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To: All Members

Dear members,

Pay Reform

At Conference 2026, delegates agreed an Executive Council policy setting out the next stage of the Fire Brigades Union's work on pay reform.

This builds on the emergency resolution agreed at Conference 2025 and reflects a clear and consistent mandate from members: pay reform must remain the union's number one industrial priority.

The current national pay structure is over twenty years old and increasingly fails to reflect the realities of a modern fire and rescue service. Over this period, members have experienced sustained real terms pay erosion, while the demands, responsibilities and professionalism required of the role have significantly increased. At the same time, the existing structure has struggled to properly recognise skills, progression and professional development. Conference was clear that meaningful reform is now essential.

The objective is not minor adjustment but a fundamental improvement to how pay is structured nationally. This means securing a fair, transparent and nationally agreed system that provides genuine progression within role, not just through promotion, and properly recognises skills, competence and development. It also means supporting recruitment and retention while establishing clearer and more meaningful career pathways for members across the service.

This is the first time in decades that the National Employers, the Fire Brigades Union, governments across the UK and wider stakeholders have been engaged in sustained, structured discussions about reforming the national pay system. While significant challenges remain, this represents a genuine and historic opportunity to secure lasting improvements for members, alongside significant investment into our industry.

Since Conference 2025, the Executive Council has maintained intensive oversight of this work. This has included dedicated strategy discussions, ongoing engagement through National Joint Council

structures, and extensive regional and brigade briefings across the UK. Through this engagement, a number of key areas requiring reform have been identified, including progression from development to competence, the future structure of the pay spine, the relationship between competence and pay, the position of control roles, issues around professional development and leadership, and the need for national consistency. Feedback from members and representatives has played a critical role throughout this process and continues to inform the union's negotiating position.

Conference agreed that any reform must meet strict and clearly defined principles. It must deliver genuine improvements in pay and progression, address existing inequalities across roles and duty systems, and not be used to undermine nationally agreed terms and conditions. Safety, professionalism and national standards must remain central to any proposals. Most importantly, members will have the final say. Any proposals affecting pay structures or role maps will be subject to member agreement before implementation.

Alongside pay reform, negotiations on the 2026 pay award have progressed, with a 3.8% offer now made. If accepted, this would mean firefighter pay has increased by approximately 23% over the past five years. Conference recognised that annual pay settlements and structural reform are separate but connected processes, and that both must deliver tangible improvements for members.

The Executive Council has been instructed to continue intensive negotiations through the National Joint Council with the aim of securing agreement on a new national pay structure, with implementation targeted from 2027. At the same time, the union will continue making the industrial and political case for the additional investment required to support meaningful reform.

This is complex national work affecting firefighters and firefighters control across the entire U.K. It will take time, careful negotiation and sustained engagement to get right. However, Conference was clear that this opportunity to address the long-standing shortcomings of the current system cannot be missed.

The Executive Council remains fully committed to securing a fair, progressive and professional national pay structure that properly recognises the skills, responsibilities and contribution of all members across the fire and rescue service. Further updates will be provided following National Joint Council meetings and through national, regional and brigade briefings as negotiations progress.

Yours in solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Selby', written in a cursive style.

Ben Selby
Assistant General Secretary