produced. So we are going to have a look at that, we are going to update it to see if there is any new research, bring all that together and just simply get on with producing the document that you have asked for. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I will now put resolution 41 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That is *carried*.

Conference, I will be taking the following resolutions in the same debate. All can carry together. Resolution 36, Inadequate Decontamination and Welfare Facilities in the Workplace moved by the NRC. Resolution 47 DECON – Control Measures for Personal or Provided Vehicles, moved by the ONC. Resolution 50, DECON National Database moved by Tyne and Wear. I now call Resolution 36 moved by the NRC.

Resolution 36 INADEQUATE DECONTAMINATION AND WELFARE FACILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE
Conference applauds the lifesaving Fire Brigades Union funded contamination research and DECON campaign. This has brought in to stark focus the inadequate decontamination and welfare facilities nationally within many of our workplaces.

The National Retained Committee believes that the starting point for any improvements should be to have a thorough understanding of the current situation.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to commission a review of all decontamination and welfare facilities, at all workplaces of our Members, and to provide a report back before the end of the current calendar year.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

GORDON NIMMO (NRC):

Moving resolution number 36 on Inadequate Decontamination and Welfare Facilities in the Workplace. First time to conference, first time speaking.

Conference applauds lifesaving Fire Brigades Union funded contamination research and DECON campaign. This has brought into stark focus the inadequate decontamination and welfare facilities nationally within many of our workplaces. Implementations are being made within stations nationally but the same stations are still behind the curve with anything close to being sufficient. Many stations lack kit space and personal storage. Many do not have any forms of adequate drying rooms, another. Lack of proper welfare facilities for crews. There are nearly a dozen RDS stations in Scotland alone without running water on station.

Disproportionate funding in the stations means inadequate levels of welfare facilities for firefighters who jump into their own vehicles to travel home to shower. The repercussions are they are contaminating their own car, their homes, their loved ones, with whatever carcinogenic materials they have picked up at a job.

Comrades, members put their lives on the line every time they go out to a call out. Expecting them to expose themselves to avoidable risks such as carcinogenic materials without having appropriate and adequate welfare facilities on station is simply inexcusable. The national retained committee believes that a starting point on any improvement should have a thorough understanding of the current situation. Conference instructs the EC to commission a review of all decontamination and welfare facilities at all workplaces of our members and provide a report back by the end of the calendar year. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, the EC support. Does that have a seconder?

SCOTT MacRORY (Scotland):

Seconding the NRC's resolution Inadequate Decontamination and Welfare Facilities in the Workplace. First time speaker.

Scotland echoes the recognition of the vital hard work carried out through the FBU funded research and DECON campaign and we welcome the requested review on all welfare and DECON facilities. Scotland recognises the national struggle our members face in unsafe, poorly equipped workplaces, irrespective of the duty system. Whilst these unacceptable conditions have never been deemed to be suitable or sufficient, the recent work carried out has highlighted just how severe the dangers are that our members face on a daily basis.

Conference, our members are developing and dying from a plethora of diseases and conditions like cancer as a direct result of exposure to dangerous contaminants at a rate far faster than the general population and at younger ages. Conference, this must change. We must move away from the age old "it will never happen to me" culture. It is happening and it will continue to happen unless we make immediate cultural changes.

The onus is absolutely on the employers to make the necessary changes needed to keep us all safe, but as we all know, progress is slow with a lot of heel dragging and comments about affordability. For this reason the FBU has been and will continue to lead the charge from the fireground up. We must keep holding our employers to account.

Whilst Scotland recognises that we are only one region, it is no less important to us as it is to every other region. Within Scotland, in the north area specifically, we have 144 RDS stations. Of those 144 RDS stations, a huge percentage – if not most – have welfare and DECON facilities which are unacceptable. More concerning still, we have a worrying number of RDS stations in the north although probably not exclusively within, that have no welfare or DECON facilities of any kind: stations with no running water, no toilets, poor ventilation, and fire kit stored unprotected and exposed to appliance exhaust contaminants – just a shed with a single door and a fire engine in it.

It is also important to note the general welfare concerns that our members are facing. We have women firefighters having to drive home from drill night to use the toilet with the rest of the male crew having no option but to go round the back of the station for a pee against the wall. We are obviously still living in times of old and this is unacceptable.

Conference, I ask you, what is the outcome of us not holding our employers to task, not forcing change, not adapting and continuing to turn the same blind eye we have been turning for so long? Let me tell you. Thanks to the ground-breaking works done by Professor Anna Stec, we now know definitely that our members will continue to develop and die from the diseases mentioned earlier. The facts can no longer be disputed and brushed under the carpet.

Rightly or wrongly, we firefighters understand why we can only mitigate some of those risks as a necessary evil in order to allow us to do the work that we do to save lives. Alarmingly, however, it is not only our members who are facing these hazards. Due to the inability of so many of our firefighters to decontaminate effectively or in any way at all, these hazardous contaminants are being taken home to their families, to their loved ones, and to their children. Can we allow this? Conference, we cannot and we must not. Knowing what we now know cannot force change is, at best, irresponsible and at worst downright reckless.

Scotland welcomes the NRC's call for a review of all DECON and welfare facilities. Scotland welcomes the inevitable findings and, lastly, Scotland welcomes the recommendations that will undoubtedly follow. Scotland hopes that each and every one of you welcomes it too. Thank you. Scotland seconds.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Scott. I now call resolution 47 moved by the ONC.

Resolution 47 DECON – CONTROL MEASURES FOR PERSONAL OR PROVIDED VEHICLES

Conference commends the excellent, internationally recognised DECON campaign.

Conference recognises the additional guidance to assist personnel who respond in their personal or fire and rescue service provided vehicle.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to seek to ensure that all fire and rescue services comply with this guidance and requests that further studies are commissioned to identify if any additional control measures should be introduced for this group of personnel.

OFFICERS NATIONAL COMMITTEE

GARY BELFIELD (ONC):

Moving resolution 47, DECON – Control Measures for Personal or Provided Vehicles. Conference commends the excellent and internationally recognised DECON campaign and the outstanding contribution by all those involved, and the ONC would like to pay a special thanks to our regional and brigade health and safety representatives for their significant work to date regarding contamination.

Health and safety reps, you have been and will continue to be instrumental in increasing and saving the lives of our firefighters. The FBU publication *Firefighters Exposure to Toxins, Effluents*, the interim best practice report, sets out some basic principles to mitigate the risk of contaminants for all of our members. The ONC has received some concerning reports that an inconsistent approach to the provision of safety equipment that has been suggested on page 68 of that report is being applied, and that some of our members are still working in contaminated conditions. That seems to be a common theme from the other reports.

Some of the examples are SIs, our fire investigators and our DIM officers who are continually working in their brigade provided vehicles without correct PPE given to them. Basic provision of nitrile gloves and air tight boxes are still being hindered by complicated procurement procedures.

Conference instructs the executive council to seek to ensure that all parts of the recommended guidance are being complied with and that all vehicles have been suitably and sufficiently risk assessed for the hazards associated with contaminants. President, conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gary; the EC are giving qualified report. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 50 moved by Tyne and Wear. The EC support.

Resolution 50 DECON NATIONAL DATABASE

Conference applauds the success of the work already carried out as part of the DECON project.

Conference also recognises firefighters in the UK face a postcode lottery of engagement with the project.

Conference notes control measures to minimise exposure to carcinogens vary from service to service where they even exist at all, and progress is rarely shared or replicated between services.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to produce a database or similar information technology solution to regularly capture the progress made in each service with regards to the DECON project and make the information available to all Fire Brigades Union Officials.

This work should begin as soon as practicable and progress must be reported back to Conference 2024.

TYNE and WEAR

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

I am sure you will all join us in offering our thanks to Anna Stec and her team for the ongoing research and for everybody involved in the campaign for DECON and the continuing work.

In Tyne and Wear we have been lucky enough in our service to embrace the campaign. We have made some progress and that progress has made it into social media. As a result of social media a number of people in this room reached out to talk to us about what we are doing on the prevention side, whether it be clean cabs, whether it be the health screening, whether it be fireground cleaning packs. What became apparent is we are not speaking to each other.

On a local level where we have a win, we don't know about it. If you look around this room, I would be surprised if you know what your neighbours have done about DECON and where they are up to. Quite basically, we are asking for a national database so we can track progress. It should be a live document with a database of some kind, or a different IT solution, so let's just record it. It will only be as good as the effort we put into it, not the EC, and I suggest apart from the database we take it a bit further and just have the conversations with each other. There is no point in having individual wins if other people don't benefit from it. Let's do it together. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cheers, Wayne. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is now open for debate. Anybody?

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

Speaking in support of resolution 36, inadequate decontamination and welfare facilities affect everyone. We need facilities for all our members at the appropriate time given. When I say "appropriate", I mean consideration is needed for members with long hair, members have afro hair, and those with afro hair styles, where decontamination takes longer.

We must remember incident grounds are classed as our workplace as well. Appropriate welfare facilities must have hot running water. Firefighters need to be able to clean their hands of any contamination. Hand sanitiser is not an appropriate substitute. This is important for members who need to change their sanitary wear whilst at an incident. Inadequate decontamination and welfare facilities need improving. Firefighters should be able to leave work safely without potentially taking contaminants back home to loved ones. Conference I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else?

DAN McNULTY (North Wales):

President, conference, second conference but first time speaking. I would just like to say as well thank you for those who have supported my resolution yesterday on the disability section. Although I didn't get to speak in front of you, it is much appreciated.

Conference, president, we would like to support resolution number 36 for a couple of reasons. Some of the work that ourselves in North Wales have been doing when it comes to incident welfare and station welfare. I would like to start just with a story that one of my colleague firefighters told me. On an incident ground, quite a large incident, she was attending an overnight incident. She started her period during that incident. There were no facilities on that incident ground at all for her to use and she ended up bleeding through her fire kit, through her personal uniform, through her personal clothing and on to her fire kit. She was so embarrassed that she took her own fire kit home and she washed it herself. She didn't want to face sending it through to laundry and having questions raised as to why there was blood on her fire kit.

I was horrified by that story and made it a bit of a personal mission to do something about this. Up until recently we were reliant on local companies attending with porta toilets, but as we have seen there were plenty of incidents where they just didn't turn up due to the time of day, due to the location – you can't get a porta toilet up mountain, especially with the North Wales mountains.

Some of the other facilities that we are facing, for example, one of our whole time stations currently there is a watch

of five, four of which are females. There is only one female toilet and one female shower for that station, whereas there are six male toilets. If they come from a particularly dirty incident they are having to wait up to an hour between them to shower because that facility is just not there.

We also have a dire issue with PPE at the moment. Due to the change of contract with our firefighting kit, it is taking months and months for dirty fire kit to be returned which means that firefighters are now wearing dirty fire kit instead of sending it off to launder because one pair is already off. You then request emergency fire kit, the region don't have it because the fire kit is past the 10-year lifespan. Therefore, firefighters are keeping dirty fire kit on their persons or in plastic bags on the fire truck hoping that they don't get a fire call.

Some of our rural cohort will then be transporting that fire kit from station to station in their own personal vehicles in bin bags. It is not appropriate. It is not good. It is a health risk. So North Wales, we support resolution number 36. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dan. Anybody else? Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, comrades. You have rightly mentioned how we got the DECON campaign into work places. When Anna Stec and her team first carried out the original project – and I have said this before but it is important to note it – that it is the biggest domestic project of its kind ever carried out by UCLan, commissioned by us.

The vast majority of fire and rescue services did not even have posters up. They had no training packages, they had no literature on the dangers of contaminants and the need to decontaminate for their staff. This, in the most part, was an FBU poster that we produced some years ago through this conference. Now, and I think you will all agree, it is difficult to walk on to a fire station, into a fire and rescue work service work place without seeing those DECON posters. So much so have we pushed this DECON on to the agenda of the sector, even those working against us are using the word DECON when they are talking about fire contaminants. We need to be proud of that and we also need to accept that posters alone are not going to achieve our safety demands on this subject. It is called the DECON campaign. DECON end of. Not DECON when it is cheap. Not DECON when it is easy. Not DECON for free. DECON.

The academics have done the work. Professor Anna Stec, she is in the room with us now, and her team have given us the ammunition we need. They told us there was no data. We have got the data. They told us there was no evidence. We have got the evidence. Now it is our job. We have to now organise and demand these measures in the workplace. We have had conversations in different fire and rescue services and we know the answers. We understand there are weaker links in this chain. Some things are very easy to implement, some things are more difficult, but this is now a completely foreseeable risk that is killing our members, making our members ill. We have to put these measures in place. If you can't get your helmet dry in time, we demand spare helmets. Yes, there's a cost to that. We don't want to take our workwear home. We shouldn't be taking our workwear home when it is contaminated. Washing machines come at a cost. Professional cleaning contracts come at a cost. Again, this isn't DECON for free, this is DECON. We need to be using the regs, we need to be using our organisation, we need to be using our safety committee. We need to be holding branch meetings. If you think there is a measure in place in your workplace that isn't correct, we get a branch meeting, we discuss what we are going to do about it and then we do something about it. The job is now on to us. The academics can only go so far. We know. We know we have got chief fire officers and ministers out there flat earthing us on this, still denying the link no matter how much evidence we provide. We now have to do our part, good, old-fashioned organising and demanding these safety measures. If it is a big old rusty sharp sticking out the side of your mess, if it was a broken step, we would be in there demanding a control measure is put in place and that risk is removed regardless of the cost, and that is what we need to be doing. We are fed up of tick boxes.

Every chief in the world will tell you they support this until you look at it. We have got chiefs in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Chief Fire Officer Odin says he supports this. He is still trying to take breathing apparatus, one of the biggest control measures to stop the respiratory risk here, off our firefighters in high rise buildings. We have got chiefs in Scotland saying they support this. You have just heard from our Scottish comrades there. We haven't

even got running water. There is no showering now, there is no showering ever. So we cannot just allow them to union-wash their work on this. If they are not putting the measures in place, we need to call it out, we need to use the regs, we need to use our organisers, we need to use our branches and we need to demand that these things are put in place. We support resolution 50 on doing that. I think Tyne and Wear want their table because they are probably going to be top of it. Congratulations on that, and that just shows the postcode lottery we are dealing with here. You have probably got one of the best clean cab policies in the fire and rescue service in Tyne and Wear, and then you have got fire stations that cannot even provide shower facilities.

So we will provide that. We will go further. We will collect the best practice from. We have already started that work on the health and safety committee. We have started those discussions. We will need all of your help feeding into that, every region, every section send your health and safety representatives to the health and safety committee and we will get that work done.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 36 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 47 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 50 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 51, Violent Attacks on Firefighters, moved by Tyne and Wear. The EC support with explanation.

Resolution 51 VIOLENT ATTACKS ON FIREFIGHTERS

Conference is horrified at the level of violence fire crews are subjected to regularly. All attacks on firefighters including verbal, physical and objects thrown are abhorrent. These attacks can also see lifesaving fire appliances being taken off the road due to damage, leaving communities and firefighters at risk.

Conference notes the apparent rise in the number of attacks ranging in severity from verbal abuse to attacks intended to cause severe harm or even kill.

Conference is clear that no firefighter should come to work and face this level of abuse.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council (EC), using the Office of National Statistics fire statistics table (FIRE0510 attacks on firefighters during operational incidents), to understand the scale of the issue and to coordinate a campaign to reduce attacks on firefighters.

Conference instructs the EC to report back no later than Conference 2024.

TYNE and WEAR

CHRIS COOK (Tyne and Wear):

The president asked us to be really quick so I am the regional health and safety for the north east of England. I am moving resolution 51. Firstly, allow us to apologise, when I was writing this resolution I was narrowly focused on firefighters after significant attacks happened in Tyne and Wear. I want everyone to understand that we understand that firefighters in control are subjected to verbal abuse which is disgraceful. We have got officer members, Grey Book members, Green Book members, who are all subjected to the same level of violence. Some are alone working. I want to be clear that all violence against anybody at work is unacceptable.

So to give some context, on 14 January 2023 a crew from Newcastle were mobilised to a car fire. This was a malicious call. The crews were lured into a dead end. They were barricaded, surrounded by a gang of youths, they threw glass bottles filled with liquid. One of them actually managed to enter the cab and smash. Very luckily, the liquid never ignited. These fire bombs were built with the intention to cause serious harm or to even kill. Firefighters, firefighters control and officer members up and down the country are being subjected to violence at work. Attacks are on the rise. In 2021-2022 saw a significant rise.

To address these disgusting attacks, firstly, we must understand the severity of the problem. Conference calls upon the executive council to use the Office of National Statistics to comprehend the severity and the impact of the

problem nationally. Conference asks the EC to coordinate a campaign – one as successful as the pay campaign – protect our firefighters, firefighter control and officer members. The Fire Brigades Union takes the health and safety of its member very, very seriously and, to quote the president, unlike other tin pot organisations. The protection of our members is vital work. Conference instructs the EC to report back no later than conference 2024. Thank you. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. The EC support with explanation. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Open for debate. Nobody. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you president. Just one really quick point. The EC is supporting this resolution just with the explanation as Cook rightly mentioned, non-operational incidents, the statistics tables talks about attacks on firefighters at operational incidents. Attacks clearly happen on our members at non-operational incidents as well. We would have to cover that point as well, but the EC supports.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 51 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 53, Two Tier Fitness Tests, moved by Lincolnshire. The EC support with explanation.

Resolution 53 TWO TIER FITNESS TESTS

Conference notes that fire and rescue services are able to introduce two tier fitness tests to determine operational fitness levels for the role/rank of Watch Manger/Station Officer and above, potentially adding weight to the flawed argument that the pension age for firefighters should be 60.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to open discussions with our national employers to cease such practices and reintroduce fitness tests that are relevant for all Members regardless of their rank/role.

LINCOLNSHIRE

RICHARD WRIGHT (Lincolnshire):

Moving resolution 53. Lincolnshire, like other services, have introduced two tier fitness levels to determine operational fitness, in doing so reducing the levels for watch manager and above. This was done despite our objections at a local level. All of us in this room have been affected by the attacks on our pensions over the years and never agreeing to the pension age of 60. These practices offer the government false statistics that suggest 60 is a reasonable pensionable age. However, this is certainly not the case for operational front line staff who still have to adhere to the higher levels and running a greater risk of capability issues around maintaining fitness later in their career. We request the EC to open discussions with our employers to cease these practices and reintroduce fitness tests that are relevant to all members regardless of rank. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rick. Does that have a seconder?

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Seconding resolution 53, two tier fitness tests. Conference, we thank Lincolnshire for bringing this resolution and support it wholeheartedly. The two tier fitness test is being driven by the NFCC, the same organisation that derailed the tripartite agreement and which advocates for unsafe high rise BA procedures. This is not a recognised standard and does not represent or reflect the findings of Dr Williams' report who found a normal pension age of 60 is unrealistic and crucially the aerobic fitness standard of less than 42 VO2 max increases the risk of sudden catastrophic cardiac events. Clearly, there is no place for a two tier fitness standard. Conference, please support the resolution and let's end this unsafe practice. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

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

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president. Conference, the EC are supporting this but this is already our policy. The executive council do their bit with the National Joint Council but the conversation cannot end here. This has to be resisted locally. You have just run a masterclass on how to tell the bosses no over pay. We have heard how Cornwall have told their bosses no over shutting a control room. Merseyside every day are telling the bosses no. This has to be resisted locally, but the executive council do support it, it is already our policy and we shall do our bit at the National Joint Council as we have done previously on this resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. Louise, did I miss you then? Do you want to speak? Are you sure? You can if you want? Come on. Sorry about that Louise.

LOUISE FLETCHER (Shropshire):

Health and safety rep for the brigade and region 7. I may be unpopular with what I am about to say but I do feel – and we have had these conversations with the National Women's Committee for many years now – the fitness test standard and the pension age 60 I believe is wrong. However, women end up being the cannon fodder potentially to prove that 60 is not achievable. Women over the age of 50 struggle to maintain that fitness. That then brings on capability issues. However, I work in a rural brigade so watch managers and above do not wear breathing apparatus. They do not do certain tasks. I personally am struggling to pass my fitness tests at the moment. I work in the protection department. Sometimes the two tier might actually be beneficial to members. I appreciate I am speaking in opposition but something I feel very passionate about. I love my job. I want to do my job as a protection officer until the age of 60 and get my pension, but I am facing disability. That is all I wanted to say.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Louise. Riccardo

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, Louise. President, conference, we have had this discussion at the NWC. There is some expert knowledge on the NWC. We have discussed the research. We will have the discussion. We will look at it. If the position needs reviewing – we will have to build a campaign around it by the way, it is not just a simple ask and get. But the conversation has started on the NWC with the newly appointed health and safety rep on that committee. We will have the discussion. We will review the research and do that work in liaison with the National Women's Committee.

THE PRESIDENT:

Lincolnshire right of reply? No. I now put resolution 53 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 80, Equality for Maintaining Fitness in the Fire and Rescue Service, moved by Cheshire. The EC are seeking remittance or they oppose.

Resolution 80 EQUALITY FOR MAINTAINING FITNESS IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Conference is reminded of the following resolution from the National Retained Committee from 2018, which was carried and therefore policy of the Union:

Conference notes the content of the Firefighter Fitness Best Practice Guide produced by the NJC. Conference is alarmed at the lack of provision of fitness training equipment or fitness training time available to Retained Duty System firefighters across the UK. Conference agrees that Retained Duty System firefighters have the same requirements as wholetime firefighters on the issue of firefighter fitness and that the same safety standards should apply to both equally.

Therefore this Conference instructs the Executive Council, at the earliest opportunity to try to negotiate a number of paid hours per week for Retained Duty System firefighters to carry out

fitness training in order to maintain their fitness to the required standard, these hours must be in addition to the already agreed hours for training, development and maintenance duties.

Conference is also reminded of the requirements under the Grey Book, which sets out guidance on firefighters' health and safety at work for local fire services to follow, maintaining the principle of a fit and healthy workforce while providing an efficient and effective fire service.

Conference is disappointed that some five years later a significant number of fire and rescue services do not provide paid positive hours for thousands of Retained/On Call firefighters up and down the United Kingdom nor provide parity to RDS firefighters.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to commence collective legal action against any fire and rescue service where this is the case, under the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 or any other relevant legislation that is deemed appropriate by our legal team.

CHESHIRE

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

This resolution seeks to address a long running issue now of discrimination for retained members which is not just an issue of equality, fairness, parity. It is clearly also an issue of health and safety and wellbeing detriment. We will be frank. We were disappointed at the EC opposition to this. I know that feeling was shared by the NRC as well. That opposition was at the beginning unclear as has been the case with a number of resolutions, to be fair, this year. The fitness requirements for the role of a firefighter does not distinguish between that of a full time or a part time firefighter, yet in many fire and rescue services it is the case that full time firefighters are provided with the equipment and paid hours to meet or maintain the standard, and part time firefighters are not. That is clearly less favourable treatment for part time workers. It is arguably problematic to expect an industrial response to address that.

So this resolution sought to instruct the executive council to commence legal action against any employer that continued to refuse to provide the equal treatment for part time workers. The reality is we think it would only take one fire and rescue to be found to be in breach of the law for the sector then to react and remedy that across the UK fire and rescue service. We have got a long and proud tradition of fighting for retained members. We are the only union that has ever done that, and we feel that we should take the responsibility on this issue. However, following a very positive conversation this morning with national officer, Mark Rowe, an action plan has been agreed that satisfies the intent of this resolution. So, in response, Cheshire agree to remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Andy. I now call para C2, para C3.

SCOTT MacRORY (Scotland):

In addition to the information in the report to conference, there have also been two member business debates held in the Scottish parliament specifically on DECON and the need for investment in the service: the first on 19 January and the second last Thursday 4 May, both sponsored by Maggie Chapman of the Greens who has been a huge ally and deserves our thanks for continuing to push this issue with the Scottish government and opposition parties. Thank you. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

I call para C4, para C5, para C6.

SCOTT MacRORY (Scotland):

Recently Barry Johnstone attended an event in Brussels discussing the continued impact of asbestos related diseases on workers across the world, and it was highlighted again the heightened levels of these diseases amongst firefighters, work which I am carrying through the European Federation of Public Service Unions as we demand support from the European Parliament to reduce exposure limits to asbestos.

As progress is made fully on DECON, we need to be as vigilant about the dangers that asbestos-containing materials continue to pose to our members. Let us not forget, conference, that firefighters are twice as likely as the general public to develop diseases like mesothelioma. Now is the time to act. Thank you. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Scott. I call para C7, para C8.

DAVID ROBERTS (Devon and Somerset):

The BA safety campaign. We stood here this morning and we heard a lot about DECON and nobody can ever argue about the advantages that we are going to see in DECON in our lifetime, but sitting behind that is the BA safety campaign. We cannot lose sight of what is going on. Just last week London colleagues, twelve storey high rise, 26 BA, 4 EDBA, systematic search floors 4 to 11. If the London Commissioner had managed to push through the removal of BA above the bridgehead last year, that would have been 30 firefighters that would have been exposed to toxic fire effluents. It was only down to the quick action of the London committee and the national officers that managed to stop this unlawful practice. Unfortunately, as Riccardo alluded to earlier on, Hampshire and Isle of Wight and one of my neighbouring brigades, Dorset and Wiltshire, Suffolk, Herts, Norfolk, they are all looking at removal of BA in certain circumstances above the bridgehead. This is not acceptable. We support the BA safety campaign now and going forward. President and conference, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, Dave, thank you conference. C8 covers many of the issues that you have just heard from the rostrum. We have challenged this wherever it arises. We have got chief fire officers under the policy of the National Fire Chiefs Council trying to take the BA masks off us in high rise building fire. At the same time they are ticking boxes saying they support DECON. At the same time they want operational attendance. At the same time they want to be the professional voice of our profession. I am not going to go into the details of why this policy is unprofessional, reckless and unsafe. We have covered that at length and every single person in this room is a professional and understands that.

What I wanted to raise was an update, conference, and what we may need to do about it locally in our organising. C8 sets out what we have already done in changing this. Yes, we saw it off in London. Yes, we saw it off in Manchester. Yes, we stopped it at the consultation stage in other brigades. We put our complaint in to the HSE. Head Office has produced that. You have that document. It is about that thick. We have not been shy on providing the evidence on why this is unsafe and unprofessional.

I refer you to C8 there. This is a 2022 report. On 27 May 2022 we put our complaint in to the Health and Safety Executive. We are now in May 2023. We have not had a response to that complaint. We have not seen a shred of counter evidence. We have not seen a risk assessment from any chief fire officer. We can go to Hants and Isle of Wight, we can go to Dorset and Wiltshire. It is now trying to be imposed in Merseyside across region 9 as we have heard. We have not seen a single answer as to what we do when a firefighter is in a BA emergency beyond the reach of a BA set.

The incident you have heard about on 12th floor of a high rise building fire in London just this week, we had to rescue two of our members. This is one of the most dangerous situations we can go into, and HSE has had 45% of its funding cut, and HSE has had 35% of its staff cut; it may not give us the answer at all at this rate, and when it comes it may not be the answer we need. So we need to start having these conversations back in our branches, back on our brigade committees about what we are going to do if that response doesn't come from the HSE or an adequate one doesn't come. We are the professional voice of this service. We know this is dangerous. We had a horrifically stark reminder this year with our brother, Barry Martin, of how dangerous our profession can be without these clowns trying to remove decades of BA safety that has kept us alive, BA safety that was born from the death and injuries of our members.

I was asked to raise the point and we still haven't got that response from the HSE. Start preparing locally for what we do if that response doesn't come or it is inadequate. Conference, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. Right, we are going to take a tea break now. We are three or four minutes late so if I give you to twenty past eleven, can I have you back in sharpish because we have the awards ceremony straightaway and we have got a lot of business to get through. Thank you.

Tea Break

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, conference. We now have the award sessions for the FBU solidarity medal and I am going to pass the chair to the vice president in order to participate in the awarding of the medal. Thank you. Conference, put that on hold. I have now been informed there is a standing orders report. I call the chair, Phil Millar.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you president. Conference, can you turn to your delegate list, please. Just on that, there seems to be an increasing amount of delegate changes. Can we please keep in mind the circular and keep them to absolutely essential changes. Region 1, Scotland, remove Gordon Sinclair and replace with Kim Ferguson. Region 1 Scotland, remove Scott MacRory and replace with Lewis Clark. Also, conference, the nomination forms have been put out for the second standing orders election. If you could have those in the election box which will be back in the corner for the end of this session. Thank you for your nominations. It would appear that I have been re-elected.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. We will now move on to the award ceremony.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

Conference, at it is December 2019 meeting the executive council agreed to instigate 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 fire and rescue service 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 we want all FBU members and branches to have the opportunity to nominate potential recipients. Although initially halted by the pandemic, we were able to instigate the initial awards last year and we believe it is important that these awards are made here at the parliament of our union in front of delegates representing all FBU members from across the UK, and it is hoped that in doing so the interest in the awards will become mainstream across the union and next year we encourage nominations to be made through brigade, section and regional committees.

Called the solidarity medal, the awards are made on behalf of all FBU members and although inclusive of serving and retired FBU members, the criteria for this award also includes persons or groups outside of our structures. The criteria are clear: to recognise or display solidarity or specific acts of solidarity on behalf of members of the FBU which are clearly of exceptional merit.

Comrades, the following three recipients meet these criteria in abundance. Conference, the first recipient is from outside of our union and outside of our service, but has been a key adviser and ally for decades. Firefighter pensions have been under attacks by successive governments for decades and the Fire Brigades Union has fought back using every means at our disposal including campaigning, strike action and, of course, legal action.

When others were cutting deals, it was the Fire Brigades Union who took the arguments head on and forced the matter to court winning a ground-breaking victory which impacted not just on FBU members but also on thousands of other public sector workers. We are proud to have taken on the government and won. However, we know the huge role that our legal team and one man in particular play. Ivan Walker is a lawyer who has dedicated himself to

supporting working people for his entire career. Specialising in pensions-related law, Ivan has supported the Fire Brigades Union for many years and was the key legal adviser and participant in our pensions victory. We know that there are many more challenges ahead, but we recognise what we have achieved so far and the solidarity it has taken from others to do so.

In recognition of outstanding legal work and commitment with the key aim of fighting for pensions justice for firefighters, the FBU solidarity medal is awarded to Ivan Walker.

IVAN WALKER:

President, conference, thank you very much indeed. I am not going to keep you for long mainly because I know my place. You guys save lives. All I do is save money – quite a lot of money – but it has been a real privilege to act for this union. You really have fought the campaigns that other people should have fought, and you took it up. It has been a real privilege to work for you and I am very grateful indeed. Thank you.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

Conference, the second award goes to a woman. Because of the DECON campaign and her high profile work within it, she should need no introduction from me. Professor Anna Stec has been a driving force in our DECON campaign and scientific leader in her field. Having recognised the links between fire contaminants and cancers in firefighters, Professor Stec set out to prove it and implement international change to protect firefighters. Her work has been ground-breaking and has led to huge advancement. Working with the FBU, Professor Stec has already done so much to spearhead industry wide change in relation to firefighter cancer prevention and protection. In short, although we know we have much to do, her work today has already achieved life-changing changes in our work places, on fire stations for FBU members. In recognition of her key role in the DECON project and ground-breaking work to understand the link between fire contaminants in cancer and to protect firefighters and their families from this risk, the FBU solidarity medal is awarded to Professor Anna Stec.

PROFESSOR ANNA STEC:

Well, thank you very much. I think a lot of what has been said today by Riccardo and other colleagues, I think they cover everything, but as a scientist I do not keep quiet. We learn to talk a lot. However, based on today's occasion I just would like to share with you my personal journey for the last six years we worked together. First of all, let me say I am truly overwhelmed by the honour of being presented with the FBU solidarity medal. I am honoured to receive this prestigious recognition and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the executive council, general secretary and the president for this remarkable distinction. I also appreciate the presence of each of you today, each member attending this conference, your dedication, friendship, determination, for the safety and wellbeing of your colleagues. It is really, truly inspiring.

1982, over 40 years ago, California was the first state in the United States to pass a firefighter presumptive illness law. Currently, 48 out of 50 states offer compensation to firefighters, many of those states offering also health monitoring. A few years later, following the United States, Canada and Australia did very similar things. Very recently, four years ago, Poland, not only introduced health monitoring but also accepted a government document introducing all the recommendations to be implemented by all the fire and rescue services across Poland. That happened last year. Currently, there is now debate – which was last week – to introduce regular health monitoring, and believe me, I do think that it will happen.

An even more powerful message came from the international agency for research of cancer last year that I also have the opportunity to serve on, an agency for the World Health Organization published a report last year confirming direct link between firefighting and cancer. This report is significant because it confirmed what was felt for many years: that firefighters are having higher risk of cancer and they are dying because of their job in relation to the exposure to fire toxins. While we have got really strong global studies and reports which are used to inform policies and regulation, UK government and government agencies still refuses to acknowledge the link between firefighting and cancer.

Six years ago the Fire Brigades Union asked me to carry out UK focused research to identify associations between fire toxicants exposures and health risks amongst firefighters. It probably shouldn't and won't surprise you that

despite the wealth of research available globally there is not only significant opposition from the government agencies, but even from some fire and rescue services management. We are queried from how this worldwide research is applicable to the UK context claiming UK firefighters behave differently, they have got different culture, they have got different practices and therefore they are not applicable to any of it in the UK.

Within the last six years we achieved the same amount of work that took 20 – 30 years in the United States and Canada. The DECON project in particular is an astonishing piece of work that we should all be proud of.

I want to express my gratitude for all of you, for all the FBU members and their leaders. Your involvement in getting firefighters to complete a 70 question questionnaires, and I know how much you hate that many questions. We went through that questionnaire. We were not only able to identify risks, but also proactive measures that must be taken to protect not only firefighters but also their loved ones. The best practice and DECON campaign originated here in the UK, and please remember that originated from you and your help.

The concept of contaminated firefighter operations is a global concern, and this has been really well reflected by the distribution of this best practice document and your DECON campaign translating into Polish, Slovakian, Czech, Portuguese and even China, showing the global leadership of the UK Fire Brigades Union. The best practice document was also referenced in the European Parliament. There is going to be follow-up by the European agency for safety and health at work that hopefully will conduct international questionnaire, something that you initiated but which will translate into 12 international languages and be adopted internationally.

We must ensure that this project is led by the Fire Brigades Union. Working with you over the last six years has also taught me the need to keep the balance between scientific research and political sensitivity, and oh boy, tell me about that. Failing, giving up, is absolutely not something that stirs in my Polish blood. We were simply as Polish nation not meant to fail. We are bloody persistent and it is really difficult to get rid of us which you can see throughout Polish history.

So giving up, given this rather challenging project, I have to say it crossed my mind a few times and returning to my really peaceful, scientific bubble that all scientists live in, definitely more peaceful scientific work. No more politics. No more intimidation. No more threatening. Yes, I had that, even through the legal battle.

There is one thing that brings me here and allows me to stand here: your friendship and your unity. It is absolutely outstanding. Your unwavering support, enormous effort, absolute commitment and determination to make a change and improve the health and wellbeing of firefighters.

More recently, with all your help we got the evidence and tragic proof that firefighters are not only dying much earlier from cancer specifically 15 – 20, but also from the rare and silent cancers that are not giving any symptoms. While presumptive legislation will take a while in the UK, you told me to develop a comprehensive and evidence-based health monitoring programme. This programme will include health check-ups and monitoring for firefighters not only to identify health issues but also health issues related to your job.

I would like to express my personal gratitude to Tyne and Wear and Manchester. Wayne, thank you for being stuck a few times by the needle so we can validate our methodology. Dave, from Greater Manchester, thank you very much for allowing me to do it. While we are preparing, I am also excited to see John and Colin working for the Scottish parliament to implement a health monitoring programme for firefighters in Scotland.

What I would like to say on a personal note, while we were preparing for London and other brigades, sadly and really disappointingly, we still have some chiefs refusing to cooperate with us to carry out the health monitoring, to bring us on their sites and to look after their own people.

As I said before, even in spite of the ongoing challenges and difficulties, working with you has taught me that we can achieve great things when we work together and remain united. I am confident that together we can ensure the safety and wellbeing of firefighters to protect their health.

Closing my speech, I would like to share with my personal call to action. Let us never forget the sacrifice made by our fellow firefighters in past and present. Let us honour their bravery by relentlessly pushing for the highest standards of safety. Care for yourself and for one another, and thank you again.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

Comrades, this year's final award goes to a serving London firefighter, a dedicated FBU member, who has inspired so many of us through his commitment, courage and determination to rebuild a community deeply traumatised by fire.

For bosses, the word "community" has become nothing more than a catchphrase, but for FBU members who live and work and serve in our communities it is so much more than that. Nowhere is this better personified than in David Badillo. David has committed himself to serving his North Kensington community not just as a firefighter but as a mentor, a volunteer and an activist. Following the terrible events on 14 June 2017 where David was part of the initial attendance, he has worked tirelessly through initiatives such as "Kids on the Green" to support and help and rebuild a community deeply traumatised by the terrible events and aftermath of Grenfell Tower. Having spoken to some of the people he has worked and assisted in the community, there is one word that is repeated time and again, "inspiration". He has given his time, energy, commitment and help to his community whilst continually directly serving them in his ongoing role as a London firefighter. He is a direct example of the power of solidarity. In recognition of outstanding work and commitment in the North Kensington community, including through initiatives such as "Kids on the Green" to support and help rebuild a community deeply traumatised by fire, the FBU solidarity medal is awarded to David Badillo.

THE VICE PRESIDENT:

David, just before you start, conference I am also pleased to announce that David, as a serving firefighter and FBU member, is also to be presented with the very first FBU watch which has been made and donated by watchmakers, William Wood, in recognition of this occasion.

DAVID BADILLO:

Well, thank you so much. Thank you to the FBU who have always had my back in what has been an extremely tough six years. Your support for me and, more importantly, for my community has been unwavering. I couldn't have done any of this without the support and the help of the firefighters of North Kensington and so many other local firefighters who have stood defiantly by my side.

When the London Fire Brigade told us we couldn't do the guard of honour for the silent walks in those early days after the fire, we did it anyway. When they told me I couldn't go on the radio to beg for money to heat the "Kids on the Green" warehouse, I did it anyway, and I raised enough money to heat half of Ladbroke Grove. And when they told me we were only allowed 30 firefighters at the funeral of Jessica Urbano Ramirez, a beautiful 12-year-old girl I tried to save on that horrific night, I made sure there were at least 100 of us lining the path to the church.

We had no plan for any of this. We just followed our hearts and did what we hope was right. We formed an unbreakable bond with our community together trying to come to terms with what had happened, standing as their guard of honour at the silent walks and at the funeral of many of the victims of the fire. We grieved with them and, with the passing of time, we slowly learned to heal with them. Thankfully, over the last couple of years my relationship with the LFB has improved. We have even recently come together to create a beautiful Grenfell memorial plaque which will take pride of place on the station forecourt.

Finally, I would like to say how honoured I am to call so many of the bereaved and survivors of Grenfell Tower my friends. The strength and dignity they have shown in the face of unimaginable heartbreak, and their continued fight for justice, is an inspiration to us all. Their lost loved ones, neighbours and friends will never be forgotten and they shall stay forever in our hearts. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right conference, wow! How good is that? Right, conference, I am very pleased to welcome Paul Nowak, the new TUC general secretary. Paul has been an active trade unionist and campaigner throughout his working life. He first

became a union member at the age of 17 doing a host of jobs on temporary and agency contracts. Paul was one of the first intake to the TUC's organising academy. Aged 26 he became an organiser for BIFU, the financial services union, and now part of UNITE, and in 2000 Paul joined the TUC staff becoming a regional secretary for the north of England and head of organising. In 2013 he was appointed TUC assistant general secretary, and in 2016 he was the deputy general secretary. Last July Paul was the sole candidate nominated by unions, including the FBU, to become the TUC general secretary. He took over and hit the ground running in January this year, so please put your hands together and give Paul a big warm welcome. Thank you, Paul.

PAUL NOWAK (TUC General Secretary):

Thanks, Ian, and thanks to the FBU for the opportunity to be here today. It is a huge honour today to bring greetings and solidarity on behalf of the TUC, our 48 unions, five and half million union members up and down the country, supermarket workers, prison officers, factory workers, bus drivers, airline pilots, every conceivable occupation and profession in the country – a TUC family of unions united by one shared common goal: to stand up, and crucially to win, for working people, their families and communities. So it is a huge honour to be here today, I have to say, after those awards as well, a pretty humbling experience as well, and I will talk a little bit more about the contribution of your union in a few moments.

I want to start though by thanking Matt for everything he does, not only as your general secretary, but on behalf of the wider trade union movement and the TUC. I think it is fair to say, Matt, we don't always agree on every issue and that is how it should be because Matt is there to bring the voice of the FBU into our general council and into our executive, but he is a person of huge integrity, he is an internationalist to his core and he is a formidable advocate for firefighters. So, Matt, thank you for everything you do on behalf of the TUC and the FBU as well.

I also want to thank your national officers, and I have to say it is nice to share a stage with Tam without his guitar for a change. Anyone who has seen Bolton Prison Blues once performed by Tam, has seen it a thousand times – sorry Tam. Thanks also to your national executive committee members, but above all, thanks to each and every FBU delegate in this room, each and every FBU activist and rep, and each and every FBU member up and down the country for the work you do not only in your union, but day in and day in your day jobs as well. An essential public service, an emergency public service that all of our communities depend upon. Last year when we had those record temperatures in July, it was your members that were on the front line dealing with the worst day for fires since World War II, putting out scores of wild fires, addressing the impact of catastrophic climate change, something I know has been discussed at this conference before. And, of course, when other people are running from burning buildings, it is your members who are running into burning buildings to save people, people like your member Barry Martin who died from his injuries tackling that blaze at the Jenners Building in Edinburgh in January.

I think it is incumbent on us all in the trade union movement – I know it is something that you do in this conference – not to forget the sacrifice of Barry, but not to forget the sacrifice and the contribution of every FBU member and every firefighter who has made that sacrifice in the service of others. And that is reflected not just in your day jobs but in the rest of the work that the FBU does as well, and we saw a glimpse of it there in terms of those solidarity awards.

I want to mention particularly, and it was great to be in the room and humbling, as I say, to be in the room to hear about the contribution of David and the FBU more generally in the aftermath of the terrible mistakes that led to the catastrophe of Grenfell. Almost six years on too little has changed despite all the campaigning, despite the Inquiry, we have got hundreds of thousands of people still living in unsafe buildings, we have got ministers and developers who are still refusing to foot the bill to remove dangerous cladding, and what happened at Grenfell, remind ourselves, in the richest corner of the richest city in Europe, was entirely preventable. It was the direct result of cost cutting, corner cutting and deregulation. It was a shocking failure to act on the concerns of residents and the decisions taken by successive governments. So today let's send out a message loud and clear that we continue to demand justice for the victims and survivors. We stand shoulder to shoulder with David and his whole community, and we say Grenfell never forget and never ever again.

Conference, these are tough times for your members, they are tough times for workers up and down the country. Since the Tories came to power – and I heard some of the debate this morning – funding for the fire and rescue

service has been cut by 30%. One in five firefighters' jobs have been axed, scores of fire stations have been closed and your pay packets have shrunk by 12% in real terms. As your motion to our congress made clear last year, you are in the firing line of those Westminster attacks: a government that wanted to dismantle your bargaining machinery, to replace the NJC with a pay review body and to give more powers to chief fire officers and police and crime commissioners, all of which would mean more cuts, more fragmentation, more attacks on terms and conditions.

I have to say though, in the face of all of that the FBU has stood firm and fought back. The overwhelming strike mandate that you delivered in January brought your employers back to the bargaining table, a massively improved offer – not a perfect offer by any stretch of the imagination, but a massive improvement on the 2% on the table at the start of the protest. That is the true value of collective bargaining and that is testament to your willingness to exercise your fundamental right to strike.

And that fundamental right has never been more important than at any other time, and it is clear that 13 years of this government, of Tory government, has broken Britain. We all know it. We have all experienced it not just in your service. We have got jobs that don't pay enough, public and private and sector workers reliant on food banks and tax credits. We have got public services that have been decimated by cuts, not just your service, local authorities, NHS, the civil service. We have got trains that don't arrive, that are cancelled at late notice, and a Tory government that is more interested in dividing working people than supporting working people, and nowhere better personified or typified than that set of inhumane degrading spiteful migration policies. That illegal Migration Bill is in the House of Lords right now and I have seen the proud grandson of immigrants to this country during the second world war to fight fascism, yes, but to build a better life for themselves and their families, I am absolutely clear, our movement should always stand with all working people regardless of where they were born, whatever their religion, whatever the colour of their skin. Your members don't check people's passports before rescuing them, and I am clear this country should never ever turn its back on those fleeing war, persecution or poverty; never ever turn its back.

Now when I took over as TUC General Secretary in the new year I said I had three key priorities and the first priority is simply this: to support unions and their members through the cost of living crisis. Let us be clear, this cost of living crisis is a wages crisis. It is what happens when you have got a government that has forced down people's wages in the public and private sector. Public sector wages now lower in real terms than they were in 2008. Since the financial crisis workers have lost on average £20,000 from their pay packets. We have got the weakest wage growth in the G7. The weekly shop is up, our bills are up, mortgages are up, rents are up. The only thing that isn't going up are our wages. We live in a country where public servants cannot afford to put petrol in their car to go to work, where our members are setting up food banks for their colleagues and where prices are going up nearly three times faster than wages.

We should always remember though it is not a cost of living crisis for everybody. It is not a cost of living crisis for everybody. FTSE 100 chief executives last year saw their pay go up by 23%; 39% the year before. Dividends to shareholders have grown three times faster than wages, and if you are a city banker you have had the best year ever for bonuses since the financial crash. That is why ahead of the budget the TUC said it was time for an economic reset and time for the government to make different political choices, but there was no plan for growth, there was no plan for investment in public services, there was nothing at all on public sector pay and nothing crucially on the fair taxes that we need to fund our schools, our hospitals, our fire service and all the other essential public services.

Taxes are the bedrock of any civilised society so we need a proper windfall tax on the oil and gas giants. BP, £4 billion profits in the first quarter of this year. A proper windfall tax on the energy giants. We need to equalise capital gains tax and income tax so our prime minister has a higher effective tax rate than a nurse or a firefighter. And we need to raise tax on the wealthy and not working people. That is how we boost pensions and benefits. That is how we put money back into our communities and that is how we deliver fair pay for public sector workers.

But our job in the trade union movement isn't just to lobby the government to bring in measures that will make society fairer; our job is to take action for change, and I have been proud over the last few months to stand on picket lines with thousands of workers, many of whom have been taking strike action for the very first time. I am absolutely clear that the TUC I lead will stand with any worker who makes that difficult decision to take strike action.

We have been coordinating strikes with our unions, providing practical support for members taking strike action, helping unions beat those ballot thresholds and crucially resisting attempts by the government to play off one group of public sector workers against another.

This is not about a decent pay rise for firefighters at the expense of nurses or nurses at the expense of teachers or teachers at the expense of civil servants. We want a decent pay rise for every single public sector worker in this country and our members are standing up for that decent pay rise. It is because our members are standing up that the government is intent on kicking lumps out of our rights at work.

That is my second priority: defending our rights at work and crucially defending that right to strike. Let us just be clear about what the government's minimum services level legislation will mean in practice. It will mean someone can vote for industrial action in a lawful industrial action ballot, get over all the ballot thresholds, the hurdles, the barriers the government puts in our way, give notice to take strike action, your employer can instruct you to work and if you don't you can face the sack. That is an attack on trade unionists, an attack on trade unionism pure and simple. It is wrong and it is unworkable. We believe it may well be unlawful, but the key thing is this: we need to oppose this bill, continue to oppose this bill – that is what the TUC has been doing throughout. We have worked with the House of Lords to try and detoxify elements of the bill, crucially that point about sacking workers. We won four important amendments late last month in the House of Lords. We are exploring with our unions the best way, if we can, to challenge not just this legislation but other legislation designed to restrict the right to strike should the legislation ever get onto the statute book, and we are committed to organising a mass rally on the night that the legislation returns to the House of Commons, and holding Labour to its commitment to repeal the legislation as and when we have a Labour government.

The key thing is this. If this legislation comes in I am sure that this conference, our unions, the TUC, will send a clear and unequivocal message. We will not stand by if any firefighter, any teacher, any rail worker, any civil servant loses their job as a result of this legislation. We will fight to defend the right to strike and we will fight to defend every single worker who exercises that right to strike. Let us make that commitment here today from this union, from this conference.

That is just one reason. That legislation is just one reason why we need to make sure at the next election that the Tories pay the price for their political attacks on the unions and the misery they have inflicted on our members and our communities over the last 13 years.

So the third key priority is securing political change in Westminster. What does that look like? I think realistically a Labour government but a Labour government that goes into the next election on a manifesto that speaks to the issues that matter to you, to your members and to our unions. Now, I know you will hear from Angela later this afternoon, but I think we absolutely want to hold Labour to that commitment which has been made to unions, shaped by unions, agreed with unions, that new deal for workers, within the first 100 days of a Labour government: banning zero hours contracts, banning fire and rehire, day one employment rights, union rights to access the workplace, new fair pay agreements to raise up standards across whole sectors of the economy, repealing that strike bill and the other anti-union legislation as well.

As we get closer to the election I can guarantee you this: there will be voices on the other side calling for Labour to water down those commitments. So we need to hold Labour to those commitments. We need to fight for those commitments and we need to be clear that we want the next Labour government to re-set the balance of power in Britain's workplaces. It is time to be bold and it is time to fix broken Britain.

Winning that change though, winning the next election, defending the right to strike, winning decent pay rises, all of that and more won't happen just because we wish it to happen. It happens because we will fight for it, we will organise for it and we will vote for it. So the overwhelmingly priority has to be for this union, for every union in the TUC, to build a bigger, better more diverse, more inclusive trade union movement, because whatever happens in the future, whoever is in government, our best defence is always, and has always been, strong unions in the workplace, reps in the workplace, organisation, unions able and committed to take on bad bosses and to win. A key part of that is making our movement not just bigger, not just much stronger, but more diverse, more inclusive and

more representative. I can see the sign over there “Equality matters”. I know that this union yesterday committed itself to do whatever it can to tackle racism and misogyny and homophobia within the fire service. That commitment, important for your union, that commitment has to be replicated right across our union. It means tackling racism in our workplaces and, if it raises its head, in our movement as well. It means challenging discrimination in our workplaces and in our movement as well.

And it means – and this is a difficult one for all unions, we have had some shocking reports from some of our affiliates over the last months, but we need to take it head on – challenging sexual harassment not just in work places but in our own movement as well, something that Matt has been leading on with us at the TUC. We need a zero tolerance environment for sexual harassment in our movement because a movement that is not a safe and inclusive space for women is not a movement that is fit for purpose. So send that message out from this conference, not just a job for the sisters, but for us brothers as well, where we see that behaviour we call that behaviour out, we challenge that behaviour, we don’t tolerate it. Because that is fundamental trade unionism at its heart and we can come at this different ways. I have been an activist for over 30 years in this movement, and people have different politics and some people are Labour Party members and some people aren’t, and some people have different political views and we all approach trade unionism in a different way, but at its heart what this movement is about is about friendship and solidarity between working people; friendship and solidarity between all working people, women and men, young and old, black and white, LGBT+ and straight, all of us working together, and when we do work together and when we do organise together, when we fight together and when we take action together, that is when we win together. Solidarity comrades.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, if you read the preamble to our work, the preamble to our rule book has three fantastic paragraphs about what this union is fundamentally about and it sets out our role in organising workers and then it says actually we cannot really change things on our own. People in my position for decades have said we need to look beyond the fire station doors. We are part of a movement. We are part of a movement in Britain, we are part of a movement internationally, and the TUC is a fundamental part of that. Yes, we may have debates and disagreements occasionally, but actually we recognise our role within the wider Labour movement.

Paul, thanks very much for that fantastic speech on behalf of our conference. I know that we will wish you well in your new role. It is going to be challenging and if you think of the things that Paul has listed, many of those are for discussion today at our conference or during this week and many of those challenges we cannot meet on our own. We need to build a movement against the anti-union laws and that will be discussed at our conference today. So, Paul, we wish you well as the General Secretary of the TUC and we look forward to working with you over a long career. We have got a couple of gifts which I am sure you gather as you travel around various conferences. Thanks very much Paul.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right conference, we are now back in session, back on with the business of the conference. I now call resolution 38, Challenge to National Operational Guidance on BA Wearers, moved by Durham. The EC support.

Resolution 38 CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE ON BA WEARERS

Conference notes that within the National Operational Guidance for Breathing Apparatus (BA), under the subheading ‘Procedures for Breathing Apparatus Operations’ it is stated:

“BA teams will consist of at least two BA wearers; only those trained in the use of BA can be BA wearers. One BA team member should be a competent firefighter.”

Conference believes that the term “should” is open to abuse by fire and rescue services, leading to unsafe practices where two development and/or apprentice firefighters are allowed to wear BA together. Whilst this issue is being challenged locally, Conference feels that more could be done nationally.

Conference instructs the Executive Council, through the appropriate structures, to demand that the word “should” be changed to ‘will’, ensuring increased safety for firefighters and the public.

DURHAM

GUY LAWES (Durham):

Moving resolution 38, challenge to national operational guidance. I am here to talk specifically about a particular line that is written within operational guidance or, more so, an actual word. Over the last couple of days myself and Andy have been speaking to delegates from various places, and what we have picked up from people is there operational guidance is a good thing, but there are also quite a few people that don't particularly like it so much.

Our experience has been that from its inception, despite its positives, we have seen it used directly to lessen our training standards and our frequency in certain areas. Words which were written with a good intention to achieve parity across the services have been manipulated by our employers in order to justify cuts to staff, appliance availability and, sadly, our risk critical training. Specifically, this resolution calls for support in changing a single word which, by its omission, allows employers to put our least experienced staff into places that contain the greatest risk.

In Durham we have seen that this has been into practice locally where development or apprentice firefighters have been used to solely make up the BA crews in their entirety. This has, sadly, in at least one instance contributed to an occurrence involving an injury to a firefighter who required hospitalisation. We will continue to fight this issue locally. However, we feel that it does have potential to have ramifications nationally and for these resolutions we ask you to support resolution 38. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Guy, does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is now open for debate. Anybody? No. 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 resolution 52, Breathing Apparatus Safety Levels, moved by Lincolnshire. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 52 BREATHING APPARATUS SAFETY LEVELS

Conference notes that firefighter safety when using breathing apparatus has long been campaigned for by our Union, holding the Fire Sector to task to ensure an evolution in equipment and auxiliaries are introduced to everyday use.

In recent years, the introduction of telemetry has proved once again an addition to safety levels whilst crews are committed in breathing apparatus, however the financial implications form a major reason for some services not purchasing this level of vitally important equipment.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to campaign for the inclusion of telemetry as part of breathing apparatus safe working practices to ensure cost is no longer an issue when it comes to breathing apparatus safety.

LINCOLNSHIRE

RICHARD WRIGHT (Lincolnshire):

Moving resolution 52. Recently our service in Lincs has undertaken a trial using telemetry equipment in BA. The feedback from the training department and the members was very positive. However, the purchase hasn't gone through with costs cited as a major reason why Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue have not bought the telemetry units. This resolution simply instructs the EC to campaign for the inclusion of telemetry as part of BA safe working practices to ensure cost is no longer an issue when it comes to our members' safety. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rick. Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. The EC give qualified support. The qualification, Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you comrade. Look, thanks for bringing this. We just discussed in C8 who the professional voices are on BA safety. We know the threat that our BA safety is under. Our bosses are constantly looking to plug gaps. We do have no current policy on this so the EC are offering qualified support to this but that will require the appropriate research to provide the details of what works, what doesn't and all the standards that are currently in use, and as per previous requests, comrades, that is going to require a two-way street so when we come asking for info, please do get it back to us. But qualified support from the executive council. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Riccardo. I will now put resolution 52 to the vote. All those in favour in please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para C9. Conference, I will be taking the following resolutions in the same debate, both can carry: resolution 35, Inadequate and Dangerous Crewing Campaign, moved by the National Retained Committee; and resolution 45 Crew Deficient Mobilising moved by Cambridgeshire. I now call resolution 35 moved by the NRC. The EC support with explanation resolution 35 and they support with explanation resolution 45.

Resolution 35 INADEQUATE AND DANGEROUS CREWING CAMPAIGN

Conference notes that resolution 'Inadequate and Dangerous Crewing Levels' from Conference 2022 instructed the Executive Council (EC) to compile information from all brigade secretaries and provide an up to date picture of how widespread the practice of inadequate and dangerous crewing is.

Conference further instructed the EC to formulate a national strategy aimed at reversing this safety critical trend. This strategy was to be published by the end of 2022. The National Retained Committee (NRC) do not believe this resolution has been actioned. We are now seeing our Members being mobilised in crews of just two persons.

Conference demands that the EC launch a campaign along similar lines to the successful DECON campaign. The aim of this is to educate and agitate our Members as to the detrimental effects of riding with less than five crew, and also to provide our Officials with the confidence and support that they need to oppose these dangerous practices.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

GORDON NIMMO (NRC):

Moving resolution 35 on inadequate and dangerous crewing campaign. The National Retained Committee would like to see the end of dangerous crewing practices to understand the issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of RDS personnel, and the challenges of keeping appliances on the run. However, to keep appliances on the run, dangerous practices are being used within the retained duty system nationally.

Conference will be aware that this has been brought up in resolutions previously many times, yet brigades up and down the country are still continuing to send appliances out the door understaffed, ill-equipped with insufficient crews putting both RDS members and our communities at risk. Comrades, it doesn't matter if it is an initial call or a make up. Any type of members going out in an appliance with less than five, there is an increased danger. If you get a running call, in their own town or village and they are going to act. We know they will. The employers know they will, but acting in these situations with inadequate crewing is wholly unsafe.

Such practices putting members in a position to dual-role as OIC and driver, the driver having to undertake BA role duty development with firefighters running in the back, even with the dangerous practice of running with two in an appliance. It shows that the retained duty system is completely underfunded, understaffed and under resourced. Yet when employers rule out reliance on the RDS to provide fire cover within the brigades, they are counting on their appliances only being available due to these dangerous practices being undertaken.

Employers are putting members' lives at risk and the public in jeopardy by putting moral pressure on the members to respond whilst undertaking these dangerous crewing practices whilst brigades currently sending appliances of first pump to confirm with a crew of three.

Conference previously instructed the EC to formulate a national strategy in reversing these safety critical practices by the end of 2022. The NRC do not believe this has been achieved. Conference demands that the EC launch a campaign along the lines of the successful DECON campaign. The aim of this is to educate and agitate the members that their RDS is not a second class duty system. These two duty systems should not be expected to mobilise under these dangerous safety critical crewing levels and to provide members and officials with the confidence and support needed to oppose these dangerous crewing practices. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 45, Crew Deficient Mobilising, moved by Cambridgeshire.

Resolution 45 CREW DEFICIENT MOBILISING

Conference will be aware that the National Retained Committee, regional committees and brigade committees have consistently raised (at previous Conferences) the issue of fire and rescue services mobilising appliances with insufficient or deficient crew which takes place in many forms nationally.

Resolution 24 from Conference 2022 (Inadequate and Dangerous Crewing levels) was moved and unanimously supported; since then crew deficient mobilising has been implemented in other brigades, most recently Cambridgeshire.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to explore the options we have to combat this, utilising the National Health and Safety Committee and all their power, as well as any other means available to us.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CALLUM HODGKIN (Cambridgeshire):

Speaking to move Cambridgeshire's resolution against the practice of crew deficient mobilising. Last year I spoke in support of Cumbria's resolution, resolution 29, opposing three-person crewing. Since conference 2022, Cambridgeshire has now expanded its practice of crew deficient mobilising sending RDS appliances to all incident types including house fire persons reported. Often these will arrive as the first crew in attendance.

As brigade officials, we have tirelessly opposed this for nearly eight months. The consultation process that we took part in was merely brushed off. Any concerns that we had were completely brushed away, and the meetings that we sat in with RDS stations, exactly the same: members voicing their opinions and senior managers brushing off concerns.

We have been constantly ignored as elected members and representatives for Cambridgeshire. The introduction of the crews of three within Cambridgeshire was met with quite a bit of resistance from our members. Many of our RDS submitted acting-under-duress letters. Eighty eight per cent of our RDS members replied to a poll, an in-house poll, in opposition and some of our members actually resigned, myself included, from the retained. A large proportion of our RDS have members and non-members who have expressed their opposition but this has fallen on deaf ears of senior managers.

We mobilised managers to combined fire authority meetings. Our brigade secretary, Mark, spoke to implore the fire authority to overturn or at least pause the implementation so we could sit down and have a conversation. This was noted but they chose to take no action.

This isn't an issue that is confined to Cambridgeshire. As we are all aware, this is a well-embedded crewing system within many fire and rescue services. The fact that we are yet to see a firefighter injury or death because of this practice is unbelievable and is testament to the skill of our members on those stations.

I believe the only course of action we have now to tackle this is to use all of the might, knowledge and expertise of our national health and safety committee and exploring any and all means available to us. Health and safety is the biggest tool that we have in our arsenal as a union, and we believe that this crewing model will fall short legally and on health and safety grounds. We have a duty to oppose this for our RDS members, for firefighters that have been forced on to the system and for the public that we serve. Conference, I urge you to support this resolution and, in turn, support RDS members, your RDS branches and your community. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Callum. I just confirm the EC's support with explanation. Right. That is open for debate. Anybody?

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

I just want to speak a little about both the resolutions really. What I am doing here is just being a bit honest, and I think we have got to be a bit honest with ourselves over this and look at what the resolutions actually say. I would prefer the position that one was withdrawn in favour of the other, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

I think what we have got to recognise is that the wording in resolution 35 says "with crews less than five". Can every official in this room say, hand on heart, that they don't have training in place, practices in place, policies in place, guidance, recognised procedures, where we go out with crews of four? I think that is really important, that we have got to be honest with ourselves. We have got watch numbers reducing, unit numbers reducing, we have got amount of leave to take, we have got members taking leave, leaving appliances on four, and it is happening. I am not standing here saying Derbyshire is perfect and it is not happening in our backyard because it is, but I do want to put a little bit of honesty to it. If we are going to go out and campaign, and I think resolution 35 is asking for that, to say it is five on an appliance or nothing, then we need to be prepared for what comes with that.

So I just think there is a lot of other things to bear in mind, whether that be sickness levels, temporary promotions, and fitting all those different things into the watch and the unit environment. So I wholeheartedly support both of the resolutions, and probably the intent behind both the resolutions, and the speakers have spoken about crews of three which is something we have worked really hard in our brigade to resist. We still have an absolute policy that we do not agree it. It is in our brigade in the very smallest form. Our retained members, I have to credit them, they do a fantastic job of trying their absolute hardest to make sure it doesn't happen, so crews of three please understand, I am absolutely behind it. But when you are talking about a campaign with having five or nothing, I think we do need a little bit of dose of reality and we need to make sure we know what we are taking on and being honest, because we do know there are appliances out there going out with four under all the things that I have just mentioned. So absolutely supporting the resolutions, but I just wanted to just add that and be honest with conference, and I think we all just need to take a look at that. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. That is what I meant in my opening address. You have got to take ownership of these resolutions when we go back to our brigades and start implementing what you are putting your hands up and voting for. Anybody else in the debate? Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president, conference. Conference, we are seeing a theme here, aren't we? Literally from day one when I got given the health and safety remit for the Fire Brigades Union, I have seen chief fire officers take away the appropriate PCR COVID testing from us, we were on the front line of a deadly pandemic, we discussed at this conference. I have seen them try and take the breathing apparatus off us in high rise fires, and every single one of them sees them every day downplaying the links between our profession and cancer. They are willing to sell off our safety, downgrade our safety standards and our professionalism to plug gaps, deliver savings and do the government's bidding.

I think these unsafe reduced crews are amongst the worst examples of that. They are not just unsafe for us, they are unsafe for the communities that we serve. Our profession isn't a game. We have discussed at this very conference the tragic reminders we have had this year of how dangerous our profession can be, and reduced crews don't just pose that immediate risk of injury, that immediate risk of death; they have adverse effects on our mental health. Sending crews to incidents where they are unable to assist, where they do not have the resources to carry out their professional service has that effect on us. It increases the exposures we are getting to the cancer disease causing elements that we have discussed at this conference. It makes decontamination, when we can't away from things quick enough, when we haven't got enough resources to deliver our services in time to get back, it makes DECON difficult or at times even impossible.

I think we need to realise – and I suppose it is reflective of this achievability and what is required from what we have heard from Chris – how deep this runs within the National Fire Chiefs Council on delivering this. One of the most absurd consequences of this policy being implemented was in my old region, it was in Suffolk, when the current chair of the NFCC was the CFO of Suffolk at the time. He reduced crews to two. They couldn't even deliver their

own banks person policy. We understand what that means. They could not reverse fire engines in Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service under this policy. This is a professional voice they want to be. Clearly not if the incident is in a cul-de-sac by the sounds of it.

They are making a joke out of our profession. I heard the general secretary stood on a fire engine outside Suffolk County Council, when Mark Hardingham was inside, and he was urging chief officers, they were willing, they have got our crests on their chest, they are willing to introduce these policies. Our safe standards, our safety at work standards, are not plucked out of the air; they are born out of the death and injury of our members, and I heard the general secretary remind them it is about time they learned the history of their own profession if they are going to start imposing these policies on us. They are policies, by the way, that they will never work themselves. You will hear chief fire officers saying "It is safe, just wait outside. Wait outside until you have made up." How long are we waiting for those make ups now. How often is a chief fire officer going to be on that reduced crew waiting outside while there are people trapped inside that fire? They are making a joke of our profession.

This has been raised on the health and safety committee, on the most recent one in fact, and we will build a campaign about this. But those crews of two I have just told you about in Suffolk. We defeated that. That crew of two doesn't exist anymore. There are parts of the East Midlands, there are parts of our union where we have defeated it, and we have done it by organising, but it is not an easy task. There are provisions for us, we know this, there are provisions in our rights where we can make our own assessments and if we don't believe it to be safe, we can remove ourselves from that. We have to give confidence to our members, and this is a difficult task. There is a financial element to this: asking our RDS brothers and sisters who are predominantly affected by this not to go out, also comes with a financial attack.

This needs raising at every brigade committee, this needs raising at every joint safety committee. We will work through head office to provide a campaign to support that, provide the resources, we will use the expertise of the health and safety committee to support that but ultimately, you heard it from the president there about ownership, we have to be organising and tackling these within our brigades.

Resolution 45 rightly talks about the power of health and safety. That power of health and safety isn't words written on a page. Our power for health and safety is in our workplaces where we organise and resist this. So this isn't an easy task comrades, but we raised it on the health and safety committee. We will continue to do that work, and that is the qualification for the 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 will now put resolution 45 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. I now call resolution 39, Firegrounds are for Firefighters, moved by South Yorkshire. The EC are seeking South Yorkshire withdraw the resolution or they will oppose it.

Resolution 39 FIRE GROUNDS ARE FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Conference applauds the strength and unity that our Members have shown over the past ten months, standing shoulder to shoulder to demand fair pay.

Conference is also aware of the future fights that each brigade will face in the coming years.

Officials have seen brigades across the country bolster their contingency/ resilience workforces, the majority of which have recruited with promises of work unrelated to times of industrial action such as major incidents or spate conditions. This cannot go unchallenged.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to explore all means possible to prevent the deployment of contingency/ resilience workers outside of periods of industrial action.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

STUART SMITH (South Yorkshire):

Resolution 39, firegrounds are for firefighters. This resolution was brought as a result of what we have seen taking shape over the last few years and certainly over the last twelve months. Comrades, we have all played a role in recent months standing in unity with all our members in the fight for fair pay whilst in the background a workforce has been cobbled together in the event that ultimately we were forced to take strike action.

These work forces are known as contingency or resilience workers, some of which have now been promised work unrelated to times of strike action such as major incidents or spate conditions. We do know that these conditions are predicted to occur more and more as global warming leads to more natural disasters in this country. If our managers believe that we need more firefighters, then they should be employing more of our sisters and brothers under our right and proper terms and conditions. Do we accept this? Is it right? Is it safe that these workers could possibly share the fireground working alongside our members?

Conference, we say absolutely not. We must explore how this can be prevented. Conference, after discussions with our EC member and the AGS, we are aware that the final paragraph in our resolution and the way it is written will create issues for our union, but I want to be clear, members in South Yorkshire with the trade union history that we have, do not support the use of these scab crews during periods of strike action or the use of these same crews outside of industrial action. We ask that the EC consider the premise of the resolution providing support to local officials where these issues present themselves, but in light of our discussion with the AGS, South Yorkshire withdraws resolution 39.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Stu. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you comrade. You have got that assurance from us and thank you for withdrawing.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 33, Flame Retardants, moved by London. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 33 FLAME RETARDANTS

Conference notes that multiple studies (which include the University of Central Lancashire ‘Flame Retardants in UK Increase Smoke Toxicity Report’ and ‘Flame Retardants in UK Increase Smoke Toxicity More than they Reduce Fire Growth Rate’ Chemosphere Volume 196 2018 page 6 by McKenna et al) have shown that chemical flame retardants used in furniture, increase toxicity in fires and are hazardous to human health and the environment. There is further gathering evidence that chemical flame retardants provide negligible delay to fire ignition, worsen fire conditions, and therefore will increase dangers to firefighter safety and welfare.

The levels and effects of flame retardant chemicals must be evaluated during fires, manufacturing, normal use in homes, workplaces and eventual disposal and recycling.

Conference notes the content of the Environmental Audit Committee report section 90 to 94 from 2019 highlighting these issues and the dangers posed to firefighters.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to actively lobby for robust legislation in order to ensure that any flame retardant chemical is properly tested for both efficacy and safety before being put on the market.

LONDON

BARRY JACKSON (London):

Moving resolution 33, flame retardants. President, conference, this is an extremely difficult and political moral scandal to surmise in a couple of minutes, but I will give it a crack. Strap yourselves in.

We have got two approaches we can have towards firefighter cancers. There is the DECON. That is very reactive. The chemical companies, they put the chemicals in whatever, and they say to the firefighters, you deal with that, you bag yourselves up, you will be OK. The correct approach is more, in my opinion, proactive and that is to stop it at source, to stop these vile chemicals getting in our systems and causing our firefighters to get cancer.

A while ago myself and Robbie Irvine, a colleague of mine, started to look at cancers in the LFB. The one question we could never really answer was why – when I looked at it I timelined the union and conference and all the rest of it. Firefighter cancers or toxicants were first referenced in 2004. That was by a motion by Staffs, but the one question I always thought of is why wasn't it before then. Surely the health and safety would have improved. We were wearing Proto sets in the 70s – I am sure Matt remembers – and some others maybe. Our procedures were so much better. Why the cancers? Why in 2004 are we first referencing it?

Then we looked at it, and we looked at the flame retardants and the introduction of them in and around 1988. People just didn't take their furniture and check it out overnight when these chemicals came in. It was a legacy affair, so it would take 10 or 15 years. The timeline then fitted like a glove, and then conference after conference it started building and building. We checked in America and it was exactly the same timeline, and it all started making sense.

The big turning point in this was 1979. To give you a bit of background it was Woolworths fire 1979, and that was Manchester. Ten people died in a furniture showroom in Woolworths. Instead of looking at the ignition, which was cigarettes mainly, self-extinguishing cigarettes, a lot of pushback – I will not go into the potential corruption of that – but they started looking at the fuel, which was the furniture. The furniture, back in the day, would have been horsehair, it would have been things like cottons, which were natural flame retardants. What they started to do was to say we will replace the foam, always making things cheaper. It was flammable foam based, petroleum based, so highly ignitable. To slow up that, they looked at these regs and said we will put a load of chemicals in that are completely unregulated. We will put the chemicals in the foam and we will test that and see what happens, and oh look, it delays ignition. The delay is minimal. It is arguable the delay it will get to ignition. But instead of the ignition what it does is it gives off something you guys in this room will be all familiar with, black toxic smoke, and that is your chemicals. If you ever drag a mattress out that is the chemicals in there. It is in your sofas. It is in your baby products. I have asked this question of people: can anybody tell me why chemicals should be in baby products? Babies don't smoke, they don't use charging phones. Why is that? Why are chemicals in your mattresses? What do you put on top of a mattress? A mattress cover which will ignite before it gets to the mattress. There are a lot of common sense reasons why this shouldn't be in there.

Of course, we are the end users to this so when, back in my day – I can say this, when I joined in 1995 – a senior hand would grab me and say "Don't put the fire out" (some of you might be familiar with that), "use the fire to guide you." I was talking to some of our younger members. They cannot see their hands in front of their faces when you rely exclusively on thermal-imaging equipment. That is the chemical. It is getting in your body and it is causing us cancers. It doesn't just cause cancers. These things cause neurological damage, hormone disruption as well as the cancer rates that we see.

So where are we with all this? They are currently reviewing regulations for this, but it is delay tactics, delay, delay, delay. We can get this legislation and we can really look at all these chemicals. What happens is they naturally leach out and absorb into your system. They test them when they are completely finite but they don't test them over time. Every time you sit down, chemicals come out. The UK has the highest level of chemicals in dust. Guess where your kids play? On the floor. Your animals etc. That is why we are seeing, even in our own society, why we have these levels of chemicals in normal human beings. It is ridiculous and also, in California, they are getting rid of them in America on the premise they just don't work and they shouldn't be in there: killer whales, with these flame retardants, off the coast of California along with polar bears. It is in our system, it is in our environment.

So, like I say, this union – what I've learned about this union – is we punch well above our weight. Let's make no mistake who we are taking on here: multi-billion pound corporations who want to put chemicals in everything in our society and in our furniture. We are the end users for this. That is who we are taking on. It seems like a hopeless mission but what intentions? You know. We can do this as a union. We punch above our weight, but we can only do it if we back this resolution. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Barry. Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That is open for debate. Anybody?

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

Thank you, president. So the EC are offering qualified support to this resolution. The qualifications are that we need to study and assess the reports, but it does need careful consideration. We spoke to the team at UCLan at length. They don't have any knowledge of the first report mentioned in the resolution. They do have knowledge of the second one. The resolution mentions the one published in Chemosphere. They tested four types basically: three types of foam/fabric combinations. Three were thought to be typical of what is out there, and the fourth was a really expensive flame-retardant free foam.

It is a limited study in their understanding and what they said it actually shows is more work required. We don't yet have here a demonstrable link between flame retardants in furniture specifically and cancers in firefighters. We do have our history around campaigning for the furniture regs, protecting the furniture regs, and we have to have that consideration of when we talk deregulation, they don't just take out the bits we don't like, they deregulate.

But we are supporting this. We support the resolution, it is just on that note of caution. We have to assess these reports closely. We will work with the team at UCLan on our findings but considering our previous position on furniture regs at the same time. So qualified support. Thank you conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 33 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. I now call resolution 37, Lithium Ion Batteries, moved by Buckinghamshire. The EC support.

Resolution 37 LITHIUM ION BATTERIES

Conference notes the significant acceleration to provide alternative energy solutions which comes at an increased risk, specifically regarding the risk lithium ion batteries pose to firefighters.

The penetration of these devices into all levels of our society has far outstripped our knowledge of the risks and hazards associated with lithium ion batteries.

Conference is concerned at the lack of oversight, legislation or scrutiny in their application.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council (EC) to campaign and demand the UK Governments introduce the necessary laws, compliance, and regulation.

Conference also instructs the EC to call on Chief Fire Officers, National Fire Chiefs Council and the Home Office to provide better training, inspection and control of these devices for all UK Fire and Rescue Services.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

KIERON THOMAS: (Buckinghamshire):

Resolution 37, Lithium ion batteries. As the resolution states, there is a significant acceleration in demand to provide alternative energy solutions in the UK and across the world which comes with an increased risk to the safety of our members, specifically regarding the risks of lithium ion batteries and what they pose to firefighters. There is a growing increase of these devices in all levels of our society and it has far outstripped our knowledge of the risks and hazards associated with lithium ion batteries.

The UK needs to look at alternative energy solutions. We know that but it comes with an increased risk to firefighters especially dangers of lithium ion batteries. Lithium ion batteries are common in all aspects of modern life, powering your smart watch, E-scooters, motor vehicles, domestic energy systems and even bulk energy which backs up our country's electricity system. The cost of lithium ion battery waste fires for the UK economy last year was £158 million and this was just 48% of all waste fires.

What are the dangers to firefighters? What are the dangers to our members and the public? The risks are huge and with more and more uses of lithium ion batteries, their presence at a fire is not always obvious.

Lithium ion is a chemical reaction allowing energy to be stored in various sized vessels. When involved in a fire situation and either the cause or spread from an adjacent fire, these are ticking time bombs producing the phenomenon called thermal runaway, highly flammable and toxic gas trails that look similar to smoke. When adding oxygen to the mix either through compartmental entry and firefighting media, this becomes highly volatile and explosive. Fires involving these batteries can burn up to 1200 degrees in a short time.

April 16 2021 an explosion occurred in Beijing where firefighters were responding to a fire of lithium ion batteries connected to a rooftop solar panel. Two firefighters were killed and one seriously injured. In 2021 New Zealand's national fire service lost a fire appliance due to a lithium ion battery which was on charge for a PPE fan in the vehicle. The UK government has pushed for more use of so called greener and renewable energy within the UK with no real oversight or legislation or scrutiny. Lithium ion fires are a global pandemic faced by the world's firefighters. The FBU has always been on the front foot of fighting for what is safe and firefighters. Let us continue and be at the front and fight for better regulations and safety. Support the resolution. We need to get ahead of the risk. Let us demand the UK government introduce better and safer laws, better compliance and improve regulation and let us demand for better training, better inspection and control of these batteries so firefighters and our members are kept safer from this increased risk. Conference I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thank you. The EC is supporting. Does that have a seconder?

BARRY JACKSON (London):

Seconding resolution 37 and trying to beat Merseyside's record for talking in a single session. President, conference, we raised this a number of years ago about lithium ion and the concerns of it. My comparison would be it could potentially be the new asbestos on our hands where it intends to do good, but there are dire consequences of it. Kieron mentioned there about thermal runaway and we cannot deal with it. We don't know how to deal with it. There are all sorts of things. You put covers on them. In Germany and places like that they can pick them up and put them in things, but you can't deal with the fires once they enter thermal runaway. We are just not getting any training. That is the first aspect, Kieron said. But what is really important is this legislation, and that is where I think we can do damage in the FBU. The legislation, what happened there was a fire in Arizona in 2019, four firefighters nearly killed, and this legislation entered and it was all about – we have got buildings in London that contain these lithium ion batteries, in the walls and the cavity walls and things like that, so when entering it gives off hydrogen fluoride. It is an immensely toxic chemical and if we have this signage even letting us know things are in there, it would be one thing, but also isolate the supply, bring them on the outside of buildings, there are things we can do like they did in Arizona, but it took four firefighters to be nearly killed for that to happen. Let's not let that happen in London and let's learn the lesson. Conference, I second. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Barry. That is open for debate.

DAN McNULTY (North Wales):

I was going to second this proposal but London beat me to it so I will just put my points across to it. Some stats that I have got from my friends and colleagues over in New York. In the last four months of the last year, September to December, there were 88 lithium ion battery fires, some of which were fatalities, one including a family of four, mother, father and two young children. The vast majority of these fires are caused by E-scooters. The craze hasn't yet arrived in the UK to the same scale as New York, but will be coming. We can start to see that from going to the large cities. I am sure London would agree. You now start to see these scooters available for hire, but with people potentially not being able to afford the cost of living with petrol, they are looking at commuting within cities using these scooters. They then store them within their houses. If they then have a faulty batch, then we have a risk of fire there.

To try and tackle this, I am not trying to compare New York to us in the UK especially not the North Wales, vastly different, although yes, we may have the mighty city of Wrexham now, a little bit different and not quite on the same scale. The technology and the equipment that we are having to try and tackle this new epidemic is very sparse, very sporadic. Recently, we have had new electric vehicle blankets put on our fire appliances. Only two for the whole of

North Wales, one at either end of the country, which takes roughly – if it is in the middle, which we know it will be – two hours to respond with that blanket. It also does state on the blanket “This is not for use on a fire”. According to the manufacturer the blanket should be used on a car before it goes on fire. How we are going to know that, I don’t know; our mind sensors have not been fine-tuned enough yet.

Last year alone, according to the BBC, there were 700 fires in the UK that were linked to lithium ion batteries, mostly in waste sites. We had one in particular in North Wales that was an 8 pump fire which again – I will compare to London – would be nothing for them, but for North Wales where struggled to get 10 on, that was all of North Wales. So we second this – third this proposal, and we would like to see some changes, some better training and better equipment put across. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for sharing that. I now put resolution 37 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference, we are now going to break for lunch. Can I have you back in the hall at 2 o’clock sharp because we have got a guest speaker. Thank you.

Break for lunch.

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, can you come to order please. Steve Price-Hunt, can you please leave the building, don't turn round, don't pass GO. No, stop Steve. Steve, stop, stop, stop. Don't let him out, don't let him out, don't let him out. Oh, conference, that was Steve Price-Hunt's last appearance at our conference. He is retiring shortly and I just wanted to say a massive thank you for all he has done for all his members in West Midlands and region 7 over the years. He has worked tirelessly. I know he has peed off a lot of presidents in the past, and taught many of them, as he does with everybody else no doubt, but he has been a great servant to this union and will continue to do so until he retires. A big hand for Steve Price-Hunt. He's back. Bring him back in. Steve, many thanks for all you have done. Right, conference, I now call Phil Millar to give the standing orders report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Conference, we have just one more delegate change if you could turn to your list please. Region 5, Lancashire, remove Tom Cogley, replace with Dave Shaw. Conference, the result of the second election to standing orders is in and Gary Lennie has been re-elected. Thank you very much for that. The fringe meeting, can I remind you, is this evening at 5.45. It is stand up to racism and it will now be held here in the main conference hall. A good attendance at that would be very much appreciated. Can you please ensure that any documentation is put away in the folders that are provided when you have finished the last session today. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.*
I am just going to bring Mark Rowe in to give you a quick legal update. Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thanks, president. Thanks, conference, for the opportunity to provide you with a quick legal update. Conference on 19 January 2021 the Staffordshire brigade secretary, Rob Moss, was dismissed under capability from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service after 28 years' service. The FBU's contention was, and still is, that Moss was dismissed because he was an FBU official and they used procedures of capability to do that. The executive council is very clear that when our members step up and become officials to defend our members in our workplaces if the bosses come for you, we will defend you by any and all means necessary and we, if necessary, will go for them.

Conference, here is the judgment received this morning. Let me read to you the final paragraph of 71 pages. It says: "The claimant's dismissal was therefore unfair and his complaint of unfair dismissal is accordingly well-founded. The question of compensation for unfair dismissal will be considered at a separate hearing." Conference, we fight, we win. Nobody – and the executive council mean nobody – attacks our officials. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark; great news. Conference, it now gives me great pleasure to welcome two good friends of the FBU who have travelled over from the US to be at our conference this week. Ed Kelly, who will address conference, is the General President of the International Association of Firefighters, the IAFF, and Jay Colbert is a Third District Vice-President of the IAFF. Conference, I would like you to join me in thanking them for making the long journey over to the UK to be part of conference this week.

The IAFF represents more than 300,000 full-time firefighters, professional firefighters and paramedics in the US and Canada. Ed was elected to the IAFF to be the tenth General President at the IAFF's 55th convention in March 2021 and previously served as the IAFF's general secretary/treasurer from 2016 to 2021. Ed is the son and grandson and brother and nephew and cousin of firefighters. He joined the Boston Fire Department as a firefighter EMT in 1997. Our unions were both founded in 1918 and have formed many alliances over the years. I am pleased that it is still growing stronger following Ed's election to general president. We are part of the same international alliance of firefighters and although the IAFF is far larger than the FBU, when you get down to basics, the firefighters in the US

face the same attacks to their terms and conditions, the reduced crewing that we have been talking about today, etc. So conference, please give a warm welcome to General President of the IAFF, Ed Kelly.

ED KELLY (General President IAFF):

My sisters and brothers, I hope I wake you up after lunch. It is a great honour to be here and I thank Matt Wrack, Ian, Ben, all of the executive for welcoming Jay and I over here. It is a true honour to be able to represent 335,000 paid professional firefighters and paramedics over North America, and as far as the Mariana Islands in the Pacific.

We have so much in common, and I will talk a little bit about that towards the end, but as Ian mentioned, I come from a long line of firefighters. My mother's father was a firefighter in Boston in the late 30s to the 60s. My father went on the job in the late 60s and served into the 2000s. I actually got to work alongside him. My mother's only sister, her husband was also a Boston firefighter. Two of my brothers, my oldest brother is a chief in East Boston, my younger brother is a lieutenant in Jamaica Plain, one of the neighbourhoods in Boston. I have a cousin that works on my truck, a lad of 17. I have another cousin that just went on the job in Braintree, one of the suburbs of Boston. I have another cousin that is on at Massport, which is the airport fire department at Logan Airport in Boston, so I like to say we are not exactly social climbers, you know. But I grew up in it. I grew up in it and found a love for it, and my father was involved in the union when I was a little kid, served on the bargaining team, and I remember marching around with picket signs when I was a little kid, with the promise of an ice cream after. I was very much brought up in the fire department. Out of all my brothers and sisters, I was the only one that really wanted to be a firefighter. My oldest brother is on the job, he just took the civil service exams and was lucky enough that he got called. My little brother, when he got out of the marine corps, he wanted to be a police officer. The city wasn't hiring at the time and he just took the fire department waiting to be called for the police department, but when he got on, his very first day on the job, they made a rescue and the woman lived, and he got the hook in his mouth and decided he wanted to stay in the fire department.

For me that was my only plan. That was my only calling. I got out of high school, I did demolition for a few years and in Boston, the way we hire, you really have to serve in the military to have a good chance of being hired by the fire department. I started in the air force, served as a firefighter in the air force on the crash school, got out of the air force and was hired in Boston in 1997, got involved in the union pretty much right away. I was talking to Riccardo last night about how he liked to throw grenades up here at the table, and now you sit at the table you have got to catch the grenades; it is a little bit different. But that is how we become leaders, right? We are willing to stand up, open our mouths and advocate, advocate for change. That's how I came up. I was a grenade tosser like Ben and Riccardo. Sure enough, the senior firefighters in my house said, "Hey, quit yapping. Get down the union hall and get involved." I got involved, started serving in positions within the union and then in 2005, I was elected president of Boston. I was a young kid at the time, comparatively, I was 31 years old as a young president. I served in Boston for five and a half years as president. We had tough fights with the then mayor at the time. It helped harden me, those trials, those tribulations were the crucible that moulded me into being a better labour leader.

One of my mentors was retiring as the state president and I will talk a little bit about how our union works in a minute, but I ran for it and was elected as president of Massachusetts. Five and a half years later I ran for and was elected as general secretary of our International which is headquartered in Washington DC. Then I ran for president and was elected two years ago. I have been serving as the general president for the past two years which, on some days, seems like it went by in the blink of an eye, and on other days it feels like I have been under water for two years. It is just an incredible honour to serve in my first love, my first calling, to be a firefighter. Inasmuch as I am honoured to serve in the union, it is a sacrifice. As you all know, it is a sacrifice you have to make for your family and for all of our families, but it comes at the cost of your own family and the time you spend at home. That is the penalty that we all pay. But you know when you are hot that the fight that we are in, being trade unionists, is every bit about our own family as it is about everybody else's. I still go to work once in a while. Our collective bargaining agreement allows me to have time off to serve the union, but if I am home and I want to, I choose to, I can go into the fire house and work with my group and touch the tools, and once in a while I go to a fire and get that energy back that reminds you of why we do – sitting in this room – what we do. It is an incredible honour.

Sitting at the top of what is the biggest change agent in the global fire service which, in my opinion, humbly, is the IAFF, our union in the States and Canada – because we have about 335,000 members which, as we were talking

about last night, drives the corporate interests that drives the standards (which I will talk about in a few minutes) that really defines the fire service in many ways, which I feel we can do a lot better job. We will talk a bit about that in a few minutes.

The IAFF itself is structured where we have two principal officers. We elect a general president and we elect a general secretary/treasurer. They are the only two positions that stretch throughout the IAFF. We then have 16 vice presidents. One of those vice presidents is not geographical. He represents just the federal firefighters of which we have about 3,500. There is an equal amount of federal firefighters that are in other federal unions. The other 15 district vice presidents that are elected are geographically located. We have three across Canada, western, eastern and centrally (the middle of Canada), and then in the States we go right across geographically, like Jay represents New England which is the six states in the top right hand corner of the United States. Jay and I came up together. Jay is a Sumner firefighter which is a tiny, little suburb. I would say it is a ghetto, but it is very expensive to live there now! It is right outside of Boston. He was president of Sumner while I was president of Boston. Then we both served as legislative agents in the state union and then served as president and secretary/treasurer of the state union, and now have moved up to the international board together. So we have been partners for a long, long time.

Jay represents all of the six New England states. We then have, moving all around the country, geographically located district vice-presidents. Then we have three elected trustees: one for Canada, one for the western United States and one for the eastern United States. Now, they are not voting members of the executive board. Their role is oversight: oversight of our finances, oversight of our policy to ensure that we are spending the members' money in accordance with our constitution and bye-laws. So it is an important job. Like anything, you know, when we get away from good checks and balances we can get ourselves into trouble.

When you get below our IAFF executive board, we have what we call our state and provincial associations. In the US it is states, in Canada it is provinces. The role of the state provincial associations is essentially to lobby on behalf of firefighters in their respective government houses. The bulk of our bread and butter benefits are governed in our state and provincial houses. Unlike you guys who have a national contract, which is impressive, we have contracts in 3,500 different locals. Some of them do not even have contracts and are what we call "right to work states". They are basically anti-union, but our pension benefits – we don't have nationalised healthcare until you turn aged 65, so our health benefits are negotiated at the table and governed by our state and provincial houses. The right to bargain, to the extent to which that right is protected and administered, is defined by our state and provincial houses.

Much of what we do that impacts us as firefighters is directly related to how successful our state provincial unions are lobbying their respective legislative houses. So it is a very important layer within the IAFF. It is interesting that we do not have mandatory affiliations for our locals – we have 3,500 locals – some of them, 70% of them have less than 50 members in a local. So the majority of our locals are real small town fire departments. There is no mandatory affiliation for a local to belong to a state or provincial association which is a challenge for us, because when we have locals, particularly our large locals, that start butting heads with our state provincial executives, they can take their ball and go home. They pull out of that state association and that has a crippling effect on our ability to lobby that particular legislature.

As you can imagine, when we lose a large local in our state provincial association, a large portion of those elected representatives, come from those big cities. When we go into lobby them we really have no impact on their next election which is where our power comes from to effect the change that we need. So that is one of our challenges that we hope to correct in the long term. When we talk about our locals, it is difficult for those small locals, 70% are under 50 members, to even function. They don't have much revenue. Even if they have a good, collectively-bargained agreement, if the chief wants to violate the agreement, they don't even have the money to pay an attorney to fight the grievance although the role of the local is to negotiate and enforce their collectively-bargained agreement. The state and provincials do the lobbying at the state and provincial level and the internationals do the federal lobbying and basically all of our high level needs of the fire service.

So when you get into how we are structured as an association, we have our elected principal officers, the general president and general secretary/treasurer who have offices in headquarters at Washington DC. The rest of our vice presidents are in their geographical locations. Within the IAFF, the general secretary/treasurer's job is just as you

would imagine: pay the bills, collect the dues, maintain the roles of the membership which are basically on the local secretaries to tell us who their members are and who has retired. On the president's side of the house, it is all of our externally facing mission: first and foremost, like I say, the mission of us as a firefighters' union, inasmuch as we have traditional needs like wages, benefits, working conditions, with our inherently dangerous profession, the very first and foremost mission of a firefighter union is health and safety. I like to tell our members the mission of the IAFF starts in front of a church and works backwards. When we lose a brother or sister in the line of duty, that is the compass we need to follow to protect the next firefighter coming along.

We have our health and safety. We are broken up into divisions in IAFF headquarters. Our health and safety division handles our health and safety obviously. We have general things like our training, our education and grants that we get out of the federal government to help administer that training and education. We, the IAFF, are the largest provider of hazardous material mitigation training in the United States. We have been for about 40 years. We also do other more hands-on stuff like our fireground survival training. We have our peer support training for behavioural health, a major investment that we are focused on, ensuring that we are getting the needs of our members met who are struggling. We actually have our own rehabilitation centre called the IAFF Center for Excellence and Behavioral Health. We can get members inpatient treatment if they need it.

We have trained about 10,000 of our members in peer support so when we have significant traumatic events, like at times we will have hurricanes (I am sure you have seen them on the news and wipe out entire regions, particularly around the south) that has a devastating impact on our members. Our members are on the line working. They cannot even take care of their families. We send in disaster relief teams to help them. A big part of that disaster relief is our peer support teams, behavioural health teams, that go in and help educate our members to the resources that they have available to them.

I love the report that we just heard on legal services. How important is that: that if we have a member willing to stand up and advocate on behalf of their brothers and sisters, that when management comes after them, that they have protection. We call that our guardian policy. So if we have a member that is fired, demoted, skipped promotion, anything as a result of their union advocacy, the IAFF will come in and provide legal coverage for them. We also have a bevy of other legal services that we deal with whether it is precedent setting cases where, as you guys know – you guys are dealing with the white papers that are written to come after your benefits and minimise your staffing – the right, the moneyed class, I like to say the union, trade unionists, there is always the fight between the rich and the poor. You know, since there were moats with alligators in them. The right, the moneyed class, has some of the smartest people in the world working against us at all times, and when crisis strikes, there is a dip in the economy, budgets get tight, you see those white papers start to come out of the file cabinet and put out in the newspapers as editorials, and spawn legislation to come after us.

So when we see those precedent setting cases, we jump in. The IAFF legal department will then jump in and pay that. We also have our communications department. How challenging is it right now to communicate with our members? All of us have these phones. Trying to compete for the consciousness of our members is such a challenge. There is so much coming at them driven by algorithms. They get force fed and then hardened in their positions. It is tough to even compete to get into their brains to show them what the union does for them. We are dealing with a whole generation of new kids, God bless them, they're great, but they are only raised getting their information off phones. Even though we could pay for sponsoring and try to get this message into their feed so they are seeing it and maybe they will read it, we are in competition with so many other entities to just compete for their consciousness. In the old days you would get a union newsletter and sit in the fire house. If it was that important, and it was a poster, you'd put it on the back side of the bathroom door so you had to read it. Now we have communications as a whole different world now. It is so powerful: whether it is good information or misinformation; it is all out there for our members.

We are politically powerful. We have to be in politics. And because we are politically powerful – and we are powerful in the States because we are not that big. 335,000 is not one of the bigger unions. Nor is it a large population. What is powerful is our brand: who we are, what we do, and that was built and inherited on the sacrifices of our members that came before us, that defined what sacrifice is for firefighters, and how we are geographically located. We are basically in every town with a blinking light, and we are usually kids that grew up in that town. So when they see

the firefighter support a particular candidate it means something. It is more powerful to the outside voter than is the mere fact that we could theoretically deliver some politician our numbers of voters as members. So that is also very important. We have our own political action and government affairs division which lobbies the federal government and assists our state and provincial associations lobbying the state provincial governments, as well as our political department within that division that helps them be successful in politics, which is the definition of how we achieve success in a public employee union that is dependent upon the elected politicians that will define not only our pay, our retirement benefits, our access to health care, but quite frankly they define how dangerous our job is: whether it is crew size, staffing etc.

We also have our technical assistance and information resources division. That is basically analysts that we hire that can do city and town budget analysis for our locals going into negotiations. They do response time, what we call GIS studies, that can show how many fire apparatuses should be protecting a time with that population, that density, with that response time capability. That gives us good arguments at the table again to make sure that we have proper crew sizes which is the most important thing we bring to an emergency. The most important thing we bring to a fire isn't water, and it is not ladders, it is people, and if we don't have adequate people, you can have all the ladders and water in the world, it doesn't matter. The fight that we have is for crew size.

We also have our information technology – which is a pain in the arse – our event management division. We have so many events, like the districts run, we have all of our training that we pump out in federal grants. They all require usually renting a hotel space, providing hotel accommodation for the instructors. That is a very busy shop, believe it or not. We also have four or five IAFF-wide events during the year: whether it is our affiliate leadership training seminar that we hold every January. We have our legislative conference in Washington DC in March, and then later on in March, in Ottawa, Canada, for our federal lobbying purposes. We have our fallen firefighter memorial every September in Colorado Springs. We have our convention or our health and safety Redmond symposium in alternating years in the summer, usually July or August. So there is a lot going on. We will have around 2,000 people come to an event.

I mentioned that we had provincial associations and then our locals. A lot of the work that gets done servicing our members gets done by the local leadership. That is one of the hardest jobs going, and I applaud everyone here that is a local leader. It was my toughest job as an elected leader, being the local president back in Boston. Whether it is someone getting arrested, behaviour or health issues that surfaced, you owned it. It is a tough, tough thing.

So when I look at the challenges that you guys have and the fights that you are taking on, they are the same fights that we have everywhere. If you think about the role we play in society, you know, it dates back to the horses, the handcarts, the buckets, the bells. It really stems from fear of what could be. We have watched towns burn down back in the 1600s. The need for a fire service has emerged and it is ever changing. Whether you think about the advent of whether it is hazardous materials or the need for technical rescue or all of the different roles that we, the traditional fire service are being forced into that we have to adapt, study, discipline into become experts. It is just about anything that could happen to the citizens that we took an oath to protect. You know, the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the US spawned the 9/11 Commission Report, and the number one failure they pointed to as the US failure on 9/11 was a failure to imagine. That is the challenge that we all have. That is the challenge of the fire service. Whatever can be imaginable, we have to be ready to respond to it.

We have an obligation to ourselves to do it in as safe a manner as possible. When you look at the number one killer of firefighters, it is cancer – hands down. Our memorial wall on Colorado Springs, roughly 70% of the names that we put on that wall every September have succumbed to cancer. One of the things I did when I became general president was create our own science and research department. We learn the hard way by realising that our bunker gear, our PPE – I said to Matt last night, my first set of bunker gear issued by Boston was Bristol. We bought it here. We bought Bristol gear. That is what I wore for my first probably 15 years on the job. In order to take on the cancer fight we came to realise that the bunker gear we have now that is driven by NFPA standards which again, because of the purchasing power in the United States, and the fact that the United States government recognises the NFPA as the standard for firefighter safety, it impacts firefighters everywhere. One of the standards that is called for in that NFPA standard is the UV light test for our inner moisture barrier. The inner barrier never sees UV light. Why do we have that test to begin with? The only moisture barrier that can withstand that UV light test be laden with PFAS, the

forever chemicals that we know are carcinogens, and it is not just cancer that it causes; it also is a cellular disruptor that leads to a lot of other negative health consequences including reproduction issues that plague a lot of our members.

So we have taken this fight wherever the fight may go. Our Canadian trustee, Alex Forrest, who fought for years to become a recognised member of IARC, which is the International Agency on Research on Cancer, which is a division of the World Health Organization, just this year was successful lobbying IARC to recognise firefighting as a group one carcinogen. That is a major victory for us as we fight for and lobby for presumptive benefits, which I know you guys have right at the forefront of your mission. Our benefits vary widely from state to state. Some have presumptive language that has passed legislation but never been funded. So essentially you may live in a state as a firefighter that has presumptive cancer on the books in law but get nothing if you get diagnosed with cancer. We just passed legislation last year and it is going to be signed into law officially. It was like being tested last year in North Carolina, which is the tobacco state in the United States, vehemently opposed to any cancer presumptive coverage for firefighters. That leaves only one state left without anything, but again, depending on where you live, the benefit is drastically different.

That division of science and research, we hired our first ever chief medical officer, a guy by the name of Danny Whu. He is an interesting individual. He was born in South America, raised in Miami, wanted to be a doctor, went and got his paramedic licence, worked in Brooklyn, New York, for about two years in the eighties and then got hired down in Miami-Dade County where he grew up. He served another 25 years in Miami-Dade, promoted to the position of chief of operations and, during that time, he also went to school, became a medical doctor, got a masters degree in public health, wrote pandemic response for the county of Miami-Dade, which I think is the fourth most populated county in the United States; ran an operations division in the field. Miami-Dade is a big fire department. They have their own helicopters, boats, you name it. It is a complicated place to work.

Danny in his retirement from Miami-Dade built a medical practice treating cancer patients, and is an expert in Eastern medicine: uses things like acupuncture to offset the bi-products of chemotherapy. He is a very forward-thinking out-of-the-box person. So we brought Danny in. He is now our chief medical officer. We have a firefighter out of LA county in Derek Irwin who spent a few years in Miami-Dade and then got hired in LA county, another big fire department where they deal with wild fire to day-to-day house responses. He went and got his chemistry degree from UCLA. He is now our chief science adviser. We also have our director of science and research, a kid named Neil McMillan out of Ottawa, Canada, who is a brilliant researcher.

So what we have learned the hard way is that these standards committees, these bodies that oversee what standards are, are far too influenced by the corporations that stand to profit off those standards. Our safety, when it comes to NFPA standards and the like, is not driven by the deed of the firefighter or the public we are sworn to protect; it is driven by the profit margins that the corporations stand to profit from by virtue of that standards adoption. There lies the fight that we are in.

We filed a lawsuit, the IAFF is suing the NFPA. We are suing them to hold them accountable for how those committees are established. They try to say they have a hands off approach to it. They set the framework and then the committee sets the standard, except they pick the committee, and that is the problem. So until we take on those interests, until we smash these standards making bodies, we are always going to be victims of the corporate interests that drive the standards. We are taking these fights on. When you think about PFAS, the chemical companies have known for about a half century that PFAS has negative health effects. In fact, one of those chemical companies actually laced cigarettes with PFAS and gave them out free to their employees to see what effect it would have on human beings.

Now, they have known that it is dangerous for humans but quite frankly the profit margins were so great that just paying wrongful death suits made more sense for the shareholders. That is the fight we have, and when you think about what our charge is as union leaders in the fire service, in many ways it comes back to the oath we took to be firefighters. It really simplifies things. At the end of the day, we don't get to pick where we are going to go to a fire or what emergency we are going to respond to. When the bell goes off we go. And if we are not prepared, trained and equipped for the emergency we are responding to, we don't take our ball and go home. We jump in with both

feet and figure it out or die trying. That, inasmuch as firefighters we took the oath that we owe that to the citizens we took an oath to protect, and literally thousands of us have proven that over the course of the fire service serving the communities.

We as elected union leaders owe it to our members who live up to that oath every day to live up to the oath we took to go wherever the fire is to protect them, and that means taking on corporate interests that are powerful, in this day and age what they are going to do is rip our lives apart. They are going to find out what your teenage daughter's social media profile is. They are going to find out whatever they can do to manipulate us as union leaders to protect their corporate interests. But just like the bravery that our fallen have shown us, we need to ride head on into that fight and take them on wherever they may be and teach the next generation that they need to pick up this Maltese Cross and carry it and make it the shield that it is for the next generation of firefighters, because there is always going to be a next threat.

These lithium ion batteries are a cool reminder that inasmuch as technology has made tremendous advancement in fire safety, whether it is sprinklers and smoke detectors – don't get me started on flame retardants. Lithium ion batteries have taught us inasmuch as innovation helps to protect us, innovation will always bring us back to risk, and at the other end of risk, at the other end of hazard are the firefighters rolling out the door to meet that challenge head on. It is our job to protect them to the best of our ability wherever that fight takes us.

I was watching your social media – I follow you guys – and I noticed on 5 May you remembered Jonathan Singleton who was killed in the line of duty in 1990 on that day, right. What jumped out at me is that I worked with a Jonathan Singleton on ladder 17 in Boston. He was one of my senior guys in the fire house when I got there, who I remember as a little kid who worked with my father when he was there. His wife called me about eight months ago and told me that Jon had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and that he was in a very tough fight and he could use a phone call. So I called Jon and talked to him. I never knew him to be emotional and he wasn't on that call either. But the news that they gave him was all bad. In fact, they basically told him there was not a heck of a lot they could do. So he has been on a trial since that time. I bumped into another firefighter that I worked with, that is a good friend of Jon's and I said, "Hey, we should get Jon out to lunch" so about a month ago we took Jon to lunch and we ended up with about 35 of us that showed up to this little lunch. It was cane, crutch, walking in the door, everybody is beat up and older at this point, but at Christmas time last year we were planning our Christmas party and I had called, I think 31 of our retired members and out of those 31, 19 of them had been diagnosed with cancer. Since then another firefighter that we worked with, who I talked to on Saturday, who is in Mexico getting experimental treatment for his colon cancer, was diagnosed.

The amount of our members that are being diagnosed with cancer at younger and younger ages requires us to take the fight wherever it goes, and that fight also follows the oath that we took to protect the citizens because as sure as we are suing the NFPA, we will be suing these chemical companies, and if we stand up and do the right thing and we can change the world doing it, the oath we took to protect the citizens, including our own grandchildren, will be fulfilled.

The mission that we have as firefighters, whether it is here in the UK, back where I am from in the US or anywhere around the world, all comes back to that oath. It is why this calling that we all share transcends language, transcends currency, transcends borders, transcends politics. You know, one of the proudest times to be a firefighter was after 9/11 when 343 firefighters made the ultimate sacrifice. I would suggest to you from the outside looking in, one of the things the FBU could and should be most proud of was how they stood up during the Blitz. How they were the difference when everyone else was, God bless them, huddled in the subways. They were all fighting and sacrificing their lives. You look now at the firefighters in the Ukraine and the courage that they show responding to rocket attacks, saving people, regardless of where you are in the political spectrum.

The humanity and courage that it takes when someone is having maybe their last day on earth, or certainly one of their worst days, our job is to show up and make it better or die trying, and as union leaders for those brave souls, they deserve all we have got. So with that, I thank you for having me. God bless you all. It is an honour for me to call myself one of your brothers. Be you, be strong, be firefighters. Thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Well, Ed, I think you can see from the reaction of our conference how enthralled people were with your contribution setting out some of the challenges you face, but actually that we face in both organisations and, indeed, that firefighters face internationally – many of the same challenges. As the president said in introducing Ed, our organisations were formed in the same year although they have a slight edge on us because their founding conventions were a few months before the FBU was founded. Our date is 1 October. But we were founded in the same year and it was a time at the beginning of the last century when workers who had not been organised before began to be organised and firefighters in various parts of the world – there are similar histories in Australia of emerging firefighter unions – but undoubtedly there are huge lessons we can learn from each other.

The American labour movement has different traditions to ours, different political traditions, different ways of organising and so on, but we have a lot to learn from each other and certainly all our visits to the IAFF events have been not simply a way of meeting people, but what can we learn from those visits. Some things are not applicable back here, but many things are applicable and we have learned from all our exchanges from the IAFF over the years.

On behalf of our conference, I want to really thank you for that contribution and wish you well in the struggles ahead, as you have done for us. We have several gifts. If you are flying, we can get them shipped over, but have a great evening tonight as well. On behalf of conference, thanks very much for attending, Jay and Ed.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference, come to order. Unfortunately, we are now back on with what is our usual business after that enthralling piece by Ed. So I am now calling section F, Trade Union and Labour Movement. Para F1. Conference, the following will all be taken in the same debate in the following order, so if those movers of the resolutions can prepare themselves. The executive council policy statement, *Preparing for a General Election* with an amendment from Hereford and Worcester; resolution 62, the New Far Right and How to Fight It, moved by Oxfordshire; resolution 58, Protect the Right to Strike moved by Nottinghamshire; resolution 60, The Strikes Minimum Service Levels Bill an Attack on Worker and Human Rights, moved by Cheshire; Resolution 64, Labour and Minimum Service Legislation, moved by Essex, and all can carry together. I now call the executive council policy statement *Preparing for a General Election*. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. President, conference, we face a political watershed. At some point over the next 18 months; there has to be a general election by January 2025 at the latest. It may be called sooner. Some have speculated it may be called as early as this autumn, it may be next May before our next conference. The Tory government will pick the date to most advantage themselves. We need to assess the situation and determine our stance and prepare for that general election.

To do that I think we need to reflect on the role of the governments we have faced over the past 13 years. It was the Westminster coalition under David Cameron who imposed austerity from 2010 making, in the fire and rescue service, the largest cuts we have seen in the history of the modern British fire and rescue service. It was the coalition government who slashed central government funding to our service by 30% leading to the loss of one in five firefighter jobs, 20% over the past decade. It was the Westminster government that from 2010 imposed wage freezes, two years of zero per cent, six years of a 1% cap, largely responsible for the fall in our members' living standards and the impact on millions of other public sector workers. It was the Westminster government who attacked our pensions making us and other public sector workers pay more, work longer, and getting less. It was the Westminster government who imposed the 2016 Trade Union Act, the latest piece of anti-worker anti-trade union legislation. It is this government today that is now imposing the Strikes Minimum Service Level Bill which again, in relation to our own sector, seeks to ban effective strike action, one of our key weapons that has helped us deliver progress against our employers.

It was the Westminster government that allowed police and crime commissioners to take over the running of fire authorities in England. It is this current government that says it will carry on its White Paper on so-called reform of the fire and rescue service in England designed to take away our rights for collective bargaining and planning to give increased powers to chief fire officers, to do all sorts of things from determining the level of fire and emergency cover in their areas to dictating what they can expect of our members, their employees.

Conference, this union has fought and will fight them on all these issues, but we can be assured that as long as they are in power they will look at further ways to make attacks on our industry, our service, and attack our members and attack our union. We come here as the executive council with a clear message to conference. We want to see the back of them at the next election. That is the hope for working people.

At present looking at alternatives, the only realistic UK wide alternative to a Tory government is a Labour government and the statement is very clear about that. The Liberal Democrats played a disgraceful role after 2010 in bringing into power the coalition which launched austerity and propped up the Cameron government. Given the first past the post electoral system and the current balance of forces, a Labour government is the only alternative to the Tories at Westminster.

So we should be clear that we as a union need to fight for a Labour government. We need to explain to our members the real existing alternatives available and how we think they should address those issues. Every member, of course, has the right and will vote as they see fit, but as a union have a responsibility to set out that record and advise what we think is in the best interests of our service, our profession, and our union and its members.

We have to remember that central government and local government provide the funding that pays for our service, deciding the rules of functioning and the context within which we operate as a trade union. We need to advocate in our view for a Labour government. The FBU is currently affiliated to the Labour Party. We don't use political fund money for that affiliation in Scotland or Northern Ireland, and nor do we affiliate to the Scottish Labour Party.

We took that decision back in 2015 for good reasons, and I have not heard a convincing reason why we should change that orientation in the run up to the next general election. We took that decision on affiliation in 2015 and it made sense: Jeremy Corbyn, was a long standing ally of this union and many of our closest political allies in the then shadow cabinet. Sadly, we lost two general elections and that leadership has now gone. Despite the obstacles – and I will come on to those in a minute – we still have opportunities and channels to influence the next Labour manifesto and potentially the next Labour government.

In July delegates from this union will attend Labour's National Policy Forum. In September delegates from this union will attend Labour Party conference and make our case for the sort of policies we want to see in the manifesto. Our president, Ian Murray, sits on Labour's national executive committee. I know it is a job he loves dearly, but seriously, when we talk – and I know there is a resolution later and I won't interfere in that debate – about defending Jeremy Corbyn as people have called, actually on a regular basis Ian and others on the Labour NEC stand up to Keir Starmer and make the case for democracy, for the democratic rights of Labour Party members. That is what we are doing at every single opportunity.

The Labour Party leadership engages with us through TULO, the Trade Union Labour link that makes Labour different from other parties in the UK. We have the Fire Brigades Union parliamentary group. It is a group of Labour MPs who advocate for the union and our policies and our interests in parliament, on all the sorts of issues that you have been raising at this conference this week: on DECON, on cancers, on standards, on trade union rights, sympathetic and supportive Labour MPs. Frankly, there are Labour MPs we would not want in our parliamentary group and we keep those ones out.

We also have members of this union who are councillors in local authorities or who are active in the Labour Party in various ways in their localities. We are engaged and we should continue to engage. We need a Labour government in the view of the executive council. We want dialogue with the Labour leadership now and when it forms the next government, as is the most likely outcome considering current opinion polls.

But we approach that relationship from the perspective of this conference, the parliament of our union where you set the rules and the policies and the expectations for this union. Those are the policies that we take into any political discussion including our political discussions within the Labour Party. Our officials go to Labour politicians carrying the policies of this union under their arm. We go to meetings at high levels, down to local meetings, engaging with MPs, with councillors and with local authorities as our policies set out by our conference.

The statement sets out many of the policy areas that we have fought for over the years. We want to see sustained investment in the fire and rescue service so that we can better serve our public and our service can be prepared for the future and address the changing risks that face our communities and so that we can improve the pay, conditions, safety and pensions of our members. Those are political matters that we take into our political debates and into the Labour Party.

We want to see the fire and rescue service as a publicly owned and publicly accountable service, and under this government we have seen threats of privatisation emerge, and we need to fight those off. We want to see the repeal of anti-union laws, not just the latest ones, not just the 2016 Act or the Minimum Service Bill that is going through parliament currently; we want to see an end to all the anti-union laws, and the FBU was central to the debate in the run up to the last general election in ensuring a strong policy was put forward in Labour's election manifesto on the question of trade union rights. We played an outstanding role, I think, in that work, and we will do so again if we have that opportunity.

The truth is we do face a harder challenge today, but we need to argue our case all the more rigorously. There will be a huge debate on all these issues in the coming months, and our union, our officials, we need to plunge into that and make the case, make allies and fight to win.

Conference, we are keen on Labour Party democracy. Labour should be a genuinely democratic party if the voice of workers is to be heard within it. We, as a union, have consistently opposed attacks on Labour Party democracy, whether it is constituency Labour parties that have been shut down, MPs who have faced attack, whether attacks on councillors or bans or expulsions within the party. We, as a union, have stood up at every stage. I think we have got a record second to none of challenging the Starmer leadership over all of those issues, and we make no apology for doing so. I think, as one of the affiliated unions, we can be very proud of our record on that front.

If we look back to the Blair years and we remember a very, very bitter dispute between this government and our employers when Tony Blair was the prime minister, and I don't think anybody who lived it will ever forget how we were treated by that Labour government, and nor should we forget it. At that time, most democratic channels within the Labour Party were blocked up and concreted over. The conference became a rally, not the sovereign body of the party as is the case in relation to the Fire Brigades Union.

But Labour currently does retain most democratic structures although they are under attack, and it is our job to make the case for democracy. We have criticisms of the current Labour leadership, and I am sure shadow ministers will tell you that we are not afraid of letting them know that, whether that is Ian on the national executive or myself speaking to Keir Starmer at TULO meetings. We don't want Labour dodging issues or aping the Tories, and it is regrettable – and we condemn it – when the Labour leader fails to stand up, for example, for the right to protest as this conference did just yesterday. We should be proud of what we said and we should call them out on their failure to do the same.

We want a Labour movement and a Labour Party that clearly and openly stands up for unity and against the nasty divide and rule tactics that this government is pursuing, for example, on the issue of refugees, and we demand that Starmer and others address that as well.

We will continue to raise our policies and fight for Labour to really represent and fight in the interests of working people. As I say, we do that currently and we need to do that collectively as a union over the coming months. Conference, we have to engage in politics. In different circumstances, Ed set out how the IAFF does this in the United States and in Canada, because political decisions influence our service, our profession and our pay and our conditions.

Ministers, councillors, other politicians make decisions that affect every single aspect of our working lives. They can either invest or they can cut. They can either negotiate or they can attack us. They can either help us or they can cause disruption. We have no choice but to engage in that struggle.

We are required, for example, to renew our political fund over the next year. It is another one of the anti-union laws introduced under the Thatcher/Major governments. Every official here at some point over the next 12 months will

need to be part of that campaign to explain to our members why we need a political fund, and why they should pay into the political fund. We need it to campaign and lobby the politicians who determine much of what happens in our industry, and we need to smash that ballot as we did all the ballots during the pay campaign over the past 12 months.

Conference, in finishing, we have a government that has relentlessly attacked us, has relentlessly attacked millions of other public sector workers, teachers, health workers who are still having to take strike action to try to win a pay rise, whose services also, alongside ours, have faced unprecedented cuts, job losses. Our public services are falling apart in this country today as a result of 13 years of failure, 13 years frankly of class war by these people against the majority, because we have got a government of millionaires who represent the billionaires. They represent the banks and the big corporations. Every single decision that they make they think about what benefits their people, and if that means attacking us, attacking public services, if it means picking on some refugee on a boat in the channel or cutting your wages or attacking your pension, it doesn't matter, if it is in their interests, that is what they will do, that is what they have done for the past 13 years. We need to kick them out of office at the next election and the quicker that comes, the better for every single one of us.

We want a government and we want to influence it. We will make demands of the new government. We want a government, not to repeat what Tony Blair did to us. We demand a government that defends and extends trade union rights and people's democratic rights. We want a government that helps us deliver decent wages, that improves public services, that defends ownership of key sectors of our public services and economy. We want a government that offers decent education for our young people and decent homes for everyone. That is what we take into the next election. That is what we fight for. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cleveland to second. Sorry, South Wales to second. That threw you.

GARETH TOVEY (South Wales):

Conference, a future Labour government must be a government that works for working people. We have seen the green shoots of what this may look like back in Wales, a Labour Wales with a Welsh Labour government, a government that has committed to put workers through their unions at the heart of decision-making at every level of society.

We must see the same commitment from a UK Labour Party, but more than warm words and commitments, we must see action. A future UK Labour government must immediately take steps to repeal damaging and undemocratic legislation led by this dangerous and divisive Tory rabble. Tory legislation that was purposely designed to reduce the living standards of working people across the UK, at the same time coupled with legislation designed to remove the right of those very same working people to speak out against it.

Let us be clear, conference: a Labour government that works for working people, will have no cause for doubt in repealing this Tory legislation. So, conference, let's be a powerful and strong voice for change within a future Labour government, and let's remember that it is not enough to hope that a Labour government will be a silver bullet to the challenges faced across the UK and in our fire and rescue services. We must work with other unions, the TUC, and amazing community movements like *Enough is Enough* to demand that a Labour government works for working people. Thank you conference. South Wales second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gareth. Hereford and Worcester to move their Amendment. The EC support the amendment.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Moving amendment to the EC policy statement *Preparing for a General Election*. Conference, I hope you agree this is a non-contentious amendment to the EC policy statement. It simply reaffirms our commitment to support workers and other trade unions, taking action to protect and improve their terms and conditions regardless of any threats imposed upon them such as, as is mentioned in the EC policy statement, the widespread use of bans, proscriptions, suspensions and expulsions, regardless of those, we will be there. We will stand alongside our comrades and we will support them through their disputes. Conference, please support the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Neil. Does the amendment have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 62, The New Far Right and How to Fight It, moved by Oxfordshire. The EC support. Conference, we have got three resolutions to take but we have got squeeze the deputy leader in as a speaker and her timescale is very, very tight, so I would ask people to make sure you stick to the timescales and keep it very succinct, thank you.

Resolution 62 THE NEW FAR RIGHT AND HOW TO FIGHT IT

Conference notes that the far right is surging across the world, taking new forms and adopting new strategies as it works to roll back social advances, re-entrench capitalist exploitation, and repress the left.

Conference further notes we cannot rely on the state or on the institutions and ideals of liberal democracy as a bulwark against fascism.

Trade unions are the voice of working people and have a responsibility to detoxify the far right's poison.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to identify strategies to tackle the influence of the far right inside and outside of our workplaces.

OXFORDSHIRE

LEE NEWPORT (Oxfordshire):

Moving resolution 62, the new far right and how to fight it. Throughout history trade unions have been at the forefront of the struggle against the far right and its attempts to divide working people using narratives of hate and blame. As the resolution states, trade unions are the voices of the working people and have the responsibility to detoxify the far right's poison. That is a responsibility we all have as FBU officials and members. We need to play a key role in our workplaces and in our communities, whether it is the housing crisis or the NHS emergency, today's far right is effective at exploiting social and economic problems impacting working class communities.

In Oxford we have seen far right activists and other extremists attempting to hijack local issues such as low traffic schemes by linking them to conspiracy theories. So when demonstrations were held against Oxford's low traffic neighbourhood schemes, one of the most ambitious in the country and a source of a long running and local debate, the trade union movement mobilised, including FBU members, to counter the extremists attending the demonstration. And FBU members across the country have mobilised on many occasions in the same way. We must continue to do that to drive them out with our members, our numbers and our solidarity.

Conference, we know their real intention, their ambitions, and their repulsive aim is to target minorities and immigrants. So let's get organised, let's tackle the new far right and all they stand for. Support the resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lee. Does that have a seconder?

IAIN BALLANTYNE (Scotland):

Speaking in support. I had the privilege of supporting a motion last month at the STUC with a very similar sentiment. It is with deep concern that we note the rise in far right social media influencers. Their insidious ideology is creeping into social media and of particular concern is the popularity of YouTube influencers expressing far right opinions, deliberately targeting the disaffected youth within our society, especially young men to mass viewing statistics, with no thought to the messages of hate they spread. This is a problem not easily solved but one that we should focus on. I would like to take the opportunity to recognise the sterling work that is already taking place around us in the union and the groups designed to defeat the far right.

We need to continue to educate and inspire our members in our workplace, in our unions and in our communities. As a union and as a movement we are ever working to elicit positive change for our members. I ask conference to encourage all members to join the Hope Not Campaign, to join the fight to defeat the far right, promote the

message that empowering people to build resilient, inclusive and hopeful communities is a worthwhile investment. In these increasingly unstable times, we should offer hope and we should demonstrate that hate and division can be overcome. Conference, I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 58, Protect the Right to Strike, moved by Nottinghamshire.

Resolution 58 PROTECT THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

Conference is appalled by this governments attempt to undermine the democratic right of working people. When workers democratically vote to strike, they could be forced to work and sacked if they don't. That's wrong, unworkable, and potentially illegal.

These proposed laws are a direct attack on working people's fundamental right to strike to defend their pay, and terms and conditions. Instead of listening to the concerns of working people and negotiating fair deals, this government has decided to undermine the right to strike.

As the cost of living crisis continues to hurt workers everywhere, we need to be able to stand together and choose to strike when we must. These laws will do nothing to fix this crisis, they will make it even harder for working people to get the pay rises they deserve.

We must challenge and overturn these laws to protect our Members and future generations of working people.

The United Kingdom already has some of the democratic world's most restrictive laws on the right to strike.

Conference demands that all political, industrial and legal routes at our disposal are used to fight and overturn these proposed draconian laws.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

STEVE TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

Moving resolution 58, protect the right to strike. Comrades, I am standing here today because our anti-democratic government cannot tolerate social organisation that they do not control. The right to strike is fundamental to every democratic society and it is a recognised human right in international law.

The UK has recognised the right to strike in law since 1906, over 100 years. However, the UK have some of the most restrictive trade union laws in the western world, through a series of rule changes starting back in 1979 and later on with the implementation of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, the list goes on. These days for a group of workers to take strike action they must firstly hold a ballot of their workforce, inform the employer of the timings and durations of their strikes, not conduct industrial action for a purpose unrelated to terms and conditions of the workers' employment contracts, not take industrial action against anyone but the employer of the affected workers, and remain peaceful and respectful when conducting pickets.

Now they are coming for even more. The government claims that they introduced in this Minimum Service Level Bill to ensure that striking workers don't put public lives at risk. So we, the workers, don't prevent people getting to work, so we don't prevent workers from accessing healthcare, so we don't prevent them from going about their daily lives safely. This is a lie. All they want is to remove even more of our human rights, to stop us organising our workplaces, to stop us speaking out and standing up for what is fair. We balloted for industrial action this year and we won that ballot. That ballot gave us power: power to negotiate, power to be heard and power to take a stand for what was rightfully ours. Comrades, there is no doubt in my mind that without that power, without the ability to fight the government head on, we have nothing.

Conference demands that we use all political, industrial and legal routes at our disposal to fight these draconian laws. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

Thank you. Conference, do you agree to suspend your standing orders? We are going into tea break time but I do want to get this debate finished. *Agreed.* Thank you.

I now call resolution 60, The Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill – An Attack on Worker and Human Rights, moved by Cheshire. The EC support.

Resolution 60 THE STRIKES (MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS) BILL – AN ATTACK ON WORKER AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Conference condemns in the strongest possible terms the governments planned anti worker legislation, following the wave of industrial action ballots in response to the cost of living crisis which is nothing more than a biased political attack on workers and the trade union movement.

The proposed legislation targets minimum service levels for fire, ambulance, and rail services, education, other transport services, border security, health services and nuclear decommissioning.

The strikes bill shows the government is working against trade unions, unwilling to properly negotiate and is instead focusing its energy on further limiting workers' ability to strike.

Under the new legislation, employers will be able to issue a work notice to staff required to meet minimum service levels. Those workers who take industrial action, regardless of being requested to work, lose their right to automatic protection from unfair dismissal.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Members were rightly angered by the recent criticisms made of our service and our profession by His/Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). These criticisms, set out in three reports issued by HMICFRS, were part of the preparation of a serious attack on our service, our Union and our Members.

This attack also targeted the pay, conditions and collective rights of firefighters, and the ability and role of the FBU, and now we have been included in this anti strike legislation – at the very time we were balloting our Members over pay following 12 years of pay restraint and a service and industry struggling after losing a quarter of its workforce nationally under successive governments.

The FBU and the entire movement needs to be loud and clear in response to this political attack on our rights, our movement and our conditions of service – we will not accept any attempts to dismantle our collective labour rights or any attempt at silencing the voices of our Members.

Conference demands the Executive Council commits to opposing this legislation with all means necessary including a legal, political and industrial response.

CHESHIRE

ANDREW FOX-HEWITT (Cheshire):

I think we just need to remind ourselves that it is not just this legislation but a framework in which this legislation sits which is clearly a targeted assault on our civil liberties in this country.

We have the Trade Union Act 2016. That amended and attacked our rights under TULCRA. We have had the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act which sought to remove our right to protest. We have had the Public Order Act rushed through recently, and we have spoken about it at this conference, what we saw last week at the Coronation, and then we have got the Minimum Service Level Bill which will, according to the Equality and Human Rights Commission see all striking workers losing their automatic unfair dismissal protection.

It is clearly an attack on working people in this country by a corrupt and morally repugnant government. That has caused the Joint Committee on Human Rights to issue a statement which is pretty unprecedented saying that this

legislation fails to meet basic human rights obligations. As has already been referred to, it went through the House of Lords who, in the last couple of weeks, have attempted to amend many elements. They have criticised the bill for giving blanket powers to ministers without providing any details.

Conference, this resolution and the wider debate that we are having, we need to be clear that we cannot simply rely on the law or politicians to stand up for our rights. We must be unequivocal in letting them know our opposition to these attacks under all these guises of legislation. It is up to us to fight for us now and the future generations, and if that requires the FBU and the movement taking strike action, taking to the streets in defiance, that is what we must be prepared to do. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

I now call resolution 64, Labour and Minimum Service Legislation, moved by Essex. The EC are seeking Essex to withdraw or they oppose.

Resolution 64 LABOUR AND MINIMUM SERVICES LEGISLATION

Conference notes the current Conservative government states that it supports the rights of workers to take strike action, however, given the proposed minimum service legislation, in reality it only supports the rights of workers to take strike action that is ineffectual. Although transparent and authoritarian, to some extent this is to be expected from a Conservative government.

Should this become law, the Labour Party, were it to win the next election, has committed to repealing this legislation.

However, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) need to be mindful, that promises made 18 months before any election can slip once a party becomes a Government.

Conference instructs that the Executive Council with other trade unions or alone, inform the Labour Party through the appropriate means that, should the Labour Party not have begun the process of repealing the minimum services legislation within 6 months of taking power, that the FBU will begin the process of disaffiliation from the Labour Party.

ESSEX

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

It is obvious to everyone here that the government are full of the worst kind of spoilt children, ones that have never been told no or to share. Trade unions standing up for themselves and saying no, that is not good enough, throws them into a petulant hissy fit of lies and overreactions that have led to a host of damaging legislation. The government says the people have the right to protest but what they mean is you have the right to protest so long as it is quiet and ineffectual. If it is effectual, we will make ridiculous laws to stop it. The government says it believes in workers' rights but will happily allow via the retained EU law bill and sunset clause, the burning of legislation and legal precedent on laws including those around employment and health and safety protections.

They state they believe in the right to strike so long as it has no impact upon the day to day running of that industry. If it does, they will legislate to stop it and that is exactly what they are doing. Although they are all the things previously stated, spoilt petulant children, they are spoilt petulant children with power. They have an 80 seat majority and therefore the power to enact the laws they choose. Minimum service legislation gives the government and the employer the overriding decision who will be forced to come to work on any given strike day. Therefore, a trade union can smash all the current anti trade union laws on balloting and yes votes, it can get 100% turn out and a 100% yes vote, but still have workers forced into the workplace via the delivery of a work notice. It cannot be underestimated how big an attack on the trade union movement this is. Labour, for its part, has stated they will repeal this legislation and, although welcome, we must hope for the best but plan for the worst. We sincerely hope they are true to their word because I believe most people in this room want a successful Labour government but not at all costs.

We the Essex FBU do not believe it is a tenable position for the FBU nationally to continue to support the Labour Party financially or otherwise should they not fulfil their pledge to repeal the Minimum Service Levels Bill. We do not believe that this is an anti-Labour resolution that will hinder future negotiations on the run up to a general election. It is a positional statement that makes clear our position that the FBU are not supportive of a political party just because they are not the Conservatives. Our support is conditional.

Therefore, we propose that the executive council with other trade unions or alone, inform the Labour Party through the appropriate means that should the Labour Party not have begun the process of repealing the minimum services legislation within six months of taking power, that the Fire Brigades Union will begin the process of disaffiliation from the Labour Party. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Conference, I have got a correction to make. I said they can all carry together. That last resolution cannot carry with the other four, because it calls for disaffiliation, whereas the EC policy statement calls for remaining affiliated. Just to be clear: resolution 64 will fall if the EC policy statement carries. I do apologise for that one. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That is open for debate. Anybody?

CHRIS COOK (Tyne and Wear):

I am up here in support of the EC policy statement. Let's not pretend – Keir Starmer is no friend to the trade union movement. He is not. Yesterday FBU, Andy Murray, asked the question, how do you solve a problem like Keir Starmer? I don't have the answer, but what I do know is that affiliation to the Labour Party is so important. You would rather have a seat at the table and be heard, may be not listened to but be heard. We don't need friends. We need allies. What I say is we have to get out. We have got into our local Labour CLPs, we have got to ask the hard questions and hold them to task. It is up to us to get out there and agitate, organise and mobilise in the Labour Party and drag them back to the left. Thank you. Tyne and Wear supports.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. Ian.

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Speaking in support of resolution 62, the new far right. Statistics released at the end of last year showed 155,841 hate crimes recorded in the UK and Wales between 2021 and 2022, a 24% rise on the previous year. The majority of these crimes were racially motivated – around 70%; religious hate crime was up by 37%. Conference on 10 February this year there was violence outside a hotel in Liverpool on Merseyside, the Suites Hotel where asylum seekers were currently being housed. This violence was sparked by unfounded rumours on social media whipped up by far right agents, most of whom don't even live in Merseyside. Conference, Merseyside is a welcoming, friendly city. You can go into any bar in Liverpool and walk out with two friends whether you want them or not. It is a city that is built on immigration and inclusion, and everyone is welcome in Merseyside (maybe not some of the London delegates).

These scenes have been repeated all over the country. Conference, these are as a result of far right policies that are being implemented by a far right government. This government is setting the rhetoric with their talk of small boats and deportation to Rwanda. Let's be clear: the enemy does not arrive by small boats; they arrive in a flash car in a sharp suit. Conference, scenes like those in Liverpool in February are not isolated incidents. The far right are growing and they are being emboldened by this Tory government. Conference, trade unionists, workers, decent human beings, have a responsibility to challenge any far right ideology wherever and whenever it raises its head. Conference, we must take to the streets, chase this right ideology out of our villages, out of our towns and, if necessary, out of our workplaces. Conference, please support the resolution.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+):

Supporting resolution 62. The far right are becoming increasingly active and we all need to be aware. Our LGBT+ community have come under attack, particularly with regard to trans rights. For standing up for the vulnerable under attack you are described as woke. For challenging the injustice you are described as snowflakes.

I look around this room and see so much woke and so many snowflakes. If standing up for your rights for the most vulnerable and challenging, that injustice means being labelled with these terms, we should consider it a badge of honour. We are woke because we are awake to the issues and the injustice. We are snowflakes because we challenge that injustice, but a warning to the far right: you can turn up the heat as much as you like, but these snowflakes aren't going to melt.

We will continue to challenge injustice and defend the vulnerable. In the run up to Brexit and subsequently, we have witnessed a significant increase in nationalism and racism. We are not saying that those who supported Brexit are responsible, but there is a hard core, far right element who portray that decision as being about their supposed cause. Language has changed and new abusive terms introduced but it is the same old agenda of hatred. Let's keep being woke, let's keep being snowflakes, and let's keep challenging hatred and intolerance. Please support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Comrades, a quick couple of points on the Essex resolution. I appreciate completely what Andy said and how he sets out the concerns about the Minimum Service Level Bill, but the executive council is concerned about the resolution and asks you to vote for the statement and against the resolution. First of all, in terms of the timescale, in our view it is completely unnecessary to address this. It says within six months of an election. That election might not be until January 2025 at the latest, so it could be six months after that that we are talking potentially. It could be at some time any point earlier than that.

There will be opportunities for this union to address those issues at that time, but I think more importantly, we think that it weakens our ability to influence the setting of policy in advance of a general election and Labour's debate. Firstly, it makes it more difficult, not easier, to talk to Labour politicians on this matter. As I have said, Keir Starmer knows where this union stands. He has no illusions about that, he knows our position on all the things that are set out in the opening comments, but nevertheless we have to talk to him; he is the leader of the Labour Party. We have to talk to the shadow ministers who will be drawing up the manifesto, and I think the sort of ultimatum that is in the resolution is not helpful.

Secondly, there are other unions affiliated. As I said, in 2019 this union played a key role on the discussions on what went into the Labour manifesto on repealing anti-union laws. By the way, we have to push other unions into that position. I think again, the ultimatum that is in the resolution does not assist us in our dialogue in terms of potentially pushing other unions to support the sort of positions that we are arguing for, so I understand the sentiment of it but we think there are serious risks for the union in resolution 64. Thanks very much, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Essex right of reply?

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

When I finished earlier I didn't hear what you were saying. Were you saying this will fall if the policy statement passes? And what was the reason for that?

THE PRESIDENT:

The reason being that your resolution calls for disaffiliation within a certain period. The EC policy statement does not talk about any disaffiliation.

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

We struggle to get to that because this is asking for action six months after an election. The EC policy statement is titled "Preparing for a general election". I don't kind of get that. This is about drawing a line in the sand. That's it. This is about drawing a line in the sand saying our support cannot be unconditional, and that is what it is about.

THE PRESIDENT:

Yes, I get that but again I will go back to what I said in the previous debate. We just sit there and we look at technically the wording of a resolution and if it could conflict or it stands in opposition or it impacts on another resolution, then that is where we come up with our determinations. We determined that it cannot carry with the EC policy statement.

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

OK. I am sorry. I just don't agree with that.

THE PRESIDENT:

You don't agree with it?

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

I don't agree with that statement. I don't see how a resolution that the action is six months after – I am not saying you can't do it; I am just saying we don't agree with it.

THE PRESIDENT:

Your route is to challenge my ruling.

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

No, I accept it. It will go to the vote.

THE PRESIDENT:

You are accepting my ruling that it cannot stand with it, or are you accepting my –

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

I am accepting your ruling.

THE PRESIDENT:

OK, thanks for that. Right, conference, to clarify, if the EC policy statement carries, then resolutions 62, 58 and 60 can carry alongside of it and 64 will fall.

I now put the amendment to the executive council policy statement 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*.

I now put resolution 62 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 58 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 60 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Right, conference obviously that did mean that resolution 64 did *fall* and, Andy, I will quite gladly come and have a chat with you later on about it and just try to explain it in more depth about that.

Right, conference obviously I asked you to suspend your standing orders for tea break. Unfortunately, the Deputy Labour Leader is on a really tight timescale today and we have managed to pinch some of that time to address conference. So we are going to bring Angela in now and we will have tea break immediately after.

Conference, it now gives me great pleasure to introduce the deputy leader of the Labour Party, Angela Rayner. Angela was elected as an MP for Ashton-under-Lyme at the 2015 general election. Before she was an MP she worked for Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council as a careworker and was a senior elected UNISON rep. Between 2016 and 2019 Angela served as shadow secretary of state for education and in 2020 Angela was elected deputy leader of the Labour Party. She regularly stands up in Westminster and speaks up for firefighters. Some delegates will remember Angela spoke at our conference in 2019. So conference please give a warm welcome to Angela back to address our conference. Thank you.

ANGELA RAYNER (Deputy Leader of the Labour Party):

Well, thanks Ian for that introduction and I first start with an apology and that is that I am stopping you from having

your break. So don't hold that against me. I will cut down my Fidel Castro version of the speech so that you can get out of here some time this evening.

It is an absolute pleasure to be here, and it is great to be back in Blackpool, one of my favourite towns as a kid. I often visited the pleasure beach, cold weather, cold sea and lots of fun, but you have had some nice weather the last few days, not too bad for you, and I really hope there's time for slots later, Matt, but if there isn't I am sure I can propose an emergency motion. I have had my fair share of union conferences in my time and standing orders, so yours sounds like it has been a good conference so far. For those new delegates that are here sometimes it can be really spicy and fun but it sounds like you have had a really good sedate, may be, conference this time round.

Blackpool is also a place that has witnessed some of the most important historical moments of our movement, and just last week Labour regained control of the council here, so conference it is an honour to address you here today, delegates, from one of our most important and long standing affiliates that you are.

I came here today with a very clear message for you: that Labour is on your side and will always be on your side, and you have my promise that the next Labour government will hand power back to people, strengthen trade unions and give our fire and rescue services the proper respect that you deserve. The Labour Party and the Fire Brigades Union have a long and shared past. We are tied together by the ties of our history and the Labour movement runs through our bones. We are family. Like most families, we have some difficult moments but when the time comes we stand together, and that for me is what counts, because the Labour movement isn't just any family, it was the first family that I truly felt at home with. This working class girl from a council estate in Manchester who left school pregnant at 16 without any qualifications or prospects who was written off time and time again by those in power, until I discovered my trade union which welcomed me with open arms.

As I started my working life, as Ian said, as a home help on poverty pay and insecure terms, I was known as a casual worker back in them days. It is now called zero hour contracts. It was thanks to my union UNISON that I was able to improve my life and the life of those of my fellow workers who I represented. I was elected by hundreds and thousands of members across this region and I was one of the most senior lay officials, and I was able to stand as an MP and then become deputy leader of the party. I was grown in our trade union movement. I may have been born in Stockport but I was raised in the union, and so in the spirit of family I want to say today that I get it. You are an affiliate but you are also an independent union. We will always respect that. We won't always agree but we will always respect your decisions. The FBU is a vital and valued voice within our Labour movement. You have lobbied us hard to put a green economy at the heart of our agenda, rightly pushing us to promise good green jobs. You get this as you are on the coal face of the climate emergency.

Last summer it was the FBU, your members, who acted as wild fires spread, running into the smoke to save lives and livelihoods as the rest of us ran for safety. We have listened, recognising the essential role that you play in achieving resilience, pledging to deliver clean power by 2030 through our new publicly-owned green energy company. But it goes deeper than that. It is not just about listening. When the going gets tough it is also about having each other's back, and right now that is important because for far too many the going has got far too tough. Thirteen years of Tory failures have left working people in an eternal winter of despair. The cost of living crisis is pushing people to the brink as a cycle of insecure work, poor pay and grave conditions offer no relief: to surging prices, soaring interest rates and free falling savings. Those in power just don't get it. How can they?

Take Blackpool's own Tory MP, Scott Benton, a man who was happy to call in favours for gambling industry investors, for £4,000 for just two days' work, more than most working people earn in two months. So crooked that even the corrupt bunch of Tories belatedly booted him out. They just don't understand that working people, we don't want handouts, all we want is fairness, opportunity and respect, to be able to pay our own way and contribute to a shared society. But under the Tories for too that is nothing but a shattered dream. What has the Tories' grand response to this nightmare been? Every twisted effort to take away trade union rights. To stop you from demanding better for your members. They've pushed through the 2016 Trade Union Act which has so viciously attacked trade unions' ability to stand up for the most vulnerable.

Last summer they egged on the employers to break strikes with agency workers putting public and worker safety at risk. Fire and rescue isn't a game. Firefighters don't grow on trees. You are highly skilled and trained staff that cannot just be replaced with an hour's notice. And to top it all off, this year they gave us the Minimum Service Levels Bill: a spiteful and bitter attack on our fundamental freedom to strike for better pay and conditions.

As one of the key work force targeted you don't need me telling you what an affront that was. To the very men and women who run towards danger as we run away, you put your lives on the line every single day. Insulting doesn't even cover it. I will tell you what: we all would like minimum standards of service and staffing, but it is the Tory ministers that are failing to provide them: 12,000 fire and rescue jobs have gone over the past decade. Central funding cuts: 30% since 2010. Eighty fire stations closed across the UK. Nearly six years on from Grenfell, no change, no apology and no justice. Families still trapped in homes with potentially fatal cladding. Emergency services sent out without thought or care.

This is the Tories' legacy and the cost of their austerity. So I want to say directly to you today, as I said in January, a Labour government will repeal all of these vindictive Tory laws within 100 days of entering office. No ifs, no buts; we will see minimum service levels out as one of our first acts of government. I was put into power as a trade unionist in our parliament for a reason. As a lifelong Labour member and trade unionist, I make no apologies when I say that the primary ambition of the next Labour government will be to hand power back to you, the working people of our country.

Jacob Rees-Mogg when I used to have to face him in parliament used to shout "Socialist" at me like it was some sort of offence. I thought he was just flirting with me. I had the other one today, Oliver Dowden, giving me a load of grief about "all your mates in the union". I was like more than mates, they are my comrades. They somehow think that it is a bad thing to be part of society and be part of our movement, but I have grown up in our movement. I have seen what our movement does, how it brings about change in our communities and makes us safer and secure, and it is why the next Labour government will deliver a new deal for working people to strengthen workers' rights, to end the Tory injustice of insecure work and deliver economic growth for all people of this country. We will give workers rights from day one, ban zero hours contract and end fire and rehire. We will raise living standards for all by creating good jobs across the whole of the UK, and we will boost incomes with a genuine living wage by ending the gender and disability and ethnicity pay gaps.

But that is not the limit, comrades. The next Labour government will also recognise the integral role that trade unions play fighting for a better life for the workers they represent, from securing working people paid holidays, to equal pay for equal work, to the furlough scheme. Trade unions have shown our worth time and time again, but for too long we have been tangled in restrictive and unnecessary laws, and this has only served to worsen industrial relations and disruption, which is why the next Labour government will release the shackles of 13 years of conservative rule, so that you once again have the freedoms and legal rights to properly stand up for your members, and we will usher in a new era of partnership between trade unions, employers and governments of all levels to deliver a better deal for all workers.

I know this is not just about individual rights. It is about how we collectively can be strengthened in our role, because that is when we get the best. We will allow electronic balloting, simplify union recognition and make it easier for workers in the gig economy to organise. We will create new rights and protections for union reps and ensure they have sufficient facility time, and we will strengthen collective bargaining including through fair pay agreements, and other sector wide agreements on conditions, pay and training.

Labour believes passionately that strong collective bargaining is key to our fight against inequality and discrimination and low pay because we know that when workers are empowered to act together they have the best possible chance of securing better pay and conditions. You, the FBU, are a shining example of this when you secured a fair deal by coming together, avoiding strikes that nobody wanted – least of all the workers who would lose a day's pay – which is why we will also look to support and build on our existing collective bargaining arrangements to deliver better outcomes for workers. But boosting people's income and making their work more secure isn't just right for those workers. It is right for everyone, for all of us. Our agenda will raise productivity, create the right conditions for business innovation and usher in sustained economic growth that we can all share in. It is good for business, it is good for our economy, it is good for society. And as one of our most important affiliates, I want to work with you to deliver this agenda for all of us.

But that is not it. The Tories have sought to hollow you out. Well, the next Labour government will give our fire and rescue services the respect that you deserve. We will ensure that governance arrangements for our emergency services respect the different roles and responsibilities that you all undertake. We will equip you properly so that you can actually do your job of keeping people safe, and we will ensure that you are paid fairly for your service and that we have strong and robust levels of staffing to keep both you and the public safe.

Now the results of last week's local elections were brilliant but it was also sobering. There is still so much work for us to do and so much at stake. A Labour victory is within our sights. No-one could have believed that when I took over as deputy leader, but it is within our sights and it cannot come a day sooner. I truly believe that this country cannot endure another five years of Tory rule. Ask yourself what will be left? Not our NHS, not our public services, not our first-class fire and rescue services or not at least as we know them now. But to get this victory, comrades, we have to come together. We have to be the family that sticks together, that works for each other. We know we can do it. Look at what we have achieved together before: in 1945 when we rebuilt our country from the war creating our modern welfare system. In 1964 when we released the white heat of technology and in 1997 when we unleashed the power of education.

The next Labour government will build on the best of our legacy. We will hand power back to you, the people. We will build an economy where nobody is left behind and we will make Britain work for working people once again. Comrades that is what is at stake. That is what our shared future can be, so join me, fight for it and we can do it together. Thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Angela, thanks so much for setting aside the time to come to our conference and give us that address. Actually, we have just finished the debate on the general election. I think it will be welcome, many of the things you have said in your comments, particularly about trade union rights and investment in public services. I think it was very welcome. You acknowledged that we as an independent trade union we have our own policies and sometimes we might disagree and, frankly, I think our conference would want us – and you would expect nothing less – to hold the Labour Party to account on these issues. We have just this minute finished addressing one of those debates.

I think we are entering a very crucial period as Labour will begin to draw up its manifesto and people in this hall and fire stations, emergency fire controls and millions of other people, will be watching closely what is in that manifesto. We look forward to working with you on the preparation of that manifesto and, of course, of bringing our policies and values into that discussion. Thanks again. Obviously, they can go and have their tea and we have got you some gifts which we always give people.

ANGELA RAYNER:

I have still got my last one in my office. It is really nice, actually, a big vase. Thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

You might have another vase. I hope it isn't the same one.

ANGELA RAYNER:

It is all right, I have got two offices.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Let's pretend we don't know what it is.

THE PRESIDENT:

Right, conference, thanks for bearing with us. We have now got tea break and that will be half past – twenty-five past thank you, we have still got a lot of business. I know you are going to be late in. You always are. Thank you. Tea break.

Break for tea.

Right, conference, everybody back? See, you always pinch minutes. Conference, I will now call Phil Millar to give a standing orders report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Can you please turn to your delegate list. Region 11, Kent, remove Dave Turner and replace with Tim Green. B&EMM remove Kasey LeGall and replace with Rob Lewis. Region 6, Leicestershire, remove Mark Drinkwater and replace with Kasey LeGall. It was all going so well.

Conference, can I please remind everyone that only those with delegate credentials, or the one nominated regional or brigade official can be on the conference floor at any time. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.*

Thank you. Conference, we are continuing with section F and we are still on para F1.

JAMES LESLIE (Devon and Somerset):

We are as a union affiliated to trade union councils and it was a quick reminder really. They offer a really good solidarity network across the country. Delegates, if you can remember when you get back, just make contact with their trade councils and offer a bit of solidarity. That will be appreciated.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call resolution 63, Right to Love, to be moved by Merseyside.

Resolution 63 RIGHT TO LOVE

Conference recognises the prohibitive legislation that governs the amount of savings a person with disabilities can hold before being rendered ineligible for Universal Credit or other benefits.

Conference also notes that should a person with disabilities enter into a cohabiting relationship and that couples' joint income or savings breach the financial threshold, then the person with disabilities would automatically become ineligible for Universal Credit or other benefits.

Conference condemns this legislation and calls for the Executive Council to undertake the following;

- ***support the campaign to 'Allow disabled people to keep all their benefits if they move in with a partner'***
- ***encourage all Members to sign and share the petition to 'Allow disabled people to keep all their benefits if they move in with a partner'***
- ***support the social media campaign #RightToLove.***

MERSEYSIDE

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Moving resolution, right to love. We know well that this government seeks to attack some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our societies, to demonise them in an attempt to create a common enemy and keep people from looking after real enemies, this government itself.

After the 2010 coalition government brought in a wave of welfare reforms in the aftermath of the financial crash, disabled people would be cast as scroungers by prominent politicians and the right wing press. The then chancellor, George Osborne, callously stoked a division between workers and shirkers. For a lot of disabled people like my friend, Joe Hardy, the treatment they continue to receive through the benefit system has left them feeling like they cannot live life to its full extent.

Under current rules, disabled people who claim universal credit or employment and support allowance risk losing some or all of their benefits if they decide to cohabit with a partner. This is because the partner's income and even savings are taken into account. If they exceed the limits for eligibility for income-related benefits then the disabled person will then lose some or all of their benefits. This rule even applies if the disabled person cannot and won't ever be able to work.

What this means is that people like Joe feel that they cannot even entertain the thought of entering into a relationship. Why should they be forced to ask their prospective partner to completely provide for them financially? As firefighters, we know that getting by on one wage is barely manageable.

There is also one other issue. People have been forced to stay in unhappy and even abusive relationships simply because they cannot afford to leave. We know that the benefits system moves slowly so a disabled person leaving a relationship cannot know exactly how long they will wait until they receive any benefits. They will also have to reapply and go through all the steps required even if their condition has never and will never change.

This is on top of the fact that 42% living in households relying on disability benefits are living in poverty, and people with disabilities pay out on average over £500 per month extra on goods and services that relate directly to their disability. Comrades, this is a cruel quirk of the benefits system that can be easily fixed by making the thresholds only applicable for the disabled person, not their partner also. Conference, we are asking that we all behind #RightToLove campaign by signing the petition and sharing it and encouraging others to sign it. Conference support this resolution and share the petition. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lee. The EC supports. Has that got a seconder?

TIM GREEN (Kent):

First time speaker. So why am I seconding resolution 63 which has been put forward by our comrades, Merseyside? Let me add some perspective. It starts with Tom Pursglove, the Conservative disability minister who posted a hostile and dangerous post on social media that warned benefit claimants his department would track you down and bring you to justice. Just bear that in mind. This is from a Conservative minister.

This is Harrison Green, he is my son, and he is 19 years old. He has got Downs Syndrome, autism and is in a wheelchair which is unfortunately due to an accident at school. Since 2010 this government have cut his mum's and his benefit and allowances that they claim as his carer. They have been vilified. The Conservative government have vilified the disabled as well, treating them as second class citizens. The pandemic and the shielding that Harrison had to endure during those two years has had a profound effect on his mental health, depression and anxiety. Harry is now leaving school and moving on to college. He has had a girlfriend. He has now got himself a new girlfriend who has got cerebral palsy. My main concern is that there could be a loss of benefits because this may well also affect where he goes if he looks at future relationships.

Harrison is non-verbal, he signs when he can be bothered, but he does use a picture board so he can communicate and make choices. Harrison has been given the same opportunities in life by myself and his mum, but both his brothers have also had the opportunity. What really concerns me is that Harrison is a loving person and will decide, with support, what he wants to do if he wants to live with a partner. This will affect his or his partner's benefits in future years. How can this be just and fair and why should you be punished through no fault of your own when you can never possibly work? Harrison's disability will never change but we are still expected to prove and demonstrate this disability every time there are changes to his payments. For these reasons I second this resolution 63.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tim. That is open for debate. Anybody. No. OK. I now put resolution 63 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call emergency resolution 4, Campaign to Defeat the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill, moved by Scotland. The EC support.

Emergency resolution 4 Campaign to Defeat the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill
On May 9 2023, the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill had its third reading in the House of Lords, it is important to note that while the Lords can propose amendments, the commons majority held by the Tories means that there is no guarantee that these amendments will be taken, and offers no realistic expectation that this Bill will not become law.

In contrast, Conference notes the comments made on April 17 2023, by Scotland's First Minister, Humza Yousaf.

In his address to the Scottish Trade Union Congress, the First Minister stated that the Scottish Government would never issue work notices under the proposed Minimum Service Levels legislation.

Conference welcomes these comments.

The strategy of others in the trade union movement to see this Bill delayed appears not to be having the desired impact and therefore Conference re-affirms the call made by the Executive Council (EC) for the building of a mass movement of opposition and non-compliance with this undemocratic legislation.

Conference calls on the EC (working with other unions if possible) to convene a conference of trade union delegates with a view to building and developing the campaign to defeat this attack on workers and make this legislation unworkable.

SCOTLAND

GUS SPROUL (Scotland):

Moving emergency resolution 4, Campaign to Defeat the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. It was welcome to hear the promises made in that last session by the deputy leader of the Labour Party but as the GS said, a general election is still a long time away and we have no guarantees that Labour will win or that if they do they will deliver on those premises, so we are where we are.

On Tuesday this week the strikes bill had its third reading in the House of Lords and we know that while the Lords can propose amendments, the Commons majority held by the Tories means that there is no guarantee that these amendments will be taken and also there is no realistic expectation that this bill won't become law.

In contrast, when Scotland's first minister, Humza Yousaf, spoke at the Scottish Trade Union Congress last month he stated that the Scottish government would never issue work notices under the proposed minimum service levels legislation and that he would seek for the legislation not to apply in Scotland. While these comments are welcome from the first minister and refreshing, we know that the Westminster government are dead set on forcing this legislation through.

The strategy of others in the trade union movement to see this bill delayed or obstructed is not having the desired effect and therefore we want to reaffirm the EC's recent call for the building of a mass movement of opposition and non-compliance with this undemocratic legislation, and to do what we can to build this campaign with other unions and explore how we can make the best use of statements in support from the likes of the first minister.

Conference, let us mandate the EC to convene a conference of trade union delegates with a view to building and developing a campaign to completely defeat this attack on workers and make this legislation unworkable. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gus, does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.*

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 2, Voter Identification, moved by Nottinghamshire. The EC support.

Emergency resolution 2 VOTER IDENTIFICATION

Conference notes that new rules on voter identification were used for the first time on 4 May 2023 in the local government elections. On 5 May, the press reported that the chair of the Electoral Commission had acknowledged that voters had faced challenges in exercising their right to vote.

Conference notes that this legislation was introduced despite the negligible number of cases of voting fraud in the UK.

Conference believes this legislation was introduced to suppress voter turnout. It will disproportionately affect young people and students, older people, people in larger urban areas and those from ethnic minorities.

Conference believes this is a cynical and undemocratic step designed to reduce the anti-Tory vote.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to campaign against all similar measures in the future.
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

STEVE TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

Moving emergency resolution 2, Voter Identification. I am conscious of time and will try and keep it brief. Comrades, for the first time in the recent local election voters were required to bring photo ID to their polling station in order to be eligible to vote regardless of if you were eligible before. After the voting ended, the Electoral Commission released a statement saying that overall the elections were well run but that should not mean that other impacts are overlooked and that the data needed to be analysed.

Well, they have analysed the data now and a spokesperson stated that they now know from their research that the ID requirement posed a greater challenge for some groups in society and that some people were regrettably unable to vote today as a result. We now know that this has disproportionately affected young people, the elderly and those from ethnic minorities. I believe this is a cynical and undemocratic step from this Tory led government further designed to silence those who do not wish to vote for them. As far as I am concerned, one eligible voter turned away is one too many. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Open for debate. Anybody? OK. I now put emergency resolution 2 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries. I now call para F2, para F3.

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

Speaking on section F3, TUC Women's Conference. This year the NWC took a delegation of three to the TUC women's conference: Kerry McCrone, Leonie Munslow and myself with a range of motions including increased use of non-disclosure agreements, how these NDAs are being used to effectively disguise victims of bullying and harassment and discrimination. Therefore, lessons are not learned as victims are unable to speak of their experiences.

Maternity was on the agenda with sister Munslow speaking on the work the LFB women's reps were carrying OUT with a commissioner to improve maternity provisions and pay. Another subject was improved access to the industrial injuries disablement benefits and how access to this fund would greatly benefit firefighters who were suffering cancer and other diseases as a result of them simply going to work. I spoke on endometriosis and how debilitating the condition is and how employers must adopt a best practice on this.

The conference closed with a solidarity session with women of all trade union movements across the world. The conference is important to women across all trade unions and gives women the opportunity to support each other and to share experiences and force change for a better work place and communities.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Georgina. Para F4, para F5, para F6, para F7.

IAIN BALLANTYNE (Scotland):

I neglected to say first time conference first time speaker when I was up previously. Thank you. Reporting on the Scottish Trade Union Congress in Dundee last month. Conference, Scottish officials were joined by the general

secretary – thanks to Matt for attending – first minister Humza Yousaf made his first public address since taking office. He spoke of the support that the STUC had shown him as a young Muslim facing daily racism and how the STUC had an anti-racism rally, and pledged to return that support stating that he would seek for the anti-democratic, anti-strike legislation not to apply in Scotland, and that the Scotland government would never issue a work notice in Scotland.

I was personally delighted by the expressions of solidarity directed to our union from across the floor and Gus Sproul was elected to the General Council, taking over from Colin Brown and will not doubt continue his good work.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Iain. Para F8, para F9, para F10, para F11.

ADAM WHITEHEAD (Cornwall):

I would just like to take this opportunity to speak to conference and make you all aware of our support for the Labour Party in ending their right to buy policy. This is one of the main causes of housing crisis in the UK. The lack of council homes is the result of the right to buy policy introduced by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980 Housing Act which means that many of these homes are sold and end up in the private sector, an estimated 40% of them.

This therefore drives up the housing benefit bill because of much higher private rentals. In Scotland and Wales the policies have already been ended. Ending right to buy is cost free and it would stop the loss of income to councils. It would mean that for the first time since the Act was introduced all new builds would increase the number of available homes and enable waiting lists to fall. I urge you to support the Labour Party in ending the right to buy. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Adam.

MATT SENIOR (Avon):

First time conference, first time speaker. President, conference, we have heard quite a bit on the subject of Labour's direction so sorry if I cover old ground, but I wanted to talk about some statements I heard from Keir Starmer on the Public Order Act two days ago. We are told this order is to prevent actions such as locking-on, blocking roads, but we should bear in mind that locking yourself to things in protest forced people who look like me to give the vote to people who look like a lot of you in this room. I look at floods in Devon only this week, and I wonder who was arrested for blocking those roads.

It also threatens materially our right to march on Westminster for pay, for the right to strike, even for the right to picket peacefully or support other trade unions, all things that we have committed to do in this conference today. When asked, two days ago, whether he would repeal that legislation, he said it needed time to bed in and that maybe guidance added to it would solve the problem. Having been a public sector worker for fifteen years and a firefighter for five years, I have listened to head teachers, councillors, chief fire officers and, I must say, that was very familiar language.

I am excited to see the back of this Tory government because the acid drip of free market dogma and acid test tears away everything that we have brought up since 1945. I was excited four years ago for a Labour government. I don't know if I am now, but influence from within is a valid point as demonstrated in paragraph 11 and many of the statements made by the EC today, but it is not a maxim or a truism, it is an assessment of where we are. Assessments must be reviewed. Labour cannot be assumed to be the party of trade unions as it has not really been that for a long time. It is a party that invites trade union involvement but we must keep asking ourselves what we are achieving. We must not sit back and expect the Labour Party to deliver for us, or we will be disappointed. We must hold them to account, but I mean really hold them. I will commit to going to CLPs as an ex member, if they will have me, and hope to influence their councillors and their members to do what is right for working people. We must now allow our engagement with the Labour Party to become nothing more than a staff engagement network. Solidarity comrades, and thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call Emergency Resolution 1, Solidarity with Jeremy Corbyn, moved by Merseyside. The EC support.

Emergency resolution 1 SOLIDARITY WITH JEREMY CORBYN

Conference recognises that the Fire Brigades Union re-affiliation to the Labour Party in 2015 was in part due to the relationship that our union enjoyed with Jeremy Corbyn.

Conference notes with dismay the decision taken by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party on 28th March 2023 which approved a motion from Keir Starmer to prevent Labour endorsing Jeremy Corbyn from standing as a Labour Party candidate.

Conference believes the decision taken by the National Executive Committee to be another step to rid the Labour Party of socialists.

Conference instructs the Executive Council, at the earliest opportunity, to seek the support of other trade unions and write to the leader of the Labour Party demanding the whip be restored to Jeremy Corbyn and that he be allowed to stand as a Labour Party candidate if chosen by the Constituency Labour Party.

MERSEYSIDE

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Moving emergency resolution 1, solidarity with Jeremy Corbyn. Comrades, I will be honest, I feel like a bit of a fraud stood here. Last year my brigade secretary stood at this conference and called for the FBU to disaffiliate with the Labour Party. I wanted to do the same again this year. However, as you know, Merseyside have been undertaking industrial action since December last year and the support we have received from Labour MPs such as Kim Johnson, Mick Whitley, Paula Barker, Ian Byrne and Margaret Greenwood has been brilliant. Asking for disaffiliation now would have seemed like a bit of a slap in the face for them.

The parliamentary Labour Party have shown just how much they like genuine socialist MPs when they triggered our own Ian Byrne who was at that point MP of the year. The people of West Derby showed that they do appreciate Ian though despite the Labour Party's fight to oust him.

As with Jeremy Corbyn, Ian does not fit with the new Labour that Starmer is attempting to create, and we all remember exactly what the new Labour gave us under Blair.

Conference, Jeremy Corbyn was not as fortunate as Ian but the attacks on him from within the Labour Party are nothing new. They were there when he was trying to achieve real change through bringing a genuinely socialist government. Indeed, those who carried out those shameful attacks could be accused of forcing this Tory government on us.

Conference, let us not forget that Keir Starmer himself, in a series of tweets in February 2020 stated the selections for Labour candidates need to be more democratic and we should end the NEC impositions of candidates. Local party members should elect their candidates for every election, yet motion removed that right from the Islington North CLP. He also said in the thread the relationship between Labour unions and the Labour Party has never been more important. Conference, it doesn't feel like that way at the moment: pledges being scrapped, striking workers not being supported, the change of the policy on university fees, not committing to repealing the Public Order Act – and I agree with the general secretary who called that a cowardly response from Labour.

Conference, this does not feel like the support we and our communities need and expect. We understand that the 12 votes against the motion to bar Jeremy Corbyn included the Fire Brigades Union's own vote on the NEC and we applaud that vote. It is right that we stand with Jeremy Corbyn just like he stood with us on countless occasions. The motion itself states that the party's electoral prospects in seats it is required to win in order to secure a parliamentary majority and/or win the next general election are both significantly diminished should Mr Corbyn be endorsed. Jeremy Corbyn has been the MP for Islington North since 1983. To suggest that he may not be re-elected as a Labour candidate is quite extraordinary. Jeremy Corbyn himself has also stated that he spent his life fighting for a fairer society on behalf of the people of Islington North, and he has no intention of stopping now.

So we could have the real possibility of Jeremy Corbyn winning that seat as an independent at the expense of a Labour candidate. Conference, we have stood shoulder to shoulder with Jeremy Corbyn on many occasions through many fights. I had the honour of sharing a platform with him earlier in the year when he visited Liverpool to speak at an anti-racism rally organised after the scandalous attack organised by fascists against refugees at a hotel in Merseyside. It is right that we stand shoulder to shoulder with him again now.

Conference, at that rally to stand in solidarity with the refugees, I was accused of virtue signalling. I have no doubt I will be accused of it again for this. Frankly, conference, I don't really care. What we need to be aware of is that if, or more likely, when the demands that are being asked for in this resolution are not met, what are we going to do? Conference, let us show the Labour Party that trade unions will not blindly support them. We will hold them accountable. Conference, support this motion. Support Jeremy Corbyn. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lee. Does that have a seconder?

ANDREW MURRAY (Durham):

The words that Angela Rayner spoke are welcomed by us all, I am sure, but those words need to be followed by deeds and that is what we will judge the Labour Party on – the deeds that they do when they come into power.

The Labour Party's shameful removal of the right for Jeremy Corbyn to stand as a Labour Party candidate is a deplorable attack on democracy within the party. It is also indicative of the party's move away from socialist values that underpin the true principles that the party was founded on. The lack of support for the striking workers across the UK has sent a strong message that the Labour Party is no longer the party of the working class.

I would like to note that it is our belief that recent Labour gains within local elections and national polls has more to do with the Conservative party losing votes due to their abhorrent tenure in government over the last 13 years rather than Labour gaining seats through well thought out policies and standing for the values of the working class across the UK.

By removing Jeremy Corbyn they not only undoubtedly lose an excellent politician who stands for those who need a voice the most, but also a seat at the next election. Last year a disaffiliation resolution was brought to conference and rightly, in our view, fell. However, the events over the last year where left leaning candidates with socialist views have been stopped from running in constituencies, must give further pause for thought on the issue of affiliation to the Labour Party. It is not a debate for this conference, but should be closely monitored over the coming year and may need to be revisited at our next conference. A strong message needs to be sent to the leader of the Labour Party that the FBU will not support a move away from socialist values. It is not just a question of disaffiliation but also whether affiliation to another party like the Green party, who are rising in political standing and will at some point in the near future provide a credible challenge to the Labour Party and the Conservatives – the Green party's political values are much more closely aligned with those of the FBU, notably seen by elected members of the party standing on picket lines in solidarity with striking workers that this Labour Party didn't provide.

It is not too late, however, for Labour. They could reinstate the whip to Jeremy Corbyn, allowing him to stand as a Labour Party candidate if chosen by the constituency as well as embracing the core socialist values that the party was built on. If we vote this through then we will be sending a clear message to the Labour Party that we stand for socialist values and that the Labour Party needs to recognise that. It will be our current view and we accept that the President speaks on behalf of us and asks for Jeremy Corbyn to be reinstated. The vote will give greater weight to that. We second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cheers, Andy. That is open for debate.

IAIN BALLANTYNE (Scotland):

Supporting emergency resolution 1. Conference, Starmer's ongoing ideological purge of socialists from the Labour Party continues unabated. This has spilled into every corner of the UK and has seen the UK Labour leader gloat in

an article in *The Times* in early April when he effectively sacked Richard Leonard, the leader of the Scottish Labour Party, confirming what many have long believed that Scottish Labour is merely a branch off. Richard Leonard has been, and remains, a long time vocal supporter of the Fire Brigades Union, most recently delivering a powerful and moving speech championing the FBU during the members' debate for a Firefighters' Memorial Day. If you haven't watched this, I recommend you check it out. Scottish members want to take this opportunity to send our solidarity to both Jeremy Corbyn and Richard Leonard, both targeted and removed by the Labour right under Keir Starmer. Conference, Scotland supports. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, comrade. Anybody else in the debate? Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

The executive council does support the resolution. Just to address some of the other points raised in the debate, I don't think there is any disagreement here about the assessment of how bad the situation might be in the Labour Party. Let us be clear, Sir Keir Starmer – I think the honour is an indication – wants to make the Labour Party safe for the system. He wants to make it a part of an establishment party. That is absolutely clear. Nevertheless, it is a battleground and politics is a battleground. The Labour Party has always been a battleground.

One of the most famous Labour politicians, the guy credited with introducing the National Health Service, Nye Bevan, was himself expelled from the Labour Party in 1939, so those battles have gone on throughout Labour's history. And I speak as someone who myself has been in the past expelled from the Labour Party. It was a bit of a relief at the time.

Just to be clear in terms of our record, the resolution at the Labour national executive to defend Jeremy Corbyn was actually moved by Ian on behalf of this union. It was a vote lost by 22 votes to 14, but that does mean there are 14 people in there fighting and that battle will go on at Labour Party conference this year as well. We as a union are absolutely clear that we oppose the witch hunts of socialists in the Labour Party, the bans and proscriptions, and I think there are several people who know we have got friends and comrades who have been caught up in that purge. That said, we support the resolution and we will take the actions, if the conference agrees the emergency resolution, obviously we will take the actions as set out in the Merseyside emergency resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put emergency resolution 1 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call F12, F13, F14.

BARRY McCOURT (Scotland):

First time at conference and first time speaker. Conference, just to inform you, FBU Scotland moved a motion at the STUC Congress last month showing our solidarity with the Palestine people and informing Congress of the recent visit to Nablus and the delivery of two more fire appliances, equipment and help with training. Free Palestine. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Barry. I now call on resolution 65, Refugee Support, moved by Lincolnshire. The EC supports.

Resolution 65 REFUGEE SUPPORT

Conference condemns and opposes the recent uprise in anti-refugee and anti-migrant activity being seen across the UK.

In February this year the Times Newspaper published a report on the increase in anti-refugee activity in the UK. The report found that hard-right protesters visited hotels housing asylum seekers 253 times last year amid a surge in anti-migrant activity.

Conference applauds Care4Calais (C4C) and all others, who have organised to resist this activity, often in hostile circumstances.

The tactic of setting working people against each other along lines of race and nationality is a tactic seen used throughout history to divide working people and disrupt our unity and organisation. This is ever more apparent in the recent far-right organising under a false banner of “protecting women and children”. There is much work to be done to stop violence against women and girls, but racist and xenophobic attacks on some of the most vulnerable people in our society is not the answer.

Conference is proud of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) refugee solidarity work with C4C and beyond and notes the Executive Council (EC) recent endorsement of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and C4C Safe passage Policy as an alternative to the Government’s inhumane Rwanda Policy.

As wages and living standards fall due to the cost of living crisis, now more than ever we need to stand as a class and resist any attempts to disrupt our unity as we see workers and unions organising to make a stand across the UK. Now more than ever we must stand with refugees and migrants to oppose racist, divisive scapegoating attacks aimed at them.

Conference demands that the EC refresh and restart the FBU refugee solidarity trips and wider projects at the earliest opportunity. This must expand to include exploring how the Union can offer full support to those organising to resist anti-migrant and anti-refugee activity in our workplaces and our communities in the UK.

LINCOLNSHIRE

RICHARD WRIGHT (Lincolnshire):

Moving resolution 65. When this resolution was constructed, I didn’t believe the situation could get any worse. How wrong I was. The rhetoric and the soundbites from the government and the right wing media have only increased. Hoodwinking the public to believe all asylum seekers are illegal immigrants and cause nothing but issues in this country, linking their arrival to crime and even a lack of GP appointments. However, the reality is the one causing these issues is the government itself. These diversionary tactics only cover up the mess created by 13 years of Tory rule.

Our comrades within Care for Calais and other organisations are constantly fighting back with the facts and the truth around the situation. However, this is sadly not enough against the media machine. Education is a major tool in our armoury and it won’t be lost on you conference, that even when our union puts out posts on social media to support such issues, a small number of comments will appear, things like “That’s not what I pay my subs for” or “Not in my name”. That, conference, shows the scale of the attack ahead.

Should the boats somehow stop, then who will be next to be blamed? We have seen this year honest hardworking people just trying to have their wages increased after years of austerity being described as militant trade unionists who are disrupting people’s lives and bringing the country to a standstill. This will not stop while they are in government. So, conference, I have two requests: firstly, support the resolution to reinvigorate our work and support with our colleagues at Care for Calais; and, secondly, to everybody here, to educate, educate, educate – get the facts out there and dispel this despicable rhetoric. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Rick. The EC is supporting. Does that have a seconder?

STEVE TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

I am quite fortunate that I share my brigade and my brigade exec with Brendan Woodhouse who last year got a FBU solidarity medal for his work with sea-watch in rescuing and supporting refugees. I have got some of his words to share with you today.

People sometimes ask why the refugee issue is a trade union issue. What has this got to do with us? They say we should just focus on our terms and conditions and nothing else. Well, I have got some reasons for you now. The government are using refugees as a tool to pull us away from the European Convention on Human Rights. They say

that we will be able to remove people more easily if we remove ourselves from international obligations. But these pieces of legislation will affect us all. It is all of our human rights that are under attack, not just the rights of refugees. If you think that taking such a monumental and controversial step as leaving the ECHR is about deporting 200 people to Rwanda, then you are mistaken.

Human rights legislation such as the EHCR enshrine in law the working week, paid holidays, bank holidays and our pay. Remove us from that and they can come for all of us. We are all under attack. The Tory government is using divisive language and attacks on refugees to dig their claws into power. It is a massive trick and I am bewildered as to how our country can fall for it.

If they are able to demonise and dehumanise refugees enough to cling to power, this directly affects our terms and conditions. Our members are attacked by the exact same language used to attack refugees and asylum seekers. Our members are black, white, Asian, refugees and all. Some of our very own members came here crossing the channel and, after all, we are all sons and daughters of migrants. Anyone can be a refugee even us. No-one can see into the future.

If you asked 15 years ago, the Syrians and the Ukrainians, they would have said it wouldn't happen to them, but here we are and it can happen to us too. Very dangerous precedents are being set and we need to take a stand. A refugee's rights are our rights after all. The racist language beginning to divide us affects our members directly, especially those who come from refugee backgrounds. They use language that is designed to cause fear but you show me a fighting age male and I will show you a worker. They are here just as NHS workers, builders and much more and, yes, firefighters too.

The government and the right wing would be less able to cause fear in our society if the people they were talking about were called workers and not fighters. Socialism and the trade union movement is anti-racist at its core. We live to build a society which builds from the root to the branch. When we talk of solidarity among workers, it is exactly this kind of thing that I mean. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

That's open for debate. Anybody?

LEWIS CLARK (Scotland):

President, conference, first time speaker, first time at conference. I am up to speak in support of the Refugee Support. As has been said before, the language and rhetoric used from the very heart of government is emboldening the far right with its fear politics and blame game that we know not to buy into. It is a fundamental trade union issue. Every refugee that does get discriminated against is a minority group and they do become an exploited workforce. They are working in dangerous conditions, living in even worse ones because they are not able to access the support that they do because of the lack of safe routes. There are not going to be any safe routes if the Tory government keep just letting this happen. There is a new boat that is parked up at Falmouth that looks atrocious, again just putting the image forward that this is a sub-class of people.

We must be the ones to lead the way. To be silent and not speak up about this at every level of the union is to endorse it. We must provide the education. We have seen in Erskine in Scotland there has been a lot of similar stuff with protests at refugees being held in hotel but providing local groups, not trade unions, but local community groups providing education and being supported by STUC, ourselves as well, has given them that opportunity to open up another avenue for people who are angry, not at the causes of refugees but the lack of support they have got from the local governments and central government. If we can provide a safe space for these people and vent in an appropriate way, not towards the refugees, towards the people who are actually to blame we will all benefit from that. Conference, we support. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lewis.

TIM GREEN (Kent):

I just want to add a few more words to this debate. There is an interesting Twitter feed, it is @refugeeassist, which is a non-profit making and non-governmental organisation. Take a look at it. They are trying to make sure that these human beings – because that is what we are talking about here – have got access to toiletries, bicycles, writing instruments, everything that you and I have got in everyday life.

I am also pretty unfortunate to have served at Dover up until last year. Now, if you don't know that, it is right on the border where the small boats are coming in. Weekly we would do a check around the port of Dover and it is quite horrifying when we used to turn up to go into the cruise terminal where you would see people being ushered ashore by the border force. What I really didn't like to see is that they used the words (this country and this government used the words) "processing". What sort of word is "processing". These people are taken from Dover – children (you don't see this, the BBC and the right wing press and media machine don't want you to see). All they say and spread is that it is males that are coming along in their droves. It is not so. I will add to that in a moment.

Processing is nothing but holocaust type words and I find it absolutely despicable and an awful type of language to use for people that have risked their lives to cross that busiest shipping lane in the world to come to this country for safe refuge.

I have also been pretty unfortunate too, to do the water plan for Manston Processing Centre or Immigration Centre, yet again. Awful, horrible words. And when you go in there, it is absolutely heart wrenching to see families and children – and we are not talking a couple of children here and there – we are talking 50, 60 children with their mums in a small crèche, and it is not even a heated, warm crèche. It is a marquee. We are talking about marquees, people being put in marquees. How can you do that? How can human beings be put in marquees and "processed" – the word "process" again. Then these human beings are being put into accommodation which is substandard and up on what was the fire service's central training establishment burning area so there is kerosene and all sorts of contaminants there, and they are being housed again in these absolutely dire facilities which are marquees again. So they are cold. They have had this whole business coming across.

I need to add this little bit of detail to what we are talking about here because these are human beings, children. It is not just your males that are coming across and I think it is a really worthy resolution. Just to add one more thing, one of the regional officials for Kent, Sam Sellick, he has taken part a lot in Care for Calais, so I just wanted to add that in. Kent supports this. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tim. Matt. Matt, just before you start. Do you agree to suspend your standing orders? *Agreed.*

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, what fantastic speeches. I would like to thank Lincolnshire on behalf of conference for bringing this resolution to us because these are difficult issues, and they are difficult issues sometimes to raise in your family perhaps, in the workplace, and we acknowledge that difficulty, but that should never be an excuse or a reason not to do the right thing, and bringing this resolution was the right thing to do.

The issue of refugees is a huge global debate and it is a huge global crisis and we need to acknowledge that, and I will come back to that in a second. Actually, we are talking about basic humanity. I think Tim just summed it up very well. Can we treat people with basic decency when they are fleeing war, terror, repression, prison and other forms of oppression or not? Sadly, we have a government that doesn't want to treat people with basic human dignity.

I think we can be very proud of the work that we have done on the refugee question. The work that we have done, for example, with Care for Calais, and I think those members and officials who have been to visit the camps in Calais frankly it has changed their lives, and we should be very proud of the role that we as a union have played in, firstly, raising that debate, taking on possibly people's prejudices and pre-conceived ideas and actually explaining through practical solidarity – we have used the word a lot this week – we have solidarity with each other on pay; this is about a different form of solidarity with other people who, as has been said, other working people who simply have come from a different country and faced different challenges to those that we have faced.

That has changed people's lives and I think we can be very proud of that. But the debate in this country is absolutely horrendous. If you go to the meetings and have seen Claire Mosely from Care for Calais, someone we have worked very closely with, has recently faced what can only be described as a witch hunt because of her work supporting refugees. Her charity was raised in the House of Commons by Tory MPs, in the House of Lords, in the press and, inevitably, leading to death threats which you have to take seriously. Again, I am proud that this union has intervened to support Claire to make sure that if she is under threat that we will take steps to provide somewhere safe for her to go and I think we should be very proud of that intervention.

Actually, if you look at the refugee crisis and you look back at the role of governments, we have got governments telling us we need to deal with illegal refugees, illegal migrants. Actually, the very same governmental system launched the invasion of Afghanistan, launched the invasion of Iraq, intervened in Libya, intervened in Syria and, frankly, has turned many of those countries into hell holes where society has virtually collapsed. My message to those people is if you want to stop the refugee crisis, frankly, stop invading other people's countries. Stop bombing other people's countries and stop selling arms to the most disgusting regimes in the world, and perhaps this would cease. Support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now put resolution 65 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. Conference, I have got two resolutions, we have got to get through to get to the end of this section, so just bear with us please. If speakers can stick to the time.

I now call Emergency Resolution 5, Free Julian Assange, moved by Mid and West Wales. The EC support.

Emergency resolution 5 FREE JULIAN ASSANGE

On 5th May 2023, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva at a meeting with Rishi Sunak called for the freedom of Julian Assange. His support is part of a growing international clamour for his release.

Conference notes that Julian Assange remains locked alone in a six feet by 12 feet cell in Belmarsh Prison merely for receiving and publishing truthful information that revealed US war crimes.

Conference further notes that if extradited to the United States, Julian Assange, father of two young British children, would face a sentence of 175 years in prison.

Conference demands immediate release, charges to be dropped, safe passage to the secure location of his choosing, and compensation for the psychological torture and arbitrary detention he has endured.

Conference calls on the Executive Council to campaign to stop the extradition of Julian Assange to the US and to write to the Home Secretary, the Shadow Home Secretary, and the Shadow Justice Secretary making the union's case on this issue.

MID and WEST WALES

GEMMA THOMAS (Mid and West Wales):

First time attending conference, first time speaker. Moving the Emergency Resolution 5, Free Julian Assange. I am conscious of the time so I am going to keep this short and sweet, very much like my EC member although he is not as sweet!

This emergency resolution simply repeats the calls made by the Brazilian President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva when he met with the prime minister on 5 May, to free Julian Assange. He has been detained in one way or another, whether under house arrest or imprisoned, with the threat of being extradited to the USA to face a possible death sentence – extradition to the USA for simply exposing possible war crimes. The persecution of Julian Assange is an illustration of how the issue of Palestine cannot be separated from the crimes of the US empire, a subject very close to my heart. My boyfriend's father was Palestinian and his family had to flee Palestine as a result of the Palestinian war. Julian Assange

has been held for over a decade without proper trial and as an organisation we must join the growing calls for his release. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gemma. The EC support. Has that got a seconder? *Formally seconded*. Thank you. That is open for debate. No. I will now put Emergency Resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para 15. I now call resolution 61, Redistribution of Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Technology and Reducing E-Waste moved by Suffolk.

Resolution 61 REDISTRIBUTION OF FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) TECHNOLOGY AND REDUCING E-WASTE

Conference instructs the Executive Council to conduct a feasibility study into the redistribution of old FBU technology to charities or causes we are affiliated to, to assist those most impacted by the cost of living crisis in accessing and addressing their mobile phone and computing needs. With global e-waste on the increase it will also sit well with our existing FBU environmental policies.

SUFFOLK

KEVIN DRIVER (Suffolk):

Moving resolution 61. Unwanted tech waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the UK and worldwide. The UK is one of the largest producers of tech waste. Every year the UK generates up to 24 kilograms per head and throws away 155,000 tonnes of electrical waste into household bins. We waste an estimated 527 million unwanted electrical items every year which, if recycled, would cut as much CO2 as taking 1.3 million cars off the road. The UK's most hoarded items of tech are mobile phones. Conference, I am sure some reps in this room still have their old FBU mobile phones – I know I have – mobile devices that are perfectly serviceable, just laying around unused that could be redistributed to those less fortunate than ourselves and in need of them.

The recent global pandemic highlighted the need for school children to have access to technology, to continue their education. Those without this access became disadvantaged. The great work that we just heard about like charities like Care for Calais to help refugees, mobile phones could be a lifeline to their loved ones.

Conference, I see no reason why, if our old FBU tech can be securely wiped of all personal data in compliance with GDPR, these devices cannot be redistributed to those in need of them more than us. If carried, and having just carried reso 65 on refugee support, this could be the perfect opportunity to start the redistribution of FBU tech. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kev. The EC support. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is open for debate. Anybody?

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Just briefly, conference, thanks to Suffolk for bringing this. We don't need to do a feasibility study. We do actually already have this process in place currently. I am a bit surprised – an FBU mobile phone lying about unused – surely not! But if that is the case, please send it through your regions or sections to us at Head Office. We have got a certified GDPR compliant process that we can use to get them wiped. That includes, by the way, IT equipment so if your much loved Chrome Book becomes unserviceable – I mean genuinely unserviceable, not that it has been bowled out of the window in frustration, then please send it back to us again and we can get it wiped and we can get it either recycled or reused. Thanks for bringing it. That's the process and I will actually get that out to you in due course.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tam. I now put resolution 61 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That's *carried*.

DAY TWO – 11 MAY 2023

Conference, that concludes business for today but can I remind you that there is a fringe *Stand up to Racism* in this room tonight at 6 o'clock, please, if you can get there, but do take anything, put your paperwork in your folders and take other things away because people will be sitting in those seats. Thank you, conference. See you in the morning.

Conference Adjourned.

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, come to order. God, I wish that would work with the grandkids! Right, morning everybody. How are we feeling? Looking bright and breezy. I did actually venture out last night. I said I wouldn't go but I did go. I went to check out Ma Kelly's. It was still the same. The highlight of the night was watching the Northern Ireland delegation led by Dermot Rooney, dancing. Excellent stuff. Right. I will now call Phil Millar, chair of standing orders, to give his report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar):

Thank you, president. Morning conference. Conference, this morning we have one EC policy statement and 25 resolutions to get through. Can you please turn to page 8 of your programme of business. Resolution 57, can you please insert immediately below it, with amendment from CSNC. That is one of our typos. Then for those that have one, can you please turn to your delegate list. You know who you are! Region 4, West Yorkshire, remove Martyn Bairstow and replace with Matthew Hearn. Region 11, Kent, remove Tim Green and replace with Dave Turner. Region 6, Leicestershire, remove Kasey LeGall and replace with Mark Drinkwater. B&EMM remove Rob Lewis and replace with Kasey LeGall. Region 5, Lancashire, remove Dave Shaw and replace with Tom Cogley. Region 8, North Wales, remove Ruth Bateman and replace with Stuart Stanley. Region 12, Buckinghamshire, remove Kieron Thomas and replace with Chris Wycherley.

Conference, on the subject of changes of delegates, to date we have this year 29 delegate changes as opposed to 65 last year from a total of the nine of the 13 regions and three of the six sections. This means, conference, assuming there are no more delegate changes, there are four regions and three sections that are getting a better packed lunch today. Can each delegation, when conference adjourns, please just leave both the name card and the voting card on the table for the stewards to collect afterwards. We do say this every year and usually someone takes them home with them, but I am going to put that down to them getting scooped up with all the paperwork. Hopefully we will fix that this year.

So, of the 20,000 pages in the first 24 hours we used last year, we are now on day three and of the 10 boxes of paper we brought with us this year, we have used less than 500 pages. So after using two 45 feet pine trees last year, this year we have barely used a branch. On behalf of the standing orders committee, can I say thank you for your cooperation regarding documentation.

The standing orders committee would also like to thank delegates for your support for the initiative for solidarity for Care for Calais. Thus far during conference the money raised from the sale of T-shirts is £1,406.50. T-shirts are still available in the shop if you want to purchase during the break.

Hopefully, conference, that is the last standing orders report for conference 2023, so no more delegate changes, and from myself and the standing orders committee I would like to thank you for how you have conducted yourselves this week and, once business has concluded, safe home.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed.*

Conference, I am sure you will join me this morning in sending a message of solidarity to the members of ASLEF and RMT who are taking strike action over the next couple of days. Obviously, it has impacted on us and people getting home but that is nothing compared to the fight that they are in in the rail industry at the minute, effectively with the government. A message of solidarity to both of them unions. Thank you.

Right, conference, now on with the business. I will taking the following resolutions in the same debate: executive council policy statement *Fire and Rescue Service Duty Systems* with amendments from Hereford and Worcester, and resolution 6, 24-hour Voluntary Shifts, moved by Lancashire. If the EC policy statement carries, then resolution 6 falls. I now call the executive council policy statement *Fire and Rescue Service Duty Systems*.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you president. President, conference, the written policy statement and these braces are a parting gift from our previous assistant general secretary. I am sure you realised that from the length of it – not the braces.

Every delegate here will know the problems we face in regard to our duty systems. The context for this discussion is set out in the policy statement and it is worth restating. Since the pay dispute in 2002-03 and the legislation that followed soon after, we faced attacks by fire authorities, fire boards and from chief fire officers. Each of those attacks is designed to break up safe systems of work and introduce changes that suit them. We have also had a dire period of austerity, especially following the 2008 economic crash and then Tory led government ever since.

They have imposed the worst cuts on our fire and rescue service. They have hit wholetime operational, retained operational and savagely cut our control staff, especially when closing control rooms. They have ratcheted up pressure on our officer members demanding even more flexibility in order to cover gaps in command and control. We have lost a fifth of our work force to cuts despite a wide range and ever reaching risks our members face.

Fire officers and other principal managers make ever more outlandish proposals to squeeze the last drop of time and effort from our members. Every conference we have had in the last decade rightly acknowledges that current fire cover levels are inadequate. The FBU cannot and will not be party to duty systems which make further reductions in fire cover and increase response times to fires and other incidents. We need to approach these discussions today with this context in mind as well as the impact on all of our sections of our membership.

It is worth saying a few words about the difficulties we face. Let us start with the retained duty system. Our National Retained Committee, the NRC, has given us a very clear picture of the problems faced by our members who work the RDS. The NRC have explained the difficulties faced with recruiting and retaining firefighters and then training those firefighters. We have all heard examples of pumps off the run or sent out with reduced inadequate crewing. We all know the impact this has with slower response times and firefighters, our members, put at greater risks when they attend fires that have got a hold in those vital minutes between mobilisation and arrival. There have been various reports conducted by individual fire and rescue services and other organisations into the retained duty system. All of these reports highlight the real difficulties facing the sector in relation to recruitment and retention.

Some FRSs have sought to design new duty systems that claim to address the matters of recruitment and retention. Some are better than others, but many self-evidently worsen both the cover for our members and the public. These systems have not been assessed and tested by leading officials and are frankly just sticking plasters. They have not been agreed between the national employers and the FBU at the NJC and therefore any acceptable duty systems for the RDS are not available to all FBU members.

Let us take a moment now to look at the flexi duty systems. The flexi duty section of the Grey Book details the principles and conditions that govern the operational rota of our officer members' work. This longstanding collective agreement provides flexi-duty system officers with six financial allowances to provide an agreed number of standby hours thereby ensuring 24 hour availability of level 2 and level 3 incident commanders. The ONC has identified a gradual deterioration in flexi-duty conditions.

Brigades around the country have implemented duty systems which are not in keeping with the Grey Book. As the ONC have told us, officer welfare is being put at risk through insufficient rest periods and excessive hours which can include long exposure on incident grounds where they are making risk-critical decisions.

So, conference, we need to consider whether this arises from structural problems within the FRS or a failure of FRS management to honour the national agreement on the duty system. Conference, I want to pay tribute to Pete Trayner and Steve Price-Hunt, who left yesterday, who have been tackling and taking on managers in West Midlands that are looking to introduce a lowering of our conditions there.

In addition to some specific issues for the retained and officer members, we also need to consider the impact of 24 hour shifts on all of our members. The executive council has listened carefully to the debates on this question over many years. The executive council recognises and understands that we have members who support 24 hour

shift working. The EC also accepts that 24 shift working has been popular with some members when it has been introduced in their brigades.

We are also very aware that many firefighters in other countries, notably the US, do 24 hour shifts and work shift patterns that differ from the arrangements we currently have in the United Kingdom. The EC accepts that it might suit some individual firefighters currently working 24 hour shifts. So part of the reason for bringing this statement here today is to acknowledge those members and officials who have put forward arguments for 24 hour shift working.

The executive council is here to listen and this policy statement is about signalling that. However, the EC also have to take into consideration all sides of that debate. There are significant objections to 24 hour shift working too. First and foremost, the executive council has to protect the health and safety of our members, whatever the duty system. In the United States the majority of firefighters work the 24 hour shift. There is now substantial research on US firefighters, such as the Harvard Work Hours Health and Safety Group. We know from this academic literature that there are significant safety and health risks faced by firefighters. A key finding is that 24 hour shifts cause acute sleep deprivation and chronic sleep deficiency. Acute health impairment from sleep deprivation includes short term memory loss, slower reaction times, reduced vigilance and mood changes. Chronic effects include impairment to cardiovascular systems, immune systems, gastrointestinal systems and contribute to obesity. Sleep deprivation also increases the risk of workplace injury and death.

We also know that the International Agency for Research on Cancer, IARC, found in 2010 that shift work that involved circadian disruption is probably carcinogenic to humans. Conference, we are rightly proud of our DECON project and the focus it has brought on the cancer risks faced by our members. However, we must consider the impact of every duty system and every pattern of working on the cancer risks faced by our members.

Whilst safety is paramount, we also need to consider the impact of duty systems on other matters. A key consideration is whether the introduction of 24 hour shift working will become a means to further cuts to firefighter jobs. We all know here that job cuts have driven many other matters our members complain about such as riding three on a pump, leaving one or two staff to cover our control rooms, and stretching our officer members to breaking point. It will not help our members if 24 hour shifts came in with plastic promises about things like down time.

Another consideration is the impact on our control rooms, and control staff national committee has made it clear that 24 hour duty systems are not suitable, nor appropriate, for personnel working in fire control rooms. We also have a duty to assess the impact, equality impact, of new duty systems. We cannot fight for equality only when it suits us. The national women's committee have reported that whilst some women like working 24 hour shifts, a number a women have left services because of the introduction of them. We have many members, both men and women with primary caring responsibilities, whether it is for children or other adults, and we have to assess the duty systems with those in mind.

So the recommendations, conference, from the executive council, with all these matters in mind, is that we ask conference to approve a number of recommendations which are designed to advance the debate and take a fresh look at all sides of the argument. First, the EC wants to commission a project to assess the scope of the changes, both those which have been introduced and those still being attempted to be introduced in fire and rescue services. We want to look at their impact.

The project will include the provision of advice on how to challenge attempts to impose adverse changes as well as seeking to reverse alterations already implemented. Secondly, the executive council will provide a process by which current duty systems and existing arrangements are reviewed to ensure compliance with the Grey Book.

Thirdly, no collective agreements, including amendments to collective agreements, shall be reached with fire and rescue services that lower the standards of terms and conditions as laid out in the Grey Book.

Fourth, where local agreements are already *in situ* no collective agreement shall be reached with fire and rescue services that seek to extend those practices deemed outside of the Grey Book. For the avoidance of doubt, conference, the terms of reference are very clear. The Fire Brigades Union will not review or spend any time or

resources on reviewing or revisiting conference policy with respect to close proximity crewing or day crewing plus. Fire and rescue services have been informed that until further notice no agreements on duty systems can be made without the express agreement of your executive council. The EC believes this process will ensure a thorough review while calling a halt to the worst practices we have seen in recent years.

I ask conference to approve the statement, delegates, observers and officials to contribute to that review I have set out. As the president has said, resolution number 6 from Lancashire does stand in opposition to this EC policy statement. It stands in opposition to a policy statement that is far wider reaching than that just of 24 hour shifts. We need to form this review, work forward on what is acceptable and safe for our members. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cleveland to second.

NICK CAIN (Cleveland):

Speaking to second the EC's policy statement on fire and rescue service duty systems. Whilst we understand that resolution 6 has been brought with the greatest of intentions by some hard working, diligent officials, we strongly oppose it.

There are probably many members inside this room within duty systems where 24 hours seems like a good idea, but we must be very careful of the route we may be going down here. I, as well as many others in this room, have just gone through the busiest summer of my 22 year career: grass fire after grass fire in extreme heat, long arduous shifts in difficult working conditions. Then the situation after extinguishing the fire and making our way back in the appliance. Literally, the second week I was back on I booked in available and proceeded to the next incident coming in. This went on for months.

Would I fancy sticking another ten and a half hours on to the shift that I do? Quite frankly, no. That is when accidents happen and also what could be even worse scenarios, ones that I don't even want to mention to be honest. We know with climate change more wildfires, flooding etc are on the increase, and coupling that with what seems to be the ever-changing demographics in society since the pandemic, it means we are getting busier and busier. Do we really want to vote on shift systems that can put our members in dangerous situations because of the fact that they were tired and then make the wrong decisions because of fatigue?

Also, we shouldn't be using a decade of pay cuts and a cost of living crisis as an excuse as to why we need to bring in a shift system that cuts down our journeys to work just to save money. Yes, we have just secured a fairly decent two year pay deal, but we can't stop there. We need to organise, mobilise and campaign for long term pay progression within the fire and rescue service so that sentences like "we need to cut down our journeys to work" never rear their ugly heads ever again.

Conference, due to ongoing cuts to staffing levels this would be the worst time possible to bring in shift systems that mean any firefighters work longer hours. Shifts that could mean we lose one or more of our members. I also welcome the reviews into the flexi duty systems as we know too well in Cleveland at the minute, and obviously the retained duty systems which have massive problems. This is not before time.

We need shift systems in place to stop tin pot chief fire officers taking advantage of our members' good nature which is why this policy statement is so important. Conference, could I please reiterate that the EC rectifies this aforementioned matter and I second the EC's policy statement on fire and rescue service duty systems.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Nick. I now call Hereford and Worcester to move their amendments. Are you going to move them both together? *Formally.*

Amendment one formally. Agreed. *Agreed.*

Amendment two? *Formally.* Thank you.

Oh, good point, Matt, keeping me on track. Amendment one, does that have a seconder? *Formally.*

Amendment two, does that have a seconder? *Formally.* Thank you.

I now call resolution 6, 24 Hour Voluntary Shifts, moved by Lancashire. The EC seek to withdraw or oppose. The EC are supporting both amendments.

Resolution 6 24 HOUR VOLUNTARY SHIFTS

Conference notes 24 hour shifts have been implemented across several fire and rescue services which have proved very popular with our Fire Brigades Union Members.

With the cost-of-living crisis and over a decade of real term pay cuts some of our Members are having to choose to live further afield and commute to their place of work due to not being able to afford to live in their station area. This forces a longer commute and therefore less time with families, giving Members a work life imbalance.

A 24 hour voluntary shift option would give Members the choice to be able to reduce their commuting time and costs, provide a better work life balance and provide a way to put money back into our Member's pockets at a time when they need it the most.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to negotiate through the National Joint Council the inclusion of a 24 hour voluntary shift option, whilst securing establishment figures, ridership factors and including all necessary safeguards within the Grey Book.

LANCASHIRE

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire):

Moving resolution 6, 24 Hours Voluntary Shifts. Comrades, 13 years ago Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service introduced day crewing plus as a shift system as an alternative to losing two pumps, one of them being here in Blackpool. This year the emergency cover review was agreed to reduce day crewing plus from 11 stations to 6. That threat of losing was still there. So far instead of losing pumps, Lancashire have reduced numbers of operational firefighters on one pump stations.

A flexible wholetime shift system was offered to members with 24 hour working including a replacement shift system to the fire stations that DCP was being removed and to all one pump stations. This was only rejected by our members due to our policies but the majority of branches and members would have considered it if it was agreed within the Grey Book terms and conditions and under a voluntary option.

As much as we appreciate the EC's policy, we feel that it is not considering members that already work 24 hour shifts on a voluntary basis or even female members that enjoy working the system. The EC policy statement acknowledges that popularity is not being measured. All we ask is for the EC to negotiate with the national joint council to consider formally measuring the options of a shift pattern and, if possible, not to reduce any of our Grey Book terms and conditions. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kev. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is now open for debate. You will all get your chance.

GEORGINA FIELDING (NWC):

Speaking to oppose resolution 6, 24 hour voluntary shifts. Conference, it is clear firefighters are being affected by cutting costs and also having lived far away from places they work due to not being able to afford to live locally, but negotiating the inclusion of a 24 hour voluntary shift pattern sets dangerous precedents. Being called to large protracted incidents such as the wildfires you all experienced last year on your first hour of a 24 hour shift without any relief crews, being called to a high rise job in the 23rd hour after a busy 24 hour shift, coming home after a busy 24 hour shift as the main care giver to young children or disabled elderly family members, only to have to hit the ground running to put in what is a well-known second shift.

A 24-hour shift can have a big impact on members who are neurodiverse, who need down time away from colleagues and members of the public to be able to function: to have to be on a 24-hour shift while experiencing

menopause symptoms and not be able to go home and wait until you feel safe to ride out in whatever condition you feel fit. 24-hour shifts put simply create a barrier for many potential new recruits that apply. 24-hour shifts have already caused many firefighters to leave.

Conference, I am sure there are many more cons to 24-hour shifts which are personal to our members. They are all warranted. Conference, for this reason I oppose.

DAN McNULTY (North Wales):

We are supporting the EC statement on the duty system and we welcome the proposal and feel that it is quite timely with what is going on currently. The Grey Book is our protection and our bible, or at least it should be. However, we have heard many times this week already how chief officers are going rogue and tearing up those working practices that have been agreed.

We also in North Wales are facing an attack on our conditions. Members have been informed of intentions to force changes to their shift patterns which have not been consulted currently. Principal officers are blaming the current recent pay increases for budget restraints. They are now looking to fix availability issues that have been ignored for years.

Out of 56 front line appliances that we have, we are lucky if we get anywhere close to our 18 pump target. This puts a massive strain on our firefighters, our incident commanders but also our control staff as well, trying to juggle that balance of where the next resource is going from and trying to cover those huge holes in availability.

Our senior managers now want to scrap the 2-2-4 shift system on two out of three of our 24 hour stations. This is so that they can impose a new four-day 12 hour shift system which is not to be confused with a day crewing system. This is a completely different shift system that they are creating out of thin air. This is the idea that they can free up half of their staff from those stations cutting the watches down by two and then send those staff out to the more rural areas of our service to sit on retained stations and potentially create new day crew stations, or day staffing stations on those areas.

These stations, as we know by the geography of North Wales, could easily be up to two hours away from their current work locations so their commuting time increases massively. This also means that the two 24 hour stations that we have will no longer have a nice wholtime crew which will now have to rely on RDS cover. This proposal will end that night cover and rely solely on the RDS which is not always guaranteed. We fully support our RDS crews but due to many reasons we cannot always rely on that cover being there. We have extremely difficult times ahead fighting for these agreed terms and conditions enclosed within our Grey Book. We believe it is vital that we stick together and support this policy statement. Thank you.

CHRIS EVANS (ONC):

First time conference, first time speaker. I think that is the only way I could guarantee a clap. Speaking in support of executive council policy statement *Fire and Rescue Service Duty Systems*. Conference, the ONC welcome the review of all duty systems. The ONC looks forward to helping with head office and the executive council in helping to look at standardising how the flexi duty systems are applied across the UK. There is a very inconsistent approach in how services are applied or flexi duty systems. My colleague just used a great comment "some chief officers are going rogue" and they definitely ARE. This is often detrimental to the health and wellbeing of our FBU members but also detrimental to the health and wellbeing of their families too, and it must stop. This review is well needed and well overdue. President, conference, I support.

BARRY McCOURT (Scotland):

Speaking in support of the executive council statement. Conference, whilst we can have every sympathy of trying to put money back into our members' pockets during these trying times and giving our members a better work-life balance, I as a father and husband can truly support trying to spend as much time at home with family and cherishing the time together with them especially when the children are very young and of pre-school age.

One of the best parts of this job is the amount of time we get to spend with our children when the common approach for work within society is Monday to Friday, nine to five. The majority of us will be very lucky that we get to

spend time with our families. We get to watch our children grow up. We get to be that person that can take their kid to the zoo, to the park or, in my case at the moment, with a toddler to the soft play centre.

Our job can also help take the financial burden off from the associated costs of child care and possibly allow our wife, husband, partner, to return to work so we can have two incomes within the household. Whilst I am currently cherishing every moment of my current lifestyle with a toddler, I want to be there during the various stages of her life and tick off the important milestones that I am sure she will go on to achieve. I want her to reach the age that I am now of 37 years old, and possibly be at the soft play centre with her and my grandchildren when I am 74. For me to get to this point in my life though I visualise us as a union putting pressures upon our employers and the government to get the funding we need for the proper implementation of DECON procedures and policies.

We as union members have a responsibility too though. We must go back to our stations and start implementing change at grass roots level. We need to systematically change our way of thinking post incident and the implications it can have on us and future members joining our industry.

If we support as conference policy, the implementation of a voluntary 24 hour shift system, what is to stop the employers from using that as justification for attacking our health, safety and welfare within any other future negotiations? I have lost count of the number of times I have been at or heard from other members who at protracted incidents where crew welfare is not at the forefront of the incident commander's mind. We in Scotland are consistently seeing pumps off the run or under crewed. We find it hard enough to see decent strategies implemented working on our current system of 10-14 and I would hate to imagine how much more trying it would become under a 24 hour shift.

We always train for worst case scenario and in this situation that unfortunately can lead to our members responding to a protracted incident at the start of a 24-hour shift. If we are to be serious about the DECON campaign then we cannot support a motion which would lead to our members being exposed to fire contaminants over an extended period. The unintended consequences of this resolution can, in my opinion, put members' safety at risk both in short and long term.

Instructing our EC to negotiate an inclusion of this type of shift through the NJC isn't a direction we in Scotland like to see our union go in. Whilst we have every sympathy with the reasons stated as to why some members want to see it brought in, I still want to visualise that soft play when I am older and retired on my gold plated pension. Conference, we support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Barry.

SAM MILLER-HODGES (Humberside):

Humberside secretaries have a history of lonely walks when discussing 24s, and I feel this will be another. I must raise concerns with this statement. Resolutions are often remitted or withdrawn because of the constraints their wording forces on the EC. This statement creates that exact situation. The 2018 resolution from Humberside on shift duty systems asks for a report on objective research on whether or not there were benefits for the shift system. The EC believes that altering shift systems to allow 24 hour working is not appropriate. This will not produce an objective report. It cannot show whether or not there are benefits to the shift system. The wording of this statement constrains and controls the subsequent report. An unbiased and unrestrained report on all aspects of shift would give greater credibility to that report. I hope that the EC will adequately consult with those doing the shift before a decision is made. No shift system is perfect but a report deserves to be objective rather than defend a pre-determined position.

A lot of the statements made today already believe that this report will be damning of 24s. I have worked 24s. I don't pretend that there aren't problems with it, but an objective report on that is the only way we can adequately deal with whether they are an appropriate shift system. The Grey Book contains shifts that allow reductions in staffing. Again, I hope that the EC report overcomes the restraints placed on it by the wording of this statement.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Sam. Matt.

MATT NICHOLLS (South Yorkshire):

Speaking in opposition to resolution 6, 24 hour voluntary shifts. Conference, in 2014 a group of volunteers chose to turn their back on the Fire Brigades Union in South Yorkshire. They volunteered to a non-Grey Book compliant shift system, one that broke safe working hours and they drove cuts right across my brigade. After four years of battling the union won a judicial review declaring the unsafe patterns was unlawful. I understand that some members are interested in 24 hour working, but if those same members wanted to volunteer to stop wearing BA at house fires, would that make it safe? We won a battle on unsafe shift patterns. Let us not give them back any ground at all. South Yorkshire oppose.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else?

GORDON NIMMO (NRC):

Speaking in support of the EC policy statement on *Fire and Rescue Service Duty Systems*. The NRC appreciate the EC statement and echo the sentiments of our comrades in Wales. The NRC recognises the difficulties facing the sector in retention and recruitment in relation to firefighters on the retained duty system. These issues will not be remedied by pay alone. A wider review of the retained duty system, including flexibility is badly needed. The NRC supports.

CRAIG CARTER (Bedfordshire):

Speaking on the EC policy statement. 24-hour shift work is spoken about almost every year at conference and as the only service with a collectively agreed 24-hour service wide shift system, delegates from Bedfordshire are still obliged to stand up here every year and present our experiences of this shift pattern.

Each year we hear from delegates about 24 hour shift system and what it might be like if implemented. Some of it is used in this policy statement. They have highlighted concerns about suitability for women members, members of control, fatigue related issues and reductions in establishment, all valid concerns. What we have not seen is a detailed report as to what this is like to work day in, day out for the last eleven years. What is the impact on our women members? Have there been any fatigue related issues? And what are the benefits and risks of establishing this shift system? Should a shift system project be established conference requests that members of Bedfordshire are consulted about their lived experience for the 24-hour shift system. Thank you, conference.

MARK DRINKWATER (Leicestershire):

Opposing resolution 6. My opposition is understandably Leicestershire-centric. For me there are two aspects of concern for this resolution. Firstly, how it would negatively impact our members with caring responsibilities. This will, of course, disproportionately affect our women comrades. In Leicestershire we have had 24-hour shift systems for approximately 10 years now.

We have up to six stations with an establishment of 72 people on most stations. In total in my knowledge, we have had two women in those ten years. They have done one year and three years in total. Clearly, this has been a barrier to the recruitment of women in our brigade. Caring responsibilities are not only for children; they can also be for elderly parents and, in Leicestershire, our diverse communities have greater levels of multi-generational households. 24-hour shift working may act as a barrier to these adults becoming members in our sector.

I genuinely don't believe that this resolution passes the conditions of an equality impact assessment and, as we stated, equality matters. Secondly, and as we are acutely aware in Leicestershire, this is a threat to the workforce numbers. This resolution threatens to unravel all the hard work and negotiation that have been completed in Leicestershire and which has removed the threat of day crewing plus. This transition away from day crewing plus in Leicestershire has increased our workforce by 61 staff and they will become 61 members. That is a real victory.

I appreciate the reference to travel costs and in this time of cost of living we need to save as much money as we can. However, what if you live and work at one of the stations that changes to 24 and are not able to do it. You now have to move away. In Leicestershire the door on multiple 24s is closing. It needs to be slammed shut once and for all based upon the principles of equality and maximising our labour force which is fundamental to the trade union movement. Conference, I oppose resolution 6 and support the EC statement.

ROB PARKIN (Kent):

Last year we brought to conference a resolution regarding 24 hour working. In Kent some 600 whole time work the system and many, I would say most, quite successfully. As Humberside suggest, this is not a perfect system and we agree that the EC need to get the lived experiences of our members. A number of the examples are purely anecdotal and as someone who works that and knowing many others that do, I would also suggest that we can give a truer picture of how a shift works. The examples given, I think it is down to ourselves, especially in health and safety and having the conversations with our employers around the control measures that we can put in. In Kent we have quite strong control measures that are in place around that 24 hour working.

The key is the fact that it is voluntary and, again, something that I would suggest the EC could actually talk to us about. We wouldn't want to have it seen that there is a fixed system because I believe that doesn't give the opportunity for those who try it and don't enjoy it. It does give the opportunity to have that work life balance as a family, as a carer. We have Tim who showed up and spoke yesterday very passionately about his son. He would agree as well – he cannot obviously speak today – that working 24s has worked fantastically for him.

So I think we just need more evidence and a truer point of view across the system so that we can come back again and get a real balanced opinion. We support resolution 6 from Lancashire. Thank you.

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

I wasn't going to speak on this. I brought some notes for another one, but just to reiterate to support the EC motion on this, anybody who thinks it is a good idea to work 24 hours in fire control are welcome to come and sit with me for 12 and see if you can cope. Twenty four hours in fire control is absolutely ridiculous. I know what it is like to sit there for 12 hours to be mentally and physically exhausted. We have not got the crews. We haven't got the staff. So where do we think we are going to get 24 hour crewing from? I know it is voluntarily but it is an absolutely ridiculous idea, OK.

I wrote some notes. Bear with me for a minute. I have got members who are too tired to drive home after a 12 hour shift in fire control, completely exhausted, mentally fatigued, sat there in their cars falling asleep. I heard the story about people fighting wildfires. I appreciate that is physically demanding, but I can assure you it can be equally demanding mentally and physically in fire control. Please support the EC motion. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, shortly the screens are just going to disappear off while the system gets reset but we can carry on I do believe. OK. Does anybody else want to speak in that debate?

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM):

I wasn't going to speak on this, it says "voluntary" but if we agree it the FRSs will think it is OK. They will then make it mandatory. Everyone will have to work 24 hours. We will then have less people working. It will cut down the workforce and we will be having job cuts left right and centre. We cannot have 24 hour shift systems with a voluntary option. They will think it is OK and they will impose it on us going forward. We will have job cuts. That is not what we want. We can't do it. I will support the EC's policy. Thanks very much.

THE PRESIDENT:

Is there anybody else wants to speak in the debate? No.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, president, and thanks for that debate conference. Look, when moving the policy statement I said that we would include officials from across the union, and to be clear that will include our comrades in Humberside, Kent and Bedfordshire that have those lived experiences of working 24 hour shift systems.

Unfortunately, conference, Kev made the stark point for me. Cuts have happened. Savage cuts have happened and now we are looking at our duty system to adapt them to lower our safe systems of work. But this policy statement is a statement to all those CFOs and we are saying it loud and clear that this book, the Grey Book, is ours and not yours and they are our duty systems. Take your hands off it.

Thank you to North Wales as well. The policy statement does go further. The review will go further. We will look at all duty systems, not just those that have been mentioned in this debate. The review will be objective. It will look at all those systems as I said in the UK. It will seek the views of our members working them. It will look overseas. It will listen to our equality and our trade sections. It will take on board all health and safety concerns. It will listen to academics and research, and it will report back to you here at conference. Please support the EC policy statement. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Lancashire, right of reply.

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire):

Conference, just to inform you that we have been mandated by our members on our brigade committee not to withdraw this resolution, but I would like to thank you all for your debate and all your input and your decision. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Kev. Right, conference, I will just reiterate to be clear. If the EC policy carries, resolution 6 falls. 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 the executive council's policy statement *Fire and Rescue Service Duty Systems* as amended to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

So, conference, as I said, resolution 6 now *falls*.

Conference, great debate, and we are getting there. Conference, I will now be taking the following resolutions in the same debate and both can carry. This is resolution 15, Driving Allowance, moved by Bedfordshire, and resolution 22, Survey of Driver Levels, moved by West Midlands. Bedfordshire to move their resolution please. Resolution 15, the EC are seeking Bedfordshire withdraw or they oppose.

Resolution 15 DRIVING ALLOWANCE

Conference instructs the Executive Council to review the National Joint Council (NJC) firefighter rolemap skill FF9 in relation to pay for emergency response drivers. The added risk and responsibility of this element of work should be properly remunerated.

Should a pay award be accepted that facilitates the creation of joint NJC working groups around the role of a firefighter and pay progression, this review should form part of any negotiations and carry the same 8 month time frame.

BEDFORDSHIRE

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

Moving resolution 15, driving allowance. Conference, for many firefighters response driving is a motivator for joining the profession. Driving on blue lights can be part of the job and a skill that many will obtain as they progress through their fire service career. This skill requires additional training and carries with it additional risk being required to respond at any time of the day, drive at speed through traffic and in areas not accustomed to large vehicles all form part of this responsibility.

It is also an additional responsibility should something go wrong. Those that chose to drive do have to drive to a standard before becoming emergency fire appliance drivers. We do have a code to drive to, a code that is there to

help protect us and other road users but pushing the boundaries in an emergency pushes the driver closer to that line of danger. Should something go wrong then that motivator for taking on the role of driving can quickly turn from a childhood dream to a nightmare. The consequences are catastrophic, the worst being a prison sentence, the least being a colossal insurance premium the next time you insure your car.

Each driver will know that their personal licence and insurance can be affected should they have an accident while driving at work. A collision is a collision despite what vehicle or circumstances it was under. Fault or no fault, it can still affect a driver's personal circumstances.

With some county councils offering pay for class 2 drivers way in excess of a firefighter's salary, we firmly believe this is an area open to negotiation for additional remuneration. This resolution does not ask for the role of a firefighter to be changed. It calls for our drivers to be properly remunerated for the additional skills and risk that response driving carries with it.

As working groups are established off the back of our successful pay award, conference asks that additional pay for driving forms part of these discussions around pay progression. Conference I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. Does that have a seconder?

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking in support of this resolution. I was absolutely astounded to realise that people don't get paid for driving, and I think it is something that has been long overlooked and we should put it right. Short and sweet. Thank you very much. I support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Trevor. I now call resolution 22 moved by West Midlands.

Resolution 22 SURVEY OF DRIVER LEVELS

Conference notes that pay progression within our service is relatively flat and that specialist skills taken on by our Members are rarely met with remuneration or reward.

Conference believes that those driving fire service vehicles, particularly whilst travelling to emergency incidents, take on a greater level of responsibility and are required to maintain a wider range of competence. They do not receive additional recompense for doing so.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to survey all fire and rescue services on the numbers of drivers (and where there are driver deficiencies) in order to provide information which could aid any future talks around pay. This must be reported back by September 2023.

Conference further instructs that the EC ensure remuneration for driving service vehicles is placed as a fundamental tenet in any future pay discussions.

WEST MIDLANDS

STEVE GREGORY (West Midlands):

The role of a driver in the fire service is one that is both stressful and a huge responsibility. However, it is one that is become less and less attractive to those within the West Midlands.

In the West Midlands there is a shortage of fire appliance drivers. Some watches have one or two which means driving every shift. Some watches have none at all and appliances are regularly off the run awaiting standby drivers. We cannot underestimate the mental impact to some of our members when they are constantly driving in heavily congested urban areas. Understanding the issues that drivers face, how it impacts them and why firefighters are reluctant to take up driving in the first place or get to the point that they give up, are crucial to discussing the issues on a national level. How many firefighters are drivers? How many firefighters drive every shift?

The EC has stated there is a working group ongoing. Surely any survey results would only bolster and strengthen working group's knowledge and leverage. We urge the EC to consider the use of a survey such as this to contribute towards the working group. In support of those working groups, we remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that. That is open for debate. Anybody?

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

President, conference, speaking in opposition to the idea of drivers being paid differently. I put on record I am a driver. I have done it and I totally get the sentiments, but driving should be voluntary because you want the people who can to do it. As soon as you dangle a carrot, you will get the wrong people driving fire engines. It is as simple as that. The second point, I don't think it would survive a quality impact assessment if I am being perfectly honest. We oppose.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. Anybody else in the debate? No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president, conference, and firstly thanks to West Midlands for remitting. That is very helpful and very welcome. We certainly will take on board a number of the points you have made. Our concern is with the final paragraph in there.

In terms of resolution 15, we are asking conference about that, and we would ask conference to think very carefully about the resolution and the implications down the line of agreeing the resolution. Firstly, driving is within the agreed rolemap, and employers can under national arrangements require people to drive. How that is applied varies a great deal between different fire and rescue services. It is also explicitly stated in section 3 of the Grey Book, so we have a national agreement that says that employers can require people to drive.

We made the point about the role map because conference needs to be clear that the employers' position is they don't want the rolemap and any discussion where we initiate a discussion that opens the possibility of employers challenging the rolemap is the threat that we face. Someone used the phrase "Pandora's box" the other day. It was a famous phrase of Ken Cameron prior to 2000 on the question of pay. He would say "Don't open Pandora's box" about the pay formula. We opened it and all the things we are discussing today came out of that box as a result.

So let's not be naïve. The employers will have an agenda. The employers' view on rolemaps is this. That the employers should have a very simple job description of a couple of paragraphs and within that each individual employer should be able to require any of their employees to broadly do anything that they want you to do. That is the employers' agenda, that is the chief officers' agenda and that is the risk when we start to say let's review the rolemap. So that is a warning to conference.

However, the title of the resolution is driving allowances. Again, do we really mean "allowances"? Our view, the executive council's view is that we want systems of pay progression which are not based on allowances, which are based on people progressing through their career, developing, contributing to the service and being paid professional pay as they develop along the line. One of those elements may in the course of discussion be driving. We need to explore that as a possibility, but we certainly don't think it should be allowances. Employers already – and we have had cases of this – may under the existing national agreement introduce ARAs (additional responsibility allowances). We have had cases of additional responsibility allowances. We have had cases of those being introduced for driving to deal with particular driving shortages so actually they already have arrangements whereby they can if they so wish introduce an allowance if they have, for example, driver shortages. They can do that already. We don't think that is the best model and, as I say, what we hope to take into the working group is the idea – it is only just beginning to be shaped – of a pay progression system that takes account of people becoming competent and as they develop through their career. So we urge you to oppose resolution 15. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Bedfordshire right of reply.

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

It has been mentioned that driving should be voluntary and driving is still voluntary, but this resolution wasn't about intentionally changing the rolemap. We all have to drive. But for many brigades the prerequisite for joining is you need a driving licence. That driving licence is supplied by you. It is your personal possession. This is what this resolution is about. It is about addressing that personal possession and protecting it.

I take on board the debate and many of the comments but it does seem strange that we talk about opening rolemaps yet on Wednesday, resolution 7 from Merseyside was shut down because it was closing the rolemap. A bit of a contradiction. What are we doing? Are we opening rolemaps or are we closing them? Conference, I will leave it there and let the floor decide. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, I will now put resolution 15 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls*.

Conference, I now call resolution 11, Responding to Incidents – At Members Own Cost, moved by the Officers National Committee. The EC support.

Resolution 11 RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS – AT MEMBERS OWN COST

Conference instructs that the Executive Council seek to ensure that no Member should have to bear a vehicle related cost in order to respond to operational incidents on blue lights.

OFFICERS NATIONAL COMMITTEE

CHRIS EVANS (ONC):

Moving resolution 11, responding to incidents at members own cost. Before I start, if I can just have a minute. I have had two epiphanies while I have been here at my first ever conference. I have been part of this committee for six months and because I am dyslexic which, like my colleague in Tyne and Wear, we only found out whilst I was in the service (I always knew), I have always thought that that three letter acronym there had NOC because I transpose letters from words. It was while I was sat there only this week that I realised it isn't NOC as I have been writing down for this long, it is actually ONC.

I am also a HDIM (Hazmat Detection Identification and Monitoring Officer) for the North West of England, and I specialise in the detection of homemade explosives in particular TATP (Triacetone Triperoxide). Epiphany number 2. TATP is the most deadly of all homemade explosives. It is deadly because it is extremely volatile and highly unstable, a bit like me. Epiphany number 2 is I can detect TATP very quickly but I now know, based on the fact that I could get ONC the wrong way round, I now know why my colleague insists on writing TATP himself on the hazardous detection board instead of me because it would be all over the place.

THE PRESIDENT:

Am I restarting the clock again?

CHRIS EVANS (ONC):

Anyway, responding to incidents at members own costs. This is an issue of fairness. Mileage and vehicle allowances have remained static since 2011 and we all know the cost of living has increased by 47%. It is affecting everyone, and we know the overall costs of motoring have increased enormously too. Conference, HMRC must update their mileage rates to reflect this enormous increase as it is currently ludicrous and unfair.

Most employees up and down the country in all sectors, have an element of choice regarding how they get to work or not. For flexi duty officers, our work place is also at the incident itself and we must respond to operational incidents in a vehicle on blue lights. There is no other option. Quite often this vehicle has been provided by us as well. This results in our members actually subsidising a fire and rescue services operational response model. It is ludicrous and it is unfair.

The national picture, as expected, is another postcode lottery and differs from service to service. Some services are paying our members and their families just 12p a mile to respond on blue lights to incidents that need resolving safely and effectively. It is ludicrous and it is unfair. Other brigades have made local arrangements to make some small increases in allowances but conference, this should be national across the board so no other chief fire officer pays the officers a pittance. The ONC will report to the national executive council. This matter should be raised at national joint council who agree these allowances for us all. President, conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, and the extra time. Right, does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That is open for debate. Nobody. No. I now put resolution 11 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now move on to para A7, para A8, para A9, para A10, para A11, para A12, para A13, para A14. I now call resolution 27 Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Funding Cuts, moved by Hereford and Worcester. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 27 URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (USAR) FUNDING CUTS

Conference notes the Home Office's decision to cease funding in 2024 for five USAR teams across England, namely those in Hereford and Worcester, Norfolk, Buckinghamshire and two teams in London.

Conference recognises the impact that this will have on Fire Brigades Union Members and instructs the Executive Council to do everything possible to protect Members, including a nationally negotiated agreement through the National Joint Council for pay protection measures, and in the event of redundancies a recall Conference to agree an industrial response.

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Moving resolution 27 Urban search and rescue funding cuts. Conference, as we currently stand the Home Office have confirmed funding will be maintained until end of March 2025 for the five USAR teams, Norfolk, Bucks, the two in London and one in Hereford and Worcester. Although this brings short term relief for our members, they are mindful that this is a moving deadline, so in order to give our members peace of mind and confidence, we ask that you support our resolution and instruct the EC to seek and agree a nationally agreed position to the NJC for pay protection measures ensuring equal and fair treatment for all USAR members. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Neil. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. It is now open for debate. Anybody? No.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president and thanks Hereford and Worcester and Buckinghamshire for bringing that into the final agenda and here to conference. Look, our members are rightly worried about the cuts and we are aware, as Neil said, that we have got some sort of a staved approach at least for one year. I think we need to make sure we commend comrades in Buckinghamshire for that successful lobbying campaign. The qualification really is just that the NJC may not be the silver bullet people think it might be in relation to this and we urge members in those affected brigades to begin to organise and prepare to take on this industrially. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ben. I now put resolution 27 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 16 Trade Union Release Agreements for Fire Brigades Union Officials moved by Bedfordshire. I have been informed Bedfordshire are going to remit with the right to speak.

Resolution 16 TRADE UNION RELEASE AGREEMENTS FOR FIRE BRIGADES UNION OFFICIALS

Conference believes it is unacceptable that individual brigades should try to gag our representatives, preventing them from carrying out their vital work. This is a threat to our democratic freedom as a trade union.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to negotiate a nationally agreed Trade Union Official release agreement through the National Joint Council by Conference 2024.

BEDFORDSHIRE

MARK COOK (Bedfordshire):

Conference, we all know how much commitment officials give in their roles. We all know how time consuming it is to carry out what is sometimes a thankless task. How many officials do you know who are regularly given time off without jumping through hoops? Brigades are becoming very reluctant to give time to trade union officials to carry out their union role. For nearly a year our region 9 EC official, Jamie Newell, has not only been working very hard as our EC member, he has also been carrying out the duties of an operational firefighter, all because of the failure to agree to a full-time release from our brigade.

It seems that brigade managers now have a new tactic in their assault on reducing the power of the union. They now try and deny officials the right to be released from their duties. They try and draw up complicated contracts preventing FBU officials from talking about issues in their brigades. Effectively a gagging order to prevent information from being shared with others.

Bedfordshire officials have also been denied time off for union duties preventing us from attending brigade meetings, regional meetings and even recently an employment tribunal to assist a member. The official involved was denied leave because they were assisting a member and taking on our brigade. In this case, and somewhat unfortunate for the service, our determined comrade decided they would use their own leave to attend this important ET, and I am pleased to report that this show of determination and defiance enabled our intrepid comrade to win the tribunal. But, now brimming with victory and somewhat angered by the brigade's actions to try and prevent a trade union official from helping one of our members, our determined comrade took them straight into another ET and won that one too.

For decades fire services across the UK have benefited from officials of our union assisting in resolving issues in their services. Services such as mine have benefitted in the years of hard work of previous regional officials, officials that were released from other services in our region. Why would a service then attempt to hinder release and restrict their officials' ability to represent our members when it is their turn? This is not just a case in my brigade. It is an approach seen all around the country.

Officials are the ones who work hard to make our workplace a safer environment. Countless hours are spent collating information carrying out inspections, attending investigations and maintaining the standard that we are all proud of, a standard that many fire and rescue services benefit from today.

Our stations are becoming cleaner. Members now understand the threat of contaminants. Remember, it was the FBU that led the way, supplied posters, put them up in our workplace, across the UK they all benefitted from our work for a very cheap price. Stifled contracts, containing what is effectively a gagging order where information cannot be shared or one that costs members money with unreasonable oncosts, are too prohibitive and not welcome to those that are willing to take on such roles. Officials have been nominated and voted in by the membership. They have been chosen to do a job. If they can't be given time off from work duties, then that all important work cannot be done. Conference, I remit. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark, and a big well done to Pat Carberry on that one. Pat, well done, because that impacts on all of us. Right, conference, then I will call resolution 20, Bereavement Leave, moved by Cleveland. The EC support.

Resolution 20 BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Conference notes the absence of a facility for 'Bereavement Leave' in the Grey Book. Conference instructs the Executive Council to raise this omission at the National Joint Council and enter negotiations with a view to an improvement to Grey Book provision, to include paid Bereavement Leave, in time to report to Conference 2024.

CLEVELAND

JAMES STRUDON (Cleveland):

I am up here to speak about resolution 20, bereavement leave. Why is there no facility for it within the Grey Book? Whilst members are going through one of the worst situations in their lives, we do not have any written guidance available to us. Conference, I am up here speaking about this because it is something that is very close to my heart. Myself and my wife, who is also a serving firefighter, recently lost our son. He was born prematurely and we lost him at 23 weeks, after a short fight. Now during this tragedy what protection did we have available to us? We had to battle with HR and tell them what we were entitled to. I had to book sick and she went on maternity and lost pay.

The only people who helped us was the FBU. I would like to put on record my thanks to the AIF who helped us during this time. To put it mildly, I don't think this is acceptable so conference instruct the executive council to raise a submission with the national joint council and enter into negotiations with a view to an improvement to the Grey Book provision, and for it to be included that paid bereavement leave is to be added. Would the EC then report back to conference in 2024.

I will never be able to put into words how proud I am of her but with me up here today maybe potentially helping somebody else in this situation, she can be a little proud of me and something good can come from our tragedy. Please support. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, James. Moving. Wow. Does that have a seconder? *Formally*. That is now open for debate. Anybody? No. Right, we will move right to the vote. I will now put resolution 20 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now all resolution 29, Bereavement Benefits (Remedial Order) 2023 moved by Kent. The EC supports with explanation.

Resolution 29 BEREAVEMENT BENEFITS (REMEDIAL) ORDER 2023

Conference notes that following Parliament's approval of the Bereavement Benefits (Remedial) Order 2023, the Government has extended the eligibility criteria for Bereavement Support Payment and Widowed Parent's Allowance.

Conference is aware that previously this was only available to eligible bereaved parents who were married or in a civil partnership, the law change will ensure more children in bereaved families are supported, regardless of their parent's legal relationship status.

Conference also notes that the Department for Work and Pensions has now opened a special 12 month application window for bereaved parents with dependent children whose partner died before 9 February 2023.

Alison Penny MBE, Director of the Childhood Bereavement Network states:

"We are relieved that at last, cohabiting families who have suffered the devastating loss of their mum or dad will now have the same access to bereavement benefits as married and civil partnered families. These benefits are a lifeline for grieving families, helping parents and carers put their children's needs first as they begin to adjust to a life that has changed forever. Our charity estimates that thousands of families, some bereaved as far back as 2001, may be in line for a retrospective payment of the benefits they have missed out on, paid from August 2018".

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:

- use data from Accident Injury & Death Benefit Fund claims to identify affected Members***
- write to those eligible to inform them of the change to eligibility criteria***
- ensure that the above tasks are completed in a timely manner to allow affected Members (or their survivors) to apply before the closure of the 12 month application window in February 2024.***

KENT

ROB PARKIN (Kent):

Moving resolution 29, Bereavement Benefits Remedial Order. It goes without saying that losing a loved one is devastating. The sense of loss and grief is unsurpassed whether you are married, in a civil partnership or neither. Comrades, were you aware that not until February of this year were parents with dependent children eligible for bereavement benefits regardless of their legal relationship status?

With parliament's approval of these updates to the Bereavement Benefits Order, the Department for Work and Pensions has opened a twelve month application window for bereaved parents with dependent children whose partner died before February 2023. Conference, the childhood benefits network estimates that as many 21,000 families, some bereaved as far back as 2001 may be entitled to retrospective payments they have missed out on paid from August 2018. Conference therefore instructs the EC to use data from Accident Injury and Death Benefit Fund claims to identify those members affected; also to write to those eligible to inform them of the change to the eligibility criteria; and ensure that these tasks are completed in a timely manner to allow affected members (or their survivors) to apply before the closure of the 12 month application window which is February 2024. Thank you. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder?

PAUL JAMES (North Yorkshire):

Standing to second resolution 29 brought by Kent. President, conference, we have just seen some names put up on the board there on the screen at the beginning of this conference where we lost our colleagues, brothers and sisters. Some of those colleagues, brothers and sisters we don't know whether they could be part of this or not, so contacting them and giving them the information that they may not be aware of has got to be a benefit to them.

However, over the last 20 years or so, people's perception of marriage has changed and not many couples are doing that now. I am one of them, having previously been married, I don't have the wish to do it again. However, I do have two young girls of the age 12 of 13 who are the biggest pain in my life, shall I say. I am not their father, but I, for one, would be in my element if I wasn't here today if I was one of those names on the board and you guys went and knocked on that door for my partner and gave her the information that this is available to her. So I will keep it short and sweet and just say can we support this resolution please. I think it is very, very valuable.

THE PRESIDENT:

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

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

President, conference, a simple explanation: GDPR again I am afraid. We may have some GDPR difficulties in using the data that we hold on the AIF so we are already getting the clarification on all that. So we need just to be conscious about how we contact people to inform them of this law change, so we are going to do that. There are several ways that the claims can be made to the bereaved for payment at present either on line, phone, paper application etc, so we are going to get that information out as quickly as possible in the most appropriate manner in compliance with GDPR. Thanks, president, thanks conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark, I will now put resolution 29 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.
I now call para A15.

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

I am just wondering if Mark Rowe, our national officer, would mind giving us a bit of an update because we had a resolution last year regarding the Jubilee Medal and we have just found out there is going to be a Coronation one and we are wondering if we are going to be left out of that as well. Thank you.

CRAIG CARTER (Bedfordshire):

Basically, what she has just said. I will go through it anyway. Conference acknowledges the effort the FBU made to campaign for control staff to be awarded the Platinum Jubilee Medal. Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire controls were awarded it, but this is bittersweet knowing that the majority were snubbed. With another medal being awarded for the King's Coronation, we hope the FBU will be revisiting the campaign and ensure our amazing front line control staff are finally recognised and awarded. Thank you.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

President, conference, yes, we have continued the pressure in relation to this very important matter. We have correspondence from Matthew Rycroft, the permanent secretary. He responded to the FBU to say "Regarding eligibility to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal, the precedent set in the Diamond and Golden Jubilee Medal processes established for certain specified operational staff criteria, namely police officers, firefighters and ambulance workers when dealing with emergencies, and this an important part" he says "and this is further defined as being called to the scene of 999 response and personnel who are potentially placing themselves in danger", so that is the criteria. Remember, conference "being called to the scene". Bear that in mind for a moment.

So an issue then came to our attention, so in conjunction with Lynda Rowan-O'Neill and Caroline, as the CSNC officials, we prepared a circular titled "Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal, FBU appalled at further insult to our members" and whilst we fundamentally disagree with the criteria that the permanent secretary informed us had been applied, and the control members are not operational, we think that that criteria is inconsistent and frankly farcical. The reason for that, the circular we prepared, contained a YouTube link to Prince Charles (now the King) awarding the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal to a ceremonial pony. It even had the pony's name engraved around its edge. I think that is frankly an utter disgrace.

Now, I have been in the job a long, long time and I have often found myself lamenting the fact, and wishing that we had more staff in control to deal with the emergencies as they come in. I have never once found myself wishing that we had a ceremonial pony to assist. So the circular was drafted on 30 August, agreed with Linda and Caroline, ready to go and we were going to do a press release and a big announcement about that particular insult. On 8 September the Queen passed away. Some of our officials were upset about that, some of our members and they took to social media to express their upset. So after discussion with Linda at that time it was agreed that issuing the circular in those circumstances might not be appropriate.

We are currently looking at the job evaluation which has been reported a couple of times now to you at conference, and we are still making that case and pushing that case. The task and finish group, we have had a couple of discussions and we are looking at just agreeing who will undertake the job evaluation. There has been some good discussion as well that has been had between myself and Gill Gittins on one occasion, around control staff and operational, so we are hoping to make some headway with that, and yes, of course, we will be pushing for the Coronation Medal as well. I hope for the time being that suffices as an update. We are not letting this matter go, conference. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I now call para A16. Para A17, Para A18.

STEVE RADCLIFFE (Cumbria):

While we accept additional bank holidays that have been afforded to us due to the deaths and Coronation of members of the monarchy, Cumbria would like to point out yet another pay related postcode lottery that has been allowed to develop regarding firefighter pay. I refer to the holiday pay and the outcome of the *Bear Scotland Ltd v Fulton* [2015] 1 CMLR 40 case.

Due to a decision for this whole day pay adjustment not to be collectively negotiated nationally through the NJC, we are now in the strange position of some services receiving this extra pay and many throughout the country still not receiving it. Another peculiarity to this is some services who have put this in place having used different formulae and percentages.

In Cumbria we had a claim many years ago with constant promises of agreement and backdating only to be put off for years. There are issues around backdating and we believe this is a breach of contract. All reps here should get their employers to pay this detriment and backdate as far as possible, if not use Thompsons. The executive council should also consider the progression of these payments through the NJC to achieve these payments for all services including back pay, something for the new Assistant General Secretary to resolve immediately. This is a national payment and should not have been left to local officials to resolve, but what is done is done. I urge all reps to get your executive council member involved to resolve this issue. Thank you.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, Steve, thank you Cumbria. Look, we will meet with yourselves, with your EC member and your regional secretary to both understand the issue fully and look at what has been done locally, and we will arrange that immediately. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ben. Para A19, para A20. Right, conference, that's tea break now. Fifteen minutes please.

Tea Break.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, can we take our seats. Right, conference. I will be taking the following resolutions in the same debate. All can carry. Resolution 40, Provision of Information Technology IT Equipment for Brigade and Health and Safety Reps, moved by Lancashire; resolution 44, Facilities for Health and Safety Officials moved by Cambridgeshire with an amendment from Hereford and Worcester; and resolution 48, Health and Safety Representatives Core Function, moved by Shropshire. I now call resolution 40, moved by Lancashire. The EC are seeking remit or they oppose.

Resolution 40 PROVISION OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) EQUIPMENT FOR BRIGADE HEALTH AND SAFETY REPS

Conference notes the vital work undertaken by Fire Brigades Union (FBU) brigade health and safety reps in ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of FBU Members and that of the public whom we serve.

Given the importance of the role carried out by brigade health and safety reps, Conference is concerned at a lack of information technology provision.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to provide all brigade health and safety reps with a laptop to assist them in carrying out their duties.

LANCASHIRE

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire):

Moving resolution 40 provision of information technology equipment for brigade health and safety reps. Comrades, although it states that our employers should provide our health and safety reps with IT equipment, we all know that this is not the case in most if not all services.

Like most contentious issues we face within the fire and rescue services throughout this country, this is one of our many things that services and brigades would laugh at if you told them FBU health and safety reps need IT equipment. As a brigade secretary, I am fortunate to have been provided with a phone and a laptop. We in Lancashire are fortunate to have one of the hardest working health and safety reps but he has to rely on his own equipment which is not covered by our technical support and leaves us as a union vulnerable should we need to input quickly.

Also, from the information security perspective, we cannot insure for the encryption on personal devices which could potentially leave us at risk of breaching confidentiality of our members and GDPR laws should the items require repair or in the event of theft. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kev. Does that have a seconder?

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Seconding resolution 40, provision of IT equipment for brigade health and safety reps. Comrades, we are often told that the role of the health and safety rep is the most important in the Fire Brigades Union. I am sure we all agree with this. Why then would we not provide them with all the equipment required to undertake their role to the best of their abilities? In my own brigade, as I am sure is the same in all of yours, we have a proud history of health and safety reps going above and beyond to protect members. They should not be doing this from a position where they are either weakened before they begin or are using their own money to pay for the equipment.

Our health and safety rep at the moment does not have access to a laptop or computer at home. All the work he undertakes is done on his mobile phone. This is not how health and safety reps should be working. There are times when he has to send us photos of documents he is working on because working on the hard copy is all he has available to him. We have heard it said that FRSs should provide our health and safety reps with laptops. Comrades, if your service is the same as mine, we cannot trust them not to put some kind of system on there to track information sent to and from those laptops.

We are not asking for iPad pros here; we are not asking for top of the range laptops; we are just asking for IT equipment that will allow our hardworking and conscientious health and safety reps to be able to undertake their work without one hand tied behind their back. That said, please don't give them Chrome Books because you will tie the other hand behind there as well.

Conference, yesterday we passed resolution 61 to redistribute FBU tech. Our health and safety reps would welcome even second hand IT equipment. Conference, support this resolution. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lee. I now call resolution 44, moved by Cambridgeshire. The EC are seeking Cambridgeshire remit or they oppose.

Resolution 44 FACILITIES FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICIALS

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to update the current facilities afforded to brigade health and safety Officials.

Health and safety is the biggest weapon we have at our disposal. The brigade reps and Officials are the lifeblood of the Fire Brigades Union; they work tirelessly to protect our current standards, whilst fighting hard to uplift them, in order to get the best for Members. They do the same (if not more) work as other brigade Officials, but aren't given the allowance or Information Technology (IT) systems in order to carry this out.

Conference instructs the EC to issue brigade health and safety Officials with the correct IT (laptop and phone/phone allowance) and a monthly allowance, in order to facilitate their great work and bring them in line with other brigade Officials

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AMENDMENT

2nd sentence of 2nd paragraph, after "The brigade" insert "health and safety"

HEREFORD and WORCESTER

CALLUM HODGKIN (Cambridgeshire):

Speaking to move our resolution regarding the provision of facilities for health and safety officials. Just following on from the last speech, I amended my speech last minute because I was going to advocate some Chrome Books, but I cannot stand here in front of everyone and advocate for Chrome Books at all.

Our health and safety rep has been at branch, brigade; all regional levels are the life blood of our union and our profession. It is down to their tireless work and campaigning over the years that the safe systems of work that we have in place today exist. It is down to their tireless and relentless work that many dangerous policies, procedures and working practices have been blocked from coming in or have been revoked. It is down to their persistence and knowledge that outdated dangerous shift systems and crewing models have been fought and overturned.

We have seen the great work that they have done on all levels with the DECON project ensuring brigades take post incident health and safety seriously. Whilst we know vital this work is in keeping firefighters safe, it also extends to our families and the public.

Proper DECON contamination removes the risk of taking this dangerous residue home to partners, children and friends, and also back out into the wider community when we attend other incidents or community events. Health and safety officials wield the most power and influence with brigades and are backed up by many legal documents and Acts. This gives them the ability to enter into dialogue with managers, backed up with law, Acts and legal documentation strengthening their arguments. However, the current facilities provision for these reps and officials is almost non-existent. Other brigade and regional officials are given IT in the form of a laptop, Chrome Book or a phone, or an allowance for that, and a monthly allowance. This is not the same for health and safety officials. How is this fair?

Health and safety officials often handle or receive sensitive personal data. It is unacceptable that this is required to be kept on personal devices and opens up a wide range of issues, correct storage and GDPR. With that being said, some brigades do offer health and safety officials brigade laptops. This is also not acceptable because they can look into these at any point.

Conference calls for a review of this practice and for health and safety officials to be afforded the correct tools in order to continue to be as efficient as possible. Health and safety is the biggest weapon that we have, and most of our firefighters fall under their remit. We need to support them the best we can.

I am aware of the potential cost implications. I think everyone in this room has argued that health and safety is worth it and I think the last question to leave you with is can you put a price on safety.

Conference, I ask you to support this resolution and assist your health and safety reps to continue in their great work in keeping firefighters, their families and the public safe. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Callum. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* I will now call Hereford and Worcester to move their amendment. *Formally.* Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. I now call resolution 48, Health and Safety Representatives Core Function, moved by Shropshire. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 48 HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES CORE FUNCTION

Conference recognises the vital work that Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Health and Safety (H&S) representatives undertake in fire and rescue services across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

Conference also recognises the support that those representatives receive from National Officers, notably Riccardo la Torre, amongst others, and from regional representatives.

Fire and rescue services however, are not so supportive, and all too often hamper the best efforts of the H&S representatives to carry out their core functions, as laid out in H&S legislation which includes the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977.

Conference agrees that this continued flouting of H&S legislation cannot continue. The barriers that some fire and rescue services put in place, often citing Data Protection, is a clear breach of the rights of Safety Representatives to discharge their functions effectively.

Conference calls on the Executive Council to engage with all fire and rescue services via the Chief Fire Officers (or equivalent), via written communication, clearly stating what is expected of the fire and rescue service when engaging with FBU H&S representatives. This work should be completed by September 2023.

SHROPSHIRE

LOUISE FLETCHER (Shropshire):

I am moving this resolution today quite frankly very briefly. I think it spells out in the resolution what we are asking for and I am aware that we have qualified support. I do fully understand that qualified support having had a discussion with other colleagues and also Riccardo. I am pleased to hear that some chief officers and senior management teams have a good working health and safety commitment with our brigades and regional representatives and they potentially do not need to receive what I am asking for in this resolution, the letter spelling out what our rights are under the SRSC regs and associated legislation. So, conference, it is simple and I would ask you to support this resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Louise. Does that have a seconder?

VANESSA ROBINSON (Northumberland):

Recently a colleague asked me two questions after witnessing interactions I had with middle management regarding a health and safety issue: (1) why do you bother? (2) Is it worth it?

I bother because I am proud to be an FBU health and safety representative as my brigade, as my region, and most certainly as my service know, health and safety has got its hooks into me and I just love it. As FBU health and safety reps, we do our role because we are passionate and we are genuinely wanting to make things better and safer for our members. And let's be realistic. Quite often no-one likes health and safety until they need health and safety.

Conference notes as health and safety reps we need to be able to focus and concentrate on what we do best. We need our executive council to have our backs and let our services know legally we have rights to carry out our core functions, our famous Brown Book. They need to know we are not a bunch of tin pot, gung ho individuals. We genuinely want to maintain and improve safe working conditions.

As health and safety reps, we don't want to be constantly justifying ourselves to our services. We don't want to be jumping through hoops that are put there to hinder us. The energy, the time and effort this takes from us could be better used.

Conference calls for engagement from our executive council to our management to confirm they recognise the importance and benefits of having active health and safety reps in all of our services. As I said before, fortunately some of our regions are making progress with principal management and long, long may that continue.

We respectfully request that communication that is needed – not that it would be nice or that it would be handy to have, but it is needed for us health and safety reps, it comes into our services via our brigade representatives, our brigade committees, so we can show our services. We don't want to be separate. We want to be working together. We should all be working together for the greater good. They should want to make our workplace safer. So can I just say, executive council we need you to have our backs and we need your help. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Vanessa, wow. Well done. Right, that is now open for debate.

LOUISE FLETCHER (Shropshire):

I may not be about to be very popular with some of you but I am actually going to speak in opposition for the previous two resolutions, resolution 40 and resolution 44. The reason being we are covered by very specific legislation, legislation that has been around almost as long as I have and was born out of the Health and Safety at Work Act which was born in the year that I was born. Now you can work out my age but there we go.

I do not feel we are in a position to let the employers off the hook. They should be providing facilities, technology, telephones. They should also be providing the time necessary for the health and safety representatives to do their work in their day jobs. It is a role. It becomes a dual role. Now my service did find out a couple of years ago that I was prepared to fight that, and I took my service to the employment tribunal. Unfortunately, I had to withdraw at the last moment because of a slight accident with the law that was used, but they had a shot across their bows, they did their research and borne out of that Shropshire now have an absolutely stonking policy for brigade and branch representatives which not only guarantees that they have the time in their day jobs to do their role, it guarantees that branch representatives, if unfortunately because they are working shifts they attend in their own time, they get that time back as compensatory leave and they are all provided with the respect that they deserve. We all work incredibly hard, but I do not believe that the Fire Brigades Union should be paying for that; the employers are required to pay for that by law and our money is better spent elsewhere. Apologies, but I am speaking in opposition of those two resolutions. Thank you.

ANDREW MURRAY (Durham):

I am also speaking in opposition to 40 and 44. Health and Safety is without a doubt the most important thing for trade unions. However, it is the right of the trade unions to have these facilities provided by employers. The representative from Lancashire said that it should be provided. I will just read what it says: "Without prejudice to regulations 5 and 6 of the regulations, every employer shall provide such facilities and assistance as may safety representatives may reasonably require for the purpose of carrying out their functions under section 2.4 of the 1974 Act and under these regulations." The union has a financial burden. We shouldn't be making that worse when employers need to be providing these facilities. We oppose.

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

Conference, I speak in support of the provision of IT equipment for health and safety reps. There have been some quotes from the safety committee regs known as the Brown Book. I am not particularly familiar with that, but I have had a quick look at the specific paragraphs on there. I believe the regulations were brought in 1974 which is quite a while now. The point is can we rely on our employers to follow this legislation under the regulations and provide what is written in this document? We have been waiting since 1974 and we can quite clearly see that 50 years or so is a little bit too long. It is one of the most important things, as has been said in the resolutions that we have health and safety behind us. We fight many battles with health and safety and what we must also remember is it doesn't state what provisions will be provided. It could be a desk top computer in the workplace. We all know that as an official's role, most of our work is carried out in our own time, and if that provision is only given to health and safety officials in the workplace, then that doesn't allow them to do the majority of their work which is done in their own time. Yes, please remember that, the 1974 the regs came in and we are arguing about it now because the provision is quite clearly not there. I support the provision for IT facilities.

CHRIS COOK (Tyne and Wear):

I am up here to speak in support of resolution 48 but I will ask the EC for a caveat. Luckily I am in one of those brigades that has a fantastic relationship with health and safety, working together to drive the safety for our members. The only thing I would ask as a caveat is that there is an opt out. I just feel it would be quite unhelpful to write to the chief officer. Thank you very much. I support.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else in the debate? No.

RICCARDO LA TORRE (National Officer):

President, conference, I make no apologies, I am going to be sharp on this one. We need to think very seriously about the message we are going to send if we support resolutions 40 and 44. I will come at my brother Hodgkins here as well. This is not a question of putting a price on health and safety. This union has proved time and time again that we will leave no stone unturned when it comes to the safety of our members. This is about not picking up the bill for the bosses just because they don't want to pay it, and we need to be very clear on that.

It is very easy to represent health and safety as clipboards and high vis; that is not the case. The history of workers' health and safety is a radical history. Our rights have been won through workers' struggle, and those rights are

underpinned by law and the FBU has played a very particular role in that. When the Health and Safety at Work Act first came about, chief fire officers tried to argue that we were expendable as firefighters, we shouldn't be under these regulations. The FBU challenged that, we fought that and we won. As recently as 2014 when a member of this union died at Marley farm, chiefs tried to argue we shouldn't be covered by these regulations that we are about to hand back to them if we agree these resolutions. This union fought that. They do not want to pick up this bill. We understand that.

Sister Fletcher, who just spoke passionately in support, has been attacked by bosses in her brigade for standing up for this union and all of us and in defending these regulations. Are we going to hand them back to the bosses? I understand they don't want to pay. They are not rights when they are easy; they are not rights when they are cheap; they are rights when they are free; they are our rights and we should demand them.

The same regulations always cover our safety reps rights to time off. Shall we hand that one back to them and should we pick up the bill for that? They also hand up our right to investigate hazards and dangerous occurrences. Shall we pick up the bill for that too. Change Brown Book to Grey Book for a second by the way, because there are lots of rights in that as well. If they don't want to pay time and a half because it is expensive and it's hard, should we pick up the tab on that too? These are our rights that workers have fought for, workers have died for and we absolutely have to defend them.

Conference, they would love nothing more than to put this bill on to us. We have lost 12,000 firefighter jobs. We have financial questions and challenges that we need to respond to in this union. The chiefs would love nothing more than for us to pick up another huge tab that they should be paying for. Let's not pay the bosses' bill. We already have one laptop per 87 members in this union. We think that might be the highest proportion of laptops for members in the entire trade union movement. Regulation 4(a), regulation 5, regulation 6, I could go on. There is a list of regulations that mean the bosses should be giving us exactly what this resolution is asking for. I know they don't want to do it. There is plenty they don't want to do. We don't accept it on anything else. We shouldn't accept it on this.

Conference, I know there are questions about confidentiality here. There are technological responses to that. We get FBU email addresses, we have FBU Onedrive. Again, this isn't a right when it is easy, this isn't a right when it is cheap, this isn't a right when it's free; there are technological solutions to the confidentiality concerns that have been raised. In fact, the regulations specifically refer to the rights to private discussions, the right to private communications. Conference, I implore you, 48 sets out precisely the attacks the bosses are doing on our safety work, what they want to take from us. I cannot imagine anyone in this room is going to oppose that so on the one hand we are going to pass one resolution that says they are attacking our regulations we need to defend them, but by the way the union is going to pick up the bill for this one because bosses don't want to pay it any more.

Conference, this will send out a serious message that we will give up when bosses push back on our demand. We will give up when bosses push back on our safety. We have had an obituary at this conference. We are talking about cancers at this conference, the exact fights that these regulations arm us to fight for. Conference, I implore you, do not send the message to the bosses from the Fire Brigades Union national conference that if you can't be bothered to give us our rights, don't worry, we'll do it ourselves. Conference, oppose 40, oppose 44. I implore you to remit them so we don't vote. Support 48 with the qualification that again, although we support these regulations, it is going to take us back round our joint safety committees. If they still exist after we are handing back the regs to them, by the way, on the joint safety committee. Conference, please think very seriously about the message that this is going to send.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Riccardo. Right of reply, Lancashire.

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire):

We understand what the law is and the way we are treated as trade union officials. We understand that. We are here now pleading with you to give our reps who do an excellent job. Without them we would be screwed. We know in Lancashire that my brigade chair, our emails are being checked. The brigade chair had an email removed by Lancs so we know we are being checked as officials in Lancs. So we are going to trade IT equipment off services.

Can we trust them? The answer is no. Lancashire has changed 180 degrees in the last two years. We have gone from a service which was a good place to work, a good place to go to. Right now it is worse than the Middle East. Members don't want to go to work but that is not the point. The point is right now, like you said, we have gone from 1974 to 2023 with these provisions without anything. Services aren't going to give in that easy to give us this equipment. Conference think hard about what we are asking for. I totally understand, but as we can't trust fire and rescue services, we need to do something drastic and quick. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Cambridgeshire, right of reply?

CALLUM HODGKIN (Cambridgeshire):

Just to come back on a few things. I don't think it is about picking up the tab, it is about equipping the officials to be efficient. Brigades should and not all of them do, some will, but we have also got to be careful because it is a postcode lottery. Some brigades will give you everything that you ask for and some will not. Some will read the regulations and the provisions as being you can have a desk when you are at work.

I think to get rid of the postcode lottery side of that, it is about equality for all of our officials across the board whether you are a brigade, regional, brigade organiser, secretary or health and safety. I will follow on from what Lancashire said about the brigade laptops. There is sensitive data in there and some of it is going to be very sensitive and very personal, and brigades do sneak and brigades will look. They know even if you log into your own brigade Onedrive they can see that and they will pull the information up.

We could get ourselves into a situation where we prepare a case and by the time we go into present that case, the brigade will already have seen all of our arguments because they will snoop. I think what I am asking for really is for you to reconsider your position as the EC and move for qualified support. By that I mean carry out a review on the cost of this and to bring it back to conference next year for approval and put it to the floor and vote on that. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Callum, if you want to do that you would have to remit it. No. Right conference, I am going to move to the vote. I now put resolution 40 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls*.

I now put the amendment to resolution 44 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls*.

I now put resolution 44 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *falls*.

I now put resolution 48 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

Conference, just before we move on with the next business can I just remind you if you haven't checked out yet to do so at the earliest opportunity.

I now call resolution 70, Working Time Regulations Guidance, moved by Essex. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 70 WORKING TIME REGULATIONS (WTR) GUIDANCE

Conference notes that some Grey Book staff often have multiple contracts.

Conference also notes that with the increases in the cost of living, the issue of working time and rest periods needs to be understood more than ever. To fully protect the health, safety and welfare of Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Members health and safety representatives need a thorough understanding of the WTR and how they interact with Grey Book duty shift systems.

Conference instructs that the Executive Council produce a WTR guidance document for FBU representatives to use in local negotiations and consultations, to ensure compliance and protect the long-term health of our Members.

ESSEX

ANDREW KNOWLES (Essex):

The increased pressure on individuals and family finances have caused many in the fire and rescue service to undertake multiple contracts often with very little oversight from the employer as to the maximum weekly hours

worked and the daily or weekly rest periods. Fire and rescue service management are often wilfully ignorant of the legislation and misquote sections for convenience, and it is only through the knowledge and understanding of the regs that FBU reps can effectively combat this approach.

Excessive working hours and fatigue result in slower reactions, reduced ability to process information, memory lapses, reduced ability to process information, memory lapses the increased awareness, underestimation of risk, reduced coordination, and it takes no imagination at all to understand how any of these could have a detrimental effect on the driver of an appliance, the decision making of an OIC or the gathering and communicating of information for a control operative, and lead to accidents, ill-health and injury or worse.

Work activities like this not only endanger the individual, the team and the public; it also reduces fire and rescue services' roles and therefore the opportunity for additional employment for others. Currently, we are aware that there is some guidance out there, but I believe it is quite old and may need updating. I don't believe it is accessible on the website either so understandably difficult to understand for the layman.

Therefore, to fully protect the health, safety and welfare of FBU members, reps need a thorough understanding of the legislation and how it interacts with the Grey Book shift systems. We request that the executive council produce a guidance document for the FBU reps to use in local negotiations and consultations to ensure compliance and protect the long term health and safety of our members. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* Thank you. That's open for debate. Nobody?

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you president, thanks Andy and the Essex brigade committee. I think this is more of a comment, president, than a qualification and I will be quick. The executive council have already completed this work. We are happy to review it and then we will reissue it to brigade committees. It is a very lengthy document, comrades, but it is comprehensive and will provide the guidance as requested by the Essex committee. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ben. I will now put resolution 70 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I will now call para C10, para C11.

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk):

For a start I just need to make you aware that I shall be talking about mental health and suicide and appreciate this may be upsetting to some members. I just want to make you all aware of the recent passing of three colleagues, friends and brothers within Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, David Pickwell, Gary Palmer and Carl Mills all took their own lives within the last six months of 2022. Sadly, two of those were on fire stations.

This has been a terrible period for Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service and we have been classified by the public health as being in a suicide cluster. Our union officials, Kevin Gain and Ryan Hastings, have been at the forefront of providing assistance to the bereaved families and I would like to pay tribute to them today. This has been a really testing time for all of our officials. I would also like to thank regional and EC member, Jamie, for all of their assistance during this difficult period.

On average there are six to seven suicides nationally in the fire and rescue service. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service has had three in five months, and therefore sadly we sit as an outlier in the data. As I stated, we have been deemed in a suicide cluster because all of the suicides are linked by place of work and the method. Sadly, two of these cases were within the drill towers.

I would like to ask two things of all of us. Firstly, can the EC look at how we record and then pass on information on deaths of serving members especially when suicide is involved. I appreciate there are sensitivities around

information sharing but with close liaison with local officials, I believe this is something they can achieve. Linked to this is how the union can assist with mental health conditions. Secondly, can I ask all of us as a membership to look out for each other. If you are struggling, please talk to someone or reach out to help. If someone is suicidal, talk to them about suicide. We must not be afraid to be open about and talk about suicide. Your intervention may be the difference. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Alan. Riccardo

RICCARDO LA TORRE:

Thank you, Alan, and I know that is a difficult contribution but it is an important one and thank you for bringing it to conference. We can give you assurances. We are very aware of all the issues that you raised. There is wider work going on across the sector outside the FBU around suicides. Our national treasurer, EC member Les Skarratts, has been liaising with that work for us on behalf of the union in the health and safety committee.

We previously had a mental health research project commissioned with Nottingham Trent University. For many reasons, it started with COVID, and then the circumstances around the academics we were dealing with, it is no longer possible to progress that project, but we are, as a priority, in discussions with other academic experts to plan what the union can do to take this research and this work forward. We are in discussion with UCLan and, as you all know, we have a trusted and long relationship with them, and we know they deliver. There is one academic in particular who has a specific expertise in mental health in the emergency services. We want to include the trade union representative work as part of that, as has been discussed in debate at this conference previously, and as soon as we have got developments on that, which we expect to be soon by the way, we will communicate them immediately.

Yes, around the monitoring and the data that we keep, we need to look at and review how we do that, how we record it and how we research patterns etc. Again, thank you, brother, it is hard to listen to but a very important contribution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Riccardo and thanks Alan. Conference, we are continually assessing how we are doing on the business. We have got 14 resolutions, I think, still to take. What I am proposing is that we carry on, we take a short break at 1 o'clock instead of the hour's lunch and then we can resume business but you would have to agree to suspend your standing orders. Is that agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you.

I now call resolution 42 – ah, just before you do that, I have also just been there are still 28 people who have not checked out so, when we do break, could you please make sure you have checked out. Thank you. Right, I now call resolution 42, Mental Health Related Emergency Call Handling, moved by the CSNC. Sherri.

Resolution 42 MENTAL HEALTH RELATED EMERGENCY CALL HANDLING

Conference recognises the important role that the Fire Brigades Union plays in shaping the fire and rescue service.

In recent years Emergency Fire Control Members have noticed a sharp upturn in the number of incidents involving members of the public suffering a mental health crisis. These incidents can range from panic attacks, to self-harm and, in the most severe cases, members of the public taking their own lives. With the current economic climate and the cost of living crisis we fear these call types will continue to increase.

Conference believes firefighters in Control do not currently receive adequate training on how to handle these calls, or how to deal with the physical and psychological pressures it places upon them. It is crucial this is remedied and that Emergency Fire Control Members are properly trained to deal with members of the public suffering a mental health crisis.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to undertake the following;

- ***raise this issue through the National Joint Council as an urgent health and safety concern***

- ***write to all fire and rescue services to ascertain the level of training provided, if any***
- ***conduct research to identify what training is available and appropriate***
- ***lobby for the implementation of appropriate training across all fire and rescue services.***

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

I have been known to speak candidly about my encounters with mental health and while most of us in fire and rescue service use humour as a coping mechanism, this is not a subject we should laugh about. So the Office of National Statistics has studied the relationship between the cost of living and the prevalence of depressions amongst adults in Great Britain. They provided in depth analysis which I am not going to go into because none of us would be surprised, and speaking from my own experience in control, I have noticed an increase in the number of callers who are suffering a mental health crisis.

The issue that we have is there is no consistency across the UK fire and rescue service when it comes to training for handling of such calls. The only training I have personally received in my career is an annual E-learning package and that is only since joining Merseyside four years go. So did that E-learning package prepare me for a recent suicidal caller? No. Did my own personal understanding of mental ill-health prepare me for someone telling me they were going to kill themselves? No. Do I feel any better prepared now for the next suicidal caller? No.

The truth is that that is the only call in 14 years of working in fire control where it broke me. I lost my composure when I was passing the call to the ambulance service. William hung up on me. He said I was like everyone else – I am doing it again. He said I was like everyone else and I was doing nothing to help, so when I was passing the call to the ambulance, a bit like this, I was crying because I understood, I had been there, but I felt like I had failed him. That is a horrible place to be when you are supposed to be the one there to help.

So what do we want? We need for this lack of training to be raised through the NJC. We need the EC's help to write to every fire and rescue service to see what level of training is provided, if any. We need the EC's help to research what training is available out there and that is appropriate for fire control, and finally, because I haven't asked for enough already, when that is complete we need the EC's help to lobby for the implementation of the appropriate training across all fire and rescue services. Conference, please support. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Well done, Sherri, well done. Does that have a seconder?

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Seconding the resolution from control. It is a good job the EC are supporting this one after that. Conference, I have been a firefighter for over 20 years, the majority of that time I will admit to a blissful sense of ignorance as to exactly what went on behind the doors of fire control. Obviously, I was always wary enough not to upset our comrades in control lest you end up on the two till six standby for the third job on the bounce. Hell hath no fury like a control firefighter scorned, it really doesn't.

It is only since becoming a brigade official that I have gained a small, small semblance of understanding as to what our control members do, and often how woefully under-provisioned they are to do it. Conference, it has been stated from this rostrum previously, but it bears repeating: as a firefighter, I would take crawling into a burning building any day of the week over giving fire advice to a trapped mother in a house often miles away. Firefighters, and firefighters in control, are by their very nature problem solvers. We adapt to overcome situations as they arise and ensure the best possible outcome for members and members of the public.

In recent years there has been a push within the fire and rescue service, not only to acknowledge but to begin to address the issue of poor mental health in our ranks. Often the catalyst for poor mental health within emergency service workers is feeling that you have been unable to do enough. For those who are relying on you in their hour of need, sadly, in recent years this pressure has been felt ever more acutely in fire control, and training has often failed to keep pace with growing societal demand.

Since 2010 successive Tory governments have cut funding for adult social care by over 29% and have axed over a quarter of mental health beds from our hospitals. Due to these cuts more and more vulnerable members of the public are now left to fend for themselves at their lowest ebb. Often the best many can hope for in mental health crisis is a night in a prison cell, only to be released the following morning probably no better than when they were taken into custody. As a result, our members in fire control are seeing a huge increase in calls from members of the public suffering mental health crisis, in many cases receiving multiple calls from the same individual, forced to listen call by call as that member of the public's mental health deteriorates.

Whilst our members in control are trained to provide advice and assurance to members of the public, they simply do not have the training to deal with the myriad of mental health emergencies they are now dealing with on a daily basis. As with many things, there seems to be a huge disparity across the UK fire and rescue service in the quantity and quality of training provided to our control members. We are aware that in some services it has even been left to those in control to source their own training. Whilst this is laudable, it is not the job of our members to do these things. We should not have to be seeking out our own training; it should be provided by our employers.

To ensure our members in fire control have the tools to tackle the ever growing demands placed upon them, we must make doubly sure the training to deal with those suffering mental health crisis is not a postcode lottery. The FBU must lead from the front demanding a UK standard in quality training for our members to ensure that our firefighters in control are not added to the ever growing list of those in mental health crisis. Conference, I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian. That's open for debate.

PAUL JAMES (North Yorkshire):

Standing to support what that very, very brave lady has said upon this stand. I am now going to speak from the heart, so excuse me. Ex-suicide survivor, was dead for approximately two and a half minutes, I made that phone call to the greater God. The police got there with paramedics and managed to bring me round. It was a long time. Thankfully I woke up in the hospital with my dad stood right beside me. My mother couldn't make it. She couldn't come to the hospital and see me.

So I made that call. It took me six years to get over it and the last four years I have been spending the majority of my life trying to help people with mental ill-health issues. The one thing that has become apparent to me today which I genuinely did not think about, and I feel as guilty as hell about it, is the person that took that call. It has been brought home to me today by seeing your face. I didn't think about that individual. I regret it, and today if I could give him a call, I wish I could. So this training that you are after, I think is vital but most importantly, I think it is an absolute necessity, and if we have got any chief fire officers out there that are ignoring this, give them my number and I will personally give them a fucking call – excuse my French.

THE PRESIDENT:

You will get excused on that one, Paul.

PAUL JAMES (North Yorkshire):

Thank you very much, president, and forgive me. I am going to end with this one thing and I mean this with all sincerity. I want no sympathy at all. I made that decision. I made it after some very serious words were said to me about my children. I made that choice. I regret it massively. I want zero sympathy. What I do want is for people to correct it and to stop somebody like myself going through it. If we can have somebody on the end of the phone with that training, with that experience, who may suffer afterwards, but could help prevent me from doing what I did.

DAN McNULTY (North Wales):

Although I think North Wales is now amalgamated with Merseyside for the amount of times I have been up here today. So, apologies. I saw this resolution today and I thought there is no way I couldn't really say something about it. I could quote the statistics and I will to some extent, that one in four of us here will suffer with mental health conditions, one in five will have suicidal thoughts, and one in fifteen will attempt it. I would also like to put a little bit of a spin on that to say that autistic adults are nine times more likely to die by suicide – nine times. It is hard to comprehend that number.

Myself, I was nearly one of those nine times. I have come very close to it through my work suffering with post traumatic stress from incidents I have attended, and when I went for support from my service they said no because occupational health only deal with physical health, not mental health. My partner worked up until recently in the police control room which I know we are not here to discuss but is very similar to the work that is done by fire control. She would often come home in tears about calls that she had taken that day, people on the end of the phone threatening suicide and people on the phone as their life ended. She was also diagnosed with depression. It was a very fun household with the two of us in there as you can imagine.

We both had to go and seek our own support and I am glad to say that we are getting there. It is a long road but we are getting there. I don't want to see anyone else go through that journey, and I will always advocate mental health support in our service, and I have done by setting up the staff network just going and speaking to people and signposting them to wherever I can.

I attended a conference a couple of weeks ago in regard to hazardous materials and we discussed an increase in ICE incidents, ICE being individual chemical exposure. It is a new form – it has been around for a long time but it is an ever increasing form of suicide now. People will expose themselves to a chemical of some description and kill themselves that way. We are going to be directly facing this. As fire crews, we are going to be called to these incidents. So I really support resolution 42. I do think it should be increased to firefighters as well, and the staff on the ground, but I cannot take away from the work that control staff do. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Dan. Anybody else in the debate. Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

President, conference, Sherri, you did not fail. Let's make that clear right from the start. Our members in fire control the length and breadth of this country have to face these difficulties every single shift and none of them fail. You have all saved countless lives including, by the way, firefighters' lives, with the work that you do. So absolute support from the executive council on this very important issue. We will certainly take it to the NJC but we also need to do our own research in conjunction with ambulance services as has been mentioned, and the police and the Police Federation, as they may already hold valuable information that we can utilise. Just one quick one to flag up though, the likely response from the NJC will probably be that this is an individual employer's issue, not the NJC, and while we fundamentally disagree with that, it is just something we wanted to flag up as the probable response.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I will now put resolution 42 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*. Wow, thanks everybody for those contributions. Powerful, powerful stuff.

I now call resolution 43, Racially Diverse Counselling Support, moved by B&EMM. The EC support.

Resolution 43 RACIALLY DIVERSE COUNSELLING SUPPORT

Conference recognises the importance of firefighter health and the ongoing maintenance of our emotional, psychological and social well-being.

Conference noted this by agreeing resolution 'Support for Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Brigade and Regional Officials' at Conference 2022. Pressures from the role of a firefighter and firefighter (Control), can and often does take its toll.

Conference further notes the pressures Members endure within the workplace which can affect them as much as what they witness on operational calls.

Since passing resolution 'Support for Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Brigade and Regional Officials' at Conference 2022 the recently published Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade led to many accounts of racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia and discriminatory practices towards neurodiverse Members. Any discrimination of this nature, if left untreated can lead to a lifetime of trauma. Victims of this abuse often require intervention to support mental wellbeing.

To ensure black and ethnic minority Members are fully supported Conference calls on the Executive Council to:

- **explore counselling and therapy services provided by black and ethnic minority health professionals**
- **create a database that can be shared via FBU structures to feed into the work outstanding on resolution ‘Support for Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Brigade and Regional Officials’ from Conference 2022**
- **write a letter to all chief fire officers and authority chairs, explaining the benefits and importance of providing counselling and therapy to black and ethnic minority Members.**

B&EMM

ALEX SZEKELY (B&EMM):

Conference, it is recognised that one in four people in the UK will suffer with a mental health related condition in their lifetime. This means that in relation to this delegation here today it is likely that 35 will suffer from a mental health condition. As a black or ethnic minority person, data shows the likelihood of acquiring a mental health related condition increases. Looking at the last seven days, MIND reports 23% of black people and only 17% of white people have reported experiencing a mental health problem.

It is not simply societal disparity and discrimination that impacts upon mental health of black and ethnic minority people. Recent publicity has highlighted discriminatory practices that exist within our workplace and these discriminatory practices are also contributing factors when looking at mental health figures.

Conference, we should recognise the nuances that exist within a group of people. Not all mental health conditions are the same, and not all treatments of mental health conditions are the same, and nor should they be. However, it is a fair assumption that the needs of groups of people sharing similar characteristics such as colour of skin, and facing similar challenges, need to be met by those who have specific skill sets and lived experiences that better enable them to understand and treat that individual.

Since passing resolution “Support for Fire Brigades Union Brigade and Officials” at conference 2022, the recently published independent cultural review of London Fire Brigade shows many accounts of racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia and discriminatory practices towards neurodiverse members. If discriminations of this nature are left untreated it can lead to a lifetime of trauma. Victims of this abuse often require intervention to support mental wellbeing.

Conference, in closing, by supporting this motion, you will be giving your black and ethnic minority brothers and sisters an equal chance to access suitable supportive services enabling them to recover from their traumas and return to the job they are proud to do. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Alex. Secunder?

GARETH TOVEY (South Wales):

Conference, mental health is such a vitally important issue, and let’s be crystal clear, it is another area where chief fire officers up and down this country are failing in their fundamentally basic responsibility to create a safe work place for our members, and so far it is through the work of this union and this union alone, that we have seen improvements in the support available, but we must do more. Conference, please support this resolution as part of the ongoing work in this area and let’s work tirelessly to ensure that all of our members are supported when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing. Conference, South Wales second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Gareth, that is now open for debate. Anybody. No. I now put resolution 43 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 46, Activity Specific Stress Risk Assessments, moved by the Officers National Committee. The EC support.

Resolution 46 ACTIVITY SPECIFIC STRESS RISK ASSESSMENTS

Conference instructs that the Executive Council (EC) seek to ensure that all fire and rescue services meet their legal requirement and undertake activity specific workplace risk assessments. Conference believes these must include stress as a potential hazard.

Conference instructs the EC to publish best practice guidance during 2023 to assist our Officials in the standardisation of these critical assessments.

OFFICERS NATIONAL COMMITTEE

CHRIS EVANS (ONC):

You will be pleased to know I have had no more epiphanies whilst being here, and I won't be going off on another tangent. Moving resolution 46, Activity Specific Stress Risk Assessments, I will be honest with you, I couldn't follow what my greatly respected region 5 colleague, Sherri, has just emotionally shared with us all. Stress risk assessments are not a choice, they are not optional, they are the law. A recent freedom of information request to services identified that the UK fire and rescue service loses up to 42 years of working days and shifts to mental ill health every single year. Stress risk assessments can help reduce that. This is a direct quote from the HSC: "Employers have a duty under the management of health and safety in the work regs 1999 to assess the risk of stress related ill-health arising from work activity." Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 they also have to take reasonable practical measures to control that risk. Employers, therefore, have a legal duty to protect its employees from stress at work by completing activity specific stress risk assessments and acting on them, just as they have to do now to complete risk assessments and controlling the hazards from them for everything else we do.

Conference, we refuse to accept physical injury to our members. The same approach must be enforced to prevent mental health injuries too. Think of a time when your service has forced unfair unjust change on your members, on our members. What considerations were given to how this would impact our members' mental health? Likely none. So when you go back to your brigades insist that stress and stress risk assessments are made a standing agenda item on your health and safety committees. We have task-based risk assessments, we have equality impact assessments, we even have data protection impact assessments. Now demand stress risk assessments too. President, conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris. Does that have a seconder?

LOUISE FLETCHER (Shropshire):

Stress is not a dirty word, but what it is a hazard to health and welfare and, as we have heard today, it can have tragic consequences. It affects not only individuals but their families, their friends and their colleagues. President, conference, it is simple. A lack of understanding stress in the workplace and the repercussions of stress on a person's mental and physical health is far too common in the UK fire service. We need to challenge and we need to change this as a matter of urgency. I want to be very, very clear, conference, it is an issue, it is a workplace issue and it is all of our issue. Conference, I support and second resolution 46.

THE PRESIDENT:

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

PAUL JAMES (North Yorkshire):

Standing to support resolution 46 for the risk assessments. I will keep it brief, president, because I am aware of the time restraints. Currently going through this with my service at the moment, I have had a battle somewhere in the region of eight to nine months just to get a stress risk assessment. What they decided to do was put together what is called a wellbeing strategy. I don't know whether you have all heard of that or not, but basically it is a back door entry to try and appease the legislation and what they can do.

What is a wellbeing strategy? It is basically is a sticking plaster to the problems that are faced by all the firefighters or everybody that is in our union. What the risk assessment does is puts it in place, highlights the hazards which is the stress in itself and puts in the control measures. Health and safety reps, you will be aware of this book. For the people

that are not, I am going to draw your attention to page 251 so if anybody is going through this with their services and having a wellbeing strategy trying to ram down their throat, it very clearly warns you that you must resist the wellbeing programmes and other individual lifestyle health promotion plans that only treat the symptoms but do not prevent the causes. If you have got any issues at all with wanting a stress risk assessment, give myself a bell, I am going through it, but we have got a man up here as well who will be able to help you. I support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Paul. Anybody else? No. I now put resolution 46 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

We are now moving on to section L, internal administration. Para L1.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking under paragraph L1. Comrades, I stood on this platform last year and I spoke on behalf of our sections, LGBT+ and Women's Section. I asked that when we review our internal administration, i.e. publications such as the ADAE policy, the rule book, that gender specific pronouns are removed. There is no place for them. There is no need for them within our union. If we are going to stand by phrases such as "equality matters" make sure that equality really does matter. Not only the language that we use when we speak but also when we write. Our written language matters. It has to be inclusive to our members. Phrases such as he, she, him, her, his, her, himself, herself do not speak to all parts of our union, they can't do. Not all of our members identify as such. We have to make sure that the language we use in all aspects makes our members feel included within our own union. Can I please therefore ask that when we do reissue and we do revise, as was agreed on day one, I believe, resolution 81 from Scotland asks for a review and reissue of the branch officials handbook. When we do revise and reissue the ADAE policy and when we do revise and reissue the rule book that gender specific pronouns are removed. Please can I ask that our sections are liaised with to find suitable alternatives to them.

Like I say, I stood here last year. It was agreed. I did, however, face some personal comeback and I might get that comeback again, and that is fine, and I will be here next year if it doesn't happen. I am happy to face that. Please get behind this. Stand behind our sections and make our union truly inclusive. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Ben.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you, Neil. Just to be really clear, there will be no comeback from up here. Derbyshire actually brought a resolution to conference last year that asked us to review the rule book. That work is to be completed before the next rule change conference, Neil. We will look at the language in there. As you said, we have already agreed to look at the ADAE policy and the branch officials handbook, but there is wider work to be done on all the communications we do. We will do that and we will bring it back to conference next year, but just give you some assurances, if you are seeking them again, we will look at all language making sure it is inclusive. We will work with our sections on that and we will bring much of it back next year if we cannot make those changes in advance. Equality does matter. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ben. I now call resolution 89, resolution clarity, moved by South Yorkshire. The EC support.

Resolution 89 RESOLUTION CLARITY

Conference applauds the ongoing achievements and commitment of this Union and its Officials. Conference recognises the demanding workload placed on the Executive Council (EC) but also notes the need for clarity with regards to the progression of resolutions passed by Conference.

In order to keep Members informed and avoid duplicate resolutions Conference instructs the EC to produce a report no later than the 31 January each year detailing any resolutions which required specific action but have not been progressed by the anticipated time scales, giving an explanation and proposed revised dates for completion.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

MATT NICHOLLS (South Yorkshire):

I would just like to make thanks to Suffolk for withdrawing resolution 88 so that it could speak on 89. President, conference, we absolutely recognise the demanding workload placed on the executive committee so this is in no way an attack on the work that you do. It is a proposal how we make things better for conference. This year resolutions 79, 81, 28 all referenced a lack of progression or information regarding motions passed via our conference. This is not confined to this year's conference. Resolutions passed by this conference must not be left to linger or be forgotten. The report asked for by this motion will address this. It will build a line of communication between the executive council and brigade committees. It will provide confidence and will avoid duplicate resolutions. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. Suffolk to second.

PHIL JOHNSTON (Suffolk):

Seconding South Yorkshire's resolution 89, resolution clarity. Conference, it has been a busy year and as resolution 89 applauds the achievements of the union and its officials, I invite conference to take this opportunity to show recognition to those behind the scenes in the communications department, membership services, education and all those who work to keep this union functioning as well as it does.

Whilst we recognise that head office releases the report to the executive council on the implementation on conference 2022 decisions on 7 March this year, this was a month after the deadline for resolution submissions for this year's conference. This is a point made during the speech on resolution 79 and just made by our comrade. Conference, we are not challenging anyone with this resolution. We are not asking for something which is not already there; we are simply asking for information to be collated and circulated to our members by a certain timeframe to keep them up to date and informed about agreed conference resolutions which will also help determine further resolutions at forthcoming conferences. Conference, please support resolution 89. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate. Anybody? No.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Thanks, president, conference. Very, very briefly, as has been identified we do carry out that work to some extent already. Putting a deadline date of 31 January so it is prior to the resolution submissions date, that will assist us and standing orders committee as well in avoiding duplication of resolutions. Yes, no problem in supporting. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I will now put resolution 89 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 92, Reduced Paper Use at Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Conference, moved by Derbyshire. EC support.

Resolution 92 REDUCE PAPER USE AT FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) CONFERENCE

Conference recalls the remarks made by the Chair of Standing Orders Committee at previous Conferences about the enormous amounts of paper that is used during Conference.

Conference believes it is our collective responsibility to reduce this in order to support the preservation of our natural environment and all those that inhabit it.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to consider all necessary steps and options to support this resolution including the use of our email system, tablets for Conference and live document sharing in order to ensure a significant reduction in the use of paper is achieved by the FBU when facilitating Conference.

Any final outcomes in ways to achieve this should be utilised across our Union at other meetings and events wherever this is possible.

DERBYSHIRE

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire):

Just moving resolution 92 to reduce the use of paper at conference. Given the standing orders report we have already had this morning, the resolution is almost deemed completed done, but I will move it anyway to ensure that we embed it into our union's policy for now and for the future.

Conference, this did start, as was mentioned in the standing orders report last year when we heard about the paper usage and comparing that to the trees that it would take to produce such an amount of paper. I must admit I didn't really consider myself an environmentalist or someone that follows that with a very keen eye until that kind of came up, and it did strike a chord with me. So I thought right I will jot that down for next year and see how I feel about it.

It is clear that the facts and figures have also been on the minds of standing orders, the executive council, head office and that conversations have already taken place to improve the situation and take action in respect of our environmental responsibilities which, I think again, was reported earlier in standing orders and we welcome that.

We simply don't need the sheets and sheets of paper with lists of names, confirmation of delegates, adverts for various things happening in and around conference, emergency resolutions, a slight amendment because someone needs a full stop in an emergency resolution so it has got to go on another bit of paper, and the list goes on and on. This is without the collection of newspapers, flyers, adverts and everything else that sometimes appears overnight on the desk. So I think it is something that we do need to consider where we go. To be clear conference, I am not going to frighten anyone to death, it just depends and paper still has its place.

I think there are examples where we need this sort of thing, and we need it probably for things like final agendas, for programmes of business, for EC policy statements where people are following that with making notes and highlighting areas that they may want to speak on. If we are trying to put all of that and follow it as quickly on to computer screens, we would need like a NASA control centre across every desk to follow everything. I am not proposing that these things will disappear.

But, you know, we do need to evolve in all areas of our business including that of the environment, so we do not want to see that kind of waste, whether it be paper being wasted for forests and trees and wildlife and all those sorts of things, or indeed things like food waste where we have heard passionate speeches at conference about hunger and people going without food. I think that is another consideration.

I can see the evolution is already taking place. You are all part of it and witness it, but let's keep doing what we can, evolve and improve and protect our precious environment. I just want to shoehorn something in that I heard from a comrade just taking some photos at the coffee break who said, "Getting a bit hacked off with all this as well. What is all these water bottles all about." There were a few other words, but I won't repeat them from here. I will just shoehorn it in or I welcome you to come up and second up because I think we can probably consider that as well going forward. You know, we are getting given bags and various other things, but we have got some perfectly reasonable water bags in the shop that perhaps Tam may wish donate instead of the bags that we have got. Everybody has got nine bags now; we don't need any more bags. It was just a thought, Tam, just a thought; that's all.

Just keep doing what we are doing, conference, but please support the resolution, like I say. We want to put it into our policy. It is giving standing orders, the executive council and everybody else food for thought to keep doing our environmental responsibility. Thanks for your time, conference. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Chris, for that very extensive and thorough moving of that resolution which has just added a page on to the record of proceedings! Right, conference, does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded*. That is open for debate. No. Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Again, president, conference, fairly briefly, in relation to previous resolution, resolution clarity, the EC are pleased to be able to report ahead of 30 January that this resolution is approaching completion. On the water bottles, Chris, yes, we did check this out with the hotel and they are this flimsy because they recycle and we wanted them to be recyclable.

The fact that most people have spilt them all over the tables when you open them, shows you how flimsy they are. We are progressing this. We are aiming to move towards a paperless conference in 2024 so it is a “watch this space”. The tablets have been tested and they should be available for conference 2024 president. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I now put resolution 92 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That carries.

I now call para L2; para L3; para L4; para L5; para L6; para L7; para L8; para L9; para L10; para 11. I now call resolution 90, Response to News Stories, moved by Devon and Somerset. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 90 RESPONSE TO NEWS STORIES

Conference notes that following a news story which surfaced on the ITV news channel about complaints concerning Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, many local Officials were inundated with questions from Members of the Union and the public.

It was clear that a statement from the Union was necessary. In the absence of any clear guidance from Head Office local reps in conjunction with the National Women’s Committee put together a statement and submitted it to the Executive Council (EC) for approval. As of 2 March 2023 no statement had been released and the news had moved on.

When news stories break about the fire service, the Union or its Members, it is vital to be able to respond in a timely manner.

Conference instructs the EC to put procedures in place to enable a timely response to any news story about the fire service, the Union or its Members, including input and agreement from the relevant section or sections.

DEVON AND SOMERSET

JAMES LESLIE (Devon and Somerset):

I won’t go into the details of what brought this about. We have all been in a similar situation. We had a national news story surfaced. The next thing you know all local journalists, or your watch members, families and friends, are all phoning you to find out about it. All I am asking for really is that we get a unified response from the union on national news stories with consultation with the relevant sections so we are all giving a similar response. That is all it is. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

He is a bit keen, and it is day three! Does that have a seconder?

KATE YHNELL (NWC):

The National Women’s Committee fully second Devon and Somerset’s resolution 90, response to media stories. I can speak personally in telling you of how the media have hounded female representatives to gain insight into our daily work and reveal any negative experiences our members have had within our fire service.

When I say “all the time” I mean weekly, daily communications asking to meet up with us, pushing us for information, interrupting our daily lives and time with our families. As representatives, we remain professional and support individuals that have needed it with privacy and care. We refer the media back to the FBU to show unity in statements and media communications, and this in turn has prevented twisting of our words and fabrication of the facts.

Responses from the FBU need to be quick and effective ensuring all our members are supported at some of the lowest points in their lives. A statement just reminding all of our members that they are not alone and that we do have a zero tolerance to any form of abuse made by anyone by our fire services. We are here to help and when news stories like this are broken, it is essential that we act quickly so the people that haven’t spoken up yet can speak up, they can come to us and they are no longer alone.

Instead, this year I waited too long for an agreed statement to be published that had already been approved by the National Women's Committee and my region. My statement was not covered in early elected committee meetings due to time constraints and, as I can appreciate that we have a lot on, this simply isn't a good enough excuse when others' mental health or possibly lives are hanging in the balance.

Before I finish, after a long few days at conference and fighting for better in the fire service, highlighting injustices and poor practice, can I change the way you think a little bit? I need to give you some examples of the positives that happen within our fire service and they make me proud to be a firefighter, and I just use the term "firefighter" because that is what I am. The male officer who investigated a grievance from a woman returning from maternity leave who changed policies and guidance to help other returning women, he put himself in their shoes, he spoke to his wife, he didn't need supporting. He supported the woman by himself. To the male firefighter with decades of experience working in mainly male jobs that supported a female member when she revealed she had an abortion and didn't want to tell anyone. He made sure she was supported with privacy and offered a hand to hold if needed. He didn't need training, he just cared. The female firefighter that supported the bisexual male firefighter to feel comfortable talking about his sexuality when he couldn't around others. These good practices and working relationships do exist within our fire service and they happen every day. Although we must challenge wrong behaviour and attitudes, we must champion and continue to highlight the good and remember that it does exist.

I do struggle a little bit with speeches, but I wanted to let you know something I wanted to tell the press. Dear press, we recognise there are problems and realise that unfortunately there are individuals in our service that do not respect members, that act inappropriately in some horrendous and disgusting ways. Make no mistake, we will challenge them, remove them from our drill yards and offices across the UK. We will protect our members constantly and never tell their harrowing stories to you without their permission. Why don't you go and report on some good practice that happens within our fire services? There are some diamonds of members of all genders who have joined our service recently and who have spent decades within our services. They stand side by side in some diverse work forces and see nothing but human beings, not difference. Members of the press, I couldn't be more proud of the women's reps throughout the UK but especially in my region 13 as I have seen how hard they have worked. You may have tried to break us but as we will always prove, time and time again, our work for members is so far more important than your stories. The National Women's Committee second resolution 90 from our brothers and sisters in Devon and Somerset and demand better with more efficiency from the EC. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kate, that is open for debate. Anybody. No. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks to the mover and seconder, particularly how that has been presented. First of all, on the incident that I think prompted the resolution. There was a case where there was a delay and, look, hands up, there was an error on our part and I apologise to the officials involved for that delay. That was a delay caused by ourselves.

In terms of the qualification, it is a minor point and it sort of leads on to some of the process issues about how to involve people because at the time that story broke there were several stories: there was the release of the London cultural review around the same time and we had a lot of discussion including with the equality sections of how we should respond and the question of how quickly you can respond when trying to include the equality sections, and I think all of the equality sections are aware of some of those tensions and sometimes we will need to get something out and that may mean that people haven't responded.

So I think it is simply on the point of the level of agreement that might or might not be achievable within the timeframes. I think we have sorted all those issues out and we have certainly worked together to make sure that responses subsequently have been improved. I think the other points that Kate raised there, the press has clearly picked on some of the horrific stories that are the reality, one part of the reality in our service, in our industry, but actually we do have other stories as has just been explained. We have people who do challenge poor behaviour, who do stand up and speak out for equality and we have watches where people get on very well as they should, and our job is to make sure that happens in every single fire and rescue service, and that is what the debate the other day is about. With that minor qualification, the executive council fully support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Matt. I now put resolution 90 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para L12; para L13; para L14.

SEONA HART (Scotland):

Speaking on L14 with an update on the red plaque scheme in our region. Conference, we have now unveiled ten red plaques across Scotland, seven of those in the last 13 months, honouring in total 17 of our fallen comrades to date with more in the planning stages. The unveiling events have all generated local and national press coverage raising the profile of the FBU in Scotland considerably, attracting the interest of MSPs resulting in motions for each being lodged at the Scottish parliament, all of which have been warmly appreciated and welcomed by the families. They have also been a key organising tool within the regions, particularly during the recent pay campaign allowing us to highlight the ultimate sacrifice those firefighters made whilst protecting their communities, and demonstrating the FBU's strength of support for our members and their families.

The planning of these unveilings has been crucial, and we recently explored an additional element to include a local primary school who worked with Professor Shane Ewen from the Leeds Beckett University along with local officials on a project they called "Fortified Fire". On the weeks leading up to the unveiling with the children completing a series of activities including historic and contemporary fire investigation, re-enacting the fatal accident inquiry and writing their own dedications to the firefighters we were honouring at the unveiling.

The additional presence of the children and their families at the event gave an overwhelming feeling of community involvement, and we are currently looking to replicate this at future red plaque unveilings across Scotland, involving not only schools but also local community groups to ensure the importance of these red plaques is remembered by future generations.

Conference, the red plaque scheme is essential to ensure all fallen comrades will always be remembered and region 1 would like to thank the head office team for their support and a special thanks to national officer, Tam McFarlane, for the tireless work, support and attendance at these events in the region. Tam, we think you are indeed "Tamtastic".

Finally, this scheme would not be possible without funding. Conference, it is crucial we all support and continually promote the Firefighters 100 Lottery both within and beyond our membership to maintain that funding so we can continue to provide red plaques to ensure our fallen comrades are never forgotten. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

We have gone from Tam's tat to Tamtastic. Tam?

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer):

Thanks, president, and thanks Shona. I can feel a new T-shirt coming on. No, the red plaque project has certainly come a long way since the end of the start of 2017 when a small group of us walking through London came across the blue plaques that are on various buildings highlighting where famous people lived, and it really occurred to us that if such plaques are good enough for celebrities, then there should be similar plaques for real heroes, firefighters, who have given their lives in the line of duty within their communities.

Since that scheme took on driven by, initiated by and run by the Fire Brigades Union, it has certainly caught the imagination of fire stations up and down the country. I can now report to conference that we have currently got 87 plaques either made or in the process of being made which commemorate 197 names of fallen firefighters, a remarkable achievement, conference. But such is the nature of our industry that there are over 2,500 names that qualify for a red plaque. I certainly hope this scheme continues to go from strength to strength. As Shona pointed out, the red plaque is funded entirely the Firefighters 100 Lottery, and I have to say, the increasing number of red plaques has not been matched by an increase in the size of the lottery. My plea to you is to please continue to build our lottery. Currently, we have got 2,689 supporters who buy a total of 5,086 tickets. Conference, we need more people to build that lottery because we need to keep this scheme going.

Every red plaque that is mounted and every official and member that gets involved pays a remarkable service to the memory of our fallen comrade. It is a fantastic initiative getting driven right across the country, and I have to say region 1 has certainly shown us how we can undertake an unveiling event in a very imaginative way. The one that happened in Motherwell with the school children was indeed remarkable and certainly showed to those children not just the excitement of fire engines speeding up and down the roads, but also tells the story of the people who ride those appliances on a day to day basis and the dangers that they face. Thank you very much for saying that, Shona, and comrades please support this scheme and the lottery that drives it.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Tam, and I just want to echo that. We have got to leave this conference and go back and get as many members as we can signed up to the lottery. I can't for the life of me understand why it has not got the take up. It is our Firefighters 100 Lottery for firefighters. It has paid for houses to be adapted when our members have had life changing injuries. It has paid for the DECON project which is going to save thousands and thousands of lives. So if I make one plea to you, when you go back to your brigades, to your watches, have a bit of a campaign within your brigades to boost those numbers on the Firefighters 100 Lottery because all of the profits, after we have paid the people who run it, go to the five good causes. So if you could do that please, I would appreciate it. Right, conference, we are now on para L15.

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire):

Comrades, without incriminating myself, Lancashire would like to thank the sales team and all those involved with #Whatyoupromote and #Backbone on 1st February 2023. If you want to know what it means, speak to the front bench please. Anyway, the EC's report that the online shop made a profit of £6,325.10. We are hoping that T-shirt sales on 1st February have contributed to a higher profit to help good causes for next year's report.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call para L16. No. Right, conference, at this point we are going to take a 15 minute tea break. There are some packed lunches out there which are covered up. Don't go in there and nab them. We have got half-a-dozen resolutions to go. The packed lunches are for when we leave conference. Also, for the 28 people who have not checked out as yet, please check out. OK. See you in 15 minutes. Thank you: 1.25.

Tea Break.

Conference, come to order. Thank you. I now call Section I, Accident and Injury Fund.

STEVE WEIR (Scotland):

Conference, members of region 1 want to take this opportunity to ensure that all of our members are signed up to the accident and injury fund. On joining the union all members should be asked by their brigade and branch officials to become a member of the AIF enabling them to access the potential benefits of the fund. Members of the fund should also be encouraged to keep their nominations for benefits up to date.

Region 1 have found recently that many of our members in Scotland didn't know if they were a member of the fund and many also knew little about the benefits that come with being a member. It has also become apparent that many had not updated their nominees. Organising effort through the pay campaign gives an opportunity to push this topic again and the devastating tragic events that occurred in Edinburgh on 23 January alongside two further claims for death of dependants the following month, have brought home the importance of being a member of this fund, particularly in region 1.

On a personal level, I would like to thank all of the EC and head office staff, my sisters and brothers in region 1, who have all pulled together in unity to fully support their members in the east area of Scotland in these challenging times. I would also like to put on record my love and appreciation of Chris Murphy who supported Barry Martin's wife, Shirley – through the most tragic of circumstances. It was and is the most difficult of roles, and, Chris, I wouldn't have wanted anybody else doing it, mate. Thank you.

Not many in this room will have known Barry Martin, but it is fitting that you know a little about the man behind the name. He was a father, a husband, son and brother, and I would appreciate it if you would all listen to the

poignant and beautiful words of Barry's wife, Shirley. She knew him best and loved him most. "Firefighter Barry Martin encompassed every vital quality, every passion and every thread of tenacity that it takes to succeed. There is something sensational about a human being who puts others before themselves and does so without question, hesitation or judgment. My husband was an example of what it means to give their absolute all, and how he gave his absolute all. Barry's resilience, his determination, his unwavering commitment to his family and career and his love lives on through us. Our sons and I are not only blessed to have experienced such an incredible life with the most exciting and bravest man we have ever known and will tell everyone about my remarkable husband. We say his name with pride and our hearts burst with adoration, respect and admiration." Conference, Barry Martin.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Steve.

NEIL BEVAN (Hereford and Worcester):

Speaking under section I, accident and injury fund. First of all, I just want to echo my comrade's comments there about the importance of the accident and injury fund and to again thank all staff involved including Nina Levine at head office following a tragic motor cycle accident on February 6 2022, Matt Lee unfortunately died following the injuries he sustained. On 3 March 2022 we laid his body to rest. It was with the help of the accident and injury fund and the death benefit fund that paid for his funeral. On behalf of his family, I stand here now to thank the accident and injury fund, head office and all involved in that fund because without it and the money that came from that they could simply not afford to have paid for his funeral. In memory of our brother, Matt Lee. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

I now call section J, legal report. Para J1, para J2.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks, president. It would be remiss of us, especially in light of the two contributions yesterday, to not note para J2 on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the ongoing work there. We are, as was said yesterday, approaching the six year anniversary, and it is important that we as a union mark that occasion, mark the recollection of that horrific incident which brought horror to an entire community and we send our solidarity to the bereaved, survivors and residents and, of course, to London firefighters who, if anyone has read the accounts that were given in that inquiry, performed remarkable acts of humanity and bravery. Of course, that incident has also taken its toll on firefighters and on that community.

Our earliest assessment of the fire which we reached very quickly was that something serious lay behind how such a terrible fire could occur in the 21st century. We pointed to issues about the fragmentation of our own service, the lack of standards in our own service and about deregulation and privatisation. I think we identified very early on that policy in relation to fire and policy in relation to building regulations has been and is driven by corporate interests, and by the needs of profit of big business, and governments have been responsible for that for almost four and a half decades. Indeed, governments of both of the major parties: a programme that was begun under the Thatcher government continued under the Blair and Brown governments.

I have got to say that all the work that we have done, the research that we have prepared in relation to the inquiry has only confirmed 100% those early assessments that we made.

We also took a decision early on that our assessment was that we would not be able to win this battle alone as a workers' organisation, as a trade union, that actually we needed to build alliances, we needed to build an alliance with that community, and sometimes that has been challenging because people in that community have questions and they have the right to ask those questions.

We have taken on those challenges and we have built firm friendships and alliances with people in the North Kensington community. Indeed, beyond that – and again it was referenced yesterday, I think, by Angela Rayner – the numbers of people living still in unsafe accommodation all over this country should be a national scandal. We have got developers and builders who have put dangerous cladding on buildings, but we have identified much wider fire safety failures within buildings all across the UK, and we have built links with people campaigning, people trapped in

leasehold flats that they cannot sell because the remediation has not been carried out. We have supported them in their protests, in parliament and at other events.

We repeat again today that our campaign is for decent, safe homes for everyone. As we approach the anniversary we are informed that what used to be a monthly walk has been reduced, but there will be a walk on the anniversary that is approaching and we will discuss with London officials, but we will intend to organise an attendance. Mr Tamtastic has played a role in organising those, including delegations from around the country, and attended those in the past. If anyone has not attended, I will guarantee that you will never forget it if you attend a Grenfell silent walk. So just to alert conference and your brigades and regional committees, the union will be organising to mark that anniversary including an attendance at the Grenfell walk. Thanks, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I call para J3, para J4, para J5, para J6, para J7, para J8, para J9. I am now moving on to section D, Fire and Rescue Service Policy. Para D1. I now call resolution 55, Transportation of Casualties in Fire Service Vehicles, moved by Greater Manchester. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 55 TRANSPORTATION OF CASUALTIES IN FIRE SERVICE VEHICLES

Conference notes that some employers in services throughout the UK are imposing changes outside the agreed collective bargaining agreements, which include instructing crews to transport casualties at incidents on fire appliances. This is to include during periods of industrial action by UK Ambulance Services striking for fair pay with whom the Fire Brigades Union stands in solidarity.

Conference accepts this idea is dangerous and is an attempt to broaden the role of a firefighter.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to utilise the National Joint Council to ensure this practice stops and to support the relevant brigade committees to fight this issue industrially.

GREATER MANCHESTER

PATRICK BRENNAN (Greater Manchester):

Moving resolution 55 on the transportation of casualties in service vehicles. Several fire service employers across the UK have attempted, or have intentions to enforce fire crews to transport casualties from incidents on front line first appliances. This arrogant attempt to introduce a dangerous practice not only undermines collective bargaining, it raises major health and safety concerns and serves only to prop up an NHS in crisis.

All employers are more than aware of the processes surrounding changes to the nationally agreed rolemap and collective bargaining arrangements, yet they intently show complete disregard preferring to dream up unworkable and unsafe practices putting firefighters and the public in danger. Fire engines are not ambulances. Ambulances are sterile environments designed to transport casualties safely with fit-for-purpose equipment and highly qualified staff. Firefighters are not paramedics. To suggest that there is room that skill uplift within the role of the firefighter is both utterly unrealistic and grossly insulting to the important work of paramedics.

Should these practices be implemented, the employer would have a legal duty of care in two fundamental areas: the safety of firefighters and the safety of patients. This would mean fire services would have a legal duty to implement and maintain new safe systems of work. This is unachievable without effective operating procedures, staff competence, fit-for-purpose equipment and effective risk assessments, none of which have been, or in some cases could ever realistically be put in place by the employer. For employers to then enforce this in times of industrial action only adds further insult. During the recent strikes by ambulance service, FBU members across the whole of the UK proudly stood side by side on the picket line while certain employers attempted to bring in this woeful practice.

To then expect firefighters and FBU members to undermine that solidarity and effectively cross the picket line cannot and should not ever be allowed to happen. We know all too well that the National Health Service is in desperate need of proper funding. However, firefighters and fire appliances are not at best a sticking plaster and at worst a tool in the continued dismantling of the NHS.

We should be out there responding to the jobs we are trained and equipped for. These changes have been successfully fought off locally, but we need to be united at a national level because these plans are a danger to firefighters, a danger to the public and a danger to the NHS. The very notion that the fire service would play a part in the demise of the NHS is sickening. It goes against everything this union stands for and we must do everything within our power to oppose the destruction of the greatest social achievement this country has ever produced.

Conference, I call on you to support this resolution to instruct the executive council to utilise the National Joint Council and ensure this practice is prevented from happening in the future and to support the relevant brigade committees to fight this issue with industrial action if need be. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Well done, Patrick. Has that got a seconder?

IAN HIBBERT (Merseyside):

Conference, president, we talked at length about of the role yesterday and the impact those discussions have had locally in brigades. It is absolutely astonishing that local employers in Manchester believe it is a good to bundle seriously ill members of the public into the cabs of fire appliances and transport them to hospital despite the valid concerns raised by our comrades in ambulance unions.

Conference, I know the EC will say that these attacks have to be fought locally, and they are absolutely right, but we must do it from a national level as well. Local services have started to attempt to implement this non-agreed work as a direct result of conversations that we have been having and decisions that we have made through the parliament of this union at a national level. We must support local officials in their fight against chief fire officers who attempt to pervert those decisions in discussions. Conference, whatever the outcome of pay discussions and potential new work for the fire service, the place for seriously ill or sick members of the public is an ambulance where they can be assured the quality of care from our comrades in the NHS. We must not allow our employers to use firefighters to paper over the cracks in our NHS and ambulance service. Please support the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Ian, that is open for debate.

DAN CRESSWELL (Nottinghamshire):

I am speaking in support of resolution 55. Conference does accept this idea is dangerous and an attempt to broaden the role. More importantly for me, members may face the chance of prosecution and putting members of the public at risk. This is happening now. Members are being put in a morally pressurised situation. We cannot allow this seriously unsafe practice to continue and it should cease with immediate effect.

This is just another example of another unlawful and dangerous policy being pushed through to our members. We need to continue to challenge these unlawful procedures by challenging services with risk assessments and with the power health and safety reps have. I challenge any chief fire officer to produce an adequate risk assessment that allows their own family member to be transported on the floor of a fire appliance. We need to remain vigilant and alert on these unsafe practices the NFCC keep pushing through. Conference, Nottinghamshire supports resolution 55.

THE PRESIDENT:

Anybody else. AGS.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thank you president, and thanks Patrick and the other speakers there. The executive council qualification should not be seen as anything other than support for the matter at the heart of the resolution, and we thank the Greater Manchester brigade committee for bringing it. However, it is important that conference understands that whilst we will raise these issues at the National Joint Council, the NJC does not have oversight of this fire service policy. This is not a matter of terms and conditions, but considering the resolution we agree we will put a marker down at the NJC saying it is an absolute no go area.

We trust that – and I am sure you guessed it – when delegates go back to their respective brigades have it clear in your minds that transporting casualties in our vehicles is unsafe, it is not within the role of the fire service and therefore oppose it locally with a guarantee of our support in that. Thanks, President.

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 resolution 56, Gaining Entry to Medical Emergencies, moved by Humberside.

Resolution 56 GAINING ENTRY TO MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Conference notes the recent challenges that the ambulance service is facing. There has been a huge increase in the amount of time that casualties are waiting for an ambulance. With the delays in ambulance response fire services are mobilizing fire engines to “Medical Emergencies” to gain entry for the ambulance service but where an ambulance will not be in attendance when the fire engine arrives and may well not be in attendance for several hours after.

While there is a legal requirement to collaborate with other emergency services and the fire service is often best equipped to facilitate entry the lack of either an ambulance in attendance or a realistic time frame for it to arrive is very dangerous. Brigades are claiming that they are not “Co-responding” as the arrival of a fire engine does not affect the ambulance services response and that the only action that the fire service is completing is “gaining entry”. But once entry has been made firefighters are being expected to remain and support casualties without access to appropriate medication, training or equipment. Often a comparison with road traffic collisions is made that firefighters would support casualties until an ambulance arrived. The road traffic collisions comparison is misleading in that firefighters training supports the stabilising of trauma injuries until the arrival of medical care. Medical emergencies are far more reliant upon medication, analgesia or transfer to definitive care none of which can be provided by the fire service.

Currently we are being corralled by the National Fire Chiefs Council and National Operational Guidance into roles and activities that we are not agreeing to, aren’t trained for and cannot complete.

Conference, in relation to the above, instructs the Executive Council to;

- *create a minimum standard of guidelines that reflect the abilities and limitations of the fire service*
- *offer national guidance on what is an appropriate wait time*
- *decide the agreed actions that can be taken and how firefighters will be adequately protected from the moral imperative to “do something” without training or support.*

HUMBERSIDE

SAM MILLER-HODGES (Humberside):

I will withdraw this resolution. The reason was to gain support in opposing the NFCC and brigades’ attempt to use assist-ambulance as a cover for placing firefighters in situations they are not trained for and in which they cannot help the public. We will fight this locally, but on conversations with the EC my wording was not correct. I withdraw.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks for that, Sam. I now call resolution 57, Fire Control Crewing moved by Hereford and Worcester with amendments from the CSNC. The EC support.

Resolution 57 FIRE CONTROL CREWING

Conference applauds the work of our Fire Control Members. It is well known the stress and pressure our Members are under on a daily basis.

Conference also recognises that this stress and pressure is greatly compounded by inadequate crewing levels.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to form a task and finish group, to look at current crewing levels, and to report on the risks to our Members and the public. This will take note of key incidents such as the Grenfell Tower fire, Manchester Arena bombing and Saddleworth Moor fire. The report will give recommendations regarding staffing levels which can be built into the Integrated Risk Management Plan process, plus minimum competence levels.

This work will be completed and published prior to Conference 2024.

HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

AMENDMENT

Delete the 1st sentence in the 3rd paragraph and replace with:

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to form a task and finish group which will consider and report on;

- ***The current crewing and supervision levels in emergency Fire Control rooms***
- ***How robust those arrangements are taking into account the requirements of reasonable foreseeable operating scenarios***
- ***The resultant risks to fire crews and to the public.***

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

Just moving resolution 57, fire control crewing. I just teased Sherri there. She is very emotional about this subject. I am extremely emotional about it but I just rant instead and get really angry. Bear with me please. It is unacceptable. We have got nobody in fire controls across the country. We are always short. We are lacking competence. We have not got the experience any more. We have not got the supervision. We have a failure to cover short term and long term sicknesses. We have got a lack of accountability from services. "It is nothing to do with us. It is in the RMIP that says we should have three people in our fire control. It doesn't happen very often." The last six months we have been running at two, usually myself and a person that has just started about eight months ago. Thankfully, she is very good so that is useful to know.

I should have started this off. This is an emergency call. I deal with them every day but this is an emergency call to conference and to the EC. We really do need help with this. We are unable to go to the toilet, we are unable to eat comfortably. It is murder in there. It is a pressure cooker environment. My crew commander has just left after 36 years because it has just become too much. Serious mental health issues are apparent amongst our members caused by problems with a lack of IT failure and crewing we had a couple of months back where everything failed: the lot, the MDT, the radio, the computers, everything, and the only way we got through to the crew was on a personal mobile phone.

As I said before, we have got members too tired to drive home after shifts and they are sleeping in cars, and if the situation doesn't improve, we will have a serious incident on our hands, a serious incident, and I fear that most members as you rightly pointed out before, it is not our fault but we do feel responsible for it. Riccardo asked a question the other day about how long for a make up. I will tell you how long in our service, you ain't going to get it mate. I have been in a situation where we can't send a fire engine out. We have asked for the make ups; we haven't got them. We gratefully accept the CSNC's amendment and thank them for their support. It is really appreciated. Medals, yes, thanks for the medals, but medals don't mean a lot to us.

I don't know what it is like to run into a burning building as Sherri said before. Equally, most people in here will never know what it is like to deal with a 999 call, especially listening to somebody in the last moments of their life and taking their last breath. Day after day, night after night it is hard graft and it is becoming harder. Retrenching of fire control staff is really a problem as well. I won't go on because it is really boring you, but as I say, it is an emergency call. Please answer our emergency call and support this resolution. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Trevor, and for somebody who has taken a 999 call as part of a fire call, because my station used to be the console evacuation, it is the longest twelve minutes of our lives waiting till the control operator has got to the

station to then relieve us at the station, because we used to set up an emergency control, and for that period we were responsible for taking the calls. It is the longest twelve minutes. I actually took one, and God was I glad when they turned up, the cavalry turned up. Right, we have now got a seconder and that is the CSNC – sorry, your amendment. Does the resolution have a seconder?

VANESSA ROBINSON (Northumberland):

Yesterday resolution 35 inadequate dangerous crewing campaign; resolution 45, crew deficient mobilising. As I listened I gasped a little bit and involuntarily I shook my head. Ever thought of a crew of three attending an incident, persons reported, as a first pump. I am sure many of you did. It is unfair for our members and for members of the public. However, emergency fire control staffing is being cut, working below what is deemed minimum staffing, again that is unfair for our members in the control room and also members of the general public.

But there is a big difference. The crew turns up with a crew of three. You know you are getting a back up. You know you are not going to be the only people there. In control we take calls. It could be a quiet night. In fact, we use the Q word, or it could be so busy, but we don't have a second pump. We don't have a third pump. We have whose bums are sat on the seats that shift.

Recently, within my own service as a firefighter control but also as a Fire Brigades Union health and safety rep, I had concerns as to what is deemed as acceptable minimum staffing on a nightshift, as do some colleagues.

One response, obviously you were throwing the questions, spate conditions, sickness, we got offered a flexi duty officer to come into control. My response: "To make a cup of tea" and that is no disrespect to flexi duty officers. You know you are good, you do what you are trained to do. I did get pulled up for saying that by the way. We are professionals in fire controls and we have got, allegedly, professional systems. As a lay person, you cannot use the system and, to be honest, in our control room you wouldn't even be able to log on. We have enough bother and we are trained to do it. Definitely, come and make a cup of tea.

As a service we would not ask untrained individuals to help and ride a fire appliance so we shouldn't be asking untrained people to come into control and help us. We need to look after our emergency fire control members. Insufficient staffing is unacceptable on any appliance at any time but I can assure you insufficient staffing is unacceptable all the time in our emergency fire control room. Can I just say for the record, I am 100% committed to my fire and rescue service, not 95%. I second.

THE PRESIDENT:

Control to move their amendment.

SHERRI KITSON (CSNC):

President, conference, I am not a particularly religious person but this does feel like divine retribution if anyone was in Brighton for my first conference 2018. I spent the Friday on the bathroom floor and don't feel sorry for me, it was self-inflicted. Anyway. Kate Scott had to read my speech that day. I am reading this on behalf of Jenna Shergold, and for the avoidance of doubt she is not on the bathroom floor, she is just away to catch her flight.

Moving the amendment, as we all know fire appliances are ever increasingly not available also known as off the run. This can be down to a number of issues, training courses, attachments, insufficient crewing. Fire control unfortunately is never off the run. No matter how many staff we have below minimum, we just shoulder the burden and, as an emergency service, the ultimate burden can be saving a life. At the start of a shift with however many staff we have, we work through. We do our best as we are highly trained professionals often at the detriment to our own health and safety, whilst looking to protect the health and safety of our crews and the public.

Fire control crewing issues are not a quick fix. There is not a one size fits all answer. Often the action from a senior or duty manager is, as Vanessa said, to put the flexi officer in control to help, but with all the best intentions they do not know my job. My job is the same as Jenna's job, just as I would not profess to know theirs unless of course a little nudge is needed on the incident ground regarding fireground feeding or an accident investigation. She is right.

Conference, this is not a solution. We need investment to provide a resilient work force which in turn ensures staff are carrying out their duties in a safe and controlled environment. We need to retain and continually train fire control staff as they are assets to their services and are often the unsung heroes of incidents. All we are asking is to have the right crewing levels to carry out our roles and administer and support emergency incidents. Help us help you. Say no to below minimum crews. She says "I second" but she is moving the amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:

Does that have a seconder? *Formally seconded.* That is now open for debate.

ANDREW MURRAY (Durham):

The removal of control operators from fire services is criminal. It shouldn't be happening. We should have a minimum level that is acceptable to provide the cover that is needed in the control rooms. The pressure that is put on control operators by taking calls is immense. If you are working with two people, three people, you do not have the ability to step back and take time that is necessary to recover from the calls that you take. It is no wonder that mental health is a major issue across control rooms. I would like to ask conference to go back to your brigades and demand that control is staffed properly. I would further like you to go back and ask members that if control are not awarded the medal, that nobody accepts the medal.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside):

Speaking in support of resolution 57. Conference, I worked in fire control when I first joined Merseyside. I worked there for three years before I moved over to be an operational firefighter. It was the hardest job I have ever done. The CFO in Merseyside told us that his decision to reduce staffing in fire control for night shifts was something that firefighters in control would thank him for. He also told us that he knew better than our firefighter control members how they are with working in this imposed situation. Conference, he doesn't. Our firefighters' control are the experts in this situation. Support them. Support this resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Lee. Anybody else? Mark.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

President, conference, yes we have heard this week from our members in our control rooms of the pressures they face, very distressing calls, very difficult calls, very traumatic calls from the public suffering mental ill health, not even mentioning the normal day to day calls, the fire calls that our members in fire control take. Our control room members' mental health and the deterioration of their mental health, is directly linked to the calls they take. And as the crewing levels are often the cause, as has been said, no time to take time out, and this impacts on their mental health. A break away from the headset is an absolute must.

Correct crewing levels through a risk assessment is a safety measure, a safety measure that they are ignoring. Conference, firefighters, through our service we attend calls but simply not the volume of calls that our members in the control room face. In a fire and rescue service if 100 calls come in a shift, they are spread out between X amount of fire stations, but our control room members take all those calls, often between four or five members, often less. Cuts are the cause of the stress and the pressures that are being faced in our control rooms. It must stop. So thanks to Hereford and Worcester for bringing this and the CSNC for the amendment. EC are going to provide what you have asked for. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Mark. I now put the amendment to resolution 57 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now put resolution 57 as amended to the vote. All those in favour in please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para D2, para D3, para D4, para D5, para D6, para D7, para D8, para D9, para D10, para D11. We now move on to section G, Education, para G1. Conference at this point I am just going to make a little contribution here because we run a conference matters course. We ran one earlier this year and I know some of the attendees on that course. What we have actually done is if they attend the course and they are not coming as a delegate we will bring them as an observer to put into practice what they have been learning on the education course. I have got to say it has been brilliant and I would advise any of you out there, one, if you want to attend the course, because myself, Mark Rowe, and the chair of standing orders, Phil Millar, along with Lindsay and the education team deliver the full package. It talks about procedures, resolutions, everything and we are there to answer any questions. It is really valuable, so if you have any new officials coming up I certainly recommend getting them on it, and there is one going to be run in January next year in preparation for the following May conference. So just a big shout out on that one, it is a really good course. Thanks. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, a couple of words on the paragraph before we get on to the resolutions, if I may. I would urge people read closely the education report. I think it marks, for example, the return to physical education events following the lockdown period where we had to significantly adapt our education events. I think we did a fantastic job in that regard during COVID, but it was very clear to us that FBU reps attending FBU education wanted those returned to physical events. I think it is appropriate to thank all of you for organising the people who attend those courses but, also, of course, the reps who turn out and do take part in FBU education. They are a credit to this organisation.

Some of the debates that we have to have in our organisation and in the wider trade union education circles is this: trade union education has been under attack. It has been under attack in terms of funding of colleges and trade union education centres, and the response of the TUC and many unions has been to thereby withdraw generally to an online individual approach to training of trade union reps. We have taken the decision that that is not the route we want to go down in general, and certainly that is the view expressed by our reps attending courses. They get a great deal of value from the engagement with other union activists and reps from other services and other parts of the country.

That is a decision we have to think about when we discuss our education challenges. I just mentioned the team. Let us just be clear what we mean here. In the corner there is Lindsay McDowell. She is supported by Charlie Batchelor, a member of staff. That is our team. So I am not trying to pre-empt any of the resolutions at all. All I would ask conference to think about is when we place demands on education, think about what we are already delivering: reps courses throughout the year, sectional schools, the different progression courses that we run again throughout the year essentially with a team of two people. That is a huge challenge to those staff. If we are talking about pressures on our members in their workplace, you also have to think about pressures on our staff in their workplace. If we want a new course, actually a course is a professional challenge. Someone has to write a course. It is a professional job for someone to undertake. It takes time, it takes discussion and so on.

I think Riccardo touched on it earlier. If you think about the impact on our finances, we have lost 12,000 jobs over the past 13 years. We have lost 12,000 members in this union, and that is in excess of £4 million that we have lost in income to this union. So we have to bear all those points in mind. She will hate me for saying it, but I want to pay tribute to Lindsay who has paid a huge amount of attention to the discussions you are having here and the documents that come out of the executive council to make sure our education programme reflects the strategy that this union is pursuing, because it cannot just be disjointed sitting over there. It cannot just take off the shelf TUC courses. We are very clear, we want courses developed around this union and the industry in which our members work and that is a key part of our strategy in relation to education.

The final point I just wanted to raise, president, is in the aftermath of the pay dispute – I mentioned this a little bit the other day – the executive council reflecting on the outcome of pay and the 96% vote, and the positive returns and feedback that you have had and the executive council have had, we need to consolidate that. We need to turn people who are feeling positive about this union into activists for this union. So in June and July we will be engaging in a series of events aimed at workplace reps to build and consolidate our strength in the workplaces in every part of the UK, and I am sure you will support us in doing that, and Lindsay is making preparations for that as we speak. Thanks very much, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now call para G2. Conference, I will be taking the following resolutions in the same debate, both can carry: resolution 66, Mental Wellbeing of Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Reps and Officials of All Levels, and resolution 67, Counselling Training for Reps/Officials moved by Durham. I now call resolution 66, Suffolk. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 66 MENTAL WELLBEING OF FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) REPS AND OFFICIALS OF ALL LEVELS

Conference recognises the tireless hard work and dedication of all FBU reps and Officials at all levels of the FBU, from station based reps to the Executive Council (EC). The commitment and subsequent workloads involved in fighting for, and protecting Members employment rights and their health and safety can be both mentally and emotionally exhausting.

Conference believes the EC should focus on the mental wellbeing of FBU reps and Officials. If FBU reps and Officials suffer mental fatigue that is not recognised or addressed, the FBU will cease to function effectively in fighting for, and protecting Members employment rights and their health and safety.

Conference instructs the EC to provide a course on mental wellbeing, to better educate and equip reps and Officials, with the knowledge to recognise when mental wellbeing is in decline and put in place mechanisms to better manage mental wellbeing.

SUFFOLK

KEVIN DRIVER (Suffolk):

Moving resolution 66. I did have a load of stats to support this but as comrades have already said it in previous contributions, we all know mental health is something that affects emergency services and the fire service a lot. It is a strand which runs through not only this conference with some emotional and personal contributions already this morning, but it ran through last conference as well. I stood at the rostrum last conference saying that that would be my last conference due to the mental health pressures put on me as an FBU rep, an FBU official, but here I am back again.

Not only have we heard already today, as I said, some real personal and emotional contributions, but we have also heard contributions from other comrades on how fire and rescue services are failing in their duties by failing to provide sufficient mental wellbeing training and awareness. I think it is potentially our duty as the FBU to lead from the front on this like we have with the amazing DECON campaign as well.

Conference, this resolution asks for a course to provide us as reps with the skills and knowledge to recognise the decline in not only our own mental health but also the mental wellbeing of others around us as well and give us processes we can use to better manage our own mental wellbeing, and then signpost members or us as reps to professional organisations so that we can get the appropriate level of support which could make a vital difference to ourselves and our members.

Conference, this will be a valuable addition to the already excellent education programme that the FBU already provides and Matt has stolen my thunder because I was going to congratulate the education team at the back there, but he has done it already, but we could again. So conference, if we don't look out for ourselves and our fellow officials and reps, we will cease to function in our own roles and compromise important work that we do. We have a duty of care to ourselves and others. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kev. Does that have a seconder?

BARRY JACKSON (London):

I was just going to take this further, this resolution – I am speaking to second this resolution. I don't think it almost goes far enough in terms of what we need to do. I am a health and safety at work rep, and the key is health, safety and welfare. That welfare means that I have a responsibility for mental health. I do not know any of our

health and safety reps, or any reps, that haven't had someone on a suicide watch 24 hours a day where they are available for them.

I think the reason behind this is the lack of compassion and the cop outs of fire services throughout the country. They are not being held to account under law and it is as simple as that, under policies. Paul said earlier about these wellbeing strategies are just absolute cop outs. If we hold them to account, then that means we don't have to pick up the slack and it helps our own mental health. The pressures we are under at the minute, I have got a member of mine who I was representing recently and the HR department didn't think it was appropriate that they would turn up. He went home, wrecked his house and went off and his missus didn't think she was going to see him again and wrote me a very moving email, and it was a disgrace. It was a cop out. In terms of that, let's get them held to account. I might do a motion about this next year actually to really pin this down. Get the joined up thinking. Let's communicate with each other and really hold these employers to account over this and help our mental health.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Barry, that's open for debate. Sorry. I have got to call Durham. So I am calling resolution 67, Counselling Training for Reps/Officials moved by Durham. I do apologise for that. The EC are seeking Durham withdraws or they oppose it.

Resolution 67 COUNSELLING TRAINING FOR REPS/OFFICIALS

Conference notes the excellent education program that the Fire Brigades Union provides for reps and Officials. Conference believes further education could and should be provided, especially relating to providing reps and Officials a foundation in counselling. Due to the nature of the roles that are undertaken by both reps and Officials they come in contact with Members who are suffering from mental health issues as well as dealing with stressful situations on a regular basis. Conference recognises that specific training in dealing with these Members is a necessary part of the education of reps and Officials, not only for the benefit of our Members but also for the mental wellbeing of reps and Officials. Conference instructs the Executive Council to investigate the implementation of basic counselling training for reps and Officials, and further investigate if this would be best suited for a pre-existing course or if a standalone course would be necessary.

DURHAM

ANDREW MURRAY (Durham):

I would just like to start by saying thank you to Lindsay and Charlie for the hard work that they do in the education department. I know it has already been said but it cannot be said enough because education is the backbone of what we do. Without the education we cannot do what we need to do. So the resolution that I have put in, I think there is a bit of misunderstanding about the spirit of what it is asking for. We don't want our reps to be counsellors. That is not where we are at. We just want our reps to be able to deal with the situations that they are in in a competent way.

We are in a privileged and unique position where we have got the trust of the membership. They will come to us, they'll talk to us. When we have that conversation with them, we need to be able to deal with it because once they no longer – they can't connect with us. We have no way of providing that support. As soon as we finish that conversation and they have gone, that is it until they come back. If we don't have those skills to make sure that we can provide as much support as possible, then we are letting the membership down.

I have got a member who last week tried to commit suicide, and every night I lay there, leading up to this, have I done enough, have I done enough to help them, and on a personal empathy level I think so, but I need training to be able to provide better support. We have spoken to Riccardo and we would just like to ask him to give us the assurances that we spoke about yesterday to tell us that this will be ongoing through UCLan and that we will get a report back and a feasibility study into what we are asking. We remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Andy. Right, that is now open for debate.

TREVOR CONNOLLY (Hereford and Worcester):

President, conference, comrades, just to say I am always willing to give up for a star of stage, screen and TV, so I don't mind waiting my turn. Speaking in support of the mental wellbeing of Fire Brigades Union reps, resolution 66. Tamtastic will know all about this from his previous career which you can talk to him about afterwards. You need to buddy up and you need to remember these things. It is me first, then it is the team, then it is the casualty. Remember those things. It is really important. Buddy up with each other, look after each other, look out for each. You lot are all lucky because I have got the human Duracell bunny there called Neil Bevan that I have to keep an eye on, and honestly, he is like a terminator. He absolutely will not give up or stop, and there is no reasoning with him, so don't try.

If you are asked to lift something heavy on the fireground you just wouldn't do it would you. So bear that in mind with your mental health. You can only take so much on board. Look after yourself. It is really important. Also downtime, you need some downtime. It is really important sometimes to say no, I have done enough for today, I need to put the phone down. On that note, please support the resolution. Thanks very much indeed.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Trevor. Anybody else? No. Riccardo.

RICCARDO LA TORRE:

Thank you president, thank you conference. Thanks to Andy, thank you region 3, we didn't want to be having to oppose that sentiment. We had our discussions and as I reported on the previous item, we are taking this incredibly seriously. We will feed the sentiment of this resolution into those discussions with the academics that we are approaching to get this project off the ground, and we will keep conference, members and officials updated and report back on that, especially what that looks like and how it looks. If we are going to the experts, let's have those discussions and let's explore what is the best way forward.

That ties into our qualification on support for 66 as well. There are a few. We do provide support on this in our existing education packages and pathways, and how that develops, what that looks like should be informed by this project that we are trying to progress with academics at UCLan. We have rightfully applauded about seven times now Lindsay and Charlie – eight times now. We have education experts so we need to be in constant liaison and discussion with them about what this looks like and how it evolves going forward, and again this will be fed into that project and those discussions with the academics.

I just want to make one point quickly around the managing of mental health. I think we need to keep focus and at the centre of our work as trade unionists on mental health. We have discussed at length in these recent discussions the hazards that exist in the workplace, how in control that may be understaffing, overwork. These are hazards. We would not settle on just managing or making ourselves resilient to other hazards. If it was a bit of old rusty sharp sticking out of the mess room wall, we wouldn't settle for making ourselves resilient to being stabbed. If we had a broken step, we wouldn't allow our members to fall and settle with we will make them more resilient to falling. We would remove it. That is the hierarchy of control. We remove the hazard.

As trade unions, of course, we are not wellbeing projects. No trade union is mental health first aiders. The exercise and the diet projects exist to assist people in managing their mental health. Dave Smith, a good friend and comrade and tutor of this union has written some fantastic pieces on what he calls wellbeing washing for *Hazards Magazine*. It is often cheaper and freer than actually addressing and removing the hazards that are harming our members' mental health in the first place. So stay alive to that. That has to be the focus of what we are demanding, and the ONC resolution around risk assessments will obviously assist on that. With those qualifications, we support.

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 68, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training, moved by B&EMM. The EC support.

Resolution 68 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION TRAINING

Conference is aware of the increased publicly highlighted cases of racism, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia and also discriminatory practices faced by neurodiverse staff within the fire and rescue service, society in general and the impact on all following these revelations.

Conference recognises that education is a valuable tool used to underpin and bolster equality legislation, good practice and everyday behaviours and as such Conference values the education facilitated by our own Union, TUC, ACAS and other union bodies.

Conference further recognises that bespoke, standalone equality and diversity training is no longer advertised as part of the core training courses recommended for brigade reps, regional reps, Executive Council Members and all supporting staff.

Conference instructs that prior to Conference 2024 a training package of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), including, but not limited to, EDI literacy inclusive language and building good practice is developed, working in partnership with the equality sections B&EMM, LGBT+ and NWC engaging with outside specialist education providers as necessary.

Conference further instructs that before Conference 2024, alongside the rollout of an EDI training package, reference materials (akin to those supplied for DECON) are produced to promote and support the drive to educate, encourage, and promote inclusive behaviour across the board.

B&EMM

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM):

So I am speaking on behalf of our chair today who has not been able to talk because she is an official – watch this space for a rule change (got to wait a few years). So to B&EMM or not to B&EMM. People of class – or is it black people – breastfeeding or chestfeeding, pronouns, him, her, they, them, microaggression such as “Can I touch your hair” and who is the husband and who is the wife? I can’t pronounce your name so I am just going to call you Dave. The majority of people do not set out to cause any offence or set out to undermine, humiliate or degrade others, they simply lack the knowledge that underpins inclusive language or behaviours. With over 300 languages spoken in the UK, over 300 nationalities and accompanying cultures, it is not surprising that there are holes in our database of inclusive language and behaviours.

With so many changes, what was acceptable yesterday may not be acceptable today and may not be acceptable tomorrow or relevant. Additionally, we need to recognise the nuances that exist between a group of people who look the same, but may not be the same whether this is religious differences, cultural differences or language differences. Not all black people are the same. Conference recognises that education is a valuable tool used to underpin and bolster equality legislation, good practice and everyday behaviours. As such, conference values the education facilitated by our own union, the TUC, ACAS and other union bodies, and also again thank you to Lindsay and Charlie.

Conference further recognises that our education department provides an ADAE course for officials as part of a number of training packages following a specific pathway with the ADAE training, EDI is covered. Conference, we are asking that all officials, EC, office staff as well and reps are given the tools to enable us all the better to understand and support our members working with our equality sections and internal education departments. And, of equal importance, working with the external partners who understand and have the tools to talk about microaggressions, who can talk about to B&EMM or not to B&EMM, who can talk about various different things: equality sections, the importance of equality sections.

I am still asked why do we have equality sections? We have got reps who don’t quite understand why we have equality sections. It is so important that we have equality sections because people who don’t have lived experiences won’t be able to bring those experiences to the table and they won’t be able to have that conversation in that room at that time. You can’t tell me what I have experienced. I can’t tell you what you have experienced. We need to change the narrative in rooms. That is the importance of the equality sections. It also includes equity in there.

Equity is so important. A lot of people want to treat everybody the same and they want to treat everyone equally, and that is not how it has to be. Everyone has differences so those differences need to be taken into consideration and sometimes certain people need a little bit more assistance and a bit more of a step up than others. I would recommend all of you also to look at equity because it is so very important. Conference, I move.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Kasey. Has that got a seconder?

ISABELLA GOODWIN (LGBT+):

First time conference and first-time speaker. Attempting to speak at least. Seconding resolution 68. Our LGBT+ members are happy to second this resolution and recognise the benefits of having a structured education and training package. Equality, diversity and inclusion training needs to be consistent. There are also many aspects around the issues that can be extremely complex: for example gender identity and the use of gender neutral language, and for this reason the equality sections need to be at the heart of any package that is produced.

By producing a training package that aligns with the brilliant education programmes currently being run throughout the year, we are ensuring that those who present this training have all the tools required. We also need to do all we can to get the membership on board in acknowledging that this is a good thing and a benefit to everyone in the service. We would like to see a campaign launched such as we have done with, and around the issue, of contaminants and DECON. The message needs to be clear: equality, diversity and inclusion is not just about minorities and is not just for the benefits of minorities. It is good for us all and we all have a role to play to make our workplaces safe and friendly spaces. Conference, please support the resolution and, one last time, let's big it up again for the education department.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Isabella. Is that a sore throat or is that a karaoke throat? That is now open for debate. Nobody. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Conference, yes, the executive council does support. I did want to just make a couple of points of clarification I think. One point is that while we clearly do need FBU training and education on the matters identified in the resolution, there is also a discussion to be had with our employers on some of this about how they are training people coming into their workforces and how they are training their workforce.

We certainly have in the past – I don't know what is currently in place in fire and rescue services, but we need to explore that. Certainly, I have participated, for example, in joint training sessions with employers, managers, with groups of the workforce who were brought in, so there is a responsibility there on the employers which again we shouldn't let them off the hook on.

I did just want to clarify on the third paragraph. It is a wording issue, but it does say "bespoke, standalone equality and diversity training is no longer advertised". Just to clarify. That is not the case. In fact, the latest education programme which has been circulated makes very clear there are two online courses for all members and officials on specific equality issues that is already out and advertised. We will discuss with the equality sections, as has been asked, how the aims in the resolution can be confirmed with our much loved education department.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 68 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call resolution 71, Internal Union Discipline (IUD) moved by Tyne and Wear. I have been informed that the EC are seeking remit or they will oppose. I have been informed that Tyne and Wear might remit?

Resolution 71 INTERNAL UNION DISCIPLINE (IUD)

Conference notes that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Rule Book contains rules covering IUD.

However, unlike the All Different All Equal policy FBU Officials receive no training or guidance on how to carry out an IUD investigation, and there are no specific timescales in which to complete

the processes. This has the potential to have an impact on all parties involved with regard to workloads and stress.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to;

- *produce a guidance document including expected timescales for any Officials who may be required to carry out an IUD investigation*
- *develop a training course via FBU education specific to IUD investigation.*

This work to be completed before Conference 2024.

TYNE and WEAR

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

I will be quick on this. The spirit of the resolution was to introduce training, guidance and particularly time scales around internal union discipline. I am sure you agree that we wouldn't let our employers have such an open policy. I don't see why we should have one. That said, however, Tyne and Wear are prepared to remit if we can have a couple of assurances from the AGS: the first one being just an acknowledgement that it is an issue that needs to be resolved; and secondly, that it will be resolved as part of the wider piece of work on looking at our own structures.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne.

THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:

Thanks very much for that Wayne. As we discussed out of conference, following a paper from region 9, the executive council has created a task and finish group to look at how we support officials and members when we are carrying out internal union discipline. So, yes, hoping that you do remit it on that basis. We do accept that there is an issue there. We are looking at those issues in that working group. We will look at timescales but I just want to make one point on it really if that is OK, Wayne. Some enquiries are quite complex, quite detailed, and will require those conducting those enquiries to take time, and it is the view of the executive council that if we were to rush an enquiry to meet an arbitrary time frame that may lower the level of detail and thoroughness. We will look at that work frankly, but we hope you understand the point. Thanks.

WAYNE ANDERSON (Tyne and Wear):

Thank you. Tyne and Wear remit.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Wayne. I now call para G3, para G4, para G5, para G6, para G7.

KIM FERGUSON (Scotland):

Speaking on paragraph G7, progression education an update from Scotland. Our members' branch activity in Scotland has increased significantly. The demands for progression education packages have never been greater. As a region, we have been fortunate to facilitate several courses over the last nine months, including a successful all different all equal course which offered places not only to region 1 reps but also to brothers and sisters in the northern regions of England which we are hoping to facilitate again this year.

There is not only great demand for these courses, but a recognised need within the regions to support any ADAE investigations that may be implemented. As a result of two successful introductory for branch officials courses in September 2022 and March 2023, which were held in our regional offices in Glasgow, we have 33 new enthusiastic branch reps on the FBU education pathway with an additional represent members course to be held in September of this year of which we have 18 registered and a further 5 on the waiting list which, for four months ahead of the course, is a great result.

We are very proud to hear that 5 of these new reps are here at the conference for the first time. Not that it has been said before now, and maybe for the eighth or ninth time, but region 1, Scotland, on behalf of our execs, reps, and all of our members would like to take the opportunity to thank Lindsay and Charlie and the FBU national education

for supporting the demand for courses within our region and the hard work that has gone into providing this progression education pathway. We really very much appreciate it, so thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Conference, we have got something we have to deal with immediately. Could all of those of delegates who are in a car parked in the hotel car park please stand up now. And me. Mark is just going to explain something.

MARK ROWE (National Officer):

Apologies for this conference. The hotel has just informed us. The system they have got up is Parking Eye and it resets at 3 o'clock, so what happens is the letters are going to be issued. You won't get a fine, you won't get anything, but the letters are going to be issued. So to avoid that, we are going to suggest that we take a quick break and those that have got the cars, if you nip out to the keypads and quickly re-register and then nip back in – apologies for this.

THE PRESIDENT:

Apologies, conference, but do it now please. The rest of you just sit around and chat. We won't be long.

Short break.

Right conference, come to order. Apologies for that. We got told at the last minute that it had to be done before 3 o'clock otherwise you would have all been getting your fines and the clamping companies would probably have been out as well. I know a lot of you have now collected your packed lunches. Could you just refrain from eating for this last debate. I know it is late in the debate and you are all getting hungry and want to get home. I will now call para G8, para G9.

PHILIPPA SMITH (West Midlands):

Conference, president, approximately 70 applicants applied for 40 spaces at this year's women's school. The school could have been filled nearly twice over. Knowing this, on 6 April, three weeks before the school I replied to my email from education and the NWC stating that I had been unsuccessful and asked why a bigger venue couldn't be sourced to accommodate the extra applicants or, if Wortley was essential, an additional place where those who didn't require creche facilities could stay and get transport back. I asked about regional schools but was told it would be too great a cost to the union.

To not provide something beyond 40 spaces at women's school, whether that is a bigger school, several schools or even regional schools would be too great a cost for the union. We are aware of the financial constraints, but could we really not extend our budget to cover those increased applications? Were attempts made to expand the school following the large amount of applicants? The email chain copied in senior officials but as far as I am aware there was no response from them regarding the funding.

We talk about misogyny, improving representation and getting more diverse officials but it appears we are not willing to put our money where our mouths are. Will any attempts be made next year to increase the funding. If not, how can we make a business case? What is the process? Or should we write another resolution for next year requesting investment in equality sections? Those of us at grassroots levels can encourage all the members we want to apply but what's the point if there are no spaces? Why waste our time lobbying people about the benefits of attending schools if there aren't enough spaces? Let's not let equality schools become exclusive and potentially alienate future officials from within our equality sections. Let us prepare to be more reactive to increase interest as more equality members join the fire service which inevitably means more members in our sections.

As we all know, NWC's motto is ask for what you want and be prepared to get it. Maybe head office could take note of that and start preparing for better organisation, more engaged members and a subsequent influx of school applications. To paraphrase a national officer, women's representation not when it's cheap, women's representation not when it's easy, women's representation not when it's free, just women's representation because it is the right thing to do.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Philippa.

GRAHAM HOPKINS (Scotland):

This is my first conference and first time speaking. The three equality sections that we have just heard, very popular, B&EMM, Women's and LGBT+ schools, in 2022 they were very, very popular. The schools play an important part for establishing relationships although they are firefighters from across the UK, and developing valuable support networks.

Out of these schools, discussion groups, activities, social activities and, of course, time for networking at the bar. The B&EMM school was held at Wortley Hall in October 2022 with over 40 members attending. The school itinerary was unrecognised in the history of B&EMM within the FBU structure. Understanding how the FBU worked alongside other trade unions and building upon the importance of the B&EMM network across all 13 regions of the FBU.

One of the guest speakers spoke of the struggle of how they migrated to the UK and the issues they faced with getting adequate health provisions. The Women's school, as mentioned just earlier, was heavily oversubscribed which I think is testimony on its popularity. I hope we can improve on the facilities. The speakers at the school were Kerry Baigent from UNISON regarding DECON. She was a survivor of breast cancer from suspected fire contamination from her time in the job. There was Care for Calais, a speaker on Solidarity, Bakers Union on solidarity. It was well attended with loads of kids because of the childcare facilities available. There were workshops on facilities, misogyny and sexual harassment.

The LGBT+ school was held at Brighton, my first school and I found it very empowering and insightful. The speakers were Saorsa-Amatheia Tweedale, a member of the TUC's national LGBT+ committee who gave great insight into how the UK is doing with trans rights compared to the rest of the world and the intersection between defending trans rights and trade union solidarity. FBU archivist, Helen Whittle, had a look at the sections' publications archives on how FBU members reacted to LGBT+ issues throughout the decades and explored the achievements of the sections throughout their history.

We also had closed sessions for small groups of us who could share our own experiences of being in the LGBT+ community in the fire service. Coming from Aberdeen, I consider myself very fortunate in my own experience at the station. It was very disappointing to hear others experiences not so good. It goes to show how much the schools are needed to educate and unite the members and empower them against racism, misogyny and homophobia. Thank you.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Just to respond to both points. The union's equality sectional schools are absolutely vital and I think the point made about looking at the history and evolution of those discussions is important in that regard. In relation to the points Philippa raised about women's school, if we are going to have equality sections self-organising, then we have to respect that self-organising, and the schools are developed and delivered in a joint approach between the equality sections and our education team, but it has always been the view of the equality sections that they want to play the key role in delivering the content of those schools, including what that school looks like. So on the question as to whether it is in Wortley or not, certainly in terms of us, no problem of looking at other venues, and other sections do have schools and have had schools that are not at Wortley, just to be clear on that point. That is a matter that they have made that decision and requested that the school should go elsewhere, but in our view that is a matter for the national women's committee to address. We are happy to have that discussion with them.

In terms of responding to the questions that were raised, as I understand it, the NWC officials asked that they should respond to the queries that were raised as the people leading the organisation of the school. Hopefully that clarifies that point. Absolutely fine to raise the issue and, as I say, if the NWC decide that they want other forms of arrangement, then we clearly can discuss that or to move the school elsewhere, we can clearly discuss that, but I think that is a matter for the NWC to address and one of us will have that discussion with the NWC. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now call para G10. I now call resolution 69, Union Learning Courses for the Retained Duty System (RDS) moved by Cambridgeshire. The EC give qualified support.

Resolution 69 UNION LEARNING COURSES FOR THE RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS)

Conference is aware of the extensive education programme that the Fire Brigades Union offers; these courses are essential for both Members and Officials, and greatly aid Members to be as effective as possible.

Unfortunately, these courses aren't as accessible for some RDS Members/ Officials, due to the nature of their primary employment. Some RDS Members willing to undertake Union learning are at a detriment of having to either use holiday leave from work or take unpaid leave, this can be off-putting. Wholetime personnel have the ability to use Trade Union Leave, allowing them to be released from duty, thus not impacting on their pay.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to explore different options to make these vital courses accessible for our RDS Members and Officials, whether this is in the form of alternative delivery (evening/weekend courses, on and offline), modular e-Learning packages or regional sessions.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

CALLUM HODGKIN (Cambridgeshire):

Speaking to move resolution 69. Education is one of the most important tools that we have at the union. It gives our officials in whichever sections they represent the knowledge, experience and skills to best represent our members and fight our battles. The current array of courses that we deliver at the union are absolutely fantastic. I definitely will give a shout out for Lindsay just to follow suit. Along with Lindsay in the education department we use outside speakers and guests with different experiences, different skills and different knowledge and this has equipped us with efficient and effective union officials. However, due to the current format of the courses, which are often residential during the week, our RDS members and officials are sometimes at a disadvantage. This is primarily down to their primary workplace commitments. Due to this I believe we are overlooking and not utilising the skills of these members.

Being mindful of the current workload on the education department, we call on the EC to explore alternative methods of course delivery. The heat illness prevention awareness course is available as an online E-learning section. Along with that the TUC learning website is also a great option that we can look at in a way to drive down costs. Modular delivery of courses could help along with evenings and online or even regional courses held locally. Conference calls for an exploration of different options of course delivery using both in-house and joint resources along with a modular approach. Conference, for what I believe may be the last time in conference 2023, I move the resolution.

THE PRESIDENT:

Has that got a seconder?

GORDON NIMMO (NRC):

Seconding resolution 39 union learning courses for retained duty system. The NRC feels a sensible approach to face to face course delivery and accessibility is required. This will increase membership engagement, energise branch activity and give confidence for RDS members and officials to challenge employers who regularly push the boundaries of RDS health and safety terms and conditions. The NRC second.

THE PRESIDENT:

That is open for debate. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

President, conference, if I can give the qualifications from the EC, we are happy to look at the points that are raised in the resolution, but I think there are some problematic areas of it, some of which I addressed in introducing

the paragraph earlier. Certainly, what has happened in other trade union education is that E-learning has been introduced as a way of cost cutting, but the impact of it is that it has reduced face to face education, and we value face to face education and our reps who attend courses have been very clear to us whenever the question is asked, they want face to face education, and during COVID people made very clear to us that they couldn't wait to get back to attending courses in person. That is the approach we have taken. We think it gives a better education experience, a better training experience for people as well. We can look at E-learning but it is potentially problematic.

On the questions of evenings and weekends, again we keep mentioning it is a team of 2 persons, one doing largely administrative work, one person (our team) who already, by the way, delivers many of our courses. I feel uncomfortable having this discussion in conference, but I think you need to realise the implications of what we are discussing here. Already travelling the country many weeks of the year. We can't simply blithely say, oh, run it at the weekends and evenings, and expect that will happen. There are problems and concerns in here.

The final point is this. Actually, we have trialled a course aimed around this, and people did attend. The interesting point that we found on the feedback was that everyone who attended the course designed precisely for this reason actually made clear that they could attend a regular, physical course. Even though we provided it, it didn't answer the problem that we created to try to address. So we will look at the issues raised but I just want to flag up to Cambridgeshire and to the NRC that it is more complex than it might at first appear. Thank you conference.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 69 to the vote. All those in favour please show. All those against please show. That *carries*.

I now call para G11, para G12. I now move on to section E, government policy and legislation: para E1, para E2, para E3, para E4.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland):

Just quickly, since the report Scotland has now got a further change in the fire minister with Siobhan Brown taking over from Elena Whitham when Humza Yousaf chose his cabinet. The regional secretary and the EC member are meeting next week and will continue pushing parity to the FBU in Scotland. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Para E5, para E6.

STEVE TUCKER (Nottinghamshire):

I am aware of the time so I will try and keep this short but hopefully end on a good note. Like most of us in the room, we in Nottinghamshire were facing yet another round of cuts at the back end of last year due to the lack of funding from central government. After this, we had a proposal out to remove 44 firefighter posts, 2 wholetime appliances and the night time cover for a third.

The NFCC did nothing. They sat on their hands waiting for the cuts to happen. Our chief was concentrating more on when he would do the cuts and how he would do the cuts. Make no mistake, comrades, the NFCC are not our friends. We put some proposals to the fire authority that we should wait for the proposals until we knew what our funding was for the upcoming financial year. They refused and put them through anyway. So we did what we always do. The FBU took the lead. We wrote to our councillors, we wrote to our members of our fire authority and we started lobbying MPs. We organised a joint visit to Westminster. We were joined by Matt, Ben, Adam and a delegation from Nottinghamshire. Our chief fire officer came with us and the chair of the Fire Authority, Michael Payne, also attended.

Our CFO made a commitment at a public meeting to a cross-party lobby and on that day not a single Tory MP came to speak to us. They were all invited. We received no apologies and not one single Tory MP bothered to turn up. Thankfully, a number of Labour MPs did actually accept our invite and came to speak to us on that day, and I am happy to report that there were no reductions in firefighter posts in Nottinghamshire last year. All thanks to the work of the FBU in securing a local government settlement. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks Steve. Para E7, para E8, para E9, para E10, para E11, para E12, para E13, para E14. Are Scotland on spring-loaded seats?

SIMON LEROUX (Scotland):

I am reading this on behalf of my fellow area official, Gordon Sinclair, who fortunately cannot be here today because he has had to leave because of a family emergency. I want to briefly touch on the rally at Westminster that has been mentioned. Sixty three of members in Scotland made the journey to the capital to lobby MPs at parliament, 21 from Gordon's own branch in Inverness making the 1,000 mile plus round trip, a trip our gen sec and national officer, Tam McFarlane, recently made the reverse of to thank everybody for their efforts and with a message that they made a difference.

For those that don't know, Inverness is the most northerly wholetime branch in the FBU and 21 travellers down to London that day was roughly a quarter of the membership. The enthusiasm in region 1 to have our voices heard kicked off in October prior when we stormed Holyrood and demanded more funding for our service. The scenes were phenomenal with 700+ firefighters and firefighter control gathering outside leaving our politicians in no uncertain terms, we will not sit quietly. Again, that saw the Inverness branch mobilise en masse with over 30 travelling the 300 mile same day round trip.

The galvanising effect that pay campaign has had across Scotland cannot be underestimated. We are in as united a position as we have ever been. Credit must be given to our EC member, regional exec and area committees in region 1 for all the hard work that has led us to this point. We are now the largest region by membership – I think that has thrown down the gauntlet to everybody at that point. This is no accident. Although our union is led by our membership, the knowledge, enthusiasm and desire for fairness for our members from our senior positions in Scotland has re-energised our branches. This work will and must continue. I have learned a few things over the recent pay campaigns and rallies and demos that have come out of this: (1) organisation is key; (2) when we are united we can achieve things; and (3) if there is a supply of beer and free FBU T-shirts, Inverness will travel anywhere. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:

Thanks, Simon. Matt.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY:

Just a very quickie. Echoing Simon's comments there, particularly Inverness branch and their banner. I don't think they walked 500 miles though. On the day of the NJC pay talks, nobody knew what the outcome of those talks was going to be, but if you are an employer and you walked through the door of Methodist Central Hall in Westminster and you see a banner from Inverness fire station FBU, then that tells you a message. That tells you that there are people willing to give up their time to put in the effort to come and say you either make a different pay offer or we are going on strike. That is the sort of stuff that helped to change things.

THE PRESIDENT:

Para E16. Conference, that concludes all of the sections of the Executive Council's Report. Therefore, is that report agreed? *Agreed.*

Conference, that concludes all the business for this week. I would like to thank each and every one of you for your efforts. It has been a fantastic week with fantastic contributions from you all. To all the delegates whose first time it was here, I hope you have enjoyed it and obviously we hope to see you again next year. As you have seen, conference, this is your chance, an opportunity, to shape and guide the union on how we go forward. As I said in my opening address, take ownership of the resolutions when you get back to your brigades. Don't sit on your hands. Get back and if the national officer calls for a survey make sure you complete the survey because until we get them all, we cannot progress things. As I say get your members engaged, get them active.

At this point, we have got a number of retiring or just retired officials and, as we know, you have done, you have walked in their shoes, it is a thankless task for little or no reward, but we do it because we believe in it. The

members don't see what is involved. They don't see you trawling over a policy or a new whatever from the brigade management, they don't see the hours you put in preparing a discipline case for members or preparing a pension medical appeal, so unless you have walked in their shoes you don't know, but you lot have.

I want to say a special thanks on behalf of the national union to these officials: Guy Herrington, region 13; Ed Burrows, region 5; Rick Wright, region 6; Richard Green ONC and region 9; Steve Saunders, region 8; Steve Price-Hunt for the third time, region 7; Ash Fox, region 3; Ian Moore, region 3; Lynda Rowan-O'Neill CSNC secretary; Roy Humphreys now region 10 former region 9. Conference, I wish all of them people all the best and a long, healthy and happy retirement.

I have just got some other thanks now which I hope you will bear me. Firstly, to the hotel staff who never fail to impress us when we do come to the Imperial. They are always polite and they make us really welcome, and I have got to say the food is fantastic. We never ever get any complaints about the food. A big thank you to the hotel staff.

Our two guests, Ed Kelly and Jay Colbert who flew over from the US to join us this week. And our fantastic staff employed by the FBU and this is all staff, the admin, education department again, the research department, the membership department, the finance department, they all play their part in putting all of this together for us. So a big thank you to all of those. The stewards, even though they did get me a parking ticket for my car, thank you very much for that, Karl.

And a special thanks from me for the full standing orders committee led by secretary Mark Rowe and the chair, Phil Millar. They are the engine of conference. Without them we just wouldn't run and whilst you may be out having a drink and relaxing after your hard day on the conference floor, they once again come, they reconvene, they meet and then they are up at the crack of dawn preparing business for conference, and I have got to say a special thanks to Rebecca Savin and Gary Lennie who assist me with my timetable. We make them meeting with me and the VP at 7 o'clock every morning (sometimes looking a bit bleary eyed), certainly from me on that. Thanks to Steve, the VP, it is the first time he has done conference and sat next to me, shadowing me and keeping me right all the time on the procedures and reminding me if I forgot a seconder or calling the business, so a special thanks to Steve on that one. Finally, conference, a huge thanks to all of you for making the conference the success it has been this year. Your contributions have all been fantastic. A big round of applause for all of you lot.

A couple more things. Conference, I set you a challenge in my opening address and that was you be the generation that changes the fire and rescue service and fixes the culture within the fire and rescue service. It is undeniable. It is there. So you be the ones to fix it, and if you see something, do something and don't just turn the other cheek. Let's be the ones to fix it.

Conference, to finish I want to send a message of solidarity to our Merseyside members. You know, their current trade dispute, they are just coming up to the six months' mark because of the anti-trade union laws, we have got to re-ballot again, and they are going to smash it, I know they are going to smash it, and it is a solidarity message from us. What I say to Phil Garrigan, you might as well retire now because you are not going to beat these on this trade dispute. They will be out until the cows come home. You won't beat them so, Mr Garrigan, give in to them, succumb to their demands. So solidarity on that one.

Conference, that is done for this year. I hope you have all enjoyed it. Safe drive home. Everybody, safe travels home. Conference is closed. Thank you.



Established 1 October 1918

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

MAY 2023

OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

PRESIDENT – Ian Murray

VICE-PRESIDENT – Steve Wright

NATIONAL TREASURER – Les Skarratts

GENERAL SECRETARY – Matt Wrack

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY – Ben Selby

NATIONAL OFFICER – Riccardo la Torre

NATIONAL OFFICER – Tam McFarlane

NATIONAL OFFICER – Mark Rowe

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REGION 1	Colin Brown
REGION 2	Jim Quinn
REGION 3	Tony Curry
REGION 4	Pete Smith
REGION 5	Les Skarratts
REGION 6	Adam Taylor
REGION 7	Andy Scattergood
REGION 8	Cerith Griffiths
REGION 9	Jamie Newell
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	Gavin Marshall
REGION 5	Edward Burrows
REGION 6	Adam Taylor
REGION 7	Billy Holland
REGION 8	Duncan Stewart-Ball
REGION 9	Rebecca Lewington
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 Trayner
NRC	Paul Revill (acting)
NWC	Robyn Richardson (acting)

REGIONAL CHAIRS

REGION 1	Gus Sproul
REGION 2	Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Karl Wager
REGION 4	Steve Howley
REGION 5	Daniel Giblin
REGION 6	Mark Stilwell
REGION 7	Steven Price-Hunt
REGION 8	Steve Saunders
REGION 9	VACANT
REGION 10	Gareth Beeton
REGION 11	Tim Green
REGION 12	Greg O'Neill
REGION 13	Scott Young
B&EMM	Karen Bell
CSNC	Caroline Saunderson
LGBT+	Maria Buck
ONC	Greg Ashman
NRC	Paul Farman (acting)
NWC	Katie Holloway (acting)

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	Harry Powell
REGION 10	Jason Hunter
REGION 11	Andy Petch
REGION 12	Robyn Richardson
REGION 13	Amanda Hills

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 1	Scotland	Iain Ballantyne Kim Ferguson Graeme Hopkins Simon Leroux Kerry McCrone Scott MacRory Chris Murphy Gordon Sinclair Steve Weir
REGION 2	Northern Ireland	Jess Doran Karen McDowell Barry Mitchell Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Cleveland	Nick Cain James Strudon
	Durham	Guy Lawes Andrew Murray
	Northumberland	Mark Dowthwaite Vanessa Robinson
	Tyne and Wear	Wayne Anderson Chris Cook
REGION 4	Humberside	Lloyd Akers Sam Miller-Hodges
	North Yorkshire	Andy Savoury Paul James
	South Yorkshire	Matt Nicholls Stuart Smith
	West Yorkshire	Martyn Bairstow Robert Rutter
REGION 5	Cheshire	Jack Fellows Andrew Fox-Hewitt
	Cumbria	Oliver Burrow Steve Mattinson
	Greater Manchester	Patrick Brennan Matthew Fryer Dave Pike
	Lancashire	Tom Cogley Kevin Wilkie
	Merseyside	Ian Hibbert Lee Hunter

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 6

Derbyshire	Andrea Crofts Chris Tapp
Leicestershire	Mark Drinkwater Daniel Fathers
Lincolnshire	Karl Keuneke Richard Wright
Northamptonshire	Chris Kemp Jed Goodfellow
Nottinghamshire	Dan Cresswell Stephen Tucker

REGION 7

Hereford and Worcester	Neil Bevan Trevor Connolly
Shropshire	Robert Cartwright Louise Fletcher
Staffordshire	Jack Lee Martin Starkey
Warwickshire	Adam Hemmings Neil Stuart
West Midlands	Stephen Gregory Cara Lansley Philippa Smith

REGION 8

Mid and West Wales	Deiniol Lloyd Gemma Thomas
North Wales	Ruth Bateman Stuart Stanley
South Wales	Paul Marc Davies Phillip Harries Gareth Tovey

REGION 9

Bedfordshire	Craig Carter Mark Cook
Cambridgeshire	Callum Hodgkin Mark Harriss
Essex	Matt Edwards Andrew Knowles
Hertfordshire	Rob Fortune
Norfolk	Ryan Hastings Alan Jaye
Suffolk	Kevin Driver Phil Johnston

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REGION 10

London

Nathan Cane
Brian Flanagan
Barry Jackson
Jim Kearns
Ross McLaren
Adan Shaw
Martin Thompson
Jon Wharnsby
David Young

REGION 11

East Sussex

Leo Cacciatore
Simon Herbert

Kent

Rob Parkin
Dave Turner

Surrey

Karl Jones
Graham Kitchin

West Sussex

Edward Fox
Antony Walker

REGION 12

Berkshire

Stephen Collins
James Hunt

Buckinghamshire

Tony Brandon
Chris Wycherley

Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Dave Hunt
Jamie Kelly

Oxfordshire

Nick Bourke
Lee Newport

REGION 13

Avon

Amanda Mills
Matt Senior

Cornwall

Martin Murt
Adam Whitehead

Devon and Somerset

James Leslie
David Roberts

Dorset and Wiltshire

Scott Blandford
Leah Smith

Gloucestershire

Richard Champ
Ben Gwyer

LIST OF DELEGATES

B&EMM

B&EMM

Kasey LeGall
Alex Szekely

CSNC

CSNC

Sherri Kitson
Jenna Shergold

LGBT+

LGBT+

Isabella Goodwin
Shelly Morgan

NRC

NRC

Gordon Nimmo
Philip Williams

NWC

NWC

Georgina Fielding
Kate Yhnell

ONC

ONC

Chris Evans
Tony Walker



Established 1 October 1918

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