



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS  
Minutes of the National Council Meeting held on  
Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008  
**West Bromwich Community Fire Station West Midlands**  
(To be read in conjunction with the various reports already issued)

**Present**

Mr P Robinson <b>QFSM</b>	President
Mr F. Kinghorn	Vice President * ( <i>dual position</i> )
Mr J. Littleton	National Secretary
Mr C. Bailey	National Treasurer & Life Vice President
Mrs L. Bairsto	No 1 District
Mr C. Bailey	No 2 District ( <i>Deputy</i> )
Mr H. Whitaker	No 3 District ( <i>From 1307hrs</i> )
Mr F. Byrne	No 4 District ( <i>Deputy</i> ) ( <i>dual position</i> )
Mr J.C. Jackson	No 5 District (Beds)
Mr F Knowles	No 6 District
Mr D. Hayden	No 7 District
Mr C. Richards <b>JP</b>	No 8A District
Mr. A.S. Jeffery	No 8B District
Mr F. Kinghorn *	No 9 District
Mrs W. Garrett	No 15 District ( <i>Direct Membership</i> )
Mr G. Bow <b>MBE</b>	Membership Secretary, Fire Fighters Charity and Editorial
Mr R.D. Orringe <b>MBE</b>	General Purposes Committee & Life Vice President
Mr P. Maguire	N.A.R.F. News Editor.
Mr J. Goddard	N.A.R.F. Pensions & NPC ( <i>From 1050hrs</i> )
Mr F. Byrne *	N.A.R.F. Pensions & Editorial
Mr. B. Wakefield	PSPC and Editorial
Mr S. Bairsto	No1 District Chairman ( <i>Observer</i> )
Mrs M. Smeed	No 8 District Treasurer ( <i>Observer</i> )

**1. The President.**

The President opening the meeting at 1037hrs asked everyone to stand and remember former friends who were no longer with us especially Barry Hook at this time.

Following the act of remembrance the President went on to say that it was a great pleasure to open this Council meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He stated that there was no change to the report that had already been issued. The only bit that concerned him, was the paragraph toward the end of his report about the Pensions withdrawal issue, this states:

*"I have been somewhat reassured during August, to learn that there may be a ray of light in respect of this situation, although, I am cynical enough at my age, to not be lulled into a false sense of security by what are only promising moves by the Government on this contentious issue.*

*I am going to include in its entirety a paragraph of information I have received from Frank Byrne recently, since this will give you an idea of what the eventual outcome will be, but cannot claim as yet to have read the 11 pages to which Frank makes reference. Doubtless this will be expanded upon during the next Council Meeting. The picture I got from Frank was as follows":*

***"The current situation with the ill health pensions issue is that the Judicial Review at the High Court in May was lost but draft revised guidance on ill health pensions, redeployment and capability for other employment has been issued to The Medical Practitioners and Fire Authorities. It does run to 11 pages so it needs to be read in its entirety. The situation on reviews has not changed as far as I can make out but I have had no further notification of any review locally."***

It was to be hoped that during this meeting, Frank Byrne, or Jeff Goddard would bring some light on this.

## **2. Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies were received from:

Mr A. Mulligan	No. 2 District
Mr P. Webster	No. 4 District
Mr H. Martin	No. 11 District & Life Vice President
Mr D. Bell	Age Concern
Mr A. Beecroft	NARF Standard Bearer
Mr R. Hurst	NARF Deputy Standard Bearer

Colin Richards informed us that although Tom Parry was not now a Council member, he had been asked by him, to offer his apologies, and wish the Meeting well. Tom is currently ill in hospital.

### **3. Minutes of Council Meeting held 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> March 2007 at The Quality Hotel Cardiff**

The Minutes were read for accuracy

**Proposed by** Colin Richards that the minutes are accurate

**Seconded by** Lynn Bairsto

### **4. Matters Arising.**

#### **4a Present Page 1**

Mr J. Jackson No 5 (Bedford) District was missing from those present.

#### **4b Page 11 Pensions Committee Report**

The Secretary reported that he had been asked to contact NARPO as to what was happening with their pensions. The Secretary went on to say that the Police Pensions had not been altered at present but NARPO were looking at our situation, to see what was happening, as they believe they could be next. It was also reported that their widows/widowers now get a full pension for life even if they remarry.

Colin Bailey asked if there was any possibility of the Fire Service Pension going this way. The President advised that he and Jeff Goddard had held discussions on the question of changes to either the old or, the new Pension Schemes and had come to the conclusion that neither would be worth contemplating. The new one was too fresh, and the old one now defunct.

#### **4c Page 13 National Pensioners Convention Report**

Following a number of reports The President reminded members of the discussion on our continued involvement in the Pensioner's Convention at the last meeting. An ad hoc "show of hands" after discussion, indicated a strong desire to continue our membership.

#### **4d Page 15 Christmas Cards**

The Secretary informed the meeting that he had spoken to The Chief Fire Officer of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service in connection with this. As result, he has got a meeting with the W Midlands Graphics Department who are now in their new headquarters and he will bring something to the table at the next meeting.

### **5 Secretary's Report.**

John Littleton said that the Secretary's Report was as issued to members and there had been no change.

## **5a Correspondence.**

The General Secretary went through the Correspondence he had received since the last meeting in March. There were 3 pieces' of correspondence that he would like to call attention to:

### **5b Project Fire Guard**

The Ministry of Defence have informed the Communities and Local Government Department that in the event of a Firefighters industrial action they would not be able to cover it, due to other commitments'. The Government and the Communities and Local Government Department have asked Group 4 to set up a capability to cover any industrial action by the Fire Service under the Civil Contingencies Act this would be at a cost of £10 million to set it up then for the following 10 years it will be £9.5million per year.

The FBU had sent a letter requesting us, to ask our members not to support this. Following a discussion it was agreed that we would just draw this to the attention of our members, but allow them to decide what they wanted to do after searching their own consciences.

### **5b New Firefighters Commutation Table.**

On the 14th May 2008, the Secretary had received an e-mail from the Communities and Local Government Department reference the new Commutation Tables, which came into effect, on the 1st October 2007. This had now brought Firefighters of both sexes in line with each other when they retired. This had caused a number of e-mails and phone calls from members who were unhappy at having retired before 30 September 2007. Had they been aware of the changes, they would have stayed in until after 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 since they claimed their commutation would have then been at a higher level. On the 9th September 2008, the Secretary received an e-mail from the FBU asking us to invite members who retired after 1992 and up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007, to send grievance letters to the Pension Ombudsman or, direct to addresses that were on the FBU web site which is as follows:  
[www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)

### **5c Veterans Badge.**

The Secretary informed the meeting that the Fire Service Veterans Badge would be available for those with 5 years service or more from the 6th November 2008 at a cost of £5.00 by applying to the BSFA. This can be applied for by going to the BSFA Web Site at [www.bfsa.org.uk](http://www.bfsa.org.uk) and requesting an application form.

Colin Bailey asked why it was 5 years when the forces have no time limit on theirs. The general secretary said he did not know why they had picked the limit but would make enquiry.

## **6. Treasurers Report.**

Colin Bailey informed the meeting that his report was as issued. His main cause of concern is that there are still number of Branches and Districts who are hanging on to the subscriptions and have not paid for this year. They must get them to the District Treasurer, who must then get them to the National Treasurer without delay. Colin stated he would rather get the Branch subscriptions in, in "drips and drabs", than to have them languishing in Districts or Branches until all are collected.

Colin went on to say that he knows that there some Branches and Districts who are having problems to get banks to accept new Treasurers, when the old Treasurer dies. If any are having this problem, will they please inform him, so that he knows what is happening.

## **7. Membership Secretary**

Graham Bow reported that there was a new membership list that had been issued this morning this showed a slight fall in the membership.

Graham Bow reported that he is still receiving old application forms from some branches that have been photocopied Graham went on to say that he would be sending new forms to those branches. Graham asked that Branches do only use pristine Application Forms for new members since some older ones are partly illegible on receipt.

## **8. General Purposes Committee**

Fred Kinghorn reported that there had not been a meeting since the March this year. Fred stated that he had been passed a letter received by Graham Bow, which had originated from SERCO IT Training and Recruitment Ltd. It seemed, that they wanted to advertise computer courses at £4000 a time to any firefighter who is retiring and had a lot of hands on experience in the Fire Service. Fred thought that this was a "no go", as there were already courses out there either for free, or, for a few pounds.

## **9. Age Concern.**

### England

David Bell sent his apologies as he is on holiday but his report was there for everyone to see, with most of it being the merger of Age Concern and Help the Aged in 2009.

## Scotland

Fred Kinghorn said his report was as issued. He stated that the merger of Age Concern and Help the Aged was going to happen.

### **10. Editorial Committee.**

Brian Wakefield said that they had met in July at the home of the editor in Stockport and there was a draft of the imminent NARF News being "proof read" by the Committee during the day if anyone wished to have an advance look? The magazine would be ready for publication in the next few weeks.

On the good side, the number of magazines that are coming back to the Erdington Office is now on the decrease, with just about 40 following the last issue. Brian Wakefield said that we would never get a zero return, due to time lag between the database going to the printers, and the magazine being sent out to members. During this period, members could die, or move address without telling anyone.

Brian Wakefield went on to say that he was concerned about the number of magazines that were actually coming back even though now much lower than they had been. There is no doubt that some of this, is attributable to the Membership Secretary not having been informed of the change of address it is up to Branch or District Secretary, to get the new address to the Membership Secretary at the earliest possible opportunity.

Peter Maguire the Editor reported that he was away next week, but the magazine would go to the printers the week after.

### **11. NARF Pensions Committee.**

Frank Byrne reported that his report was as issued and that he believed that responses from the members that he had been spoken to, indicated that we should go with **option 3** of the 3 options that were in the last issue of NARF News with reference medical appeals. The President asked if there was in fact any support for putting any money into a fighting fund for these appeals. There was little or no support for a fighting fund. Frank Byrne went on to say that he had received a few requests for help on Pensions issues and he had pointed them in the right direction. Frank also stated, that with the loss of Barry Hook, he was concerned that he did not have all the knowledge on pensions that Barry had, and when someone contacted him, he normally had to do a lot of research on the subject.

Jeff Goddard said that he felt the same and he also had to do a lot of research. Jeff Goddard went on to give us a reminder of the two Surrey cases and the outcomes and told us he had been dealing with several other enquiries. Jeff had received one from Lancashire (believed a Direct Member) and another from a member in Harrogate which had warranted a two page

advice response to assist him sort out incorrect advice he had received about his pension.

Jeff advised that there seemed to have been a shift by the Government on the appeals that we had all been concerned about. He felt that a change of Pensions Officer, a man who had previously been Minister for Fire matters, may have been responsible for resolving the London case which initially "set alarm bells ringing"

**Lunch was taken at 1225hrs**

**The meeting continued at 1255hrs**

## **12 Public Service Pensions Committee**

Brian Wakefield stated that he hoped that we all had his Report. He went on to explain, what had happened at the meeting in May which included tax changes that took effect in September 2008. Brian Wakefield said that the PSPC were going to look at Age Related Allowances as they had not been increased for a number of years.

Brian reported that the annual increase in state and public service pensions should be 5% next April 2009, he also went on to explain the CPI was now 5.2% and had suddenly gone ahead of the RPI when it is normally behind.

Brian Wakefield emphasised that our membership of the PSPC is a good investment.

## **13 Firefighters Memorial Trust**

### **Fire Services Monument**

Colin Bailey gave a report of the opening of the monument at Alrewas, which had been a fabulous day. Colin Bailey went on to say that he would like to see more services at the monument. We were advised that NARF West Midlands already lay a wreath on 9/11 and 11th November every year.

Alex Jeffries asked if NARF should hold a service there every year?

Colin Bailey replied that this was an idea that he was already looking at, and he had been in talks with Brian Wakefield on the subject. Colin invited anyone who came up with any ideas pertinent to this matter, to please contact him.

Brian Wakefield asked that if anyone takes a wreath to the Garden, could they please make sure that all the metal clips are removed from the wreath to stop it staining the slabs.

## **Remembrance Service London**

Colin Bailey reported that the places at the Cenotaph to all the other groups and to ours have been reduced. NARF allocation is down to 24 this year due to work that is taking place on the roads around the area.

### **14 National Pensioners Convention.**

Andy Mulligan was not available to give his report due to another appointment but had submitted a written report. Margaret Smeed gave a verbal report about the happenings at the National Pensioners Parliament; she informed the Council that there was a lobby and March on Parliament on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

### **15 Any Other Business**

#### **15a Funerals**

Fred Kinghorn asked if the NARF Standard Bearer should be available to attend funerals of NARF Members since he thought he should have been at Barry Hook's funeral. The President said that he had no knowledge of a precedent for this, and the Standard Bearer had not been present at John Reidford's funeral to which both he and Fred had been! John had been until his illness, Vice President of NARF.

Following a discussion it was decided that this should go to the General Purposes Committee for determination.

#### **15b Motion 3/09/2007 Voting Numbers**

John Littleton reminded the Council that this motion is from No 4 District about Voting at Council Meetings and was discussed at the April 2007 Council Meeting. The Motion had been passed, but needs to be put to the AGM May 2009 as this was the earliest another change to the Constitution could be made.

#### **15c Council Meeting and AGM**

John Littleton informed the Council, that the Council Meeting and AGM will be held at the Thistle Hotel Birmingham over the weekend of the 9th & 10th May 2009. Due to his holiday plans next year, could Members refrain from sending Meeting Reports to him, **until 19th April 2009**. John stressed however **that Reports must be with him by 24th April 2009** so the time frame will be tight!

#### **15d Writing to Chief Fire Offices about NARF**

The President had received a written suggestion from Paul Webster, suggesting that he write personally to Chief Fire Officers seeking to get

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"document input" about NARF, put into Retirement packs issued to future brigade retirees in their county area. Peter had submitted this previously to GP Committee but it had seemingly got "lost sight of" The President asked if we agreed for him to do this which was forthcoming. Some offered to send him details they already used, which meant letters would have to be carefully worded, in case this procedure was already in being in some counties.

**The meeting closed at 1400hrs and the President wish everyone a safe journey home.**