

# THE FIRE BRIGADE SOCIETY

## Minutes of 2019 - 2020 Annual General Meeting

Held at Abbey Pumping Station, Leicester, on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2020

After a morning of photography and looking round the site the meeting was convened at 14.00 hours.

### **(1) Welcoming Address:**

Steve Dodge welcomed members and guests to the meeting, and items (2), and (3) on the agenda were discharged. Accordingly, in the absence of The President, Les Edkins agreed to Chair the meeting, and Richard Williams agreed to take the minutes.

Steve went on to give a brief history the Pumping Station and thanked them for their enthusiastic assistance in organising the event, and the visiting machines that had attended during the morning. He went on to impart some good information on the history of the area, the city, and particularly the constituent brigades of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. There were details on the development of the services, stations and appliances, and of major incidents. Information on visits to, and interaction with the brigade by The Society were also shared with the audience.

Steve, in his role as Events Manager, also made reference to the continuing developments within The Society. Visits have become more structured, and less frenetic, and, to most members who attend, much better for it. There is always the temptation to dash about and get "just one more machine" (often identical to several others already seen that day). However, to do so reduces the interaction between The Society and the crews, most of which is very positive. We don't know that we are not speaking to a future Chief Officer, and it will play much better for our successors if we have left a good impression rather than a negative one. It also makes interaction between members easier and more enjoyable. This is also greatly assisted by the continued, and expanding use of coaches or minibuses, which also improve our green credentials, parking issues, and stress and fatigue levels. Some of the less obvious considerations which go into planning visits were also described. He ended his address by commending the full and comprehensive visit programme for the coming year.

### **(4) Apologies (& Attendance):**

A full list is provided in 'Appendix I' (attending) and 'Appendix II' (apologies). Members will be provided with these documents in accordance with their mandate provided at the time of membership renewal. AGM Minutes are also filed on The Society's web site.

### **(5) A moment of Reflection:**

The Chairman of the meeting asked all those present to stand and observe a two minutes silence to reflect on the passing of a number of Society members during the year, and for all the members of the worldwide fire fighting community who have served and paid the ultimate price.

The deaths of the following members have been notified to The Society; Leonard A Snelling, FBS East Midlands, Michael (Mike) J. Clark, FBS The East of England, Christopher R Hyson, FBS South East, Mike H George, FBS Wales, Colin Domville, FBS North West, Edwin Brimble, FBS Wales, David Stewardson, FBS International (Canada), Simon John D'Arcy Ryan FBS North West and two past members whose membership lapsed very recently; Ron Vale, FBS East Midlands, and Stephan Owen, FBS North West.

### **(6) & (7) Minutes of 2018-2019 AGM:**

The Minutes had previously been circulated electronically, and by post (with Fire Cover 224) in accordance with the individual members mandate. Howard Davies proposed formal acceptance. Jeff Sanders seconded the motion and it was duly carried by a unanimous vote. There were no matters arising.

### **(8) 2018-2019 Annual Report:**

This had previously been circulated to members with Fire Cover No 226, November 2019. There was nothing to add to the report.

### **(9) Acceptance of the Accounts and Auditors Report for 2018-2019**

**&**

### **(10) Acceptance of the 2020-2021 Operational Plan:**

The results of both these items were identical and are reported together.

There were 74 returned ballots, 69 for acceptance of the proposals, and 1 against. There were 4 spoilt ballots, two for lack of members name or membership number, and two for lack of clarity of voting intentions. Both proposals were thereby accepted by an overwhelming majority.

**Note:** The count of the returned postal ballots for agenda items (9) and (10) was carried out by two non-voting members Christine Errington and Mary Williams prior to the meeting. This was supervised by independent non-member Felicity Edkins.

**(11) Appointments:**

The posts were detailed in Fire Cover No 225, August 2019.

**Non-Executive Supervisory Board Appointee: 1 year appointment 2020 – 2021**

Martin Kingsnorth, FBS London

**Executive Appointments; 4 Years, commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020:**

**FBS Vehicle Recorder:**

Simon Rowley, FBS South East

**FBS Editorial Team:**

Les Edkins (Editor), FBS East Midlands

Ralph Horton (Managing Editor), FBS West Midlands

Mike Smith (Editor), FBS East of England

**(12) The President's Address:**

The President's report had been previously circulated as part of the voting form with Fire Cover No 226, November 2019. There was nothing to add to this report.

**(13) Working Party Updates:**

**Financial Working Party:** A full update had been submitted in the previously published annual report, and there was nothing further to add at this time.

**Management Working Party:** There was little to add to the published report except to reiterate that the new organization is working well, though experience has thrown up a few anomalies to be addressed. It had been hoped that the revised constitution would be presented to the membership during this year, but other commitments meant that was not possible. The amendments to the existing constitution has allowed The Society to carry on. However, the document requires 'tidying up', and if possible, simplifying.

**(14) Motions Submitted:** There were no motions submitted for consideration by the meeting.

**(15) Transaction of Business:** Other than agenda items, there was no other business specified for the meeting.

**(16) Bob Herbert Award:**

This was awarded to Howard Davis for his article 'Learning from Hillsborough' in Fire Cover No 220, May 2018.

**(17)** There were no other awards or presentations to be made at the meeting.

**(18) 2020–2021 National Programme:**

There was currently no date, or location, for the 2020-2021 AGM, but in line with our desire to make the event as accessible as possible, two locations in the South of England are being investigated.

The 2020 National Visit is scheduled to be in the Lincolnshire area over the weekend of 16 / 17 May and the 2020 International Visit to the Frankfurt region on 15 / 16<sup>th</sup> August.

**(19) Matters for the remainder of the weekend:**

Steve Dodge and Les Edkins then reminded members of the details of the FBS East Midlands visit on the following day.

**(20) AGM Closed at 15.00 hours**

After a refreshment break the group was reconvened for a 'question and answer session' amongst the members attending and the representatives of The Society Units present. A summary of the major points raised, and answered at the time, or following subsequent research by the appropriate Unit after the meeting is given in Appendix III.

The meeting dispersed at 16.30 hours

**Richard Williams, Minute Secretary**

**February 2020**

**Post Meeting Note: The COVID-19 Pandemic has totally disrupted all of The Society's National, International and Local visit plans so far this year, and probably for the remainder also.**

# THE FIRE BRIGADE SOCIETY

## APPENDICES TO MINUTES OF 2019 - 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### Appendix I Members Attending:

Stuart Brandrick	Alan Broughton	Howard Davies	Steve Dodge
Les Edkins	Christine Errington	Richard Hickman	Steve Udall
David Holt	Martin Kingsnorth	Graham Mitchell	Stephen Potter
Mark Poutney	Stephan Roth	Simon Rowley	Jeff Sanders
Clive Stephens	Mary Williams	Richard Williams	

### Appendix II Apologies for Absence:

Jon Hall	Ralph Horton	Sue Horton	Mike Smith	Matthias Borchert
Gordon Whitehead	Mike Bunn	Bill Hickin	Simon Adamson	Sam Crosby
Michael Wood	Frances Wood	Jeff Clish	Brett Clayton	Stuart Runciman
Ray Banyard	Craig Hall	Ron Henderson	Arthur Smith	Eddie Henderson
Alan Field	Eddie Simmons	Brian Jackson	Serge Amores	Andrew Fenton
David Mitchell	Jonathon Radnor	Geraint Roberts	Peter Williams	Martin West
Richard Thompson	Colin Carter	Soren Heeks	Adam Griffiths	Ian Kitchen
Paul Measday	Bob Smith	Dave Boulter	Clive Shearman	Chris Shearman
Henrick Svensson	Claus Marott Pedersen	Matthias Stockebrand		

### Appendix III Question & Answer Session:

A number of questions were raised by members following the AGM, some were answered at the time, and some have required additional research and comment from operational units. For clarity and completeness, the answers to the questions have all been treated in the same manner. It should be noted that some suggestions require additional resources for delivery, but with a number of key Society vacancies still not filled, this would, even if adopted, impede implementation.

**(1) Executive Supervisory Board (ESB):** The functionality of the ESB was raised suggesting more meetings should take place and guidance issued, although which guidance was not available was not stated.

The ESB along with The Society's new structure was recommended by the Management Working Party as a result of the output from the Presidents Membership Survey and was democratically accepted by a membership vote.

The ESB *is NOT* a direct substitute for the previous 'committee driven structure'. The operation of The Society is now vested in the individual units with the ESB operating a *supervisory* role.

The Operational Units individually produce annual, budgeted, Operational Plans and the ESB adjudicate these plans to form the overall Society's Operational Plan (available to view on the FBS web site), which is then subjected to a democratic membership vote. The ESB's role, following the membership vote, is to monitor using quarterly reporting and data projection, to ensure compliance with the plan.

Although it is not known what 'guidance is missing' or where the 'lack of guidance' has impacted on The Society, robust guidance exists and it is all available on the FBS web site. The Society has a 'Constitution,' which is currently under review, and 'Membership Rules'. The ESB have put in place, a very comprehensive, 'Handbook for Appointed Officers and Volunteers', which covers the running of The Society and Officers Roles, the 'FBS Data Protection Policy', 'The Society Year & Activity Plan' and the Editorial Team have provided the 'Publications Conditions'.

It was always envisaged that the ESB would work 'electronically', with few, if any physical meetings. This follows the very successful lead of the Editorial Team's operation. The determination is that the ESB will not revert to the expensive, and perceived 'ineffective, time greedy, talking shop' that characterised the committee approach.

'Face to face' ESB meeting will incur expense that will have to be funded, for instance, by increased membership fees or by reducing the pages in 'Fire Cover'. It is believed that this would be unacceptable to the membership.

The Management Working Party has the mandate to 'tune' the ESB and Unit's operations in-line with the democratically accepted model and in conjunction with the review of the Constitution.

**(2) Sales Unit:** Prior to the AGM it had been recognised that the operation of the Sales Unit had 'severe shortcomings', hence the proposed review announced in the Annual Report distributed to members in November 2019. The review will address, the near future and changing retail habits accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**(3) Library:** The Society Library is located in The National Emergency Services Museum, Sheffield, and at the time of the meeting, should have been open to the membership. Due to flood damage to the room housing the FBS library, and to a few books, opening has been delayed. The Museum has also had 'staff resource issues' which has impinged on the project. *(Footnote: The effect the pandemic closure will have on the museum, and the library, is currently unknown).*

**(4) Recruitment, the Website, and Social Media:** Over the past 2-3 years, well over 1,000 surplus older copies of 'Fire Cover' have been given out during visits, and at blue light events. Recruitment campaigns targeted at the young fire fighters of two major FRSs have also been implemented. No perceptible positive results in terms of new members, were produced by any of these approaches.

Whether the magazines have steered prospective members towards the web site is unknown. The web site is now up and running on the 'new platform'. It is performing well on search engines, consistently appearing near the top of the results. This is a 'function' managed by the Webmaster. The situation regarding social media has been discussed many times, but the biggest issue still remains that editing, and policing has a cost in management and human resources, which are not available to The Society at this time.

**(5) The co-ordination of Visits, Secrecy, and Long-Term Planning:** Visits are co-ordinated as much as possible, but due to specific requirements of our hosts, it is not always possible to avoid clashes with other visits, and especially with events and activities in other fields. Secrecy is only an issue, when one of our destinations, particularly secure sites, do not wish us to advertise their location until **AFTER** they have seen a list of participants.

Forward planning can be a useful tool, but it is not always possible, as many host brigades are unwilling to commit themselves beyond their current operational year. I will also point out the maxim by which the military operate, which is, "no plan survives first contact with the enemy". I will reinforce that sentiment with the words attributed to Sir Harold Macmillan when asked what could blow things off course – "Events dear boy, events". This is especially true this year when many months of detailed and meticulous planning of an exciting visit programme was completely destroyed by an infected animal over 5,000miles away in China. Some plans can be rolled over, but until an effective treatment or vaccine is available, we may be in the same situation next, and indeed future years.

**(6) VBB:** The wish to maintain closer contact with the VBB progressed well for a number of years, but has faltered somewhat recently due to changes of personnel, domestic and health problems of key contacts, as well as changes to the organisation and 'services' of the VBB. Time is need for us to re-establish effective channels of communication, but that is currently in being used for other Society projects.

**(7) Fire Cover - Duplicated and / or Unused Articles and Photographs, Space Planning:** Whilst the Editorial team always endeavour to maintain a top-quality product, the vast amount of material they handle means duplication has the potential to occur. Duplication may occasionally happen if the item has been submitted twice, or because of very infrequent technical glitches thrown up by the industry standard editing suite in use.

Copy held is reviewed regularly. Where copy has been held for a long period, the author will be contacted before use to establish whether the publication should still go ahead, or whether they wish to update. The time-span for this varies according to the nature of the item, mainly whether it is historical or current in nature.

Space planning is employed in the production of 'Fire Cover'. However, production schedules need to be respected. Space is finally consolidated when copy arrives in a 'useable form' by the 'published copy date'. Articles that are late, or just within deadline, but require a large amount of editing, are not likely to appear in the planned edition. Late copy for 'reserved space' causes major disruption, delay, compromises the 'printing slot' agreed with our printers and ends in late publication.

Allocated space is 'industry standard' and the Editorial Team have conducted limited trials with this approach and have indicated this option is likely in the future. Single articles which command as many as 15 pages in Fire Cover have been received for publication, but can conflict with the need to provide a balanced magazine which caters to all members. The Editorial Team are committed to diversity and copy from authors throughout The Society and from sources which offer interest for the membership.

**(8) Communications:** It was remarked that some communication was not as clear or as swift as it might be. The speed of response could be improved if the query was addressed to the unit best placed to answer it, rather than raised as a generality or through a 'third party'. It is accepted that some officers do not always adhere to the 28-day acknowledgement / response time. A reminder will be sent out with the next communication. In the notice on page 1 of Fire Cover members are asked to 'make direct contact with the specific unit relevant to the nature of their question, query or assistance required'.

**(9) Catering:** The Society does not have a catering unit. There are very strict laws in the UK, with heavy fines rising to imprisonment, governing the preparation, serving and sale of food. You will know from experience that most organisations now contract out catering; brigade HQs and The Fire Service College being examples from recent FBS events. To run such a unit, we would need personnel with current appropriate food safety / handling certification, and certified equipment. However, currently we could resell pre-packed sandwiches, such as that bought from a supermarket and commercially produced items such as cakes and biscuits. Our public liability insurance does not cover us for catering in any form.

We can continue to make use of professional catering opportunities offered whilst on Society events, such as the food we had at the 2018-19 AGM' in Sheffield' and at the airfield café, where we had lunch, or the RAF Museum of Firefighting visit, where 'any liability' remains with the venue's caterers.