

The Fire Brigades Union



DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE CONFERENCE SKILLS

Guidance Notes

UPDATED OCTOBER 2011

CONTENTS

	Page
Information Notes 1	
Debating a Motion	2
– Introduction	2
– Submitting a motion	2
– Amendments to motions	2
– The order of debate	3
The Jargon of Meetings	6
– "Point of Order"	6
– "Move Next Business"	6
– "Suspend Standing Orders"	6
– Standing Orders Committee	7
Information Notes 2	
– Preparing a Speech: Structure and Aims	8
– Preparing a Speech: Process	10
– Preparing a Speech – Use of Language	11
– Preparing a Speech – Speaking Techniques	12
– Preparing a Speech – Using Your Voice	14
– Preparing a Speech – Gesture	15
– The FBU Standing Orders Committee	16

Information Notes 1

Debating a Motion

1. Introduction

There are special rules and procedures for debating motions that are followed at Branch, Brigade and Regional meetings. So it is important to know about these if you want to influence what happens.

2. Submitting a Motion

Most Branches have a rule that motions should be submitted in writing to the Branch Secretary before the meeting. This means they can be put on the agenda and people know the issue is coming up. Members have a chance to read the motion and think about it before the meeting. Brigade and Regional Committees apply similar rules about motions.

At any meeting it is usually possible to submit *emergency motions* if an issue has just occurred, and also to propose a motion *during* a general discussion, as a way of getting the meeting to take a decision. Or if discussion is taking no particular direction on an issue, the person chairing the meeting might ask if anyone wants to put a motion, to bring things to a conclusion.

Every motion must have a '*Proposer*' and a '*Seconder*' before it can be discussed.

3. Amendments to Motions

Any motion can be 'amended' by changing words, adding words, or removing words. This is done by someone proposing a formal 'amendment'. Like a motion, every amendment must have a *Proposer* and *Seconder* before it can be discussed.

Something that completely distorts or contradicts the original motion cannot be accepted as an amendment. If you totally disagree with a motion, you just vote against it.

Amendments might be submitted in writing before a meeting, where motions have been publicised in advance on the agenda; or they can be put forward at the meeting itself – after a motion has been proposed, or at any time during the discussion on a motion.

4. The Order of Debate

This is the procedure normally followed for debating a motion:

a. Motion Proposed (or Moved)

The member proposing a motion starts off the debate by briefly introducing the motion. The motion should be read out so the Secretary can get the words down. Alternatively a copy of the motion could be provided to the Secretary. In introducing the motion you should cover points like:

- why you are putting the motion;
- why the questions raised are important;
- why the meeting should support it.

b. Motion Seconded

The Secunder of a motion has the right to speak as well, but you can choose to tell the Chair that you will just second the motion 'formally'. This means you do not make a contribution at this stage. You might decide to make one during the general discussion instead.

c. Proposing Amendments

If someone has indicated they want to put an amendment before the debate begins, the amendment would be proposed and seconded immediately after the motion has been introduced. Again the Proposer will make a brief introduction, and the Secunder can either make a brief contribution or opt to second the amendment 'formally'.

If the amendment is not written down, it should be read out clearly so the Secretary can get the wording.

Amendments do not usually **have** to be put immediately after the motion. They can be introduced at any point during the general discussion.

When an amendment has been proposed and seconded, the Chair should ask the Proposer of the original motion if he/she accepts the amendment. If he/she does (he/she might think it improves the clarity of the motion), the amendment becomes part of the motion and is discussed and voted on as part of it. If he/she does not, the motion and the amendment will be voted on *separately* after a general discussion.

d. General Discussion

It is up to the Chair to guide and structure the discussion on a motion (and any amendment/s). Here are some of the general rules that are normally applied to structure discussion:

- Members wishing to speak should indicate this to the Chair (usually by raising their hand);
- Members should only speak when asked to by the Chair, and they should address their comments to the Chair, rather than argue directly with individuals;
- speakers should stick to the subject under discussion, and not repeat at length what other speakers have said;
- it is normal procedure that each member should only speak once in a particular discussion;
- a time limit for speakers can stop discussion rambling on;
- the Chair should try and get a balance of speakers 'for' and 'against' the motion and any amendments. So if, for example, there have been two speakers in a row in *favour* of the motion (or the amendment), the Chair might ask if anyone wants to speak against.

Branches or Brigade Committees should have their own Standing Orders that set down rules. These Standing Orders are, as a rule, based on Regional Committee Standing Orders.

e. Moving a Vote

Normally the Chair will sense when discussion is ending or becoming repetitive and will suggest moving to a vote. If some members object, a vote might be taken on whether or not to end discussion, but this is not usually necessary.

Any member of the meeting can suggest during discussion that the vote is not taken. Again, if there is not clear agreement on this, the Chair might ask for a vote on whether discussion should end or continue.

Before the vote is taken, the Proposer of the original motion has the right to reply to the debate and sum up the issues.

f. Taking the Vote

Voting can be a bit complicated, particularly if there is an amendment. This is the procedure normally followed:

- the Chair will ask the Secretary to read out the motion and any amendment;
- if there is an amendment, this is voted on first;
- the Chair will ask for a show of hands of those 'for' the amendment, 'against' the amendment and sometimes of those 'abstaining';
- the votes should be recorded by the Secretary;
- if the amendment is defeated, the vote is then taken on the original motion – for, against, and abstentions;
- if the amendment is carried, then the vote is on the motion as *amended* (sometimes referred to as the 'substantive motion');
- the Chair does not normally vote unless the vote is tied;
- if a motion is complicated or lengthy, a Chair may decide to take in parts, both for discussion and the vote;
- at Conferences, if it is not clear from a show of hands whether a vote is won or lost, a "card vote" may be called. Leaders of delegations are then asked by the Chair to hold up a card indicating how many members they represent and these numbers for or against are added up by the Tellers. Card votes are an accurate way of assessing the level of support for a motion. In most organisations the standing orders allow any Delegates to call a card vote, immediately following a show of hands.

The Jargon of Meetings

If you are taking part in a discussion at a meeting, you may hear quite a lot of jargon you don't understand. The following are common terms it might be useful to know about.

1. 'POINT OF ORDER'

A 'point of order' is an objection raised by a member at a meeting. This kind of objection can be made if:

- there is a departure from the subject under discussion;
- an objectionable form of speech is being used;
- there is a breach of the general rules of debate;
- there is an infringement of the Standing Orders.

2. 'MOVE NEXT BUSINESS'

If someone who has not previously spoken in the debate moves 'next business', they are asking that the meeting should proceed to the next item on the agenda. The Chair must ask for a vote on whether or not to move on to the next item.

If 'next business' is moved and **carried** while a motion is being discussed, it has the effect of dismissing the motion along with any amendments, without a vote. If it is not carried, discussion on the motion and any amendments can be resumed, and a vote taken.

3. 'SUSPEND STANDING ORDERS'

Standing Orders are the agreed rules of the meeting or conference. When someone asks for the suspension of Standing Orders at a meeting they want a temporary postponement of those rules.

For example, at a Conference it may be required to cut the speakers times. In such circumstances, the procedure should be that a suspension of that particular Standing Order is moved and if it is carried by at least two thirds of those present and entitled to vote, permits that departure from Standing Orders.

4. 'STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE'

In most unions this is an elected, representative body that advises a Conference on timings, running order for motions, when visitors should address conference and so on. Delegates who wish to make changes to any of these will have to make a submission to the Committee to seek their agreement.

The Standing Orders Committee can also be called a "Conference Steering Committee" or a "Conference Arrangements Committee".

For more detailed information on the Standing Orders Committee see pages 16 – 19.

Information Notes 2

Preparing a Speech: Structure and Aims

YOUR AUDIENCE:

- who are they?
- where will you be speaking?
- how many will be present?
- will other people be speaking at the meeting?

YOUR AIMS:

- what do you want to achieve?
- do you want support for a motion?
- do you want to press home particular arguments?
- do you require action to be taken?

STRUCTURE:

- You will find the following structure useful:
 - list main points
 - write a draft outline
 - make a final draft
 - use simple language
 - use your audience
 - make it interesting
- It is often said that a good speech is structured by:
 - telling your audience what you are going to say;
 - telling your audience it;
 - telling your audience what you've just told them.

INTRODUCTION:

- Start by saying:
 - who you are
 - why you are there
 - what you are speaking about

MAIN POINTS:

Try to restrict yourself to three main points:

1st main point:

- give real life examples if possible.

2nd main point:

- back-up your point with relevant facts.

3rd main point:

- use comparisons if applicable.

CONCLUSION:

- summarise what you have said;
- emphasise what you want to do.

Preparing a Speech: Process

- **Getting the facts**

You will need to work out what facts you need. They may come mainly from your own experience. You may need to get some documents from your organisation, for example a journal or leaflets. Ask for help if you need it. Your organisation is there to help with information.

- **Note down your ideas**

Make a list of all the main points.

Start with a blank piece of paper and note down ideas as they come into your head. It would be useful if you got someone to help you. Often as one idea comes forward it will spark off another.

- **Write a draft outline of your speech**

Once you have everything you could include, work out how best this information can be pulled into shape and structured effectively. You may wish to write it out in detail. Use these headings:

- Introduction
- Main points
- Conclusion.

- **Write a final draft**

- use summaries of your main points;
- use a separate piece of paper or post-card for each section of your speech;
- refine it until you are happy with it.

- **Practice giving your speech**

- use a tape recorder if you want to hear what it sounds like;
- time your speech if you are speaking to a time limit;
- practice it on someone else if you would find it helpful.

Preparing a Speech: Use of Language

Use simple language

- avoid jargon;
- use short words and sentences;
- use familiar words;
- explain any abbreviations and technical terms.

Use language sensitively

- try to involve all your audience;
- make sure you are not using racist and sexist language.

Make it interesting

- use examples from real life to illustrate your point
 - use comparisons:

For example 'your views are like a record player repeating the same message over and over again'
 - use facts to support your case
 - use props if appropriate
 - if you feel able to, and it's appropriate use humour to help illustrate a point
- Do not over do it*** – but it can help to get the audience on your side.

Preparing a Speech: Speaking Techniques

Introduction

Some uses of language are more powerful than others. Most of us react positively to each of the techniques mentioned below. You can use them to help make your point.

1. The contrasting pair

This form of language can be used to make a main point or to develop the detail of your speech.

This technique is used constantly in trade union and labour movement speeches.

- "we call for more jobs not more bombs"
- "we don't want tax cuts we want more money for the National Health Service"
- "we don't want our old people left to fend for themselves, we want proper community care"
- "we want work, not waste"

2. The three part list

This technique can be used to help you structure a speech or to help enhance the detail of a speech.

In our movement this technique has often been used to summarise an organisation's aims, for example, 'organise, agitate, educate' or 'educate, organise, control.' In speeches the technique is often used at Conference. For example:

- *"Never in the history of legalised robbery has so much been given by so many to so few"* (W Jordan, about privatisation, at the 1986 TUC Congress).
- *"With the collapse of our economy, all the Government can do is come up with a new catchword – flexibility. But what does it mean? It means flexibility for unscrupulous businesses which want to cut corners on health and safety; flexibility for employers in hotels and restaurants and hundreds of other businesses to cut wages; flexibility to sack workers and sell off jobs as soon as there is a chance to make a quick buck".*
(R. Bickerstaffe, 1986 TUC Congress).

3. Set them up and knock them down

This technique is used to help emphasise a speaker's point. For example,

- *"The Tories said the Health Service was safe in their hands. We know that closed wards, huge waiting lists, scrapped hospitals, overworked doctors and nurses tell a different story"*
- *"The Tories said that we had a strong economy. The facts are that for the first time this country had a huge deficit on manufactured trade"*

As you can see the technique enables you to refute an opponent's argument and make your point strongly.

4. The rhetorical question

Sometimes, you can catch your audience's attention by asking a question or a series of questions. For example:

"Now, what about the treatment of young people under the Tories? Were they getting a fair deal?"

Now you can go on to answer your own question.

"What did the Tory Government introduce for our schools?"

I'll tell you what they introduced for our schools.

I'll tell you what they introduced – they introduced a divisive system of schooling thrown open to market forces and simultaneously under more state control."

5. Repetition for effect

Using the same word or phrase over and over again will help to lodge your ideas in the audience's memory and keep their attention.

Preparing a Speech: Using Your Voice

Introduction

You may find the following points helpful in presenting a speech:

1. Project your voice and look at the audience

Try to speak to the back of the room. You need to make sure you hold your head up to achieve this. This in turn means you cannot continuously read from notes.

2. Try to make your voice interesting

You can do this by:

- varying the speed
- varying the tone

3. Emphasise important words and sentences

You can stress certain words and sentences in your speech. For example:

"I would now like to comment on the Tory government's poll tax.

*I would suggest that this tax was **fair** only in the sense that the Black Death was **fair**; it was indiscriminate, it struck at **young** and **old**, **rich** and **poor**, **employed** and **unemployed** alike."*

4. Breathe deeply in the right places

You should try to pause and breathe deeply at appropriate places. This will help give your voice the power it needs to carry.

Breathing properly is also a good way to calm your nerves. Remember that it is natural to feel nervous before making a speech –

- it helps produce a good performance

Preparing a Speech: Gesture

Introduction

Try to follow these guidelines, they will help you hold the interest of your audience.

1. Establish eye contact with your audience

Try not to fix your gaze on one person. Look at as many people as you can. Move your eyes across the whole audience it helps them feel involved. Look at your audience, not your notes.

2. Use hand gestures economically to help emphasise key points

Hand gestures can help the audience capture feelings from a speaker.

A wagging finger, a clenched fist, hands outstretched can all help make a point.

Use those gestures that you feel comfortable with.

Props can also be effective. For example, holding up a newspaper article or a letter from management can help you illustrate your point dramatically.

3. Keep still while you are speaking

Try to avoid nervous habits, like jingling change in your pocket, or constantly smoothing your hair back or adjusting your clothes. Use your hands in a controlled way to help you make points, otherwise keep them still.

The FBU Standing Orders Committee

Conference is the "Supreme Government" of our Union.

All the features of our Union's structure are dependent on the decisions of Conference.

RULE 7. (1)

Conference

"The supreme government of the union shall be vested in Conference which shall be biennial, and/or recall conferences and the decision of which shall be binding on all members".

The Standing Orders Committee seeks to facilitate these procedures –

Amongst other things, the SOC will in consultation with the Executive Council:

1. Arrange to hold Conference;
2. Publish details for circulation to the membership;
3. Inform Brigade Committee's of procedure to submit Resolutions and Rule changes;
4. Prepare Conference Agenda;
5. Report to the 'floor' of Conference as and when necessary.

Standing Orders Committee – the structure:

Two Executive Council Members;

Appointed at the Executive Council AGM held in September.

Four Lay Members;

Elected from the delegates to Conference by the Conference delegates; elected to serve for four years. Two members will retire at each Conference and will be eligible for re-election for a further period of four years. From this Committee a 'Chair of Standing Orders' is elected on an annual basis at the SOC September meeting.

In addition, the Committee has a 'Secretary' (National Officer), and also two members of Head Office Staff.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE – THE TIMETABLE FOR BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

1. Following Conference assess the previous Conference.
2. At least 20 weeks prior to Conference – publish the **PRELIMINARY NOTICE** of Conference.
3. Brigades and Sections submit Resolutions, changes to Rule, alterations to Standing Orders and names of Delegates usually by the end of the first week in January.
4. January – SOC Meeting
 - Consider:
 - ❑ ***Rule changes***
 - ❑ ***EC Documents***
 - ❑ ***Resolutions***
 - ❑ ***Alterations to Standing Orders***
 - ❑ ***Delegates***
 - ❑ ***Conference Arrangements etc.***
5. At least six weeks prior to Conference publish the PRELIMINARY AGENDA.
6. Brigades and Sections submit amendments.
7. March – SOC Meeting
 - Consider:
 - ❑ ***Amendments***
 - ❑ ***Compositing***
 - ❑ ***Conference Arrangements etc.***
8. At least two weeks prior to Conference – **FINAL AGENDA**.

AT CONFERENCE

The Standing Orders Committee –

- Meet everyday
- Produce Programme of Business
- Produce Presidential Timetable
- Agree:
 - ❑ ***Facilities***
 - ❑ ***Speaker's times***
 - ❑ ***Emergency Resolutions***
 - ❑ ***Stalls***
 - ❑ ***Ballots***
 - ❑ ***Report to Conference***

SUBMITTING RESOLUTION PROPOSALS AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RESOLUTION PROPOSALS FOR INCLUSION IN THE PRELIMINARY AND FINAL AGENDA'S

Guidance notes are attached to the electronic forms emailed from Head Office; these should be carefully read to ensure compliance with both the Rule Book and Standing Orders.

As a rule of thumb:

A. Resolution Proposals:

- Must not be omnibus*;
- Must be factually correct;
- Must be clear in intent;
- Must not be a Rule change;
- Must be grammatically correct.

*An omnibus motion is one that deals with more than one subject. It is important that this is not allowed, as delegates may be forced to vote against something that they support, because they oppose the other part of the motion.

B. Proposed Amendments to Resolution Proposals:

- Must be directly relevant to the original motion;
- Must not mutilate or make absurd or be frivolous;
- Must be the same subject matter;
- Must not make the resolution omnibus;
- Must not negate the original intention of the resolution;
- Must be clear in intent;
- Must be grammatically correct.

You are strongly advised to review all submissions to ensure compliance with Standing Order No 5 and Rule 7 (7).

Any submissions received at Head Office later than the closing time and date specified on the forms will be ruled out of order.



Fire Brigades Union

Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT2 7AE

Tel: 020 8541 1765

Fax: 020 8546 5187

www.fbu.org.uk