



THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT

RE-ORGANISATION SUB COMMITTEE

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2007

Annual Conference 2005 endorsed a Statement from the Executive Council (“Executive Council Statement to Conference – Re-organisation Sub-Committee”). The Re-organisation Sub-Committee as agreed by the Executive Council consisted of the President, Acting Vice-President, the General Secretary and the following Executive Council members: John McDonald, Dave Green, Jim Barbour, Mike Smith, Jack Ford and Vicky Knight.

The Sub-Committee met on several occasions during 2005 and 2006. Small Working Groups of two members were also created to examine each of the individual issues identified within the Conference Statement. In addition a discussion was held with Professor Mike Terry of Warwick University who has assisted other Unions in the area of re-organisation. On behalf of the Union the Sub-Committee would like to thank Professor Terry for his assistance in this matter.

All Committees of the Union (Brigade, Regional and Sectional) were invited to make submissions to the Sub-Committee for consideration. The Sub-Committee wishes to thank those Committees which provided submissions.

In relation to the issues identified in the 2005 Conference paper, the Working Groups of the Sub-Committee considered each issue in detail.

1. Implications of move from Rank to Role

‘Non-uniformed’ membership of the FBU

There are a number of significant issues which as yet are not fully developed which will have an impact on our future and “*who*” we actually represent in the Fire & Rescue Service. These include but are not limited to:

- The development of a separate NJC negotiating body for Middle Managers (MMNB)
- The shift from Rank to Role
- The definition of “Fire and Rescue staff”
- Uniform and “non-uniforming” of posts.

Who we represent in the future is becoming increasingly a focus of our attention.

We have successfully maintained the position of Watch Managers within the NJC Negotiating Body and outside the compass of the MMNB. The Executive Council and the Officers National Committee will need to monitor carefully the development of the MMNB in relation to the wider NJC.

It is apparent that in some quarters widening the definition of “Fire and Rescue staff” to include the non-uniform administrative staff and the removal of the distinction of “uniform” and “non-uniform” may create a number of potential dangers which will now need to be considered in detail.

2. Future structure of the Union to meet ever changing aspirations of members

Decision making process within the Union

Recent years have brought considerable change to the Service in which the FBU seeks to represent its members and there are many important factors to consider in the continuing development of the Fire Brigades Union.

Considerable lessons have been learnt from the Pay dispute (see materials produced by the EC following the Pay Dispute “lessons learnt” and “moving forward together” workshops) and with further work the Union could perhaps be better structured to reflect these.

Any consideration in relation to the issue of “Union – Future Structure/s” must necessarily involve wide-ranging discussion on topics including:

- Definition of “Membership”
- Impact of Rank to Role
- Impact of IPDS
- Impact of devolution, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- New Grey Book, terms and conditions
- Key areas such as: Equality and Diversity; Health and Safety; and Discipline and Grievance
- Role of Head Office
- Role of Regional, Brigade and Sectional Committees and Annual Conference
- Legislative Change
- Finance.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Options need to be identified and explored in relation to all of the above prior to the development of recommendations and a full and interactive consultation process with the broad membership. Final decisions must be Conference based.

3. Future development of Sectional representation

We recognised the invaluable resources and specialist knowledge contained within each specific trade and equality section within the Union including the need for further work in this area to develop this within the organisation.

This is clearly a high profile and significant area of Union activity and indeed, its consideration is intrinsic to any discussion in respect of Union structure.

A number of areas will require detailed exploration, in consultation with the membership, including:

- The role of “Sections” within the current/future overall FBU structure
- Development, education and training needs
- Definition of Membership – important if we are to consider potential recruitment and representation of members outwith the current Grey Book
- Democracy and accountability issues.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

4. To fully incorporate work already complete on ‘Stress of Officials’

The past twelve months have seen several meetings take place in order to progress this area of work. Exploratory work was undertaken by Nottingham Trent University and Park Lane College, Leeds. After receiving detailed proposals from both institutions it was decided to move the work forward by utilising Park Lane College. Several meetings have been held with Trevor Cave, TUC tutor at the college and several options are being considered.

Advice that is coming from the college revolves around dealing with the issues of “time management” and “work prioritisation”, rather than dealing with the issue of stress as a single issue. To this end a pilot course is being devised that will enable Officials to address work and time pressures. It is envisaged that further meetings planned over the year will enable firmer proposals to be formulated.

5. Necessary and/or desired Rule changes

At this stage there are no recommended Rule changes arising from the work of the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee considered the individual issues identified above within the context of the overall issue of the possible re-organisation of the structure of the Union. This would obviously be a major project and would impact on the other current work of the Union at all levels. In discussing this issue the Sub-Committee gave consideration to the feedback received at the Executive Council, at other Committees of the Union and to the number of submissions received. In the light of this, the Sub-Committee has concluded that there is not a consensus or desire at this stage for a wholesale re-organisation or re-structuring of the Union. This does not mean of course that the issue should not be re-considered in the future. Any organisation needs to occasionally review the effectiveness of its structures.

The Executive Council recommends to Conference that the work of the Sub-Committee should continue and should at this stage focus on the following areas:

1. Head Office - especially around issues relating to the support and training of Head Office officials
2. Stress of Officials – ensuring that previous work already carried out on this issue is progressed
3. Membership of the FBU. The Executive Council is aware of moves to introduce non-uniformed employees in areas of work traditionally carried out by FBU members. This is a complex issue which needs further attention within the Sub-Committee and elsewhere in the Union.