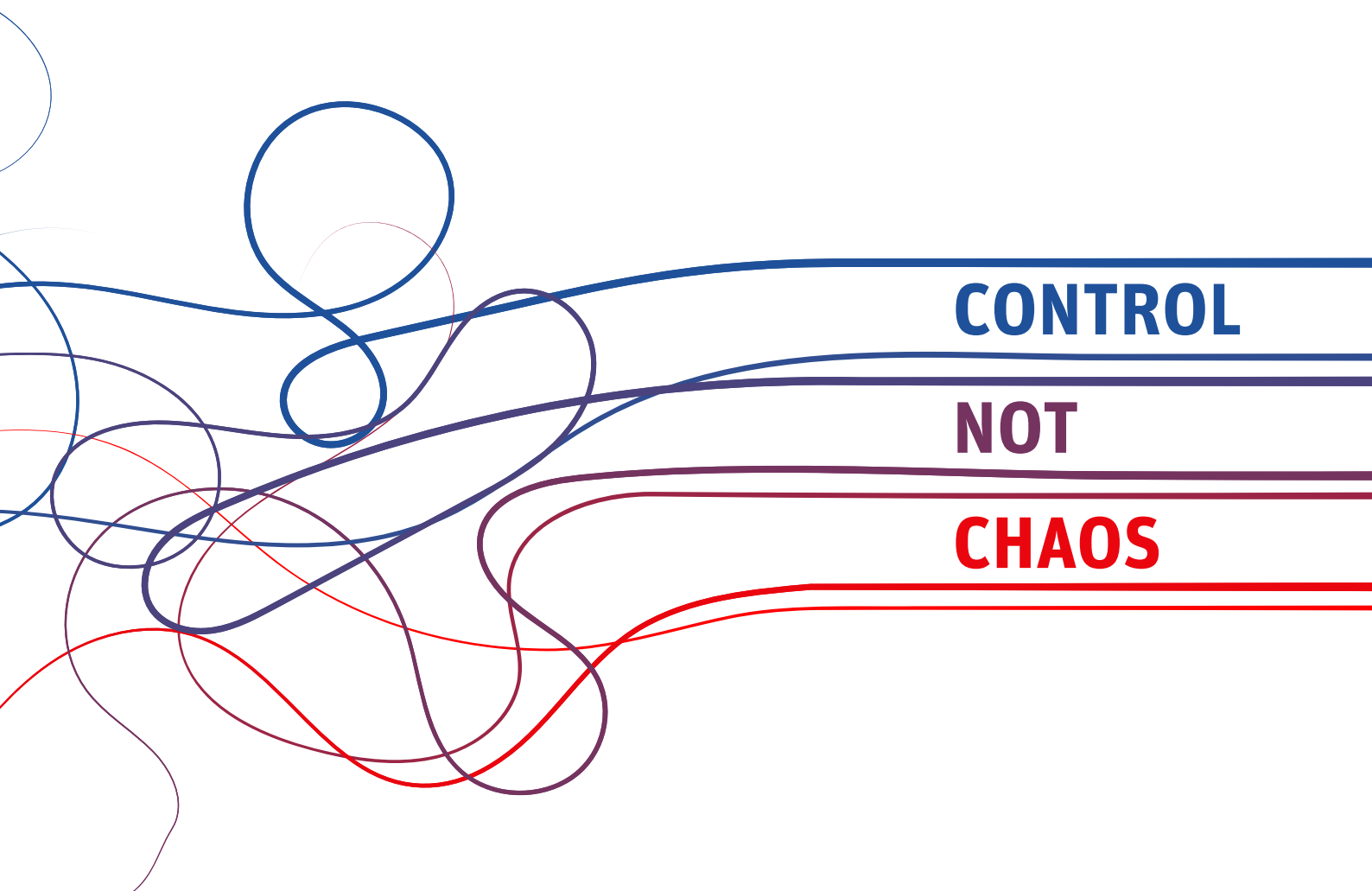
The Professional Trade Union for Prison, Correctional and Public and Private Mental Health Trust Service Providers

POA Annual Conference 2025

Verbatim Report



POA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

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MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Before we start business we need to open Conference, and opening Conference will be the Mayor of Eastbourne, Candy Vaughan. Candy was born in Eastbourne. Her father was in the Royal Navy and met her mother at Eastbourne Pier when he was on leave. Unfortunately for her family, her mother passed away when she was two-and-a-half years old. Candy lived in Eastbourne before moving to Ashford when her father had left the Navy. When Candy left school with 11 CSEs to her name, she joined the Co-Op Insurance Society dealing with 27 sets of accounts from the agents. This was all counted manually – no computers or calculators in her day.

Candy has had a few jobs in her time. The one she is most proud of is being one of the first sales assistants in a brand new Curry's store in Hampden Park. She eventually rose to Deputy Manager once her children had all grown up. Candy has two daughters and two sons, eight grandchildren and one step-grandchild. Christmas can be very expensive! She has unseen disablement of fibromyalgia and has also had mental health issues, depression and anxiety. Candy has learnt to live with this. In April 2012 Candy had a quadruple heart bypass, not far from a heart attack. In the June of that year, she started to do a health walk, walking with a group of other walkers. She now leads that walk and has been doing so for the past five years. The walk was 10 years old on Friday 3rd June 2022. It was during the start of this walk that Candy wanted to get it into the magazine sent out to the tenants of Eastbourne homes to encourage others to join them. She was given funding for pedometers by the Langley Area Panel, which she became part of – first as a member, then secretary and then chair. She thoroughly enjoyed being able to fund with the panel schools, nurseries and other charities, and even Neighbourhood First.

She is involved in so many projects. Together with funding from 3VA, she is helping to transform a neglected piece of land at Lavender Close, off Milfoil Drive into a Peace Garden and a community garden for all the community. Candy enjoys working together with people and is very much looking forward to meeting many more during her time as Mayor. The Mayor's Consort is Cristy Foster, Candy's daughter. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Madam Mayor Councillor Candy Vaughn. Candy, please can you open Conference? Thank you.

<Applause>

CANDY VAUGHN – MAYOR OF EASTBOURNE: Hello, you lovely lot! It's nice to see you. I was here last year. I got a bit thrown last year. Everybody was sat there with their arms crossed, and it looks a bit more relaxed this time, so it's absolutely lovely to see you here and thank you for coming to Eastbourne – Eastbourne being the sunniest spot in the UK. Everybody tells you that I expect. And of course there's lots to do. How long are you at Conference for? Three days? Thank you. So you'll be able to have a go on the Wheel and other bits and pieces that are going on, so I hope you have a fantastic time. Have a great Conference and it's been really lovely to see you again. Take care, enjoy yourselves over these next three days, and you might even see me out and about. Thank you very much. It's lovely to see you again.

<Applause>

Oh lovely!

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Can we have some photos and get them in our magazine. Thank you.

CANDY VAUGHN – MAYOR OF EASTBOURNE: OK.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Candy Vaughn.

<Applause>

Just a few things before I hand over to Standing Orders. Firstly the retired members, if there are any retired members in the hall who haven't registered as a retired member, then this is your opportunity this week to do so. And the retired members are also running a raffle to raise funds so they can put on events for our retired colleagues, so if you can all buy raffle tickets that'd be very welcome. Before I hand over to Standing Orders we do have a short presentation on the voting system. I know there's some first-time delegates and maybe you've forgotten from last year how it works, but I'll hand over to our tech crew who will take you through how to vote and how it works and then we'll have a test vote so you'll all know what you're doing. There are a few slides – it'll only take a couple of minutes and then we'll get cracking. Thank you.

OLIVER PAYNE – LUMI: Thank you very much. Good morning everybody. My name's Oliver Payne, I'm with Lumi and we are the voting provider, which you should be familiar with over the last few years. I'm just going to go through a few slides. You should have been given your voting device and a voting card when you came in today. If you haven't picked up your voting device and voting card, and you are a branch representative who will vote, we are just over there at the tech area, if you need to go and pick up your device and card. So all of your cards should be inserted into your device, and at the top of the screen it should say your branch name. So please ensure before the test vote that it says your branch name at the top of your screen and your card is inserted properly as you can see on the screen. As you can see on the slide, the branch name should appear, welcome, and then obviously your branch name after. Please make sure that the card is facing you with the chip, and the welcome message should appear when you open it.

When the vote is open there will be three voting options: for, against, withheld. You can either move the trackball and click in to select your option or you can simply click 1, 2 or 3 to vote. You will get a vote confirmation once you've submitted your vote and that will appear on the screen saying for

received, against or withheld received. If you'd like to cancel your vote and replace that with another vote, you can click the X button and then you may be able to submit your new vote. When the vote is closed you will resume to the POA logo screen, which should be in front of you now, and you will no longer be able to modify your vote. So if we could move to a test vote please.

So the vote is now open. The motion is it will be sunny tomorrow. If you could please vote for, against or withheld for this motion. And please raise your hand if you're experiencing any issues with the voting devices and my colleague will come over to you to assist. We'll be closing the vote shortly once this issue's fixed, so if you could all make sure you vote just to ensure that everyone's device is working properly.

The vote is now closed, and as will be with every single item we will now display the results on the screen. Good to see some optimism – 87 votes for, 16 against and 11 withheld votes. That will be the process for every single vote that we run during this conference. Thank you very much.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you for that. Before I hand over to Standing Orders, just check your mobile phones – make sure they're on silent or switched off please. And over to Standing Orders.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR AND CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: Morning Conference, Chair, invited guests and observers – welcome to Eastbourne for the POA's 84th Annual Conference. As Chair of Standing Orders it's my intention to set out the order of business. I'd like to thank the Standing Orders Committee for conducting the business of the Union and I'd like to thank Nicola, who has worked tirelessly on this. You will note that in your delegate programme we have several fringe meetings scheduled during Conference. Can I urge all delegates to support these events wherever possible. Food and refreshments will be offered at each event. Space is limited so get there early to avoid disappointment. You should all have registered and been furnished with the appropriate documentation for this year's 84th Annual Conference. For the avoidance of doubt, you should have an Annual Conference Agenda Booklet and a Report Back booklet. All documentation is contained in your delegates pack which you picked up this morning. If you need any assistance during the week, do not hesitate to contact the Conference staff in the Conference office or the NEC. Delegates wishing to address Conference should make their way to the front of the hall and take a seat.

All delegates must take up seats on the floor of Conference. I'm assured and I can see that there's enough seats around. Delegates, observers, providers, invited guests and honorary life members must wear their identification at all times this week. This year we do have some intelligence that there may be some type of protest from a disgruntled ex-POA member and ex-prison officer. We have contacted the police who've put extra patrols on. The security team need you to wear your ID at all times and, if you're challenged, stop, allow them to question you and then carry on.

Conference, only delegates are allowed on the Conference floor and all observers and invited guests must take up seats in the appropriate designated area. In moving the Standing Orders Committee Report to this 84th Annual Conference, the Standing Orders Committee seeks the approval of Conference for the following delegates to be appointed as scrutineers and tellers: Karen Henry, Rampton; Niall McIntosh, Whitemoor; Wendy Price, Drake Hall; Brian Stennett, Full Sutton; Phil Tuck, Cardiff. Chair, can we call on Conference to accept please?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Conference, with a show of hands, do you accept the scrutineers and tellers? Please show now. Thank you, Conference. That's been approved.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR AND CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: Standing Orders procedures in regard to the order of business for Conference is set out on the inside of your Conference Agenda. Please take a moment to remind yourself of the rules throughout Conference. Delegate are reminded that the rules governing Conference and procedures are set up in Conference Paper 3 of 25. If you are unsure on any issues, please feel free to speak to the Standing Orders Committee. We are here to help.

For the 84th Annual Conference, we received 123 motions within the prescribed time period, and our apologies go out to Wandsworth. The Standing Orders Committee contacted branches and 22 motions were reworded in line with Conference policy and approved by the Branch. Three motions were withdrawn before publication, 14 motions were returned as not meeting the criteria – and from this, one branch appealed the decision of the Standing Orders Committee to the NEC. The NEC upheld the Standing Orders Committee's decision. This gives us an agenda for this Conference of 106 motions in the Conference Agenda booklet.

Conference are reminded that the section containing any proposed rule change will require a two-thirds majority, and the rest of the Conference agenda will require a simple majority. Therefore, Conference, we now have an agenda of 106 motions as contained within the booklet. Conference, in order to expedite business throughout this week, your attention is drawn to the inside of your Annual Conference Agenda, which outlines the report of the Standing Orders and the Procedures. Delegates are reminded that all mobile phones must be switched off or switched to silent throughout the duration of Conference. This includes the NEC and FTOs. Any branch who wishes to second a specific motion should ensure that they inform myself or Mick Pimblett as soon as possible so that we can inform the Chair of Conference before he seeks a seconder from the floor. Delegates should be aware, if you second a motion, you must speak at the time as you will not be allowed to speak once the debate has started. Again, delegates, if you intend to speak on behalf of your branch on any motion, will you please come forward to the front of the Conference and occupy one of the seats during the moving of the motion. The Chair will call you to the rostrum to address Conference. Any delegates addressing Conference must give their full name and their branch so that we can record this to keep an accurate verbatim report once Conference has concluded.

Will all delegates, observers and providers return to their seats quickly following any break in Conference so that the Chair can move business. Throughout Conference delegates may be required to attend the office on official business. All delegates must ensure that at least one delegate remains on the Conference floor whilst Conference is in session. In line with custom and practice, the Chair of Conference may call motions when guest speakers are attending and addressing Conference with the approval of Conference. The Welfare Committee AGM will take place at the direction of the Chair of Conference. The National Committee for Mental Health Care Services AGM will take place at some point Wednesday morning. I now ask the Chair of Conference to seek Conference approval for the adoption of Standing Orders.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Again, Conference, with a show of hands please can we approve and adopt Standing Orders? Thank you very much, Conference. That's approved, Dave.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR AND CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE: Thank you, Conference.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Conference, we come to the point now where we honour those who have sadly passed over the last 12 months. It's usually a minute's silence but we have a slideshow with the names of those who we've sadly lost. It's also the 40th anniversary of the Bradford Fire. We remember them as well. So if you are able to, can you please observe the silence until the film has finished. Thank you.

<Film plays>

Thank you, Conference. Conference, National Executive Committee, delegates, observers, honorary life members, invited guests – welcome to this, the 84th Annual Conference of the POA. You're all looking well. I hope you have a really good week and enjoy yourselves. You notice from your programme, Conference, we do have some guest speakers during the course of this week. They include Mick Whelan, the General Secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers' union; Lord Timpson, the Prisons Minister; Phil Copple, acting CEO; Sally Jameson, MP for Doncaster and a former prison officer. We have fraternal greetings from Karl Dalton, the Southern Ireland POA, and also Brian Goodman, Honorary Life Member, and we have Jennifer Rademaker addressing us to feed back on her review.

Please don't forget the fringe meetings. They include the Health and Safety Protocol – a really useful fringe meeting for those who maybe don't know much about it or are new as trade union reps. We also have a fringe about PTSD research that's being completed into prison officers. That's a really interesting one. And we have a "crime in prisons" fringe meeting for those of you who are still experiencing problems getting offenders prosecuted for assaults on staff, so that could be quite useful for you as well. All the details are in your programme. At the back of the hall, you may notice some familiar faces from HMPPS. We do have people from employee relations and there is a plan for a director to attend as well. Please make them feel welcome. Go and say hello. They are very welcome and we appreciate the facility time we've all been given to attend Conference. The nominated charity is the North West Air Ambulance Service, and the reason I chose them is because after that atrocity in Southport it was clear to me that, without their assistance, there may well have been more fatalities, so let's raise as much as we can to keep them in the air.

Just before I start my address, I just want to pay tribute to two dear friends and colleagues who we've sadly lost over the past 12 months. In Scotland, a retired full-time official, Andy Hogg, sadly passed away. For those who don't know Andy or had never met him, he was probably one of the nicest people you will ever meet. He always had time for everyone. He was always there to offer advice and support and he will be sadly missed by us all.

And of course our very own Joe Simpson. What can I say about Joe? Very few people knew that he had a terminal illness. That was the character of the man. He kept going to the end. His work ethic never changed. He was always there for POA members – supporting them, doing the business of the Union. He was POA through and through. He was a true friend, a true trade unionist and I'm going to miss that cheeky smile, that infectious laugh and that absolutely wicked sense of humour. We do have plans, Conference, to keep Joe's name alive, and I'm sure that you'll help us achieve that this week.

I'd like to thank the NEC, the full-time officials, all the officers, the support staff, my amazing secretary Nicola Herbert, for all their committed work over the past 12 months. They are always there for you, they are always there for me. Thank you to the Retired Members Committee for the good work they continue to do, ensuring that our retired colleagues are never forgotten. Most of all, Conference, I want to thank each and every one of you. You are the true POA. I know what you are up against, I know how difficult things are. I know what you face, I know what the challenges are and I know it's a thankless task because it's always "your fault". You never stop and I appreciate it. I appreciate the support you give me and I appreciate the support you give the NEC, wherever your workplace is, wherever you are. From me to you, thank you so much for everything that you do.

Of course, we've had some people re-elected. I thank you for re-electing Geoff and Terry. You've already re-elected National Vice Chair Dave Todd, who I couldn't do without. Mick Pimblett is now the Deputy General Secretary. What an asset to the Union Mick is. And of course, thank you so much for re-electing Steve Gillan as our General Secretary, because I'm telling you now, you couldn't ask for anyone better. Committed, dedicated, knowledgeable, experienced, well-respected in the trade union movement – and I do believe that, after TUC Congress this year, Steve will take over the Presidency of the TUC for a period of 12 months, and I think that's the first time in POA history a General Secretary's ever done that, so we'll have to get some really awkward motions and raise some really awkward points of order when he takes over that Presidency! So, thank you for re-electing Steve. Our tag team is still going for now. We should never lose good people – and talking of good people, congratulations to Terry and Sarah, who will soon be taking up full-time official posts. Massive bonus to this Union and I wish them all the best in their future careers.

And of course, after this Conference, the National Chair position will be getting advertised. I will be seeking your support and nominations. I do want to get re-elected – of course I do, Conference! I absolutely love what I do. I couldn't be happier. I'm so proud to lead such a fantastic body of people and such an amazing Union, and I've got some unfinished business to do, not least of which is lowering your retirement age. So, I will be seeking your support for that.

What a busy 12 months – where do I start? I suppose I should start with the election of a Labour government, with all the hopes and aspirations it brought. Hasn't been the best of starts for them, has it? Freezing the pensioners by removing their Winter Fuel Allowance, forcing millions more children into poverty by not relaxing the two-child cap, betraying the WASPI women – and now they target the most vulnerable amongst us with their welfare cuts, not forgetting that POA members are on PIP as well. But apparently, they keep lauding the Employment Rights Bill, which is apparently a new deal for working people – but not all working people, oh no. You see they said, when they come into power, they will rescind anti-trade-union legislation – unless you're a prison officer in England and Wales, because they conveniently forget about the most longstanding, pernicious, restrictive piece of anti-trade-union legislation this country has ever witnessed, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 Section 127.

They also said that you will see the biggest insourcing in a generation – unless it involves the prison service, because they've already decided that the maintenance of prisons will be retendered and will be handed back to private companies, despite the fact that it's been a catastrophic failure. It's cost at least three times as much to outsource it as it would have done keeping it in-house. There is currently over £1.8 billion worth of outstanding repairs – and they think that is a successful model, because according to the government, the Treasury have a report which proves it will be cost-effective, retendering it to the private sector, but they're refusing to publicise it, refusing to release it. What are they trying to hide? You see, Conference, no government is a friend of the POA because we only get the rights that we fight for. Nothing is ever given to us.

And many commentators, they complain about working conditions in China, workers shackled to factory machines with no rights at all. Yet the POA – prison officers in England and Wales – the POA continue to be the most restricted trade union on planet earth, with no workplace rights at all. And I've read the letters. I know some of you have written to your local MP and I've seen the replies. The copy and paste jobs saying, "We couldn't possibly allow prison officers to have the right to strike back. They're too important to national security." Well, that's all well and good but you can't have it both ways. You can't say in one breath, you're that important to the security of the country that we couldn't allow you to take any form of industrial action, and then in the next breath say, "But actually, you're not that important. You can work till you're 68." We're a front-line uniformed law enforcement agency. We should have the same rights and privileges as others who can retire after 30 years' service or aged 60. You cannot have it both ways.

<Applause>

At TUC Congress last year, when all these General Secretaries from the big unions were getting up and praising the Labour government – "Oh this is great, the Employment Rights Bill, we're going to bring everything back, renationalise everything" – when they were all getting up, I got up and said, "Don't forget about the prison officers, because as far as I'm concerned if Keir Starmer doesn't agree to rescind that piece of legislation that affects us, then he deserves to be thrown in the Brighton sea." And this year at TUC Congress, back in Brighton, if any of you see any Labour politicians' heads bobbing up and down in the Brighton waves – guilty as charged!

Well look at our strapline – "Control Not Chaos" – and nothing could be more apt. Dear me, are we in chaos. When the Labour government came into power, we were looking at 87,453 prisoners and we were full. So, they introduced early release schemes – and you've all seen it, the press outside prisons, prisoners popping champaign corks on camera, thanking the Labour government because they've been released early. Some of that was staged. I know that film crews and journalists were going up to prisoners, handing them a bottle of champaign and saying, "Just pop the cork for us so we can film you and take photographs of you." So, don't believe everything you read.

87,453. As I stand here now, the population is in excess of 88,000 and last week we had only 500 spaces left in the closed adult male estate. What a massive success that early release scheme has been! We've had Operation Early Dawn, where we've clogged up police cells and stopped them from doing their job. We're now in the midst – and we await the publication any time now of the Sentencing Review conducted by David Gauke, and we were heavily involved in that and apparently he visited a prison in Texas in America, because they're the benchmark for prison reform and sentence reform and rehabilitation. Well, if it's good enough for sentencing reform and rehabilitation, then it must be good enough for control and containment. The biggest job they're going to have is selling it to the public. Now, I haven't got a problem with giving people time off for good behaviour if they conform. If they want to change their lives, fine. Not a problem with that. But I think victims of crime have got a problem with someone getting a 10-year sentence and serving only four. I think that's a massive problem. That's not justice served. So, let's see what that review brings – and all this of course on the back of us still waiting for our pay award, which is going to be late yet again. Hopefully not as late as last year. And I know the government have had it in their possession for several weeks now. It's due for publication any time now. Maybe I can ask Lord Timpson when he addresses us, when is it going to happen? I would imagine some time before recess in July it will be announced, so hopefully not as late as last year.

And part of the headlines of course – and I'm looking at my friends – yes, the Wandsworth video. I mean Wandsworth, your luck's got to change sometime. My thoughts are with you. That video – and like you, those who've seen it, I just couldn't believe what I was watching. But you know what that's down to? It's down to the employer. Down to the employer. The vetting's getting better but it's still not good enough. Vetting needs to improve. The way we recruit staff needs to improve. Scrap this remote rubbish. Let's get it back face-to-face. Face-to-face assessments. Face-to-face interviews with a panel that grill people and put them under pressure and really test their character. The training is not fit for purpose. It doesn't prepare people for life on the landings, for the conditions and the pressure they're going to be put under by really well-organised, experienced criminals. And I know Wandsworth are doing great work, and I know things have improved at Wandsworth, but it's still not enough. They still need the investment to modernise. We still need that training to improve, that vetting to improve and the recruitment process to improve. But you know, if we didn't isolate each other and we didn't work in isolation on landings, I doubt corrupt staff would get an opportunity to do anything. And as far as I'm concerned, when we catch corrupt staff and we prosecute corrupt staff, the minimum sentence they should serve is 10 years – and they should serve every day and absolutely rot, we want rid of them.

We've had Dartmoor temporarily closed because of a radon issue. Radon ain't new at Dartmoor. We've got evidence that proves radon was an issue back in 2007, but it's been ignored and now look where we are. Dartmoor staff treated absolutely appallingly by the employer – displaced, they still don't know what's going to happen with Dartmoor and it all comes down to cost. The decision is being delayed, I suspect until after the spending review. Well, one thing's for certain, we will do everything we can to secure that funding to do the necessary repairs to reopen Dartmoor. We want it to reopen. I know the employer wants it to reopen. I know the Secretary of State wants it to reopen. It's down to the Treasury and if it's going to be cost-effective. Hopefully the pain will not be prolonged for our colleagues from Dartmoor.

And you may have noticed in the hall, Conference, there are a few delegates from Cookham Wood walking around with big, smug smiles on their faces, because yes, they've been rerolled – they're no longer in the youth custody estate. The assaults on staff have dwindled and they're all happy now. Well done Cookham Wood. It's nice to see you with a smile on your face.

Some of you may have witnessed my evidence to the Justice and Home Affairs Select Committee in the House of Lords, where they were looking at the governance and culture within HMPPS. The evidence I gave shocked them because I told them how it is. And you know all too well how it is. You

know what's going on in your jails, you know what the issues are, you know what you face. I told them about drones, the threat of drones – a real, imminent threat, not only to prisons but to national security. We've been warning the employer for years about the threat of drones, and still nothing! We know there's technology out there which can block a drone entering our airspace. You only have to speak to the army to know that. If you want real experts on drone-blocking technology, go and speak to the Ukrainian army. We know it's out there, but still it hasn't been installed. Is it a matter of cost? Is that what it's all about? Some of the excuses we get is, "Well technology advances." Well, keep up with technology. There really is no excuse. We should be able to secure our airspace because it's only a matter of time before a firearm is smuggled in via drone and then what? You've already had two scares, two prisons with full lockdown searches because intelligence suggested there was a firearm that had been delivered by a drone. I was watching a video last week of a one-person drone which is basically the same as a helicopter. This guy on the video, demonstrating this drone – he sits in it and it just works like a helicopter. Off he flew. We know drones are out there that can carry a payload of 75 kilos. Now we've got a drone that acts as a helicopter. That's an escape attempt. So, we need to sort it out. It's not as if we haven't warned them.

And then of course I told the Select Committee about what you face, and your members face from managers who bully, intimidate, threaten. Boy oh boy, have we been vindicated on that score with the Rademaker Report. Proof of unacceptable behaviour at senior levels. Something that they can no longer cover up. There has been zero accountability for too long, zero consequences for too long and that must change. And I can guarantee you, we will force that change. There must be consequences for Band 7s and above. HMPPS must root out and kick out the tyrants because POA members have suffered enough.

<Applause>

We will not allow those recommendations to gather dust on a shelf. We want them implemented in full without delay. Staff must have faith and confidence in the system and should never, ever fear reprisals. No more should managers hear the grievance and decide on the outcome when they are the subject of that grievance. It's time for POA members to speak out and we will be with you every step of the way.

Conference, I know that many of you have disputes, some of you longstanding disputes, and I know it's a source of great frustration to you, as it is to us at a national level. And we're still trying to secure a fit-for-purpose disputes resolution procedure. That's ongoing work. But I just want to highlight one example of a dispute and it's from the Isle of Mann. With the Isle of Mann, the Committee had fallen out with their governor, which if you've ever met the man is not a difficult thing to do. He'd upset the C&R instructors, so the C&R instructors decided, OK we've had enough of this, and all resigned en masse. Well, they're volunteers. Unless you're gonna pay me to do it, we don't have to do it. So that left the Isle of Mann in a quandary, didn't it? Now they've got no instructors – can't put on refresher training, can't train new recruits. So, what does the governor do? He phones the Northern Ireland Prison Service, who agreed that they would fly over C&R instructors to the Isle of Mann and facilitate all this work – until I made a phone call to our colleagues on the Northern Ireland Area Committee, who phoned me several hours later and said, "That's not going to happen now, Mark. We don't want to get involved in anybody else's fight. Our director's told them it's not happening." So, thank you, Northern Ireland. Unity really is our strength. Thank you on a good job. Help is appreciated. So, then what does he do? Well, he came from the private sector so he went back to his mates in the private sector, who facilitated C&R training with their instructors for a couple of weeks, but that's all they could manage. So, he's still left in a quandary, with over 90% of staff out of date, new recruits unable to finish their course because they can't get C&R trained. So, we thought, well we'd best try and sort this out. So, Mick Pimblett and I flew over to the Isle of Mann. We toured the jail, we had a discussion with the C&R instructors, and all they wanted was to have the issues resolved, to be heard and to be respected. Nothing wrong with that, Conference, nothing wrong with that at all. So, we held a meeting, the local Committee, me, Mick – and members from the Isle of Mann government. And at that meeting, the governor agreed to mediation. We said, "Sit down like adults, with the C&R instructors, with the Committee, sort it out. They've agreed to come back on board." He agreed to that. So, we're waiting for a mediation date and then we find out he goes behind everybody's back and he phones NTRG, speaks to one of their directors, who agrees that POA members from NTRG will go over to the Isle of Mann and facilitate all this training. Until I made a call to our employer, who quite rightly said, "We're not getting involved in this. It's not our jurisdiction and, by the way, if we send NTRG over there, who's going to cover in England and Wales when there's trouble? So that idea got kiboshed, so now he's forced to go through mediation. I get an email yesterday from the POA in Jersey, who've got one prison on Jersey, who tell me that he's phoned them and their governor's come to the POA in Jersey and said, "What's all this about?" They phoned me, I told them what it's all about and now that idea's gone as well. So, it just proves two things. One, you don't have to be a volunteer, and two, unity is our strength. So well done, Isle of Mann, and I hope you resolve it – and well, as for your governor, who knows.

Conference, I'm sure you're all aware of the violence stats. A 10-year high – assaults on staff are a 10-year high. They have learned absolutely nothing. I remember sitting in a meeting as we were coming out of Covid and they were keen on expanding regimes, and I said, "You'll all be sitting here in two years' time looking at each other, scratching your heads, 'How did that happen? How did that ...'" Well, it's happened! Highest for a decade, because they've learnt nothing. Look what Covid taught us. It taught us that prisoners felt safer and staff were in control when we unlock smaller cohorts of prisoners. We were able to forge those positive staff-prisoner relationships and meet all their needs. They weren't getting bullied, they weren't getting taxed. They were still getting what they were entitled to, still going to activities. But they didn't want that. Violence reduced, self-harm reduced, even though all the so-called experts told us it would spiral, but it never did. And they say to us, "Well, we can't legitimise a restricted regime, a Covid regime, now." I'm not asking for a Covid regime. All I'm asking for is that you unlock prisoners in smaller numbers, no full-wing unlocks, so you've got more staff around. That you don't mix them, because that reduces violence. You give them all their entitlements. You still send them to activities. And I set them a challenge. I said, "Why don't you find the most violent jail in the country and, for six months, implement a Covid-type regime – a restricted regime, when we do all that – and in six months' time analyse the stats, come back to me and tell me I'm wrong." They don't want to do it. They've learnt absolutely nothing. Deaths in custody up, self-harm up, assaults on staff up by 13%, a new record high of 29 each and every day. Serious assaults up by 11%.

In the YCS estate, it's even worse. A 25% increase on assaults on staff. Is it any wonder when 70% of those prisoners are in custody for a violent offence? And the opponents and the reform groups, they don't want you to have any protections at all – nothing. They expect you to become a victim to stand back and be used as a human punchbag and worse. They launch legal challenges to stop you getting the protections you so desperately need. Well, I say better to have and not need than to need and not have. And I remember listening to an interview, Nick Ferrari on LBC, and they had someone from the Howard League, and Nick asked him five times – he said, "I'm a prison officer. I'm on my own on a landing. There's a 15-year-old murderer coming towards me with a knife. Why can't I spray him in the eyes with pepper spray?" Five times he asked this person and he didn't get

an answer, so in the end Nick cut him off. Reflect on this: the perpetrator of the Southport atrocities was a 17-year-old child who entered the Youth Custody Estate until his 18th birthday. A 15-year-old armed with a knife is just as deadly as an adult armed with a knife, so shame on those who think it's acceptable for staff to be assaulted at work and use the age of the offender as an excuse not to give you the protections you need. Shame on them all.

<Applause>

Well, Conference, we did it. We did it. Our campaign finally paid off and we will see the rollout of PAVA in the Youth Custody Estate. So, be proud of your union for never backing down, for challenging and arguing and protecting you, the members on the frontline. Your safety is non-negotiable, and we should rightly celebrate this victory. And of course many of you now are at full staffing levels, some of you have overrecruited, but day by day you're still short of staff. That's down to the recruitment process, to the training process, where we're setting new recruits up to fail, but it's also down to resilience. And the reason I mention resilience is because I'm in the company of the most resilient people in the service – in the NHS, wherever you work – because you're trade union officials. And I remember watching the Dimbleby lecture with Sir Gareth Southgate, and he was talking about resilience and belief, and he said that failure is the only way that we learn, and we get better versions of ourselves through that learning process. He said failure helps you to grow a resilience and a strength, and he reflected on that famous penalty missed in the Euros in 1996, that some of you may remember. I certainly do. He said the pain of that still haunts him to this day and probably always will, but he said it was a watershed moment in his life and it forced him to accept that failure, to dig deep. And it revealed to him an inner belief and a resilience that he never knew he had. And the reason I'm saying that is because we can't win them all and you may be disappointed, you may be beating yourself up because someone's just lost a job, because a decision's gone against you, but you're still here. You're still chipping away. We learn from it. We get better. We provide better evidence, we give up better arguments. If there's one thing I want you to take away from this conference, it's this: believe in yourselves like I believe in you.

And when I talk about resilient staff, I've never met such a resilient group of staff as I met at HMP Frankland after that absolutely atrocious attack on them by a terrorist prisoner, which came so close to a tragedy. And we wish our colleagues a speedy recovery. And on the back of that attack, it was blatantly obvious to me that you really do not have the protections that you need in your workplace. And credit to the government, they have initiated a rapid review – and it is a rapid review. We're heavily involved in those discussions. It will be completed shortly after Conference, with recommendations. We've asked for stab-proof vests in high-risk areas. What do we mean by high-risk areas? We're looking at separation centres, close-supervision centres and every segregation unit because they are the high-risk areas. We want slash-proof vests rolling out to the rest of the estate, where you think you need it, because of the threat you face and the violence levels in your establishments. But we need your help. We need you to provide us with the evidence because the employer loves evidence and statistics. Now, you might not need slash-proof vests in the open estate – I don't know, you tell me. You might not need them in the female estate, even though violence in the female estate is rocketing. I don't know – you tell me, give me the evidence so I can go and argue and get you this stuff.

What doesn't help is when the employer goes round and visits jails to talk about stab-proof and slash-proof vests, and holds focus groups – what doesn't help is when the members say, "Well, even if you give me it, I wouldn't wear it. We don't need it. We don't want it." That doesn't help us. So, if you want all this equipment because you need it, then you need to tell us, and if you don't want it, bring it here and we'll change our policy. But if I can get you that equipment to protect you in the workplace, then I'll do everything I can to do it, and that's what we're trying to do now. Of course, we've already asked for the tactical use of tasers, especially in the high-security estate they have to be our priority, at the moment, because I'm convinced, I'm absolutely convinced, that if taser would have been available locally to deploy during that incident, that threat would have been neutralised a lot quicker and maybe there wouldn't have been as much serious injury as there was. And you may have heard me talk about supermax. Well, as I said before, if you're going to use the American model for reform then let's use it for control and containment, because whether you like it or not, whether you want to hear it or not, we are dealing with a handful, and it is a handful, a handful of prisoners whose ideology will never, ever change. You can't reform them, you can't rehabilitate them – their sole purpose is to carry out atrocities in prison and target prison staff. And my biggest fear is that one of our colleagues will get murdered on duty if we don't clamp down on them. The appeasement has got to stop. Giving to prisoners because they threaten to smash up – appeasement. Allowing prisoners loads of kit in the cell – appeasement. Undermining your decisions on the landings – appeasement. It's got to stop. What do we mean by supermax? Separation centres should be run like supermax. You enter the unit; you're immediately issued with a prison-issue uniform. I don't care what it looks like. It can be a bright pink boilersuit for all I care. Every time you're unlocked, you're cuffed, and you're escorted by three staff. You don't have anything in your cell that you can fashion into a weapon. You get your basic entitlement. If you want to use the gym, there's the rowing machine on the landings – crack on. Why would we want to give people anything more when they're trying to murder us? Control and contain them based on the American model. It's got to happen, and it's got to happen soon. And we've got to have a government with the will and the bottle to do it.

<Applause>

And while I'm talking about Frankland – Frankland delegates please take this back to your members, everybody in this hall is with you. The entire trade union movement is with you. The general public are with you and, if there's anything you need, just say. We wish our colleagues a speedy recovery and I want to commend Frankland for all the work they're doing at this fraught time for their members. Please show your appreciation for the Frankland Committee.

<Applause>

Conference, we have a fringe about the health and safety protocol. It's been used a few times this year. Recently at Whitemoor they managed to resolve their issues. And at Liverpool, where staff, individuals who used it got threatened with court action and disciplinary action. And the employer – every time it's been used the employer says to us, "It's your members that are failing to use it correctly and failing to adhere to it." What a load of rubbish. I'm afraid it's their managers that are failing to adhere to it and use it correctly because the POA are the only ones who educate and put on training for their members on the health and safety protocol. So, how does that work? We're getting the blame for everything. And it's the same old, same old. Every time it's used, government legal department, pre-action protocol letter – yes, this government like the last is determined to

take the POA to court instead of allowing local officials, with the support of the NEC, to sort it out. No, let's just run them into court. And the biggest misinterpretation by our employer when it comes to the protocol is this: they think that, when you, as an individual, invoke that protocol, that you should carry on working the exact same practice that forced you to invoke it in the first place. What an absolutely ridiculous way to think. "We want you to carry on working that practice that you feel is that unsafe that it forced you to invoke the protocol in the first place."

Imagine your governors are in charge of a zoo and we have a health and safety protocol at the zoo, and your job is to feed the lions. The governor comes along one day and says, "I've got a new working practice to feed the lines. It's dead efficient. Saves time and it's the safest you'll ever know." You say, "What's that, governor?" and he says, "What I want you to do is I want you to go into the lion's den and I want you to feed the lion hand to mouth." And you say, "Well, I don't think that's safe, governor, I'm not happy with that." He says, "Well, I'll have to order it if you don't do it," so you do it and the next day you see the governor and you say, "Excuse me governor, I'm invoking the health and safety protocol as an individual because I don't think that working practice that you want me to do is safe." And he says, "What do you mean, you don't think it's safe?" And you say, "Well, look governor, it bit me hand off. Bit me hand off, governor, it's not safe!" Would you expect to continue with that unsafe working practice until your local POA Committee have sat down with the management and resolved it? It's an absolutely ridiculous way to think, but that's the way your employer interprets the health and safety protocol. Ridiculous. I'll tell you what, it's a good job your governors aren't in charge of a zoo, innit?

But I have to ask, why are you going the extra mile for an employer that clearly doesn't care about your safety? Why are you worrying if voluntary tasks can't be covered because, if they were that vital, you'd be getting paid for them. And just because your governor thinks the regime is safe, doesn't actually mean it is. But one thing we've learned is that, when POA members speak out, the government and the employer is forced to act. When POA members stand up, the government is forced to listen to us, to act upon what we are saying. So I'm saying to you, be bold, be brave, be honest to yourself and true to your members. Never back down, never give up, and remember, you only win the rights that you fight for and without a fight you will have no rights. We are stronger together, we are safer together. We will stand together and we will win together. Unity is our strength, solidarity to you all. Thank you!

<Applause>

Thank you, Conference. You're very kind. We now move on to the Finance Officer's Report with Steve Gillan, General Secretary.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you Chair. NEC, Conference, colleagues, before I move the year-end accounts for 2024, I can advise Conference that, in line with rule 12.17 of the Union's Rules and Constitution, I have not received any formal finance questions related to the audited accounts of the trade union. I can inform Conference that I have received an informal query which I've had addressed with a single branch under rule 12.20. And what I can say as well, from day 2 of Conference under rule 12.2, any delegate can come and ask myself, the Deputy General Secretary or David Goodwin, our accountant, Sturgess Hutchinson, any questions in relation to those audited accounts. As in previous years, although not required to do so under the Rules and Constitution, all NEC and full-time officers' monthly claim forms for the year 2024 will be available for any delegate to view upon request. If anyone wishes to scrutinise those forms, they will be made available during this week, so just let me know. Our accountants are also present and can be asked any question in relation to those audited accounts, as I've just said.

Colleagues, it is now my duty, on behalf of the National Executive Committee, to present the Union's accounts for the year ending 31 December 2024, commencing with the income of the Union. There was an increase in membership during the year, which combined with the small increase in subscription rate taking effect in June 2024, resulted in an increase of income of £619,000. This increase in income and an increase in costs, we generated a surplus for the year of just over £700,000. I will now highlight the main areas where cost changes arose. Salaries and superannuation costs remained the same, with reduced staff numbers offsetting the pay increase in the year. Travelling and meeting expenses again increased by £57,000 to £349,000, mainly due to the increased hotel costs. We expect these may increase further but continued use of online meetings should keep costs below pre-pandemic levels. Information technology costs were almost unchanged, at £190,000 maintaining the reduction following a programme of upgrading in 2021. Repairs and renewals increased by £22,000 to £78,000, mainly as a result of increases in ongoing maintenance contracts plus redecoration costs at Linden House. Legal and professional charges have increased by £95,000. This maintains the reduction in work being carried out by Thompsons under the agreed cap fees. £498,000 of capped payments were refunded in 2024 and £448,000 is available for refund this year, which has already been paid back to us.

Turning now to the balance sheet, there were no changes in the value of the properties in 2024 after a full revaluation at the end of 2023. Our net current assets increased by £750,000, principally due to the amount held in the general fund bank following the refund from Thompsons. This, together with the increase in income and control of costs, means that the overall net assets of the Union increased by £734,000 and now stand at £7,149,000. The Provident Benefit Fund has again been able to contribute the full amount of death benefit paid during the year. There is £112,000 in the fund available for future death benefits. Colleagues, I must also report on the amount paid by the Union in death benefit, which sadly was £163,000, as you've just seen during the couple of minutes silence that we had. I want to thank the Finance Committee Chair, who's Dave Todd, and the rest of the committee for their prudence on our finances and for the remarkable way that they've conducted investments on different things. We took on board some of the concerns last year about investments and, within the General Fund and the other funds that we have, we just made a safe deposit and got a return of 5% on our moneys, which amounted to just over £150,000 in interest. We decided not to do any further investments in the markets – and I'm pretty glad we didn't because of the trade tariffs that we've seen and the markets collapsing around us, although they have recovered. But we all know, if we did go down that route in the future then of course we would make sure that there was a diversification of funds to ensure that we get a decent return and so forth.

I want to comment on our legal services because you will see as well from the personal injury payments that we've received back for members in compensation amount to £1.9 million in 2024, and for a variation on employment rights, £2.4 million in compensation. So, totalling £4.3 million that we got back for our members in compensation overall in 2024. I think that's an excellent return on some of the stuff that is being done, but more than that, on pensions, although that is a very costly litigation for the emotional distress and injury to feelings, I know it's taken a long time and it will continue to take a long time, but so far, so far up to date in 2024, £5.5 million worth of compensation has been given back to our members. And I think even with

the amount that we've spent, that is good value for money and demonstrates that, with our legal providers, we will continue to protect the membership.

This Union will continue to evolve. Over the years, we've had to make difficult decisions that have not always been popular. So, for example, I know that in Scotland they had an insurance-backed scheme for the legal providers, and I had to make the difficult decision to put it out to procurement. And of course we moved to Thompson's Scotland, which are different to Thompson's in England and Wales because the law in Scotland is different. The reality is things have bedded down in Scotland and I took the Scottish Committee and branches along with us because of the arguments that were put forward. The same in Northern Ireland, who dealt with a different firm of lawyers, but the reality is I didn't think they were getting good value for money. And sometimes we will have to make those difficult decisions, and I think it's paying dividends for us in relation to that in the moneys that we get back in compensation and the representation that we receive from Thompsons. Now don't get me wrong, from time to time we have our disagreements with Thompsons on a variety of issues, but that's happened in the past with Lees Lloyd Whitley, and it happened with Mishcon de Reya even before that, so the reality is we will continue the good dialogue that we've had with Thompson's. I've told you this many years ago, when we were paying £1.2 million in capped fees back in the year 2000 for our legal services – we're still paying £1.2 million now and the reality is Thompson's aren't even reaching the cap and we're getting a rebate from that cap each year. I think that's tremendous work and good diligence by the Legal Aid Committee, by the National Executive Committee and by the Finance Committee.

I also want to say, as well, we're not afraid of spending money. Although things look good in the accounts at this minute in time, we have got to continually evolve. We can't keep doing the things that we've done in the past just because we've always done them in the past. And I think the social media campaigns that we're now running are excellent. We've introduced podcasts through Simon Sapper, we've got a media strategy and we're using the education fund for media training. And we will be using it also for a variety of other educational purposes – not just for the National Executive Committee, not just for full-time officers, but for you as delegates and other POA members as well because effectively there'll be a lifespan up here and we need to make sure that going forward we have the correct people coming forward that are experienced, that are trained well and had the same benefits that we've had and the education that we've had, through good training by your trade union. So, I look forward to using that fund because we've got nearly half a million pounds in that fund and we will continue to use that in bespoke programmes going forward.

We've invested in Unity Consulting. Let me tell you a little bit about Unity Consulting. They're in the Conference Hall. There's three of them: Neil Findlay, Tommy Kane and Michael Sharpe. Now I went into a dialogue some time ago with Neil, Tommy and Michael about doing work for us on a consultancy basis to raise the profile, initially actually in Scotland, so I've got the SNC on board in relation to that. I was pleased with the manner in which they went about their work in Scotland. Neil Findlay I've known many years. Neil had 18 years in local government and the Scottish Parliament, and he's been a tireless campaigner on social justice. A trade unionist at heart and he's come up with some brilliant ideas for this trade union, jointly, that we take forward in discussions and we agree a pathway in relation to it. But of course it costs money, but I think again it's an educational process and one which we're glad that we've brought them on board. Tommy was a senior political advisor and senior researcher in the Scottish Parliament, so Tommy's knowledge will be of great value to the POA, and Michael Sharpe is the former General Secretary of the Scottish Labour Party, so all that combined knowledge can do us only good, I think, and I know they do work with other trade unions. So, we will continue that investment with them and I think we're going to see much benefit from that going forward. Charley Allan, I've got to say, has done a brilliant job in Parliament for us. He liaises with myself, Mark and other members of the Executive, taking our strategies forward, whether that's through the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group or the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group. I think it's fantastic the work that's been done.

So, we never stand still. So, although the accounts look pretty good, we've still got to be careful, and you've heard me say that lots of times over the last 20 years or so in relation to our finances. They're looking good at the moment. I laid down a challenge to you as delegates a couple of years ago and by god you've risen to that challenge, because I challenged to you to go out and recruit members and that's exactly what you've done. You've recruited those members and we stand full membership just short of 33,000 at this minute in time. So, thank you for doing that. That was an absolutely superb effort in relation to it. We will also continue, through the education fund, with our international work, whether that is visiting Israel and Palestine, whether it's visiting Colombia – we sent a delegation to Cuba including our young members for two years running, that's part of their education. We will be continuing that work in relation to our international work, but I'm going to open it up as well to branch delegates to see if anybody wishes to go as well in 2026. You may not get facility time for it – we probably won't, but you may well have to take your own annual leave.

So, all in all I think the POA are in a good place. We still have some potential liabilities on legal challenges and different things. We're never away. As you heard from Mark in his opening speech, every time there is an issue in a jail under the health and safety protocol or under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the first port of call that our employer and Secretary of State, irrespective of who the government is, is to threaten us with legal action. Well, you know what? You can keep threatening because I've now got another five years along with this Executive and I've never once repudiated any action whatsoever, and I will not repudiate any action going forward. I may criticise afterwards but I will never repudiate an action that any of our branches ever takes and they will have our full support in relation to health and safety matters. I think it's cowardly of the employer and indeed the government hiding behind the robes of a judge. Come and talk to us, have a dialogue with us. Give us our rights back to take formal industrial action when the issue is right. To hide behind anti-trade-union legislation since 1994 is not just a stain on them, it's a stain on society, quite frankly, because there's no other workers treated like that. So, we will always have a reserve pot of money in relation to attempting to preserve your rights at work, and if that means continuing legal challenge after legal challenge, that's exactly what we will do. Conference, I move this report. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Steve. Conference, I'm now going to ask you to adopt the Finance Report with a show of hands. All those in favour please show. Thank you, that's adopted. Steve, the adoption of the Welfare Fund Charity AGM.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you Chair. NEC, Conference, again the POA Welfare Fund Accounts Finance Officer's Report 2024. Colleagues, it's now my duty to present the Welfare Fund's Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2024. Members' contributions remained unchanged and, with the number of contributing members increasing throughout the year, subscriptions received increased by £29,000 to £358,927. The Gift Aid due on these contributions for the year amounted to £88,000. All of this amount has now been received from HMRC. The Welfare Fund

did not apply for a grant in 2024 from the CSIS Charity Fund, but I did apply for monies to benefit retired members and we were granted £10,000 to spend in an unrestricted manner for those retired members. We received that £10,000 and we distributed it evenly with the Retired Members Branch throughout the UK to benefit our retired members. All of the above have resulted in an increase in income of £46,000 from last year to a total of £472,000. 70% of membership contributions were given out as grants during the year, up from 66% in 2023, and of the total grants of £317,000, £52,000 was provided for the residential rehabilitation courses for the fire-fighters charity. The other costs including travel and subsistence and stress and bereavement counselling helpline increased by £4,000 to £20,000.

Turning now to the balance sheet – as at the year end, the charity held almost £1 million in the bank. During the year, £500,000 was invested in investments managed by Quilters. These investments produce some income of £25,000 and increased in value by £24,000 at year end. The other debtors of £79,000 are mainly the Gift Aid due from HMRC. Overall, the surplus in the year of £159,000 helped increase the overall reserves of the charity to a total of £1,604,000 as of 31 December 2024.

Colleagues, just as an aside from that, I would like to thank the brilliant work over the years of David Evans, who sadly died in 2024. David, along with Pete Hancox and Mick Rickets, were effectively the founder members of the Welfare Fund and sat as the very first committee. And I remember back then as Vice-Chair, I sat with them. It has grown massively since those days and it's one of the proudest things that I think the POA can say that we've got. Funded by the members, for the members. And I think that fund has helped out many, many branches and many individual members. Obviously I can't go into detail about any particular cases because it's private and confidential, but I've got to say those stalwarts back then – Dave Evans, Mick Rickets, Pete Hancox – should be very proud of themselves for setting this up. So in effect it took place, a feasibility study was done towards the back end of the year 2000. We then brought it in in 2003 and we've never looked back since, but we've never actually reviewed the rules and constitution around it. Now there's certain parts that the Charity Commission won't allow you, the actual principles, but I think the make-up of that committee needs to be looked at now, so that we've got a cross-section of the membership and countries – Scotland, Northern Ireland and indeed England and Wales – so we've got a good cross-section of people on that, including retired members as well. So, I look forward to taking that review forward with the Charity Commission over the next year, and hopefully next year I'll be able to report back with any changes, if any at all. Thank you Chair. That is the Welfare Report. Hopefully it's accepted by Conference.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Steve.

<Applause>

Conference, if you're happy to adopt the Welfare Report please show now. Thank you very much. That's adopted. Want to do the Annual Report while you're on a roll, Steve?

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Might as well, Chair.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: You'll go for the hattrick.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: You will know that many years ago we decided not to produce the Annual Report in paper copy, to save the trees and different things, because they all end up in the bin and god knows what. So, we produce it online and it's a good reference document for some of the work that's carried out throughout the year by the National Executive Committee and full-time officers. If anything, it's a good reference document, so please give it a scan, when you can, and I hope you accept the Annual Report.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Conference, if you're happy to adopt it, please show. OK, thank you. Please use it wisely!

OK, we can get on with business. Conference, we have got 106 motions, so it's nothing personal but I've got a mute button here for that microphone in front of me, so if you rabbit on and on in excess of five minutes I'm going to have to cut you off! I don't want to be left with loads of motions on Thursday when some of you have got really long journeys, so just think about your timing. You'll see in front of you a little traffic-light system. Green is good, amber is start finishing off. Red is a big hook comes out from me and drags you off, alright?

And just before we start our business, Louden Grange is now a public sector prison. They've got a Committee. Well done, Lowdham Grange, and you're very welcome at Conference. It's good to see you.

So, motion 1 is an NEC motion. It affects the rules, which means we need a two-thirds majority on the voting system. So we're looking at 66.6% minimum to get this carried. Speaking on behalf of the NEC is Steve Gillan. Do we have a seconder for this motion please? Thank you.

Motion 1

Amend Rule 10.6 Candidates for election as National Executive Committee members must be;

(a) full members for at least 3 consecutive years of the Union who are willing to stand; and

(b) nominated to the General Secretary in writing by a minimum of 5 branches in accordance with duly convened Branch Meetings.

NEC

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Conference. I promise you Chair, I won't rabbit on or else I'll get the hook. So, getting into this motion straight away, Conference, you've just accepted the Finance Report and, as I said during the Finance Report, nothing ever stands still for ever. We've had it in our rules for ever that there were no restrictions on who could stand in any national election. This isn't about individuals, it's not about protecting the existing Executive, it's about what's best for this Union – getting the best people that there are to stand for election. So, if you read it in conjunction with other rules, you will see that, if you become a lapsed member, you can't stand for office for five years, but if there was an election, which is called now, you could actually have three days as a POA member and just need one nomination. Every election costs us £40,000 in your expenses, your members' expenses, and what we're saying is we want the very best people. I don't think it's restrictive compared to how other unions are. We just want three consecutive years of POA Union membership and to have five nominations. I don't think that is too much to ask. Thank you, Conference. Look forward to the discussion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Steve. Next speaker please.

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC, I'm going to harp on the same message as what Steve's just said. The cost of this, of ballots, to the membership, it's ridiculous. When you look at the turnout of what we're getting on these votes – the last General Secretary election, we had a 5% turnout. A 5% turnout on our membership for a £40,000 cost. It's not cost-effective. Why are we spending that money? It is about getting out, getting your branches, speaking to your membership and saying, "Where are we going, what are we doing, what do want to achieve, why are we subsidising people's egos running for positions where potentially our members are paying that cost?" It's about bringing it back in, making sure we're all aware of who's running, why they're running and what they're there for. Constantly you speak to your members, or the members at my branch come to me and go, "Who's going for the election, who's good?" And I'm like, "No, you need to read it. You need to look at their nomination form, why they're standing, what they stand for." But constantly they turn to us and ask us the questions. It's not about that. We've got to make sure we're doing the right thing by our members and our members' money. Thank you very much. Support the motion.

<Applause>

MIKE KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: Conference, Chair, NEC, I want you to reject this motion simply because, yes, it costs 40K to run an election – that doesn't mean that it costs each individual £40,000 to run for election. From having one branch to represent you to go up for the elections for the NEC, they now want to make that five. Now, I don't know about you guys, I mean the NEC, they have their audience with you guys here now, you have the area reps that get around their prisons to promote themselves so they can go up for re-election, but if anybody new wants to get on, any individual here – I will put my stall out now, I am not interested in the NEC in any shape or form, but I'm very passionate that we should have a fair and transparent system and we can't have that if an individual in this room decides that they want to run for the NEC but they've got to get five branches to back them up. We don't get the time, we don't get the opportunity unless we use it in our own time, to get around all these other prisons to get the support from them. So, we are dependent upon our own branch to put us forward. Then we can start pushing out all the election speeches and stuff like that to get nominated. This is restrictive to you guys down here, not to these guys. They've got the audience. They're going to get that. You guys here, individuals, or your members at your branches, it's restricting them. I haven't got a problem with the three consecutive years. Fine with that. Unfortunately, if we reject that, that gets struck out anyway. It's the five branches to get support from, that is what I'm against, that is what I don't like, and I plead with you guys, do not shoot yourselves in the foot if you want to run for the NEC by approving this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, HMP SUDBRY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, I hope I don't muck this first one up like I did last year. I'm speaking today against this motion, to which it's the Executive's intention to amend the Rules and Constitution of our union. The members that I represent at Sudbury feel that in doing so we will impede access to aspiring individuals who wish to hold national office in the future. Many aspirants do not have, within their gift, the ability to travel, visit different establishments and canvas the membership for support and their votes – a gift, as Mike has just outlined, that is afforded to members of the NEC as being national officials. In doing so, I feel that we will place many members at detriment, preventing fresh and talented new officials from ascending to national office. I fully appreciate that there are good intentions from the Executive to protect the Union from unnecessary financial costs, wanting to develop branch officials and prospective NEC officials. However, by restricting access to standing for office, we will be protecting the current incumbent officials. So, under the Union's own Annex A for equalities, we set out the expectations for all our members regardless of what position or office they hold. Our Annex A states the POA is absolutely committed to equal opportunities and that the POA will ensure that it is regarded as an exemplary employer and trade union, that aims to take a strategic lead in combatting discrimination and promoting equality and opportunity. And yet despite this, we stand here today discussing a proposed rule change that has the potential to cause division and inequality and lack of opportunity. Conference and fellow members, I please ask for you to support in rejecting the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, HMP BELMARSH: Conference, Chair, NEC, I've been a POA member for 35 years, 20 years on committees. I'm speaking against this motion. For 115 years we didn't need this, so why do you need it now? It restricts talent. There might be an individual who joins tomorrow who might have a lot of experience in unions, might be having something to offer and represent you guys, might have the passion to stand up and say what they think. You're stopping them from representing the members that we represent. The second is I believe it's undemocratic. Ideally this Union, we here, represent our members. Each one of our members has a say. If that member joins the Union, then he's got a right to stand, and if he's rejected he's rejected by the membership, not a rule. Again, Conference, I ask you to reject this motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, I ask you to support this motion. We have notice to staff that allows Union reps and branch officials to hold meetings with facility time for their members in the establishment to talk about nominations and

elections. Also it's very expensive, £40,000. Our Union, over the last five, 10 years, has had some really good NEC members and we want to try and keep that, so if someone's got experience of our Union for three years, that's a good thing, and I ask you to support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers indicating, so right to reply from Steve Gillan.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you very much Chair, Conference. Nothing like getting off to a bit of controversy on the first day of Conference, but never mind. That's why I enjoy the POA Conference so much, with different points of view. The Executive have put this up not to be undemocratic at all, not to go against equal opportunities, because it doesn't matter whether you need one nomination, five nominations or 20 nominations, you've still got to get them. That's the reality of the thing. So, I don't think any Executive member, which was intimated by Whatton, that we have a platform to get elected. When I first stood for election, I didn't get on the first time, on the NEC, and that was way back in 1997. I came out of seven delegates that were standing, there were three places and I came fourth. So that's a reality, and I had quite a lot of nominations, quite frankly, so I think that's a bit of a red herring. What we're saying is we want experienced people that are in the POA. I take on John's point from Belmarsh about you could have the best person in the world that joins the POA and joins the prison service on day one and then wants to put themselves up for election. They might be a great trade unionist but they know nothing about the POA, quite frankly. And we want experienced people to put up and then gain that experience up here. The money is a bit irrelevant, because it's not my money, it's not your money, it's the membership's money. Now, if we want to waste £40,000, continue in the way that we are, then fine. But the reality is, what we're saying to you is, let's have experienced people. You can't in one breath say, if someone becomes a lapsed member they're not allowed to stand for five years, but someone on day one joining the job can seek one nomination, be mates with someone at a particular branch, and then stand for election. That doesn't seem right to me. That seems very undemocratic to me, and against equal opportunities. But the reality is, it's your trade union. Please vote the right way and put this in, because I'm not actually sure which bit you were against. Because none of the speakers identified it, whether it was the five nominations or whether it was the three years as a POA member. No one identified that, quite frankly. So, what I'm saying is, we've put it up for the right reasons. It's not about individuals, who's got ambitions. The Union comes first! It's not about protecting the National Executive Committee. They can look after themselves. And one final point for me, everybody does have the same platform, actually. It's through your nomination request. Everybody who stands writes to a branch and you're supposed to hold meetings and read all nomination requests out, and then let your members decide. And let me tell you, there were a lot of people in previous elections that hadn't done any returns whatsoever because they've never held any branch meetings. So, this is an opportunity now for us to reset and for every branch to have the responsibilities, read out the nomination requests, make your selections, and if this goes through then those that will be on the order paper will have at least five nominations. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, Conference. To get this carried, we need at least 66.6% of the votes, and if it is carried then motion 2 from Cookham Wood will automatically fall. We'll open the voting now, thank you. As you can see that motion is lost.

On to motion 2, Cookham Wood. Do we have a seconder for Cookham Wood?

Motion 2

The addition of the below, to Rule 10.6

The support from no less than 5 branches to stand 10.6 (C)

COOKHAM WOOD

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Conference, Cookham Wood are seeking permission to withdraw this motion. With a show of hands, do you give them permission to withdraw? Thank you. That is withdrawn.

Motion 3 is a Belmarsh motion. Do we have a seconder for Belmarsh? Thank you Brinsford. I invite Belmarsh to speak.

Motion 3

To amend Rule 19.3 from

Rule 19.3 If there is any query or concern relating to the legal advice and assistance scheme or an individual case:

(a) it shall be referred first to the Legal Aid Committee; and

(b) appeal from any decision of the Legal Aid Committee is to the National Executive Committee (whose decision is final).

(c) If any member wishes to appeal the decision of the Legal Aid Committee they must do so within 3 months of the date of the written notification of the Legal Aid Committee's decision, by informing the General Secretary

of the intention to appeal and supply the grounds for the appeal in writing.

To

Rule 19.3 If there is any query or concern relating to the legal advice and assistance scheme or an individual case:

(a) it shall be referred first to the Legal Aid Committee; and

(b) appeal from any decision of the Legal Aid Committee is to the National Executive Committee (whose decision is final). The member may attend or dial in to either Committee to state their case.

(c) If any member wishes to appeal the decision of the Legal Aid Committee they must do so within 3 months of the date of the written notification of the Legal Aid Committee's decision, by informing the General Secretary of the intention to appeal and supply the grounds for the appeal in writing.

BELMARSH

JOHN SHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, HMP BELMARSH: Hello again. I obviously don't need to reintroduce myself. So, basically this motion is to suggest that we have the ability for individuals who are making an appeal to the Legal Aid Committee, for them to be able to dial in and see what's happening, listen in to what's happening and maybe put forward their views during that proceeding. At the moment, that committee sits in their absence. I personally don't think that's quite right. I think those individuals should have the opportunity to see what's going on. It promotes clarity and I ask you to vote for this motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks John.

<Applause>

Any more speakers? OK, Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC, asking you to reject the motion. Colleagues, attendance at the Legal Aid Committee or an NEC meeting to consider a legal case will probably be classed as a trade union activity and not a trade union duty, which would attract facility time. So, this is asking for attendance either in person or to dial in on a Legal Aid Committee or an NEC meeting. Whilst we understand the rationale regarding the motion, it is just not practical for it to happen. NEC meetings are held on the second and last Wednesday of the month, and Legal Aid Committee meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month. What would happen if a member was to appeal to the Legal Aid Committee or to the NEC but was working that day? Would we have to reschedule the Legal Aid Committee or the NEC meeting so that member could attend or dial in? Let's just say there were multiple people who wished to attend a Legal Aid Committee or NEC meeting in order to submit their appeal in person. Would we then have to hold multiple Legal Aid Committee meetings and multiple NEC meetings so that the member can attend, therefore taking up NEC members' time when they should be out representing members? Colleagues, whilst we understand the motion, as previously stated, it's just not practical. Please reject the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Mick. John, do you wish to reply? No? OK, thanks. Straight to the vote then, Conference. Vote is now open. Thank you, we can now show the results. That motion is lost.

On to motion 4, Berwyn. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you Send.

Motion 4

Request a change to the Rules and Constitution to increase committee size from

Rule 20.2(c) 3 to 5 other Committee Members

To

Rule 20.2(c) 3 to 7 other Committee Members.

BERWYN

RICKY HYSLOP – BRANCH CHAIR, BERWYN: So, the motion reads to increase the Committee members from three to seven. The reason we requested this is, I don't know about yourselves, the amount of work that we do, day in, day out, attending disciplinaries, use of force meetings, Committee meetings – this, that and the other – it takes up a lot of our time. And I'm for giving my time to our members, absolutely, but the workload that we have is getting far too much. The increase of two Committee members would spread our load a little bit more, giving us that opportunity to give more time and thorough work to support our members. We request you support the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Berwyn.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM - JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, I ask you to support this motion. Large establishments need more representatives, especially as the Union's concerned for the wellbeing of our members in establishments. We are more and more called upon to help people with mental issues, mental health ill health, and to help the employer get them back to work as well, and it's a really important part of a rep's job. Thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Gary.

<Applause>

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to reject this motion. When it comes to how busy we are, we are all very busy at the moment, but we work at our pace. It's for us to put in our facility time requests and, unless your Committee is full of five members and you're all working five days a week on facility time, then I don't see any need to increase it. And when you look around the country, some branches are struggling to get three people on a Committee. Do we really want to be watering it down and opening it up to get seven people on board? We want a good competition, we want four people or five or six people to be putting their names down, wanting to join the Committee, and fighting it out in elections, really driving home the important work of the POA. We don't want to be backfilling just with someone who wants to get on potentially for the wrong reasons, so let's keep the right people there. Let's limit our number to five and make sure we've got the right people doing it for the right reasons. Thank you. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks, Jordan. I can't see any more speakers. Dave Todd for the NEC.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR: Conference, Chair, invited guests, responding on behalf of the NEC in support of the motion. The Berwyn branch have brought this motion for a good reason. They operate in one of the biggest jails in the country and need support on their Committee. The caseload, as has been mentioned by the Berwyn branch, is huge. They need support. If we look at new-build prisons, they're huge. We're getting more and more new-build prisons and we need to help them. Service of the members takes our time – yes, we give up our own time, but what's wrong with having two more Committee members to bring that caseload down, to support the membership. Conference, Berwyn are overwhelmed. Support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, the vote is now open, Conference. That's been carried.

Motion 5, Oakhill. Permission to withdraw, Conference? Show of hands, can they withdraw this motion? Thank you, that's withdrawn Oakhill.

Motion 6, Rampton, seconder for Rampton? Thank you.

Motion 6

Amend Rule 21.2b from

Functions Rule 21.2 The National Committee for Secure Health Care Services will:

(a) recommend the manner in which members of the Union employed in Secure Health Care Units further their aims, objectives and professional aspirations;

(b) be responsible for the organisation of all members in Secure Health Care Units; and

(c) liaise with and support members in all Secure Health Care Units.

to

Functions Rule 21.2 The National Committee for Secure Health Care Services will:

(a) recommend the manner in which members of the Union employed in Secure Health Care Units further their aims, objectives and professional aspirations;

(b) be responsible for the organisation of all members in Secure Health Care Units and prison health settings; and

(c) liaise with and support members in all Secure Health Care Units.

RAMPTON

DAVID ALLPORT – BRANCH SECRETARY, RAMPTON: Chair, NEC, Conference, please support this rule change. It's to ensure that our members get the opportunity to vote in relation to NHS pay-rises etc. and any other issues ongoing. It will also support us in identifying our members for our local area, so please support this motion. Thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you.

<Applause>

No more speakers, so Angela Montgomery for the NEC.

ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, delegates, visitors, the NEC would like you to support this motion as it would enable our healthcare activists to support healthcare members in prisons. I'm aware that Rampton services seven prisons – we are about to get a decision on pay and we would very much like to ballot all of those members, so I would be saying support this motion. We have a permanent seat on the Staff Council for the first time this year, so it's a really good opportunity for us to go out and recruit. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Angela. That vote is now open, Conference. Thank you. As you can see, that's carried.

Motion 7, Hull. Seconder for Hull, please?

Motion 7

For the NEC to condemn the employer for the lack of effective preventative measures in place to combat illegal drone activity within the custodial environment.

HULL

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, motion 7 reads for the NEC to condemn the employer for the lack of effective preventative measures in place to combat illegal drone activity within the custodial environment. "The number of criminals prepared to carry guns and the apparent availability of weapons has never been greater. It needs little imagination to forecast that there will be many future attempts to get firearms into prisons. The need for vigilance is paramount for it is vital that there are clear and well-thought-out rules for searching which are effectively supervised. The service cannot afford to get it wrong again." That was written in 1994 – over 30 years ago – as part of the Woodcock Enquiry. Bring us to present day, today – Lord Timpson, last year, when addressing his House, let them know drone sightings were up 770% between 2019 and 2023, yet when asked what he's going to do about it, what our employer's going to do about it, he can't talk about it because of security issues. When asked constantly about his preventative measures that are in place to protect our members, they can't talk about it because of security issues. They can't talk about it because of security issues because if they came out to the public and said, "What are our preventative measures? Absolutely nothing!" they'd be letting every single person in the country know the fact that we all know – there is nothing in place! There's absolutely nothing in place! And we all go to work, day in, day out, drones coming in like Gatwick Airport, and there's nothing to stop them. You ain't getting a drone up to the windows of MI5 building, are you? It's not happening. Yet apparently in our workplace it's acceptable.

Last year, HMPPS came out with, "Technology's moving at a pace but we're underfunded, we're under-resourced. We do want to build a strong case, we know we are under-resourced." That's the employer coming out with that. And yet here we are, year on year, coming back to the same old problems. And what does the government do? And what does our employer do? Tells the security director to slash its budget by 16%. That's going to help things, isn't it? It's really not. I know that there are people within our employer's system that do want to get the measures put in but they're facing challenges. I know it's going to have to go to a spending review but ultimately they're not short of cash as an employer. There are multiple projects, pilots going on around the country, and it's about prioritising the money that they do have. And at the minute, I'm sorry, they're spending it in the wrong places. It needs to be focussed on security. I will not come back here another year and see one of my colleagues have a firearm pulled on them. You'll have to drag me from outside the front of a jail where I'll be stood with a picket fence and signs. Colleagues, please support the motion. Please join debates around drone activity in jail. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well said, Jordan!

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I would like you to support this motion because the amount of people actually getting hammered and the amount of things comes into the prisons, illegal stuff, is actually a problem. Prisoners getting away with it and it's just chaos, so let's support this motion and we go forward with it. Thank you.

<Applause>

LEE LASSMAN – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE: Conference, Chair, NEC and invited guests, I stand before you to express my unwavering support for the recent motion around the drone activity and I ask you to do the same. Over the past few years, we've all seen the alarming rise in drone incursions. These unmanned aircraft are not just occasional disruptions; they are a growing security crisis. They're being used to smuggle in contraband such as drugs, mobile phones, weapons and other illicit articles. This influx of illegal items has a direct and devastating impact on the safety and order within our prisons and directly threatens each and every one of us in this room. The consequences are clear and troubling. As a direct result of this increased drone activity, illegal article finds are at an all-time high. We're seeing more drugs, mobile phones and dangerous items being recovered than ever before. Reports of prisoners under the influence of drugs or alcohol are at an unprecedented peak. Mobile phone use within the prison walls remains at record levels, enabling prisoners to communicate with the outside world, co-ordinate illegal activities and threaten the staff and public.

Most concerning of all, we are now witnessing a rise in violent incidents, some involving shop-bought flick-knives that are easily accessible. These weapons are being used to intimidate and assault staff and prisoners, and fuel further disorder. The connection between the drone activity and this increase in violence is undeniable. The influx of contraband makes prisoners more volatile, more dangerous and more difficult to manage. This situation is not just about contraband. It's about safety. The drone threat directly correlates with the decline in safety to everyone working with and living inside our prisons. Staff members are put at greater risk of assault, injury and even death. The environment becomes increasingly hostile and the ability to maintain control and security diminishes each day. Despite the growing evidence and the clear danger, HMPPS has failed to act decisively. Their response has been slow, inefficient and reactive rather than proactive. This ongoing inaction is unacceptable. We deserve and demand better. Our safety, the safety of the prisoners and safety of the wider community depend on immediate improvements. Investments in drone detection from technology, better training for staff and a clear, co-ordinated plan to intercept and prevent these incursions. We must be clear. This is not a distant threat. It's happening now and it's affecting every aspect of our work and safety. The rise in violence, drug use and disorder within prisons is directly linked to the unchecked drone activity. We cannot afford to ignore this any longer and hope that it will resolve itself. The risks are too high and the consequences are too severe. Thank you.

<Applause>

CHRIS STRETCH – BRANCH SECRETARY, BULLINGDON: Chair, NEC, Conference, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

We stand in full support of this motion. The crisis we face is escalating and, if urgent action is not taken, the consequences will be disastrous. Over the past six months, drone activity across all the HMP estates has surged to an alarming level, jeopardising the safety and security of staff and inmates alike. At HMP Bullingdon alone, more than 150 drone incidents have been recorded in the last three months – an unacceptable breach of security that puts lives at risks. These drones are an unchecked highway for smuggled contraband, with hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of illicit goods entering our prisons, fuelling violence, disorder and instability. One particularly shocking incident involved a drone delivering £120,000 worth of contraband, triggering an immediate lockdown of one of our wings. Another deeply disturbing case saw police raising the alarm, stating that firearms had been smuggled into the prison via a drone. This forced the deployment of the DST, national resources and highly trained Tornado staff, all at immense cost to the prison service and the police. This is a failure of leadership, this is a failure of security, and most of all it's a failure of HMPPS's duty. The Committee at HMP Bullingdon has engaged extensively with our governor to propose practical solutions, yet every step forward has been blocked by the same obstacle: a persistent lack of funding. Our requests for essential security upgrades have been ignored, dismissed and delayed, leaving our prison estates open to unrelenting drone attacks. This failure violates the Health and Safety at Work Act, which mandates that employers provide a safe and secure working environment for their employees. Where is that safety for the dedicated officers who risk their lives every day? Where is the security for the inmates who deserve a chance at rehabilitation without being targeted by organised crime. HMPPS must act now before the situation spirals beyond control. If this issue continues to be ignored, the consequences will be severe, not just for staff and inmates but for public safety as a whole. The cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of intervention. Conference, I hope you stand with us and support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well said.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR: Conference, Chair, invited guests, Dave Todd, National Vice Chair responding on behalf of the NEC and happy to support the motion for all the reasons Hull, Feltham, Swaleside and Bullingdon have cited, and condemn your employer. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Dave. Straight to the vote then. Thank you. We can display those results. Thank you, that's carried, and we will ensure the employer is suitably condemned.

Next motion is motion 8, NEC. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you. Dave Todd for the NEC.

Motion 8

Conference condemn the failure of HMPPS in their lack of achievements in stopping "drones" delivering illegal items into our

workplaces, these are destabilising the safety of prisons and placing further risk to an already violent and chaotic workplaces for our members to work in.

The POA seek urgent action from the employer to make prisons safer.

NEC

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR: Conference, Chair, invited guests, the motion reads, "Conference condemns the failure of HMPPS in their lack of achievements in stopping 'drones' delivering illegal items into our workplaces, these are destabilising the safety of prisons and placing further risk to an already violent and chaotic workplaces for our members to work in. The POA seek urgent action from the employer to make prisons safer." Conference, and I'm talking to the employer when I say this, drones are not a new phenomenon. They've been here for years. I'll take you back to when I was the area rep in London in 2016. A prisoner was fatally stabbed in HMP Pentonville with a combat knife that was flew in by a drone. We warned then what would come from the drone incursions. We've seen drugs, weapons, mobile phones, and warned that a firearm would be next. Little has happened to stop that since. Lock up dangerous people who want to harm us and other prisoners in our care. We think the employer is overwhelmed from the sheer number of incursions, yet they rely on other agencies to solve the problems we face on a daily basis. Now, we're not saying that other agencies don't have a part in the solution. However, does that help us face the issues on the landings day-to-day? No, Conference, it doesn't. We need better protections in prisons to stop these incursions, better netting on yards, better windows in cells, more prisoners off the landings. Is it really a horrendous thought, colleagues, to bring a drone down somehow in a prison? Get them down, stop the criminality, make our workplaces safer. Thank you, Conference, and condemn the employer.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No speakers indicated so we'll go straight to the vote please. Thank you. We can display those results. That's been carried. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

I'm sure the media will take interest in that if you want to speak to them anon. You know the score.

Next one is a debate, so we don't need a seconder. I'm going to invite Hull to start the debate and, if you wish to join in, then come and take a seat. Thank you, Hull.

Motion 9

That Conference debate the heightened risks facing colleagues due to illegal drone activity, the effectiveness of current physical security measures and the realistic possibility of prisoners in custody gaining access to firearms.

HULL

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, the debate reads, "Conference debate the heightened risks facing colleagues due to illegal drone activity, the effectiveness of current physical security measures and the realistic possibility of prisoners in custody gaining access to firearms." Working behind the walls, we're often silenced. Not many people get to hear our stories. Thankfully, the NEC do some good work with the media. However, Conference, it's our time to come up and share our stories for the journalists that are in the back of the room to take away with them. So, if you've had drones fly into your establishment, please do get up and join the debate because it's our time to let people know, let our wider audiences know what we're facing, day in, day out. This problem can be solved as well. In Jersey Prison, they have a "SkyFence" technology, it's called. I got in touch with the CEO of Drone Defence, Richard Gill, who went into Jersey Prison. They set up a geofence around the prison – drone flies in, hits the geofence, bounce, bounce, bounce, can't go any further, either drops down or goes home. Can be done. Yet HMPPS wouldn't engage with him any further. They saw the technology, saw it was working, and he's having to put in Freedom of Information requests to find out why they're not taking it on any further. It's proven to work and this employer is consciously choosing not to act with proven technology.

It's only a matter of time before a firearm comes into the establishment – and one thing I want to leave you with, Conference, before other people join the debate, hopefully, is our physical security measures are standard protocol. A Cat B jail is generally having the same spec walls and fences all around the countries – as is a Cat C, as your Category A. I'm in Hull. If – in Durham, if in Leeds, another Category B local prison – if a firearm is flown into the establishment, and it's happened in Leeds, and they've had to walk out because of their health and safety – well I've got exactly the same fabric around my jail, so is then not my health and safety at risk as well, being in the same establishment with the same physical security measures? Obviously, we're bound by the injunction, but it's food for thought. If it does happen to one of our establishments, it could happen to all of us, and I hope colleagues stand by each other when that day does eventually happen, because it is coming. Please join the debate, Conference.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, I want to know when the NEC and Thompsons are going to hold the employer to account with the permanent injunction, where it clearly says that anybody – and that means anybody – who increases the risk of health and safety to staff, prisoners, visitors, contractors in a prison, or allow that to happen, when are they going to hold them to account?

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Gary.

DAVID CLANCY – BRANCH SECRETARY, HIGHPOINT NORTH: Chair, Conference, NEC, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

Highpoint North is in the middle of the countryside. It's a massive jail and they're building an extension – it's going to go to Highpoint East, which is potentially another 800 prisoners – so Highpoint in itself, when it gets built, the third part, will be one of the biggest jails in Europe. The jail itself is massive. It's got an open area. We've got fencing that's open. We've also got the netting that's down and the governor is refusing to pay any extra money for the empty netting. We've also got on Highpoint itself, a flightpath for the military Apache base. How can drones get across a military air site? I do not know. Every single day, somewhere in Highpoint there's a drone coming over. Conference, can you please join in the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well done.

BRANCH DELEGATE, STOCKEN: Conference, NEC, invited guests, just wanted to add something. HMP Stocken, we're pretty much like High Point. We're a large jail, one of the largest public-sector jails in the country. We're also very rural. We're in the county of Rutland, the smallest county in the UK. We share our services with Leicester. When we have drones come to Stocken, we call the Leicestershire police. We're waiting up to an hour for police to arrive and that's if they set off immediately because we're so rural. We had police come to us one evening – we had five drones over the establishment and they were able to send a couple of cars. They recovered one drone after it crashed, and this drone, they said, was in excess of £20,000 worth of drone. It was a professional drone and, at the moment, I think what we're facing is unprecedented. We have many prisoners in our jail that are inside for getting – sorry, I don't know how to word this.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Take your time.

BRANCH DELEGATE, STOCKEN: For getting drugs or unauthorised items into prisons via drones, and yet they're all still coming to our prison. Sorry.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Take your time, no rush.

BRANCH DELEGATE, STOCKEN: Sorry, I'm a bit nervous. And with these prisoners coming to us, our security team, they're still burying their heads in the sand. They're saying it's not the drones how things are getting in, it's coming in through reception. Please join the debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well done.

FIKRET SINCIK – BRANCH CHAIR, MAIDSTONE: Conference, NEC, Chair, it's not first time speaking but it feels like first time. Still nerve-wracking. I know that most of the governors have as much concern as we do. So far, our governor spent £1,500 to buy a drone and fly it around the prison, just for prevention. So, they know HMPPS do nothing, absolutely nothing. It's going to get to the point it's going to force us out at some point. I hope we're not going to have the major issue of somebody's going to lose their life and HMPPS is going to move and do something about it. Please join the debate, thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more debaters, so Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers, happy to join this debate and we thank Hull for bringing this debate to the floor. I'm sure every single delegate sitting out here in their prisons has experienced drone activity. It's getting beyond ridiculous, the amount of drones flying in. Colleagues at Bullingdon, some 20 drones in one night arrived, with the police basically at that point saying, "You are taking our resources away from the community. We are absolutely strapped with trying to stop the drone activity around your prisons and we are failing our community." So the implications are massive out there. It is a significant threat to our prisons across the whole estate. Security measures are outdated, insufficient. Technology threats like drones – we're enhancing the drone systems, we're not putting anything into it. It is a huge concern across the debate, and like I say, I thank you again, Hull, for bringing this debate and I thank everybody who's spoke on this debate. Thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Phil. No need for a vote, Conference, because that was a debate.

So it's straight onto Motion 10, Wandsworth. Seconder for Wandsworth, please. Thank you, Whatton.

Motion 10

That all category A, B and C prisons are fitted with electronic counter measure systems to prevent drones from flying into prisons in any weather.

WANDSWORTH

BRETISLAV LUKES – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH: Good morning, Conference, Chair, NEC. The Conference motion reads that all Category A, B and C prisons are fitted with electronic counter-measure systems to prevent drones from flying into prisons in any weather. So, it is a sad reality for Wandsworth Prison, and I'm sure all your establishments as well, that the contraband is being delivered by drones daily. We even have sometimes a few drones a night, and it goes straight to the cell windows. The statistics – it was mentioned here that the employer loves statistics, so the statistics in Wandsworth are quite shocking, to be honest. We estimate that over 82% of the contraband in the Wandsworth Prison is delivered by drones. Basically, they come, they go, and we currently don't have any effective way to stop them.

Now, the Wandsworth local branch have been campaigning in Parliament for almost two years now and we've been campaigning for extra budget so we can install some counter-measures for open areas of the prison to effectively stop the drones from coming, but so far we have had no success because the response from the Parliament is always the same really. It says, "We already provide budget for windows replacement project which is sufficient enough to stop the drones." Now, I know and you know that it is not, and even when we send the Parliament data from our search efforts, proving that, despite windows being replaced, kilograms and kilograms of drugs, phones and even flick knives are being delivered to prison, and thus showing that, while bearing massive costs, massive costs to taxpayers' wallets, the window replacement project is not effective, their answer is still the same, "We provide budget for windows replacement."

One could almost ask a question, who benefits from these contracts? Because it certainly is not us or our safety. Meanwhile, for a fraction of the price, we could install electronic counter-measures – and I thank my colleague from Hull who already explained to you how it works, so I don't have to – and effectively stop the drones. Sadly it has become apparent that, on a local level, we will not achieve this, and therefore I ask you, colleagues, to support this motion and instruct the NEC to pressure the government to install these systems in all category A, B and C prisons, and give our members the increase of safety they deserve. Thank you.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: Conference, Chair, NEC, I would like you to support this motion, but I just wanted to add something a little bit to it. With electronic counter measures, it's not just going to stop drones, if they implement it, it will stop mobile phone signals as well, so all these contraband mobile phones they've got, they won't be able to call out. If they can't call out, then they won't be able to organise the drones to come in the first place. It's not just the drones that are the issues – obviously they're the big issue – it will stop the drones but it will also stop phone calls as well, all mobile phone signals, so if we get the ECM, electronic counter-measures, it will help in other ways as well to help with stability within the prison.

Personally, like my colleague's just pointed out, I have got no idea why the HMPPS are obsessed with the idea of putting new windows in, because they just break them, they pull them apart. They put grilling on it, great, they'll just pry it off eventually because they've got all the time in the world to do it in and we don't have the time to make sure that they're not. So, why not just put electronic counter-measures in? It is not overly expensive, like the government will make out, for individual units. They do have a set bubble, size-wise, because I've heard the argument before, "Yes, but we've got houses right near the walls and they'll be affected." No, they won't, you just move the ECM further into the prison so the bubble that it creates is within the wall profiles. It doesn't have to cover outside the walls, just inside the walls. It will stop phone signals, it will stop the signals to the drones. Our radios will still work because it won't affect that particular frequency of our radios. It is the answer to our problems. But it's not just the drone problem it'll be the answer to, it'll be the illicit phones that they get in as well. I strongly recommend that we urge our illustrious leaders in the government to get ECM for the prisons because it will solve a lot of our issues. Thank you very much, support this motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, Conference, NEC, again I refer to the permanent injunction against the POA, where it clearly states that any person who increases or allows the increase of risk to health and safety in any prison is in contempt of court. Thank you.

<Applause>

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Morning Conference, Chair. I'd like to propose an amendment to this, the only reason being is YSC is currently excluded from this as we're not Cateogry A, B or C as we house all category of prisoners. Would we be in for putting an amendment for …?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: You can't because we've adopted standing orders. You can't propose an amendment, but I can assure you, if this is carried, we will, at a national level, include the YSC estate. If you want to give us examples of what's going on at Wetherby with drones, please feel free.

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: We're quite fortunate that we've not got a particular problem with drones because we've got plenty of staff that are willing to bring things in for the children, so …

<Laughter and applause>

But that being said, we are opposite Wetherby racecourse, so on race days where there are drones flying over the racecourse to provide coverage for the racing events, there are some people who are quite clever who also fly their drones in, and we've got one of our large fields, every now and then packages are dropped over on the field. So, it does affect us but maybe nowhere near as much as say Feltham or any of the establishments that have been raised already. We just support this anyway and hope that YSC are included. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nice to see vetting and recruitment going well at Wetherby.

KEITH STUTELY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, FORD: Chair, NEC, delegates, invited guests, I'd also like to support this motion. One of the reasons I'd like to support it was also to ask the committee that they include the open estate in this, because whilst we don't have a particular problem with drones, we do have a massive problem with mobile phones. If this is brought in that would kill that, as I think the member from Whatton said. Please support it.

<Applause>

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BELMARSH: Chair, Conference, NEC, obviously I'm standing up to say that we should vote for this. The point that I want to make is the mechanism with which we actually get to achieve it. We can go and ask government, we can go and ask HMPPS to do this, and the usual responses will come back. But from what everyone's said so far, clearly it's a health and safety issue, and health and safety issues generally have more momentum, and I think that we should use those legislations for our protection in order to achieve a goal. Thank you very much.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks, John. No other speakers, Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. We thank Wandsworth for bringing this motion to Conference. In the recent years, the rise of drone technology has posed serious and growing threats to the security integrity of our prison systems. Drones are being used to deliver drugs, weapons, mobile phones, and to be fair, quite recently we are now awash with weapons and phones across our prison system and I believe now some prisoners are getting Just Eats virtually delivered to their cell windows now, and takeaways. It's undermining the purpose of the prison system, just as rehabilitation and public safety has been undermined by this.

Our prisons house the most dangerous offenders in all the categories across. These dangerous offenders go through the categories, but they are still there. They're still involved in organised crime networks and violence. Allowing the infiltration of drones at these facilities gives inmates access to the tools to escalate the violence, enable criminal enterprise, and endanger both inmates and staff. Drone detection radar, signal jammers, geofencing technology offer a robust defence against the threat. These systems can detect, track and disable drones before they reach the prison airspace. When equipped with the right technology, these systems ensure consistent protection all year round in all weathers. HMPPS or the government may argue on cost, but what I would ask is what is the cost of delivering smart phones, weapons into our system? Basically, the technology sends a clear message that our prison system is not a playground for criminal innovation, it's a place where law and order are upheld, where staff are protected, where inmates are given a controlled environment in which rehabilitation is possible.

Now, our colleague within the debate and previous motions from Hull made the statement about HMPPS doing nothing. Now, that's not strictly true, to a certain extent. Don't panic, Hull, this will be coming. So, the bottom line is we do have, if you go on their intranet, we do have from the National Prison Intelligence Co-ordination Centre, the Drone Inclusion Response Planning, the Recovery Document. Now, what this document does, it actually tells you we have all different types of drones. We have fixed-wing drones, we have self-built drones, we have commercial, off-the-shelf drones, COTs, we have quadcopter drones. So, what HMPPS have done for us, you can now maybe impress your colleagues. HMP Wandsworth can say, "Gee, do you know that drone that came in that brought the two hunting knives and the six mobile phones? Well, that was a COT." How impressive! But that's all they're doing, so please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Conference. We can go to the vote. And we can display those results. That's carried, well done, thank you.

On to Motion 11, Wandsworth. Seconder for Wandsworth? Thank you.

Motion 11

That all category A, B and C prisons are fitted with suitable robust netting to prevent the flow of illegal items being delivered to prisoners in HM Prisons by drones. This to be completed ASAP.

WANDSWORTH

BRATISLAV LUKES – BRANCH SECRETARY, WANDSWORTH: Hello again Conference, Chair, delegates. So, the motion from Wandsworth basically reads the same thing, only we instruct the NEC to install or to ask the government or HMPPS to install security steel netting over the open

areas of Cateogry A, B or C prisons. It's because we know how much the government loves the argument of the technology is going forward and we are not able to keep up with it, so let's anticipate that argument and sort of let's put in place something that will stop the drones, which is ancient technology already, but is effective. If you put a steel net over the open establishment, the drone just cannot get through. Granted it will not stop the mobile phone signals and all the other stuff that has been here just now mentioned, but the main things that we are trying to stop, which is the drones and bringing illicit items into the prisons, will be stopped by steel nets over the open estates, also over the open areas of A, B or C prisons, so I ask you to support this motion and give the NEC a bit of manoeuvring space in case the government comes back with their favourite argument that we will not be able to keep up with the technology. Thank you.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED, BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, invited guests, I've only got one question to ask everyone which is sitting here, and the Chair as well. We talk about cost – is the human cost more than the cost of what they can do? Is it they have to lose a life before they're going to act on it? Everybody knows it's a problem. A drone is a problem, right, it brings firearms, it brings everything, so are we going to just sit here and let somebody lose their life before we act on it? Is that the society we are building up? I ask the NEC, and I ask the Chair and POA, to basically get this done as soon as possible, before anybody else loses their life. Thank you and support the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, no more speakers so Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests, observers, responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to support this motion. Again, I thank HMP Wandsworth for bringing this motion forward and I thank our colleague down here, he's done a lot of work behind the scenes, lobbying his MPs, writing letters on this very motion. We have discussed drones across estates so I'm not really going to drone on much more on this motion. All I'd ask you is, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: We'll take that to the vote, Conference, thank you. And we can view the results. Thank you, that's carried.

Motion 12, Wymott. Seconder for Wymott, please? Thank you, Garth.

Motion 12

That the banning of vaping in prisons (for staff) is treated as a national issue, against a local one.

WYMOTT

IAN PRESCOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WYMOTT: Chair, Conference, NEC, on the back of a branch meeting the Committee are mandated to actively resist the banning of vapes for staff at Wymott. The ban was introduced under the guise of a clean air policy. During the branch meeting, 100% of members were against its introduction. Vaping was banned at Wymott on 11th November. At present, staff are still vaping on site, with the Committee carrying out their wishes. Members felt it was a bit rich introducing this ban when wings stink of drugs, from unlock right through the day. For many staff, vaping literally is a coping mechanism to get through the day in one of the country's most stressful work environments. This ban isn't nationwide, so you could work in the same region, wear the same uniform, have the same employer, yet some staff can vape and others not. How can that be right?

Originally vaping was brought in as a measure to stop smoking. If they ban prisoners vaping under the guise of clear air, we could fully understand. On nights, staff are paid for their breaks because they can't leave the establishment. That doesn't mean by law they can't have a break away from their area of work. Under this ban they would be prevented from having a vape on their break. Why should staff be disadvantaged just because they're working nights? Most of our Committee don't vape, so this isn't an actual issue for us personally. One of our main concerns is the way it's been implemented, with the NEC not being consulted. If they circumvent them on this issue, what will be next? Support the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Ian. No speakers, so Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in support of the motion. Vaping was introduced as part of the smoking ban. There was no choice with the smoking ban, it was a national policy. Vaping was loosely referred to, leaving it down to an individual governor to make that decision. Well, that can't be right that any governor can make an individual decision like that, particularly when it affects individuals differently. A national policy would ensure that uniformity and conformity is there and everybody is treated exactly the same. Please support the motion, thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Terry. Straight to the vote then, Conference. Vote is now open. And we can look at those results. That's carried.

Motion 13 is an NEC motion. Seconder please. Thank you, Brinsford. Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

Motion 13

Conference mandates the NEC to engage with the employer to provide a fully funded crime in prisons lead, within each establishment.

NEC

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC, asking you to support this motion. The National Crime in Prisons team are doing a lot of work to try and improve outcomes for staff, and actually they want the same as what we want. Whilst HMPPS finally allocated some funding for a Crime in Prisons team to be set up nationally, they and we need so much more. The work needs to start at establishment level and there are now some governors who are seeing the merit in having a local Crime in Prisons lead to oversee police referrals and to support staff who've been the victim of a crime at work. These governors are paying for this resource out of their budget. They are not being given any extra funding to facilitate it. The structure nationally includes area leads so that there is a point of contact for advice, but the area leads struggle to hold establishments to account when they do not have an allocated point of contact at each prison.

The Crime in Prisons team are in the process of establishing job descriptions for a local Crime in Prisons role, but we need you, as the local reps, to push this with your governors and to make them aware of the benefits the role could bring. The motion asks for a funded role for each establishment locally. There is a Crime in Prisons fringe meeting tomorrow at lunchtime and the national lead will explain all of the work they are doing to try and support staff in more detail. There will be copies of the agreement itself, copies of the staff assault guidance, and copies of the spittle strategy that they have introduced. Please take these back to your establishments and ask governors to introduce them, if they haven't already. There are DNA spit kits available to assist with prosecutions. A number of prisons have engaged in that process, but it is available to all prisons. Please support this motion to try and improve outcomes for our colleagues who are assaulted and being let down by the employer.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED, BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference and Chair, NEC and honourable invited guests, I would like you to support this motion, and the reason is because I was on the first point of contact when the London bombing was happening with the TfL. That was my previous job. And I've seen how much impact it makes. By giving a spit kit –this is in the transport industry – a spit kit was given to the drivers, they were assaulted right, left and centre, and it brings a lot of people on to the board. It does help, it does work, right. All we need is to support it and get it there, so if we support this motion, I think we'll get there eventually.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. OK, we can go to the vote. Vote's now closed. We can display the results. Thank you, that's carried.

Motion 14 is a debate. Starting a debate is Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

Motion 14

Conference debate the impact that the new catergorisation changes will have on the stability of the open estate namely, the (Ministers and HMPPS) changes we are seeking to make to the categorisation policy are to:

1. **Allow offenders to access open conditions from 5 years from release, replacing the current requirement of 3 years from release; as well as**

2. **Introduce a permanent presumptive risk assessment into the policy and the digital categorisation tool, replacing the Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TRPS).**

NEC

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers, responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to participate in this debate. Conference, the debate is how the impact of the new categorisation changes will have on the stability of the open estate. Mainly the categorisation policy around allowing offenders to access open conditions from five years from release, replacing the current requirement of three years from release, and also the introduction of a presumptive risk assessment into the policy and a digital categorisation tool replacing the TPRS scheme. Conference, the dilution of these sanctions around extending the current three-year requirement to five is yet another desperate attempt from the government to reduce the ever-growing population crisis. But this decision to do so will come with consequences, mark my words, especially if staffing resources are not increased to provide adequate key-worker provisions for resettlement and increased security measures in the open estate.

The introduction of these schemes will only bring additional pressures of extended workloads, diluted risk assessments and public protection issues, not to mention local resettlement pressures around protecting the public. As the justice and balance scales have been about monitoring behaviour throughout the estates, with the escalation to the open estate for resettlement in the community, how can fast-tracked prisoners on the basis of these policies focus on protecting the public? I think we can all say that the open estate over the years has been the poor relation to the prison and has always been the cheapest of the establishments to run, cost-wise, with minimum staff, day and night, throughout all grades. Less or no security restrictions, removal of searching in some establishments, and with the expansion of the stability levels, no additional staff to maintain the regime but high levels of unsuitable prisoners.

There is already a cost at the moment and has been the way before the scheme, but more TPRS prisons are failing in this experiment and establishments are incurring the costs by moving prisoners back to closed, using taxpayers' money. The TPRS scheme was a knee-jerk reaction to political football in an untested exercise to ease the overpopulation crisis from previous governments and reduce the historical failings. Conference, I'm sure you're all aware of the permanent presumptive risk assessment in the policy and the digital categorisation tool, which is only as good as the inputted data, with a generic algorithm that focus on the basic requirements and minimal management of the risk with a tick box. Conference, if the open estate is going to be used as an expansion tank, let's expand the resources to cope with the additional work. Join the debate.

<Applause>

GEORGINA COFFEY – BRANCH CHAIR, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, NEC, I'd like to thank the NEC for bringing this debate before Conference as the new changes for the re-categorisation of prisoners and TPRS is placing the health and safety of our members in jeopardy. It's also placing the safety and security of the public at risk by putting unsuitable and unassessed prisoners into open conditions. The open estate has been a plaything for politicians, ministers and HMPPS executive directors, and the open estate is being used as a quick fix for years of failings from poor senior management and the lack of direction.

The need to address this problem is severe across the whole estate and for one major concern. The open estate is currently being used as a quick fix for prison buildings. No investment in prison buildings, poor retention of staff and propping up the failing public and private sector, as well as being a tool in the political arena, despite years of forewarnings and cries for progressive change. The type of prisoners we are now receiving in the open estate would once have never stepped foot in open conditions. However, their presumed categorisation and so-called low risk is having a severe impact into the running of the open estate. As I'm sure you are aware, we do not carry Pava or batons during day estate. This is down to the delusional perception of HMPPS managers that Category D prisoners pose a lower risk to staff and public, which I'm sure we can all agree is far from the truth. The increase in non-compliance, staff assaults are on the rise in the open estate, where recently we've had three of our members injured – one being bitten in the throat, one in the leg, and one ending up with concussion. This was during night state. We only have three officers during night state and it was down to the goodwill of staff coming in so the prison didn't run with zero officers.

The unauthorised articles being found within our prison is tenfold in comparison to when I stood here last year, where the motion was carried to lobby the NEC to condemn the TPRS scheme. I'm now stood here once again to ask the NEC to condemn the TPRS scheme and to ask the question of how the POA move forward to ensure our members are safe walking through the gate to commence their duty. Extending the amount of time a prisoner can serve in open conditions from three to five years is only adding to the unrealistic expectation of continued conformity of prisoners that are required to remain within the open estate, something we are struggling to keep our head above water with at the moment. The new categorisation process will undoubtedly draw public scrutiny and the loss of public confidence in our ability to address offending behaviour, which can only be interpreted by the public as a soft approach. Time after time, the government are taking a gamble and attempting to alleviate the population pressures and failing miserably, but it's not them that are left to pick up the pieces. So, it's business as usual, I guess, and on to the next bright idea.

NEC, it's time for urgency and a focus on the open estate. We cannot sustain another year of the open estate being run into the ground. I for one am very worried about what the future holds for Sudbury. Let us stop these ministers, politicians and incompetent senior high leaders from using our prisons and our members' safety as a roulette wheel, placing all their hopes on red. Colleagues, I ask you to join this debate and end the unsafe TPRS scheme.

<Applause>

PHIL THORNTON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM: Mr Chairman, Conference, invited guests and the legend that is Paul Malliband, second-time speaker. We've got three motions coming and I ask for your support with all those. Very serious, and as Georgina's just put it, way more eloquently than me. After my last conversation with Terry McCarthy, I was dared to dream, and I dreamt of a dream that was once Kirkham for me. "Come to Kirkham," they said, "on your way to retirement. You deserve the break after years of excitement. A tan in the summer, trench foot in the winter, but no alarm bells, you'll not need to be a sprinter." Quickly I learned, though, not always rosy – poor behaviour, anger, disrespect, sneers, not just from the prisoners but from my peers. So why do the staff feel so demotivated? I know the answer and it cannot be overstated. Kirkham has lost sight of its purpose, rehabilitation. Recent changes have caused destabilisation. I'm not John Cooper Clark, by the way.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: I know.

PHIL THORNTON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM: There you go. In this rhyme, please hear my plea, Kirkham is crumbling, all because capacity is key. TPRS 24, HDC 12, these are the next ideas but surely the authors have lost their careers. We need more support. We need people's support. New world will take any old cohort. Our jail is changing beyond all recognition. We can't continue in this position. Drugs are rife, debt, phones, absconds and recently a slashing, it's no wonder the HMIP gave us a bashing. To combat those threats we need PPE, we need protection, this will help relieve some of the staff's dejection. Apologies for my style of debate. I ask for your support before it's too late. The service is broken, downtrodden and blighted, in footballing terms we're Manchester United.

<Applause>

I couldn't get a rhyme with Everton! So, before the Chair signals the end to my ditty, please support us to make Kirkham less – shamefully unsafe.

<Laughter and applause>

A final thought. If you dream of a transfer with me, don't. Stay safe in your jails with your walls and your PPE. Heed the words, please, that I have

spoken, because Kirkham has become a Cat C open.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: I taught him everything he knows. Well done, Phil.

JAMES EVANS – BRANCH CHAIR, THORN CROSS: I know it's lunchtime, so I'll keep this quick. I've lived through benchmarking once in the open. We're about to live through it again. Whatever you've been told by your governors, but the reports are out from this new team or whatever they're called. We've already been told we're losing staff when it comes in, we're going to lose officers. At the same time, we're getting extra PODs in, with more prisoners, who are going to be in the last two years, as long as they haven't had any adjudication in the last three months, they will be coming from your Cat Cs automatically into a Cat D. I'm not here to cry, I'm just here to ask you for your support. When these next motions come up, please give us PPE. Thank you.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: I'd like to thank my last colleague who mentioned about PPE, because that's really important. And believe it or not, when we're on duty in a prison, we are constables. And if you look on the internet and find out that constables are allowed the privileges and protections offered to them, so why haven't we got the same as the police forces around our prisons? Which they quite happily spray teenagers that are being naughty with PAVA and they use ready-bar handcuffs and they even use batons. But most of all, a director from HMPPS says that they would prefer all staff to have tasers because they are less forceful than C&R and protective to our members that might get injured in C&R because, as anybody on the NEC will tell you, there's some very large, buff young people in our prisons. But the reason I'm up here is I would like you to refer to POA Circular 98 of 2017, because in there that is the injunction against the POA. And anybody else that knows about that injunction, and in there it quite specifically says, "Parties other than the claimant and the defendant are included in that order. Any action that would be likely to put the public at risk". Is this not putting the public at risk, what the employer wants us to do next to make rooms in their prisons? It is also a contempt of court for any person notified of this order, the injunction. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks, Gary.

OK, there's no more debaters so we'll move on to motion 15, which is Kirkham. Do we have a seconder? Thank you. And if this motion is carried, motions 18 and 21 will fall.

Motion 15

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for all band 3,4,5s, in the Open Estate to be issued with Pava and Batons whilst performing their duties.

KIRKHAM

PHIL THORNTON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM: Chair, Conference, invited guests, third-time speaker. I ask Conference to instruct the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for all Band 3, 4 and 5s in the open estate to be issued with PAVA and batons whilst performing their duties. Colleagues, members of the open estate need protection – they need the correct PPE. A camera is great but it only records incidents, makes evidence for adjudications, police charges or even the coroner, but not for my demise. Recent serious assaults at Sudbury only reinforce our need to be able to protect ourselves. I know each one of you is faced with increasing violence and staff assaults, but we have no credible deterrent or detection. We need PAVA and batons throughout the course of all our duties, not just at night. The open estate is seeing an increase in risk to all our members due to inappropriate allocation, inappropriate attitudes, drugs, drug-taking and the resulting behaviour – the debt, the violence, etc. They all pose a risk to me and my colleagues. Things aren't improving in the open estate. We've seen an increase in throwovers, intruders, debt and, worryingly, spice. They all add risk to our members.

Two weeks ago on a Saturday, I answered a call from a member of staff. And we'd had a prisoner-on-prisoner slashing, a seven-inch scar down the young man's face. So, the people that are happy to do that are in open conditions. It's incredible. The recent Sentencing Review will see prisoners move through the system more quickly and having been tested less. Kirkham is a vast site, it's massive. Staff coming to support can literally be seven or eight minutes away. We work in far more isolation than a closed establishment and we count the billets on our own and we're often on our own throughout the day. At night, myself and three officers on duty, we have PAVA and batons in case we need to go onto one of the billets, but what's the difference between the day and the night? The risk remains the same.

I stand firmly in my belief that many transfers in are sent with little or no concern for whether they should be in this environment. One day, they're in a Cat C where the staff have PAVAand batons, the next day they're with me and yet I have nothing. It makes no sense. Police officers have mandatory PPE – a baton and PAVA. When they qualify, they're given those protections and they do not leave the police station without them. They have no additional PPE during the night. Also it doesn't matter whether they're dealing with an inner-city disturbance one minute or they go to a sleepy village in Cheshire the next. Their bosses don't say, "Don't forget to take your PPE off, you're not in the inner city" – they're still dealing with the same people.

I cannot protect myself with something that I don't have. Ten years I worked at Preston – I had a baton, I had PAVA during the pilot. I personally never

had to draw it, but many staff did. It was there. It was a deterrent. A true Cat D prisoner who engages with the regime with work and actively betters himself will not see me wearing that as a personal slight on his behaviour or character, nor any change to our professional interaction. Those prisoners know that we need better protection. Those prisoners see the inappropriate allocations that we get. They agree that a lot of these lads should not be there. Do we really need to have a colleague in the open estate seriously injured before we afford the protection that most of you have in this room? Colleagues, I ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

KEITH STUTELY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, FORD: Chair, NEC, colleagues, this doesn't get any easier the more I stand up here. I will ask you to support this motion for all the reasons that my colleague has said. At what point do they stop becoming dangerous? Because at the moment we are allowed to carry PAVA, cuffs and batons at night, and magically at 7 o'clock in the morning, they stop becoming dangerous. How does that work? Also, Ford is a large prison, it is a very open prison. Support could be – you're not going to get it instantly like you do on a landing enclosed. It's not going to happen. We need protection. At Ford we've currently got around 400 prisoners. We are having an extension – it is going to go up to 700-plus. How many of those do you think are going to be proper Cat D prisoners? Because I can guarantee you, it isn't going to be many. Please support it.

<Applause>

MICK HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, why shouldn't our colleagues in the open estate have protection? We all do in the closed. The white shirt isn't enough anymore – nobody really cares about the authority figure. I think people forget that the people in the open conditions are still prisoners. We've heard some horrible stories about things – people being slashed and stuff. Roughly 34% return back to closed prisons. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and members of the NEC, I'd like to thank Kirkham for bringing this motion before Conference because it is a very trying and important time and we're feeling it at Sudbury. Like it's already been mentioned, under Section 10 of the Prison Act 1952 we have the powers and privileges of police constables, but we're not allowed to exercise that right because the management in the open estate still think that these prisoners are the best prisoners within the system. They're being admitted to Sudbury and they are then being resent back to closed, placing an impact on the regime where we don't have many staff. Sudbury, last week, there was two staff for 600 prisoners on Res. We'd never unlock in the closed estate if that was the amount of staff that we've got on, but that's fine because these are really good, well-behaved prisoners.

A TPRS prisoner that was presumed to be a Cat D was at Sudbury for one week and then he decided to assault a member of staff and smash the wing office up. He was then subsequently relocated back to HMP Stocken. The benchmarking process that was put in has done nothing in recent years to combat the threat that is being posed by the unallocated prisoners that are being put into the open estate. Their threat level has increased but our staffing complements haven't. We've got nothing to protect ourselves with in day state, and when you're on your own, because they say it's an open prison, you have to patrol around on your own. You're in the grounds on your own and there's more of them than there is us, and we've got nothing to defend ourselves. We've recently submitted a dispute over PAVA and batons, and as we can all agree here, the employee relations team have been about as useful as a chocolate fireguard, if they actually respond to their emails. So I'm asking you all, please support us. Let's have equality across the estate and support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

RICHARD PARRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, THORN CROSS: NEC, delegates, guests, thank you Kirkham for bringing this motion. Locally we've seen an increase in violence, specifically weapons assaults, especially prisoner on prisoner, and MPT failures. This is due in part to the failures that are the recategorisation process and the release scheme. As lone workers, during any violent incident we must either make a choice to try to protect ourselves or withdraw. Please help us protect ourselves in this open estate during these volatile times and support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so Andy Baxter for the NEC.

ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC. The NEC support this motion. We've heard of changes that have taken place in the open estate. We all know that the pressure will increase even further through the latest capacity-driven schemes to move prisoners that are not ready and not a good fit to open conditions. Returns from the open estate to the closed estate are at the highest levels we've ever seen. That alone is a key stability indicator that must not be ignored. The open establishments face the highest period of risk in their history. It has been confirmed that staff in the open estate more often than not work in isolated conditions. Some of the open estate establishments are huge. Alarm bell response at times could be many minutes away. There would also be a benefit to the employer of having a workforce that is universally trained, equipped and cross-deployable. The Executive constantly remind HMPPS that resource must follow risk. The risk is increasing in the open estate and PPE should not be optional. PAVA and a baton should be on the utility belt of every prison officer across the full prison estate, daytime and nighttime. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Straight to the vote then, thank you. Thank you, we can display those results. Excellent, that's been

carried.

<Applause>

So just a few things, Conference, before I discharge you for dinner. You will notice that Nicola Hubert is going round with a bucket. It's to raise funds for, well, a charity of our choice. It would probably be the Air Ambulance, I would think. And it's cash only, no cards. English money please, no Euros. Good friend to the left of me – you may notice he's got a rather healthy grey beard and he's agreed to shave it off in aid of charity, but we must raise at least £500. So, when you see the bucket, throw your loose change in, throw your loose notes in, and let's raise as much as we can.

We've got a couple of fringe meetings. So, we've got one in the Johnson Room on Level 5 for the health and safety protocol. It will be really useful for you if you don't know what that is, or you want to ask any questions about it. And we've also got a really interesting one about PTSD research that's been carried out – that's on the Bistro Level 1 in this building, so please make sure they're well attended. Apart from that, thanks for a great morning, see you at 1:45pm. Thank you.

<Break>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, Conference, I'll bring you to order again for this afternoon's session. We do have a break this afternoon. We've got a guest speaker at 2 o'clock, so we'll plough on with a few motions first. We're on to motion 16, which is a Sudbury motion. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you, Whatton.

Motion 16

Conference mandates the NEC to engage and lobby the employer to provide additional resources into the Open Estate by way of Dedicated Search Team.

SUDBURY

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, I'm speaking on behalf of motion 16, "Conference mandates the NEC to engage and lobby the employer to provide additional resources into the open estate by the way of dedicated search teams." Conference, the illicit and criminal economy grows ever-stronger in our prisons. Smartphones, Bluetooth devices, USB and storage devices, drugs and drugs-related paraphernalia are forever and increasingly being found within our establishments. But what is more alarming and is deeply concerning is the increase in weapons. If, like Sudbury, you know your establishment has a problem when the local takeaway takes an order from the staff on a Saturday night as a way to mark the closing of the week and the owner asks, "Where do you want it dropping off? At the gate or the fence?" Comical, yes, but sadly an example of how the forgotten estate is yet again being left under-resourced and unequipped to deal with the increase of unsuitable prisoners and OCGs being pushed into the open estate. They're flooding our establishments with the aforementioned articles and they undermine the valuable work that we do and they place the public at risk.

At Sudbury and at many local establishments in the open estate, we have no local security resource at our disposal. We rely solely on the area and national security resources through the deployment of the NDST and the area search teams to support us locally. This resource is continually in high demand across the area prison group. When they do attend Sudbury, they find a treasure trove of illicit items and unauthorised articles. Again, this only highlights a classic prison service trick – a short-term fix for a long-term problem. So, how are we going to fix this? Well, a start would be to return dedicated search teams back into open establishments which, like many things, were cut from the prisons under benchmarking. We need trained and equipped DST officers within our local staffing groups who, on a daily basis, are challenging and disrupting the elicit and criminal economy, acting on intelligence in the first instance and having a physical presence within our prisons, rather than relying on national and area resources. Colleagues, let us take back control of our open prisons, return security, order and discipline and end the era of the illicit supermarket sweep within the open estate. Please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No speakers, so Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, asking you to support the motion. The open estate plays a vital role in the prison system – it represents the essential step in rehabilitation and reintegration. But for it to function effectively, and above all safely, we must ensure that the security infrastructure is fit for purpose. Right now, that means addressing the increasing pressures placed on staff and tightening gaps that could compromise the integrity of the estate. Unauthorised items and illicit substances are persistent challenges. Without the proper support, our staff are being asked to do more with less, stretching already limited resources and leaving room for risks to grow. A dedicated search team would not only strengthen our frontline but also send a clear message that we are serious about security, serious about safety and serious about supporting our workforce. Such a team would bring focussed expertise, consistency in practice and, more importantly, reassurance for staff and those in our care. The open estate is managed with the same vigilance as the rest of the system. We are not asking for luxury, we are asking for necessities. Please support this motion. Give us the tools to take this forward. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Conference, we can go to the vote. And we can view the outcome of that vote. That's been

carried, thank you.

Motion 17 is Sudbury. Seconder for Sudbury? Thank you, Brinsford.

Motion 17

Conference mandates the NEC to engage and lobby the employer to provide additional resources into the Open Estate by way of Dedicated Security Team.

SUDBURY

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, speaking on behalf of Conference motion 17, "Conference mandates the NEC to engage and lobby the employer to provide additional resources into the open estate by the way of Dedicated Security Teams." Colleagues, further to the overview that I set out in Conference motion 16, I would like to build upon this and once again call upon your support for the forgotten estate. We need a return of the Dedicated Security Teams equipped with prison dogs to support our establishments locally rather than relying on regional area resources, a resource that can be given and easily taken away by the simplest act of the readjustment and amendment to an area prison group, which has happened to my home establishment at Sudbury. The local commitment to prison dogs from our sister establishment, HMP Nottingham, has now gone, leaving us without any specialist dog handlers to support on visits and area searches during key times of the day. This support previously enabled us to disrupt the illicit prison economy that was expanding within our establishments. We now must rely on a commitment to specialist dog handlers from the West Midlands, a commitment very much like the Prison Service Pay Review Body recommendations of still not being seen – which, I am sure I speak for my members and everyone here, we'll be very happy when we do see them.

A high percentage of you in this room will know that the open estate is forgotten about – overlooked by the closed. We should not in 2025 have to rely on regional and prison area resources to keep our establishment safe. We must be equipped with the necessary resources to address offending and criminal behaviour within our establishments. In doing so, we can increase safety within our open prisons and the prolonged, lasting effects of the illicit and unauthorised articles that are increasingly prevalent will be challenged. All we ask is to be afforded the same equality that our colleagues within the closed estate have been afforded, and we need your support to bring this under-resourced and overshadowed area of the prison service to the attention of ministers and the HMPPS Executive Directors who are at present playing blind man's bluff with our safety and security. Colleagues, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers, asking you to support this motion. I'd like to thank Sudbury for bringing this motion to Conference. As you are aware, the cascading of prisoners to the open estate brings concerns and one around organised crime, criminality and OCGs. Dedicated search teams have predominantly been for the closed estate, with the historical dilution of regional DSTs and dog sections within regional sections, with regional bias from PGDs. Their own autonomy has caused favouritism amongst areas and some establishments not being able to access this facility. So, local dedicated security teams would provide a protective security resource. Regional DSTs, when invited, are coming in to find contraband and illicit items, which is only the tip of the iceberg, and therefore a dedicated team that provides items that injure or hurt our members, either physically or connected to OCGs, is a necessity and a need. The open estate used to have security teams and dogs teams based within the establishment, and they were very successful in finding items when returning prisoners to closed conditions. Support this motion as it protects not just the open but returning prisons. Support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Geoff. We can take that to the vote. And we can see the results of that vote. Thank you, that's carried. Conference, before I invite our first guest speaker to address you, I would like you to turn to Motion 49 which is in relation to the Rademaker Report, and we're going to hear that so Jennifer can see what the feeling is about that. It's an NEC motion – do we have a seconder please? Thank you. Steve Gillan for the NEC. Behind you.

Motion 49

Conference accept that the processes which are designed to address completely unacceptable behaviour by managers highlighted by our members is not fit for purpose, and that too often unacceptable behaviour by a manager is simply overlooked/ ignored or covered up. Conference recognises that the report produced by Jennifer Rademaker commissioned by senior leaders over 18 months ago has been on the desk of senior leaders for over a year, we hypothesise that some of the content must be unpalatable, that the report simply highlights issues we are already aware of, that some managers bully and victimise some of our members, conference calls on HMPPS to publish the report in its entirety and get on and deal with the report recommendations.

NEC

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, delegates – a very important motion here on the Jennifer Rademaker report. Of course, the motion is a little bit out of date now because it had to be in by 31st January, but nevertheless a very important motion. We've now seen

Jennifer Rademaker's report. Obviously myself and Mark have spoken to her several weeks ago about the report and we understand why the full report won't be published, and that's to protect some of the victims that came forward with their horrendous stories.

When myself and Mark met with Jennifer to give evidence, and other members of the Executive did as well, we gave her a report on some of the issues that we have been told about over many years and decades. And I wondered if Jennifer would have actually believed us. I think she did. Oh, she believed us. But let me also pay tribute because I don't think sometimes we often do it enough. Phil Copple and Amy Rees, I think, were very brave in actually asking for this investigation to be done. The reason I say that is because I think they knew the depth of what was going on and the protectionism must go forever. The hard work, actually, starts now in the recommendations that Jennifer has made. And I don't want to steal her thunder because she'll be speaking shortly after this motion, but let me give you a flavour of what has happened over many, many years. And some of you who have been in the service for as long as I have, some 35 years, will know the boys' clubs that used to go about together – the Masons, Freemasons, all covering for each other and different things.

And I've got to say, even recently, some of the horror stories that we have heard about and supported our members. So, for example, there was a female POA member, who happens to be a branch official as well. She reported something of a sexual nature to the employer. It was ignored – no investigation, no nothing. But she was tenacious, she actually asked the Union for help and she asked Thompsons Solicitors for help. With our support, she bypassed the employer and reported it to the police. Guess what? The police didn't want to know because they said it was her word against the other individual. But she didn't give up. Thompsons then wrote a letter to the police asking for them to reopen the investigation. Credit to them, they did, but because this individual wouldn't let go, other women came forward to report that it had happened to them as well by the same individual. This individual, now, due to the tenacity of our branch official, has been found guilty in Crown Court and also is awaiting sentence. It wouldn't have happened but for the tenacity and bravery of our member and I, for one, am very proud of that individual because, if she hadn't been tenacious, if she hadn't been brave and we hadn't supported her, HMPPS would have done nothing about it.

And that is a familiar story that we've heard over and over. We even know that branch officials on branch Committees, if they raise their head above the parapet, are targeted – are targeted by unscrupulous governors and senior managers for daring to stand up for their membership. We know of bullying, harassment, racial discrimination and it can have no place. Now, you've heard me say it before, it can have no place in the POA but it can have no place in the prison service either or, indeed, society.

But the hard work does start now with the recommendations, and myself and Mark and the Executive have laid it on the line. This just can't be an issue where a report has been done and then there's no outcome. There's got to be independent processes that our members have got confidence in to see justice, so that they feel safe at work, free of harassment, free from bullying, free from racism – so that they can come to work in a safe and decent manner. There should be no hiding place either for the people that do it to them. And all too often, individual governors, senior managers, have either been paid off, moved on, promoted sideways, to get them out of the way. No longer. And we won't agree any protocol or anything like that if we don't think it goes far enough.

Now, we specifically asked Jennifer if she would oversee and have an input into the processes going forward and she says that is her aim and objective. I just hope politically and from internally that she's allowed to do that unfettered. Because she has our full support after calling them out. Let me also tell you about where it impacts our members. When some people who may be looking after their loved ones, it may be cancer sufferers, that actually want to condense their hours or to do x, y and z, and they're told, "No, you can't do it." How uncaring is that of an employer to look after someone that may be terminally ill, that may be suffering, their family is suffering and different things, only to be told, "No, you've got to do your full hours and we can't facilitate this," and what have you? What sort of employer does that to their employees? They should hang their heads in shame, actually, when they do that sort of stuff to our people. They go through the motions and then say, "No, sorry, we can't facilitate that." That is so wrong. So wrong on every level. But let me also tell you, we cannot just now let this be lip service, there needs to be serious outcomes.

And I know the report has been delayed and delayed and delayed, whether that's politicians or government lawyers or whoever, but I certainly know that Jennifer had to run things past independent lawyers, actually, as well to make sure that she was protecting the victims. I've got no problem with them identifying the guilty because they shouldn't have any protections. And let me tell you, and let me finish on this, we pushed for this with your help. Year after year, we pushed for this sort of independence and I think we're on the cusp of receiving that. Thank you, Conference, and support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No other speakers, so we can go to the vote. Thank you, we can view the outcome. Thank you, that's carried.

Conference, let me introduce our guest speaker, Jennifer Rademaker. Jennifer joined the Ministry of Justice – not yet –

<Laughter>

– as a non-executive board member on 21st August 2023. She brings over 35 years of global experience in payment technology and financial services. She has a strong track record in leading transformative technology initiatives, driving rapid scale of products and services and de-risking deployment of new technology and technology mitigations. Before her retirement in 2024, Jennifer worked for Mastercard for 20 years in global and regional roles in technology delivery, product development, sales, strategy, consulting and future of work. Her career includes a consistent focus on culture, engagement and inclusivity. Jennifer is the chair of the board of trustees at Fine Cell Work and a NED at Fair4All Finance, ICM Mobility and Snapper Services. She holds a BSc in Statistics from Lehigh University and a MSc in Statistics from Iowa State. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Jennifer Rademaker.

<Applause>

JENNIFER RADEMAKER – NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE: Thank you all and good afternoon. I was a little nervous about having the post-lunch slot but Steve just gave such a rousing speech that I hope all of you have a high level of energy after that. I want to thank Mark and Steve for the invitation to speak to you all today. As they mentioned, I am the author of a recently published review of professional standards related to bullying, harassment and discrimination in HMPPS. I was approached by HMPPS to conduct this review of how the organisation handles bullying, harassment and discrimination. HMPPS was being proactive and wanted this review, as Steve mentioned, and I do have to say I agree with him. I think Amy and Phil were being very courageous in asking for this review because they met me and they knew that I was going to give my opinion in an unfettered way. I have to say, through the process they gave me tremendous access – no door was closed to me. I had a great support team led by Natalia Oprea, who is here today as well, and I was able to conduct a number of interviews, which I'll tell you more about later, do a lot of data analysis and do things like go through two years of employment tribunal cases. So, they really opened the door to me to allow me to do the investigation that I felt this organisation deserved. That, I think, is a reflection of the fact that doing something about this was already a priority for Amy and Phil. They had already taken some steps to address opportunities for improvement, including things like establishing TUBU, the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit.

So, as a result of this support, my report might read differently than similar reviews conducted for other public services. I did not need to convince HMPPS to take action. Frankly, as we've heard today from Mark and Steve, you all have already been doing a great job of advocating for that and it was a well-known thing that something needed to be done. So instead, I was able to focus on identifying specific practical steps that would drive the positive change they sought, and that's what I've delivered in the 12 recommendations that are in my report.

Now, early on in the process of doing the research for the report, I had an incredibly valuable session with Mark and Steve, valuable and humbling. Mark and Steve challenged me to listen carefully to your concerns and to develop a report that would make a difference. Mark in particular was very concerned that my review would be well-meaning but not result in the change that HMPPS needed. I'm saying that a little more politically than Mark did, but he got his point across and it was tough for me to hear because I was coming in and wanted to make a difference but I thought about that conversation a lot as I did my work. And that was one of the lenses and the hurdles that I set for myself, that whatever I produced had to do right by the concerns that the POA had raised to me and that it had to be something that could be implementable and would make a difference, the change that all of you have sought. So, while Mark and Steve were appropriately challenging, they also gave me a gift. They generously offered to put me in contact with POA members who had made bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints, and I eagerly accepted. This for me was really an important gift because I needed to hear first-hand of the experiences that people had. While I was open about the fact that I was conducting a review, this really fast-tracked things, having people come to me and share their experiences. Those meetings were entirely confidential – they were powerful, upsetting and sobering, and they gave me insights that I could not have gotten through any other means. So, I am very grateful for that support from the POA.

Now, some people have asked why I didn't include those stories in my review. Early on, I really picked up on the significant fear of retaliation that permeated this organisation in a way that I have not seen in any other organisation that I have ever worked with or for. Even though I knew I would try, if I wanted to include the stories in my review, I would heavily anonymise them – I just could not risk inadvertently exposing people. So, the people that spoke to me did so in confidence and they got my commitment that their stories would stay with me and go no further. But their experiences, while I don't share their stories, their experience really informed and underpin the recommendations.

In addition to those confidential interviews, I also spent time visiting prison staff, interviewing prison officers, governors, new colleague mentors, members of the standard coaching team, staff networks and many other prison staff functions, and I did a number of site visits as well. And, as I mentioned, I ploughed through two years of employment tribunal cases. The most disturbing and recurring theme that emerged from those conversations was a lack of trust in the current system for reporting bullying, harassment and discrimination, coupled with this fear of retaliation that I mentioned earlier. Employees surfaced concerns about finding a safe, neutral party to hear their complaints, getting a fair hearing and feeling confident that they would not suffer any negative ramifications for reporting. Looking at the current process, I felt those employee concerns were valid, particularly in a highly networked and enclosed environment like the prison service. So, as a result, my first recommendation and, in my view, my most impactful is that HMPPS should establish an independent channel outside of the line management structure for reporting, investigating and decisioning bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints, where a dedicated team of well-trained experts can handle matters in a ring-fenced, confidential and standardised process. I believe this could be a game-changer.

<Applause>

Thank you. I have to say, there was a lot of support from Phil and Amy, particularly, for this recommendation which, as I said, I think is the one that is going to have the most lasting impact. And I want to linger on two aspects of this recommendation. The first is the importance of having an independent team that you can report to that will handle your complaints. So, no longer having to go to your manager or to somebody else in your environment to report your complaints, but to be able to go to an independent group who will do it. And that, I believe, will bring the assurance of a fair outcome to you and tackle this fear of retaliation because it will be done in this ring-fenced, confidential manner.

The second point I want to make on this, as part of the recommendations, is the importance of having experts do this. It was clear to me, particularly as I looked through the employment tribunal cases, that as much as we could try to train people to handle these kinds of complaints, you might only see one or two in your career and that doesn't give the expertise to be able to handle it well, whereas having this handled by experts who will do so in a consistent manner, in a professional manner, that should then bring the surety that your complaint is being handled in a confidential, efficient, professional way. Efficiency is important because I heard many, many times, "It just takes too long to get these kinds of things resolved," right? So that's my point on efficiency. So, these are the two components, the independence and then having people who do this for a job, who are experts in this. And I believe that those two things combined will deliver – will be a first step in the change we need. It's not the only step, because there are 11 more recommendations. Don't worry, I'm not going to go through them all, but I am going to move to a second one that I think has a supporting relationship to this first recommendation. And that is looking at the new, independent process – it's not enough to just establish it. Let's be honest, trust

has to be built among you, right? You're coming out of years of a system that did not work for you and so trust has to be built. And how can we do that? Well, one recommendation that I had – again that has been embraced by HMPPS – is that they should begin reporting metrics on bullying, harassment and discrimination matters and their outcomes on a regular basis, and by that I mean quarterly, let's say to all employees. No details, just numbers, so anonymity would be protected. But I'm talking about, on every quarter, seeing a report that you all would have access to that says, in the last quarter 100 cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination were handled by this group, of which 20 were bullying, 30 were discrimination, another 50 were harassment, and of those the outcomes 20% resulted in dismissal, 30% resulted in some other form of sanctions, 40% went to remediation etc., so that you can see for yourself that the system is working, that the pipe of complaints is being addressed and how they're being addressed. I think that is important in order to start to rebuilt trust so that you can see for yourself that this is working.

And it's an important step as well in terms of transparency. I think we need more transparency about this matter in general. So, that is a second supporting recommendation to that first, most powerful one, and that is to allow you to see the data.

So, as I said, I made 12 recommendations. I just want to touch on a few more that I think are especially high impact. Now, Mark said earlier we should not lose good people, and to that I want to say amen. And you are good people and you're also rare people. As a relative outsider, I am always struck by the special and rare talent that's required to work in prison and probation. What do I mean by rare talent? You have great people skills coupled with the ability to set and maintain boundaries. Those two don't usually show up at the same time, so that combination in itself is incredibly rare. You have a zoom lens that allows you to focus on the big picture and then zoom in to details. You're able to multitask in a noisy, chaotic environment. You have a well-honed radar for potentially risky situations. You can think on your feet, reacting appropriately to an extremely broad spectrum of situations. You have courage – you're the kind of people who don't run away and, to paraphrase Rudyard Kipling, you keep your head when all about you are losing theirs. And finally a word that we've heard a couple of times today: unbelievably resilient. That is a rare talent profile, to have all of those things at once. It's difficult to find, so it means it's difficult to find you and it's important to keep you.

So, a number of my measures, while designed to address bullying, harassment and discrimination, also have my secondary agenda of making sure that we're able to attract and retain the very best talent. So, to go on to one of them, and Steve touched a little bit on this kind of situation before when he was talking about supporting a colleague who had a family member, for example, who was ill, and that recommendation is to review the process for handling workplace adjustments. When you need a workplace adjustment, that's an opportunity for the organisation to support you and to retain you so that you can continue to perform your job well. Or to support you through a really difficult time in your life when you need support more than you have before. It is an incredibly powerful moment for the employer to show loyalty to the employee. But too often I heard in my process that this sensitive process of handling a workplace adjustment or an accommodation was not handled well and that resulted in valuable talent leaving the organisation. People who had no other choice because their needs could not be accommodated than taking the decision to leave HMPPS, which to me is a tragedy. So, I called for the organisation to address inconsistencies in the application of managerial discretion. I think there's too much managerial discretion in how workplace accommodations are handled. I think if the occupational health team and the workplace adjustment team support your recommendations, then I think that the manager should just accept that as taken.

<Applause>

I also called on the organisation to address explicitly when recommendations from occupational health and the workplace adjustment team are disregarded. And when that happens, that to me again is unacceptable and needs to be justified because those recommendations, in my view, should just be accepted as they are.

Finally, as part of this, I called for them to provide more confidential channels for communicating medical information and adjustments. Frankly, in my view, it is not your manager's business to know why you need an accommodation or an adjustment. You should not have to justify your medical condition to your manager. You will have had that conversation already with occupational health or workplace adjustment, who are there to handle this. You should not have to reveal that information and it should not be part of a managerial discussion unless you choose to share it with your manager.

<Applause>

So that, to me, is a particularly powerful one as well. There were some other opportunities that I saw to reinforce professional standards more regularly and one of those was the performance feedback process. So, I recommended that HMPPS assess the current approach to performance feedback to bolster effectiveness in supporting professional standards of behaviour. What I am looking for is purposeful discussions during appraisals and other coaching conversations to cover not just what you do but how you do it as well. You could be the best at your job and actually getting your tasks done but, if you do it in a miserable way, if there is broken glass every time you walk into a room because your "how" – how you do things – is not appropriate, you're not following professional standards. That needs to be called out and I think that has resonated particularly with Phil and his team, the importance of having conversations about how. This is something that I have stressed should be at all levels of the organisation. So, conversations at the very top of the house on down on what you do but, equally important, how you do it matters.

I also recommended that HMPPS assess whether current hiring practices enable sufficient assessment of a candidate's alignment with HMPPS values prior to hiring. This is another really important one for me. I think it's very hard to train new values into someone and because I believe it takes a rare talent profile to be a great prison officer or probation officer, I think that has to be assessed carefully. And it's not just the talent profile, I believe you also have to have a vocation to do this work. So, aligning with values and gauging vocation need more focus in the hiring process for these incredibly people-centric roles. By the way, I also am a believer in the importance of in-person interviews for these roles. I think it's very hard to gauge over a Zoom interview whether or not somebody has what it takes to do these jobs.

So, I talk a lot about the talent at HMPPS because I think it's important to remember that this is a people business. I think some of my comments in this were also a bit of an "Aha!" moment to the organisation. Coming as an outsider, HMPPS is people dealing with other people. This is a people business. You don't manufacture semiconductors or sell shoes or grow corn or manage a shipping warehouse, you are people dealing with other

people. So, I was surprised that HMPPS's internal policies and practices were not more geared to support a people business. And that is something that, as I move forward in my engagement with not just HMPPS but the MoJ more broadly, will be a steady drumbeat from me. We cannot forget that this is a people organisation and everything needs to come back to how the people in this room and more broadly across the organisation are treated.

Now, I'm very pleased to say that HMPPS has accepted all of my recommendations and has action plans decked against each finding. I'm going to continue to stay engaged through the implementation of my recommendations but, at my request, with some sufficient distance so that I can continue to be a constructive challenger. That is important to me because I would like to be able to be in a position to challenge the implementation of this as it goes forward and to come back with subsequent recommendations. So, I want that distance to be able to continue to have that what I think is a healthy dynamic.

So, I'd like to close by thanking Mark and Steve for their early and clearly very influential meeting with me and for the trust they showed in me by sending some of their members who had experienced bullying, harassment and discrimination to speak with me. I don't use that word trust lightly. I can imagine that, for them, sending a POA member who they certainly would have had every reason to believe and think was traumatised by their experience to speak to yet another person, that required real trust and I'm very thankful for that. And to those people who shared those confidential interviews with me, I just want to say that I hope my handling of your sensitive and painful experiences honours that trust and that my report and recommendations do justice in addressing the challenges that you experienced. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well, Conference, what an absolutely fantastic address from Jennifer and I think after that I'm going to offer her a membership form, to be honest with you. Now, call me a detective, Jennifer, but I suspect that you're probably from America, specifically Philadelphia, so I'm guessing you're sort a Philadelphia Eagles type of girl. Now, it's tradition that, when Americans come to live in this country, they have to adopt a football team. Now, luckily for you, we've just been taken over, my club has just been taken over by a group of very rich Americans. So, it's only right that I should give you a gift and you should adopt Everton F.C. as your football team. So, when you drink your morning coffee –

BRANCH DELEGATE: Don't do it!

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: – you've got a nice Everton mug and I've got you a nice carrier bag because we've got some more gifts for you there. But please show your appreciation for Jennifer Rademaker.

<Applause>

Jennifer Rademaker, people.

<Applause>

Jennifer said she's going to stay because she now wants to be a POA member.

Right, on with business then, we're on to Motion 19 because 18 fell when 15 was adopted so 19 is Kirkham, can we have a seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 19

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for all band 2s in the Open Estate to be issued with Pava whilst performing their duties.

KIRKHAM

PHIL THORNTON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM: Good afternoon, Mr Chair, Conference, invited guests, delegates. Motion 19, then, is from ourselves, Conference, instructing NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for all Band 2s in the open estate to be issued with PAVA whilst performing their duties. I'm grateful for your support recently for 3, 4 and 5 but now I ask you just to think a little bit further please. I'm asking for your support again.

At Kirkham, many OSGs tasks have far more interaction with prisoners on any day than I may. Some of those tasks are in isolation and some can be in areas where contention looms. Their uniform is the same as mine. They wear a coat often that obscures their uniform – a prisoner can't tell the difference between one black and white uniform or another. And an angry or drug-fuelled prisoner will not ensure that he distinguishes between who he should attack, he'll just do so. OSGs have no PPE at all. They have a camera which I've mentioned earlier on but they've nothing to help them evade or escape a situation where they become in danger. We give them a fish knife on nights so we recognise that they may have to use that to save a prisoner's life, but what happens if that interaction turns ugly or turns unsavoury? The increased risk to me in the open estate due to all the factors that have been raised recently is equally the same for our Band 2 colleagues – they do need PAVA.

Now, a colleague mentioned to me, "Well, they're not trained." Well, train them! We trust them to work in highly important areas – control rooms. The gate at Kirkham, the welcome centre as we call it, sees a lot of activity, prisoners coming and going. They work in areas where I might need to summon them to be sharp, to be on time and to be able to call and summon assistance for me. So why don't we trust them to have some sort of protection and, more importantly, know when to use it. By having PAVA, they would have some way of escaping that difficult situation without relying on breakaway

techniques. And this is what I found out recently – breakaway techniques, SPEAR, not compulsory for an OSG. So, they can walk round Kirkham with absolutely no way of having any skill to protect themselves or break away from a situation because they're not obliged to take it. These are changing times, colleagues. It's a changing climate, the risk is increased and that risk is a risk to all of us. I ask you support the issuing of PAVA to OSGs in the open estate. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Hold on Phil.

KEITH STUTLEY – COMMITTEE MEMBER, FORD: Chair, colleagues, NEC, I remembered that bit this time round. I would also ask you to support this. I know some of you from closed conditions are sitting there thinking, "Well, why do they need it? They don't have any prisoner contact." Well, actually in the open estate they do and they have an awful lot of prisoner contact. When we're doing roll checks at night, we don't have the luxury of having the offenders being locked behind doors. They can walk out. What's to stop somebody from walking out and attacking somebody because he's off his head on drugs and attacking somebody because he sees a uniform? He's not going to sit or stand there and go, "Hang on, have you got a white stripe? No, alright, off you go." He's going to go in there and he's going to batter someone because he's off on drugs or he's raged because somebody said no earlier on. Our Band 2s in the open estate do a very difficult job with very little training and very little protection. Please help them by giving them that protection, support the motion.

<Applause>

MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, I'm asking you to reject this motion. So, I understand the sentiment but what is an OSG going to do once they deploy PAVA? What if it doesn't work? They're not C&R trained, they can't draw their baton, the rules around them carrying PPE – they're not allowed to because they don't have the authority. OK, what if HMPPS then want to train OSGs in C&R, baton training, what's the need for a Band 3? So please reject the motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, visitors, I wish you to reject this motion and refer to the OSG agreement when it comes to supervising prisoners in prisons. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so over to Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in favour of the motion. We've all heard the evidence today from the open estate. The open estate is changing beyond all recognition. The Band 2 role in the open estate is totally different from a Band 2 role in the closed estate. There's so much more prisoner contact. And HMPPS will come out and say, "They've all been risk assessed. They're all Cat. D prisoners. They're all good lads." I beg to differ. We all know what we're sending to the open estate because of the overcrowding crisis. And I've heard what some of the speakers have said here – Band 2s aren't trained – this is purely to give them a chance to defend themselves should the need arise. Please support the motion before it's too late. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Do you want a right to reply? Right to reply, Phil.

PHIL THORNTON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM: Yes, please do, yeah. I heard one of my colleagues call the open estate the forgotten estate, which resonated with me. I've often felt OSGs are the forgotten rank. And, as I've said before, I'm not suggesting that they're not capable, of course they're capable. We trust them to do so much in our jails. Given them PAVA as a way of escaping a situation that you don't come across, they do not come across, in the closed estate. It does beg the question, they're not here to take our jobs, though you do need if you're going to cover the jail with wholly Band 2s. Maybe there's no place for Band 2s in open prisons, maybe next year's motion would be that we remove those and we just have all Band 3s. I don't know but that's not for discussion today. But, no, I say they need some way of being able to evade some of the situations. And I come back to what I said before: two Saturdays ago, a prisoner presented himself to the office with a 7" scar down his face. Those prisoners that are prepared to do that for an amount of money are in the open estate and they're being sent there by people in your jails who do not care. They press TPRS, there's his risk assessment sent in. He wouldn't be a Cat D but he'd be a TPRS, and they're coming to us. And me and my colleagues at all ranks have got no way of protecting ourselves. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Phil. Thank you, Conference, that vote is now open. And we can now close that vote. That's been carried.

<Applause>

Motion 20 is Standford Hill. Seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 20

With the introduction of TPRS and the reduction of the custodial part of the sentence, prisoners are being moved to open conditions before they are suitable. Please lobby HMPPS for full C&R Advance Teams to be implemented in the Open Estate.

STANDFORD HILL

LEE SHEPHERD – BRANCH SECRETARY, STANDFORD HILL: Conference, Chair, NEC, invited guests, 'With the introduction of TPRS and the reduction of the custodial part of the sentence, prisoners are being moved to open conditions before they are suitable. Please lobby HMPPS for full C&R Advance Teams to be implemented into the open estate." Conference, you have all just heard us all highlight the issues that are concerning the open estate. But another issue that we face on a daily basis is that, not only do we not have full PPE we also don't have full C&R teams. We are under-funded, under-resourced and under-staffed. This is another great example of this.

The resources of fully trained C&R teams were stripped from us quite some years ago. The open estates are starting to bubble and bubble a lot. Yet again, this is to the thanks of the inappropriate Cat Ds in the open estate. HMPPS will always ask us to provide evidence to back up our resources but we are on the ground. We can see with our own eyes what is happening. Let's not be a statistic before it's too late. There is already an increasing need for the specialist national tactical response units being deployed around the country. This is due to the frequent callouts to address the rising prison violence that we are all facing and we are no different in the open estate. This mess was not created by us, but we are the ones that have to pick up the pieces when it goes wrong. Give us back our resources. The open estates are being destabilised and at a fast rate. Enough is enough. I've said it before and I'll say it again, the police in a quiet country suburb have fully trained riot teams, the same as their counterparts in the cities. So why don't we? Why are we putting up with this? It's so prevalent, more than ever, that we have a need for this resource. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, speaking in support of Conference Motion 20, to which I would like to thank my colleague from Standford Hill for bringing the motion to conference. The open estate, as I'm sure you're aware, does not provide an advanced C&R commitment, nor any local advanced C&R units and sections. If, like Sudbury, your local C&R <inaudible> will be woefully inadequate, to such a degree that last time we had to do a planned use of force intervention we had to borrow stab-proof body armour from HMP Foston Hall just across the road because Sudbury didn't have enough, and the ones that we did have didn't have any in-armour plating. Another damning example of how the under-resourced, under-staffed and ill-equipped forgotten open estate is again and again being overlooked and overshadowed.

The open estate will continue to highlight the TPRS scheme and how dangerous it is becoming due to unsuitable prisoners that we are receiving. Edmund Burke – a writer, literary critic, philosopher – once said, "Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it." Well, it's quite clear that Mr Copple and his executive directors have a short memory and they don't remember the Ford Prison riot. They can't remember the disorder and the chaos that occurred, but we can and we do. We have the foresight to see what's coming, and the danger that the HMPPS executive are putting and continue to put staff and the public in danger. Our open establishments need to have an advanced C&R capability. Very much like our sentiments over baton and PAVA in day estate, we need to be equipped and resourced to meet the danger and the threat that is ever-lurking. We need to be able to stop disorder and protect the public. Conference, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to support this motion. I'd like to thank Standford Hill for bringing this motion. We've already debated in an earlier motion around the concerns of unsuitable prisoners and the suitability of the TPRS regarding wrong categorised prisoners within a less-secure environment. The escalating violence and incidences are a concern as the majority of open estate seem to be located in a rural location with little or no secure perimeter. It would be an additional resource to protect our members and the public. By the time any national deployment could be organised, the prison would be empty, damaged or burnt to the ground. The implantation of C&R Advance Teams would mitigate the risk and quicken the response, especially with the ever-increasing incidence developing in the open estate. There was a time that the open estate had C&R Advance Teams strategically placed in their numbers for local response and mutual aid, but this was removed due to a cost-cutting exercise. Conference, support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, we can take that to the vote. Thank you, that vote is now closed. It's been carried.

Motion 21 fell when 15 got adopted, so on to 22, Kirkham. Seconder for Kirkham please? Thank you.

Motion 22

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to increase the Staffing compliment in the Open Estate due to the changing nature of the estate after the recent sentencing review.

PHIL THORNTON – BRANCH CHAIR, KIRKHAM: Good afternoon again, colleagues, NEC, Mr Chair, invited guests. Last time for me, you'll be glad to hear. Motion 22, Conference, instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to increase the staffing complement in the open estate due to the changing nature of that estate after the recent Sentencing Review. You'll notice I try not to use the word ratio in any of this. I try. Colleagues, I stood here last year in support of Sudbury's motion regarding how unfit for purpose the assessment allocation to the open estate is. You supported it unequivocally and I thank you. However, a year on, nothing has changed. Last year at Kirkham, we returned 245 prisoners. In the first three months of this year, we've returned 82 to closed. They consist of, are you ready, prisoners with further charges – yeah, further charges, who believes it? Those who refuse to engage with the regime, those who continue to take multiple illicit substances, those who engage in their illicit economies, those who are bullied to receive drops and become abscond risks – it goes on and on. These pressures leave us regularly working on <inaudible> I know you all have issues and concerns but we've no physical barriers, you've heard we've no PPE. We can't lock up as easily as you can in a closed establishment. We are a vast, vast site, as I've mentioned.

Last year, we had another critical HMIP inspection, the irony of which is that the visiting team had no understanding of what TPRS was and how it has crippled any semblance of us delivering a purposeful regime. Yet even though they were briefed and they recognised it in their report, they damned us anyway. Kirkham last year saw the largest number of TPRS transfers in in the country. Prisoners arriving with little time left to serve and with Cat C attitudes to work and conforming with our regime. The inspectors berated the relationship between the staff and prisoners and some of it echoed the last two reports, but how are we to build healthy relationships with prisoners when members are being pulled from their duties and dealing with situations that in a utopian Cat D we shouldn't?

The governor wants to implement a link officer scheme. You can call it what you will – personal officer, key-worker. We all agree it has massive benefits – increased knowledge of the prisoners, we have a first point of contact, better dynamic security built on valued relationships. But how do we do this with our current staffing levels when we're dealing with transient behaviour? We can't. And that is also considering how far away we would be from having the numbers of staff to deliver what is recognised for a personal officer scheme. But consider the benefits of a valued personal officer scheme. In the next few days, we're faced with HDC-12. Currently at Kirkham we've 235 who will be eligible and will be discharged. Our roll will drop to around 400 on a prison with a CNA of 699, and what will happen then? It's a question – will the prison service leave us those spaces or will they want them filling? Well, you know the answer. It's possible the recent Sentencing Review will have made it possible, in theory, for a prisoner who receives a 15-year determinate sentence with some remand time thrown in and a little bit of offending behaviour work completed to arrive at Kirkham with five years left to serve. 15-year sentences aren't given out lightly, they're given out to serious offenders. We already have 31% of our prisoners who are OCGs. Can we rely on probation staff, POMs and OMUs to really scrutinise those they send us as the prison service suggests they will? I think not. I've seen it. We'll continue to have OCGs and those involved actively in their illicit economies in our prison, with a continued flow of unmotivated, uninterested TPRS prisoners, many with drugs habits at their mercy. The recipe is unpalatable, the inherent danger is all because, as I mentioned earlier, capacity is key. This is a perfect storm of supply and demand and it often sees staff running round, dealing with the effects akin to the Keystone Cops. I often think that we're HMP Chaos and we're a Cat C open.

Additional staff would allow us to search and disrupt the trafficking of drugs into our establishment, and there are certain times of the working day when every single officer is profile work that gives us no capacity to search returning workers. Drugs, illicit items, weapons can literally be walked into our prison. The risk to myself, my colleagues and our members is steadily increasing, the work that has been created is increasing and the disruption is increasing. Colleagues, I ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well done, Phil.

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, speaking on behalf and in support of motion 22. I would like to thank Kirkham for bringing this forward. Like all establishments, we are still operating under the disastrous benchmarking-set staffing levels, and governors and senior managers are still working to the old faithful ratio of 1:30, which we all know doesn't exist as it's now based on risk and mitigating that risk. The current benchmark staffing resources allow nothing for the increase in unsuitable and presumed low-risk prisoners. It does nothing to cater for the increased number of interim prison escorts returning prisoners to closed conditions, which with other Cat D establishments like Sudbury it is occurring on a daily basis and in some cases two to three times a day, a resource implication that leaves many of our open prisons barely at the minimum staffing levels. We have no staffing complement to deal with the increased number of prisoners that are being segregated for non-compliance or unsuitability for open conditions, just as our receptions are not resourced and incorrectly profiled to receive prisoners late, well outside of the reception operating times, due to the population pressures.

This insufficient staff is taking a burden on our workplace planning units to cater for the increased workload. I do sympathise with our colleagues on the NEC because I know they share our concerns. The problem is not the NEC buying into this motion in Conference, but rather the employer. The employer will always pull out the old faithful that additional resource will cost too much to the public purse, to which I would like to pose a question. We have an Executive Directorate that is top heavy. When in our service's history have we ever had two Director Generals, a Director General CEO and our Director General Operations that does the same job as the Chief Operating Officer? Then a few years ago they introduced the AED level of management, which was not required and not necessary. We are top heavy within senior employee relations managers that do nothing to help us, only hinder us. They're the waste and they're the detriment to the public purse. Cut them and put that back into the open estate and the closed estate. Please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

KEITH STUTLEY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, FORD: Chair, NEC, colleagues, speaking in support of the motion. Again, I would like to thank

Kirkham for bringing this forward. This is something that needs to happen. We need extra staff, we need the whole thing to be looked at. Currently, on nights in an open prison, we will have one CM, two officers and three OSGs. At Ford, one of those is a fixed post. What happens when we have to send one out to hospital that has to be escorted? That means that we are then down to one officer, one CM, two OSGs and a fixed post. It's not good enough, it's not right, we need it changed. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in favour of the motion. Wow, I've been coming to Conference for quite a long time now – I've never heard so many concerns raised about the open estate. It must be obvious to everybody in this room here today, the open estate is in crisis. It's no longer a Cat D open estate and, to paraphrase Kirkham, it's now a Cat C open estate – that's what we've got here. The risk has increased greatly, so to use a prison service saying, resource must follow the risk. Let's make sure the open estate has the correct resource in place to deal with the increased risk. Thank you. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote has now opened, Conference. And we can now view the results of that vote. That's been carried, thank you for that. It's now 3 o'clock – go and get yourself a brew and I'll see you at 20 past.

<Break>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Conference, I'll bring you to order. Thank you, Conference. Before we continue with business, we did have scheduled Karl Dalton, General Secretary of the Southern Ireland POA, but he's not well so his Deputy General Secretary, Gabriel Keaveny, will be addressing us and giving us fraternal greetings from the Southern Ireland POA. When you see some of their terms and conditions and pay scales, it makes your eyes water. They've done such a good job, but I'm guessing we all face the same problems in our jails as they do over the pond. But it gives me great pleasure to introduce Gabriel. Gabriel, the floor is yours my mate.

<Applause>

GABRIEL KEAVENY – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY, SOUTHERN IRELAND POA: Can I just start off by saying we're not carried shoulder high, even though the terms and conditions are pretty OK. Prison officers, they're not good at thinking, certainly the Irish ones aren't. But in any event, I'm delighted to bring fraternal greetings to you from Ireland. And it was great to see Mick Pimblett and Dave Todd at our Annual Conference in Galway, which took place about a week and a half ago. They would have listened to the debates and the motions and it's no surprise to anybody here that the issues that you're discussing here today emerge across the water.

I'm at this business, as you can see from my hairstyle, a pretty long period of time – and in 34 years we have never seen overcrowding so bad. We're about 25% over what we can safely manage in the prisons. We're a lot smaller than yourselves but the places are absolutely jam-packed. They manufacture, they put in two bunks into a cell and they say it has a cell capacity of two. It's messing around with the figures and the place has never, ever – we've never seen such overcrowding. There's no plans in sight in relation to how they're going to deal with it. However, they did purchase a number of modular units for the open centres. Now, we've no issue with overcrowding in the open centres, as it transpires. So, they spent €600,000 each on these modular homes for prisoners nearing the end of their sentence. We told the Minister for Justice he could build a five-bedroom detached house for the prisoner and it would have been cheaper. So, the money isn't as big a challenge in Ireland, for whatever reason. We protested vehemently about this expenditure and they still went ahead and they did it.

Assaults on staff continue. It's on the increase, as you know yourselves – with the drugs, the violence is on the increase as well. Since I spoke to you last, we had an officer's home, a serious arson attack on an officer's home – they tried to burn himself and his wife out of the building just for being a prison officer. So, we at this stage don't carry batons or pepper spray, we go in with our shirt sleeves, so it's a unique set-up to tell you the relationship is that good. But any event, we have an agreement with them to introduce it and they have to change legislation.

But I suppose the biggest thing I heard you talking about here today was the drones. Of course we're inundated with drone deliveries as well. A massive cost involved – each delivery is estimated about €60,000. Our fear, which we've told management, is of a firearm being delivered. We know flick knives actually are quite popular in these packages. So, they were delivering them – first of all they would set alight to the package, it would be dropped down and it would burn directly through the net and the prisoners would get it in the exercise yard. So, now we've put up steel netting and I heard this discussed today. We've put up steel netting in some yards but the prisoners are quite ingenious in what they do. So, in our high-security prison in Portlaoise, they set off the smoke detectors and there was steel netting put in the yard so that was out of bounds. They set off the smoke detectors, the vents opened under division and the drone just dropped straight into the landings.

So, a couple of suggestions, then, that the prison service put forward for dealing with it. They bought a lot of drones and they asked us to agree a circular with them in relation to officers being trained as pilots. So we said, "What are they going to do, the pilots?" So" they said, 'They're going to attack, the drone is going to attack the other drone."

<Laughter>

This is a fact. So, it was like the Battle of Britain over the Irish Prison Service prisons, you know.

<Applause>

This is true. So more than Mark earlier when he spoke to people, we spoke to our members who said, "Listen, this is non-runner. We're not going to have this craic." So, then the other suggestion was we would take over the flight of the drone coming in and we'd land it safely, OK? Until the Irish Aviation Authority says, "You will in your – that's not going to happen." The reality is, folks, unless we have technology to stop them getting across the boundary wall, it's never going to happen. And they have all these hairbrained ideas – they'll spend loads of money on daftness and the real impact is for officers in the prisons themselves. We know from searches that their phones are still in the wrappings, the drugs are still in the wrappings. There's that much drugs in the prisons, it's awash with drugs. So, where it's going to end, they're going to have to decide, but they're going to have to decide fast. There's nobody being prosecuted, nobody being brought before the courts in real terms. We've had one so far. One of our major prisons, Mountjoy, is right beside the police station, the Garda station, and the drones are flying in and you can see it on TikTok – anyone who has a sad life can look it up.

But then other issues the lads would have listened to us – issues about pensions, mandatory retirement age. The government decided to increase that without any consultation with ourselves. It's still voluntary but we see it as the thin end of the wedge and we continue to fight with it. There are a number of unions grouped together, like-minded unions, in relation to the issue.

One final thing, folks, I listened to a couple of delegates coming up here and telling us it's their first time to be here in Conference. I just thought it was brilliant. The reality is that we need new people involved. We need a constant stream of volunteers. It's the only way this works. The reality is, unless we stand together, we'll obviously fall individually, there's no doubt about that. It's only from the work that you do yourselves at the coal face that keeps management at bay. I talk to recruits all the time in our training centre and I tell them, if they think they're better off without the POA, well, they're sadly mistaken. Long may you continue to represent your members in the way you're doing it. I wish you all the best in the days ahead in your deliberations. Thanks very, very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well, thank you for that Gabriel, you're always welcome at this conference. I do have a gift here with Karl's name on so when you go home can you pass it on to him for us. It's cheaper than posting it.

GABRIEL KEAVENY – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY, SOUTHERN IRELAND POA: I will not. I'll have lost it.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: I'm only joking. He knows I'm only joking. Gabriel – give him a round of applause.

<Applause>

OK Conference, we are now moving on to motion 23, which is a Liverpool motion. Can we have a seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 23

That Conference instruct the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for a policy whereby any Prisoner who commits a serious assault against a member of Staff is immediately transferred out of the establishment.

LIVERPOOL

DAVID MARSHALL – BRANCH SECRETARY, LIVERPOOL: Chair, Conference, NEC, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

Motion reads, "That Conference instruct the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for a policy whereby any prison who commits a serious assault against a member of staff is immediately transferred out of the establishment." We've had a number of assaults of a serious nature at Liverpool recently and it's a constant battle to get these perpetrators transferred out, leaving staff feeling unsupported and unsafe. Another common issue is we have prisoners who've assaulted staff returning due to court cases – which we accept, or our managers accept. We've even had prisoners return who are part of an active court case involving serving staff who alarmingly are just told to stay away from the prisoner basically. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Dave.

MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to reject this motion. I understand why we wouldn't want the member of staff to see somebody that's assaulted them. We have staff assaults all the time at the moment that are just assaults. If we agree this, various assault –

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Mick, Brinsford seconded this motion. You can't speak against it if you second it.

MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Oh, OK. Support the motion then.

<Laughter>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That was a deliberate mistake from Mick, honest.

LEE LASSMAN – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE: Chair, NEC and invited guests, I propose a rejection to this motion. Whilst I completely understand and agree with many of the points made and I do sympathise, I do also have some serious concerns. So, in order for this motion to stand, a clear and concise definition of what constitutes a serious assault would need to be agreed upon. As someone that's been a victim of an assault whilst on duty, I certainly class the assault as serious due to the long-lasting psychological impacts that I sustained. Yet I suffered no broken bones, I wasn't hospitalised and I didn't require any stiches. So again, I ask what constitutes a serious assault? All and any assaults on staff are unacceptable and serious.

Secondly, and probably more importantly, if this motion was to be passed, we're at extreme risk of creating an extremely dangerous culture for ourselves. It's a culture whereby any individual seeking a prison move, sorry, has a pre-designed and pre-existing exit pathway. It is my genuine and honest belief that if this motion is passed and it does become common knowledge amongst the prisoners, we will see an increase in staff assaults committed by those looking to manipulate this motion. Reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC and honourable invited guests, I would say support this motion and the reason is I've been a <inaudible> for a little while and I've seen a lot of people getting assaulted, especially seriously – what impact I see it leaves them. Especially when the person comes in, prisoner, and he got away with it and his laugh on his face, it gives the person another satisfaction. So, before you reject it, I would say consider that – what are you going to do to help your colleagues or are you going to go against it? Thank you.

<Applause>

LOUISE JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, HEWELL: Conference, Chair, NEC, I would also vote and ask that you reject this motion. Initially, as a Committee and our members, we initially thought it was a good idea. But the more we thought about it out of the box, we realised it wouldn't take long before it started to encourage prisoners to assault staff in order to get their transfers. These prisoners will do anything to transfer out and, remember, they are already violent offenders who will go to any lengths to get out of their current jail. So, I ask you to think carefully of the consequences of voting in favour of this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Chair, Conference, on this motion we would look to support. There is a very specific reason for supporting this based from the YCS and that comes from when prisoners are aged 18 but are still retained within the youth estate, they pose a special problem to staff. One such example recently, only four weeks ago, an officer in PPE was knocked unconscious by a known OCG nominal who has been involved in conditioning of staff and prisoners. Our Number One guaranteed he will be moved. Like I say, four weeks later, he's still in our segregation unit. Five prisons have rejected taking him. This seems unfair on the officer involved, who is still off work, but colleagues have to look at this person and deal with them every day. I appreciate this will be mirrored across the estate. In terms of the influence this person has, it's unprecedented based on the way that they are able to manipulate people to carry out their bidding so that, even though they're in a confined space, threats are still prevalent. We have another two that are Category A prisoners. They're both aged 19 and they've been instigating assaults on prisoners and staff. At 19 they're still in an under-18 establishment.

We have another 18-year-old who is nearly 19. He's retired two officers, one through being severely assaulted and the only reason he wasn't killed is because the improvised weapon that he was using broke. Another one was hot-watered into the eye and still has got vision problems. So recently this court case made the press through reporting in the courts at the same time as the staff assault in Frankland. A relative comparison was made within the article about the staff assaults. A Head of Function at Wetherby said this is why we really need these – why I'm looking for support of this motion. A Head of Function at Wetherby was angry that this was a misrepresentation of the events but this is the same person who threw him an 18th birthday party and said what good value the outside caterer was at only £77. We need these people to be moved on because they're conditioning our staff. I look for your support with this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking against the motion. An extremely emotive subject this – nobody wants to see a colleague seriously assaulted. But let's take the emotion out of it. What would happen when prisoners soon realised that the way to get a transfer is to seriously assault a member of staff? We'd be placing our members in danger, we'd be putting targets on their back. And let's look at it from another point of view. We want the full weight of the courts to come down on any prisoner who assaults a member of staff. Rightly or wrongly, police forces across the country would be reluctant to go all over the country to process one individual case. So, I can appreciate the emotion

behind Liverpool's request but this would place our members in danger and hinder any potential prosecution. Please reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: The vote's now open, Conference. Thank you, we can now view the results. That motion is lost. Thank you for Brinsford for highlighting a really important point actually. It's easy to forget when you're down there with so much going on but, if you second a motion, you've got to speak in favour of it. So, thanks for Brinsford for bringing that to our attention.

24, Wakefield – a seconder for Wakefield, please? Thank you.

Motion 24

Conference mandate the NEC to enter into discussions with HMPPS to gain more realistic financial support package when a prison service dog retires.

WAKEFIELD

ANDY BELK – BRANCH CHAIR, WAKEFIELD: Chair, NEC, colleagues and guests, first time speaking at Conference.

<Applause>

I'm here today to ask for your support on motion 24, which reads, "Conference mandate the NEC to enter into discussion with HMPPS to gain more realistic financial support package when a Prison Service dog retires." Currently, when a dog retires from active service, this animal receives no benefits – no fiscal reward, no nothing. It becomes the weight and responsibility of the person who adopts it, whether that be a member of the public, a member of the service or even the dog handler that's been looking after it for the last eight years.

Often, what we've found is that it is impossible to gain medical insurance for these animals. When you phone the insurance company and tell them that you've adopted an ex-working dog, your payments go up by 30 to 50% alone. This places an immense strain on the people that are looking after these animals on our behalf. What we're asking for is that some monies be put aside from HMPPS so that they continue looking after these dogs and giving somebody an opportunity to house them on our behalf while they serve the last few years waiting for their retirement. Thank you and please support my motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, I ask you to support this. Our working dogs in the prison service work hard every day to protect prisoners in our care and also to protect staff and to sort out people that are attempting to bring illicit items into our prisons. Thank you for your support.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Gary.

<Applause>

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BELMARSH: Chair, Conference, NEC, speaking to support this motion. These dogs don't choose to be employed by HMPPS. They come, they work hard, they put themselves at risk, they put themselves at risk through their deployment, they put themselves at risk through everyday training. When it comes for them to retire, as said before, it's down to the person who accepts responsibility for them to meet all the challenges. There are charities out there that will kind of support you and help out when there's medical needs or an emergency that <inaudible> however, they're only there for the emergency cases, something that's going to cost a lot at one point. But the everyday, day in, day out, costs of looking after a dog is really expensive. At the moment, the prison service get really, really good discounts on dog food. A bag of dog food, what's a bag of dog food? It's about £70 to £90 a month for a dog to get through. For someone who's looked after that dog all the way through their career, it's not much to ask. So basically all I'm saying is support this. There's a lot of things that could be asked from serving dog handlers and come up with suggestions of how the prison service could help and I hope, if this carries forward, then a lot of guidance will be taken from those individuals. Eight is not too late. Please vote in favour of this motion. Cheers.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking in favour of the motion for all the reasons that you've just heard. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Vote's open, Conference. And we can view the result. That's carried.

Motion 25, Wetherby. Seconder for Wetherby? Thank you.

Motion 25

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for the removal of pre record from Body Worn Video Cameras as the default setting.

WETHERBY

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Chair, Conference, I'm asking you to support motion 25, which is, "Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for the removal of prerecord from the body-worn video cameras as the default setting." So, recently there's been a change on the body-worn camera, where prerecord has been set so, as soon as you activate it, prerecord is running constantly. Between October '24 and February '25, Wetherby had 11 members of staff under investigation for comments made prior to an incident occurring that was accessed under the guise of incidental footage. So, these conversations that you're having with your work colleagues around your normal day, maybe something has happened, pick your item. The point there is it's you talking with your colleagues. You've then gone on and dealt with the incident, no issue with that has been raised. I'm not proposing a motion to shield misconduct but this is protecting staff from a culture of surveillance that extends beyond the operational need. Sorry, I've got doctor's scrawl here.

The instances I refer to are often private, informal and unrelated to the incident being reviewed, yet these recordings are being used punitively. The body-worn video camera should be a tool for safety and accountability, not a trap for incidental remarks taken out of context. I urge for us to restore fairness and remove the prerecord as the default setting and allow members and colleagues to choose, if they so desire. Support this motion please.

<Applause>

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECREARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC, we're fortunately free from the tyranny that is the YCS at Cookham but our staff constantly are under attack, whether that be investigation because a manager has coincidentally looked at footage, very much echoing what our colleagues see in the other YCS estates. It was happening daily, weekly – we see it all the time. Please support this motion – it helps our members to realise actually we're not constantly under attack. We see it now because we're in the adult estate and actually it's pretty decent for us, but in the YCS staff are constantly berated, belittled and attacked and they use this against us all the time. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

BRANCH DELEGATE: Chair, NEC, Conference, I understand the sentiment on this, but I ask you to reject the motion. I was an SO in the Seg and we get a lot of governors now that will chuck out nickings because the stuff isn't on body-worn video camera. We had one incident on one of our exercise yards where a prisoner basically threatened to break an officer's legs and threatened his family. As soon as the officer turned his camera on, he went, "Oh, morning sir. How are you?" Didn't think nothing of it. Went to the nicking, tried to say he was polite as anything, so we showed him the footage. He got found out, his mouth dropped, hit the floor and he got punished for it. If you remove that prerecord, you're going to let prisoners get away with stuff. So, I ask you to reject the motion.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I would ask you to reject this motion. The prerecord on the body-worn video camera is a fantastic piece of equipment that allows us to secure a conviction. During my tenure as the Branch Chair at HMP Nottingham, a member of staff was seriously assaulted. Thirty seconds of prerecord footage was the difference between the police not pursuing the charge and a criminal conviction. We can turn the prerecord off when we go to the toilet and at dinner breaks, there is a procedure to do it. By removing the prerecord we are giving – we are impeding ourselves from securing convictions. The POA cannot, we can't mitigate or defend the undefendable. If somebody says something that they shouldn't have done, we have to be held to account and that's unfortunate. But we can do a local agreement to make sure that, if footage is recorded or it's pressed by accident and it's not to do with an incident, it can be deleted and, in some jails, this is common practice. But I say we need to continue to safeguard ourselves, so please reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC against the motion. Body-worn video cameras were introduced as an aid to safety and their introduction was supported by the POA. While we do not feel able to support this motion, we do still acknowledge there have been issues with their use in some situations. The policy framework goes into a lot of detail around the use of them and the importance of protecting personal data and using any data in the appropriate way. Initially, when the cameras were introduced, the prerecord element of them was not actioned. HMPPS approached us at the point that they wanted to test the prerecord function and I don't mind admitting we had our reservations. We had a lot of meetings where we pushed back and many discussions around the length of time that the prerecord element would be set to. The prerecord was tested at a number of establishments – we contacted those sites several times during the testing period and we asked for feedback in how it was operating. We received very little feedback and essentially there was no real negativity or opposition to it.

There were concerns about privacy potentially being violated, some of which was negated by the prerecord only being activated for a shorter length

of time than the originally proposed two-minute time period. In return, HMPPS provided us with examples where prosecutions had been successful based on the footage that was captured leading up to a member of staff being assaulted. They were able to demonstrate threats and prove intent from the prisoner and could also evidence that the staff had been completely professional in other circumstances where staff had been accused of wrongdoing. From our point of view it was difficult to argue against the introduction of the prerecord when we received no negative feedback during the testing period and the employer were able to share several success stories with us that assisted in successful prosecutions where our members had been attacked.

All of that said, we know that some of you are experiencing the negative side of the prerecord function, where footage is being used against staff in some circumstances. We've also been made aware of issues with GDPR in relation to the cameras and excessive numbers of staff being given access to the footage, with a free rein to view whatever they like. The policy lead has taken action where we've highlighted these issues. The policy framework is fit for purpose but there have been failures to adhere to it. The policy is due for review later this year and we're happy to raise any concerns as part of that review, so we would ask that you make us aware of any problems you're experiencing so we can report back with some real and relevant feedback and try to address some of the issues being experienced by our members. We do not want to reduce any opportunity of a successful prosecution when a member of staff is assaulted and we would urge caution and just ask that you also consider this element of the prerecord function and reject this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, no reply so straight to the vote please. Thank you and we can view the results. That motion is lost.

Motion 26, Berwyn, seconder please? Thank you Brinsford. Just in time, well done. See, we're working well together this afternoon Mick.

Motion 26

Conference instructs the NEC to engage with HMPPS to determine that Fitness Trackers are allowed into establishments for staff.

BERWYN

MATHEW EVANS – BRANCH SECRETARY, BERWYN: NCT, Conference, the motion reads, "Conference instructs the NEC to engage with HMPPS to determine that fitness trackers are allowed into establishments for staff." So, I know a lot of the issues that we've got with drones and that this seems very trivial. However, after the notice from Central banning all smart watches, fitness trackers, the reason we brought this is, what about the welfare and the wellbeing of our staff? Staff use it to count their steps, that little bit of fitness. They can be used to monitor their heartrate and demonstrate how stressed the situations and the workplace is that we work in. I'm sure that the Security Department are concerned about the access to phones that they can link to or that, God forbid, a prisoner gets hold of a fitness tracker and goes, "It's 10 paces from my bed to the cell door." They have 10 fingers, they can count. Sadly, using the drones they get phones in and no doubt they can do that anyway. Fitness trackers are used for people for understanding and helping their own wellbeing and their own fitness. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No other speakers, so Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in favour of the motion. I think it's time for HMPPS to move with the times. Why wouldn't you allow something that can help your staff monitor their health and wellbeing? Time for this policy to be revisited. Please support the motion, thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: The vote is now open, Conference. And we can look at the results of that. That's carried. Thank you for that. We've got drones delivering all kinds to our jails, we're giving prisoners access to cooking facilities and yet we can't wear fitness trackers. Tell me how that makes sense. Never mind.

We are on to 27, which is a debate, and I invite Liverpool to open a debate.

Motion 27

That Conference debate the effectiveness of the 2019 Health and Safety protocol.

LIVERPOOL

ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL: Chair, Conference, NEC, invited guests – Liverpool, home of the current champions, Premier League champions, so thank you for sitting us in front of the silverware, thank you. Back to the business. The Conference debate today for us is around the effectiveness of the 2019 Health and Safety Protocol. I think I, like a lot of people here, thought that it was a shield for us for so long, that

we'd seen the way we were attacked when staff had fears by management, by courts. But this protocol really gave us what we thought was a shield against that. Sadly, at Liverpool we found out recently that it wasn't. Governors can – I use the word abuse it as they see fit. Basically, just disagreeing with the whole protocol. We were convinced that we'd followed all the protocols to the point where, months before the issue arrived, we had Mark visit us for a branch meeting. The feelings of the staff were quite clear then about how unsafe the jail was becoming, very low numbers at the time. We'd had a reprofile and the governor had decided although we'd gone from a C to a B that we were going to reduce our numbers in doing full regimes. Which the staff, quite clearly, were saying to us, "It's dangerous, it's unmanageable. We just can't do it."

Sadly, we had a period of over four days, five really serious assaults on staff which led, ironically at a time when myself and Dave, my secretary, were out visiting a member of staff who'd been assaulted, the staff took it upon themselves to vent their frustrations. They went to the chapel and basically cried out for help and said to the governors, "It's not safe. Help us." Unfortunately, the response they got from the governor, despite the efforts of myself when we returned, the committee ably assisted by Terry who came rushing in to help us, was a governor who just was clearly quoting that this, in his opinion, wasn't the best use of the policy. We were wrong, he was right and his staff simply had to return to work. As Mark had said earlier, using the analogy of the lion tamer, we just had to put our hands back in the cages as far as he was concerned and crack on, despite the injuries to staff.

It's not right. In my mind, it's bullying. Sadly, it disappointed me and my branch that what we thought was our shield was paper thin, it wasn't the shield we thought it was. We deserve a Health and Safety policy that's fit for purpose for the work we do. And I urge you to join in the debate now – to question the one we've got and to keep open this debate because it has to be what we assumed it was, which was a safety net for us. And governors are allowed, on a whim, to abuse it, despite your efforts and that of the NEC.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well said, Roger.

<Applause>

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: Hello. This isn't the only policy that we have health and safety-wise. We've got employment law and still as employers they have to abide by them. It's just one document – the more documents we have to help protect staff, the better. But we have Health and Safety Committee regulations and people should use these and this time to – sorry about this, bit nervous here – to help to improve our working conditions whilst in work. We all come to work to be safe, it's just an extra tool to that. Most tools are just in place for the workers. I'm waffling here now, aren't I? Sorry.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: You're doing well, Nathan. Keep going mate.

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: They are there, the legislation is there, the employers have to abide by them. We have to go out there and make sure they abide by them. It's just another tool. Your facility time, you should be able to have your facility time, it's legislated in law. So, we should use it more. Sorry.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference and visitors, the POA have invested a lot of time engaging with our employer to have a consultative committee on health and safety, and every area in the country has a rep on that committee. And, as Mark says, quite a lot of the time unity is strength, so I invite every single health and safety member in every establishment to engage with their consultative committee member on matters of health and safety. So when I joined the prison service I think we just had two policies to deal with, which was the Prison Service Order and a PSI, and it seemed quite easy. Even though they're written in legal speak, you can read between the lines and make them work for our benefit and also the employer's benefit, as most governors try to do. But what I'm saying is now we've got protocols, we've got guidance, we've got frameworks, we've got PSOs that are still valid, we've got PSIs that are still valid, we've got documents that are archived on the government website that we have access to every day that say that it's been archived since we changed our email address or company logo, and underneath it says this is still a relevant document. So, it is a bit of a mess and it's really hard to navigate, but we've got things in place like the RMP. So, after every incident you should have a new risk assessment for whatever that work was that caused or led to that incident. So, managers need to be challenged why they are not looking at the risk assessments after an incident. I keep hearing that loads of people are being assaulted and it needs to stop and the only way we can do that is to keep revisiting the risk assessments, getting managers to sign and put their name to them so that we can hold someone accountable. Thank you very much again.

<Applause>

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Chair, Conference, I'm sure this is about the Health and Safety protocol – excellent. So, we've got a good bit of experience with this. Two years ago, Wetherby was exceptionally dangerous. There were national incidents every other day and we were really, really struggling. The Health and Safety protocol was invoked by members who said that our workplace was unsafe. There was a meeting convened – however, as has been referenced by members of the NEC previously, there is not a lot of adequate training for the SMT members at establishments, and ours is no different. The SMT decided to invoke one of the contingency plans, which was the withdrawal of labour by a union member – and I've no real evidence for this other than whispers but I believe all they were trying to do was arrest one of us for incitement. So, trying to say that we incorrectly used this. We had backing from the NEC because we'd correctly done it. But the protocol itself wasn't – I think it's worded deliberately woolly so that we can interpret it how we see fit. However, when it comes to then implementing it as an individual person, how on earth do you have the collective element of it? So, for example, if I wanted to say that my working environment was unsafe, the likelihood is one of my colleagues would also be unsafe but I couldn't tell them that I thought it was unsafe for fear of inciting them to say, "Actually, it is unsafe."

So, I think the permanent injunction is an element of this which doesn't help us make the Health and Safety protocol as efficient as it could be. I think if we could get that bit rescinded, the Health and Safety protocol would probably be more effective as a tool for us to use. That being said, the meetings that were proposed and all of the outcomes afterwards, off the back of invoking the Health and Safety protocol, changed what was going on at the time. So, I will say it is an efficient document if it's then used properly and, as I said, with the support from the NEC, we were unbelievably supported. So just to put it on there, Wetherby have had a mixed time with it but overall it has been a positive use, once you take away the fact that they tried to take away our money and fine us and try and arrest us. But overlook all of that and it's a good document. Thank you.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, we at Sudbury a few weeks ago had what would be, in closed, you would say a concerted indiscipline. A night orderly officer wrote on the daily operations report that it was the most unsafe that she'd felt in 25 years, where staff were scared to go down <inaudible> because prisoners would refuse to return to their accommodation. So, in good faith, as it says in the protocol, we wrote to the governor to ask to convene a meeting, like it says, to convey the concerns and get additional resources. That's the bit that's missing, it's the good faith. It's not the POA that interpret it or implements the Health and Safety protocol incorrectly, it's that senior managers don't want to engage with us because they think we're wrong. They don't want to meet with us and try and solve the problem, all they want to do is invoke Section 127 or say that we're inciting our members. So, I think the Health and Safety protocol is fine, we just need to do more work with senior managers and educate them. Because, again during my tenure at Nottingham, alarm responses is a big thing. They would constantly cross-deploy alarm responses to non-responding jobs such as constant watches, placing everybody at detriment. You raise that issue, the governor tried to say that we are inciting industrial action by saying to the CMs that you can't cross-deploy alarm bell responses. The issue is not the POA, the issue is the employer. Please join in the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Conference, Chair, NEC, this protocol for me – now, luckily enough at Whatton we've never had to use it, which is great. But it's essentially a document that tells us what we can and can't do. We all know that we've got draconian laws around us, about what we can and can't say to our members, what we can when it comes to their safety – go to a, retreat to a place of safety. We cannae do that anymore, Captain. We can't do stuff like that. What this tells us is, essentially that, yes, we can tell our members now that it's up to you what you do, these are your options, and we can give them the options of what they can do about it. That's what this protocol does. I don't think the protocol is particularly bad, I don't think there's a massive issue with it. Yet again, as my other colleagues have alluded to, this isn't isolated to the protocol. It's pretty much across any policy that any governor tries to implement – they don't know it properly, they don't understand it properly and they try and use it against us, failing most of the time because they just don't know their own policies.

So, I think this is fine, I don't think it needs overly dramatically changing at the moment. Ideally, we'd like to get rid of it because we'll get rid of the draconian rules that we've got governing us and our industrial processes, and what we can and can't say to our members. But unfortunately we are under the cosh, as it were, from the court injunction. And this is the only thing we've got really to say to our governors, "In fact I can tell my members what the options are. I can tell them that they can go to a place of safety, for example, as an option, but I just can't tell them do it because that's what the POA is telling you." And that's what this protocol does for us, and that's it. Anyway, join in the motion – not the motion, the debate – and thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: We've got one more. Are you joining the debate, are you, Roger?

ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL: Yes please. Just to add to that…

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: You've already spoken. Roger, can we reply before we…?

ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL: Yes, sorry.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: It's a debate, so you don't get a right to reply. It's just a debate so… Joining the debate for the NEC is Steve Gillan, my fellow injunctee and future pad mate.

<Laughter>

But I'm on the top bunk. You can't reply, it's a debate. Steve, thank you.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, thank you Liverpool for bringing this debate, I think it's really important, to be honest with you. Obviously, you've suffered at the hands of it, probably not at the hands of the protocol but an unscrupulous governor who doesn't understand health and safety. Over the last couple of years, we've actually seen a few branches invoke the Health and Safety protocol. I don't want anyone to get confused between the legally binding Health and Safety protocol and the Employment Rights Act of 1996, section 44, where you can take action as an individual for serious and imminent danger. So, there's a distinct difference. So, I know that Liverpool have relied on the protocol, Manchester, Wetherby, Aylesbury, Whitemoor on several occasions, and Feltham. And guess what? On each occasion, the issues have been resolved, which tells me they were genuine, legitimate issues on health and safety. And shame on those governors for then saying it's nothing to do with the protocol, it's nothing to do with anything else, but then relying on the comfort blanket of Tory anti-trade-union legislation that's also been endorsed by the Labour government as well. That's what we're up against. It's the most restrictive legislation that any worker in the United Kingdom comes under. Let's make

that abundantly clear. The law is not on our side. The law is on the side of the employer and they use that as a comfort blanket, to jump to it rather than look at the real issues, excuse me, of resolving the health and safety issues that our members face each day.

And credit to those branches, I think they've gone about their business in the correct way. I don't care, actually, what the governors of those establishments believe. I believe the local Committees and the members. I know that POA members don't just work off – run off the job at the drop of a hat. That's not what they do. They try and work their way through it. We see the horrendous assaults every single day and sometimes our members just say, "Enough is enough." So, yes, I would rather have the protocol than not have the protocol. But what I want to see is HMPPS being a decent employer and, instead of threatening me, Mark and the NEC every five minutes, every time there's an issue at a particular establishment, to actually try and understand what the issues are and resolve them locally.

Now, those of you who attended the fringe meeting at lunchtime would have understood that this protocol, actually, is about keeping us out of court. And guess what? It has on every single occasion. Because on every single occasion when they've threatened us, and they have, each time those individual branches have taken action we have not repudiated that action and they might have threatened us. But by the tenacity of the Executive and the intelligence of the local Committees, actually, we've resolved the issues. And it puts egg on their face, actually, because they jump the gun every time. And I lay this challenge down to the employer and Employee Relations at the back, because I got on particularly well with Francis Stuart, Head of Employee Relations, because I think he's a decent person, he understands the issues. But there are some rogue governors out there that just don't want to understand the protocol, they don't want to understand the Health and Safety At Work Act 1974, they don't want to understand the Employment Rights Act '96, they don't want to understand our MPs, they don't want to understand anything apart from bullying and intimidating our branch officials and our members by handing them letters and saying, "You either comply with this or we're going to bring the full weight of the law down on you." Well, I think we need to turn the tables on them. I really do think we need to turn the tables by saying, "You ain't threatening us anymore. We're going to run you into court." And I think that's the dialogue that our Executive are going to have with leading barristers and our legal team because enough is enough. Enough is enough of this horrible legislation. Mark and I sat in front of the new Secretary of State and we told her, "You can have all the legislation in the world against us but when the issue is right we will defend our members." So, Liverpool, thank you for bringing this to Conference, it was worthy of a debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you for that.

And Liverpool again, motion 28, can we have a seconder please? Thank you, Berwyn.

Motion 28

Conference instructs the NEC to challenge HMPPS on their adherence and interpretation of the 2019 Health and Safety protocol.

LIVERPOOL

ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL: Chair, Conference, NEC, invited guests – I'm repeating myself a little bit on this one but just the words of encouragement from Steve there, "Conference instruct the NEC to challenge HMPPS on their adherence and interpretation of the 2019 Health and Safety protocol." What we don't want to see again, what alarmed me – like all of you I put my head above the parapet when it goes off and we have to face the management. I've had the letters, as have all the lads behind me – I know that, when we take staff out. What we saw at Liverpool recently was the governor forced into the fact, because me and Dave weren't in the establishment, to admit that it was nothing to do with us. So in his wisdom he gave every member of staff – and the demographic of the staff now is changing, we've got a lot of young staff, a lot of inexperienced staff haven't been there that long – and presenting them with letters threatening, as we've heard, legal action, financial action. It's not right and it's something that, as a Union, and hopefully the lads behind us have said that, we will address and tighten up because we need to. So just bear that in mind. If you do it right and he says you're not invoking any action by your members, he may well turn on your members and issue them. So as long as you're aware of that, you can give them that advice. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Roger. No other speakers, so Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in support of the motion. In 2019 the POA and HMPPS agreed on the Health and Safety protocol. Sadly, they're reluctant to abide by it. I've been involved when the protocol has been invoked at Feltham, Manchester, Wetherby and, more recently, Liverpool. What's blatantly obvious to me is that prison service managers do not understand the terms of the protocol and, more importantly, their obligations under it. Local governors are too quick to feed back to GOLD with their version of events and blame everything on naughty staff not doing as they're told. That's where we're at. HMPPS are just as bad. Their first reaction is always, "Solicitors, run them into court." Then they take a breath and realise they mightn't be getting it right. Nobody has ever been prosecuted for invoking the Health and Safety protocol. You just heard what Steve Gillan said then. The NEC are more than happy to keep on challenging HMPPS on their interpretation of the protocol. Please support the motion, thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open, Conference. And we can now close that vote. That's been carried, thank you.

29, Belmarsh. Seconder for Belmarsh? Thank you, Wandsworth.

Motion 29

Conference instructs the NEC to report HMPPS to the Health and Safety Executive for the stress caused to our members by managers within HMPPS who engage in bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination.

BELMARSH

JOHN SCHULZ – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BELMARSH: Formally moved.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Formally moved. That means, Conference, for those who don't know, that you read the motion – they don't have to speak on it but it's been formally moved because it's been seconded. Do Wandsworth wish to speak on it?

JAMES SHAW – BRANCH CHAIR, WANDSWORTH: Conference, Chair, NEC, I just wanted to make a point really. I saw this motion and thought it was particularly good. "Conference instruct the NEC to report HMPPS to the Health and Safety Executive for the stress caused to our members by managers within HMPs who engage in bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination." I just want to make the point that we don't really just need to rely on the NEC to report them to the HSE. I've reported, or Wandsworth has reported, the Wandsworth management under Health and Safety to the HSE on two previous occasions.

I'm not suggesting the HSE is a silver bullet and I'm sure the NEC are aware of the limitations of the HSE, but it irritates the hell out of the governor when they actually have an investigation from the HSE or they tell them they're coming in to write a report to find out what it is that they're doing. So, I would support this motion but also I'd encourage everybody, don't forget that you have that in your armoury – get in touch with the HSE. If they're not giving you the risk assessments, the safe systems of work that you deserve, or you've got health and safety issues or they're attacking your staff, do get on the website. It's so easy to do. Formulate your case, send it to the Health and Safety Executive and irritate your governor if he deserves it. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Jim. No other speakers, so Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking against the motion for the reasons that Jim's just laid out really. It's down to individual branches to contact the Health and Safety Executive if you believe your members are being bullied, harassed, victimised or discriminated against. Whilst we accept this is happening, in some branches it won't be happening and we wouldn't be able to give specific examples to the HSE. As area reps we'll support you, but report them yourselves. It's anonymous – management don't need to know who's contacted them. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Straight to the vote then, Conference. Thank you. And that vote is now closed. The motion is lost.

On to 30, Sudbury. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you, Brinsford.

Motion 30

Conference mandates the NEC to engage and lobby the employer to provide additional resources to the effected establishments in line with the fire safety project due to the collapse of ISG, the necessary and critical fire safety work has been put on a temporary halt with no additional resources put in place until the fire safety work recommences.

SUDBURY

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, speaking on behalf of Conference motion 30, "Conference mandates the NEC to engage and lobby the employer to provide additional resources to the affected establishments in line with the Fire Safety project due to the collapse of ISG. The necessary and critical fire safety work has been put on temporary halt with no additional resources put in place until the fire safety work recommences."

Colleagues, the critical fire safety work that has initially been undertaken across various establishments has been halted and/or indefinitely postponed with the collapse of ISG. This is leaving our establishments in a vulnerable position. Years of neglect, underinvestment by succeeding governments and privatisation of works and facility management services have left our public-sector prisons in an unfit and unsafe state. Planned preventative maintenance, PPMs, are now firing critical safety assets, are not conducted to the full specification and standards – to which the private work and facilities management providers then add an additional percentage on top of any repair work that is carried out, which is usually 10%. This is allowing private companies to achieve a profit to the detriment of the taxpayer and the public purse.

Newly installed fire alarm systems that are project managed by the employer and/or jointly between the private workforce management service provider and HMPPS are not calibrated and/or linked to the establishment's main control and communications room. This is leaving residential areas vulnerable and at increased risk of fires being undetected until it is too late. This in turn is placing the prisoner, the establishment and, most importantly, our members in harm's way. What do you think the employer's response to this is? Do you think they have provided additional resources and/or funding to support establishments, that they find themselves in this position? The answer, in short, is no. They would rather continue to stretch an already overburdened and under-resourced staffing group further, placing additional operational pressures upon them – additional operational pressures and responsibilities that can only further and contribute to staff burnout and fatigue. We call upon Conference to support this motion and support the NEC to engage with the employer to provide additional staffing and/or financial resource to affected establishments until the critical safety work can be completed. Colleagues, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No other speakers, so over to Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, asking that you accept this motion. As you are aware, ISG, the primary consultant supplier of the Ministry of Justice fire safety improvement programme, entered administration in 2024. This event has had serious and far-reaching consequences. Nine prison establishments, including Bullingdon, Coldingley, Durham, Lancaster Farms, Risley, Sudbury, Swaleside, The Mount and Wymott, have been directly impacted. Four projects were already in delivery and three more were due to start immediately.

Let us be clear on this, this is not a minor delay in construction, this is significant interruption to critical fire safety improvements, improvements that are not just policy aspirations but essential safeguards to the lives of staff and prisoners. The contingency response from HMPPS included additional fire safety orders and commitments to install domestic smoke detectors as a temporary mitigation. But, colleagues, these measures, however well intended, are simply not enough. The prolonged reliance on domestic smoke detectors was never the original plan and cannot be seen as an acceptable substitute without significant additional support. The DSDs require ongoing routine maintenance and testing with accordance to policy. This means additional workloads on already stretched staff. These checks must be regular throughout and uninterrupted to ensure the safety of all, yet despite promises there has been no meaningful increase in the resourcing of staff on the ground who are now tasked with maintaining the stopgap measures in addition to their existing duties.

We have had assurance that resources will be commissioned soon but, colleagues, soon does not keep people safe, soon doesn't reduce workloads and soon does not address the very real fire risks that exist in these aging prison buildings. Let's be honest, fire safety is not a "nice to have" – it's a non-negotiable and we cannot allow delays or lack of urgency to put anybody at risk. It's the responsibility of the employer to ensure that they have some permanent solutions that are deployed immediately. Not next month, not next week – we need these immediately. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open, Conference. Thank you. And we can now close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 31, Cookham Wood. Seconder for Cookham Wood? Who was that, sorry? Don't all shout at once. Lowdham got in first did they, OK? This is one of the delegates that's got a permanent smile on his face.

Motion 31

The POA update the conference policy from Staff uniform to be Black and Whites TO staff uniform Fit for purpose and nationally agreed.

COOKHAM WOOD

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC, we've put this motion in from our branch. As I keep saying, we've got out of the plight of the YCS and we're now adult estate and we're in black and white. A lot of our staff were eager to keep the polos, they kind of liked them. Not the Tellytubby ones that you might have seen in the Daily Mirror but the standard blue, navy blue, polos. Looking in our area, we have other prisons who are already wearing navy polos, white polos, etc. A lot of our staff want to come out of the shirt. It's a lot easier for them at home, ironing etc. It's something that we've spoke at length about at many a branch meeting. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Sorry, I was a bit slow getting up there, mate. Conference, Chair, NEC, I would like us to go to polo shirts and trousers or combat trousers, whatever, that's my personal preference. But I'm not going to lie, the only reason I want to reject this motion is because it says to stick to black and white. I don't know the obsession with black and white – I think prison officers are creatures of habit, to be honest. Last conference – or the conference before, because this comes up every year – people say they like the white because they can see the officer at the other end of the landing, which is great but 90% of new staff, particularly, but other staff as well, they've constantly got their jackets on anyway, which are black. You don't seem to whinge about that one. But even though I do think we should move forward, progress the uniform to polo shirts and combat trousers, I just want to see it completely black. There are some of the issue black polo shirts out there and, to tell you the truth, they're really good. Not only that, though, I'm a single man, I'm lazy and I can just shove it all in one wash, which is helpful. But that's my perspective on that one. Thank you very much. Please reject this motion.

<Applause>

KEVIN BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE, HULL: Chair, Conference, visitors, we've been trialling the white polo for the last 18 months and it is a lot better. The white polo you can see – it's a little bit difficult to keep clean, you can't get two or three days out of them like you used to with the shirts.

<Laughter>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Is that what the smell is?

KEVIN BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, HULL: But you can see them, they are good. What we did at Hull, because we were given the choice, we've got 400 operational members of staff, about 95% of people are wearing the polos now. Some people were objecting at first, they wanted to keep it black and white, a bit of tradition, a bit of discipline. We've seen no real detriment, it's a lot comfier, a lot better in summer, it's a lot nicer. So, again, like my guy said, it comes up every year, this. I've pushed it the last couple of years because I quite like them. They're also unisex as well so you don't have to go with the male or female, again we went for that last year. It was a close call last year so I'm hoping some fresh faces, a little bit more youth, will get a result this year so please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

JAMES SHAW – BRANCH CHAIR, WANDSWORTH: Right, Wandsworth's not going to die on a hill over this but we had a branch meeting and it was raised at the branch meeting, and what we had was that we wanted to maintain the black and white uniform, we wanted to maintain the shirt that required an iron to make you look smart and actually to preserve, what I would say, some element of having the appearance of having some authority. Also, go back to the Woolf Report – what we've seen is the gradual deterioration of our uniform. The Woolf Report suggested that prison governors would wear uniform – like the police, like the fire service – and if those at the top had adopted wearing a smart uniform, it would not have deteriorated to the state of the uniform that we have today. So, I'm asking – we're rejecting this, asking you to reject it. I think that, if you accept this – by the way, I do think that Wandsworth's motion will fall next time round. But that's my motivation behind it. I'm sorry but people telling me that I don't have to iron it or I can wear it for a few days, I can't agree with that as a reason for walking around like just a scruff really. Thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Jim.

<Applause>

Nobody else, so over to Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, asking to reject the motion. Colleagues, a uniform fit for purpose. What is a uniform fit for purpose? Does it need to be flame retardant? Does it need to be hot liquid repellent? Does it need to be waterproof? Does it need to be cotton. Does it need to be nylon? What is a uniform that's fit for purpose, because I don't know. And the motion is also asking for a nationally agreed version of the uniform. Who's going to agree it? The Health and Safety Committee? The NEC? Are we going to ballot our members? Colleagues, just reject the motion, it's not possible.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Right to reply?

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: I'd like to come back about that sort of professionalisation. You look at every other force – fire service, police – they're all in polo shirts. Everyone's changing. It's a new world order. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open, Conference. Thank you. We can now close that vote.

<Applause>

I think it's wise to take this to a card vote, so can we have the scrutineers and tellers prepare yourselves. We'll do it the old-fashioned way. Scrutineers and tellers. You should have voting cards in your packs. Mark which way you want to vote. Once you've voted on your card vote, just hold them in the air so our scrutineers and tellers can come round and collect them. So, in your packs you should have cards for a card vote, OK? You just put your branch name on it and you vote for or against. The scrutineers and tellers come round, collect that off you, go away, count it and then I announce it as soon as I can. Once you've voted, just put it in the air. Wave it around and someone will collect it.

Is there anybody left with a card vote to hand in? There's more down the far side. Has everybody handed in their cards? OK, what I'll do, once the cards have been voted, I will announce the results of that. And just for clarity, under rule 12.13 it asks for the support of at least 10 branches for a card vote. My interpretation of that is it's near enough 50:50 so we've got more than ten, so that's why I didn't ask for a show of hands, OK? So, we'll plod on until we know the result of that.

So, we're on to motion 32, which is a Berwyn motion. Do we have a seconder for Berwyn please? Thank you.

Motion 32

That the NEC engage with HMPPS to discuss the Roll out of Utility Vests as standard issue PPE.

BERWYN

MATHEW EVANS – BRANCH SECRETARY, BERWYN: NEC, Conference, this one reads, "That the NEC engage with HMPPS to discuss the roll-out of utility vests as standard issue PPE." Now I know there's a process already with OH referrals to get a white piece of linen that can hold your baton and that. What we're referring to is the quality black one, which is used by the likes of the dog handlers and DSC, are the ones that we've seen which is fit for purpose, as that word that has been used. It's been referred to that we have the powers of a constable, yet we don't have the clothing, we don't have the equipment. The police have moved on to utility vests. The current belt, and we have been fortunate with a large waist where I can put all my kit on it and have room for manoeuvre. Some of the staff now don't have the waist size and you can see the equipment that they're carrying on their belt is almost overlapping, digging into the staff. I weighed mine and it was about 3 kilos. So that's 3 kilos of weight on your hips all day whilst you're responding, whilst you're walking, whilst you're sitting in an office chair and it digs into your side. The belts are no longer fit for purpose. The police moved away from them, it's about time we did the same. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

BRANCH DELEGATE: Chair, NEC, Conference, visitors, I ask you to support this motion. Stop trying to redesign a uniform that worked for a long time and spend the money on giving us something that will protect us from back injuries, hernias, everything else that comes from a utility belt, and give us a proper vest that can protect us to a certain extent from everything that we are at risk of everyday. Thank you. I ask you to support this motion.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC and honourable members, I would say support this from deep inside my heart. And the reason I say that is I have seen time after time the only time you're going to get a vest is through the medical or HO referrals. Try getting that – six, seven months, what's going to happen to that person? HMP is the worst for ordering stuff. You're begging it day after day, day after day, and still the result is negative. You go to the governor level, you're sitting there saying, "Oh yeah, this person ordered it." You go to that person, "No, no, this person ordered it. Yeah, it's been approved. Yeah, yeah, finance person has approved it." It doesn't work. You're still begging them. And I would say, support this motion. At least there are people out there who can actually utilise this particular facility because they don't have to go, it'll be simple just to order it and get it out of the way. Thank you.

<Applause>

MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, we bought a motion similar to this two years ago. The vote was very close. We support this motion, so please support it.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in support of the motion. There's already been quite a bit of work done on this and, in all honesty, what's been offered is pathetic, it's not fit for purpose. So, we'll say this – shame on HMPPS. Why is it a constant battle with them to ensure that our members are equipped with adequate PPE? Why does everything take forever? Why is it always a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted? The safety and wellbeing of our staff and our members is non-negotiable. Why do we have to go cap in hand to HMPPS for something that should already be available? Please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. And we can now close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 33 is Wandsworth and if this is carried motion 34 will fall. Do we have a seconder for Wandsworth?

Motion 33

That the downgrading of operational staff uniform is halted immediately, and the traditional uniform of White shirt and tie with epaulettes and black trousers is preserved.

WANDSWORTH

JAMES SHAW – BRANCH CHAIR, WANDSWORTH: Chair, NEC, Conference, I kind of already said most of what I was going to say on this. Just

one other thing, though. I remember when I first started, we were issued leather shoes. If you got a long-sleeved shirt it was a Ben Sherman. So, our motion is that the downgrading of operational staff uniform is halted immediately and the traditional uniform of white shirt and tie with epaulettes, black trousers, is preserved. Now, what we're talking about here is we're talking about the quality. And, as I indicated earlier, we would have a very good quality uniform if governors wore uniform. It's only simply because they don't have to wear it that they actually don't really care what they kit us out in. We've seen all sorts of failures in the past – remember them ridiculous shoes they issued us? They were like hovercrafts and they weighed a tonne. They were just some big mould and <makes raspberry noise> and there's your shoes, put them on. OK, so support this motion please. Let's at least preserve our uniform. We're not saying that it shouldn't evolve. What we are saying is that let's keep it smart and let's keep some authority. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Jim.

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, asking you to reject this motion. The reason why I ask you to reject this motion is that the white shirt has had its day. In 2008 the National Constabularies across the country recognised that they needed to move with the times and that the polo shirt offered more comfort, durability, and it allowed comfort for carrying their equipment. The white shirt is not breathable – it sticks to you, it stains rather quickly. I have female members at Sudbury that order white male shirts because the blouse that's issued to female staff is see-through and they have prisoners, even though they wear a vest and white undergarments, still commenting on their appearance, making them uncomfortable. The governor hasn't made them wear ties, however they're well within their rights to ask them to wear a tie if they're wearing a male shirt. If we're not going to move with the times, we might as well bring the peaked cap back, have metal rank insignias and raised things on our epaulettes.

<Applause>

The service went downhill when we got rid of Principal Officers and Senior Officers. We need a new uniform, we've just voted for vests. As somebody that wears a vest at work, one of the DST vests, I can assure you it's really unbearable when you're wearing a white shirt. It's not when you're wearing a polo shirt. The C&R package that was developed with the NTRG and SPEAR was designed for the utility vest and a polo shirt. It's time to move on with the times, please reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: I always forget this order. Oh crumbs! Chair, NEC, Conference, I'm going to get this right at some point, I swear. As my colleague just pointed out, we have just voted to have the vests, thank you mate. Just voted to have the vests. If you have your vest with a shirt, it is just going to get horribly sweaty. The shirts aren't breathable, they don't take the moisture off your body or off the skin and it will just turn see-through with sweat. Excuse me. So, ideally, if we're going to have the vests we're going to need the polo shirts because then that's more breathable, it will wick the sweat away from you as well to allow it to be evaporated. So, to keep the traditional uniform with a tie, a tie – come on! Who here likes wearing a tie? We all look forward to the summer. Oh, fair one, there's a couple.

<Laughter>

We all look forward to the summer where we can take it off. But, as my colleague pointed out, we need to move with the times, we need to stop looking at the past. Move to the polo shirts, move to the combat trousers and get rid of the shirt and tie. Please reject this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

GAVIN HAMMOND – BRANCH CHAIR, LOWDHAM GRANGE: Chair, Conference, NEC, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

I suggest we reject this motion. We've gone through many motions this morning and this afternoon asking HMPPS to move with the times. This uniform, the old shirt and tie, is not fit for purpose, it's not been fit for purpose for years. All first-line emergency services – police, fire, paramedics – all wear T-shirts and combat trousers. Let's move with the times. Thank you.

<Applause>

LOUISE JAMES – BRANCH DELEGATE, HEWELL: What is the matter with everybody? What is wrong with a good old-fashioned shirt and tie? Professional standards.

<Applause>

It's about time the youth of today got the iron out and learned how to use it. Right? As Nick said, what is fit for purpose? Our shirts, our trousers? They're fit for the job we do. We're smart, we have standards and we show those that we work with, the prisoners, the standards that they should meet. I joined the service 19 years ago and I'm proud to wear that shirt and trousers.

<Applause>

If I wanted to wear a polo shirt, I'd go and work in Asda.

SID SIDERY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BRIXTON: Chair, Conference, NEC, my only objection to this is the ruddy tie. If I have to wear a shirt I can do up at the collar, it has to be a 19", which means I look like I'm wearing a bell tent. I can't help it, I'm on the diet jabs for my diabetes. I still can't get the collar done up and it's not comfortable wearing the tie. That's my objections, that's why I'm asking for you to reject it.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Just – Nathan, one moment, one moment. Did you second this motion?

<Laughter>

Sorry. If you second the motion you've got to speak immediately after the mover. Right. Thanks.

KEVIN BRANKLING – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, HULL: Chair, Conference, guests, I won't repeat what I said earlier but I will back Wandsworth on what they say about standards. But you don't get standards from the shirt, you get it from the people you employ.

<Applause>

Twenty-one years ago when I started, or probably 35 for my guy, you could have put the staff we had then in a big red nose and floppy shoes and they'd still be better than 50% of the staff we've got now because we are employing the wrong people.

<Applause>

Getting the shirt or the polo, whatever, won't make the difference. Get the right people then we decide what we put them in. But, again, you know my thoughts, Hull's thoughts, big branch, we want to keep the polos. Cheers. Ta.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, no other speakers, so over to Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, asking you to support this motion. And we were asking to support this motion – here we go again – we're talking about uniform again. Year in, year out. The main reasons that we're not going to support this unit is the bottom line is the professionalism. Get us back to a professional looking service in front of the prisoners.

<Applause>

That is what we're asking for so please support the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. Any right to reply?

JAMES SHAW – BRANCH CHAIR, WANDSWORTH: Thanks very much for that. I've nothing more to say. I think we've said enough, I think we're exhausted.

<Laughter>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK. To the vote. The vote's now open, thank you. We can now close that vote.

Vote is lost which means we're OK for motion 34 from Berwyn. Do we have a seconder for Berwyn?

Motion 34

That the NEC engage with HMPPS to agree and roll out soft uniform in line with other Public Services.

BERWYN

MATHEW EVANS – BRANCH SECRETARY, BERWYN: NEC, Conference, I don't think I have to say much about this, we've kind of just had most of the argument with it. But we request the NEC engage with HMPPS to agree and roll out soft uniform in line with other public services. As some of the colleagues have mentioned, it's not about whether it's black, it's white, it's pink. You could look like Mr Blobby with the pink and yellow spots.

The person wearing it is the person that will give some of that authority. It doesn't matter what you're wearing, give us something that is suitable. We voted in the vests – thank you for your support with that. The likes of the polos would be better suited for it. Again, other public services – they've all moved with the times, they've all gone to the polo tops. They've moved into the utility trousers as opposed to cargos that some people have said. It's something that is suitable, something that is proper for our staff and our membership. It's not about moving away from shirts, it's about moving with the times with everybody else. The powers of the constable, they wear it. One of the colleagues just said then, if you're front-line facing, so if you were in visits perhaps wearing a shirt and tie would be suitable to give that professionalism, if that's what you're after. But for those that are on the wings in those hot environments who are sadly rolling around with big individuals who are gym buffs that we give all the equipment to and the protein to, a polo shirt is more suitable. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: I'm asking you to reject it for the same sort of reasons as the last one that we actually lost. Styal, we went through polo shirts when we <inaudible> and then we went back to white shirts. We were involved in the trial of the new white shirts – and the quality of them, they're like bin bags. They're not like the old ones that they used to issue the dog handlers. The quality of it has gone downhill massively so you'd be wearing like a bin bag for the whole duration of your shift. You look unprofessional, it's shocking the quality of it. I've still got my old issue prison officer shorts with the drawstring and vest. You know, we never wore them out on the landings so bring in three-quarter pants and trainers. Where next? How about sliders, we could go and work in sliders. Whatever next? You know – we're a professional service, it's going downhill. At what point do we say stop, no, it's enough, we want to look professional? Thank you.

<Applause>

BRANCH DELEGATE: Chair, NEC, Conference and guests, I ask you to reject the motion. I want to remain in a shirt and trousers with a tie which I wear all year round and I iron it. And it's because of the younger generation and the modern generation that we can't get Kiwi boot polish in this country anymore. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference – yes. So, this is the motion I want you to support for the polo shirts, where the other one I wanted you to reject it even though I was agreeing with the polo shirt approach to our uniforms. I just didn't agree with it because, if we went for that motion, then it would have to be black and white, where if you vote for this one and it opens it up to be any colour such as black or whatever, such as any particular – I think the YOs, no, was it juvies, have blue or something is it? You guys probably know better than I do on that one. But it will open it up so we can have different colours, ideally black and black. So, I would personally prefer to vote for this one and support this motion. On the quick one about professionalism, I've never seen a police officer in a polo shirt and said, "I ain't talking to you, mate, you're wearing a polo shirt. That's not very professional, you should be in a shirt." We don't. This illusion of authority because you're wearing a shirt and tie, it still exists. It's the person in the uniform that has the authority, not the uniform itself. Thank you. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, for the reasons I've stated before I would like you to reject this motion. During Covid, when the pandemic was on, the governor at HMP Nottingham put all his staff, regardless of where you worked, in polo shirts because it was easier to wash and obviously we had to wash our uniform after the end of every shift. And we carried on when we came out of the pandemic as well, and I believe our colleagues at Whitemoor or Long Lartin, they're also in black polo shirts. When we did a survey of the prisoners at Nottingham, they said that prisoners found staff more approachable and were able to have good pro-social relations by talking to staff in a polo shirt. It broke down barriers and it had that less-authoritarian stance on that. Some governors will disagree with that, they say we look too authoritarian or too much like the police. But a soft uniform, what's the definition of a soft uniform? It needs to be fit for purpose. The times have moved on. For those that have been in the forces, we've moved on from the DPM kit. It was brilliant back in the day – you looked smart in it, it was crisp, you had your stable belt on, everyone looked smart. They've now moved on to MTP, it's a fantastic piece of kit. It's breathable, it's adaptable, it's fit for the training, it's fit for purpose. That's what the prison service needs, a fit-for-purpose uniform that caters for all. Please reject the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

KEITH STUTLEY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, FORD: Chair, NEC, colleagues, we have been at Ford in soft uniform for about a year now. Successive governors have said yes, we can wear them if we want to. The staff that do wear them are happier with them. A concern was raised about the quality, surely that's down to then the NEC negotiating with our employer, HMP, saying, "What on earth are you doing buying this cheap rubbish? Get us some stuff that we can actually use and actually wear." Please support this motion.

<Applause>

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, obviously you've heard big Kev's views on it and how Kevin's dressed today compared to maybe how I'm dressed today. So, I think it's important, colleagues, that we all remember that we represent our branches and it's, what do our members in our branches want? There's a lot of old heads in here with a lot of experience who would probably want to go back to the number ones and <inaudible> caps, potentially. However, I have my personal views. Kevin in his role has his views, but I'm here representing my branch and it's my branch's views that I'm going to bring forward today. So please, when it comes to your voting, just remember we're here for our members and our branches, not for our own personal views.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No other speakers, so over to Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to reject the motion. It was only a couple of years ago where we had the Teletubby episode where the YCS were trying to introduce a soft uniform. We've all seen the stories in the press regarding that and you came to us, quite rightly, and said, "We need you to kick back against this soft uniform." Well now asking us, two years later, that we now want a soft uniform. Again, what is a soft uniform? We discussed about polo shirts – one of the speakers spoke about polo shirts, does it mention polo shirts on here? Will it be OK if you have pink polo shirts like we kicked back against a couple of years ago?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Point of order. Approach.

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Apologies, Mick, I think you're misleading Conference here. We were in navy polos in the YCS and they wanted to put us in Teletubby uniform. That's when we come to the NEC to say stop this from happening. We managed to stop it from happening and we stayed in the navy polos. It wasn't a case of we come to you saying, "Stop us going into soft uniform" – we were in soft uniform at the time.

<Applause>

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Conference –

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Yeah, I'm going to uphold that point of order to be fair to him. Carry on, Mick. Yeah.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Yes, so Conference, please reject the motion.

<Laughter and applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, let's go to the vote. OK, we can close that vote. Motion is carried.

<Applause>

I'm just waiting for this card vote result to come in – it's imminent. So, we'll do the next one, which is motion 35, NEC – Jackie Marshall. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 35

That Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate a policy for breastfeeding mothers returning to work following maternity leave.

NEC

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, moving motion 35. Colleagues, there's nothing in place, no policy or anything else, for nursing mums returning to work. We've got mums expressing in the toilet and putting it in the wing fridge. We've got mums going out to their cars and expressing the milk there. Should they be on the front line with the risks of trauma and infection? Because, let's face it, we don't work in the cleanest of places. It's not right, colleagues – there should be policy in place to protect these mums. They need a clean, safe place with a lockable fridge. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, visitors, I ask you to support this motion. I'm a male ally for the Champion Women in the Workplace. If you want to know more about that, ask me outside Conference because we're always looking for male allies. And the sponsor is Mr Copple himself, he's also a male ally. There should be somewhere in the workplace that's hygienic and comfortable for someone returning to work that needs to express milk, and I ask you to support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

KATIE CALDECOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WARREN HILL: Chair, NEC, Conference, first time speaking at Conference.

<Applause>

I'd like to speak in favour of this motion and share my personal experience. I returned from maternity leave when my children were six months old, they were both exclusively breast-fed. To simply keep my boys fed and alive I had no choice but to express my milk during my shifts so then they had milk for the following day. I wasn't supported with this, though. I was met with negative judgements from managers and colleagues and I ended up

having to spend my lunch breaks sitting in the toilet to express my milk. I did this for several months. There was nowhere else I could go in the prison that gave me the privacy required. It wasn't pleasant, it wasn't decent or hygienic. We need a policy in place to support breastfeeding mothers. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

SID SIDERY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BRIXTON: Chair, Conference, NEC, I support this but there is a way – we have a policy that allows this to happen already. If you're an intravenous drug – I'm a diabetic, I use insulin. I have the right to have a room set aside for me so that, if I want to go and inject insulin, which I store in the fridge, I can do. So, the policy is there, it's just not being applied for the right purpose. Well, it's being applied for my purpose but it's not being applied to mothers. That's me.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, well done.

<Applause>

Do you want to reply?

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: No.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, we can take that to the vote then. OK, we can show the results of that. That's carried. Waiting for the results of this card vote is like waiting for the roll to come in, isn't it?

<Laughter>

You're not getting any TOIL! I will pay you back, don't worry.

We'll plod on – motion 36, Cookham Wood. Seconder for Cookham Wood? Thank you.

Motion 36

The POA make it policy that any new prison or any prison that enters a Re-Role process will then be added to any ongoing agreed Pilot schemes or any agreed future prison program that are being rolled out for the appropriate category/type of prison.

COOKHAM WOOD

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC, you've heard a lot about our re-role at Cookham and I've been up here talking about it quite a lot. There we were at Cookham – a razor-free site. The re-role comes into effect – a couple of weeks in, I get a contact from the governor, "Can you pop up, we need to sort out local operating procedures for razors?" Sorry? We're razor-free. "Oh no, because we're going to men now we need to get razors back in." We had electronic shavers on site, we had stock, we had the availability, we had the forms, we had everything we needed to get done, ready to rock and roll straight away. They wanted to bring razors back into Cookham Wood, just for the national pilot to then say, "Oh no, we're going to be taking them out in a couple of months' time." It's very descriptive on the wording of the motion that it's agreed for the local prison and where you're at, etc., so if you're re-rolling from a Cat C to a B, B whatever, it's about how that affects you and the mechanisms we've got in place. Why are we putting staff at risk? If we're going to get rid of something, why are we putting it back into a prison just to take it out again in a couple of months? It seems quite straightforward, doesn't it? But the NEC, or the employer, sorry, hasn't got a clue. So please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Tyler, no other speakers, so Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in support of the motion. Common sense in the prison service? It just doesn't go hand in hand, does it? Why would you miss an opportunity like this? Please support the motion, thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: And to the vote please. OK, we can show the results of that. That's carried.

Motion 37 is a debate so no need for a seconder. I invite Wymott to start the debate. While we're waiting for the roll.

Motion 37

To debate prison performance against safety, sending a clear message to HMPPS that our safety is non-negotiable.

IAN PRESCOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WYMOTT: Chair, NEC, Conference, when I joined this job back in 1993 there were no targets other than common sense and keeping a roof on the place. The modern prison service now has league tables, weighted score cards, ring-fenced resources, entitlements – aided and abetted by the headline-grabbing Chief Inspector. While there's nothing wrong in driving up standards, this approach has taken away the governors' ability to manage their prison. Daily, we see stressed out Oscar Ones trying to balance these competing factors. You can't drop MDT, we're behind on key-worker. Unsurprisingly, searching the prison isn't considered a priority on the weighted score card. If you've not got the staff to send on to work, we just fudge it by doing a controlled labour movement. Not got the staff to send on means sending a wing of almost 200 prisoners with just three prison officers. How can that be remotely safe? Where's the response if it goes off in the workshop?

In the monthly meeting, we reminded the governor of health and safety and her responsibilities, especially if or when someone gets badly hurt. "Governor, how could you justify those farcical staffing movements?" That focussed her mind. Now we protect the wings, even if it means taking a hit on regime performance. The latest safety stats released via the NEC paints an alarming but unsurprising picture. Unfortunately, behind every one of those stats is a victim. Appeasement against safety is now a default position for most prisons, evidenced daily in the national media. When it comes to safety, our biggest issue is Number One governors will not fight our corner. For them it's regime, regime, regime. Common sense must dictate the regime, not pointless targets. The decline in safety can be traced back to when governors stopped adding days to sentences. In the modern prison service, staff are viewed as little more than an expendable commodity, summed up perfectly by our former PDG, the area manager – "Ian, never forget, this is just a game." My reply? "It's no game when people are getting hurt." Conference, the service needs to return to the era of control against chaos, where discipline and respect dictate the regime, not out-of-touch pen-pushers working from home. Support the debate.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well done, Ian.

<Applause>

No more debaters, so Terry for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, staff safety is non-negotiable but some prison service managers don't seem to understand this concept and are prepared to endanger staff just so they can tick a few boxes, fulfil some KPIs. I've heard several times in the recent months from governors, "I'm prepared to carry the risk." Well, that's not acceptable, that's nonsense. The threat of a quick dispute normally puts that one to bed. A governor's first priority should always be to the safety of his staff and not his KPIs. Thank you to Wymott for bringing the debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Conference. I have the result from the card vote, which was motion 31. We've had one branch abstain, one spoilt ballot form, number of votes in favour: 11,729; number of votes against: 13,708. That motion is lost.

Just a few things before we finish for today. Just a reminder that there's a raffle for the retired members. Cash only, no card. No income tax, no VAT, no money back. So please draw some money out tonight and purchase some raffle tickets. We've got the National Committee for Mental Health Care Services pre-meeting, that's in the bistro at the back, level 1, and we've got an Area Committee Northern Ireland meeting in the Johnson Room, level 5. Thank you so much for today, see you bright and early, 9 o'clock tomorrow morning. Conference now closed.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Conference, I'll bring you to order. Good morning to you all. Just a few things before I hand over to Steve, who is going to chair the Secure Mental Health Services AGM. So, don't forget that, when you speak, introduce yourself – your name, what branch you're from. If you second a motion, you must speak immediately after the mover of the motion and you must speak in support of it. If you've got any points of order, wait until Mick Pimblett gets up and speaks on behalf of the NEC.

<Laughter>

We've raised enough for the National Vice-Chair to shave his much-loved beard off.

<Applause>

We're going to donate those funds to a charity that Joe Simpson was involved in, the Seafarers' Charity, and Dave has indicated that he's happy if you want a public display to shave it off at quarter past one on the stage, have it filmed, put it on our YouTube channel. He's declined my offer to shave it with a blunt Bic razor but never mind. We've got the retired members' raffle that will be getting drawn at some point this afternoon, so please purchase your tickets there. And welcome to another branch Committee who are back in the public sector, HMP Kilmarnock.

<Applause>

So, we'll have a good morning getting through as many motions as we can. We've got a few awards this afternoon. I think by the end of today, we will have cracked it, yeah, so tomorrow we shouldn't have too much to do because we've got a lot of guest speakers. So, without further ado, me and Steve will swap seats. We've got the same haircut but we'll swap seats.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you Chair, very happy now to open up the AGM of the National Committee for Mental Health Care Services. Angela Montgomery is going to give an overview before we then move on to the two motions. Thank you, Angela.

ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, delegates of the Conference and all visitors, the last year has been a very testing time for the NHS and I'm sure you've all seen in the press the difficulties that the NHS is currently facing. In secure accommodation, known as the specials to most of you, and in offender health in prisons, it is a particularly testing time. NHS England, who oversee the contracting of services to prisons, has been abolished. I'm sure you've heard that and there are likely to be redundancies. Packages are being sought in relation to redundancies, but the impact for you, both in the secure hospitals and in prisons themselves, is that NHS Trusts are likely to refuse to continue their contracts when they come up for renewal and they will be tendered out. Some of those contracts will go to the private sector – which, in my view, personal view, is a disgrace because the NHS Trust in the footprint of a prison should be the one that delivers the service to offenders who are the most vulnerable people in our community.

If you are talking about emptying prisons, good healthcare, particularly mental healthcare and drugs services, is the key to enabling rehabilitation and impacting on not returning to prison. That decision will impact on all of us – this year, next year and in future years. I know we have people from Employee Relations here and I ask them to talk to their counterparts to see what can be stopped. My other issue is, it's contracting out by the backdoor. There was a commitment by this government to have the greatest scheme of insourcing ever and I don't see it in this service, don't see it for the prisons, don't see it in secure health, don't see it in offender health.

On that rather negative note, I give thanks to all of you, particularly those branches in our special hospitals and those staff who support healthcare services in prisons, because you do an incredible job, a really difficult job, and I know at times you probably think the members don't appreciate it, but they do really. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you very much, Angela. We'll now move to motion 76, which is Mersey Care – Ashworth Branch, as they're commonly known. Do we have a seconder for the motion? Sorry? Thank you.

Motion 76

We ask Conference and the NEC to support Mersey Care Branch to campaign and negotiate with the Mersey Care NHS Trust equivalent terms and conditions for those members on Bank Contracts (zero hours), with our members on substantive contracts.

MERSEY CARE

STUART CURRY – BRANCH HEALTH & SAFETY LEAD, MERSEY CARE ASHWORTH: First-time speaker at Conference.

<Applause>

Chair, NEC, Conference and invited guests, we ask Conference and the NEC to support this motion. We ask for help, support for the Mersey Care

branch, to campaign and negotiate with our trust for equivalent terms and conditions for our members on bank contracts, or zero-hours contracts, the gig economy, with our members who are on substantive contracts. We have in the past created a supporting workforce of additional staffing known as our bank workers. Each shift they complete is classed as an individual contract, known as a zero-hours contract. This then allows them less terms and conditions than our substantive staff. Two examples of this are maternity pay and sick pay. Even when they are injured during an assault, because of this, our patients will target our substantive staff, knowing that the bank staff who do not get paid to get involved in the incidents and get injured will remove themselves from that place to help. That will reduce the challenge on the behaviours of those patients. This then adds to the high risk that we all work under. We ask that you please support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: There's no other speakers, we'll move to Angela, please, on behalf of the Executive.

ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: The NEC support this motion to negotiate improved terms and conditions for bank staff who work in Mersey Care NHS Trust. It's important to ensure both pay and terms and conditions are comparable, for the reasons outlined by the speaker. The implementation of the Employment Rights Bill will have an impact on zero-hours contracts and that will go through the negotiating process as to what that looks like, because I know all employers are looking at those contracts as to what they're going to have to offer as a result of that being implemented. So, again, we support this motion.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you very much, Angela.

<Applause>

We'll now move to the vote for motion 76. We're closing that vote. The motion is carried.

Motion 77, Mersey Care, do we have a seconder? Thank you.

Motion 77

We ask Conference and the NEC to support Mersey Care Branch to campaign and negotiate with the Mersey Care NHS Trust to agree secure hospital lead pay is index linked.

MERSEY CARE

STUART CURRY – BRANCH HEALTH & SAFETY LEAD, MERSEY CARE ASHWORTH: Chair, NEC, Conference and invited guests, the special hospital lead is an allowance that we receive. The allowances are in addition to pay, that recognises working conditions that differ from regular conditions. These working conditions are shared by all staff who draw keys, security keys. From OSGs to healthcare assistants, domestics to service managers, nurses to therapists and rehab staff, the lead payment in 2007 when I started was £4,000 per year. The lead payment in 2025 is still £4,000 per year. We request our special hospital lead be index linked. Our NEC representation on the National Health Council is a new seat for the POA and we urge you to make this our way forward by using this as a starting point to negotiate better terms and conditions and pay for our colleagues. We also ask our NEC colleagues to assist the Mersey Care branch in campaigning, supporting and visiting to promote this campaign. Support the motion. Up the workers. Solidarity.

<Applause>

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: No other speakers? Angela on behalf of the National Executive Committee.

ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: The NEC support this motion in supporting Mersey Care branch negotiating with the Trust to make the special payments index-linked. Clearly, if there has been no increase in decades, this is a cost-of-living cut which continues. We will support the branch to ensure that that is index-linked because that is really important to our members. And, quite correctly, we are now a full member of the Staff NHS Council and we will raise that issue at that level. Thank you.

<Applause>

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, Angela, we'll now move to the vote. Closing the vote, thank you. The motion is carried.

Conference, just before we conclude the AGM, I'd just like to say a few words on behalf of Rampton, Carstairs, Broadmoor and Mersey Care. The work that they do on behalf of the POA and, indeed, the NHS is absolutely vital. They're a credit to this trade union. The membership within those settings are a massive integral part of this union. I'm very pleased to be Chair of the Secure Hospitals, and they help me understand their issues and together, because I know that Mark attends all the meetings as well, as does Dave, as does other members of the Executive, and indeed Phil Fairley in Scotland as well. As I say, it's an extremely difficult environment to work in. Very proud of what they do and long may that hard work continue with our full support and the support of Conference. So, thank you very much. Well done to Mersey Care in bringing those motions and we will use our seat, long hard-fought issue that – for over 30 years we didn't have a seat but campaigning with other unions we managed to break the barriers down to allow us to have a full seat on the NHS staff-side – and we will use that to the best of our ability to maintain their terms and conditions. Thank you very much. That concludes.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Steve. Just to check with Conference, are you seeing the results of the vote on your screens? Yeah? OK, fine.

OK, so we're on motion 38, which is a debate so there's no need for a seconder. So, I will invite Cookham Wood up to start the debate. There he is, Mr Happy. All happy now, Tyler.

Motion 38

Conference debate the violence levels across the estate and local SMTs response to this.

COOKHAM WOOD

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: I will be in a minute. Chair, Conference, NEC, asking you to join this debate. We've not shied away from the violence levels within the YCS and it's something that we've kind of spoken about a lot over the last few years. Some of you in the room will know my colleague that was airlifted to King's, and I remember that day and I was stood over him in the servery, unconscious, on a trolley, being intubated – it was horrible. I remember thinking – I was there, I stood there – I thought, 'This is it. This is bad but this is it, it's going to change. It's going to change, they're going to listen to us now because my mate's going to hospital and there's a helicopter coming and they're taking him. But they'll listen because this is bad. We're struggling, we're hurting, this is violent.' We had a Seg, they took our Seg away – it's dangerous, you can't put children in segregation, why do we do that? We were taking their TVs. They were assaulting us and we were taking their TVs. OK, so we won't take their TVs, they can keep their TVs. All the control mechanisms we had within the YCS, they took them away. Hairbrained ideas from some rogue governors that think they know what they're doing, that's going to make it all better. It will stop staff getting assaulted, so we'll leave them with what they've got.

They were kicking through wooden fire-doors, smashing wooden fire-doors through to get at each other, attack each other with knives, weapons, blades – you name it. We then changed all the wooden fire-doors for metal doors. They then started kicking through the blockwork in our education building to get to each other. It was awful, it was horrific. What did our governors do? Well, 'They're bored. They're really bored. What we're going to do, we're going to put bookcases on all the landings for engagements. These lads have got something to do, got something to read, something to engage them in their time.' Staff were quite happy with this, to an extent. When we said, 'Yeah, what books are we going to get? Are we going to get some sort of hard-hitting novels about gang violence, about what we're doing?' No, we've got "I Did See a Mammoth" and "Spy Raptors". Dave Cook has volunteered, by the way, to do a story time in Weatherspoon's at 7 o'clock tonight if anyone wants to take him up on that, just to get to know these books a bit better.

<Applause>

But what are we doing? When are they going to listen? Because they didn't listen to us when my friend was lifted, when he was taken to hospital. They didn't. They didn't care. It was on to the next one. What can we do? Let's get them back out again, let's reset. Let's reset, let's go again. I didn't go off that day, I went back to work and we were stood in the hub office. And I remember it clear as day, the governor said to us, "We'll lock down. We'll make sure we're all sorted. Give it an hour and then we'll get them back out again, we'll go for exercise and we'll just make sure they're all…" We were in no fit state. No fit state to be doing this. Please join this debate, Conference. Let's actually expose some of what's going on in our establishments because we don't talk about it enough and it doesn't make the press. It doesn't make the news because we are the forgotten about service. Get up here, join in the debate, let us know. Thank you.

<Applause>

JASON OLEKSIAK – BRANCH CHAIR, FELTHAM: Morning Conference, Chair, Secretary, NEC and delegates and guests – at HMP Feltham we've got the same issues with HMP Cookham Wood at the time. One side we've got YCS, the other side we've got HMPPS. The same issues that happened in Cookham Wood happened in Feltham – smashed through the windows, the violence is going up, assaults are going up. Enough's enough, it's time now we stood up and supported our members in the workplace. The employer's got a duty of care, OK, and let's remind them at times what they should be doing. Thank you.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: I wasn't going to speak – oh sorry – Conference, NEC, Chair, I wasn't going to talk on this one, to be fair, but it was the second part of the motion for me was the big one, the SMT local's response to it. And, to tell you the truth, I think – not across the board, there are some good governors out there that do care about staff – but I just generally think SMT do not care about us. I think fast-track is a problem for that because most of these governors did three minutes on a landing and then seemed to think that they can run the prison and know how a prison works, can deal with violence and stuff like that. I'm sure that I look in front of me right now and there's the majority of us who have been assaulted in some form or way because we are the coalface. When you look at governors, you'll see that most of them haven't been assaulted because they've not done enough time on the landings to get assaulted or really know what it's like when you do get assaulted. Myself, I've been assaulted – sometimes seriously, sometimes not – and the response from SMT is disgusting. They do not seem to care about how we as individuals, officers having to deal with this, are suffering from this. It might be a really bad assault. Somebody might get attacked with a weapon, somebody might get – I was going to swear there, I stopped myself. Somebody might get seriously assaulted and that's bad. But somebody might get pushed, somebody might just get a slap from a prisoner. But I can tell you from personal experience that, yes, I have been seriously assaulted, but the one that

really broke my back was a fairly minor assault. It was fairly minor compared to what I had previously, but it broke me – mentally it broke me. And all I got from SMT was, "No, we're not moving him off the wings. No, we're not transferring him. When are you coming back to work? You've been off for three weeks now, you need to come back."

Their response – and their obligations to us are completely forgotten because, "We've got a regime to run. We need to get them out. We need to let them all out." We can't punish the other guys, lock them behind the doors because we're dealing with the paperwork or whatever it is from a member of staff being assaulted. They don't really go to the other people who witnessed that, the officers that witnessed the assault on our members of staff. "How are you guys? Do you need to see the care team, or if not…" They just say, "Right, let's get the regime going again." To me, it's disgusting. SMT local responses to assaults are disgusting. They're just solely focussed on their statistics – out of cell times, tending work, making sure they've got purposeful activities. They don't seem to care at what the effect is on us. And that is what grips me about this and the local SMT response. I know violence is high in all our prisons, I know it's a relevant part of this debate – but, for me, SMT and their response to assaults is disgusting. That's me, thank you.

<Applause>

STEVEN HAMBLETT – BRANCH SECRETARY, MAIDSTONE: Chair, NEC, Conference, we don't have too many violent incidences at Maidstone but we had one recently where the reaction from the governors, as Mike said, is disgusting. We had one individual on one wing that had mental health problems. He started smashing up his cell, so we thought we'd put him in the Seg. He was threatening staff. He was coming up to 42 days in the Seg, where he would require a review with the PGD. Their response was, "Well, we need to give him a chance." No, there's too many concerns from staff. We expressed our concerns. I was the SO in the Seg at the time. I said, "If you put him on the wing, you're going to have problems." They put him on the wing – come to lunchtime, unlocked him. Twenty minutes out of his cell, he assaulted four staff and was back in the Seg. We challenged it and the governor's response was, "Well we had to try." No, you didn't have to try, you had to listen to staff. It's not good enough.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Morning – NEC, Chair and Conference and invited guests. Being a POA rep, you tend to meet new members of staff right at the beginning of their career journey in HMPPS and, to keep it simple, I tell them there's a few things that you just need to concentrate on, especially in the first six months of your service, which is keeping everyone alive, counting and getting the roll right, and making sure that you protect yourself and your colleagues. When will HMPPS do the same for us? They say that preservation of life overrides security in some cases. When will they do something to show us that they're going to preserve our lives in our environment? And when are they going to stop all these new prison officers from escaping the service because they've had enough or it's not the job for them? Please join the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: Hello. What I've heard this morning is all from the young adults, young males. Well, the female estate – we're not offered batons, PAVA, anything to protect ourselves. Well, we've recently been given cuffs, which is really quite a good game-changer for us. However, we still have people that will stab you. We've got a majority – well, quite a large percentage of our population are in for murder, so they've killed people. And what are we offered to protect ourselves? Just a set of cuffs. We had a prisoner that was Miss UK Bodybuilder – the weekend before, she was pulling a truck, I couldn't pull a truck, but she was – off her face on spice. It took six of us to pin her down. You know, next year I will be pushing for motions for PAVA and for batons in the female estate. I can remember it's on the governor's discretion whether we get batons for escorts and that. When I worked at Holloway, we were always issued with a baton, back in 2002, for escorts. We don't get that now because it's political. You can't be seen to be using it against a violent prisoner. However, the police won't care if it's a female or a male or youngster kicking off, they will deal with the threat that's in front of them and we should be offered the same protection. Thank you.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'd like to thank Cookham for bringing this debate forward. So, I'd like to address this in two points. One of them is from when I was at Nottingham. The SMT – I agree with Mr Kimpton's sentiments – they don't care about us as individuals. All the governor at Nottingham wanted to do was expand the regime and reintroduce pool tables. Doesn't address any offending behaviour and it's a weapon, a weapon that has been directed against our staff at Nottingham before, and against prisoners. We raised concerns that they'd reduced the staffing levels on the wing, poor supervision of prisoners – and you want to give them a weapon. "No, no, no, they've got to have something to do. HMIP say they need to be able to play pool." So, you want to put the pool game before the safety of our members? They don't care about us. Members of staff being assaulted. They knew a member of staff was going to get potted. Did they move that member of staff off the wing? No. They let the member of staff get potted and then they segregated the prisoner. Again, they knew what was going to happen and did nothing about it. Poor management, poor oversight.

Fast-forward in the open estate, like we spoke yesterday. We've got no PPE to defend ourselves – very much like our colleagues in the female estate – we've only got a set of handcuffs in the day. The same prisoners are coming through our receptions in the open estate as they are in the Cat Cs and the Cat Bs, and we've got nothing to defend ourselves. A TPRS prisoner came into Sudbury – he was there a week. I've seen him at Nottingham, he was down the segregation unit when I worked in the Seg at Nottingham. "How have you ended up here?" "Well, I don't know. I don't know how I've ended up here." A week later he's smashing the office up and a member of staff is seriously assaulted. If we'd have had access to PAVA we could have reduced that incident but instead we're fighting in an office. Please join the debate and I encourage everyone to do so. Thank you.

<Applause>

DAVID PRITCHARD – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEWES: Chair, NEC, colleagues, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

There's no doubt that there are some good governors out there. They are, they're usually the ones that have risen up through the ranks and know what it's like on the landings. These fast-track governors have not got a clue. Recently there was an assault at our place. A staff member of mine, good friend of mine, assaulted. We restrained the prisoner – I'm taking him to the segregation unit covered in my friend's blood. OK, cool, he's going in the segregation unit, probably transfer him out. You know, get the member of staff the help that they need. Did any of that happen? No. He was let out the segregation unit a week later. Lo and behold, two other staff members assaulted. Back into the segregation unit and we'll just keep him there until he's released. Great progress that. Sat with the governor during an RMP review, "Oh, we don't like these ratios. Violence will go up, funnily enough." The governor's response: "I'm prepared to accept that." I'm sorry, I don't accept that. You shouldn't accept that, we should neither accept anything that increases the risk of violence towards our members. Funnily enough, he pushed the RMP through. We're now in dispute but violence is now tracking at pre-pandemic levels. Disgusting. And his response to this? "Well, maybe we open up the regime a bit more. Give them a bit more time out in the evening." I'm sorry governor, are you stupid? What plans have you got in place for your staff? Nothing. As long as we can appease HMIP, Charlie Taylor and his bunch of merry men, it'll all be fine. I'm sorry but Employee Relations, when it comes to staff safety, there is no middle ground, there is no compromise. Keep us safe. Thank you.

<Applause>

SUKHVINDER BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH: Chair, Conference, NEC, violence levels are at a 10-year high. Just locally at HMP Belmarsh, we have 350 assaults per year. The fact is SMTs don't care. If they did, violence levels would be on their way down and not on the way up. The question is, what are we going to do about it? What's our local response? What's our local strategy to the levels of violence? Have we lodged a dispute about levels of violence? At Belmarsh we have, because it's one of the things that we just cannot accept. What's the NEC response and what is the NEC's strategy on levels of violence across the entire prison estate? That's a question for the top table. Conference, we need to plan our response and it needs to be co-ordinated locally and by the top table. If we don't, we're accepting these levels of violence and we're complicit in these levels of violence. Please join the debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Joining the debate for the NEC is Mick Pimblett.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC to the debate. Colleagues, we cannot continue to ignore the excessive levels of violence that the staff on the front-line face when dealing with prisoners. There is no excuse for violent behaviour. We are now witnessing an escalation in life-threatening incidents that prove that we are dealing with a more violent cohort of prisoners. And doing nothing is not an option. HMPPS's own latest statistics show the true picture of violence in prisons and His Majesty's Prison Service, and the MoJ cannot dismiss the evidence that is staring them in the face. Assaults up by 11% in the 12 months to December 2024. Staff assaults up 13% in the 12 months to December 2024. And serious assaults up 10%. In the background section of HMPPS's latest statistics, they state themselves, and I quote, "The statistics between '20 and 2022 were affected by the different levels of restrictions implemented within prisons to limit and control the spread of Covid-19. These restrictions included the implementation of the effective isolation of prisoners to reduce the spread of Covid-19." Well, I say to HMPPS, why did you not learn from the period of 2020 to 2022 and reintroduce those levels of restrictions to reduce the spread of violence in the prison estate, which is doing far greater harm to our members than Covid-19 ever did?

The only zero tolerance that MoJ and HMPPS bureaucrats have when it comes to violence is a refusal to see this calamity and the rank inability to do anything about it except stay invisible. Even our biggest critics in the past, the Howard League for Penal Reform, have stated that the POA is right to be concerned. But what do we get from our lords and masters? The same old soundbites that they're taking over a crisis which is left to them by the previous government and that we have zero tolerance to violence. This is not good enough. Urgent and sustained action is needed now to protect our members and the prisoners that they look after.

The POA continues to give HMPPS solutions to reduce the unacceptable levels of violence, but they refuse to listen. It's time that prison leaders left their ivory towers and started listening to the front line instead of forcing staff to work in unsafe prison regimes in pursuit of unlock periods that achieve little and are breeding violence against POA members. Colleagues, we very recently saw an attack and our members at HMP Frankland nearly losing their lives. The POA are putting this government on notice that, if they fail to heed our warnings, the next headline will include a fatality within one of our prisons. If things do not improve soon, the POA will not hesitate to take any action deemed necessary to protect our members, regardless of Section 127 or the permanent injunction.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you for that, Mick, but I don't think there's enough room for three in a cell.

We're on to motion 39. He tried to get another day off but I said no chance, you've got to work today, so Ian Carson is going to move it. Do we have a seconder? Thank you.

Motion 39

That Conference accepts that we are almost back at pre pandemic levels of violence/chaos and disorder, and that we collectively

condemn HMPPS for their failure to recognise the lessons learned from the pandemic and incorporate these lessons into prison regimes. In 2020 the POA warned the employer that unless we learned the lessons from the data available during the pandemic, that we would be back at pre pandemic levels of violence chaos and disorder in 2024/25. That is now unfortunately the position.

NEC

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Well, how do I follow that then? Chair, Conference, moving motion 39, asking you to support this motion. And I'm not going to read it all back to you, you've got it in front of you and it's on the screens. Colleagues, it isn't always useful to point the finger and lay the blame when things go wrong, but on this occasion pointing the finger is absolutely appropriate. We're now back at pre-pandemic levels of violence and the chaos and the mayhem and the pandemonium has returned with a vengeance. I've got to say this and I'm going to say it twice. The latest violence figures are nothing short of disgraceful. Those figures are nothing short of an absolute disgrace. Albert Einstein once said, he defined insanity as doing the same things over and over whilst expecting different results. And I know that we are not collectively insane, but I can't speak for everybody else. The pandemic and the lessons learned from the abundant data was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to put the prison service onto a path which could realistically deliver its core aims and objectives – keeping people safely in custody and offering opportunities through rehabilitation. And we've got the employer at the back of the room and I'm going to aim this at them. You cannot rehabilitate anybody in violent, chaotic environments. We learnt from the pandemic that control was the key. Working with smaller groups of prisoners in a well-structured and supervised environment was the way forward.

We were promised structured on- and off-wing activities <inaudible> everybody remember that? Yeah, which was supposed to be purposeful. Interestingly, something that was taken from a previous agreement we agreed in 2017, the first bullet point – purposeful activity – it's in your RMP. What we've got is X-boxes, ping pong and pool. Some managers even considering putting darts on the wings. Have a little think about that for a moment. Some managers think it's a good idea to give prisoners darts. The promises that were made to us have evaporated like a mirage in the desert. Nobody admits to making any promises to us. Consider this – at a time when violence is where it is and all the other indicators of the state of the service are as bad or worse than ever, some managers think it would be a good idea to give prisoners darts as a structured on-wing activity. Insanity? Possibly. Madness? Likely. Stupidity? Absolutely.

Let us all collectively condemn our employer for their collective failure. The latest move, which comes out of the various meetings I attend, is to put the blame on factors which are out of their control – and it's something I'm absolutely sick of. We've got high levels of crowding – yes. Drug use in society is up – absolutely. I joined the service in 1990 and I know a lot of you are going to look at me and go, "Ian, that can't be possible." True, true, I joined in 1990. Prisons were overcrowded then, prisoners used drugs back then, but we had more control. It's clear, colleagues, that our employer's failure is likely to result in decades more misery for both our members who work in prisons and those we look after, and it didn't need to be this way. This was a matter of choice and for that we must collectively condemn our employer. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Ian. There are no indicated speakers, so we'll just go straight to the vote. OK, we can display the results of that. That's carried, thank you very much.

Motion 40, Hollesley Bay, seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 40

This Conference mandates the NEC to oppose the Clustering/merging of Prisons where it is at the detriment of our members.

HOLLESLEY BAY

MARK SMY – BRANCH SECRETARY, HOLLESLEY BAY: Chair, Conference, NEC, motion 40 is that "Conference mandates the NEC to oppose the clustering and merger of prisons where it's at detriment of our members." Scenario is two high-performing prisons about a mile and a half apart from each other. Settled staff. Somebody's come up with the good idea – what we'll do, make it more cost-effective, allegedly. We'll cluster and we'll merge them. So now you've got two prisons with unsettled staff because nobody's coming up with any answers to any questions, goalposts are continually moving. Take the Band 5 group, between the two establishments – 23. "Oh, we'll make that 20." Well, what's going to happen to the other three positions? "Well, we'll just sort of…" Nobody gives you an answer. Well, where does it leave the staff? "Well, we'll redeploy across both sites." Well, how – how are we going to get between the two sites? So, I'll tell you what, I'm walking. And what I'll do, I'll take my meal break – if I'm working up there in the afternoon, I'll walk up. "Oh, there's no need to be awkward. What we'll do is we'll provide a pool car." What happens if there's more than one of us going up at different times? "Oh, you're putting obstacles in the way." Well, can you give us an answer for our members because they're walking round, their heads are down. Promotion avenues have gone. You're putting CMAC into Talent Management chats now on eight weeks and there's no jobs for them. So, what's happening? "Oh, it'll all come out in the wash at some point." But we're still not getting an answer. It's affecting the members and it's not on. So, please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No further speakers, so I'll hand over to Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking in favour of motion 40. Colleagues, it's some time since we've dealt with a merger or a cluster. I'm not sure what the difference is but they told us Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill weren't being merged anymore,

they were clustering them instead. Both branches went into dispute and we were working with the PGA and resisting everything until the PGA did a deal. Merger or clustering is an uncertainty for all staff. What will happen to the excess staff? Who will those staff be? Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill are two of the highest-performing establishments across the prison estate and the staff are proud of that and work hard to keep it that way. HMPPS believe they can cluster them and have one big high-performing prison, and it's only the uniformed staff that realise it won't work. One an open estate, the other a therapeutic estate – they couldn't be more different. As Mark said, they're about a mile and a half apart along a dirt track, which isn't safe to walk along. We will dispute any reduction in uniformed staff but it's a time of uncertainty. All front-line staff are under enough pressure without having to go through this. Obviously, it's all about money, but there's other ways the department can save money. They can get rid of all these governors that they keep moving sideways when they've done wrong, or move them to the ivory tower.

<Applause>

Thank you. Please support the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Jackie. Straight to the vote then please. That vote is now closed. Thank you for that, that's carried.

41, Warren Hill.

BRANCH DELEGATE, WARREN HILL: Permission to withdraw.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Show of hands, permission to withdraw 41? Thank you, that's withdrawn.

Motion 42, Hollesley Bay. Seconder for Hollesley Bay? Thank you.

Motion 42

We propose that Conference debate the detrimental effect to members of Mergers/Clustering and develop a policy to resist such when they are proposed.

HOLLESLEY BAY

MARK SMY – BRANCH SECRETARY, HOLLESLEY BAY: Chair, Conference, NEC, I think we've covered it on the previous motion. Bear it all in mind because, if they think that they've got a successful merger or a cluster, they could do it to your establishments as well. I think this is just sort of the way forward for them. Depending on all the staff of what ages, we've got a split age bracket at the moment. We've got some on Indeed.com, some on the pensions portal, that's the direction it's heading. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Just noticed this is a debate, so anyone else wish to contribute? I'll invite Angela Montgomery to contribute on the part of the NEC.

ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: I mean, it's been a short debate but it's been a clear debate. And there are many questions regarding mergers and clusterings. There's the issue about what the difference is – I don't think anyone's clear. There's the issue about how travel happens and who pays the cost of that. There's the issue of, where is the rationale, and the clear rationale, for doing that? And what is the evidence that it will be successful? It's been a helpful debate and we will be looking to pursue the points that all of you have raised. Many thanks.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you.

On to Motion 43, Cookham Wood. Seconder for Cookham Wood? Sudbury.

Motion 43

Conference condemns the failed experiment that was the band 4 diploma in the youth estate.

COOKHAM WOOD

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC, some of you in the room may know about the Band 4 diploma that we were offered and we did in the youth custody estate. You joined the job as a Band 3 prison officer, they then said to us existing Band 3s, "You can upskill, do a year's training and you'll get your Band 4 youth justice worker." At the time, we were told it's a level, so if you want to go to adult you can leave as an SO. A lot of staff took this and were running with it. We were promised that we would get at least four hours a week off of the detail to be able to complete this work. That never materialised. We were always given, if you did it you got four hours TOIL each week. We had

staff in excess of 200 hours TOIL balances at our establishment. Couldn't take the time off, couldn't get the time back. We weren't having enough staff sign up to it operational, so they extended it to our non-op friends. Governors sitting in offices doing a diploma with all the time in the world, going on to do their Masters that was fully funded for by the prison service. It makes no sense.

Recently where we've re-rolled – we've had an excess of Band 4 officers, youth justice workers, we just let them level transfer. If they had been in the job a year and a month, they've got their Band 4. We've closed Cookham. They've only ever worked with groups of six, seven, eight lads – they're now running wings of 180 across the south-east. We've just absolutely destroyed the levels of experience in the Band 4 in the south-east and I know our colleagues in the other YCSs are the same. Fingers crossed they won't shut them as well, but it is a common pattern that we're seeing. Our staff were just hounded and hounded and hounded to get this done. There was an agreement reached with the NEC – we all attended the meeting, I think it was back in 2017, to iron out this policy where we would get these protections for our staff. They were never given, they were never offered. It was the same across all four of the YCS sites. I urge the other four branches – or the other three branches that are left in the YCS – to get up and join this and help me on this motion because it needs to be raised. Thank you.

<Applause>

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Morning, Conference, Chair. So just to echo Tyler's thoughts here. The Youth Justice Diploma is a well-intentioned bit of training and development. It does teach a bit of psychology and it helps you understand slightly differently the developing person. So, there is a well-intentioned piece there. However, it destroyed any semblance of the youth estate being a comparison with the adult estate. So, any one of you, as Tyler said, we would be paid as a Band 4 officer so we'd be doing AFCs, putting in breakfast packs, but being paid as a Band 4. It was not the best way of doing it. I support the motion and I hope you all do too. Thank you.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests, I ask you to support this motion. It occurred to me that someone that's got 200 hours' worth of TOIL, they could go to their governor and say, "There's something called Bulletin 8 that tells me that you should pay back my TOIL as soon as possible and like for like." And that's all I've got to say. Thank you.

<Applause>

JASON OLEKSIAK – BRANCH CHAIR, FELTHAM: Good morning, Chair, Executive, Secretary and Committee members. We've got the same issues as Cookham Wood and the rest of the YCS. For anybody who's a Band 4 specialist, there's a lot of confusion going on, I would say. They've removed the SO rank completely and a lot of these new staff coming in, done this course for 12 months to 18 months and then they were given these two stripes. There's a lot of confusion across the board in the YCS. It's a broken system in the YCS. The SFT don't really work together and I agree with my colleagues as well, there's a lot more work to be done with YCS as well. A lot of improvements have to be done. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Terry McCarthy for the NEC.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in favour of the motion. You've heard from Cookham Wood and Wetherby and Feltham about how disastrous the diploma was for the YCS. What they didn't mention was, if you'd worked in the youth custody estate for 25 years but didn't fancy doing the diploma, you had to move out of that estate. The YCS lost hundreds of years of experience because of this. It was disastrous for the YCS. So, for all the reasons that you've just heard from the branches, please support the motion and join in the condemnation of the debacle that was the YCS Diploma. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote's now open, Conference. Thank you. And we can close that vote. That's carried. Interestingly enough, on this one we will condemn the employer for that but we can't condemn the people who come up with the madcap idea because they've left the service. One of them now works for the Department of Work and Pensions, so I'm sure they'll be very successful with the welfare cuts, and the other one went to the private sector and thought they could work from home for four days a week running a prison. And, of course, the private sector being cut-throat didn't move them sideways or give them a promotion, they sacked them. So, they will be suitably condemned.

Motion 44, Parkhurst. Who seconded that then? Thank you.

Motion 44

The NEC discuss with HMPPS to extend the rigid limits on return to work and light duties beyond 3 months.

PARKHURST

GLEN HOLMES – BRANCH CHAIR, PARKHURST: Chair, Conference, NEC – bringing this motion asking for your support. Due to the state of the NHS and the treatment times, we find that our governors and area managers are manipulating the process to suit certain people. We heard yesterday about the boys' clubs and the masons and all that sort of stuff. I'm not going to say that the grasses or "Yes, governor" people, I won't say ex-forces

and I won't say friends of governors, but it appears if you don't fit into the little areas then you are treated completely differently. You're allowed different systems, you can be on restricted duties for two to three years. However, if you can't afford private treatment, you can be waiting over nine months to get to see a consultant, let alone have any treatment. To be told by the consultant you have to wait around nine months but, if you go private, I can do it in two weeks at a cost of £16,000. If a member of staff who has been working 25 hours a week because they couldn't afford the £16,000 for treatment and due to the fact that the NHS can't do the work until 18 months later, the governors think those staff can't fulfil their role and they were dismissed. This is not right and should not be down to any governor. There should be a different process to support those staff for more than 13 weeks and it should be the same for everybody. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Glen.

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Good morning, Conference, Chair, NEC and honourable members. I would like you to support this motion and the reason is an MRI scan, for example, a lot of things happen and, when your person gets an injury, they go for an MRI scan. On the NHS, just a simple MRI scan can take up to three months. That is not enough, and do you know what the governor says? Sorry, you're not fit for purpose. I have seen in my short career, time after time, basically CM pulling their card saying get back to the job otherwise you're off sick. You're off sick, you're going to be put in front of the governor. Tell you what, you're going to resign or regrade. What are you going to do? So, we've been threatened. Three months is not enough sometimes. Support this motion please. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so over to Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking in favour of this motion. We'll all have different experiences of supporting POA members who have either returned to work or who are unable to work operationally for a number of reasons. HMPPS policy suggests that 13 weeks is the maximum length of time a prison officer can be on restricted duties before a decision needs to be made regarding their future as an operational member of staff. There is an element of discretion around this, but it only comes where a governor does the right thing and supports a member of staff because they can see they are a victim of circumstances beyond their control. There will also be many occasions where a governor refuses to extend the 13 weeks and staff are either regraded or managed out of the service because they were unable to return to full operational duties within a set time-frame. Current NHS waiting lists will only add to these issues and, at the very least, they should be acknowledged. Every set of circumstances is different and each case should be considered with an open mind and a level of flexibility that can be adapted to fit the staff members' individual situation. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. And we can display those results. That's carried.

On to Motion 45, Erlestoke. Withdraw was that? Ford, oh sorry. I'm getting old, my hearing's going.

Motion 45

For the NEC to negotiate with the employer to allow the option of 39 and 41 hour contracts for Operational Support Grades.

ERLESTOKE

NEIL PARSONS – BRANCH CHAIR, ERLESTOKE: Sorry for the wait. Chair, NEC, Conference, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

HMP Erlestoke would like to submit the following motion, "For the NEC to negotiate with the employer to allow the option of 39 and 41 hour contracts for Operational Support Grades." At HMP Erlestoke, we have an increase in retention rate in the OSG group. Out of a target staffing figure of 56, we do have a healthy full-time equivalent figure of 53.98 and this is made up of 62 individuals. However, out of these 62, 11 of them are on work-life balances, with a number of them being part-time, and including nine not being able to carry out night duties. This causes difficulty in covering these duties and more shortages within the detail on top of a non-effective rate currently sat at 6 but is often higher. Due to only having a vacancy rate of three, overtime is minimal, which often means covering shortfalls is difficult and sometimes needing to act down officers and use restricted duty staff to cover these shortfalls. Often, OSGs have asked me about contracts and if they could do more hours like other grades, which is why we have proposed this motion. We strongly believe this would help retention and keep experienced and effective OSGs with no need to look for better-paid jobs or internal promotion if they are content in what they are doing. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

KEITH STUTLEY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, FORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, delegates, everybody else, I'm going to keep this short. As a former OSG that did the fast track to officer, I would say that the OSG group is severely overlooked by pretty much everyone. They do a fantastic job.

<Applause>

They do a fantastic job, they do an essential job and they should have the same things that we should have. If they want to work 39 hours or 41 hours and it will help them with their pay, then let's let them do it. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so over to Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking in favour of this motion. The introduction of Fair and Sustainable terms and conditions included the option for prison officers to work between 37 and 41 hours once they have completed their training. It hasn't been without its issues in terms of added complications around pay and shift patterns, but it has also caused division in the ranks around why the option to increase your hours was only permitted at the Band 3 grade. Some of our OSG members do already work 39 hours but only because they were employed prior to F&S being introduced. Anyone employed now does not have the option to increase their hours in the same way that a Band 3 prison officer does. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: The vote is now open, Conference. Thank you, we can now close that vote. That's been carried.

Motion 46, Erlestoke. Thank you. If this is carried then 47 will fall.

Motion 46

For the NEC to negotiate with the employer to increase the length of Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave to 12 weeks full pay from 2 weeks statutory pay.

ERLESTOKE

DAVID TUCKER – BRANCH SECRETARY, ERLESTOKE: Good morning, Chair, NEC, Conference, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

Motion is for the NEC to negotiate with the employer to increase the length of statutory parental bereavement leave to 12 weeks' full pay compared to the current two weeks' statutory. Currently, the employer offers two weeks consecutive or two separate weeks within 56 weeks of the death of a child up to 18 years of age. If you are unable to have a funeral within this time, you are able, kindly, to have unpaid special leave. How nice. For mothers and fathers, this is possibly the worst time in their lives. No-one expects to outlive their children or have to bury them. Currently, you are expected to arrange a funeral, grieve and heal within two weeks. The proposed 12 weeks would provide at least the possibility to grieve, cry and try to get to a new normality, that normality of no longer having their children in their lives. Expectant mothers are able to get six months full pay at the beginning of motherhood. Would it not be at least appropriate to give parents 12 weeks to mourn this loss? Support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, well done.

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC and honourable invited guests, I did a <inaudible> undertaken in the Covid time and I can tell you it's not easy. I met so many different families and I've got so many stories, but let's not go down that road. What I'm saying here is we all have suffered and lost and I'm sure it does come back and haunt you. Two weeks is not enough. It's not enough. We need more time. Twelve weeks I think is not enough but at least we've got something. Support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so over to Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking in favour of motion 46. Colleagues, this will be short and sweet. What can be more devastating for any parent than losing a child? If a pregnant woman loses a child within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, they're only entitled to two weeks' paid leave. Twenty-four weeks and one day, they can take their full maternity leave. Obviously, that one day must make it more devastating. But we want to be clear – it's not just baby loss, it's the loss of a child under the age of 18. No parent is going to get over that loss in two weeks and understandably they will go sick and will therefore have sick warnings to worry about. And whilst we all know that policy says managers can use their discretion, we also all know that governors are not allowing them to use their discretion, which is something else we've brought up and nothing's been done about it. Colleagues, all we're asking for is that any member of staff who loses a child to be treated with care and sympathy. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. Thank you, we can display the results. That's carried so Motion 47 falls.

On to Motion 48, Erlestoke. Thank you.

Motion 48

For the NEC to negotiate with the employer to increase Parental Leave (up to a maximum of 6 weeks).

ERLESTOKE

DAVID TUCKER – BRANCH SECRETARY, ERLESTOKE: And again – Chair, NEC, Conference, "For the NEC to negotiate with the employer to increase parental leave up to six weeks." Currently, the second parent has two weeks to bond with a newborn and support the mother following the most physical thing they put their bodies through. Six weeks for the second parent can help alleviate stress for the new mother and decrease risk of experiencing postpartum depression. If the baby is delivered by c-section, the mother has a healing time of a minimum of six weeks. Surely the second parent should be able to support the healing mother and the new baby without the stress of also having to work on the landings? In perspective, ASDA has doubled statutory time to provide four weeks, John Lewis gives 14 full pay and 12 weeks on 50%, Google gives 24 full weeks' pay and flexible working agreements, Barclays gives six weeks full pay and 26 weeks if they have worked for at least 26 years for them. The government should be leading on these reforms, not private companies. Thank you, support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No further speakers, so over to Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, supporting motion 48. There's nothing really more to say. Over the last two motions, it's all been said. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Jackie, and we can go to the vote. We can now close that vote. That's carried.

We did motion 49 yesterday, so over to Motion 50, Whatton. A seconder for Whatton please? Thank you, Sudbury.

Motion 50

Conference mandates the POA NEC to engage with the Employer to disband the in-effective Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit which holds little if any authority in addressing unprofessional conduct and breaches of professional standards when involving Senior Manager(s) and Leader(s) and be replaced with a Professional Standards Directorate (PSD) that has the authority to investigate and hold to account all HMPPS Staff regardless of grade, rank and or position.

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference – "Conference to mandate the POA NEC to engage with the employer to disband the ineffective Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit which hold little, if any, authority in addressing unprofessional conduct and breaches of professional standards when involving senior managers and leaders and to be replaced with a professional standard directorate that has the authority to investigate and hold to account all HMPPS staff regardless of grade, rank or position." Down to you, mate.

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'd like to thank Whatton for bringing motion 50 before conference. Like Mike, I attended the fringe meeting at last year's Annual Conference which was facilitated by the Employee Relations team and the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviour Unit. I'm sure, like many of us that attended that meeting, that we sat there in disbelief in listening to the feedback in information that was provided to us by TUBU staff, demonstrating how ineffective TUBU, as an organisation, actually is in addressing bullying, harassment and victimisation and unprofessional conduct, especially when the perpetrators are senior managers, governors and senior leaders. Like many members, I had high hopes when TUBU was first formed, thinking that higher and senior leadership were taking a real step in addressing the disgraceful and disgusting behaviour of senior managers and governors. The membership was sold the premise and the dream that this was a time for change and that change was coming. However, HMPPS, in their infinite wisdom, based TUBU, the operating model, on a system – by their own admission at the fringe meeting – on one that's used within the armed forces which, of course, are bound by military law, legislation and King's regulations. It's a non-comparative working environment and a different set of processes that are alien to the modern-day civil service and that of the prison service. They did this rather than adapt and embrace a tried and tested system of professional standards units used within the Home Office, national constabularies and police and authorities across the country.

TUBU's highest grade within their organisational structure is a Band 10, which we all know within the Conduct and Discipline Policy is unable to commission and/or investigate a grade higher. That excludes governors, PGD and senior civil service grades within the executive, making them literally

above reproach and continue to behave in a hostile, degrading and unprofessional manner to our members. TUBU investigators are non-operational members of staff. They cannot investigate operational grades which is, again, stated with our own Conduct and Discipline Policy. Therefore, TUBU cannot take any action against senior operational leaders. TUBU has become nothing more than a reporting unacceptable behaviour unit. We would have more joy and fruition if our members reported bullying, harassment, the sexual assaults to the police. At least then the prison service would be compelled to investigate these individuals as we are a notifiable profession.

My last statement, if heard by a member of the general public in 2025 about a professional public service, would undoubtedly cause shock and horror. However, it only confirms that HMPPS has a damning and unresponsive reputation for addressing, challenging and taking action against head of function, governors and senior leaders when their behaviour falls below the required standard. Have you noticed that there always seems to be a special project, review work or assignment at the area office when it's a governor grade, rather than face suspension or disciplinary action, which we've all seen? We've all seen these same people then impose suspensions and detrimental processes against our colleagues in the Band 2-5 group. The service is desperate for an independent professional standards directorate that has the independence and no undue influence of HMPPS senior leaders and managers. We need a professional standards organisation that has the authority and jurisdiction to investigate all members of staff, regardless of grade and position. The service needs an organisation that dispenses professional standards and procedural and natural justice in a truly equal and objective manner. I appreciate that some members today may be saying, "Well, they'll just fill it with ex-governors or senior managers and they'll mark their own homework again" – but we need more.

Jennifer Rademaker, the Non-Executive Director for the Ministry of Justice, has stated in her much-needed recommendations to the employer that an independent channel outside of the line management structure for reporting and investigating decisions on bullying, harassment, complaints, where a dedicated team of well-trained professionals and experts can handle these matters in a ring-fenced, confidential and standardised process, is needed. TUBU falls short of this and, for all those that put their faith in them, they have failed us and our members. Conference, please support this motion and empower the NEC to compel the employer to make changes now. Thank you.

<Applause>

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BELMARSH: Chair, Conference, NEC, I'm speaking against this motion and, before I speak, I would like to commend, obviously, the comments made by the previous speaker. And really can I say I don't agree with any of it? No, I agree with all of it. At present this is the only dedicated unit dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Are they independent, effective and transparent? That's a different matter. I think everyone who attended the fringe meeting last year was absolutely disgusted at the response that they were given when they asked questions. What I believe the NEC should do is use the information, however filtered it may be, to challenge the employer. I'm sure there's enough information within TUBU's own climate assessment reports of all the prisons that they've done over the last few years to provide enough damning information to take that forward and challenge the employer. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC against this motion. We completely understand the sentiment behind it and we do share your frustrations, particularly when members are feeling they have nowhere to turn and it appears that nobody is willing to intervene when senior managers are behaving badly. There is an acknowledgement from TUBU itself that they are not yet where they want to be and that they are a work in progress. The recent Rademaker enquiry and subsequent report looked at the role of TUBU as part of her review. There are a number of recommendations as a result of it. TUBU are included within the recommendations, specifically in relation to their climate assessments. Any of you who have been through the climate assessment process will be aware that the full report is only given to the governor and is not shared any wider than that. It is not surprising that staff have little faith in the process when it's impossible to hold the governor to account without knowing the finer details of the report. How can we as a trade union try to force change when we are not given access to the full report in the first place?

Another recommendation on the back of the Rademaker Report says that continued care should be given in hiring TUBU mediators and investigators with personal and professional profiles that reflect neutrality and independence. It is clear that TUBU still feature and still have a role to play as far as these recommendations are concerned, so it's in our interests to progress these proposals and to allow TUBU the opportunity to improve and to make themselves fit for purpose moving forward. They need to build on their credibility, so staff do see them as independent and not just as another management tool. The NEC fully support the implantation of these recommendations and we will be involved in progressing them with the employer. The recommendations do highlight a need for independence when professional standards are being questioned. We would ask that this motion is rejected so we are not restricted in our discussions around how these changes will be implemented. If this motion is carried at Conference today, we will be limited in what we can ask for or accept. We need to be able to fully consider all elements of the report's recommendations and this motion would prevent that. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Straight to the vote then. That vote is now closed. Motion is lost.

Motion 51 is a debate, so no need for a seconder. I'll invite Whatton to start the debate.

Motion 51

Conference to debate the current Conduct & Discipline Process and whether it is fit for purpose as well as the disproportionality in the way disciplinary sanctions are imposed.

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Thank you. Chair, NEC, Conference, I'd like to invite the Conference to debate the current Conduct and Discipline process, whether it is fit for purpose as well as the proportionality in the way disciplinary sanctions are imposed. There is far too much inconsistency with the application of 06/10. Governors seem to do what they want with it. Every time we pick up a procedural error, they just chin it off – disregard it, sorry. They don't pay any mind to consistency when they do it. I mean, some of you already know I got sacked because I said you couldn't trust governors to be truthful. I even had emails to prove that they lied in emails, so it wasn't even slander, but yet I still got sacked. Obviously, I won my appeal. I will never forget what the Area Manager said to me as well – "I'm not going to see you walk for blowing raspberries at governors" – because that's how pathetic it was that I got sacked for that. And that was a full disciplinary, gross misconduct. Where is the proportionality there? You get governors that we all know – we've discussed it lots already at this Conference – you get governors that get allegations made against them or even grievances, which is something we'll come on to a bit later anyway, where the desired outcome is for that governor to be investigated under 06/10. And I know, not personally but from colleagues, that you can chase that all the way up to Phil Copple and trying to get them when it's a completely legitimate reason to commission an investigation for an officer – for a governor, no, don't bother with that. No, we've got to look after them. So there needs to be consistency, there needs to be proportionality with the application of the disciplinary process. I hand it over to any of my colleagues.

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'd like to thank HMP Whatton for bringing this debate to motion before Conference. Conference, many of us today have represented members through the Conduct and Disciplinary investigation and subsequent hearings. We have all seen the discrepancies and procedural errors in the way the investigating officer has conducted the investigation, how they've presented the alleged facts to the hearing authority, usually filled with suppositions, opinions and hearsay evidence. We have all seen first-hand the hearing authority dismiss a member on the grounds of probability rather than on the burden of proof which is clearly defined within our Conduct and Discipline policy and Halsbury's Laws of England. Yet, despite our best effort, the hours of work and the due regard for our member, the governor will always impose the harshest and most punitive disciplinary sanction that is available.

Governors, PGDs and senior leaders continue to commission simple investigations and fact-findings to which they are backed and supported by ill-informed and unversed HR case managers in prison service policies. This is despite the fact that branch officials and national officials continue to remind them that PSO1300 has been rescinded for nearly 15 years and cannot be used for staff-related investigations. This is met with little or no regard when this is raised and they're conducting investigations outside of policy and prolonging the investigative process. 06/10 is quite clear in its methodology. The process stated therein for suspension of duty should be considered in exceptional circumstances, which we're going to discuss later, with alternative, detached and restricted duties explored during the investigative process. However, all too often we are called to support a member who is being suspended – as the governor it's their go-to option, with the full intention that they know when it goes to a hearing they're going to dismiss them. That's their get out of jail free card. The way disciplinary awards and sanctions are imposed on Bands 2-5 is also done in a <inaudible> manner, with Bands 2-5 receiving the most severe and punitive awards in comparison with Bands 6-12, who receive little or no sanction. One has only got to look at the Conduct and Discipline Report, which we as branch officials will only be able to obtain a small section pertinent to the individuals that we represent, a practice that I encourage all reps when representing a member to speak to your NEC reps and obtain it for your hearings. The employer will always say Bands 2-5 are the most populous within the service and therefore will be reflected high within the data. This was done in an email to me when I tried to grievance Phil Copple for not following his own Conduct and Discipline policy. For anyone that goes to the Durham office, it's nearly as tall as him and it outlines the professional standards of the service. He doesn't follow it himself and he's in charge of our professional standards now as the new interim Director General Chief Executive Officer. What hope have we got? The manner in which gross misconduct cases are heard by a single hearing authority doesn't work. Having a governor or PGD senior leader as the judge, jury and sentence enabler doesn't fill, if it ever did fill, us with confidence. It's time for change and we need to change our Conduct and Discipline policy. I encourage everyone to take part in the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

BILLY YOUNG – BRANCH CHAIR, GLENOCHIL: Chair, NEC, colleagues, guests, I'm sad to see the same thing in Scotland as is happening in England. We've got governors deciding on what's going to happen to our members and they do it in a way that has raised my dander, if that's the right phrase to use, because they do it disproportionately to what they are doing. I have, I'll point out, been part of this one process myself in my career and, when it becomes a part where a unit manager's involved, it suddenly disappears because they say, "Oh, that's one of us. We don't want to take it any further." And to highlight the point, I've just recently – the reason I'm up talking is I've recently been representing a member who went through that process and they have kept them sacked from the job. If it had been a governor grade, that person wouldn't have been even investigated. And in fact we had a case just recently where we had members of staff in Scotland dismissed for breaking Covid rules – sacked, done. And we had a governor who I'll not mention who did the same thing, made the front page of the paper, disciplined. But he was disciplined behind closed doors and that meant he retained his job, stayed as a dep governor, and then after a period of time became the acting governor who then retained his dep governors. So in Scotland they get a retention bonus, which isn't advertised but it's to keep them in the job because they're good at their job and we can't recruit people to do that job. And then when he became the governor, I'm pretty sure he got the same retention bonus. And he's now retired on governor's wages. That's the hypocrisy that we're dealing with in this service from England, Scotland, and probably Ireland as well, because they don't think that they should be held to the same standards they hold us to. And it's shocking and our employer should be ashamed. The governors should be ashamed, but we, as a union, should be very proud that we stand up for our members. Thanks for the debate, thanks for bringing this forward and let's make sure that we stand up and fight and don't let them away with us. And I didn't <inaudible>.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Joining the debate for the NEC is Ian Carson.

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, encouraging the other branches to come and join us, especially those who have never spoken at Conference before. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, we've got to remember that 06/10 is the policy that belongs to the employer. It's their policy and, whilst we can attempt to change it, we cannot give you any guarantees. One thing I'll say at this point is knowledge is power, so reading the policy and understanding the various facets and bits of that policy is really important. 06/10 has got a number of shortcomings. I'm going to highlight one for me. The main one for me, and I deal with it quite a lot of the time, is set within section 9. It's about how you conduct an appeal. When we get to an appeal, we focus on the four areas to appeal – correct me if I'm wrong – when actually we should be focussing on the roles and responsibilities of the Area Manager. That's normally who the appeal goes to, isn't it, the PGD? So, what does it say? In making their decision, the appeal authority must consider whether the disciplinary process was correctly followed, whether the member of staff was given sufficient time, whether the finding was consistent, whether the arguments in mitigation were given due weight – and there are another four bullet points. So, there's an absolute role there for the PGD of the appeal, who must ensure that this happens, but there is no appeal to that if that all goes wrong. So, there is a shortcoming there in 06/10.

Is it fit for purpose? We could spend all day discussing that. Last year in December, I took my areas, Northeast and Yorkshire, to Quorn Grange for two days. We had a two-day area meeting. We covered a comprehensive agenda but most of morning two was taken up by PSI 06/10, and some of my branch officials are still in a coma from sitting and listening to me talking for five hours about 06/10. Never mind. We covered compliance, rules and responsibilities, redacted information, suspensions, questioning witnesses, especially – especially – the investigating manager, witness statements, defining charges, and many others. So, when we debate 06/10, what we're perhaps looking to do is get more insight in how we improve our representation. Where does it work for us? What bits don't work and why? Not forgetting the massive impact local industrial relations has on the whole process. It's really important to know that. Then you need to consider whether or not you need your area official in to give you a hand on some of the issues that you're finding difficulty with. We will do that – this NEC will do that for you. One of the matters to debate here is disproportionality. Yes, absolutely. When you look at the conduct reports, it appears that there is much, perhaps too much, scope for governors when coming to a decision. And whilst the reports reflect this, we have to balance that with the acceptance that we don't have all the details. When considering any outcome or appeal with a branch official, where the outcome is questionable, there's a number of matters to consider, but one of the things that I always do, perhaps most importantly when I'm looking at this, is to look at whether the ACAS guidelines have been followed. What does the ACAS guidelines say? Managers must act consistently and bear in mind outcomes of a similar nature. So, how many people do that? That's been successful for me on a number of occasions so that maybe can overcome the issue of disproportionality. Think about this.

We know managers act outside of policy and we know many don't know what they're doing. And there's a lot who do – there's some good managers – but there's some people I wouldn't pay with washers. We know many investigating managers don't have a clue and we know that this impacts on outcomes for our members. What do we do about that? How about at the point when the policy is thrown in the bin and when we've come to the conclusion that there's no way that either natural or procedural justice will be delivered – do we submit a grievance against the hearing authority? The employer – I'll tell you what the employer will say, "These matters will be addressed at the appeal." I'm going to tell you, absolutely not. The grievance is about the behaviour of the individual and not the policy, and therefore that is a grievance. How many insist on a formal investigation when they submit that grievance? What does the policy actually say? Well 1.1 says, "The policy sets out the mandatory instructions for HR-based investigations." It's mandatory, it's not optional. We need to emphasise that. Perhaps when we question 06/10 and its effectiveness, what we really want is greater insight because that's what's going to improve the whole process for us. I'm going to leave you with this, and this is an analogy that I came up with that I found online. And I'm going to quote Winston Churchill: "Many forms of government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No-one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise, indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except for all the other forms that have been tried." So, be careful what you wish for. Please join the debate, Conference.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Ian. That was a debate.

The next one, Motion 52, is also a debate, and starting off the debate for the NEC is Ian Carson.

Motion 52

Conference debate the wrongful application of PSI 6/10 section 6 suspensions and the impact a suspension from work has on POA members.

NEC

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, opening this debate on behalf of the NEC. We're debating the wrongful application of section 6 PSI 06/10 and the impact this has on POA members. We've done this in the past and I think it's about time we did it again. At the outset, we must concede that, on occasion, our members face investigation into various serious issues and suspension appears to be the only option. My advice to you all is, regardless of that, challenge the suspension. We've got to be on record of doing that on a regular basis. There are a number of times when prison governors simply suspend, regardless of the available information. We all know that. And I know some jails, and I'm not going to name them but the information is out there, where suspension appears to be the default position because the governing governor hasn't got a scooby. Unless, of course, you're a manager, certainly 7 and above.

The policy with relation to suspensions is clear. Whilst section 6 has a number of facets, the basic position and the basic principle is, in order to suspend, there must be a risk to the individual or risk to the business, and that sits within the term exceptional risk. Further, managers must be able

to demonstrate why alternatives are not suitable and they must keep a record. That is vitally important because, when you challenge the suspension, you're entitled to that information. How many people write and ask for that information? In most cases it won't exist. It's a useful thing for us to do. So, we must ask for that information. It's not necessarily policy but in most cases the Dep suspends and then the governor is the appeal. Well, if you're appealing a suspension and you believe it's wrongful, the grievance now starts with the governor because that's the appeal to the suspension. So that appeal should go to the PGD in my head, and I've done this. So, the appeal for that part of the grievance should go to the director. Let's start opening them up as arguments.

We've all come across numerous cases where staff have been wrongfully suspended when the criteria couldn't be met and suspensions were simply done on a whim. This is wrong and something we must challenge. A few years ago, I looked after a close friend who was a branch official at Holme House – and the guys from Holme House know exactly who I'm talking to, I'm not going to name him. He was suspended five days after submitting a grievance because he was being bullied and victimised, and there was a racial element. This man was a Muslim who joined the British Army and served in Iraq. Just imagine how brave that man was, and he was being bullied and victimised by managers at my own prison. And five days after he submitted that bullying documentation, he was suspended. I couldn't believe it. He was suspended. The whole issue took a heavy toll on him and his friends. He couldn't tell his wife. In the end, after several months, we called the individuals who had the details of the suspension to account. I challenged the suspension with the PGD because I had an email from the PGD to the investigating manager saying, "We don't have enough evidence to suspend." But he didn't know I had that. Let me tell you, he disappeared overnight. The manager who was controlling it, he was asked to pick his window and he went. The department settled out of court for this man – I'll be having a meal with him when I get back from Conference next week. He's the only operational Band 4 I know of who has never done prison officer training. That was in the letter we agreed as part of the settlement and the employment tribunal.

We shouldn't have to get to that point. No amount of financial compensation can make up for what people go through, and in my opinion wrongful suspensions happen every day and the impact can be devastating. It's something we must understand and we must overcome. Please join the debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Ian, you've done that good a job and covered everything that we can move on to motion 53.

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Are you sure, Chair? You want me to crack on?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: I know you're on a roll so…

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: I'm on a roll, Chair, thank you for that.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: You can move motion 53 as long as we get a seconder. Do we have a seconder? Thank you Brinsford.

Motion 53

Conference instructs the NEC to meet with the employer and seek to add a paragraph to section 6 PSI 6/10 to ensure when any member of staff is suspended, they are submitted for monthly mental health referrals specifically relating to their suspension and the impact suspension is having on their health.

NEC

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – moving motion 53, asking for your support. Colleagues, we've already debated the impact suspension can have on our members. Many individuals descend into dark places, especially those whose suspension is questionable, and they're in the majority for me. This motion calls for suspended staff to undergo monthly mental health referrals, which some of you may agree with but let me explain. Last year, a close personal friend was suspended.

<Applause>

Just give me a second to compose myself. What nobody knew was the amount of anguish this man was going through. He ended up taking his own life. It should never happen. We need to support suspended staff and we need to make sure that they're getting these mental health referrals so we ensure that this doesn't happen again. Please support the motion conference.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Speaker, next speaker. Yes?

SID SIDERY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BRIXTON: Chair, Conference, NEC, I have been a bad boy. Twice. I have been suspended for a total of 14½ months on two offences. Busted, promoted, barred from promotion. I have had 22 sessions of counselling. I'm still on the antidepressants and the last offence was 2016. It's not pretty, it's not nice and, when staff come and say to you, "Oh, 8½ months off, that should be nice" – no, it isn't nice, it's not nice at all. It's horrendous. I fully support this motion.

<Applause>

RICKY HYSLOP – BRANCH CHAIR, BERWYN: Chair, NEC, about eight years ago we had a suspension of a very close friend, a member of staff, who was suspended for nearly five months. And in them five months, there wasn't really much to suspend him on. We challenged the governor, challenged all the process, procedural, procedure and everything. They kept saying no, the suspension is remaining. Didn't know, being a close friend didn't know he struggled with mental health. It wasn't shared with his close friends and colleagues. On the day of the hearing, the governor dismissed him, left. I said, "Don't worry, we'll appeal." He left there, five hours later he hung himself. Apologies.

<Applause>

But then it went through the Coroner's Court – took it all the way, pushed, pushed. We had area meetings with the – at the time it was one of the area managers, Paul Baker. He was very supportive. Three weeks after him hanging himself, they moved the Number One, the Dep and the Corporate Services Manager all in one go. We then had interim management come in because they failed. But then the Coroner's Court recommendations, there were lots of recommendations with regards to what they should have done, the failings and stuff. So, they were aware within that process <inaudible> how the governors at the time got it so wrong but it didn't obviously bring him back. I ask you to support this motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM- JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, guests and visitors, I ask you to support this motion because as a manager I know that, if a member of staff calls in sick with work-related stress or stress, I get sent an email from our lovely SSCL to ask me to complete a stress risk assessment or to refer them to OH. So, it's more probably than not, if you've been suspended from work and you've got all these issues with telling family or keeping a secret, whatever way you choose to deal with that, then you're definitely caused stress by work. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all, we can take that to the vote. And we can close that vote. Thank you, that's carried and we will of course press that with urgency.

Motion 54 is an NEC motion, can we have a seconder please? Thank you. Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

Motion 54

Conference directs the NEC to inform the employer that use of the teams recording function in relation to disciplinary hearings ceases with immediate effect. All interviews and transcripts should be carried out as per PSI 6/2010 to ensure they present an accurate reflection of what was said at every stage of the process.

NEC

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – asking you to support this motion. Conference, recording interviews and disciplines via Teams seems to have crept in, in this Aldous Huxley's Brave New World which has evolved through Covid times. We understand that PSI 06/2010 is open to criticism but the body of the PSI is well written and reinforces our members' rights either there or then or in an appeal or employment tribunal. As we understand, there is a push for AI from the employer but this is substituting human resources and using benefits from the new world of AI. We also understand the pitfalls Teams has – it's not open to verbal disabilities, regional dialogue, international dialogue or laymen terms. The un-auditable transcripts notes are not acceptable. Our members need a true reflection either on appeal or in the courts.

The main reason PSI 06/2010 states tape recordings, as I'm now apparently a dinosaur, I remember the tape machine when you got a copy once you'd commenced an interview. Because once you've got the transcripts you could play the tape side by side with the transcript, note the anomalies and make sure it's a verbatim note of events, which helps your members achieve a positive outcome. You would then sign investigation reports and return a true reflection of events. How can you do this if dictaphones are encrypted, Teams recordings aren't shared at the point of an interview as any electronic data can be modified after the event? How many times have you received a file you can't open, "Oh, it's been damaged." Conference, the police used tapes. They've moved away from that and now they use a PACE machine when interviewing suspects that is used with a legal process, authorised by solicitors, courts and judges. I'm sure you have one of these under your PLO's desk. Shouldn't we be given the same right to have a copy of the recording and be able to access when needed? Conference, support this motion and, on that note, I'll pedal off on my BMX bike.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No further speakers so we can go to the vote. And we can close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 55, Whatton. Seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 55

Conference mandates the POA NEC to engage with the Employer for HMPPS to cease using Microsoft Teams and Digital recording devices such as Dictaphone's to conduct disciplinary and grievance hearing(s) as the quality of audio and transcription which does not provide and accurate verbatim transcript of the hearing, placing our members at detriment due to the fact that important information can be missed which is vital in any subsequent appeal(s) or hearings.

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference, "Conference to mandate the POA NEC to engage with the employer for HMPPS cases using Microsoft Teams and digital recording devices such as Dictaphones to conduct disciplinary and grievance hearings as the quality of audio and transcripts which do not provide an accurate verbatim transcription of the hearing, placing our members at detriment due to the fact that the important information can be missed which is vital in any subsequent appeal hearings." This is very similar to the one that Geoff just spoke about, the only difference for this one is it's all encompassing so it's not just disciplinaries it will be for – no, I have lost my point, haven't I?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Take your time, Mick. No rush.

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Sorry, I was looking at the bottom one.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, don't worry about it.

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: I'll hand it over to you, mate.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK, BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'd like to thank Whatton for bringing this motion before you. We all know that the prison service during Covid, business had to continue as usual. We couldn't social distance, so Microsoft Teams was a way that we could continue the operational running of the establishments. However, that emergency measure that was needed has now become the norm and I just feel that doing disciplinaries and grievances over Teams takes away that emotive feeling of being in the room. From the previous motion that we've just done about the mental health aspect of things, if we're conducting a disciplinary over Teams and that member is at home, at the end of that Teams call if they've been dismissed from the service, there's no care team there, there's no member of the POA, there's no trade union rep there. We don't know what's going to happen. We have a duty of care to our member. The prison service has a duty of care to their member of staff.

The other issue being is that Teams, they'll say, "Well, we can use Teams to transcribe it." The Teams process doesn't distinguish between me, Mike or Geoff talking, it'll just come up as Mike. If you go to an appeal, if you have a really strict area manager, like the North and East Midlands do, if it's not in the transcripts it doesn't count, it can't be heard. And that's also in Employment Tribunals. Like Geoff's elaborated on with the PACE machine, the PACE machines like we had at Nottingham has three discs. There's a working copy that goes off to shared services, there's a copy for the rep and there's a copy for the governor. You can hear it. Now they're using Big Word you have to pay Big Word for the software, which is a detriment to our costs because they send you it to your personal email address because you can't access your prison service one. You can't hear it, you can't read it. So, this is why I would ask you to support this motion and for things to be done face to face and how we used to do it over the tape process. Thank you.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC and honourable invited guests, I just want to bring a few things on your attention because recently I did actually ask for a script and luckily I had the recording of the Team. I had to go through this for an hour or so. I went through the difference between the dialogues and everything and there was a lot of things was missing. The Teams actually doesn't pick up some of the slang words or, for some of the words it actually changes it. So my thing is, well, this is a danger. This digital system is becoming dangerous for a lot of things. And when it goes to further down the road, it's becoming more and more dangerous because you can't represent the right, it's not a true reflection of what happened in that room there. And the same as my colleague just pointed out, the Teams itself, unless the person is speaking, it picks up that word otherwise it just basically says the same person was recording. So, literally how do you find the difference? So, before you support or reject the motion, consider this please. Thank you.

<Applause>

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference – asking you to reject this motion. The reason being is the wording of the motion to cease using Microsoft Teams and digital recording in comparison to the previous motion, which was the recording function. I was with a member previously who was involved in a sexual assault case. The member was the victim of this case. It took an enormous amount of courage for that member to eventually go to the police regarding the matter and you can imagine the anguish when the police decided not to take it further or prosecute because, as we've heard previously in this conference, it was one person's word against another. Now, they had to deal with not only the rejection of the police not taking it further, but then we were supporting that member through the internal disciplinary proceedings because this was one member of staff against another. Now, this member who was the victim of this assault was incredibly brave throughout this whole process. However, they had one request and that was, when it comes to the hearing, please do not put me in the same room as my abuser. They said, "Do not make me sit across from him." And I think that's a reasonable request to make.

One of our members has been so unfortunate and has to have that horrific thing happen to them, the least we can do is offer them a chance to video link into the hearing and have the tape recording still going in the hearing. And that's why I agree with motion 54 to stop the recording device but allow the members to attend via Teams in certain specific circumstances. Have it cranked up loud enough so that the tape recording in the room can

still pick it up. So it's for that reason I'm asking you to reject the motion so that we can still give those unfortunate victims, if they come forward, that opportunity. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Jordan. Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, Chair, asking to support this motion. I think we've heard on the previous motion around dictaphones and making sure that we have a true reflection of the transcripts for our members and for that I ask you to support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. And we can view the results of that. That's carried.

On to motion 56, Wetherby. Seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 56

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with employer to mandate the use of PACE machines.

WETHERBY

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Chair, Conference, we're proposing that Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with the employer to mandate the use of PACE machines. We've pretty much covered the reasons for why we're asking for this – for the clarity for members. So, the question we're asking is, how many times have you been involved in investigations where the head of function or governors or investigating officer conduct the interviews or the hearings and they don't have a recording or note-taker present, they just say, "I'll do it from memory." This has happened a number of times and has been raised already with 06/10, where you raised your factor saying that this has not been – process has not been followed but it just gets overruled because I'm willing to accept the report. Which is grossly unfair to the members and anyone involved in it because it undermines the process, which should – as has also been said, 06/10 is quite well written in parts – and should provide a whole lot of security for people. But, like I say, the investigating officer undermines that. I'm asking for the motion to be supported to ensure an accurate record of the hearings are delivered, which should help members get better outcomes instead of a biased or misrepresentation being presented, and I invite Conference to support this motion.

<Applause>

MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to support this. It's really this simple. When you go to an ET, if it wasn't said and it's not recorded, it didn't happen. That's how simple it is so please support the motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: For the record of the tape, Chair, NEC, Conference and visitors, I ask you to support this motion. Again, we have the powers and protections of a constable and I can't see any police officer union rep letting them go into a room and be asked questions without a PACE machine. Thank you. Support the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Gary.

<Applause>

Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – supporting the motion. There isn't much more to say really on the recording of disciplinary hearings. The previous motions have covered it. It's time the prison service professionalised the process when it comes to disciplinary hearings and the potential outcomes. Support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Conference, and we'll take that to the vote. We can now close that vote. That's been carried.

I've got a note on motion 57 from Whatton that they wish to withdraw with an explanation to Conference, is that still correct?

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Yes. Chair, NEC, Conference, we would like to withdraw motion 57 because I think, if we get

this through and passed, we feel that it will probably potentially hamper any future negotiations as a result of the Rademaker Report. So rather than pushing this through and preventing the NEC from doing full negotiations on the back of that report, we would like to withdraw it and then we can always come back next year to judge it again once they've got some agreement going. So please can we withdraw this, thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Just raise your hands if you're happy for them to withdraw. Thank you. You could have stitched him up, you know. Just saying, just saying.

58, Wetherby, seconder for Wetherby please? Thank you.

Motion 58

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to mandate that all Conduct and Discipline Hearings should be in person and not virtual.

WETHERBY

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Hello again. Chair, Conference, I'm asking you to support the motion that "Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS to mandate that all conduct and discipline hearings should be in person and not virtual." I will acknowledge what's been said by Jordan from Hull about having the option and I don't think that this would prohibit that if the person wanted it. I think if we say that it should be in person, the reasons for that are sincere. Wetherby is proposing the motion that all conduct and discipline hearings should be heard in person. Given the magnitude of these hearings for the members involved, we believe that the stakes are too high to not be done in person and be conducted remotely. The practice of doing it remotely impacts on fairness, transparency and ultimately respect for the person and for the process. We've had many examples over the last year where this has happened but one in particular is worth drawing attention to. A member had an appeal hearing for a dismissal heard by the PGD and it was heard from her kitchen. So, prior to the member joining the Teams call, I witnessed the family leaving, saying goodbye, sitting in the kitchen. I thought what an unprofessional way to conduct yourself when you've got the livelihood of a member in your hands.

The remote hearings, in my opinion, diminish the efficacy of body language and the impact of the words because there's no guarantee of concentration from the person that is actually hearing the appeal. We have no idea who else is in the room. We have no idea what they're actually paying attention to – is it myself, is it the television, is it anything else? This would not be the case if it was carried in person because you'd be able to see the whites of their eyes and you'd be able to know that they're paying attention to you or that they're not. And you could address yourself in a way that would mitigate that. Not conducting the hearings in person risks eroding natural justice and diminishes the human element that is vital in the potential life-changing decisions that are going to be made. Conference, I hope you support this motion.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I would ask you to reject this motion. And the simple reason is we are going to put limitations on the people who are basically unable to come forward because whatever the reasons are. For some flaw, the person hasn't been able to manage himself with the timing – that's human error. We cannot basically put a limitation on someone who is basically unable to make it to the meeting. Someone might be there for three hours away from the establishment or wherever the hearing is, and can't make it for whatever reasons. Are we going to put a limitation on people? Are we going to force them to basically make what isn't flexible for them? That's the reason I would like to reject it. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

GEOFF WILLETS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Thank you. Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers – asking you to support this motion. We've previously heard it's paramount that an in-person code of conduct or mandated in-person as a line in the sand. The importance of these potential career-changing events need to be in person as a mandated starting block approach and not a tick-box exercise. How can members supply evidence, produce documents and challenge witnesses to achieve a fair hearing virtually? As in most cases, the charges are either misconduct or gross misconduct and the member requires a correct in-person representation as they could be potentially dismissed. I'm sure you have experience that every member is an individual and has individual needs, however that is, emotional or physical. How can we support them virtually? But most important, why isn't the employer supporting them, either through care teams, line managers or local services? I'm sure there is a policy for the workplace but not in the home. Very much like what seems to be acceptable that governors can deviate from policy when it suits them. There's no mention of Teams being used in PSI 06/2010. We need to reinforce to the employer their commitment as health and safety legislation and look after the welfare and wellbeing of their employees, our members. Recently I've heard of a member that completed their virtual disciplinary hearing and halfway through became disconnected from the call and there was a serious concern for his mental health as he had stated he was going to harm himself. But there was no support, nobody sitting next to him, no family at home, no care prior to the appointment, no care team, just their dog. The only option was to send the police round. We have seen an increase of mental health amongst our colleagues – so, Conference, if only on the grounds of support, support this motion and challenge locally. Obtain the protections required for our members. Support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Conference, that vote is now open. And we can now close that vote. Thank you, that's carried. We will now adjourn for the tea break. See you at 20 past 11.

<Break>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Conference, I'll call you to order. Thank you, Conference. We'll continue with motion 59 which is a debate from Whatton. I'll invite Whatton to start the debate.

Motion 59

Conference to debate the effectiveness and reliability of HR Case Managers during disciplinary, FHARMS and Grievance Hearings in which their advice leads to detrimental outcomes for our member(s).

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Can you hear me? Oh, here we go. Chair, NEC, Conference, I'd like the "Conference to debate the effectiveness and reliability of HR Case Managers during disciplinaries, FHARMS, grievance hearings in which their advice leads to determining the outcome of our members." Now, from my personal experience on this one, with my members particularly, HR – I think people are under the illusion that HR are there to be fair and advise governors what the correct policies are. From my personal experience, I don't think that's the case at all, I think that they – I think a good description of my feeling on the matter is that they collude with the senior manager to get the outcome that the governors want at a hearing, to manipulate the – manipulate is not the right word – to word anything to be detrimental to our members. I don't think this is particularly fair, personally, I think that HR should be impartial and should only be advising on what the policy is and not what they can get away with, which is, I feel, what they do. Please join this motion and I'm going to hand it over to my colleague.

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'd like to thank Mike and his branch for bringing this debate before Conference. We'd like to think that HR caseworkers are grounded in employment law but they're not grounded in prison service policies and the new frameworks that's been introduced. It is apparent, as Mike stated, that they do assist governors and managers, prison service managers, in circumventing policy. I recently did a Subject Access Request for a member who was having trouble getting a level transfer to another establishment, and we asked for the all the HR advice that was given to the PGD and the AD. It was quite clear in the Subject Access Request involved in the grievance as well that they were telling the governor how to circumvent policy because it says, "should" and "can" and not "must", which I think is underhanded because, if it's in policy that they should do this, then we should be adhering to it. But they're saying you can get round it and you don't have to action it because it doesn't say "must". This is detrimental to our members. When it comes to disciplinaries and investigations, we always raise it to HR or we try to raise it to the HR business partner that they're using underhanded tactics. Simple investigations, as I've stated before, to prolong an investigation or try to obtain the evidence and then commission an investigation and use what they found in the fact-finding. Again, when it comes to FHARM meetings, I've had a few cases where HR have advised the governor that they should only award 75% to the member, compensation, rather than 100% because it's down to the Area Manager to award the 100%, which we all know is wrong. So, they're giving bad advice, they're not trained to a good standard and they don't know our policies. There needs to be some form of better training and better development for HR caseworkers. So, please join the debate, let everyone know what's happened with you and your members. Thank you.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC and honourable invited guests, I've done a couple of FHARM meetings with the HR and what I felt was they are like a partner. So, when someone is a partner, they're only there for the money for themselves, not for the others. So, what I find is the HR Case, they are more to do with the partnerships rather than – and what money they can save and how can they squeeze the money. And that's all about it. So, when my colleagues turned round and said 70%, it's what they're looking at how much we can save, it's not so much as the governor. The governor can give 100% – I've seen it, they do give 100% compensation – you know, compensations. To be honest with you, if you look at it from the external point of view, anyone who's a partner, they'll all be looking for themselves and not for the business. I remember a case where someone actually was a partner and, because they were getting £50,000 in their pocket salary, they didn't care what happened to the other business or anything else. So, I think in some time we need to basically tell our governors the partners are not very always reliable. It's got to be considered. So, join the debate and thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Joining the debate for the NEC is Phil Hannant.

UNKNOWN DELEGATE: Still got somebody else wants to debate. Somebody else wants to debate.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Oh, we've got another one?

UNKNOWN DELEGATE: Yes.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. You'll have to wait your turn, Phil. I know you're coiled. Coiled spring there. Something like that, anyway.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: I'm here like a coiled spring, like a coiled spring.

STEPHEN LYNAGH – BRANCH SECRETARY, GREENOCK: Chair, NEC, Conference, this is a subject that's quite close to my own heart. Ordinarily I tend not to involve myself in the business down south. What we are seeing north of the border is something that's much more malicious. Its HR are nothing more than a management stooge, they are there to undermine and frustrate due process. They frustrate representation of our members. They make up the policy as they go along and rewrite the policy as they go along. If you ever go to appeal on a grievance panel, you're immediately at a disadvantage of 2:1. So you'll have a governor chairing it, HR, HR BP sitting as a second person, and a member or third SMC of your NEC here as a third person. Very rarely you're going to get a win out of that.

One particular instance that I have currently is an ongoing grievance where the grievance manager is an HR BP, who is also the line manager of the individual bringing the grievance. Within that grievance process, it became apparent that a physical threat had been made against a trade union official by a manager. That was suppressed and omitted from the notes of that grievance. When a transcript was asked for, it was refused. A Subject Access Request had to go in and HR at department took the full 30 days to provide it. At that point, it was apparent that the threat had been left out. So, I'm now in a position where at appeal I'll need to call the witness who made the statement and the other trade union individual who was present to corroborate the statement. This is not HR as it's meant to be. They are not independent policy experts, they are charlatans masquerading as independent policy experts. They are there purely to undermine the representation of our members. That's all I've got to say. Join the debate.

<Applause>

BILLY YOUNG – BRANCH CHAIR, GLENOCHIL: Chair, NEC, delegates, guests, this is serious but I'm going to put an image into your head. Most of the time when I go to deal with my HR, I have the Emperor's March in my head from Star Wars because we are going to do battle with the dark side. Because they seem to think that they are the custodians of the policy, they are the arbitrators of the policy and they understand the policy, even if they don't read it. Because I've had that with an HR officer, I said, "Have you read the policy?" "No, I've not had time yet. But I understand what it means." If we did that for our members, we're hung, drawn and quartered. But they think because they're employed to do that role, they can skim, miss parts out, just, "Ah, we don't do that." This is what I say to my members every time you're sitting in that office with me. I say to them, "HR are there for the management. We need to make sure that we bring whatever's in that policy to the table so there's no way they can wriggle out of what they should be doing." But they invariably find some way of doing that. And their opinions, which they're not supposed to bring to the table, come out all the time. They do it on a basis that is unbelievable and if they're doing it down south, they're definitely doing it up north and they're probably doing it all the time. Because they think they are untouchable. And the sad matter of the fact is, even if you find them out that they've done things wrong or not through policy, nothing happens because they self-mark their own homework.

It needs to stop. It needs to stop being a case of them and us because in Scotland they've actually got partnership which kind of works, most of the time. Unfortunately you don't have it down in England. But I would say that's a double-edged sword because we should be working in partnership with policy, there should be a yin and yang and a balance that may go our way or their way, but invariably it doesn't. And we have to fight. And I've got a case, I won't go into the details of it, but it means we've got to fight again for just the basic rights that we should have as employees. That's wrong. It's the 21st – well, 21st century, I'm led to believe. Not the 20th century, not the 18th century, we don't doff our caps and say, "Thanks very much for coming to work and paying me for doing my job." So anyway, thanks for raising the debate, thanks for listening to me. Keep fighting. Keep pointing out the fact our members are worth that fight and keep telling HR, "Read your damn policies. Don't make it up." Thanks very much.

<Applause>

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests, happy to join this debate. I've worked with, across, over the years, actually a handful of decent, competent HR advisors. However, you know, we must look at the damage that poor HR advisors can do. When their advice leads to unfair, disappropriate, harmful outcomes, especially within FHARMS and grievances and disciplines, the integrity of the whole process is called into place. Obviously we get reported back, a lot of our members that feel that the advice is one-sided, it is based on management, which we've heard from a lot of our colleagues saying today. Then, again, they feel let down, they feel let down by the management. I recently sat on a grievance where I logged on to the PDG, the PDG logged on, HR caseworker logged on and obviously the member of staff I was representing logged on. So, we set away on the grievance and said to the PDG, "You are the Chair, where's the TU rep for the panel? It's a grievance appeal, where's the TU rep?' The PDG's response was, "Well that's you." I said, "No, that's not me, I'm here with my colleague representing." I said, "The grievance policy is quite a small policy, it's about eight pages long." So, I said, "But I'll save you the time, I'll just refer you to the HR advisor who will quite clearly tell you that policy states you must have a TU rep unless we decide to displace that TU rep." The advice that came from the HR was, "Eh, well I don't really know." I said, "Well, OK, you maybe just need to turn a couple of pages and we'll sort it." Anyway, that appeal had to be stopped and it was reconvened some weeks later when they sought advice and obviously appointed one. And that's what we're up against.

We've heard from our colleagues across today about Band 4s being promoted far too early with no experience, Band 5s being promoted, governors being promoted through the ranks without doing any time on the landings, or very little time. You know, this service is not – this isn't just around all of this, this is across everywhere and it's exactly the same with some of our HR advisors. What they are doing, they are getting promoted, they don't know the policies and they're literally out of their depths and giving us, as colleagues have rightly said in this debate, wrong advice across the estate. Basically, I think, going forward, we should be looking at a more rigorous oversight of HR involvement, that they can be looked into. We need proper training, accountability for them and it needs looked at across the whole estate, as I say, and they need to be accountable for the decisions that they're making. Thank you very much for bringing this debate, I'm happy to join it. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all for that debate. Next, we have motion 60, Whatton. Seconder for Whatton please. Thank you.

Motion 60

Conference mandates the POA NEC to engage with the Employer to ensure that HR Caseworkers are versed and are sufficiently trained in HMPPS policies when advising decision managers to prevent managers from making ill-informed and ill-advised decisions.

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRACH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference. "Conference to mandate the POA NEC to engage with the employer to ensure that HR Case Workers are versed and are sufficiently trained in HMPPS policies when advising decision managers to prevent managers from making ill-informed and ill-advised decisions." Now, obviously this is linked to the debate we just had and we've heard examples of what we're talking about so I haven't got a lot else to add to it. So, please support this motion. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Mike. No other speakers so I'll hand over to Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, happy to support and progress this motion. There's been a lot of movement within the HR Directorate in the last couple of years, and it doesn't feel like any of it is to our benefit. HR support is severely lacking within the prison environment and it comes at a time where a lot of prison service managers are also relatively inexperienced and need the appropriate support and guidance more than ever. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. And we can now close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 61, Frankland, seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 61

The NEC negotiate with HMPPS to get the attendance Management Policy's trigger points extended for operational staff, so that it reflects the physical and mental demands of the job.

FRANKLAND

DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND: Chair, NEC, Conference – motion 61, "The NEC negotiate with HMPPS to get the Attendance Management Policy's trigger points extended for operational staff so that it reflects the physical and mental demands of the job." The Support & Attendance Policy and Procedure document and previous policies laid down how all HMPPS employees are managed when it comes to sickness absence, regardless of whether you are operational or non-operational. Basically, whatever your job or place of work is, the trigger is eight days and then subsequent improvement periods. The physical nature of the prison officer grade is not reflected when calculating trigger points. Non-ops staff in many cases can still attend work with physical injuries, but prison officers can't and have to report sick. But we all have the same trigger points. I've seen many cases of non-op staff attending work with physical injuries. Operational staff should have extended trigger points to reflect the physical nature of the job. As our workplace becomes more violent and challenging, we have all seen the rise in absence for mental health issues brought on by the job. Operational staff have non-realistic, non-effective percentages, so it leaves us tighter and, if you add in the long shifts, weekend work and the night shifts, this all chips away at our staff's health and wellbeing. Operational staff don't have the luxury of the recent trend of working from home. I know for a fact that working from home is now used for non-op staff recovering from surgery or treatment or when they're just feeling under the weather. I'm not having a go at non-op staff, good luck to them, but we need to acknowledge there is a clear distinction between us and that the rules and policies need to be different to reflect the nature and strains of operational staff's duties. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Dave. No other speakers, so I'll hand over to Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests, asking you to support this motion. Operational staff are the backbone of the prison service. They're the ones on the landings, in the control rooms and on the front lines of public safety every single day. Our jobs are physically demanding, mentally draining and often dangerous. Theirs are not the roles that can be carried out from behind a desk or from home. Unlike some staff groups within HMPPS, who may have the option to be flexible or remote working, operational staff must be physically present in the prison environment. There is no work from home option for the prison officer responding to an alarm, intervening in a violent incident or conducting a cell search. Their presence is essential – their work relentless. Yet the Attendance Management Policy makes little distinction between those who can access flexible working and those who cannot. Operational staff are held to the same trigger points, besides facing the greater physical and mental stress. That is fundamentally unfair.

What this means, in parts, is trigger points under the current policy can <inaudible> formal action after just a few incidences of absence, regardless of what that absence or injury are. These are not ordinary office jobs. The emotional impact of working in a high-risk, high-stress environment can't be

understated. The weight of responsibility carried by prison officers every day is immense and yet the current policy does not reflect that reality. What we are calling for is not an excuse for absenteeism – we are calling for fairness, for recognition, for a policy that understands the real-life conditions our members work under. Trigger points must be extended for operational staff, not to lower standards but to acknowledge the standards they uphold under pressure most people can't imagine. What we need is a policy that works with our staff and not against them – one that recognises the demands of the role and respects the fact that they don't have the option to log off and recover at home. I urge you all to support this motion and send a clear message to HMPPS that our front-line workers deserve policies that reflect their reality. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all. That vote is now open. And we can now view the results. Thank you, that's carried.

Motion 62, Liverpool. Thank you.

Motion 62

That Conference instruct the NEC to insist upon HMPPS that any shift patterns produced by the Centre for establishments MUST comply with the guidance on red hours in the Finance Manual.

LIVERPOOL

ROGER MORAN – BRANCH CHAIR, LIVERPOOL: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests, motion reads that "Conference instructs the NEC to insist upon HMPPS that any shift patterns produced by the Centre for Establishments must comply with the guidance on red hours in the Finance Manual", which is currently 20-30%. A little bit of background. We as a Committee have done a couple of reprofiles at Liverpool in the last couple of years. It became apparent to us that our Band 2 colleagues were being asked to work way in excess of this 20-30% – in the first one, we found it was nearer 60%. Again, seeking advice, local reps, we found it was widespread across the service. These aren't shift patterns made up locally by governors or something that we did, because obviously we would never look at doing something of that nature. These have come up from these so-called experts within HMPPS whose job it is, sole job it is, to devise shift patterns for staff. How can they be allowed to go against their own manual? And not just slightly over, but sometimes two and three times to our lowest-paid colleagues. You know, that time they're asked to do those red hours is all away from their family and their loved ones – at weekends or evenings, excessive nights, again, to some of our lowest-paid colleagues. It's not fair, it needs addressing, please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No-one else, so over to Terry McCarthy.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference – speaking in support of the motion. This motion, for me, highlights the need for local branches to get involved in reprofile at a local level because, if you don't, your SMT will get a hold of SIG, BDG, whatever they call themselves now, and ask them to provide a shift pattern for you. They'll feed a load of figures into a computer and come up with a shift pattern that doesn't represent what you need because they've got no local knowledge. You know what you need for your branch. Now, when Liverpool brought this up, we did some research. Band 2s across the country are working on average 48% red hours. That's unacceptable. The guidance is there for a reason, it's to be followed, not ignored. Please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: And that vote is open. Thank you, we can now close that vote. That's been carried.

Motion 63, Wakefield. Seconder for Wakefield?

Motion 63

Conference mandate the NEC to approach HMPPS to remove the necessity of core competence being submitted for individuals that have been temporary promoted for a period of six months or more.

This would only be in their home establishment.

WAKEFIELD

ANDY BELK – BRANCH CHAIR, WAKEFIELD: Chair, NEC, colleagues, guests – asking for your support on motion 63, which reads, "Conference mandate the NEC to approach HMPPS to remove the necessity of core competencies being submitted for individuals that have been temporary promoted for a period of six months or more. This would only apply at the home establishment." Why the need for the change? The current process places unnecessary barriers on members who have already demonstrated their capabilities in practice, and overlooks their real-world experience. Temporary promotion is not a trivial process. It is undertaken with consideration, ensuring that those stepping up possess the skills and knowledge to fulfil this role. This demonstrated competency through action rather than paperwork. After holding this role, these members should be given the

opportunity to attend a board and see if they succeed there, rather than falling at a competency-based system. By making this alteration, we can streamline and reinforce the system that rewards through performance and speaks louder than paperwork. Thank you for your support. I hope you support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No-one else, so over to Angela Montgomery for the NEC.

ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: The NEC are looking for you to vote against this motion in terms of acting temporary promotion. The action of undertaking temporary promotion is an opportunity for any staff member to try and get the opportunity of acting up. The need to demonstrate competencies is one which is required of all and it is important that people who end up on detached duty on temporary promotion are not disadvantaged in that process. It is also important that those who decide that they do not wish to be temporarily promoted but wish to be permanently promoted are also not disadvantaged in the process. It is an employer process and in that context I understand it's been an employer process for a lengthy period of time. And this is the context in which we would be looking for you to reject the motion because we would want fairness to all members, regardless of whether they work in the home establishment or otherwise. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Wakefield, do you want the right to reply? Right to reply, yes.

ANDY BELK – BRANCH CHAIR, WAKEFIELD: Thank you. In response from the NEC delegate, I want to stress that this only applies to home establishment. I'm not trying to disadvantage anybody from applying for promotion anywhere else. I have a situation at HMP Wakefield where I have a member of staff who has been temporary promoted to senior officer for nearly two years. Every time he applies for promotion at his home establishment, he's told continuously, "Your competencies are not good enough." But yet he still does this post for two years. I was temporary promoted for seven months and was told my competencies were not good enough for HMP Wakefield, but yet on Friday I'm going to HMP Wealstun for a board. Why are staff being told that, at their own establishment, their competencies are not good enough? Let them go to a board, let them sit the interview. Give them that tiny little big step. If they fall at interview then unfortunately it is the way it goes, but let's give them that opportunity rather than blocking the real-world experience that they've got from working in their home establishments. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote's now open, Conference. And we can now close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 64 is Frankland. Thank you.

Motion 64

The NEC requests HMPPS to conduct a full and comprehensive review of the recruitment process for operational prison staff. The review should aim to address the limitations of the online recruitment process and incorporate face to face interaction to get a better assessment of a candidates interpersonal skills, resilience and suitability for the demands of the job.

FRANKLAND

DAVE FERRY – BRANCH SECRETARY, FRANKLAND: Chair, NEC, Conference – motion 64, that, "The NEC requests HMPPS to conduct a full and comprehensive review of the recruitment process for operational prison staff. The review should aim to address the limitations of the online recruitment process and incorporate face-to-face interaction to get a better assessment of a candidate's interpersonal skills, resilience and suitability for the demands of the job." Quite a simple one this. The current online recruitment process is not fit for purpose for recruiting prison officers. There's no doubt in my mind that the nature of the job is changing. Our prisons are becoming ever so more violent and challenging. The recruitment process needs to reflect this in order to recruit the most suitable candidates. I don't believe that selecting prison officers online is an effective way of getting the best people. What we've seen is a system that places far too much emphasis on ticking digital boxes and not nearly enough on assessing the real-world qualities that define a good prison officer. This job isn't for everyone. It demands emotional resilience, strong interpersonal skills, sound judgement and the ability to deal with intense and often dangerous situations. Those aren't things you can measure accurately through an online test or a remote interview. We're calling for the return of face-to-face interaction in the recruitment process, not to make life harder for applicants but to make sure the people coming into this job are generally ready for what it entails.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, visitors and guests – asking you to support this motion. I think we're setting people up to fail with online <inaudible>, whatever you want to call them. Recently I took part in some research on online recruitment and my role was to play the part of someone that's gone for an interview. And on the screen this young lady told me that she was going to give some really negative information to a male prisoner in a male prison somewhere and the information was that he wasn't allowed to go and see his brother who had died, or wasn't allowed to go to the funeral. So, the guy turned round and sort of said, "Oh well, eff this and eff that," without actually saying the words. And he wasn't very aggressive and I thought, "This is not real life." Our prisons are dangerous and to deliver that information to someone needs someone with some very extraordinary skills and they say extraordinary people like you, I believe that's true. But when they put these TV

adverts on to ask people to come in, the candidates have no idea what they're letting themselves in for and when they join they leave within two years. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC. Firstly I want to thank Frankland for bringing this motion to Conference. I think it's a very important point that needs to be raised. There I was, one week – well, one weekday evening – text comes out from a local prison, they need cover for a hospital escort. So, I thought yeah, why not, sign up to that, get up there and see what the craic is. Get into the room to be met with a young member of staff who says to me, "Oh, you're taking over." I was like, "Yeah, yeah. Who else am I with?" He said, "Oh, you've got these two but they don't speak any English." Sorry? "Oh, they don't speak any English." I said, "What do you mean, they don't speak any English?" He went, "Oh, they don't know, they can't understand us. They don't know what we're saying and what we're doing." I was like, how has that happened? Phoned the establishment and said, "Who am I on with tonight?" and they said, "Oh yeah, it's them two." I said, "Do they not speak any English?" "Oh no, we know about this, we've got ongoing issues with this." And it was just accepted. We've got to get back to a proper process, face-to-face interviews and really understanding what people are coming in to join this job for, because it's really not fit for purpose. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I would ask you to support this particular motion. And the simple reason is, if you look at the failure rate of a prison officer leaving the prison service, it's quite high. I have recently been involved with one of the, what do you call, training. It was just the <inaudible> to basically check on him. Within two years, right, people leave the job. My question is, you invest a lot of money on training – I'll quote me off the top of my head I think it's, what, 36,000?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: For training?

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: To train first someone, a person.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: An average of 15,000 but we're losing £12 million a year because of attrition.

TAYAAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: There you go. Why can't they give it to us? Why not a pay increase? Do you understand? And the other thing is, when they actually come on the board, the funny thing is you are doing your job on the landing and this officer is hiding away. So how safe is that for us? How safe is it for someone basically hiding away and you are expecting, "I'm alright. I'm alright now." I don't think so. So, the recruitment process is failing madly, it needs to be relooked at. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – in support of the motion. This is a much-debated and much-discussed issue. We've been challenging the employer around their recruitment methods for a number of years now. Online recruitment was a necessary evil during the pandemic that unfortunately has remained ever since. We agree it is difficult to fully assess someone's suitability for the role of prison officer without any face-to-face interaction at all taking place. On the back of our concerns, we were invited to observe the online recruitment process so we could see for ourselves how it worked and what the candidates were being asked to do. The roleplay element still tested the candidates but in a very watered-down way compared to how it was carried out previously, where you spent several hours carrying out a number of roleplays with various different people face to face. We've heard of many examples where people who have been recruited are wholly unsuitable for a number of different reasons, and it is no clearer really how this has been allowed to happen.

Where particular health conditions are declared during the application process, candidates should be referred to OH and they should assess and advise on suitability for the role. So clearly there are some issues there that are not being addressed prior to people being offered a position. This process also obviously cannot account for people not declaring relevant health concerns during the application stage either. There was a pilot carried out at Berwyn where they did all their own recruitment, and face-to-face interviews were included as part of that. It's difficult to measure if this was a success or not in terms of specific outcomes. There is both subjective and objective evidence to consider and questions around what a successful outcome looks like if you compare it to the online recruitment process. The online process is obviously quicker and costs less, but it is more difficult to measure or evidence why face-to-face recruitment would be a more effective way forward. The conclusions following the pilot at Berwyn are still being worked through and the current recruitment process is by no means the finished and final process. We're more than happy to support this motion to facilitate the ongoing consultation with HMPPS and to hopefully work towards improving the recruitment process and making sure it incorporates some face-to-face interaction within it.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Straight to the vote then. Thank you, we can view those results. That's carried.

Motion 65, Maidstone. Thank you.

Motion 65

Conference mandates the NEC to request and negotiate with HMPPS, for new entry prison officer training to be reviewed to ensure the completed training is fit for purpose.

MAIDSTONE

STEVEN HAMBLETT – BRANCH SECRETARY, MAIDSTONE: Chair, NEC, Conference – speaking on motion 65, "Conference mandates the NEC to request and negotiate with HMPPS for the new entry prison officer training to be reviewed to ensure the completed training is fit for purpose." Training has evolved over the years – evolved, watered down, you know, you take the choice. Recently they've been – any new entry prison officer is required to undertake an apprenticeship programme. And that was to supplement the initial training they did. And that was in order that all the skills required for the prison officer were taught and tested. A supplementary training apprenticeship scheme is no longer but the training remains the same. Unless the initial training is reviewed to ensure that everything that was in that supplementary training is put back in the normal training, and they receive the necessary training and practical skills delivered, we will be placing our staff and even prisoners at risk of exploitation, physical risk, damage retention and wellbeing of both new and existing staff. We need to make sure that the people we get are trained properly. I've spoken to an ex-Committee member at Maidstone who's now in L&D and he's been told, if they're not good enough, you've still got to get them through. We need to review this training and make sure it is fit for purpose.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, guests and visitors – asking you to support this motion. We're a disciplined organisation and we want to be seen that way. Prison officers need to be trained correctly. I remember, when I did my training, I had two trainers for the whole period and they knew me at the end and I got a course report that gave me goals to work on going forward. And probably the first thing on my SPDR was to follow prison service policy. Please, please support this motion.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference, the standard of training has dropped dramatically since my day, to be honest. I know I look young and youthful, but I have been in the prison service over 16 years now. And it is dramatically different to how it was. When I was there, as my colleagues pointed out, you had two tutors, sorry, that were there for the whole of your – I think it was eight weeks back then, it might be longer, I can't remember now. For the whole of your course, you had two tutors with you. Now, it's haphazard – you may have one tutor, you may have another. There was no – I don't feel like there's any sense of pride in the job when you're at your foundation training. When I did mine, you used to get awards for the best student for your course. You used to get your CNR shield if you were the super-ninja on CNR. That's all gone now. They don't even do passing out parades now. Actually, I lie, I did attend one the other day which was an ad-hoc one by the tutors who decided to jack it up. But back in the day when I did it, there was that sense of pride. You got your family to come down, you was proud of what you did. That's gone.

As one of my other colleagues mentioned as well, the tutors are being told that you cannot fail the POELTs, or the new officers on their course – they just have to keep taking them through. The only exception to that is a C&R – they get three chances at that and that's the only way you could potentially get rid of them. So, when it comes to the practical stuff and knowing policies, they're just going to keep pushing them through until they pass it. That's not acceptable. It should be, if you fail your test, you get another opportunity to do it. If you fail that, then you return to your establishment for potential regrade or whatever it may be. Because what we're doing is we're allowing people that wouldn't normally be suitable to be able to come through onto the landings and work. And I don't think that helps or aids in our retention of staff, because they're not fully prepped for what they're getting into. So, I do appreciate you putting this motion forward and please support it.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Mick. Youthful, Mick? Have you got no mirrors in your home? Youthful. You've obviously got no mirrors in your home.

GARY KIMBER – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, STOCKEN: Chair, NEC, colleagues, invited guests, see if I can talk better this time. HMP Stocken has come up with a great idea for what's happening with our colleagues returning from training that are not meeting our standards. We're retraining them at Stocken. So when they come back, we've had many incidences, sorry – you know what I'm trying to say – where staff on multiple occasions, the same staff, are not getting involved in C&R. Refusing to help their colleagues and have even said, "I'm not getting involved because he's a brother." So, what we're doing at our level is retraining them in RPE, retraining them in C&R and it's just a waste of resources, time and money. What are we actually training them in at college? Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. Dave Todd for the NEC.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR: Conference, Chair, invited guests – responding in support of the motion. Colleagues, I think we've got to ask why we're in the position we are in the first instance. The retention rate, as has been alluded to previous speakers, rose creating a vacuum, a huge hole. Some prisons couldn't unlock on a day because they were on red RMPs. What was HMPPS's response to that? Let's get that churn going. Get them in as quick as we can, leave them on the landings and let's either sink or swim. I think it's far, far – there's far, far more things we need to consider. When I joined the job, colleagues, I went to a busy jail, but I had time to learn the job. I had experienced people that I could look up to, that I could take a bit from them, a bit from them, a bit from them and produce what I thought was a good prison officer. It's far more than just the training. The training is a huge element but the training never, ever got me into the place to be prepared for a prison officer until I hit those landings.

I remember, I needed to go to Durham and experienced colleagues there told me, "Enjoy those nine weeks because it will not prepare you for what's to come." Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. Thank you, we can now view those results. That's carried.

Motion 66 Wetherby. Thank you.

Motion 66

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for a total review of recruitment, training and promotion assessments within HMPPS.

WETHERBY

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Chair, Conference, so I'm asking for your support for the motion 66, "Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate with HMPPS for a total review of recruitment, training and promotion assessments within HMPPS." So we've touched to a great degree on recruitment already for how it's unfit for purpose. I'd like to extend that to the training and promotion assessments that are within, so that a comprehensive review is undertaken to make sure that we don't just get one bit right – it's right the way through the journey through your career. So, we're asking for a total review of recruitment, training and promotion. Like many other branches that we've spoken to, we believe it's a time for a full review of recruitment, training and the promotion process. At present, I can speak with a bit of competence, I believe, with the YCS, the process, the job descriptions – sorry, the job adverts – don't reflect what people are going to be walking into. So, we've genuinely had a couple of people come in for a prison officer job who've asked where their office is because they were expecting to be a psychologist. So, we know that people are not being prepared. I'll just touch on this. The recruitment doesn't consider the unique culture and the needs of an establishment, so you can't interview to make sure that the person fits for what your establishment is designed to do.

So the training – I believe it's going to be touched on by Woodhill on the next motion as well – the training for prison officer training is too short for new recruits and lacks depth. The ongoing training for staff has shifted way too much online, so there's no guarantee that the person who is actually doing the training is the person that's meant to be doing it. There's no guarantee that the training is actually covering the basis for what it's intended to. You don't have any feedback from the trainer to be able to assess understanding. So, the training ongoing isn't fit for purpose either. Promotion assessments can be conducted remotely. The proposal here is that this doesn't provide an environment to assess operational knowledge or competence. Moving on to interview boards, they can lack neutrality. I would like to say many of us have experienced – I know I have, or seen – boards which may not have been entirely straight. Just to conclude, we need a full review of recruitment, training and promotion to improve standards, protect the integrity of our profession and ensure fairness for all staff. Thank you and please support this motion.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I would like you to support this motion. I'd like to add something very interesting, which when I was a young age and there was a recruitment, they used to come in and they used to say, "Oh, have you just come from the airport?" "Yes, I am." "OK, right, can you say yes? Can you say no? OK, let's go." Right? "Can we put him on cleaning? Can we put him in bakery?" And I think the whole recruitment process of HMPPS has actually gone in that direction. Whoever says yes, bring him on. I remember when I was young if somebody said, "I'm a prison officer," you have to think, oh, did he actually – was ex-military before? Was he a police officer? Discipline was there. Code of conduct was there. Everything basically was there. And when I joined it, I was looking for that because my background was, I came from that sort of area and I was really looking forward to it. When I went to landings and there was a lot of people came in, I've just come from training, "Oh, they didn't tell me that." It wasn't in the manual. They didn't tell me how to do this, how to do that. So, the whole process is failed – and it's not just failing in one point, it's failing everywhere. Chaos is coming, so that's why support this motion please. Thank you.

<Applause>

LEE LASSMAN – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE: Conference, Chair, NEC, I stand before you today to express my unwavering support for the motion to negotiate with HMPPS regarding the deeply flawed recruitment process for prison officers and specifically concerning the Futures and First Deployment schemes. My position is based on first-hand evidence gathered at HMP Swaleside and I believe the current approach is not only short-sighted but ultimate jeopardises the safety of our staff and the security of our prisons. The recruitment process, as currently structured, has been rushed and fundamentally flawed. The evidence from HMP Swaleside paints a stark picture. The current system, in my view, is a sticking plaster over a gaping wound. The Futures and First Deployment schemes, whilst seemingly offering immediate solutions, are a short-term fix, a Band-aid on a significantly deeper problem. These schemes, while well intentioned, they've already cost HMPPS millions of pounds, a considerable investment that without a long-term solution will prove to be a futile expenditure. Let's be clear, the current recruitment crisis is not a simple matter of numbers, it's a systemic issue. It's rooted in the lack of long-term planning and failure to address the underlying factors contributing to officer attrition. The Futures and First Deployment schemes, whilst potentially offering some benefits, do not address the fundamental flaws in the recruitment and retention pipeline.

What are the fundamental flaws? We need to ask the employer some hard questions. Are the working conditions conducive to attracting and retaining quality officers? Are the training programmes robust enough to equip new recruits with the skills they need to survive in our prisons? Are there sufficient opportunities and career progression and professional development? The safety of our staff is paramount and it must always be our top

priority. Rushing the recruitment process, as we have seen, undermines the very foundations of safety. A poorly trained and inadequately supported officer is a risk to themselves and the officers they work with. This isn't just about numbers, it's about ensuring that every officer who enters our prisons is properly equipped, supported and prepared to work safely and effectively.

Now, I just want to talk about the costs of this short-sighted approach that was touched upon earlier. And I base this on HMP Swaleside's own findings. So, of the two schemes I've mentioned, we've had 53 staff join on these schemes. They're a two-year contract. Out of those 53 staff we've got one officer staying. That one officer has been deployed to a national resource, so we can't use him on the landings. So, I just want to break down the costings for this to give you a bit of food for thought. So, the cost of training those 53 officers, including their subsidence claims whilst in training: £445,200. The salaries for two years: £3,810, 488. Claims for rental allowance over the two years: £749,208. Claims for monthly travel allowance: £445,200. Bonus payments for the two years while they worked with us: £159,000. And now the cost of training replacements for those 53 officers that are leaving £445,200. Total cost for these 53 officers who ultimately are unable to stay at Swaleside is a staggering £6,054,296. Just let that sink in – six million pounds. And there's no enduring benefit, there's no long-term solution to this recruitment crisis.

It's not just financial inefficiency, it's a failure to invest in what truly matters – the safety of us and our officers and our members. The implementation of these schemes, with their inherent churn, will ultimately lead to a dip in safety. We risk a less-experienced workforce, leading to increased instability in our prisons and, tragically, more staff being assaulted in the execution of their duties. Imagine what we could have done with that six million quid. That money could have been directly invested in enhancing officer safety, better training facilities, more robust personal protective equipment and increased staffing levels on the wings. Technology that can improve communication and response times. Support services for those officers that have sadly been assaulted. This money, instead of being a temporary subsidy for a failed recruitment strategy could have been a genuine investment opportunity in making our prisons safer places to work. Therefore, I urge you to support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: Hello. In support of the motion. I'd like to tell you a little story about we had a recruitment problem at our establishment. We were trying to recruit officers and OSGs. We had one particular person who sat at interview board for an OSG job. We had a board, they came in to interview process, was deemed completely unsuitable for the role. Nine weeks later, after sitting online and passing the test, they turned back up at the establishment as an officer. That person is no longer in the job after, obviously, many failings. We had to represent him on many a time. Completely unsuitable for the job. However, you've probably all seen the TikTok videos – I'm a three but in the uniform I'm an eight, you know. Seriously, we have to put better things in place to get the suitable people that we deserve and demand as an organisation. A professional body. Thank you.

<Applause>

MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, where do you start recruitment? I've been in the job a while. We used to have six roleplays when you had your assessment day. It's gone down to one. How can they determine from one roleplay that you're suitable? They can't really, can they? Training – we have people coming back from college that have not even seen a <inaudible> document. It's really appalling. And then we have staff refusing to do planned interventions because they're too scared. We all get scared, it's not a problem, but it's part of your job to do that. It's just a joke. Everything about what they do with recruitment training, it's just not long enough, it's not right. So please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Dave Todd for the NEC.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR: Conference, Chair, invited guests, responding in support. It's all been said, Conference, you've said it. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all, that vote is now open. And we view the results of that. Thank you, that's carried.

Conference, just to remind you, there's a fringe meeting at the back in the Bistro – that's the Crime in Prisons. That's a really useful one for those who are still having difficulties getting people prosecuted. And don't forget, there's a live shave at quarter past 1 on stage in aid of charity. His much-loved grey beard will be no more and his hopefully more youthful looks than Richard Madeley in the crowd there will come through. Apart from that, have a good dinner and I'll see you at quarter to two.

<Break>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. For those who are looking at a stranger to my left, he's our National Vice Chair who's just shaved his beard off in aid of the charity that Joe Simpson was heavily involved in.

<Applause>

Great effort. Now looking more youthful than the Richard Madeley lookalike from Whatton. And to my right is our esteemed guest speaker, a really good friend, a true trade unionist, General Secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers' union, Mick Whelan.

<Applause>

He has spent 40 years on the railway and 40 years as an active trade unionist. He began in the rail industry as a guard on British Rail's Midland region in 1984. He was first a member, then a rep for the NUR. When he became a train driver in 1988 he joined ASLEF, the train drivers' union, and he was elected Regional Organiser for the Midland region in 2000. Mick was elected General Secretary of ASLEF in 2011 and since then has worked hard to engage with other rail unions, the TUC, the Labour Party and other stakeholders in the rail industry. Mick became chair of the Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation, which co-ordinates the activity of the trade unions which affiliate to the Labour Party in 2016 and in September 2017 he was elected to the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party. Good luck with that, Mick. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Mick Wheelan.

<Applause>

MICK WHEELAN – GENERAL SECRETARY, ASLEF: Follow that, as they say. Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for the kind invitation to speak here today. I bring you solidarity and friendship from all the train drivers across the UK. I seem to spend an awful lot of time with Steve and Mark, because their values shine through and we share a lot in common, which means we spend a lot of time and a lot of late hours on the same platforms, arguing for the same things, whether we're in the Labour Party or not.

But I'd like to take a brief moment, if I could, to pay my respects and our respects to Joe Simpson, who was a great friend to ASLEF – a colleague, a trade unionist. I had the privilege of working with Joe for many years and going on human rights missions with him. His passion for people and natural humanity always shone through, and he will be missed.

<Applause>

I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate another friend, Mick Pimblett, on his new role and wish him all the best for the future. But I've been stunned, and I can't be stunned. I know we hear the stories about what you go through every day, but the recent incidents both at Frankland and Lowdham Grange – my sympathies to all those impacted by it and their families, because what we do as workers impacts on our families too. But also my respects to all those of you who deal with the numerous occasions of violence and other issues that we can't understand outside your sector, right, and despite the warnings and interventions by the POA to try and change both this government's and previous governments' view of the world. I've been looking at the report for the Publics Accounts Committee – and it's time that those findings were acted upon. You've got to deal with overcrowding, you have to deal with fire safety, you have to deal with proper funding, £520 million is not enough, and I do think the £2.8 billion is probably an underestimate in the Victorian prisons we have in many places. The issues around drugs, drones, mental health – both of the officers and the prisoners – self-harm, understaffing and, most frightening of all, in a very physical role and a very stressful role, being expected to work until the age of 70. I expect all of these things are very high on your agenda this week, so I'll tell you what I'll do, I won't tell you about prisons, you don't tell me about trains.

Can I also take this opportunity to thank Steve and Mark and yourselves, because we saw it everywhere across the UK when we ended up in the longest rail strike in history. So many people came and stood on our picket lines, so many people offered us voice and support, and so many people stood with us at a time – because we were the last union standing. We thought that wasn't going to happen – it was a very political strike, so I can't thank you enough. And that made me think. Steve and I go back a long way, and there was one time the worst that we thought could happen to us was Grayling. Seriously. Steve and I, he'd been three years, been Ministry of Justice and destroyed you lot, and the probation service, and then he came to the railways. And we ended up in a dispute, and the first time I went to meet him, it didn't go very well. Lots of silences, lots of "Erms" and "Ahs" and whatever. The second meeting, he'd obviously got one of his people to do a bit of research, so he said, "Michael" – only my mum calls me Michael – "Michael, I understand that you're the Chair of Justice for Colombia", and I said, "Yes, Minister". Well, he said, "You might not know this, Michael, but when I was at Cambridge, I was Chair of Amnesty." And I said, "Really, Minister? Is that what gave you the idea to bang people up for 23 hours a day without any books?" And it sort of went downhill from there.

Down the years, I've been proud to speak at many POA meetings and rallies and the right to strike, and <inaudible>, and the associated <inaudible> and I seconded your motions at TUC, because I do believe that every worker should have the same rights, should have the same voice, the same opportunity, same ability to protect themselves under health and safety and other legislation. And if something is unfair for one group of workers, it's inherently unfair for another group of workers. So, we've done that many, many times.

So, at this point I suppose I have to apologise because, now Mark's dropped me in it, I am the Chair of TULO, the Trade Union Labour Organisation – affiliated unions to the Labour Party – and we're running around talking about our new deal, our new deal for workers. It is a good deal, undoing decades and decades and decades of anti-worker legislation, from Thatcher to the 2016 Act, from the Lobbying Act to the Transparency Act, to the Protest Bill. It has to be done. But we did in real terms set ourselves a really unreliable timeline that, to make them do it, because we understood what happened when Blair and Brown were there. They promised us change and didn't give it, over three Labour governments. That they had to do this within 100 days. The whole width and breadth of this was quite stunning. So, there will be 250 changes – if we get them through the Lords, if we get them past the Tory amendments – that will change all workers' lives on a daily basis. But we failed. Despite the hard work done by your top table, despite the hard work by the trade unions in convincing people immediately to give the rights back to everybody else. I'll apologise today and I'll apologise every day in the future until you have the same rights as we do, because it is wrong.

<Applause>

So, as we do this, we still know that, even when you have the right to strike – and I so admire the bravery of your leadership on occasions, and I'm not sure if Thompsons are in the room, because we share the same lawyers, but I hear the stories behind the scenes of how all of a sudden when you rightfully go out on strike or withdraw your labour because of health and safety reasons, the top table go <inaudible> and won't run away and won't

hide, but won't let them drag you into court to undermine what you, the workers, are doing. So, I do admire trade unions that creatively avoid things, but even when you have the right to strike, look at my trade union's history. Under Grayling, and subsequently I spent 18 months in the High Court being injuncted – even when you have the right to strike, even when you jump through their hoops, even when you do their ballots, even when you do their cooling off periods, they will still try and find another reason to get you into court, and we need to change that too, that's got to stop.

<Applause>

I suppose like all of you, like all trade unions, all civil society organisations, we're looking back at the last four or five years and there's lots of stuff we failed to do. All our campaigning naturally stopped during the period of Covid. All the campaigns we wanted to run, the things we were doing mutually, the things we were doing singly, and otherwise. So, I imagine part of your conference this week will be reinvigorating many of the things that you want to do and where you want to be, and putting that impetus back into them. But also thinking about that time of Covid. We thought about it a lot. There was just this one short period of time where all work had dignity, it didn't matter what you did. Everybody was virtually a key-worker – those who put the food on the shelves, those who got the people round the country, those who trapped themselves in with other people and looked after them during a dangerous time and put themselves more at risk than others, and you did.

But that period of dignity didn't last long. I don't think any of us expected the same level of reprobation as the NHS or the social care service, but we did come out of Covid with an expectation that understanding there was a dignity to all work, that it would be rewarded, and that dignity would hopefully go into retirement and take us to where we needed to be. And what we saw was a series of Tory Prime Ministers reverting back to type – cutting, changing and hurting workers everywhere. And all the words they said before turned out to be lies, while they partied and did what they sought to do. But also then, forgot. Because after the two years of Covid, what we then actually had was virtually two years of every sector, private and public, out on strike. And even those that weren't on strike were supporting those that were on strike, because in every household in the country there wasn't a family not affected by the policies of that Tory government. There wasn't a family not affected who didn't have somebody out on strike who was a teacher, a civil servant, a train driver, a bin lorry driver, or somebody else. And they didn't understand that we were all standing on the same platforms, shouting for that solidarity and unity because we believe that every victory of every trade union across the movement was a victory for everybody. And that's what we found – people came and supported us across the board, but we had a government that didn't understand. And I think four or five Prime Ministers in a short period of time, looking after their mates and doing what they did, right, found them out. One trick ponies on immigration, as Reform are. The reality of this country is we need investment. We need to invest in our people, we need to invest in training, we need to invest in infrastructure, we need to invest in future generations, and we need to invest in the communities in which we live and grow up in. And that's where we need to be.

And we need to understand, where did that £38 billion of track and trace money go? Where did the money for VIP lanes go? Where did the highest-taxing government of all time do with our money? Because over that 14 years of austerity, we saw council budgets cut by 36%, we saw the prison service budgets and justice cut by massive amounts, we saw every sector being cut. What I saw in my industry was loads of privateers and transnationals taking hundreds of millions of pounds out of my industry, while only barely doing what they had to do. People making more money during Covid for not running trains than running the trains they were paid to do so. People making more money out of a two-year rail strike on the strike days than on the days when we actually ran trains. There's got to be something wrong with that. There's got to be something wrong in a model that allows that to happen.

So, we ended up with the highest-borrowing government of all time, highest-taxing government of all time. And when I say the highest-borrowing government of all time, don't believe this thing about the Tories being good with the economy. Fourteen years of austerity. Where did the money go? Fourteen years of cuts. Where did the money go? Because they're not just the highest-borrowing government of all time, they're the highest-borrowing government if you add every government in history together and took off the bill for Covid off the end. So, we need to ask ourselves, what have we done as a country? Where do we need to be? But I also want to say this to the Labour Party, we did not elect you for more of the same. We do not agree with your stance on the Winter Fuel Allowance, we do not agree what you're doing on PIP, we do not agree what you're doing on cuts to services. And I was proud to stand in Birmingham with the bin workers the other day, while they want to take £8,000 a year off a person who drivers a bin lorry. Don't put the pain on the workers, put it where it should be. Put it on the Googles, put it on the Amazons – put it on the transnationals. Make the people who don't pay tax, pay tax. Don't take it out the people who pay the tax and National Insurance. Give them the disposable income that will drive their local economy, that will drive their national economy, that will allow people to have a dignity in what they do, and then, hopefully, we'll be in a better place.

Now, I do agree, having inherited the proverbial bag of crap, they're probably not going to listen to me today. But I do believe they will listen to the voice of the trade union movement, and I do believe they will listen to civil society, and I do believe if we all say on the things that they're wrong, they will have to change their view of the world. So, I believe it's quite simple. Now is the time for all trade unions to demand investment across all sectors, decent pay, dignity into retirement, a real future for our children and grandchildren. And I think unions standing together are key to that future, so I'm proud to be here with you today. I look forward to being back with you in the future. Your battles are ours, your wins are ours, and when we stand as a movement, I don't think we can be shaken. Thank you for listening.

<Applause>

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Mick, if you just remain there for a small second, because we've got a small gift. But there was one thing that you said in your speech, and you apologised to Conference that you couldn't achieve. Mick, there is absolutely no reason for you to apologise whatsoever for the actions of the Labour government, or any other government, quite frankly. Thirty-one years ago, we had our rights ripped away from us, and our campaign goes on. Politicians come and go, of all colours, but we, the POA, remain here, and we will continue that campaign to get a basic fundamental human rights restored. Mick, I've got a small gift for you, so here we go.

<Applause>

Mick Wheelan, good friend of the POA. Thanks, Mick.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks, Mick. I hope your train's not cancelled.

<Laughter>

Conference, we'll carry on with some motions at about 2:30pm. I'll invite Bryan Goodman, Honorary Life Member, to send his fraternal greetings, and shortly before the break I believe we've got the raffle to do for retired members, and there's one for Chesterton Grant as well.

So we are now on Motion 67, which is Woodhill. Can I have a seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 67

To mandate that the NEC instruct HMPPS to invest in its workforce and return to training sessions for staff and not E-Learning, which is not fit for purpose. There is no requirement from E-Learning to prove that staff have completed and understood the subject. It is a tick box test at the end that can be taken as many times as needed to get over the pass mark of 80%.

WOODHILL

ALISON PHILO – BRANCH CHAIR, WOODHILL: Chair, Conference, visitors and invited guests, speaking for Motion 67. It is, "To mandate that the NEC instructs HMPPS to invest in its workforce and to return to training sessions for staff and not E-Learning, which is not fit for purpose. There is no requirement from e-learning for staff to prove that they have completed and understood the subject. It's a tick box exercise that, at the end, can be taken as many times as needed to get over the pass mark of 80%." Describing the current practice of training through E-Learning as learning is generous at best. Our understanding of learning is clearly defined to us from childhood, where any subject we are taught or expected to learn is tested to ensure a level of understanding or recognise the need for additional support. Even in independent adult learning, that maintains this. E-Learning is a memory test at best. We are aware that some staff are playing the videos for C&R E-Learning in the background whilst carrying out something else. C&R training is vital when any allegations of excessive use of force can see any of our members in a court dock. Yet HMPPS clearly don't view our need for training with tangible oversight as important. Who oversees our members' capability to put E-Learning subject matters into practice? There is no guarantee that the person completing the E-Learning is the person whose account it's on. Also the expectation of HMPPS and our governors are that our members do this E-Learning in their own time rather than providing time and a suitable location for learning to take place. There is no reason to support their reluctance to take staff off duty for training as this time is built into all of our profiles and non-effectives. This is without acknowledging our members who have dyslexia and dyscalculia or other learning needs who struggle with reading or reading from screens. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

LEE LASSMAN – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE: Chair, NEC and invited guests, a lot of my points have already been said, but thank you for passing this motion. So, in our view there's several reasons why this motion should be passed. First and foremost, staff are often told to complete their E-Learning modules in their own time. This is outside of their scheduled working hours. This creates an unfair situation where staff are expected to find time, often after long shifts, to complete their training. Quite often they're left with no choice but to leave their colleagues on the landing or to do the training in their own time, which is neither fair nor sustainable. This approach undermines the importance of training, shows a clear lack of investment in our workforce, and ultimately devalues the skills and knowledge that our staff need to do their jobs effectively. Secondly, as mentioned, the current E-Learning set up is essentially a tick box. Staff can rush through the modules, skip through content, and then just attempt the test at the end as many times as they want until they pass. This process encourages a superficial engagement with training and, as a result, many of the staff members do not absorb or understand the information being presented. Because of this, there's widespread lack of confidence in the training's effectiveness and staff often do not believe that the training holds any real significance or value. This leads to a dangerous situation where advice and information is not retained and staff are ill-prepared to deal with complex or challenging situations.

Furthermore, the environment we work in is becoming more demanding and complex. We have less-experienced staff and the prison system itself has become more difficult to manage. It's essential that our officers are well trained, confident and competent in their roles. They need to understand the policies, procedures and practical skills necessary to keep themselves and their colleagues safe. Relying solely on online modules, especially when they are completed in a rushed or superficial manner, does not meet these needs. Investing in face-to-face practical training sessions would address many of the issues. It would provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with trainers, ask questions and learn in a realistic environment. This kind of training helps staff to retain information better, apply their skills more confidently, and develop a deeper understanding of their responsibilities. It also fosters a sense of professionalism and pride, making the staff feel valued, important and invested in their development. Moreover, providing proper training sessions would have a positive impact on staff morale. When staff see their employers willing to invest in their development and provide meaningful learning opportunities, it boosts their confidence and job satisfaction. This in turn can help improve staff retention rates, which are crucial given the challenges we currently face.

The benefits of investing in proper, physical training sessions extend beyond the individual competence. They translate into a safer, more effective workplace where staff are better equipped to handle the realities of their roles. Well-trained staff are more resilient, more capable of de-escalating situations, and better prepared to respond to emergencies. This ultimately leads to a better environment for everyone. Please pass this motion.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I only want to point out one quick thing which actually my colleague has pointed out. The motion itself does not actually say anything about the time, so it's basically about the E-Learning, not about the time that we get related, so when you do reject or propose, basically have that in mind. Thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nobody else? So, Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers – responding on behalf of the NEC, asking to support this motion. We thank Woodhill for bringing this motion. It's always been a controversial topic, but something that raises concerns around computer-based training, it's fit for purpose. There is no educational support or learning for our members that have difficulties and require additional support or guidance, and in most cases the requirement to do so is during additional duties. With a target pressure to complete and subsequent to no additional training hours, no requirement to prove staff have completed this online training, this fails the individual, hinders their learning abilities and promotional avenues. The investment of the workforce should be paramount and inclusive to everyone's training needs, not a quick few minutes of multiple questions from a computer programme. The NEC has and continues to challenge the employer to invest in our members and professionalise the service like our international counterparts, and make it a service that shines bright, professional, and one that is recognised as a class above the custodial environment. Support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, the vote is now open. We can now close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 68, Woodhill.

Motion 68

To mandate that the NEC instruct HMPPS to invest in its workforce and roll out IPD (Individual Professional Development) sessions to Band 2 OSG's who are routinely exposed to inappropriate language and behaviour during the monitoring of pin phones, and who must view violence against staff and prisoners repeatedly whilst monitoring CCTV and Body Worn Camera footage.

WOODHILL

ALISON PHILO – BRANCH CHAIR, WOODHILL: Me again. Chair, Conference, visitors, invited guests – speaking on Motion 68, and that is, "To mandate that the NEC instruct HMPPS to invest in its workforce and roll out IPD sessions to our Band 2 OSGs, who are routinely exposed to inappropriate language and behaviour during the monitoring of pin phones and who must view violence against staff and prisoners repeatedly whilst monitoring CCTV and body worn camera footage." Since the introduction of in-cell telephones and removing the 10-minute time limit on telephone calls, our Band 2 colleagues are being expected to listen to hours of phone calls where the prisoners and their call recipients engage in graphic sexual discussions. Unsurprisingly, HMPPS did not consider this and its impact on our members, who are tasked with pin phone monitoring on its implementation.

Our Band 2 colleagues are also tasked with managing and reviewing CCTV and body worn camera footage of prisoner on prisoner and prisoner on staff assaults, some of these of an extremely violent nature, to prepare for evidence for police investigations or for adjudications. Let's not forget our Band 2 colleagues from the control room, witnessing and managing responses to live incidents of this nature. All of these are traumatising and our members need a way to unload this trauma and preserve their mental health and not become overwhelmed by their work. Like our other colleagues in other frontline services, who are monitored and supported by counselling when dealing with traumatic subjects, our Band 2 members should be routinely given this as part of their role and not wait until the members who have raised an issue or have become unable to cope. Conference, please support this motion.

<Applause>

KEITH STUTELY – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, FORD: Chair, NEC, colleagues, invited guests, I'd like to thank Woodhill for bringing this one because, all too often, our Band 2 colleagues have been overlooked. As I've already said, they are overlooked and undervalued. Also I would like to point out that, in the open estate, they do have a fair degree of prisoner contact. This motion needs to be passed, please support it. thank you.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests, please support this motion. I think it's really important that, if we've got the facility to help staff get through some of the difficult things that we see every single day, and quite a lot of it is on the news channels at the moment, with our Chair on our behalf championing our safety in the workplace, mental ill health is something that affects a lot of people. Some people like talking about it, some people are in that stigma still where they can't talk about it. Every member of staff that works inside a prison should have an avenue. Please don't forget there is a confidential helpline from the POA, also the civil service charity, and other useful charities out there, so if you can't engage with HMPPS's employee assistance programme because you think that it's not confidential, I believe it is and I've used it before, and I urge you to support this motion, and everybody should have an opportunity to talk about their work.

<Applause>

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers – responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to support this motion. I'd like to thank Woodhill for bringing this motion to Conference. Some sceptics are under an illusion, as we work in some of the most violent workplaces in western Europe, violence is acceptable, whether it's verbal, physical or psychological. Well, let me tell you, it's not. "We don't tolerate violence", the prison service states in their policies. The exposure of this type of inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable to our members and measures should be taken to protect their mental health and wellbeing, not just at Band 2s, but widespread. The approved Code of Practice and Regulation 2 of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee's Regulations 1977 contain reference to protections for our members: "Violence of all forms, significant impact on mental health leading to a range of problems including depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance abuse. Exposure to violence can have lasting mental health effects, effecting educational outcomes and overall wellbeing."

In 2017, the government commissioned Lord Stevenson and Paul Farmer to an independent review to the role that employees can play to better support individuals with mental health conditions in the workplace. The Thriving at Work report sets out the framework of actions called Core Standards that the Review has recommended employers of all sizes can and should put in place, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan that promotes good mental health to all employees and outlines the support available for those who might need it. This can be found on the HSE's management standards approach website. Conference, protect our members and support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. Thank you, we can now close that. It's carried.

Motion 69, Maidstone. Seconder from Maidstone? Thank you.

Motion 69

Conference mandates the NEC to request and negotiate with HMPPS for HMPPS to provide a dedicated budget for wellbeing in establishments additional to the Governor's budget.

MAIDSTONE

FIRKET SINCIK – BRANCH CHAIR, MAIDSTONE: Chair, Conference, NEC, I am asking your support for motion 69 which reads, "Conference mandates the NEC to request and negotiate with HMPPS for HMPPS to provide dedicated budget for wellbeing in establishments, additional to Governor's budget." So, HMPPS promotes wellbeing as priority topic. However, they do not provide any financial support for individual establishments. This means that staff, for the staff and the managers, do not receive the same and similar approaches and support as other organisations and partner agencies. With HMPPS we have different access to welfare support, such as supervision, even though we have the same staff from various partners contacting the same roles. Any welfare budget should be for the establishment to utilise as required rather than centralised as individual sites face different challenges and welfare needs. Thank you and please support the motion.

<Applause>

MICK HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, in support of this. The service always talk about a duty of care. We've already talked about people being suspended, off sick, and being rushed back to work. This is the time now for HMPPS to put their money where their mouth is. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC. A dedicated wellbeing budget for each establishment could be used to facilitate early interventions, it could be used to improve staff health and improve staff resilience. Money spent on wellbeing would be offset by improved and less costly outcomes further down the line. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all, that vote is now open. And we can now view those results. It's carried.

Motion 70, Hull. Seconder, please? Thank you.

Motion 70

For Conference to recognise the employers lack of respect, reward and recognition given to employees on reaching key milestones in long service. Conference mandate the NEC to engage with the employer to improve reward and recognition provided by the employer for long serving members.

HULL

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests, retired members – moving Motion 70 from Hull. It reads, "For conference to recognise the employers lack of respect, reward and recognition given to employees in reaching key milestones in long service. Conference mandate the NEC to engage with the employer, to improve reward and recognition provided by the employer for long serving members." I bring this motion on behalf of the long-serving members at Hull and also many members who are now retired members after leaving the service, because we are fed up of seeing members who have given 20, 25, 30 plus years' service come in for a farm meeting because they can't work until they're 68 – because they're having to go when they're 60 years old, 58 years old because of medical inefficiencies, and then that's it, nothing. There is a time when we'd line the route, we'd clap out staff and everyone knew who they were. There was flowers presented to the families. And in key milestones as they went through service, they should be recognised. It's not good enough to just get a few increments as a Band 3, then have to wait until 10 years to get an extra week's leave, and then have absolutely nothing. We should be rewarded and we should be recognising the important contribution that these officers make. It's not good enough from the employer.

And then staff are leaving and they have, or some have their exit interviews, and some of the top reasons are either pay or progression, and isn't that just fudging the figures? Because why am I going for progression? The only reason I'm going for progression isn't to look good with a second or third stripe, it's because I want more money, so they're fudging the figures on that aspect as well. Conference, I'm sure this isn't an issue just isolated to Hull. Whilst this isn't a debate, please take this opportunity to let the employer know how your experienced members of staff are being treated in your establishments, and how they should be taken into account going forward. Thank you.

<Applause>

IAN PRESCOTT – BRANCH SECRETARY, WYMOTT: Happy to support this motion. An absolute joke, 30 years' service, I've done, over 30 years. We got a, how would you describe it? That big? Two pieces of cheap glass that were glued together. An absolute joke. I got an award from Conference last year, superb. This was an embarrassment, absolute, utter embarrassment. 100% it's right, this. Something needs doing.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Ian. You got a damn sight more than I did when I hit 30 years, I'll tell you.

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – responding to Motion 70, asking you to support this motion. There was a time, colleagues, when the service absolutely rewarded long service, when it recognised the commitment of those who had made the service a career. Rewarding service at regular interviews, you know, has a positive impact on retention, and our employer needs to listen to that because retention is a problem at the moment. I'm not going to reiterate what Hull have said, I think this is a great motion. I just want to mention this. I remember working with a guy one day who was coming up for retirement. He was about a month away, and the prison governor came up, walked on the wing. I put my bacon sandwich and my cup of coffee down and I pretended I was busy. That was normal for me. And the governor walked up to him and said, and I'm not going to mention his name, he said, "I've come to say thank you very much for your service, you've been a great servant to the prison service and I know you're leaving in a month's time but I want your baton and I want your keys off you now and I'm going to escort you to the gate. Thank you very much, you can have four weeks special leave." That's the kind of thing that people used to do to reward recognition, and so absolutely support this motion. Thank you, Hull.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is open. And we can view the results of that. It's carried.

Motion 71, Berwyn. Seconder for Berwyn? Thank you.

Motion 71

Conference instructs NEC to engage with HMPPS to enable staff to undertake PP/ Bedwatches / Constant watches whilst on Annual Leave or TOIL.

BERWYN

MATT EVANS – BRANCH SECRETARY, BERWYN: NEC, Conference, this one reads, "Conference instructs NEC to engage with HMPPS to enable staff to undertake PP / Bed watches / Constant watches whilst on annual leave or TOIL." Other agencies – so the NHS, for example – they can book a week's leave and they can go in and do a week's overtime. My annual leave, I pay to get a rest day. I can take it, providing there's scope, whenever I want, so why can't I do what I want on my annual leave? If I choose to come and do a constant watch, why can't I? Oh, that's right, because my underlying shift pattern is a main shift, so I can get two hours for the early start or the ED. TOIL is time off in lieu. You've taken my hours that I've not been able to get home because of an incident at night or because a roll was late. That's my time, not yours, so if I want to take my time back, why can't I again go and do a bed watch? Sorry, that's because of my underlying shift pattern. Now there was a notice out from My Detail, I think it's 4314, don't quote me exactly on that one, where if I <inaudible> at nights, those two-week blocks, I can do overtime because that rest week is now a TOIL week. That's acceptable. If I come in to do training on a rest day and TOIL off another day, I can do PP on that day – that's acceptable. But it says within that, that if I try to do that on another day, I'm not allowed. Why? It's my time, if I want to get paid for it, why can't I? Please support the motion.

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: I'm asking you to reject this motion. As far as I'm aware, it started in 1889 with the Masters and Servant Act, and then went on later to employment rights, and the formulation of unions. They fought for our rights to have days off because the employer would have you working every day, all day, as much as you could. And as far as I'm aware, legally it's fraud because you're getting paid

twice. So how can the union then fight this motion for us when it's against employment law? These are our rights – we fought for many, many years for them. Don't then get the union to fight to have them reinstated. It's crazy.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, guests and visitors, I urge you to reject this motion. I believe that annual leave is there for us to go and spend time with your families, our real families, not our prison families, and enjoy our children, our wives, our partners, whatever. And if you've earnt TOIL, you should take it. What you should be concentrating on is helping NEC get us a better pay deal. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC – urging you to reject this motion, very much for what's already been said. But I guarantee there are some prison dignitaries at the back that are rubbing their hands together right now, thinking, "We've got them." This has got so many ways of being abused, phone calls when you're on annual leave, blocked leave, etc., saying, "Yeah, just come in, do a bit of PP," or when you get to the end of the year and you're looking at doing your carry over, they'll think they can then come back to you on this motion and say, "Well actually, we'll put you down as block leave on them two weeks when you're doing your PP" and stuff like that. Please reject this motion.

<Applause>

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, colleagues, this is a health and safety issue more than anything. If our colleagues and members across the estate had a true understanding of health and safety, there probably wouldn't be many jails in this country still operating because everyone would be out the front of their jail. However, it falls upon us to protect our members' health and safety at times, and things like this are one of those things. If people are in need of the money, they'll be willing to put their health and safety aside, their time to rest and recuperate, just to get those extra pennies, because we're not paid enough at first. It's our responsibility to make sure that they don't put that risk upon themselves. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Chair, Conference, I'm slightly torn on this because I don't like people telling me what to do – so, if I want to come in and work, I should be able to do that. That being said, I'm urging you to reject the motion, based on the logic that we need time off, we need time to recuperate. It's been mentioned as well about double payment, which may also pose a problem with it. But latterly, how many of you have meetings where your members say to you, "Why is the payment plus rate never going up?" – presumably lots of nodding heads. The reason why it doesn't go up is because you keep doing it at £22 an hour.

<Applause>

If you're a Custodial Manager now, your basic salary is higher than £22, so why on earth would people there do that? Wetherby is a real sinner in this instance because people at our establishment do this already, so even though it breaks the rules, there's people who do it. I then have people at the meetings we have saying to me, "Why are you not sorting the payment plus rate out? Why are the NEC not sorting it out? Why is anyone not sorting it out?" And I've said quite simply, as I've just said, "Because you keep doing it. You fundamentally misunderstand supply and demand and you're the cause of this." Reject the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so I'll invite Mick Pimblett to respond from the NEC.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC, asking you to reject the motion. The legal entitlement to holiday is intended to provide people with a period of rest from work. Lord Justice Mummery stated recently, in a case of NHS Leeds versus Larner, that the purpose of paid annual leave is to enable a worker to enjoy rest, relaxation and leisure, and it is for the protection of health and safety. If workers are not able to switch off and relax, they are less likely to return to work feeling reinvigorated and motivated. There is a risk that staff who work whilst on leave will not get the health benefits of a complete break and will, as a result, go on to develop stress-related ill health. Working on leave can also interfere with precious family time and can therefore have a detrimental impact on relationships and potentially cause further stress.

Under health and safety legislation, there is a clear duty on employers to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the welfare of employees at work. Employers also have a duty to undertake risk assessments and manage activities to reduce the incidents of stress at work. Breach of health and safety legislation could result in criminal sanctions. It is not possible for employees to contract out their statutory holiday entitlement. If a culture of employees working while on holiday develops, it is likely to set a dangerous precedent – that employees are on call at all times and therefore significantly increase the likelihood of the workforce being affected by work-related stress. Employers are also under a common law duty to say they will care for the health and safety of employees in the workplace. Therefore, employees suffering from work-related stress could potentially bring personal injury claims and, in addition, stress and depression having a substantial and long-term effects on an employee's day-to-day activities may amount to disability under the Equalities Act 2010. In such circumstances, employers will be exposed to possible claims for failure to make reasonable adjustments.

Colleagues, why do our members want to work while they're on annual leave? I will tell you why they want to work when they're on annual leave and why there's a requirement, because they're not paid enough, and because HMPPS do not recruit enough staff.

<Applause>

HMPPS need to listen to this union. Give our members dignity at work and pay staff what they're actually worth. Reject the motion, Conference.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Straight to the vote then. And we can view the results. That motion is lost.

Conference, I'm now going to invite Honorary Life Member, Bryan Goodman, to address us to send out his fraternal greetings. Bryan Goodman.

<Applause>

He's just been directed the wrong way by Steve Lewis. Well done, Steve. Bryan Goodman.

<Applause>

BRYAN GOODMAN – HONORARY LIFE MEMBER: Wow. It's been a long time – not to be back at Eastbourne but to be on a rostrum at the POA conference. Just to give you a quick resume of who I am, I joined the prison service in 1971 – that was 54 years ago, makes me feel rather old. I spent a year, well the training – going back to some of the Conference motions we've had on today and the last couple of days – the training was a month at Horfield Jail for me in Bristol, two months at Leyhill Officers Training School, and then my first posting was Maidstone, and I spent two years there. Luckily, when I went there, prisoners decided to go on the roof, so it was a bit of a baptism of fire. But I moved from there to Latchmere House Remand Centre, no longer there, it's now multi-million-pound houses, and I was branch Chair there. I moved from there on promotion to Wandsworth as a senior officer. Lots of you won't recognise the grades I'm going to talk about.

I recently saw a programme on Wandsworth, which is a place I hold very dear, and it absolutely frightened me to death. But then I recalled – so I went there 30 years ago and the first thing I did, well, I was the junior SO, although I had 16 years' service, I was the junior SO, so that was my job, in the bath house. So, I went down there, I'd never seen anything like it in my life. So I went to the POA rep, health and safety rep, and said, "What are we going to do?" "We've tried for years, we just cannot do anything." I said, "We've got to." So I went down the bath house and I shut it down, end of story. Went to the chief and said, "Right, what are we going to do now? We've got no bath house," because it was dire. The rats were like cats – Category A prisoners diving away from them, hiding up on the seats. So, they did some minor changes, so as at least while I was there I could see my staff, they weren't all in steam and everything. I could see prisoners.

Just staying on Wandsworth for a minute, you may – there will be people in this room that will remember the Wandsworth lockout. And that lasted 10 days – they locked us out of the jail. I was the branch Chair, I was still a senior officer, and we eventually got back to work – and not on the terms that they locked us out for. I mean it was a totally contrived dispute, there's no two ways about that at all. So, we continued, I continued as branch Chair. I then went, well, I was promoted at Wandsworth. So – well the grades I did at Wandsworth were senior officer, principal officer, governor 5 and governor 4, and just to put Whatton's mind at rest, I was not a governor who lied through his teeth or did anything like that. I supported staff, that was why I was there, as far as I was concerned. And I think if I'd have done anything differently, I would not have been given the Cronin Clasp in 1998 or Honorary Life Membership in whatever date it was, I can't remember.

Things were not easy, and I listened yesterday to Jennifer about discrimination and bullying, and it wasn't – well basically the reason it took me, I didn't join this job to get to become a governing governor at all. I didn't end up a governing governor, but I joined because I wanted to make a difference to people's lives. And it wasn't a coincidence that the reason it took 16 years to get onto that first rung was because I was the branch Chair of the POA. That was made perfectly clear to me by lots and lots of people, who were in the know. So, I then went to High Down. They changed the process slightly, where you were in that grade but you still had to go to other prisons of your choice to have an interview. So, I went to High Down because basically I didn't think there was any other prisons that would want to touch me at all, and I met the governing governor. So I presumed there would probably be three or four on the panel, and he was on his own. And I said, "Is anybody else coming, Governor?" He said, "No, it's just me and you." So, I said, "Oh, OK." He said, "There's nothing I don't know about you. I know all about your POA connections, what you've done, and I've just got one question for you." And I thought, "Oh, here we go again, 'When are you going to leave the POA?'" But that wasn't the question, the question was, "What day can you start?" So, he was somebody who put a lot of trust in me. I'm not sure from what I've heard in the last two days that there are still people like that running jails. I hope there are but I'd be surprised if there are, from what I'm hearing.

The first thing I did – I was the duty governor, I get told I've got to go to Wormwood Scrubs because they're out in the carpark, so all the governors got ordered to go there. I put up my hand, I said, "No way I'm going there," so I didn't go. And I ran the prison instead, I ran High Down prison instead, and that's the way I operated my whole service. I was only able to do that, well firstly because I had the bottle to do it, but secondly it was the support I had from people like yourselves, the National Committee, at home, my wife, who is somewhere in the hall, and so that's me.

We go back to the business end – it's such a pleasure to be here to give the fraternal address on behalf of the Honorary Life Members. I think there are eight of us here this year. There are many more at home – some can't get here, others have got a variety of reasons why they can't be here – but we all keep a keen interest in what's going on in this Union and within the service. It's absolutely, the strapline is brilliant. How the prison service have ended up in the state they're in, I have no idea. But it won't get any better until the conditions are improved for staff and prisoners, to ensure that everybody feels safe. And I just hope that all of you keep coming to Conference. The standard of debate has been – excuse me, I'm rather dry – the standard of debate has been excellent. Some of the items have been around for years. The polo shirts and combat trousers, I think it may have been John Gunning about 30 years ago first raised that, I think, from Feltham. But these things keep on coming up, and it's right that they do, it's right that

you come to Conference and you have your say and you make those deliberations and formulate POA policy in that way.

There are a number of things that I could say, I could talk for a long time up here, but I'm not going to because I know that time is very, very important and we've got lots of motions left to do. So, from me, on behalf of all the Honorary Life Members, thank you so much for the invite from the NEC. You always treat us very, very well, and we're thankful for that. But the other thing I would say is, when I went to High Down, I decided not to continue being a branch official. And I met the Committee there – they knew who I was – and I said, "I'm not going to stand for any office, but I do expect you to come knocking my door for any advice you want, and I will give it." I've represented lots and lots of people over my service and got some really good results. It's just such a shame that we haven't got – or you haven't got – an employer that respects what you do and who you are. On that basis, I say thank you all so much, god bless you all, stay safe, and hope to see you again.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Wait there, Bryan. Bryan, wait there.

<Applause>

Now, Bryan, nobody goes away from Conference empty-handed and we do have a little gift. But we are in a seaside town and what I do every year, when we're here, I go to the rock shop. So, I'm looking for a bar of rock for you and I thought, "What can I get him? Loads of flavours." And then I thought, "Well I know what his accent's like" – so I got him a pirate bar of rock. I don't know what pirate flavour is but I'm sure you'll tell me tomorrow morning. And we also have a gift on behalf of the POA that you can take away and enjoy in your home in comfort. Bryan Goodman, ladies and gentleman.

<Applause>

Bryan, take care of yourself.

BRYAN GOODMAN – HONORARY LIFE MEMBER: Thank you. Thank you, Conference.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well done, Bryan.

OK, we'll do a couple more before we draw the raffle and have a break. We'll start with motion 72, Durham. Can I have a seconder for Durham?

Motion 72

Conference debate the disastrous impact benchmarking had on POA members, and the insidious relationship between benchmarking and the workforce delivery model which is in effect benchmarking 2 without the bells and whistles.

DURHAM

KEITH HOW – BRANCH CHAIR, DURHAM: Chair, NEC, Honorary Life Members, Conference, the motion reads, "Conference debate the disastrous impact benchmarking had on POA members and the insidious relationship between benchmarking and the workforce delivery model, which is in effect benchmarking too, without the bells and whistles." There can't be anyone in the conference hall that doesn't recognise the disastrous impact that benchmarking has had on the prison service, and most importantly its own staff that were left to pick up the pieces for the employer. The result was clear for all to see, the chaos which has unfolded since, due to the severe loss of control in all prisons – staff assaults up, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults up, serious assaults up, self-harm, you've guessed it, up. Benchmarking has led to the loss of tens of thousands of experienced staff, which has hugely impacted stability in prisons. Lots of jail-craft, experienced men <inaudible> staff to look to and learn from, and ultimately control state-wide. The prison service have decided that a workforce remodel is the answer. However, it's a sham – and in fact benchmarking too, make no mistake. Let me explain the reason why. This is because it's based on reissues and doesn't measure the staffing resources needed to deliver the work safely. We have heard rumours that some prisons will benefit and others will lose out. Be under no illusion, there is no additional resources for this piece of work, it's simply designed to divide the workforce by moving resources from one prison to another. We as a collective must stick together and reject this. You will get the opportunity to do this in the next motion. Please support the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, it's quite amazing what material you can find online that's open source. And I know we go through security training, things like that – be careful what you post online – but whilst we were sat in the conference hall I thought, "I'll have a quick look". So, the lead for the Workforce Delivery Model Project has their profile on LinkedIn, detailing their experience, what makes them fit for that role. So, if we just go back a couple of years, I'm just scrolling to it now, so previous job before all this, "My first task is to implement the public-sector benchmarking at HMP Moorland." Now if the Employee Service isn't benchmarking mark two, then why is the person who was responsible for implementing benchmarking in many of the jails in the Yorkshire region now leading on this project? It's because they have the experience of benchmarking to bring forward for this benchmarking mark 2 exercise.

I'm sure we'll hear from colleagues about the disastrous elements of benchmarking. We all know what it brought, the employer knows what it brought – but there's two other things that I want everyone to consider as well with this, that I think will be coming in the future. And we talked about clustering

on previous motions, and there's also a motion on the <inaudible> the new employment offer. So, my jail, Hull, is about – say it's about 10 miles away from the local Cat C. We're in quite a good recruitment position, but how good would it be for the employer to come to us and go, "I know what, I'll make your work really flexible, you can bid for your own shifts like they do in some other places, like the NHS". Great, that's good. So actually, yeah, I'm going to go for an A shift now, I want an A shift on that Friday. Yeah, no problem, ticked on the system, on this fancy new operating model, you can do that, bid for it, you've got it. OK, but suddenly I'm not on A shift at Hull, I'm in a cluster site for the Yorkshire region, where I can travel anywhere an hour from my home establishment. You're now an A shift in Humber. When they can't get the staff, I can see it coming that they're going to come to us and divert us to any jails in our local area because they can't fill the staff with the right people. So, it's just a warning of what could be to come. And please, if there's whispers of that that does come forward, because we know what the employer's like and the underhand tactics they'll use, please dispute and get it on the national agenda. Thank you.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'd like to thank Durham for bringing this forward. Like many of us, we know that benchmarking is not a friend to the prison service. It saw loads of experience go pretty much overnight and they've set unsafe staffing figures on our wings. Like my colleague from Durham has said, it doesn't take anything into account for the risk that's posed to the prisoners, for the non-compliance that we're facing. They're still using the 1:30 ratio – it's wrong and it's not safe. Like my colleagues, when I first started at Lindholme – Lindholme has an L shaped wing, it has an SO on either side and four staff. They managed to move that down to just having one SO for both spurs. They can't provide adequate supervision and the staff don't have proper supervision and oversight. So, I encourage you all in the debate and to, like my colleague from Hull says, dispute the Workforce Delivery Model. Thank you.

<Applause>

JAMES EVANS – BRANCH CHAIR, THORN CROSS: Chair, NEC, Conference, I'm not sure if you're aware but these workforce delivery model letters have gone out to your governors. I would ask you to ask your governor, can you have sight of it. I know in my establishment they've recommended a 12% drop in Band 3 officers. This is going to be a national issue. It's not gone through our NEC – it's incredibly disrespectful that they, I think they made one site visit, they did it all on a computer. I suggest we wake up to this. This is coming. Join the debate. Thank you.

<Applause>

RICKY HYSLOP – BRANCH CHAIR, BERWYN: Chair, NEC, delegates, I was at HMP Onley back in when benchmarking come in. I was at Onley when benchmarking came in and, at the same time, we were being market-tested, and so they kind of hit us with a double whammy at the same time. Overnight we lost nearly 100 staff, so we went from 204 staff to 102 staff – bang, like that. Four staff per wing with an SO down to two staff per wing. In the light of obviously being market-tested, I think everything got agreed, it was like, "Oh my god, we're being market-tested." And then obviously benchmarking came in and then it got rolled out. I think we were in the first four prisons to be benchmarked. Recently we've just had a <inaudible> in to Berwyn. And they came in just before Christmas – the report was supposed to be published or sent to the governor in December. We asked – nothing January, nothing February, and then it eventually turned up in March. We asked them if we could see it. "No, you can't. It's not to be shared." So I'm asking, "Well, if they've come in and done a kind of a workforce delivery model on Berwyn, why are we not being shared?" "Well it's not to be shared yet because they're not too sure what the plan is to how we move forward." So, we're having these reports done that can't be shared. If you've got a governor that's willing to, which luckily we had – she's just gone to, she's ended up at <inaudible> but she kind of shared some of that information. But we talk about transparency and, if it was going to be transparent and it was a good thing for us as a service, then why aren't they sharing them? Why are they keeping it secret? Why is it not now going to be implemented until 2027, I've been informed? Definitely a worry. As I say, I went through benchmarking at the start, it seems very similar. Yeah, join in the debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Joining the debate is Dave Todd from the NEC.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR: Conference, Chair, invited guests – joining the debate on behalf of the NEC. Benchmarking. I worked in Swaleside during benchmarking. We got 23 extra Band 3 staff through it. Why am I saying that? Because they tried to divide and conquer us by branches. Don't let that happen this time. Don't be divided. Some of the branches, I've seen some of the reports – why they're not sharing with you, I don't know, because there was a guarantee that you'd see them. Some branches will get an enhancement in Band 3 numbers. Some will lose. It's the old, old tactic – divide and conquer. Don't let it happen to us, don't let it happen to you as a branch. We've sent them a clear message, we expect no frontline losses. That was from Amy Rees and Phil Copple, that will be messaged and is messaged every time we meet the workforce development team. They will not, under this NEC, have an easy time. They do not want to have an easy time under you as branches. Get a hold of them if they come in, have a look at the report, rip it to bits. Enter into local dispute and we'll do what management do with local disputes, we'll observe the status quo forever and a day. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well said, Dave. OK, are we ready for the raffle? Everyone's looking forward to this. Has anyone ever watched the farmer on Brassic? Go on, go on.

STEVE WHITFIELD – RETIRED MEMBERS BRANCH: Thank you Chair, NEC and Conference. I know you're pushed for time so I'm going to be very, very quick, and this is what you've come for today, I know all that. I just want to say thanks for NEC for the support they give to the retired members. And more importantly than them is the office staff who support us tremendously. A great deal of thanks goes out to them because, every

time we ring up and we don't know what to do, they do know what to do, so I'd really like to thank the office staff. What I want to tell you very quickly is what we intend to try and do. We have got plans on the Retired Members Committee and our plans are going to work. They're going to work better than the prison service plans will work, I guarantee you that. What we quickly want to do, when your members have got problems, they come to the POA office and they want you to sort them out and help them and point them in the right direction. When they retire, they haven't got that POA office. The Retired Members Committee wants to be that POA office and we want them to be able to come to us and we'll try and fill that void. That's what we're aiming for. What we intend to do is send out, with the blessings of the NEC, to all branches by email a bit of a retirement pack telling them how to get in touch with them and what they can do and what the benefits are and what we can offer them. If we can't do it, we'll tell them, but we'll do as much as we can and we want to try and get something in line with wellbeing and the mental health if we can help in that trend.

So expect very, very soon, when we've sorted it out, all the branches to get your welcome pack or your retirement pack. Please, please, anybody who retires, from ill health or whatever reason, give it to them and tell them to get in touch with us if they've got a problem. We'll try and do whatever we can for them. That's our intentions. And we're also going round the country having get togethers. We've had one in Liverpool, one in Scotland, we've got one lined up for Northern Ireland, and we're going to go to London and the Midlands and keep going round to different venues to get the retired members back, get them together and give them a bit of feeling that they've lost that family in work. Let's keep it going with the retired members, and now we are your link towards your retired members. So that's what we intend to do and we'll do our darndest to do it. That's all I'm going to say because you're rushed for time, so I'll get on with the raffle now.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Do you want me to call people up, Steve? Call people up to pull the raffle out. Wandsworth, come on, Jim.

STEVE WHITFIELD – RETIRED MEMBERS BRANCH: The first raffle, it's Chesterton Grant and they've donated a bottle of Moet, and it was a free draw and only about 20 people put their name in. That's unusual for prison officers. 20 names in? Right, the winner is Jason Oleksiak. That's from Chesterton Grant, who are an excellent firm if you want any advice on mortgages.

Shelly, draw one of these out for us. The first draw of the raffle gets a pick of the prize and then they'll draw the next ticket out. Blue 192. Blue 192. There's a time limit on it. Draw another one. Pink 427. This is going well. Shall we give up? Pink 427. No. Come on, do another one.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: It's like the Chuckle Brothers, this, isn't it.

STEVE WHITFIELD – RETIRED MEMBERS BRANCH: Pink 619.

<Applause>

Cheers mate, just take your pick. And will you pick my next one, please? Thank you. It's blue 319. Come on.

<Applause>

Take your pick and then pick one. And it's silver 22.

<Applause>

The next one is silver 441. Anybody? Hey, Thompsons again – Thompsons solicitors.

<Applause>

Blue 307. Blue 307.

<Applause>

A well-deserved prize, this one. Right, the next one is blue again, 85. Is that you? Of course you can have one, it's Shelly from Chesterton Grant.

<Applause>

Yellow 676. That one, is that it? No? Nicola, is it?

<Applause>

And it's pink 414.

<Applause>

Wonderful security staff. Only another 67 prizes left. By the way, thank you very much because you've raised over £500 for the retired members, so thank you very much.

<Applause>

Pink 27. Pink 27. Clock's ticking, clock's ticking.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: It is, everyone's gasping for a cup of tea. Get a move on.

STEVE WHITFIELD – RETIRED MEMBERS BRANCH: Right, have to do another one. Shelly? And it's blue 334. We're not having much luck with this, eh. Blue 334, hello?

<Applause>

Here you are, pick this one. And the last one is yellow 598.

<Applause>

Cheers, mate. That concludes the raffle, thank you very much. And does everybody know Liverpool won the league this year?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Right, thank you, go get a cup of tea. See you at 3:30pm.

<Break>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: It's Wednesday afternoon. It's time for some awards to be given out. One of my favourite parts of Conference, this, but usual rules apply. I cannot be blamed for anything that's written that I read out. And I know our two Cronin Clasp awardees extremely well and I'm so delighted for them because they thoroughly deserve this honour. Our first Cronin Clasp winner: Claire Jordan, HMP Styal.

<Applause>

You'd best sit down, because what I'm about to read out – just sit down and listen first. That's what I like to see. Keen! Officer Claire Jordan, or more affectionately known as CJ, joined the prison service on 7 April 1997. It feels like she's been in service for a lot longer than that. After being spotted as a lifeguard and swimming instructor in one of the Cheshire Leisure Centres by old, distinguished PO Taggy Tailor from HMP Styal, she was invited to take up an offer of being a night auxiliary at Styal. The job description at Styal was far from being an auxiliary, dealing with prisoners on houses during the night in the same way officers did on a daily basis – exception being there was only 10 night auxiliaries on duty, rather than the 40-plus prison officers during the day. CJ was a natural in dealing with both prisoners and staff, and this was noticed by the then governor, Madelaine Malden. Perhaps it was her time served in her early years as a Butlin's Red Coat or her athletic prowess, choosing not to become an athlete with other Olympians she had grown up with, that caught the eye, but she's a natural people person. The governor invited CJ to become an officer and pursue a career in the prison service. Reluctantly, CJ agreed as she would be losing a ton of overtime which was quite good at the time, and she'd be on less money as an officer. However, to Newbold she went, not without controversy, on her NEPO course.

When she returned, CJ was exceptional at her job and could diffuse incidents with ease. Certain managers didn't care for CJ's laid-back and relaxed manner and it was obvious her easy attitude wound them up. Before long, it was clear CJ was a born leader and she could have one day run a prison and further, but it was obvious CJ was born a trade unionist. The only direction she envisaged was to help her colleagues and shape the direction of the prison she loved to serve. Not long after completing her probationary period, she came onto Styal POA Committee, where she was active and eager to serve as the Committee. Like most reps, she took a lot of work home, defending members and advocating for members' wellbeing. Spending time on detached to other prisons around the country, CJ often found herself at odds with the differing or dithering management she came across, which would often become fraught – for the governors, that is. CJ became the branch secretary at Styal in 2013, although she was at the front edge with both the different chairs and secretaries for years before her election into that role. Throughout her time, CJ has been used by other branches to represent their members, such is her knowledge and their faith in her experience. She could have been on the NEC, like she could have been in the service, but if you cut in her half, like a stick of rock, she's have POA running right through her. The epitome of POA branch officials – always putting the interests of the members before herself. That was written by the Styal branch. CJ, come and collect your well-deserved Cronin Clasp.

<Applause>

CLAIRE JORDAN – BRANCH SECRETARY, STYAL: Well, I am very overwhelmed. I'd like to thank the branch. Obviously, this is last my Conference. I will miss it. I'm quite interested in the retirement one but it will be from Spain! I really, really can't thank everybody enough, and the NEC – especially to yourself, Terry, who was always on the phone. I really am stuck for words. I've just got to thank you – stay together, stick together guys. Great Union, been all my career. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Fantastic. Next person, again thoroughly deserved. Glen Holmes, HMP Parkhurst.

<Applause>

The Parkhurst Branch would like to take this opportunity, during the Conference, to formally acknowledge and honour the remarkable dedication and selfless attitude Glen has demonstrated throughout his career as a branch official at Parkhurst. Glen's journey began over 40 years ago, shortly after his initial posting to HMP Pentonville. His path to becoming a branch official was shaped by an incident early in his career where, despite upsetting a governor, his steadfast qualities were recognised as ideal for such a role. Since then, Glen has embraced this responsibility wholeheartedly and has never looked back. From Pentonville, Glen went on to serve at Belmarsh, before transferring to Parkhurst in the mid-nineties. It was during this time at Parkhurst, following the infamous escape incident, that Glen stepped into the role of branch Chair, a position he has held with unwavering commitment ever since.

Glen's unique and compassionate approach to leadership has left an indelible mark on countless staff members over the years. He has been a pillar of strength and support, guiding colleagues through challenging times and upholding the codes of conduct with fairness and dedication. His efforts have extended far beyond the workplace, offering help to members during moments of personal hardship, such as struggling relationships or financial difficulties. Glen's open-door policy has been a lifeline for many, providing staff with a safe haven when they had nowhere else to turn. Through his determined advocacy and unyielding principles, Glen has saved numerous jobs within codes of discipline that might have seemed hopeless to others. His tireless dedication to the branch and its members has always been his guiding principle, making him a true asset and an inspiration to everyone he has worked with. The Parkhurst branch wishes to express its profound gratitude to Glen for his unselfish and exemplary service over the past three decades. It is with immense pride that the branch has nominated Glen for the POA's prestigious Cronin Clasp award, a fitting recognition of his exceptional contributions and achievements as a branch official. Thank you, Glen, for your outstanding leadership, commitment and compassion. Your legacy will undoubtedly inspire future generations of branch officials. And that's from the Parkhurst Branch. Come and collect your well-deserved Cronin Clasp, Glen Holmes.

<Applause>

GLEN HOLMES – BRANCH CHAIR, PARKHURST: I can only say a few words. First of all, this is the first thing I've won since I was a sperm going to the egg – so I'd better thank me dad for that, whoever he was!

<Laughter>

Secondly, it's been a bit of a crap last nine months for me.

<Applause>

I'd like to thank Les, Matty-Moo and Stu, who've been looking after me for the last nine months. I'd like to thank Sarah, Mark, but most of all Dave Todd because, nine months ago, if he hadn't phoned me up I wouldn't be here now. I will say never, ever forget your support staff. All the staff at Cronin, they're the best thing since sliced bread. They do more for you than you realise. So please keep talking to them, keep supporting them and respect them because they do a brilliant job. But like I say, if Dave Todd hadn't phoned me that night, I'd be dead now, so thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Conference, they're our award winners, but I have got something else to give out. They're not expecting this but it is in recognition of exceptional bravery and courage, and I hope next year we can honour those staff who were involved in that horrific incident at Frankland. We've got a little token of our appreciation in recognition of the Frankland Branch and its members. We hope you can display this plaque in your prison with pride because I couldn't be prouder of what you and your members faced and resolved on that day, that could have been so much worse. And I can guarantee everyone in this room, I will not rest until each and every one of you get the protections and the safe regimes you deserve. Can we please have the two delegates from Frankland on the stage to accept this award.

<Applause>

SCOTT COATES – BRANCH CHAIR, FRANKLAND: Everybody who knows us, they know I'm not a public speaker because I never get up here, but I've just got a few words to say <inaudible> that day, when I nearly watched a colleague bleed out, we nearly watched a son watch his dad get stabbed five times, and a partner had to listen to his girlfriend shout over the radio for all available staff, officer down. And we criticise these people all the time, but without their help and their support I really don't know how we'd be getting through it, so thank you all. And without your support as well. The messages have been overwhelming from you all. I hope we never ever have to face something like we faced on that day ever again. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Conference. Just while we're on about Frankland, I do plan on visiting the three injured staff who are recovering at home, thankfully. You may have seen my circular where I give the email address out. If you've got any messages of support for Frankland staff, just ping them into me. I'm putting them all on a Word sheet and then eventually we're going to put them in a booklet so when I go round to visit the staff I can hand each and every one of them some messages of support from all the POA members. We've even got the general public emailing in sending their best regards, disgusted at the attack, so it really is fantastic. We've got everyone behind us and we can achieve whatever we want together, I promise you that, so just please keep sending the messages of support in.

So, we'll move on. We'll get through as many motions as we can. We'll finish on time at five and then hopefully we won't have too much to do tomorrow, so you can get away, because we have got three guest speakers. I do apologise for that, but it's the only time they could attend. So you've got the Prisons Minister, the CEO, and Sally Jameson. It's the only space they had – we invited them, so we've got to accommodate them.

So, we're onto motion 73, which is Durham. Do we have a seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 73

Conference instructs the NEC to reiterate its already communicated position to the employer that we do not accept that safe staffing levels can be set through staffing ratios. That the NEC inform the employer that we do not agree with the workforce delivery model because it is simply a repeat of the failed benchmarking process, and we remind the employer that staffing ratios were removed through the introduction of the regime management plan under section 9.

DURHAM

KEITH HOW – BRANCH CHAIR, DURHAM: Chair, NEC, honorary life members, Conference, the motion reads, "Conference instructs the NEC to reiterate its already communicated position to the employer that we do not accept that safe staffing levels can be set through staffing ratios. That the NEC inform the employer that we do not agree with the workforce delivery model because it is simply a repeat of the failed benchmarking process, and we remind the employer that staffing ratios were removed through the introduction of the regime management plan under section 9." I feel passionately about making the workplace a safe working environment for all concerned. Don't take this as a criticism – how many branches honestly have a functioning compliant RMP? My concern is, if you don't, how can you say they have safe, agreed staffing levels which are based on risk, not ratios alone? I know each prison is different, unique in some ways – it has different layout and functions. This is the very reason why the RMP is vital. All these variables should be considered when formulating it. Section 9 of the RMP reads, "It's important to note that staff-to-prisoner ratios alone must not be used as a basis to set staffing levels, and that staffing numbers must only be established in consideration of the hazards and the risks as identified within health and safety risk assessments and the local controls <inaudible> reduce risk." That section there outlines that ratios alone cannot dictates safe staffing levels. It's based on risk. I would urge all branches who do not have an agreed RMP to contact your NEC rep and work together to deliver this piece of work for your branch. Please support this motion to ensure the NEC deliver this message to your employer and, be clear, it is vital they are aware and reminded of our position. Our safety is non-negotiable. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, guests and visitors, the RMP in your establishment is the only way that you can work out how many officers you have on a wing or a landing to safely unlock your prison. Every single establishment is different. You're the ones that can challenge the governor and your RMP should be reviewed at least every three months. Please use that document because that's what gives your officers empowerment to say, "No, I'm not unlocking because I need two officers on the wing – or three officers." That's the only safe way you can do that. If there's an incident, then you can revisit it and make sure that you've got the right number of staff. That's the only way you can work out how many staff you need to unlock your wings. Support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Ian Carson for the NEC.

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to support this motion and telling you that we are absolutely thrilled and overjoyed to reiterate our position and thank you to Durham. Colleagues, safe staffing levels cannot be set through staffing ratios. Profiling or measuring the work is the only way to establish the resource that you need to run any part of your prison regime. I'm going to take one minute of my time to just quickly explain for all of those branch officials who are new at this exactly how you do that, and I'm going to use AFCs as the example, LBBs in my speak but it's AFCs now unless that's changed – fabric checks, because that's the best example of how you can gauge a resource. So, fabric checks– a cell requires the check which contains a list of duties to undertake to do the check. So, you go into the cell, you do each of the duties, and somebody's got a stopwatch and they measure the work. That's how long it takes to do AFCs in one cell. Then you add in the risk assessment and safe system of work. Is the cell occupied? Yes – then you need more than one member of staff because there is a hostage risk and that member of staff could be on the other side of the landing. But you do that yourself locally – you've now established how much resource you need to do AFCs in one cell. If you've got 100 cells, you multiply that by 100, and that's what you need in the profile to do that work.

That's how the prison service used to run the prisons. That's how we ran prisons up until benchmarking. It stopped at benchmarking. Benchmarking's dead, so that's how you should be resourcing your prison. This is benchmarking in all but name, workforce delivery. Has anybody seen the WDM that covers reception? If you haven't, let me tell you what it says. The number of prisoners coming through, and I believe it's 1,000 to one member of staff – nobody measures how much time it takes for you to get a prisoner through reception, and one branch came up to me recently and asked me and I said, "Just measure the time it takes for one prisoner to come through reception. That gives you a basis on which to gauge your resource." Let's collectively reject WDM. There may be winners, as we heard in a previous speech, but it's not funded so there's going to be losers. We don't accept staffing ratios because it does not set safe staffing levels. Yes, of course, if you've got 90 prisoners, you've done the work properly, you've got 3 staff – you inevitably end up with a ratio. We don't start with a ratio. We start with safety and profiling. I'm going to repeat what Keith said. Section 9.11 of the RMP: "It's important to note that staff-to-prisoner ratios alone must not be used as a basis to set staffing levels." This is what we've agreed. We agreed this in 2017, and "staffing numbers must only be established in consideration of the hazards and the risks as identified within health and safety risk assessments and the local controls." If your governor's got a copy of that document and you haven't seen it, get a hold of it and start doing this work. And let me tell you, we can pull the legs under it all by simply asking for the profile to be correctly measured. If you go and measure your

profile work tomorrow, I would bet that each and every one of you will require more staff. Let's collectively reject WDM. It's important that we send this message to the employer. We reject it. Please support.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Conference. The vote is now open. That's carried.

Motion 74 is an NEC motion. Do we have a seconder? Thank you. Ian Carson for NEC.

Motion 74

That Conference accepts that any attempt to increase the non-effective by moving existing resources from the profile to the non-effective is nothing more than smoke and mirrors and contrary to the stated position of this Union. The current non-effective is funded separately from the profile and given as 20% of the TSF/PSF it incorporates annual leave sickness and training and whilst woefully inadequate to meet current needs it is nonetheless separately funded.

Conference accepts that the stated NEC position to only profile to 20% is the only way to secure any future real increase in the non-effective, further Conference accepts that any staffing shortfalls are addressed by correct management of the RMP not sleight of hand.

NEC

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – moving motion 74 on behalf of the NEC, asking you to support. There's a lot of detail here, Conference, and I'm not going to try and attempt to insult your intelligence, so please don't take it that way. Some of the detail will be new to some of you, I expect. In recent months, the employer, through its conversations, has shown unequivocally that they either don't understand what the non-effective is or where it comes from, and that they don't know that work can be moved around within the agreed RMP or they think that we don't know. The fact is that this Union's position is now, and has always been, that the non-effective, which is set at 20% of your profiled staffing, or your target staffing figure, is inadequate. Everybody knows that. And that funding is necessary to uplift the non-effective to better reflect staffing challenges that we face in today's prisons. The additional pressures, the additional sick, the maternity leave, all of them things that provide additional pressure, they're not funded. The two things are separate. Our employers decided to group them together because they – I don't know why, it might be easier for the statistics. 20% of them's funded, the rest isn't. That's the basis for this.

It would be possibly useful at this point if I quickly outline how the non-effective works. And I'm not seeking to insult anybody's intelligence, but if we open HMP anywhere tomorrow and we ended up with 200 Band 3s because we've profiled the work correctly, we add 20% would give us 240. That's the number of Band 3s that we should have because we've profiled the work correctly. That's your 20% non-effective. 14.6% of that is for annual leave, so if you've got 200 staff you should have 30 on leave, and that leave isn't specific around the running of the regime, that's the leave that you need so that everybody can get their terms and conditions in. And if you're on casual leave, you can't be told you can't have a day's leave because they can't cover the ED, or they can't cover the early break or they can't cover the lunch, because that's in breach of your terms and conditions, because Bulletin 8 says, "Casual leave will be treated as attendance for the amount of duty shown in the officers' shift system for the day." So, if any of you branches out there have a detail office that tells your members, our members, that they cannot have a day's leave because they cannot cover the ED, they're in breach of their terms and conditions. Go in, submit your SFC. A lot of you are looking at each other amazed. I'm telling you, that's the situation. Annual leave is sacrosanct. It's part of your terms and conditions. There's an easier way, actually, of calculating annual leave. Number of days in a year, take away the rest days, that's the number of days left, leave to be taken, divide one into the other, tells you how many staff need to be on leave every day in order to get their annual leave in. You do the calculation for the weekend. Job sorted. I've done it in the north-east, we won four disputes in the last two years – actually we didn't win them, they conceded to them. So, what's the employer up to?

Mr Copple wrote to the NEC last summer and proposed increasing the non-effective to 24%, not by providing additional resources but by moving the staff out of the profile into the non-effective. We told him, we wrote and told him we couldn't accept this. We want the non-effective funded. We know it's inadequate. Most importantly, and this is the most important issue, you move them staff out of the profile into non-effective, you reduce the availability for annual leave. 200 staff, reduce it by 4%, 192 staff, annual leave for 200 – 30; annual leave for 192 – 28. By using smoke and mirrors, and giving you a little bit of snake oil, they've reduced the amount of annual leave available for our members. We're not having it. Colleagues, if you've been hoodwinked, and I know it's a buy-out there, into buying into the increase in the non-effective, please submit your SFC to go back to the original position as soon as you can. I would suggest the next reprofile. I know many of my branches have told their governors that we ain't increasing the non-effective unless additional resources are provided. This is nothing more than an attempt to cover shortfalls by sleight of hand. The only real way to deal with this issue is provide more resources or resort to your RMP and reduce the work. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No speakers, so straight to the vote. We can show the result. That's carried.

Motion 75, NEC motion. Seconder please? Thank you. Dave Todd for the NEC.

Motion 75

Conference to condemn the employer for the waste of public funds and time they spent to date on the SANEO project.

NEC

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE-CHAIR: Conference, Chair, invited guests – moving the motion on behalf of the NEC. The motion's a condemnation. Styal and Onley were absolutely messed about with this pilot. I think the employer thought we'll put this pilot in place to circumnavigate <inaudible> your terms and conditions. We've got lots of new members of staff that don't know what <inaudible> is. We asked them how much the pilot cost. They won't tell. Colleagues, we always get told we have to be responsible with taxpayers' money. So does our employer. Please condemn the employer.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No speakers, so we can go straight to the vote. Thank you, we can now close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 76 and 77 we've already done. Motion 78, Whatton. Seconder for Whatton please?

Motion 78

Conference mandates the POA NEC to engage with the Employer to introduce a Retention Fee to be paid by HMPPS namely by the establishment of whom the staff have agreed to undertake bedwatch and or external escorting duties on a rest day in the event that they are then cancelled and or stood down, in which the staff member will receive recompense for the time that they have given up there time to undertake those duties.

WHATTON

MIKE KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference. "Conference mandates that the POA NEC engage with the employer to introduce a retention fee to be paid by HMPPS, namely by the establishment of whom staff have agreed to undertake bed-watch and or external escorting duties on a rest day in the event that they are then cancelled and or stood down, in which the staff member will receive recompense for the time that they have given up there time to undertake those duties." So, my members were getting frustrated that they would put their names down for bed-watches and then it would get cancelled, because they've already organised their childcare commitments and also moved around their personal lives for their rest days. For example, if they did a night they'd be sleeping all day, then to be called up to say it's been cancelled with no financial compensation for that. More particularly over the childcare, because if you've paid for the childcare and then the bed-watch gets cancelled. <sighs> What my members would like to have is, if they get 12-24-hours' notice of it being cancelled, they'll get a £20 retainer, and if it's 12 hours or less they'll get a £40 retainer. I obviously discussed this with my members and stated, "Well, if you keep doing it you're not going to get it," and I completely understand what the NEC is probably about to say to us, that it's unattainable, but if we could get it and if it was achievable it would be ideal. So if you could support this motion my branch would be pleased. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No speakers, so Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers, responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to reject this motion. Conference, we understand the sentiments of this motion, but this motion if it's achieved goes against the principles of this Union. Rest days are rest days, not days that can be brokered to the highest bidder for financial gain. The excessive hours, long shifts that have already been identified is a factor that affects your health and your members' health, but more practically we already have members that have to pay out thousands of pounds for wrongly calculated time-cards by shared services. This would trigger more investigations of fraud and potential dismissal. How can you be paid for something you haven't completed and isn't in the financial manual or policy. Is this fraud? What are the timeframes? How long is the shift you get paid for? Is it the same for the private sector or regional sites? As we've already seen in Covid, higher PP payments were paid and offered. This would set a precedent and disadvantage these establishments that have already negotiated rewards. So many questions but little content in this motion. This would not only tie the hands of the members in NEC but also those branches that have already got beneficial processes in place. There is an option to negotiate the motion locally, to address these anomalies and achieve this outside of restrictions, to reach an outcome fit for purposes with governor's autonomy. Conference, reject this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No right to reply, so straight to the vote. Thank you. We can now view the outcome. That motion is lost.

Motion 79, Berwyn. Seconder for Berwyn?

Motion 79

That the NEC negotiate the Band 3 operational base rate of pay be a true reflection of the work undertaken and required in comparison to Band 3 non-operational.

The difference of 20% unsocial pay is not sufficient for the work conducted.

BERWYN

MATHEW EVANS – BRANCH SECRETARY, BERWYN: NEC, Conference, the motion reads, "That the NEC negotiate the Band 3 operational base rate of pay be a true reflection of the work undertaken and required in comparison to Band 3 non-operational. The difference of 20% unsocial pay is not sufficient for the work conducted." So, this isn't a dig at non-operational staff, saying that they're overpaid. Far from it. The fact is that our operational staff are severely underpaid. You look at the job description, sadly the non-op are at risk of repetitive strain injury perhaps or papercuts. We, on the front line, are at risk of severe assaults, life-changing injuries, C&R, fire burns, RPE. 20% to put on a shirt and do shift patterns is not enough, whether they consider it a form of danger pay, risk pay, however it is. Please support the motion and get the pay that we deserve.

<Applause>

DAVID TUCKER – BRANCH SECRETARY, ERLESTOKE: Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you, unfortunately, to reject the motion. We can all agree that our pay is a problem, year on year on year on year, but more importantly everyone in the prison is in that same boat – op, non-op, everyone needs more pay. Comparing op against non-op is not acceptable. The work and responsibilities are not comparable, they're not the same. They do a different job but they still work in a prison, they still have prisoner-facing roles. They may not lock them up at night, but they definitely tell them bad news, do other roles that you don't do on a day-to-day. Do not diminish the work done by the non-op staff by discriminating against them in this way. You wouldn't want the admin team that works for you to get paid less in the Union because they're only an admin, compared to these guys, would you? You may not have many non-op members at your branch. We've got a slowly increasing amount. We do a better job than PCS at our branch, they're coming to us. So, if you don't have many non-op, try and get some because they're there Monday to Friday. We've got two on our Committee, there all the time – Monday to Friday, helps with everything. This is a pay issue, not an operational versus civilian staff member issue. Reject the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Jackie Marshall for the NEC.

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking against the motion. Whilst we understand the sentiments of it, there are reasons. F&S came about following an equal pay claim by the PCS saying that their members also worked in prisons and faced the same risks as uniformed staff. Whilst we all know that's far from the truth, the PCS won and some civilian staff received lump-sum payments and we saw the birth of F&S. The department then had to bring the pay scales together, which is why base rates for operational staff and civilian staff are the same, with uniformed staff receiving the unsociable hours element of pay. Because of this, this motion is unachievable, but we will continue to push for an increase in the unsociable hours element. Conference, please reject the motion as it's unachievable due to the court ruling. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Right to reply.=

MATHEW EVANS – BRANCH SECRETARY, BERWYN: This isn't just about the unsocial aspect, so a little bit more on it. If I was a Band 3 officer and I got injured due to an assault and I took the regrade to a Band 3 admin, the unsocial is all I lose, but the risk that we have as an operational is still there. Please support it.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. Vote's now open. That vote is now closed. It's been lost.

Motion 80, HMP Lewes, do we have a seconder?

Motion 80

For the NEC to negotiate with the employer a pay increment scale similar to Band 3 and Band 5 with respect to the Band 4 role as this currently does not exist.

LEWES

DAVID PRITCHARD – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEWES: Chair, NEC, Conference, motion 80 is in relation to the Band 4 role, which I only recently found out doesn't incur pay points. The Band 4 role is a unique role. It's a link between the Band 3s, Band 5s and the safe running of a wing, and other jobs obviously that encompass that role. Not everybody wants to move up to a Band 5. I know a lot of people want to earn more money, that's what drives a lot of people. We also believe that, with the implementation of this, it will help retain staff, bring stability to wings, because people will want to remain in that Band 4 role instead of moving on. The Band 3s get it, the Band 5s get it, there's no reason why Band 4s should not be getting a pay point increment every year. Thank you.

<Applause>

LEE LASSMAN – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE: Chair, NEC, Conference – so, I'm massively in favour and support of this motion. I wrote a bit of a speech on this one with some really posh big words and stuff.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: I hope it only lasts three minutes …

<Laughter>

LEE LASSMAN – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE: But I'm going to do away with that and just share some experiences actually from what we've had at Swaleside. So, initially I was going to say about how the Band 4 role is arguably probably the most demanding role within the prison service. If there's an issue on the wing, the prisoners, the Band 3s, they're all looking to the Band 4 to sort it. As a Band 5, I demand a lot from my Band 4s. The job role has changed massively, even since five years ago when I was an SO. All I had to do was get the staff on duty and get the role in one time. It's all about QAs now, key-works – chasing this, chasing that, everything lands on the Band 4's shoulders and there's no incentive for it. There's no financial recompense for the work they do. They're not recognised. I just want to share a bit of an experience of what I had going back last month. We held a Band 4 board. Obviously as Band 5s we're going out, trying to poach people. We want the best staff in the best positions and there were three staff that I asked to go for it, who were already temped up. And they've refused to go for the boards because financially they will lose money. So, we've had to promote people above them that are nowhere near as experienced, ultimately nowhere near as good at the job, and we've got people sitting in jobs now because they're going to lose money. How can that be effective, how is that fair, how is that leading to a safer and more secure prison? It's not. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, well done.

ROBERT SPRAKE – BRANCH SECRETARY, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests, I would like to speak against this motion. When I joined the job well over 20 years ago, I got to work with some very experienced officers that had been in 20, 30 years, and I've benefitted from that experience as a new member of staff. And one of the questions I used to ask them was, how come you're not an SO? And the answer was usually, well, there's no point. It doesn't pay. Because back in them days SOs had line-management responsibility and the answer was, "Why would I want all the extra work of managing staff for £150 a month? If I want that money I can just do a bed-watch." So, there is a lot of very experienced staff that probably would have made very good SOs that didn't want promotion. A few years ago, I think I'm right in saying that the employer recommended that the spine points for the Band 4 go and we go to a spot rate. The spot rate was set at the maximum of the pay range, so this puts some clear distance between the Band 3 and the Band 4. It was good news for the incumbent Band 4s because they went to the top of the pay scale and got a rise, but what I've noticed is there seems to be a lot more motivation amongst our Band 3 members to seek promotion and seek development, and I can only put that down to the fact that now potentially you're looking at a £6-8,000 pay rise, depending of course on how many hours you do under F&S. So I'm not really sure how this motion benefits our members, because it's not going to make a jot of difference to the existing Band 4s and it just means that any of our Band 3 members who get promoted are going to be starting on less money – which is important, because we're now on an average salary pension scheme. The longer you can spend at the higher rate, the bigger your pot gets. So, on that basis, I would ask you to reject the motion.

<Applause>

MICHAEL HARRISON – BRANCH CHAIR, BRINSFORD: Chair, NEC, Conference, in support of this motion. The Band 4 is so undervalued in our prison at Brinsford. We don't see Band 5s for three, four weeks if they have nights and leave. They are there for the staff support – they direct staff, they drive the regime. The difference between a Band 3 on a 41-hour contract to a Band 4 is less than £50 a month. So, think about that a little bit. For the responsibility that they take on, it's not a lot, so please support this motion.

<Applause>

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference – asking you to reject this motion on the basis of the feasibility of its achievement. We don't have collective bargaining rights with the employer. If this motion was to read that, in future evidence submissions to pay review body, this is something that they want taken into consideration, that we want submitting in the evidence to the pay review body, then I'd be asking you to support it. However, engaging with the employer to get these rises or these points set won't be achievable. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Over to Phil for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, asking you to accept this motion and support it. We're looking for a pay incremental scale in the Band 4s that would be aligned with exactly what the Band 3s and Band 5s have at present. At this minute in time, Band 4s are undervalued across the state. F&S did that to be fair. There's no advancement within the band, no recognition of skill development or time served, and that just makes SOs feel even further undervalued. It undermines morale within that rank and the Band 4s are left wondering why they take on more responsibility. Like I say, they bridge the gap, they're there to drive the regime, supervise Band 3 staff and be the conduit between 3 and 5, so for that motion I would ask you to support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, we'll go to the vote, thank you. Motion is carried. We'll suggest that in our next lot of pay submissions, Conference.

Motion 81, I've had a message from Lewes, they want permission to withdraw, so show of hands, permission to withdraw for Lewes? Thank you, that is withdrawn.

Motion 82 is Lewes. Seconder for Lewes, please? Thank you.

Motion 82

To instruct the NEC to negotiate with the employer to bring annual leave in line with other Civil Service departments. Other Civil Service departments enjoy the benefit of an additional 5 days leave after completion of 5 years, as opposed to 10 years within the Prison Service.

LEWES

DAVID PRITCHARD – BRANCH SECRETARY, LEWES: Chair, NEC, Conference, motion 82 is, "To instruct the NEC to negotiate with the employer to bring annual leave in line with other Civil Service departments. Other Civil Service departments enjoy the benefit of an additional 5 days leave after completion of 5 years, as opposed to 10 years within the Prison Service." This proposal is quite clear. The government categorises us as civil servants, which means we should receive all the benefits afforded to them. A recurring theme across various agencies in the Civil Service pertains to annual leave. Civil servants are entitled to an extra leave after five years of service. After looking on the HMPPS website FAQs for new entrants, I found this quote: "New entrants to the civil service receive 25 days of annual leave upon entry, increasing to a maximum of 30 days after 5 years of service." I urge the NEC to make sure that is put across to every member of staff within HMPPS. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. There's no other speakers, so straight to Phil Hannant for the NEC.

PHIL HANNANT – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – asking you to accept this motion. This is a matter of fairness, consistency and respect across the service. We are HMPPS, HM Prison and Probation Service. Across the wider Civil Service, staff receive an additional five days of annual leave after just five years' service, yet we at the prison service are made to wait 10 years before being granted the same benefit. This is not just a technical issue, it's a clear inequity that sends troubling messages that our service, our commitment and our sacrifices are valued less. Let's be clear, our members work in some of the most challenging and high-pressure environments of the civil service. We face unique risks, high levels of stress and related responsibilities. We keep the public safe, we support rehabilitation and uphold the justice system every day. HMPPS should be leading the way in terms of staff support and wellbeing, not lagging behind. Bringing our leave entitlement in line with other departments will not only correct an injustice, it would also support retention, reduce burnout and send a strong signal that our members are truly valued. This is not a demand for special treatment, it's a call for equal treatment. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. That vote is now open. OK, we can close that vote. That's carried.

Motion 83, Edinburgh. Seconder for Edinburgh please? Thank you Send.

Motion 83

Conference mandate the NEC to engage with the relevant agencies to ensure that pensions and lump sums due to staff, either retiring or semi-retiring, are paid within 14 days of the retiral or semi- retiral date. At present the service being provided is unacceptable.

EDINBURGH

GORDON FERRIER – BRANCH SECRETARY, EDINBURGH: Chair, NEC, Conference, motion 83 reads, "Conference mandate the NEC to engage with the relevant agencies to ensure that pensions and lump sums due to staff, either retiring or semi-retiring, are paid within 14 days of the retiral or semi-retiral date. At present the service being provided is unacceptable." Conference, many of our members have reached or are very close to retiral age after many years' service in His Majesty's Prison Service. Incidentally, many of whom don't want to wear a polo shirt. Lengthy phone calls for up to an hour are commonplace for members seeking information or even just to reset a password through MyCSP. They are sadly, in many cases, also encountering long delays in receiving their pensions or lumpsums. The expected 3-4 month period to process new retiral applications is not being met. The situation looks unlikely to improve after the government announcement in March that Civil Service running costs were to be reduced by 15% before the end of the decade. This could cost over 10,000 jobs within the Civil Service. High levels of sick, redeployment to other departments and people working from home is impacting the service being provided to our members. Please support this motion to empower our NEC to engage with all relevant agencies to ensure that our members receive all their benefits <inaudible>. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests and visitors – support the motion. Everybody that retires from the service, HMPPS know that they're retiring because they tell us that we have to retire at 68! So, they know when I'm going to retire, at the moment, unless that changes. So, they need to put the resources and they need to hold the other agencies accountable. I've had a few long-standing members from my establishment retire in the last couple of years, and some of them have had to wait over seven months to get payments from the pension department, so please support this motion.

<Applause>

ALLEENA COUPE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE: NEC, Chair, Conference, I would ask you to support this motion. As one of the members of the Benevolent Fund in Scotland, it's our job sometimes to have to support people who have not had a pension. This is utterly ridiculous and it's humiliating to people to have to come and say, "I have got no money. Can you help me?" Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Andy Baxter for the NEC.

ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, NEC, asking you to support this motion. Colleagues, the POA meet regularly with Cabinet Office in relation to Civil Service pension management. On those meetings, there has been an admission that service delivery levels have suffered slippage, including the very issues as highlighted by Edinburgh. One of the factors, but not the only factor contributing to that slippage, is a transfer of Civil Service pension administration away from MyCSP to a new contractor, Capita. The POA will continue to engage with Cabinet Office on the issue of timely payments throughout and beyond this transition to Capita. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. That vote is now open. And we can now view the results of that vote. That's carried. Thank you very much.

Motion 84, Berwyn, seconder for Berwyn? Thank you.

Motion 84

That the NEC Negotiate with HMPPS To propose the inclusion of overtime/payment plus (PP) in the calculation of pensionable earnings, ensuring that employees receive fair retirement benefits reflective of their total work contributions.

BERWYN

MATHEW EVANS – BRANCH SECRETARY, BERWYN: NEC, Conference, 84 reads, "That the NEC negotiate with HMPPS To propose the inclusion of overtime/payment plus (PP) in the calculation of pensionable earnings, ensuring that employees receive fair retirement benefits reflective of their total work contributions." This is following on the back of recently getting our annual leave additional payment in our PP. We've already spoken that staff are working extra hours because our base rate of pay is not enough, so they have to substitute. If we're working more hours, why can't that be put into our pensions? If they paid us more, as we deserve, that would be going into our pensions, so why can't this? Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No other speakers, so over to Andy Baxter for the NEC.

ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, NEC, the NEC ask you to reject this motion. For clarification, HMPPS does not have the authority to make overtime or any allowance pensionable. That sits with Cabinet Office through pension scheme rules. Pension scheme rules are statutory legislation. In April 2021, myself and Joe Simpson pursued the issue of making payment plus and OSG overtime pensionable through Cabinet Office. In August '21, the Cabinet Office responded negatively and gave a detailed breakdown by pension scheme of the pension scheme rules and why they believed that payment plus and OSG overtime were not pensionable. They stated, "Alpha scheme rules define pensionable earnings as the sum of the member's permanent pensionable earnings and fluctuating pensionable earnings, where permanent pensionable earnings are defined as basic pay plus any allowance granted on a permanent basis that the scheme manager determines to be permanent pensionable earnings." PP is not, in their opinion, granted on a permanent basis. The premium and NOVAS rules are similarly worded. The classic scheme rules define pensionable earnings as salary or wages and pensionable emoluments. The rules are very specific in the classic scheme. Overtime pay and payments for intermittent duties are specifically categorised as non-pensionable. Also, as part of that 2021 attempt, the Union was made aware that, if payment plus and OSG overtime were to be made pensionable, there was a potential financial detriment to members through both the need to make backdated pension contributions and the potential HMRC liabilities. Colleagues, the NEC ask you to reject this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Straight to the vote then. The vote is now complete. The motion is lost.

Motion 85, Berwyn. Permission to withdraw from Berwyn. Please show. Thank you. That's withdrawn. Nearly there, Conference.

We're going to move on to motion 86, which is an NEC motion. Can we have a seconder for that? Send, you got in there quick before everybody else shouted!

<Laughter>

But unfortunately Whitemoor beat you to it because they wanted to second it anyway. But thank you. Over to Steve Gillan for the NEC please.

Motion 86

That Linden House is renamed Simpson House in memory of Joe Simpson previous Deputy General Secretary.

NEC

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, delegates, invited guests, this gives me immense pleasure in moving this motion in memory of our Deputy General Secretary Joe Simpson, who sadly passed away last September. Joe was a friend to many and I think, if you've seen the tribute to him out there, as you come in to the Conference Hall, you will know how fondly Joe was thought of – not just in the POA but throughout the trade union movement. Throughout employers, whether that was HMPPS, Northern Ireland, Scotland, private sector, immigration services, MPs, all the tributes were there for Joe Simpson. A fantastic guy, who I first met in the 1990s when I was a young branch official. A very proud Sunderland supporter as well. And I might just tell you a little story about that in a second.

There is so much that I could say about Joe, but what this Executive want is for Joe's legacy and memory to continue within the POA, and I can't think of a better way than to rename Linden House, Simpson House. When I saw Joe in hospital, quite near the end, the consultant had just been to see him and they were going to stop the treatment and let him go home. They asked Joe where he wanted to go and Joe had a caravan with Emma up in South Shields, so Joe says, "That's where I want to go, so if you can find me a hospice there, that will do me." So, the consultant then said to him, "Well Joe, it might not be as easy as that. I know you live in York as well, do you want us to look there?" And Joe says, "OK then." "Or even better," he says, "What about Newcastle?" And Joe, quick as a flash, said, "I ain't dying in Newcastle!"

<Laughter>

So, when I went to see him, we had – well, I'd been looking after Joe, along with Emma – different people and what have you, this Executive. I won't go into it all because I don't think I'd be able to speak for too long on it, but it's been a difficult couple of years. Conference, please show Joe the biggest accolade that we could do – because we made him, when we found out it was terminal cancer and he only had weeks left, we made him an honorary life member because the NEC, when Conference isn't sitting, have that power. And I don't think there's anyone in here that would have denied that. He was a great asset to this Union. He was not just a colleague to me but a dear friend, and he used to calm me down at times and I used to calm him down. He was great with the support staff, he was a great Deputy General Secretary, and I'm proud of everything that he achieved. And I pay tribute to the Durham Miners Association because it was always Joe's ambition to be on the balcony and to be on the top table and different things, and I managed to arrange that for him. He was knackered, because of the illness that he had, but the grin never left his face all day long.

I could go on for hours about Joe and what he's done, and we all adored him. The practical jokes that he done on me, from time to time, and he'd be cringing now at this, about us renaming it to Simpson House, but I'm glad he'd be cringing because it'll be payback for me and for this Executive to some of the pranks that he's done on us! But I can't think of a better person to be remembered by this trade union. Joe Simpson was a giant. Giant of a man, but also giant in the trade union movement. He was a friendly guy – he cared passionately about others. And when I had a little bit of a slight illness, guess who was first on the phone, even though he had been told he'd a terminal illness – Joe Simpson. That's the nature of the man. A tremendous man, and we're going to have to go a long way to find a man of his stature in this Union. Thank you, Joe, thanks for the memories, and you'll continue to go forward.

<Applause>

NIALL MACINTOSH – BRANCH CHAIR, WHITEMOOR: Chair, NEC, Conference – proud to second this motion. I think with, what Mark said yesterday in the opening address and what Steve just said, there's nothing else I can say but one thing. Joe Simpson's a legend and he needs to be remembered, and I'm going to ask the Chair something. When this motion's passed, Chair, can we have a minute's applause in memory of Joe Simpson?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Of course we can!

NIALL MACINTOSH – BRANCH CHAIR, WHITEMOOR: Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, let's get it done. Let's go to this vote. And we can see the results of that – thank you so much everyone. If you can be upstanding I'll time a minute's applause starting now.

<Applause>

So, I think that's a fitting time to end proceedings for the day – and I owe you 15 minutes from yesterday anyway. So I'm just going to let Steve close Conference today with a few announcements.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: I'd like to thank Dave Todd for having his beard shaved off, and it was all done in good fun but there's a serious note to it because you lot raised well over £700-800 in relation to Joe's charity.

<Applause>

I've also had a word with the Finance Committee, and we're going to top it up to £2,000 with your permission.

<Applause>

And just one final issue tomorrow. Sky News will be here, filming live. I don't have to ask you to be professional because you always are, but it's just to be aware that the TV cameras, if it's to be believed – Sky News, Channel 4, perhaps BBC and other news outlets – will probably be here for Mr Timpson's speech and any subsequent questions that we have or Mark's response to him. So, no matter what we think is going to be said or not, please be professional, as you always are, and let us deal with any issues that come out behind the scenes, but we'll show ourselves in a good light as we always do. Thank you, Conference, and enjoy the evening. We'll see you tomorrow.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Good morning, Conference. I'll bring you to order. As you may have noticed, we're going to start Conference with a few guest speakers, but before I introduce the Prisons Minister Lord Timpson, we've got a short video to watch.

<Video: "Undercover In Britain's Prison Chaos" – Times Investigates>

Thank you, Conference. That gives us food for thought. It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Prisons Minister. Lord Timpson OBE was appointed Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending on 5 July 2024. Prior to this appointment, he held the position of Chief Executive of the Timpson Group from 2002 to July 2024, a company which is known for advocating for the employment of former prisoners. Lord Timpson was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 2011 for services to training and employment for disadvantaged people. He was made Chair of the Employers' Forum for Reducing Reoffending until 2016 and became the Chair of the Prison Reform Trust that same year. He also founded the Employment Advisory Board network across the prison estate, which links prisons with employers to improve the employment opportunities for former offenders upon release. Please welcome Lord James Timpson.

<Applause>

THE RT HON LORD JAMES TIMPSON– MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRISONS, PROBATION AND REDUCING REOFFENDING: Thank you, Mark. It's such a pleasure to be here and I know how much time and effort goes into events like this, so I just want to say a big thank you to everyone involved in organising the conference. And, of course, I want to thank Steve and Mark for engaging with me so positively since I took up this role. I very much appreciate your kindness to me, alongside a bit of healthy challenge too. But most of all, I want to thank you, the POA members and representatives, for the work you do every day to protect the public, support offenders to turn their lives around and, ultimately, to cut crime in our country. You do a vital public service and, as the minister responsible for prisons, I will always stand with you.

For those members who don't know me, I want to just explain why I was asked to do this job and why I care about prisons and the work you do every day. It all started at HMP Styal when I was a kid. My mum and dad used to foster the babies of women in custody at that prison, which was near to where we lived in Cheshire. I'd go with my mum when she took those babies back to visit their mums. I wasn't allowed into the prison, so I'd wait in the car, wondering what those women could possibly have done that was so bad it meant they couldn't be with their babies. And let me just say how pleased I am that we have now set up the Women's Justice Board, with a clear goal to reduce the number of women in prison. That experience of going to Styal sparked a lifelong interest in prisons and the criminal justice system. Years later, when I was running my family's business, the Timpson cobblers and key-cutters you see on the high street, that interest grew and I would visit prisons whenever I could. It was on one of those visits at HMP Thorn Cross, just down the road from where I live, over 20 years ago, that I met a guy called Matt. He got into a fight while out celebrating his A Levels and, rather than going to university, he ended up in prison. I liked Matt instantly and could tell that he was smart and capable, so I told him that he could come and work for Timpson when he was released. All these years later, I'm proud to say that Matt still works for the company and still works at the shop that's nearest the prison that I first met him in.

That chance encounter started a journey for our company with prison-leavers. Today, more than 10% of Timpson Group's workforce are ex-offenders – people who have, with the help of prison officers like you, turned their lives around for good. You know better than anyone what they need in order to do that. Some of the most important factors are education and skills, so they can get the jobs that help prevent them from going back to crime when they're released. That's why I helped to open a number of academies and workshops at prisons to support offenders on that journey. But I also realise that there is a disconnect between prisons and the local businesses who had roles to fill, which is why I started the Employment Advisory Boards. They're now operating in 93 prisons across the country, making that crucial link between you and employers, so that you can tailor how you work with offenders, giving them the best possible chance to find work and get themselves back on track. So that's been my journey with prisons and why the Prime Minister asked me to take on this job, which I was delighted, if a little daunted, to accept.

But to bring this back to where it all started at HMP Styal. One of those babies that my parents fostered actually went on to become a prison officer. She and I catch up regularly – in fact, I actually got a WhatsApp message from her this morning – and like you, she faces the challenges that make her job so much more difficult than it should be. It's becoming a familiar story. As CEO of the Timpson Group, I would always visit our stores around the country because, ultimately, any organisation is a people business. If you look after the people, they look after you, and it is always on the front line where you get the best ideas from the people really doing the job, and it's something I've carried on since becoming a minister. I always make a point of seeking out POA representatives when I visit prisons, and they tell me that, too often, the system is in crisis, miles away from the controlled regimes we all want to see. I've been to all sorts of prisons in my time, from the massive Cat A prisons at Frankland, where I went recently following the awful attack there, to HMP Haverigg, an open prison I visited just before I became a minister, that you can only get to, I remember, by going down a tiny little dirt track road and over lots of cattle grids. Wherever I've gone, it's been the same story – there are incredible, dedicated staff but the prison system is in chaos and the question is, "Why?"

As you know better than anyone, when this Labour government came into power, the position we inherited was shocking. Prisons were full almost to breaking point. The pressure you were under was immense, with so many offenders under your supervision that just getting through a day without something terrible happening counted as a win, never mind the job you actually signed up for – turning offenders' lives around. The capacity crisis is making it almost impossible for you to do your work. The SDS40 policy, where some offenders were released a few weeks or months early, alleviated pressure, but capacity continues to pose huge challenges. And just recently, we got as low as around 400 available cells in the adult male estate. That puts you at risk of harm and it puts the viability of the entire system in jeopardy. Clearly, we cannot go on like this. I know that and you know that. The government has published a 10-year capacity strategy, pledging to build 14,000 additional prison places. As announced yesterday, the Treasury are going to fund our prison expansion plans across the spending review period. That is a total capital investment of £4.74 billion and will allow us to start building three new prisons, in addition to the recently opened HMP Millsike.

And I'm pleased to confirm that one of these new prisons will be run by the public-sector prison service. We also announced yesterday that we will soon change the law so that those serving standard determinate sentences of between one and less than four years can only be returned to prison for a fixed 28-day period. This will target the recall population, which has more than doubled in seven years. Exclusions will apply, including any offender who's been recalled for committing a serious further offence or those subject to MAPPA Level 2 and 3. But it still won't be enough. With the prison population projected to rise by 3,000 prisoners a year, it is impossible to build our way out of this crisis or make sufficient operational changes to overcome the capacity issue. We must do things differently. That's why the government asked David Gauke, a hugely respected former Justice Secretary, to carry out an independent review of sentencing with one clear goal: to make sure our prisons never fill up again. The review's findings are due to be published imminently and the government looks forward to setting out its response. But we do know that it's likely to call for more punishment to take place outside prison, using technology like tags to reduce reoffending with robust community sentencing. I took part in a round-table discussion last week with leaders from the technology sector to discuss how they might be able to turbocharge those efforts and help the probation service to deliver on the review's recommendation. We also talked about how technology could support you in your day-to-day work inside prisons, and I'm looking forward to seeing where that work goes. But let me be really clear: it's about technology supporting good officers, not replacing them.

One thing is for certain – a whole range of efforts will be needed to get the prison capacity crisis properly under control. That will include, for example, getting parts of the estate that are currently unusable back in working order, and I'm pleased to say that we're investing £300 million in prison maintenance this year. Whatever it's going to take to tackle capacity, this government is facing the issue head on, and I'm the kind of person who calls a spade a spade. We're determined to put the entire estate on a sustainable footing for the future so that you can run prisons that are springboards for turning offenders' lives around for good, not just holding pens that keep them out of circulation for a while. As I've already alluded to, getting the prison population under control will support our efforts to reduce prison violence. Incidents like the ones at Frankland recently and Belmarsh just last week make the headlines because of the offenders alleged to be responsible. But the reality is that the rate of assaults on staff is on the rise – up 13% in the last year. No-one comes to work to be attacked and, as your minister, I am taking a zero-tolerance approach. In the youth estate, assaults against staff are 14 times higher than in adult prisons. Though it's not an easy decision, it was right to roll out PAVA spray to train staff working at YOIs Feltham, Werrington and Wetherby. I know how hard the POA campaigned on this issue over a long period of time to protect its members, and I stand with the POA and I stand with our frontline staff.

<Applause>

As the minister responsible for prisons, that's my job. It's the very least you deserve from a Labour government, and I know that the last 14 years have felt long – and they have been tiring. The truth is that you have held the system together for so long and, too often, you have been expected to do it without enough support. Recruitment continues to be an issue and it is vital that we attract new officers with the values and resilience to do the job. I know from my time running the Timpson Group that there is always room for improvement in processes like these, and I'm committed to exploring all avenues to get the right people into the service. Again, getting the capacity issue under control should help by making the job a more attractive prospect. But we've also got to hold on to the great staff we've already got by giving you proper career development and demonstrating that this is a job where you can go places. Before becoming a minister, I led a review of prison officer foundation training and spoke to hundreds of officers as part of that work. What was clear to me is that we have firm foundations but we need to do more to support you to develop as professionals. The ENABLE programme is taking the findings of my review and combining it with plans to strengthen ongoing staff development. This will make sure there is excellent training throughout your career journey – from the training you receive when you first join the service to the management training for our pipeline of future governors to lead it. And of course, like any professionals, you want to be properly rewarded for the jobs you do. We're committed to working with the trade unions, including the POA, to improve pay and working conditions, and to do so through a timelier pay round process so that hardworking staff receive pay uplifts as soon as feasibly possible.

Ultimately, I know that reform of the system, whatever form it takes, will only ever be possible if we properly value the people who deliver it. But valuing people isn't just about how they're rewarded, it's also about how they are treated – and achieving control over chaos requires a workforce that is controlled, not chaotic. Jennifer Rademaker spoke here at the conference on Tuesday about her review into professional standards in HMPPS, which was published last week. I know how closely she worked with the POA on it and how supportive you are of the process. I'm sure we all agree that her report makes for sobering reading. Too often, prison officers, particularly female ones, have been belittled, bemeaned at and, in the worst cases, even assaulted at work. This behaviour is then only dismissed by the higher-up mates of those who have done it, put down to little more than "friendly banter". In the most egregious examples, there've even been attempts to cover it up. The government is clear that we will not accept toxic culture, where behaviour like this can happen, so I'm pleased to say that we've accepted Jennifer Rademaker's recommendations in full. That includes putting in place a properly independent investigation process, taking it out of the line management chain entirely. It means staff making complaints can be absolutely sure that their case will be properly looked at by somebody with no skin in the game.

<Applause>

And it's crucial that we make HMPPS a place where everyone feels proud to work, so that they can be their very best and get on with the job they signed up to do – keeping the people of our country safe, getting offenders' lives back on track and cutting crime. As I said at the beginning, your work is a vital public service. I know that, for years, people have stood in this spot and praised you for doing it, while at the same time refusing to engage with the reality of the chaos inside our prisons. After watching on from the sidelines for all that time, this Labour government is facing it head on. From capacity to conditions and protection to professional standards, we're being honest about the problems in the system so that we can work with you to apply the right solutions. It's crucial that we take that approach because we know we can't fix the system without your support. I'm going to carry on getting out to as many prisons as possible so that you can tell me what things are really like on the ground. I really appreciated the breakfast meeting we had this morning, where colleagues were very candid about their experiences across the prison estate and, crucially, what more we need to do to make our prisons what we all want them to be – places of hope and rehabilitation, rather than despair and stagnation. But also, better and more secure places for you to go to work every day. Prisons that make our streets safer but also keep you safe in the job. I know that, together, we can turn chaos into control and control into a catalyst for the kind of change that is lasting change. That's what I'm going to be working on and, for as long as I'm privileged to do this job, I will do it every day to the best of my ability. And finally, please could you thank your families for the support they give

to you to do the vital jobs you do in keeping the public safe. It's always a team effort and their support of you is something I appreciate very much. Thank you for listening.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, James, and you're very welcome at POA Conference as long as you stay in the role, hopefully for a bit while longer but I wouldn't put a bet on it, with the history of former Prisons Ministers. You've had a meeting with some delegates from across the prison estate this morning. You know only too well the problems that the open estate are facing now and will face in the future without any protections in place, without the adequate staffing levels. You mentioned there about technology for offenders to serve their sentences as an option not to go to prison. Well, if the technology is there to supervise offenders as part of their conviction, why isn't the technology there to protect the staff in front of you and stop drones invading our airspace? I just can't work it out.

<Applause>

You've mentioned about new-build prisons and you've said that one out of three prisons, one of those prisons, will be in the public sector. What happened to the pledge from the Labour government to see the biggest insourcing in a generation?

<Applause>

We welcome the £300 million investment to maintain our prisons but there's a £1.8 billion deficit. In your business, in Timpson's, if you had a £1.8 billion deficit and only brought in £300 million, you'd go bust! You continue with a failed model of private prison maintenance. Bring it back in-house!

<Applause>

I just want to put it on public record so there's no hiding place for this government – you're well aware of the assaults on staff. We've had an incident at Whitemoor not so long ago, a terrorist attack on staff, prisoners with fake suicide vests on. We've had a member of staff at another high-security prison, Wakefield, have his throat slashed, came close to death. We've had that horrific Frankland attack by someone with an ideology that can't be changed. You'll never reform these people, you'll never rehabilitate these people, they'll never have a job in Timpson's. They're serving 50 years and longer. They want to murder us. I'm putting it on record – if you don't give us supermax facilities, one of my colleagues is going to be murdered on duty and I will not hold back.

<Applause>

And I don't accept the argument from the Labour government that, "Oh, well, it'll be subject to a human rights challenge." I tell you what, you're quick enough to run us into court when these people dare to protect their health and safety at work.

<Applause>

So, I've got just two questions, James. And the first question I ask every Prisons Minister – and it's a really straightforward question with an easy answer, yes or no, but strangely, not a single Prisons Minister has ever answered it "yes" or "no". So, the first question, really simple – do you agree that prison officers should have a retirement age of 60 and cannot work til they're 68?

THE RT HON LORD JAMES TIMPSON – MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRISONS, PROBATION AND REDUCING REOFFENDING: Well, I'm going to give you the answer that the Lord Chancellor gave you when we had our, I thought it was a very productive open meeting, a couple of weeks ago at Petty France, which is – it's something we're looking at and we're working with you closely.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: And the other one is – when are we getting our pay award?

THE RT HON LORD JAMES TIMPSON – MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRISONS, PROBATION AND REDUCING REOFFENDING: One of the things I've learnt doing this job is, there's certain things I know that I can't necessarily say yet, so it will be imminent.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: I hope it's not as imminent as your PAVA decision in the YCS!

<Laughter and applause>

And you know, you can avoid an appearance in the European Court of Human Rights if you give us our right to strike back. It's not a hard decision – we deserve it.

<Applause>

So, James, thank you so much for attending Conference and addressing us. Nobody goes away empty-handed. I hope I've given you easy questions there. I watched you on Sophy Ridge and you're slowly turning into a politician. I much prefer you as Lord Timpson, no-politician-businessman, but you're slowly getting there, I know you're getting coached. So, we're in a seaside town and I like to buy guests sticks of rock, and there's dozens of

flavours in this shop, and I thought, "What can I get James?" Well, you're in a fruity role as Prisons Minister so I got you a fruity flavour bar of rock, and we've got a gift for you there – but Conference, please show your appreciation for James Timpson.

THE RT HON LORD JAMES TIMPSON – MINISTER OF STATE FOR PRISONS, PROBATION AND REDUCING REOFFENDING: Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: So, our next guest, you all know. Phil Copple – he's now our interim CEO. I should say, he's acting up, temporary promoted, whatever – interim CEO. Phil has worked in offender management for over 30 years. He joined the prison service in 1990 as a prison officer before undertaking a range of managerial posts at different prisons as well as HQ. Took up his first governor post at HMP Deerbolt, an establishment for young adult men, in 2000. He was then governor of Frankland high-security prison from 2002 to 2006, after which he became, in old speak, the Area Manager for prisons in north-east England and then the North East Director of Offender Management within the National Offender Management System – we all remember that, now HMPPS – with responsibility for both prisons and probation in that region. Phil became a member of the NOMS Board in 2011 and served as Director of National Operational Services, Director of High Security, Director of Public Sector Prisons and Chief Operating Officer. He had a short spell seconded to the Ministry of Justice's Strategy Unit, working on prison strategy in 2015. Upon creation of HMPPS in April 2017, Phil took up post as Executive Director Prisons, with responsibility for all prisons in England, becoming the agency's Head of Profession for prisons. Phil became Director General of Prisons in November 2019. Under a revised structure, Phil became Director General of Operations in September 2022, with responsibility for all operations within HMPPS. Phil became the Interim Director General Chief Executive Officer for HMPPS in April 2025. Phil, I wouldn't like to put that on the back of a Liverpool football shirt but you're very welcome to address Conference. Please welcome Phil Copple.

<Applause>

PHIL COPPLE – DIRECTOR GENERAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HMPPS: Good morning, everybody. Thank you, it's good to be with you this morning. I can tell how long in the tooth I am just by how long that took, that career resume. Over the last few years, being Director General of Operations and Amy being the CEO, we've tried to alternate coming to the Conference, and it was Amy's slot this year. But given that she's been elevated to the interim Permanent Secretary, you've got me for two years on the bounce, so apologies. I just wanted to start by just paying my own tribute to Joe Simpson, and I was fortunate enough to see Emma earlier this morning and give her my condolences in person before she headed off home. I knew Joe for a long time and I was very fond of him. When I was an officer at Leeds in the early '90s, that's when I first met him and we worked together numerous occasions when he was there on detached duty from Manchester. Later in the north-east, when he was at Holme House and I was the Area Manager, I met him a number of occasions then, and he became the area rep when I was the Area Manager. I had a lot of dealings with him in his role then. Obviously, over the recent years, I've been in a national role and so has he, as the Deputy General Secretary, so our paths crossed again. I know Joe was held in very high esteem by everybody, really, that he worked with. He was a very committed, decent person. He was very dedicated and knowledgeable about health and safety and its improvement. I do like the idea that in Leeds, the city where I first met him, there will in future be Simpson House – I think that's very fitting.

Moving on to what you've been talking about a lot during the course of the Conference, being very focused on safety – and how could it be otherwise, in light of recent traumatic events. I do want to mostly reflect on safety with you but I do want to touch on three other things first, quickly. The Minister has talked a lot about the strategic context for us and about changes that we're seeking to drive through. He's obviously mentioned the capacity situation and yesterday's announcements. The sentencing review should report soon and then I expect the government to try and move legislation through Parliament quickly, to make changes to the sentencing framework – changes that will, in the longer term, put the system on a more sustainable footing and get us out of the recurring crisis that we're in, in terms of population and capacity. Further measures are needed to buy time to bridge to the point, probably in the spring of 2026, when those new laws start to take effect. So we will, in a few weeks, introduce another one of those measures – the extension of home detention curfew – to a 12-month maximum period. Then in the autumn, we will introduce the change that the Lord Chancellor announced yesterday – the changes to recall arrangements, so that those offenders who were sentenced to under four years, most of them, if they get recalled, will be automatically re-released 28 days later, and try and reduce the recall population we have in our prisons. But I am very hopeful that the changes that will come about in the sentencing framework will put us on a better footing and get us out of this cycle that we've been in with population and capacity for the last two years or more, with a number of acute points when the system was being taken close to the brink of collapse. That matters for lots of reasons but one of the reasons it matters is safety in our prisons as well because prisons operating at that level of pressure with that level of churn cannot be as safe as we want them to be.

The second thing I just want to touch on briefly is around professional standards and the Rademaker Review, which I know you heard from Jennifer a couple of days ago and Minister Timpson just touched on earlier. I want to be clear, as the CEO and on behalf of the whole senior leadership team of HMPPS, that we're determined to drive the changes needed and see through those recommendations that we've got. We want to work closely with the POA and all our recognised trade unions in working out the details of how we implement those recommendations. We're not in a position as the leadership, I'm not in a position as the CEO, of being dragged reluctantly into doing something in that area. I'm determined to make the improvements. That's why we set up the Tackling Unacceptable Behaviours Unit several years ago. That's why we commissioned Jennifer Rademaker's review in the first place, and it was HMPPS that commissioned it and it's why we're determined now to progress the implementation of the recommendations from her review. I am very grateful for the solid support from the POA and other unions to the initial reception of those recommendations and the principles behind them. Trying to bring about some of these changes together through agreement and co-operation will be a whole lot better than having to try and drive it through in the face of disagreement about those details. I hope that we can secure agreement on the details of how we implement the recommendations in the weeks and months ahead.

The last thing I want to say is about pay. I was very pleased that the current government brought forward the timescale last year by getting the remit letter out to the pay review body much earlier than has been the case in recent years, and we're on track for a much earlier outcome than we've

had in recent years. The government received the pay review body's report five weeks ago and I'm hopeful that the outcome will be announced by government next week. I'm also hopeful that, quite soon afterwards, the next pay round will get under way, with an even earlier issuing of the remit letter to the pay review body so that we can get back on track for the 2026 pay award to be even earlier, and stick with that in future years.

So, I want to turn back to safety and focus on that. I want to be clear about my own position. Violence in our prisons is too high. It's not something that we're taking for granted, that we don't care about, that isn't a priority – I'm determined that we reduce it. I want the working environments of my staff to be safer for them. The last published safety data was very troubling, showing increases in assaults in 2024 compared to 2023, but there were also some signs that it wasn't spiralling out of control in an ever upward trend. We did see a small reduction in the assault rate in the last quarter of 2024, between October and December, compared to the previous quarter of July to September. And I'm hopeful that this improvement will be continued into 2025 and that, despite all the challenges we currently face, we start to see an improving trend, including a fall in serious assaults against staff. I wanted to share a few reflections with you about my own background and experiences earlier in my career that have very much shaped my approach, and they inform my leadership now in my current role. Some of this is very historic but for reasons I'll try and explain, I think it's still very relevant as well. The spine of my early career was in high-security prisons. In the early '90s, I was a principal officer in Wakefield. In the late '90s, I was a senior manager in Frankland and I became the Dep there. Then later on, a few years later, having gone to Deerbolt as governor, as Mark touched on, I went back to Frankland and I was the governor for four years and, later on, I became the Director of High Security. As a prison leader, and with only a few years' servicing, I was very deeply affected by the lessons we learned in the mid-1990s – before, I know, some of you were even in the service. For me, they were very formative events and they've always had an impact on my approach to prison management.

In the mid-nineties, we had some very high-profile escapes from high-security prisons – from Whitemoor in September 1994, which led to the Woodcock Enquiry, and then just a few months later, right at the beginning of 1995, escapes from Parkhurst, which led to the Learmont Enquiry. I left Wakefield just after the Whitemoor escapes and went to work at headquarters for 12 months, and I was staff officer to Richard Tilt, who became the Director of Security during that period. Wakefield was always a bit different from the other dispersals – it was always run a bit differently and was more controlled. But it was clear in the mid-nineties that the situation was very wrong at the other dispersals. The power dynamic between staff and prisoners was seriously out of kilter. Prisoners had the upper hand – staff were threatened and intimidated if they tried to do their job properly. Too often, they were not supported by local managers – indeed, they were often undermined. There was a prevailing management philosophy about how to run long-term high-security prisons in those days and it seems to be around the fact that you couldn't really be firm with difficult, dangerous, long-term prisoners, that you had to seek a different sort of accommodation with them compared to the way that you tried to run other prisons. This really was a culture of appeasement.

When I was a prison officer at Leeds, I worked lots of shifts with staff on detached duty from Manchester – Joe Simpson, as I said, was one of them – and after the disturbance of 1990 in Manchester, they were often on detached duty, going around the estate. I would hear horror stories from them about what it was like, working on detached duty at Frankland and Full Sutton, about the way that prisoners were with staff and the way that staff had retreated. I recall very well talking to one officer who had been very seriously assaulted at Frankland. He'd been assaulted because he went into one of the TV rooms off the landing and the prisoners told him to leave and he refused, because he wasn't going to stand for that, and he got very, very badly assaulted. There were "no-go areas" for staff and they were brutally enforced by prisoners, who had the upper hand. I can remember when I first went to Frankland in '97, there was an old document lying around that I saw and it was sort of like a local mission statement. It had this line in it about the fact that the prison would seek to run a relaxed regime within a secure perimeter. And that was part of that kind of philosophy as well, about how to run those places. But a relaxed regime actually meant a lax regime – there was very poor control. Every step backward that staff took, prisoners took a step forward. That balance of power dynamic, completely wrong, as I said. And poor control inevitably led to poor security. Staff didn't have the confidence to carry out basic security procedures and it wasn't safe for the odd one who tried to, and managers didn't manage.

I can remember talking to staff at Frankland when I got there in the late '90s, and they were talking about how much it had improved for them. We used to routinely lock down the prison to search it, as well as doing it on an intelligence-led basis if there was a reason to. And they would contrast that with what it had been like a few years before, when trying to lock down the prison for a search was out of the question because everybody feared a riot. They didn't think it would be tolerated by the prisoners. That is a bit of a contrast with today, despite all the challenges that we might have, because as I speak to you today, Gartree is on the fourth day of its lockdown search. It's been locked down since Monday because there was a reason to do it and because people manage and staff carry out basic security procedures, even in long-term prisons. If you re-read the Woodcock report and the Learmont report and those enquiries, all of this is laid out and the folly of a so-called "relaxed regime within a secure perimeter" is starkly exposed by those escapes from Whitemoor and Parkhurst. Because when it's this bad, a secure perimeter doesn't stop people escaping because you need all the other ingredients to be there and you need control. It's right that, today, we are worried about drones and we're worried about the potential that they could convey a firearm into a prison. But more than 30 years ago, in 1994, when six Category A prisoners escaped from Whitemoor Special Security Unit, one of them had a gun and fired that gun and a prison officer got shot and fortunately wasn't killed – more than 30 years ago.

Now, a determined effort got under way after those escapes and those enquiries to regain control in dispersals – make them safer, make them more secure. And when I was posted to Frankland in 1997, huge progress had been made and we continue to make more progress. But staff would very much tell me about the bad old days and what it had been like, but they contrasted it because they felt much more in control and confident in what they were doing, even though inevitably, they continued to manage very difficult and dangerous people. There was an uncompromising focus on security, and security was a great deal better by that point. Staff were on the front foot and they pushed the prisoners back and reoccupied the ground that had been surrendered wrongly. That took really strong leadership from the local management team and it took huge courage from frontline staff to bring about that sort of change, but that's something that was done in that time. There was plenty of resistance but, in the end, the staff prevailed. But despite that, there are always risks to safety and there continued to be thankfully rare but really serious incidents. When I was the governor, a female officer was attacked by a very dangerous sex offender and sexually assaulted her and she suffered long-term physical injuries, fighting him off. A few years after I left, there was a terrible incident involving a prisoner called Kevan Thakrar and two staff were very nearly killed in the way he attacked them. We have a responsibility to manage all these risks as effectively as we can because, in our most secure environments, it is not an exaggeration to say that lives are at stake.

You know better than me that a prison officer exercises professional judgement all the time in assessing risks – risks to themselves and risks to

others. Always trying to anticipate, looking out for the signs of increasing risk so that they can act, be proactive, be pre-emptive. Staff rely on each other and on their ability to identify signs of emerging risks in the way a prisoner's behaving, in what other prisoners are saying about them. It's deeply concerning when there's a sense that they can't rely on that ability to spot trouble coming because people will feel less safe. I sensed some of that, talking to frontline staff at Frankland a few weeks ago, who worked in the separation centre there, because no one saw that murderous attack coming from that individual. There wasn't any sign of it in his behaviours – in fact, others on that unit could be more challenging day-to-day. The way we try to engage with prisoners – build relationships, assess risks from them – I think that holds good for the vast majority of prisoners and for most of the prison estate. But it isn't effective for a small number of people. And if that's the case, we need to be prepared to adapt our approach. If there are a small number of prisoners who are prone to violence against staff because of a lack of control, because of poor emotional regulation or poor mental health when they're stressed or angry, then we need to do something different. If it's nothing to do with emotions or mental health, if instead it's a cold, calculated, ideologically driven desire to kill prison staff because they're seen as a legitimate target, then we need a very different approach, both to how we manage those prisoners and how we try to identify them in advance effectively.

This raises big questions for us about separation centres and about how we manage some ideologically driven extremists in the estate. The Lord Chancellor will commission the independent review that she's announced and we will see what's recommended, but it is clear to me that we need to recalibrate and revise our approach. We will look at the recommendations from that independent review in doing so, but the governor of Frankland will do that in the interim and his colleagues will across high security. I don't accept that there's any generalised culture of appeasement in the high-security estate. I've seen what one looks like about 30 years ago, and that's not where we are today. That's not a philosophy that leaders have in those prisons or nationally. But we have very different threats today, and we'll need to develop more effective approaches.

I'm clear that in any prison, under the governor's leadership, staff have to be the ones that are in control. If they're not, then it's a whole lot worse in every way. In the wider estate, to improve safety, we need to utilise strategies that respond to changing threats from serious organised crime and from the technologies they use. But we also need to stick with some of the basics, some of the enduring practices that we've developed and learned in days gone by, sometimes having learned painful lessons. So there's a combination of the new and the very familiar in what's needed. Some of it is about basics that remain important. Some of the necessary ingredients that our experience and the evidence would associate with safer prisons can be very difficult to achieve right now, in parts of the estate. I recognise that but I'm determined that we make progress in putting them in place. Here are some of the things I've got in mind. There's a basic thing around staffing, isn't there? You've got to have the right number in the first place. We've made a lot of progress with recruitment, and indeed with retention, in the last few years. We've got about 1,500 more prison officers in post today than we had three years ago. The resignation rate for officers has dropped from well over 13% to well under 10. We need to get the vetting right, we need to get the training right. There are things we're doing to improve all of them, as the minister touched on.

We have to have staff that are confident and capable. Experience is important. One of our challenges is significant levels of inexperienced staff, particularly in some prisons. If we keep resignation rates lower, that will improve over time because we'll keep more people. Staff have to have high standards of professionalism as well as skill and discipline. They need to be skilful in working relationships with prisoners, and the basics around supervision and being alert are also important in what we do, day in and day out. A second area is around drugs and the illicit economy – we all know that's at the root of a lot of violence. Serious organised crime has got much more sophisticated and they are using drones to convey drugs and weapons and phones into prisons. We need to target hard in our prisons to that risk. That does require investment – it requires money in the infrastructure of the prisons to make it much more difficult to just deliver packages with drones. We need to invest in some new technologies and we need to invest in some staffing and intelligence, and work with the police to tackle that threat. We have put together a bid for significant investment in all those areas through the current spending review. It is a big priority for me, to spend more money in those areas so we can tackle and reduce that threat. Some of the results we've got from Manchester prison in recent months have been encouraging in being able to see evidence of actually driving down the ingress threat from drones, even without some of the investment that we want in the infrastructure of the prison.

A third thing we need is decent conditions – that helps with a safer prison. The crowding and the capacity pressures and the churn of prisons, as I mentioned earlier, are not helpful. The deterioration in living conditions and the fabric of prisons is not helpful. Again, through the spending review, we've sought a significant investment in maintenance in our prisons. And not primarily through the maintenance of the facilities management contracts that Mark touched on before, but major maintenance projects to improve the infrastructure and refurbish and strengthen security in our prisons. A fourth ingredient is around personal activity – we need to occupy people. There needs to be a variety of things that they do in a typical week. The activity needs to be as purposeful as possible – it needs to be rehabilitative for those that are engaging in changing their lives. Some of our safest prisons have the best regimes – places like Oakwood, in the private sector, and Stocken and Warren Hill. It needs good leadership at all levels – we need to have an operational grip on the day-to-day and we need to have strong moral leadership, with an emphasis on professional standards in the way that we go about our work. We need to treat prisoners with humanity but it needs to be a robust humanity – there's nothing soft about it. We have to be uncompromising in insisting on people not behaving badly in an antisocial way. They need to be challenged and we need to uphold standards, but we also need effective responses to violence when it occurs.

I'm very interested in exploring with you and others what it is that we can do to reinvigorate the use of the Crime in Prison protocol. In some parts of the country, for some prisons, with some police forces, it works really well, but it's a bit patchy. And I think the POA have a role in encouraging their members to complete the evidential packet for police investigations after violent incidents, as well as managers doing that. And we're seeing examples where it's been effective to challenge an appeal against the decision not to prosecute, and those decisions have been changed in some cases. But at the next level down as well, we need to consider ways in which we can strengthen our own internal disciplinary system, ways in which we could strengthen independent adjudicators and the punishments they have available to them. Strengthen the disciplinary penalties that governors have as well for their adjudications. Do more in prisons to publicise the tariffs of punishments so that prisoners are clearly communicated to about the consequences of ill-discipline and violence in particular. I've given instructions for us to accelerate the work that's underway to reinvigorate what we're doing with local response teams and higher security prisons as well, to improve that capability, which I think is very important.

When it comes to different bits of kit and technology, I don't have an ideological position about any of it. I'm pragmatic – I want to look at the evidence of what we think is our best assessment of whether something adds to safety. If that costs money, we will find the money. We will always find the money for the things that we think are needed to try and improve safety. That was what we did when we made a decision to introduce PAVA in the

adult estate. It's what we're doing now when we've made a decision to introduce PAVA in the youth estate. Many months before some of the recent high-profile incidents, we carried out a non-operational trial of Taser, working closely with the police and our specialist ORU staff about different types of equipment and what might be effective in a prison setting for different types of incident. And before recent high-profile incidents, we recommended that we then move to an operational trial of tasers with ORU staff, and ministers agreed to that, as you know, and announced it. I am open to thinking about whether tasers have a wider role to play beyond ORU staff. It's about the evidence. Similarly for anti-stab vests – I think there is mixed evidence because of some of the risks that can be associated with the use of those vests, particularly in planned attacks and because it will cause individuals who are determined to try and kill to go for the face and the neck if there is wide use of anti-stab vests. But there are clearly incidents where wearing such a vest would also offer protection to people. I suspect there are mixed views amongst our staff about the vests, depending on what type of kit is available. They're not necessarily comfortable things to wear for a whole day, particularly in the summer, and lots of other agencies, including the police who have equipment like that, don't have an assumption that people will be wearing them continuously for eight or 12 hours. I know when I visited the Canadian prison service some years ago, when they'd introduced them, that they had a big challenge about getting staff to actually wear them consistently through their shifts. But as I said, I'm pragmatic – I want to look at the evidence and let's make a decision.

We've got the review around protective body armour under way, as you know, it's been announced. I do want to come back to the point that safety is fundamental for us – it's foundational to everything else. It's an operational priority for me and it always will be, and I refuse to accept the status quo. It's not good enough and I reiterate my determination to reduce violence in our prisons. I sincerely want us to work with the POA to do that, both at the national level, but also critically at local level, where so many of these operational decisions and judgements have to be reached, day in and day out. We want the same outcome, so I'm very keen that we work together to achieve it. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Phil. You mentioned some really interesting things there. You've just said safety is fundamental. I wish you'd tell that to some of your governors because these people in front of you don't feel safe.

<Applause>

And I'm a bit concerned. I know stab-proof and slash-proof vests is divisive amongst staff but it sounds to me as if you're already setting the stage for your excuses when you fail to roll them out. "They're uncomfortable to wear", "Don't wanna wear them for 12 hours", "If we put them on, they'll target our face and neck". You know something, Phil? When you work on a building site, you're forced to wear a hard hat. They're uncomfortable, lots of people don't want to wear them, but it's for their own safety.

<Applause>

And you quoted, I think it was the Woodcock report: "Staff were threatened and intimidated if they tried to do their job properly." That's still going on, but you know who's doing all that? Some of your governors.

<Applause>

These people in front of you want to get rid of the weapons, the phones, the drugs from our prisons. They want lockdown searches like what's happening at Gartree – fantastic, four days, let's get it done. It's that bad. I know there's a prison TikTok channel where prisoners live stream from their cells. Our prisons aren't safe and they'll never be secure until we install drone-blocking technology. It's out there – let's get it done before a weapon comes into our jail that can put these people in a life-threatening situation.

<Applause>

And we do appreciate you addressing Conference. It's not an easy place to come, especially with what's going on, but I've just got one question for you. With all this, it seems you've learnt absolutely nothing from Covid, where violence reduced, self-harm reduced, people felt safer, we were unlocking in smaller cohorts, staff were confident and in control. So ,there's just one question that these people would want an answer to. Simple, Phil: what's your plan?

PHIL COPPLE – DIRECTOR GENERAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HMPPS: Well, two things. In terms of making some of the priority of this and the focus on it clear to governors, that is very clear. That is set out very prominently in a small number of operational priorities that have been set and communicated right across the service, including to every governor. In terms of the plan, the operational priorities document that we circulated at the beginning of the calendar year set out some of the key steps, in terms of building on the local reviews of safety strategies and strengthening what we have locally on the ground. But I also wanted to refer to some of the things I said that I think will be relevant, even if they are things that are under consideration at this point, following the government commissioning reviews, or picking up some of the ideas that we're developing to try and improve safety. So, we will see what happens with the review in relation to body armour. I wasn't preparing excuses – I was reflecting some of the things that we're learning, that it's not a straightforward thing to just pick up and go with. There are different types of equipment – we need to think about what's most appropriate and we need to think about the basis on which it might be used. We'll see what that concludes, we'll see what the evidence is around that. If we want to do something, we will find the money to do it – money will not stand in its way. But I'm also keen that we see what the independent reviewer recommends, in relation to separation centres and managing that very small number of people that can be potentially in a very different category, and we might need a very different approach to, compared to the general prison population.

I'm also very open to practical ideas that I touched on, about how can we use the Crime in Prisons protocol better? How can we strengthen disciplinary arrangements, both the independent adjudicator and governor, in our prisons? Practical ideas like that to try and deal with and have more serious

consequences for people when there's ill-discipline. But I also think a lot of things turn around, whether we have success securing some of the investments that we're seeking to improve counter-drone measures, to improve the infrastructure of our prisons to make them safer and more secure in that way. And if we're able to continue to make progress with our staffing position – having the right number of people, training them better, having ongoing training so they are more experienced, more capable, more confident. If we can make progress with that and make progress against drugs, including against drones, we will have the foundation that enables us to do much better in this area, and that's what I'm really determined that we do.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well, thank you, Phil. Thank you for your honesty and as usual, you don't go away empty-handed. I've been to my rock shop and I know you're a Liverpool fan, so I've bought you a bag of Everton mints. Phil Copple, ladies and gentlemen.

<Laughter and applause>

Thank you, Conference. Our next guest speaker's due about 11 o'clock, Sally Jameson, former prison officer. So, until then, we can plough on with some business.

I do believe we're on motion 87, which is a motion from Manston. Can we have a seconder for Manston please?

Motion 87

To add immigration services into the POA tag line. To read The Professional Trade Union for Prison Correctional, Public and Private Mental Health Trust Services Providers and Immigration Services.

MANSTON

MICHAELLA ROBINSON – BRANCH SECRETARY, MANSTON SHORT-TERM HOLDING FACILITY: Chair, Conference, NEC, delegates, invited guests. First-time speaker.

<Applause>

We're asking you all to vote, along with myself and other private sectors, that we'll have immigration services to be included in the POA tagline, to be read as: "The Professional Trade Union for Prison Correctional, Public and Private Mental Health Trust Services Providers and Immigration Services." Another reason why we are asking you to support this motion is that the immigration side of the POA feel more included within the yearly conference. Immigration services is becoming a big factor within the POA, with an ever-increasing membership – not just at Manston but across all immigration centres. We, at Manston, have a membership of approximately 660 members, with the ability to go up to above 1,000 members, so we all please ask you to support this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well done.

HERAN LIMBACHIA – BRANCH CHAIR, GATWICK IRC: Chair, Conference, NEC, invited guests. Also, first-time speaker.

<Applause>

Firstly, I would like to thank Manston for raising the motion and, secondly, I ask Conference for their support. We are asking for your support for this simple tagline which possibly might not mean a lot to a lot of you but it would mean a lot to us. What does a change in the strapline mean for people that work in prisons? Well, through our networking here and at private conferences, it's evident that others within the custodial environment don't fully understand the challenges we face within the private sector, but also in immigration. With the early release scheme that the government have set up and the prisons are freeing up bed spaces, where are these foreign national offenders going? Well, they're coming to my estate. Our clientele is significantly and dramatically changing. Gone are the days of being populated by asylum claims and overstayers. We are now housing the same high-risk residents who are able to exploit the changes between the immigration and the prison sectors. We have a centre that looks, smells and effectively is built like a Cat B prison but our powers suggest that we do not have the same as our fellow officers. Listening to my peers in the last two days about the PPE – well, we stand in the same boat. We are left with just cuffs and we are not given the same protection and security as our prison counterparts. While we upsell the importance of the union to the ITCs and the landings on a regular basis, we hope that one strapline will assist with our membership, locally and at a national level. Our colleagues have mentioned about the membership going through the roof. Looking in the private sector, it's about 17, 18% of the total membership, with no real scope with the Government – we have no real plan on immigration, it's only going to get bigger and bigger and our membership limitations is endless. So, we hope for the Conference's support. While I'm up here, both days, I've heard about moving with the times and I agree with that. And I also say to Chair and NEC, it's about time that the private sector have a voice. I leave you with this: what would the NEC do or look like when a private member is elected? I hope for your support.

<Applause>

ALEX BRATTON – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, ICE IMMIGRATION BRANCH: Chair, NEC, delegates, invited guests. First-time speaker as well.

<Applause>

Like these two have well said before, it'll mean a lot to us. Just to be having three words on the end, it'll help us recruit more members, which is better for everyone at the top table and everyone here. More members means a better union, so please support the motion.

<Applause>

RICHARD ADZOBU – BRANCH CHAIR, OAKHILL CENTRE: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests. Private sector as well. I'm here to support my colleagues from the private sector. I support the vital role of private sector, which we provide for correctional, mental health and immigration. Don't be a politician – support us please, vote for us. Thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. Steve Gillan for the NEC.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, Chair, thank you, Conference. Thank you, Manston, for bringing this motion and listen – you're not private sector, you're not immigration, you're POA members.

<Applause>

You're an integral part of this trade union and please, don't forget that. No division in this trade union. Very welcome, it's a big, growing part of this trade union and we will continue to grow it by having those discussions with the private-sector employers and we continue to get voluntary recognition agreements with them. So, I think that's a big, big issue for us. And of course, we do support this motion and we hope Conference fully endorse that strapline addition. Thank you.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well done. Straight to the vote please. We can close that vote. Thanks, that's carried.

Motion 88, Maidstone. Seconder for Maidstone? Thank you.

Motion 88

That the POA supply POA badges with a poppy.

MAIDSTONE

STEVEN HAMBLETT – BRANCH SECRETARY, MAIDSTONE: Chair, NEC, Conference. This is a simple request. The motion reads: "That the POA supply POA badges with a poppy." Doesn't sound a lot but we know there are pedantic governors out there that are telling staff they can only wear one badge on their uniform, and at certain times of the year, those staff have to choose which badge they wear. Do they wear a poppy? Do they wear a POA badge? We just ask that POA produce and make available to members a pin badge that includes the POA logo and a poppy next to it, similar to the badges that can be bought online. If you're a football club or a rugby supporter, you can buy them – these are extremely popular. This will also allow our members to wear the badge showing the POA's support for the poppy and wear it with pride. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No more speakers, so over to Ian Carson for the NEC.

IAN CARSON – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference – responding to motion 88, asking you to reject this motion. I want to start by thanking Maidstone for bringing this motion. It's very well-meaning but, if we accept it, it simply undermines the aims and objectives of buying a poppy. Let me explain why. Everybody knows, your poppy donation goes to the Royal British Legion. The Royal British Legion's website doesn't have a poppy design with a POA badge on it. Now, we can go to an external organisation and have one designed, but that totally undermines the reason you buy your poppy. You buy your poppy because it goes to the charity. Buying a poppy's a matter for an individual – I've got a number of badges that I've bought myself. Not everybody will wear a poppy – we've got a very diverse membership. This is very well-meaning but I ask you to reject it. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, we can go to the vote please. We can display those results. That motion is lost.

Motion 89, Cookham Wood. Seconder for Cookham Wood? Thank you.

Motion 89

The POA update the criteria for a young member from the current age of 30 to the age of 35 in line with the rest of the trade union movement.

COOKHAM WOOD

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC. It's been a couple of years since the inception of the Young Members Committee and what we found was, the first year we put the motion in to set up a Young Members Committee, I spent a lot of time at Conference walking around, talking to young delegates. I think everyone that was here will remember Jade from Moorland. She got up and did a really good speech and everyone said how really good she was and, "That's a good young voice." I approached her and said, "Look, are you going to support the motion and speak for the young members?" And she said, "I can't, I'm too old." There's many delegates on the floor this week, and we are getting younger here, but again, they're too old to be part of the Young Members Committee. The motion's quite simple – line up our expectation with that of the GFTU and the TUC that young member is the age of 35. I won't take up too much of your time and I'll wait and see what the NEC's got to say, but please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks, Tyler. No other speakers. Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference – speaking on behalf of the NEC, asking you to reject the motion. The criteria from union to union for young members differs. However, for the TUC's Young Workers' Conference, their constitution and standing orders state: "Delegates must qualify as a young member worker under the rules of the union that they are representing. Where the rules of the union a delegate is representing do not contain any definition of a young member, the delegates nominated by such a union must be 27 years of age or under on the first day of Conference." As you can see, the TUC definition of a young member is anybody aged 27 or younger on the first day of Conference. While there's nothing to prevent the POA making our criteria of a young member up to the age of 35, the NEC do not believe there's a requirement for this. Conference, please reject the motion.

<Applause>

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETAARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Like I say, Conference, look round the room. There's young members that have been up this week. I'll pay tribute to Jordan from Hull and the other guys around the room – there's so many young members here that have got a voice that aren't given access to this committee. We heard Mr Gillan tell us at the start of the week how proud that we were that we've sent young members to Cuba. That criteria was matched on 35, so why are we not following it? Please support the motion, Conference.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Take it to the vote please. Display the result please. Well done, Tyler. That's carried.

<Applause>

How old are you, Tyler?

<Inaudible>

<Laugher>

Well done, mate.

Motion 90 is a debate, no need for a seconder. I'll invite Parkhurst to start the debate.

Motion 90

Conference debate mental health and the affect it has on our members, the NEC hold a mental health awareness day/week, determined by Conference led by this Union.

PARKHURST

GLEN HOLMES – BRANCH CHAIR, PARKHURST: Chair, NEC, Conference. We asked to debate this motion. As we know, today or this week, we've spoken a lot about mental health. The prison service talk a lot about mental health and the issue. In reality, senior management don't like talking about it, don't like dealing with it, and it's a matter of a tick box exercise and really, do they care? I don't think they do. When this motion is debated and the NEC can hold some form of either a day or week, and it's led by this Union, we can show them that we are better than them, because we are. We need a positive attitude towards mental health. I know the NEC have things in place at the moment and I know there are things in place, but anything's got to be better for staff. We need this sort of thing, so please support the motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests and visitors. I ask you to join the debate. Anything that the POA, other unions, whether private officers or public officers, can do to help our mental ill health that's caused by our workplace, the effects on our safety, the frustration of no action being taken, is a really good thing. Please join the debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Can't see any more debaters, so I'll hand over to Sarah Rigby for the NEC.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC, joining the debate. We're happy to support the awareness session but we will need a level of agreement from the employer to facilitate it in a way that benefits our members as much as possible. The mental health of prison officers is such an important issue. I imagine every branch official in this room has found themselves trying to support someone, feeling out of their depth and that they cannot find the right words, or they don't have any answers. The nature of being a prison officer usually means putting on a brave face and dealing with whatever is in front of us. This makes it even more difficult to ask for help and support, or to even acknowledge it if you feel you are struggling. There is help available, both through the POA or the employer, and it's about finding what works best for each individual who is in need of support. It's also really important we all look after each other and are not scared to have the difficult conversations if someone is in need. Happy to support this from Parkhurst and thank them for being brave enough to highlight this as an issue.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. Motion 91, Hull. Thank you.

Motion 91

For the NEC to develop a communications strategy, with the aim of sending key messaging and information in a digital format throughout the year to branch committees: to share as directed by the NEC in the workplace, on social media platforms and with local media if appropriate.

HULL

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference. Motion 91, "For the NEC to develop a communications strategy, with the aim of sending key messaging and information in a digital format throughout the year to branch committees: to share as directed by the NEC in the workplace, on social media platforms and with local media if appropriate." I think the NEC have done quite a good job over the past year, of improving their communication strategies and their online presence. There's been a lot more media interviews <inaudible> with you in Unity Consulting, and the work that Charley Allan does in Parliament. The message is getting out there a bit more but I think there's more that we could be doing as branches. All this motion's asking for is for, nationally, us to be given the tools to do that. We've got to be careful with what we post online, so that's why I'm asking for it to be NEC-directed because we don't want to get ourselves in bother with what we're posting and it is a bit of a minefield at times. But hopefully, if it's cleared by a Communications team <inaudible> the NEC, they can back us and we can get the messages to more people, where they see fit. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No one else. Andy?

ANDY BAXTER – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, NEC, responding on behalf of the NEC. The NEC support this motion. We've all, as branch officials, received a call from a local or a national journalist. When you receive that call, it's key that the things that you say to the media are consistent with both POA campaigns and messaging, and also that your engagement does not land you in trouble. In recent months, the POA have engaged Unity Consulting in Scotland to improve both media and campaign messaging. This has seen a significant increase in both POA media output, campaign output and press engagement. Social media reach for the POA is currently at an all-time high. Unity maintain campaign plans and a media briefing script for the union's officers and the executive members. These documents allow POA social media outputs to remain on theme in order to deliver a constant message on key issues. It would be a very straightforward process to share the themes of the media briefing script with branches – however, the advice would remain that, where possible, local media work should be delivered in conjunction and consultation with your area NEC representative. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks Andy. Take that to the vote then. We can now close that vote. Thank you, that's carried and of course, we'll ensure that we don't employ Gary Lineker as our Communications Officer.

<Laughter>

Motion 92, Broadmoor is formally moved because they're not here – but I do know about it, so as long as they get a seconder, we can hear it. Yeah, thank you. OK, so take it as read. Does the seconder wish to speak on this motion? Yeah.

Motion 92

Conference instruct the NEC to set up a branch based working party for the consideration of a transition to a digital process. The working party to recommend proposed rule updates at Conference 2026.

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: NEC, Conference and Chair and honourable invited guests. On behalf of Broadmoor, motion 92, "Conference instruct the NEC to set up a branch based working party for the consideration of a transition to a digital process. The working party to recommend proposed rule updates at Conference 2026." I would ask you to support the motion. I don't have any more details for that. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you. Angela Montgomery replying for the NEC.

ANGELA MONTGOMERY – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, Conference, delegates, visitors. The NEC is not supporting this motion because every branch member here has the right to make rule changes. You will remember – I know it was three days ago – we had all the rule changes at the beginning of Conference, so any one of you is able to make any suggested change. So that is a much more open process and we would wish that to continue. So, should any of you want any changes for next year's Conference, you are well within your rights to do so. So, we are asking that you reject this motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, the vote's now open. Thank you all, we can close that vote. That motion is lost.

Conference, it's now time for a tea break. See you at 11, thank you.

<Break>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you, Conference. I'll bring you to order. Conference, it gives me personally immense pride to introduce our next guest speaker – former prison officer, now a Member of Parliament. Sally Jameson, MP for Doncaster Central. Sally was born and raised in Doncaster and was active in the local Labour Party for over a decade before being elected in July 2024, taking over from Dame Rosie Winterton as the MP for Doncaster Central. Before being elected, Sally worked as a prison officer at HMP YOI Moorland in Hatfield, where she was also branch Chair of the POA. She has also worked in Parliament for the Labour Party and for Doncaster Council. Since being elected in July 2024, Sally has been appointed as the Parliamentary Private Secretary for the Ministry of Justice – a supportive role to the department's ministers. Sally Jameson, MP, the floor is yours.

<Applause>

SALLY JAMESON – MP FOR DONCASTER CENTRAL: Thank you Mark, and I'm a lot more nervous being stood up here than when I used to sit down there and just jeer at everyone that was speaking, so hopefully you'll be a bit kinder to me today than I used to be to the people that used to speak up here. It's been almost a year now since I completed my last day as a prison officer and, after six years at HMP and YOI Moorland in my hometown of Doncaster, I handed in my resignation so that I could formally become the parliamentary candidate for Doncaster Central. And it was the honour of my life to be elected on July 4 last year. I'm only the second prison officer to be elected to the UK Parliament and I want to assure everyone in that I carry that experience with me every single day. For me, having been around the Labour Party and the trade union movement for a long time, I can honestly say – and admittedly with some bias – that the POA is one of the best, because the Executive you have don't just understand what prison officers and similar roles go through by reading about it, they have lived it themselves, and our committees, all of you, understand the people you represent because you are in their boots on the same landings and know the same issues that our members face, because you face them as well, and that is not the same in all trade unions that exist today.

As a POA Chair at HMP Moorland for four years, I know all too well what every person in this room does each day to support their colleagues through the toughest of times and ensure the highest possible standards of safety in the most difficult of circumstances. And I know it means taking calls out of hours in the middle of night, dealing with people's personal crises and issues which you never want to talk about ever again, and making sure that people are safe and getting a fair hearing from the employer. And I know there'll be people working in prisons today that wouldn't still have jobs if it wasn't for people like you in this room. And I've taken my experience as a POA Chair, which I'd say was more stressful probably than being a prison officer itself, with me to Parliament to stand up for my constituents in Doncaster as well as the many prison staff actually that live in Doncaster, because we have four establishments. That is why I am so proud to be part of the POA, even today, because it is for prison officers and run by prison officers, and that is what makes it so special.

This also makes our Union a powerful voice when pushing for change, and I am personally proud to bring this frontline voice to work with me every day – because the experience that we have and that all of you continue to have must be heard in the rooms where decisions are made. When I was first elected I was pleased, as Mark said earlier, to be appointed as the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, and whilst this does mean that I can't raise matters in the Houses of Parliament related to the department, what it does do is give me a seat at the table, so that my experience and the experiences that all of you are having can be heard. And look, none of us are under any illusions about the scale of challenge that our prisons face, and I'm sure you've told James Timpson all about that earlier today. And we all saw the capacity crisis coming on the last government with their little effort to resolve it. And I have to say, when I have to sit in the Chamber when the opposition call an urgent question on prison officer violence, when they had 14 years to do something about it, I find it really quite galling, but I do that every single week and I make sure that they know that's their legacy.

<Applause>

And whilst there are no quick-fix solutions and I know that change won't be happening quick enough for anyone in this room or any of the establishments, I will say that, in the short time I have been an MP, I do have confidence that Shabana Mahmood and James Timpson do have the ability and the drive, they are willing to listen, they do want to work with the POA to tackle the crisis head-on and take some difficult decisions to bring about meaningful solution. Horrific incidents of violence have been in the news recently and I'm sure they've been discussed a lot throughout this week, and I just want to say that I stand in absolute solidarity with those prison officers – but also all the other officers that work with them that will be affected. And as we all know, none of this is new. This level of violence isn't new, and excessive violence that prison officers have to endure, and have done for many years now, has been beyond acceptable. It has been all too often ignored and it must come to an end. But I also know that Mark and Steve and all of you in this room will continue to make sure that it is on the agenda of the decision-makers, the media and indeed the public, and I know you've done a fabulous job of making sure that those voices have been heard in recent times. And there is no greater show of this than the campaign that this Union ran to introduce PAVA in the youth estate, and I'm pleased that the government has now agreed to approve its use because we all know in this room the huge challenge that is faced in the young offender estate and the instances in which this would be so important to protect life and limb of officers and our members, but also of young people. And whilst I know it doesn't solve all of the problems and there's a lot more things we need to do to make the prison estate safer, I think this is a big win for the POA and its members and it shows the strength of a Union and the strength of collective action and why all of you need to go back to your establishments and make sure that your members know that it's the Union campaign that brought about that change, and so other changes that they want to see need to be done through this Union with collective action to challenge decision-makers and make sure it happens. This win for the POA shows that the Union does have the power to influence its change, and this starts with constructive dialogue between the POA and the government, which will mean the voice of everyone in this room is heard.

So finally, I just want to say a heartfelt thank you to you all, and particularly the NEC, for all the support that you've shown me personally, both when I was a candidate and still working in the prison, but also now as an MP. I was going to give a special shoutout to HMP Moorland, who I would have said were the best Committee here, but I found out an hour ago that they've pissed off home!

<Laughter and applause>

Apparently, childcare issues. So, my loyalties are open to be bought from now on in for further shoutouts! But I want to end on this promise – that I will continue to make sure that the voice of prison officers is heard at every level in our government, and I hope that, whilst I am only the second one to be elected to our Parliament, many, many more will follow at all levels of government and council, because your experience, our experience, brings so much to the table and we must make sure that someone is always sat at it. Thank you for inviting me to speak here today. I'm sure that Mark, Steve and the NEC will continue to hold my feet to the fire over the next four years to apply as much pressure as possible to get the outcomes that you all want to see, and it's fantastic to be here two years on from when I was last a POA Chair. I look forward to speaking to you all throughout the rest of the day. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Sally, it's great to see you and you will always be part of the POA family. I consider Sally to be a friend, former colleague but she is a friend and, whenever we meet up in the House of Commons, I don't know if you know this, but when you go to the bar in the House of Commons you're not allowed to buy a drink, so the politicians have to buy a drink, so I welcome your invites to the bar at the House of Commons because I never have to buy a drink – it's great!

<Laughter>

I know you'll never admit it but I know that you were influential in the rollout of PAVA in the YCS estate because you've got the ear of government ministers and Secretaries of State in your role, so I know you were influential in that, so thank you so much for all your efforts in supporting us.

<Applause>

Now, no one goes away empty-handed and I've been to the rock shop for you, Sally. And with you being Donny girl, I thought what flavour could I get you that reminds you of Billy Biscuits? If you know, you know.

<Laughter>

Blue <inaudible> flavour rock.

<Applause>

Please show your appreciation for Sally Jameson.

<Applause>

Thank you Sally!

<Applause>

She'll soon realise she's left her handbag. You know how many hair products girls carry.

<Laughter>

Told you! Let's get on with motion 93, Belmarsh. Can we have a seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 93

Conference instructs the NEC to prohibit any lobbying of branch officials relating to the business of Conference. All debates should be held in the Conference Hall.

BELMARSH

So they've formally moved. Feltham, do you wish to speak on it? That'll be a no. Speaker on behalf of the NEC is Dave Todd.

DAVE TODD – NATIONAL VICE CHAIR: Chair, I'd just like to indulge myself for one second please. Conference, you were very, very generous yesterday and throughout the week. I thought it only right and proper that I give you something back, so there's some beard wash, beard shampoo, beard oil, beard wax, you're welcome to them.

<Laughter and applause>

Conference, Chair, invited guests – responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to reject the motion. Conference, nobody's going to go around policing pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants, to make sure that you're not speaking about a motion before it's stood at Conference. It's impossible. You do it all the time. Some of the branches did it on the very first motion and that allowed you to defeat the NEC. So, Conference, please reject.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, we can take that to the vote. And we can view the results. That motion is lost. With you looking like that without your beard, Dave, I'd hate to see some of the clubs and bars you frequent!

<Laughter>

Motion 94, permission to withdraw I've got from Belmarsh. Can they have permission to withdraw? Please show. Thank you, that's withdrawn.

Motion 95, Belmarsh. Thank you Feltham.

Motion 95

Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate a legal buffer clause with the Union Solicitors when the 51% threshold of success is not met; but fighting the case is in the best interests of the membership.

BELMARSH

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BELMARSH: Conference, at present the Union's solicitors will only supply legal support when the 51% threshold of success has been met, no matter what the case is about. I'm proposing that, in cases that have a lesser chance of success, but if won would have a greater benefit for the members as a whole, a weighting system should be applied. I'll give an example of a case that came recently over the last couple of years. Up to about three years ago, there was a division between dog-handlers who were provided vans, who were working in area teams, and dog-handlers in the high-security estate. I noticed last year there was a motion that was carried to ask for all dog-handlers to be provided with an appropriate vehicle. As part of the prison services response, it came in with a statement about different contracts between those individuals who were working in the high-security estate and those individuals who were in area teams. It also related to the fact that one group of individuals in the areas teams were going off to different establishments through the day. It might be the case, it might not. But the one thing that they did turn round and say, and they highlighted within the case, was that we were on different terms and conditions because we were employed in different establishments, and those establishments were advertised as different terms and conditions. Well, there was a case where an individual said, "I don't think this is right." He wasn't able to make the prison service go and get them all vans, but what he did do is he challenged it and he said, "What I want to be able to do is to claim mileage," which will hopefully cover the proportion of the cost for the vehicle that he has to purchase in order to bring in the dogs in a safe and correct manner to work. So, he went to this as a litigant in person against the prison service, on his own. He did have a little bit of advice, but he did it on his own. He took that forward and, before it even got to a tribunal, he won. And for the last three years, all those dog handlers who've not been provided with a vehicle have been able to claim for their mileage. Now in Belmarsh, in one establishment, that equates to £100,000 a year, so individuals who were having to go and get vehicles at their own expense are at least having a proportion of that met by HMPPS.

Now, I understand that everything can't go to court, so I think you should have on top of the 51% and where there's something that might fall slightly below that, you should have a weighting system and that weighting system should be as follows – a cost-reward benefit, so how much it's going to cost and what's the possible outcome, what's the benefit. How many members of staff would it affect, and does it meet the aims and objectives of the

Union as a whole? We're not a no win, no fee organisation – although you can't take everything to court, we should use the system to invoke change for the benefit of members. Conference, please support this motion.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I would like to thank you very much for Belmarsh for bringing this one to our attention. This is very close to my heart and I have basically burnt out and suffered the consequences myself, so living proof of it. I have got quite a few solicitor friends who are on panels and other things, and the system itself is a favouritism sort of thing. 51%, that's what the business wants. And no offence to NEC or anybody – yes, I understand the business need needs to be put in front and there has to be a guideline, there has to be deadlines, yes, absolutely fine. But some of the cases on based on 51, because of the calculation of a solicitor who's sitting there and dealing with it, I think that's really unfair. I have seen myself, I've taken one case myself and I actually went all the way down and the judge basically put a moratorium. Why? Because solicitor won't take it because it's under the above, it's a 49%, it's a risk that we can't take. I would ask the NEC to consider a better system or something else to put in place. And I would ask you, every single one of you, to please support this motion. I understand what the NEC are probably going to turn round and say that basically it's not interested in the business, but think about the people who you're going to save. Sometimes it's only on the borderline, all we need is a chance. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nobody else, so Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, asking you to reject the motion. Conference, the NEC do not negotiate any clauses with the Union's solicitors. They provide the service of the POA where we, the POA, call the shots. The Union calls the shots by way of our rules and constitution. There is already scope for the Legal Aid Committee to fight cases where the 51% threshold is not met. However, in administering the legal aid scheme, the Legal Aid Committee and the NEC have a constitutional responsibility to ensure that the POA receives the best possible value for money and that the members' subscriptions are not wasted in pursuing fruitless claims. In order to be able to assess the merit of the issues which they need to decide, the Legal Aid Committee and subsequently the NEC will be provided with all relevant information for them to decide upon the issues. So, as sister committees in exercising the powers delegated to them, the committees have developed a number of principles which it'll follow when exercising its discretion.

Subject to exceptional circumstances, either related to the general importance of the issues or the facts of a particular case, legal assistance will not generally be granted or continued where the prospects of succeeding in the claim do not warrant support. That is, the claim must have a better than 50% chance of succeeding. The proposal of the motion is asking for a clause to be included in the legal aid handbook that, where the 51% threshold is not met, the case is still taken on if it's in the best interests of the membership. How far do we go? 50%, 40%, 30%? When the NEC have applied the discretion and support of cases against our criteria, it's normally on a point of principle for the wider membership, and when we have done, as set out in previous Conference report backs, it hasn't always been successful and is often very costly to the Union also. It also ought to be said that, when the NEC requests legal advice on certain issues, to ascertain whether we have a legal challenge or not, sometimes we're left disappointed as it doesn't reach the threshold set by you through our rules and constitution. In an ideal world, we would want our legal scheme to say that we would challenge every single case, but I'm afraid that's unrealistic and extremely costly to do so, and to have such a scheme lowering the threshold would automatically increase our legal bill and that means that our members would have to pay a lot more in monthly subscriptions. Finally, for the avoidance of doubt, the removal of the threshold would be for all areas of the legal advice scheme, not just employment law or personal injury law. The lowering of the 50% threshold would also apply to criminal cases. Would you want your money spending on a member who, say for example, had been charged with bringing drugs into the establishment, who had pleaded not guilty but only had a 20 or 30% chance of success in the Crown Court? I know that I wouldn't want my subs going on that. Conference, reject the motion.

<Applause>

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BELMARSH: One of the things that was brought up there was the 51%. 51% is the standard first post you're going to go through, the first filter point. I'm not saying that it shouldn't be used. In a lot of cases ,it should be used. The point that I'm making that, when the outcome would have a massive effect for a large group of individuals, that should be seen as a weighting. So, Conference, please accept my motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thanks John. That vote is now open. We can now close that vote. Motion is lost.

Motion 96, Belmarsh. Seconder for Belmarsh. Thank you.

Motion 96

NEC to instruct the Union Solicitors to send out a client survey after EVERY interaction so we can measure members satisfaction in relation to the services provided.

BELMARSH

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBER, BELMARSH: Conference, Chair, NEC, at present we are spending £1.2 million on legal services. Do we get value for money? Only those provided with the services know. When you order an Uber, you get a survey. When you get a food delivery, you get a survey. But at present, if you're provided with legal advice or representation from our legal providers, you don't. It's really simple and this can be done with a simple star rating. It's not expensive and it will give a true and accurate indication of the quality of representation given to our members. Conference, please support this motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, visitors and guests, I urge you to reject this motion and use the POA's annual survey if you want to comment on our legal services. Please reject the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nobody else? Mick Pimblett for the NEC.

MICK PIMBLETT – ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference – speaking on behalf of the NEC, asking you to reject the motion. Colleagues, this motion is fraught with danger, particularly to the Union's finances. The POA currently have 58 death in custody cases which include multiple members, 24 criminal injuries claims, 189 employment law cases, 728 personal injury claims, 133 police investigations and 75 stress claims with Thompsons. If there was a requirement to send out a client survey after every interaction, this would come at a cost to the Union. The definition of interaction is a reciprocal action between two parties. Would every interaction, including the supply of a sicknote or a payslip to the solicitors, require Thompsons to send out a client survey? Would a phone call to a member regarding an occupational health report require Thompsons to send out a client care survey? In addition, if this motion were passed, it states that we would then be able to measure our members' satisfaction in relation to the services provided. How would we do this? Would we instruct a company of statisticians to run a survey for us? How often would we do it? Would it be annually, would it be six-monthly? Colleagues, currently Thompsons send out a client survey to members when their legal case has been finalised. Very few members complete these satisfaction surveys in any case. Why have another survey which our members will simply not complete? If members are not happy with the service that they receive from Thompsons, they can contact myself, the Legal Aid Committee or the NEC and we will make sure that any problems are resolved. Conference, please reject the motion.

<Applause>

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE, BELMARSH: So, one of the things I noticed you saying there, when you finished your representation, that you're given a survey. I went to tribunal, I was represented by Thompsons, at the end of that I wasn't given a survey. I know others that weren't given surveys. When you're talking about costs, there are many platforms out there, one of them you used recently, Survey Monkey. There's loads of things you can do. It's really easy and you just say at the end of it, "What do you think the quality was of your representation? Star 1 to 5." It's really cheap, it's really simple. Get on the internet, have a look. Those companies supplying them, £500 go all the way up to £5,000. It's really simple. And all I'm saying is that, when we receive a representation, those individuals should be seen to say, was it quality, yes or no? That's all I'm asking. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Vote is now open, Conference. And we can close that vote. Motion is lost.

Motion 97, Belmarsh. Seconder please? Thank you.

Motion 97

Conference instructs the NEC to ballot the membership if the POA ever proposes a no strike agreement.

BELMARSH

JOHN SCHULZE – BRANCH COMMITTEE, BELMARSH: Conference, Chair, NEC, there may be a chance in the future that we're given back the right to strike. If this happens and the NEC put forward a no-strike agreement, it should be put forward to the membership as a whole to make that decision. This should be done through the ballot box. It's a basic human principle on a very contentious issue. Conference, please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No speakers. I'll hand over to Steve Gillan for the NEC.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you Chair, thank you Conference. Delegates, invited guests, we're going to ask you to go against this motion on one very simple issue. We're never, ever going to sign up for a no strike agreement!

<Applause>

So that means we wouldn't ever have to ballot anyone. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, let's take that to the vote. We can now close that vote. Motion is lost.

Motion 98 is a debate. I'm going to invite Whatton up to start the debate.

Motion 98

Conference to debate the current disputes resolution policy under PSO 8525 and its effectiveness, as well as the impartiality, accountability of the Employee Relations Team.

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: "Conference to debate the current disputes resolution policy under PSO 8525 and its effectiveness, as well as the impartiality, accountability of the Employment Relations Team." I struggle with the Disputes Committee. We had a dispute with our governor about body-worn cameras. Our old governor was very adamant that she wasn't going to have this, despite just about every prison in the prison system having body-worn cameras. She was dead against it. So, we went to a dispute. Now one would assume it would have been fairly easy, what on earth is the governor of Whatton doing? Everybody else has got them, they can have them too. Straightforward. Here's the direction from the Disputes Committee, from her bosses – stop being stupid, get the cameras in. No. 18 months, 18 months to get that dispute resolved, and why? I just don't understand it.

There's other examples as well. When we failed to agree with the governor, we go to a dispute because we have a difference on opinions and policies, why can't the Disputes Committee just look at it and say, "OK, here we go, POA are wrong or POA are right," and direct the governor – engage, they're right or they're wrong or whatever it may be. It's fairly simple. Our governors don't always follow policies – we want them to. I don't understand why it takes so long and why the process is so drawn out for a dispute. These are just some of my experiences of disputes, by the way. I do encourage the rest of the Conference to partake in this debate because I am sure that Whatton isn't the only prison that's got issues with the current disputes policy. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference and colleagues of the NEC, I'd like to thank Whatton for bringing this motion before Conference. It's quite an emotive subject for me and, like many of us that sit in the hall, we've all had industrial disputes that we've had to register. 8525 is a compensatory measure because we don't have the right to strike. It's the only way that we have to resolve local disputes and industrial disputes and, in my opinion, from my experience, it's not fit for purpose. All it is a great big winding wheel and hopefully either the POA or prison service managers will give up and one will concede. There is no way of compelling managers to want to engage. The POA use the SFC process to secure facility time, to arrange meetings so we can convey the concerns of our members. Governors, prison service managers and, like Mr Carson said the other day, there are some good prison service managers out there but they're becoming few and far between, they see it is a direct challenge to their authority. Why am I going to take any suggestions from a jumped-up Band 3, which is exactly what my previous governor said in a POA management meeting.

I spoke to Mr Stuart the other day from Employee Relations. There needs to be more done in upskilling managers because they don't see the value of working with the POA. We want the same outlook – we want a safe regime, safety for prisoners, but above all safety for staff. When we can't agree locally, it's going to the National Disputes Committee and then it vanishes into the ether. The pool tables dispute at Nottingham, we heard nothing back. Now I appreciate what the NEC will say. It's down to the area rep to issue you with an update. The problem we have is, governors don't take what the POA say as gospel. There needs to be a better method of the minutes of that meeting or the action points discussed being conveyed so it's issued to both parties, both the employer and the POA, because unfortunately Employee Relations aren't impartial. Now I'm not going to do a hatchet job on the previous manager that looked after the POA bargaining unit, but he caused more problems at Nottingham by telling the governor one thing and the POA the other, without us being in the same room together, and it escalated the problem. The only reason why the dispute at Nottingham was resolved was because Mr Willetts has a good working relationship with our area manager, and I'm happy to say that pool tables will never return to Nottingham. They've done, finished. That's only because of the effective working relationship of the NEC rep. We're putting our heads on the block when we register a dispute. Governors will target you. They'll say, "Oh no, no, it's nothing personal." It absolutely is. I got moved to different work areas, wasn't allowed to work in certain areas, wasn't allowed to work with certain people, because I was putting my head above the parapet registering these disputes. We are being failed by our National Disputes Committee, and unfortunately, and it's not very often I say this, we are being failed by our NEC by not doing more to get these managers inline, and we're being failed by ER. I encourage you to join in the debate and side with the next motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Joining the debate, Jackie Marshall.

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking on the motion 98 debate. So, 18 years last week since we gave notice on the JIRPA. Some of you probably remember it, the Joint Industrial Relations Procedural Agreement. And it's 17 years since Jack Straw went running back to Parliament to reenact 127. PSO 8525, what can I say? I know what I'd like to say but I don't think the National Chair would

be very happy.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Say it, say it!

JACKIE MARSHALL – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: What I can say is it's unfit for purpose. So, under section 2, the key principles, it says, "Engage constructively on issues at an early stage." If we did that then we probably wouldn't even need this document, but as we all know, governors don't do it. "Aim to reach agreement that is in the best interest of NOMS (HMPPS) and its employees." Well, I think governors must be employing the prisoners because it's normally to benefit them, not to benefit us. "Be open and honest and act with integrity." Mmm, perhaps I won't comment on that one. "Treat each other with respect." That's another debatable one, with the behaviour of some of our governors. "Acknowledge each other's legitimate interests." If governors did that, again we probably wouldn't need this policy.

The motion asks about the impartiality and accountability of the Employee Relations Team, who I do have some sympathy with because they hear our side and they hear the governor's side and sometimes they don't marry. An example of that, at a recent issue at Whitemoor, Employee Relations were told that the NEC had told the Whitemoor Committee not to speak to the governor, and that simply wasn't true. There was only myself and Mark that spoke to them, and neither of us told them, and never would tell them not to speak to the governor. And Employee Relations can only advise governors. However, there have been occasions when the Chair of the National Disputes Committee has made a decision. Governors have been told, but not followed the instruction, and as usual nothing is done. It's only when they've been told again and again and again that they actually do something. I'm not sure any of us would get away with that, but the governors do. We've been talking to HMPPS about a new disputes procedure but they don't want what we want and we don't want what they want. So we're at a stalemate, but no doubt sooner or later we will get back round the table and try again. Thanks for the debate.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all.

On to Motion 99, Whatton. Seconder for Whatton please? Thank you Brinsford.

Motion 99

Conference mandates the POA NEC to engage with the employer and to mandate the National Disputes Committee to provide POA Branch Official(s) who's establishments have an official dispute registered with ER Disputes Team, with an officially documented update on any, progress made, areas agreed and what was discussed on their dispute, to ensure that an up to date and reflective engagement log is maintained to assist with future discussions.

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference, "Conference mandates the POA NEC to engage with the employer and to mandate the National Disputes Committee to provide POA Branch Official(s) who's establishments have an official dispute registered with ER Disputes Team, with an officially documented update on any, progress made, areas agreed and what was discussed on their dispute, to ensure that an up to date and reflective engagement log is maintained to assist with future discussions." So, going to be a bit critical here. Two years ago, Whatton put a motion forward for us to be informed about any disputes discussions that happened if we've lodged a dispute. The only updates I get is if I chase it and half the time it's, "Have you got this information." And the email I sent back was, "I've sent you this information already" and attached the email to it. I think if we push this motion through, then it means that we will be able to get an update, and if it is discussed at the disputes meetings, we'll know what's been said, so we can then go forward and speak to our governors about it. Because at the moment, if we don't get any feedback from what the Disputes are saying, we've already got to the point where we've discussed everything we need to discuss, so that's why we've put the dispute in. Now if we don't know what they're saying up top, so we can go back to our governors, so we can continue that discussion which is supposed to happen under the Disputes Policy, where are we supposed to go? All I'm asking for is regular updates if it's discussed, what was discussed – and, if it wasn't discussed, why wasn't it discussed? It's pretty simples. Thank you very much and invite my colleague to take over. Have fun.

<Applause>

NIGEL HARVEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STOKE HEATH: Chair, NEC, delegates, guests – speaking in support of this motion. First of all, I want to thank Mike for bringing this. This is, at our branch, a real pain. My branch has asked me to speak up on this motion today due to the frustrations over our disputes, which we have submitted over 12 months ago at our branch. Little or no movement in disputes, with little communication in the way of any updates via Employee Relations or the NEC, despite a motion, as Mike said, passed at Conference two years ago confirming that monthly updates should begin. Our branch have little trust in raising disputes due to the lack of communication and the length of time disputes can run for. We have disputes over two years old. This motion, if passed today, will go a long way in putting this trust back in this process. I do need to thank the National Chair today for organising and chairing a meeting on Tuesday at the end of Conference to listen to Stoke Heath's issues and concerns in relations to our disputes – so again, thank you Mark. For this reason, I urge the floor to pass this motion.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'd just like to build on what I said in the debate. Sudbury currently has seven industrial disputes registered where there is no progression. Every time we have a POA management meeting, it's quite comical. The deputy governor and the governing governor will say, "Have you got an update?" "No. Have you?" "No." So, we can't discuss anything.

So, no progress can be made. So, I agree with what Mike's raised and what my colleague from Stoke Heath says – we need something that's from ER or the POA that's signed by either the Vice-Chair or whoever chairs the Disputes meeting, that this is what was discussed, the action points that were agreed, because the stagnation of the National Disputes process is still keeping our members at detriment. We've got unprofiled work, non-measured work, flexible tasks that are being delivered. My members are overstretched and they're on burnout and we're waiting for the grown-ups to make a decision. Please support the motion and let's get things moving. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nobody else? Over to Geoff Willetts, please.

GEOFF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers – responding on behalf of the NEC, asking you to reject this motion. Conference, we already have a mechanism in the structure of this Union, so branches can access information from their area NEC official, and if they require additional information they can obtain this from the Chair of the Disputes Committee. PSO 8525 policy is a procedure to enable POA and management to reach an agreement on change proposals and resolve local disputes quickly at the lowest level. The process is a local one. As the remit of the Committee is to oversee the process, the engagement log, process and agreement sit locally with the branches and too many times the Disputes Committee are not furnished with up-to-date movements. There is no process within the policy to make ER comply with an official disputes register. This would mean a change to PSO 8525 policy. Who would update this database? I understand the frustrations around this motion, by why would you increase the workload of the Committee? These areas are already being covered within the structure and agenda of the meetings and works on a frank and open discussion. This would only close the meeting in a scripted, evidential, tug of war and achieving victories would be a thing of the past. Conference, reject this motion.

<Applause>

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: I'm assuming it's an official meeting, it's minuted. Is it going to be really that difficult for them to get those minutes, copy and paste what was said round our motions to send it to us so we're aware what's being discussed? Yes, it's supposed to be dealt with at the lowest level, but if we've come to loggerheads with governors, we've put it to a dispute to get, as my colleague just said quite comically, the grown-ups to discuss, if they can tell us some feedback what their points of view are, we can then go back to the governor, deal with it at the lowest level. But we can't, because we don't know what's being said and we're at loggerheads. Despite the workload, I'm sure it's not difficult to copy and paste minutes to the relevant branches for the relevant disputes that are discussed. Please support this motion so we can actually move on disputes that we submit. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. We can close that vote. It's carried.

Motion 100, Whatton. Seconder for Whatton?

Motion 100

Conference to mandate the POA NEC to engage with the employer to revise and or revisit the current disputes resolution policy to ensure that there is greater accountability and ownership of senior managers and employee relations team who cannot follow or seek to circumvent the engagement process, to compel Senior Managers to engage with local branch officials.

WHATTON

MICHAEL KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference, I won't go on a rant about this one, swearsies. "Conference to mandate the POA NEC to engage with the employer to revise and or revisit the current disputes resolution policy to ensure that there is greater accountability and ownership of senior managers and employee relations team who cannot follow or seek to circumvent the engagement process, to compel Senior Managers to engage with local branch officials." In fact, that's all I've got to say on it, after my last little rant. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No-one else, so over to Geoff Willetts for the NEC.

GEOF WILLETTS – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, invited guests and observers – Geoff Willetts responding on behalf of the NEC asking you to reject this motion. I understand the sentiments of this motion. It's been the POA's ambition to achieve accountability through binding arbitration. With this motion, you're pushing against an open door. We've had recent talks regarding a new disputes process, but let me tell you, the employer likes no decision-maker and the balance of justice when they want tipping in their direction with an NPC weighing down them scales and being more powerful than an SFC. Employee Relations are only an advisory service, a call-centre in Petty France, and have no power to make, influence or compel managers or governors into sensible decisions. You have the power locally to hold governors accountable under the disputes process and under your grievance policy for individuals. The power of them is evident and has brought positive change to your members, especially at Whatton. The NEC want more than what this motion contains in a new disputes process, and this motion doesn't achieve the minimum starting block of binding arbitration and doesn't go far enough. Conference, we have tried consultation with the employer. Unfortunately, this has failed. They do not want to empower us. We are now seeking a political approach and intervention. We hope this will be a lot fairer and better outcome for the

membership. Conference, reject this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: To the vote then please. And the results of that vote are that motion is lost.

101, Belmarsh. Thank you.

Motion 101

Conference instructs the NEC to lodge a National Dispute for the stress caused to our members by managers within HMPPS who engage in bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination.

BELMARSH

BILL BUPARAI– BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH: Chair, Conference, NEC, the motion reads that "Conference instructs the NEC to lodge a National Dispute for the stress caused to our members by managers within HMPPS who engage in bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination." The recent disclosure of the Rademaker report is evidence of bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation taking place nationally across the prison service. These unacceptable behaviours cause our members stress. There is no denying this. As branch officials we see that stress on our members' faces, week in, week out. The question is whether we agree that these behaviours are acceptable. Obviously, we're going to say no. A dispute is exactly that, it's a failure to agree. Using the Rademaker report, we can now show the employer that we as a union do not agree with the way in which our members are being treated. Conference, please support the motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests and visitors, I ask you to support this motion. However, I do believe that NEC might have a different spin on it. Obviously because of the review and the report, we've got the evidence that there is bullying harassment, we all know that. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: No other speakers, so I'll invite Steve Gillan to address this motion.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you Chair, thank you Conference. There'll be no spin on this one but we're asking you to go against it for a very simple reason, in that it doesn't fit the national disputes criteria. We've got, as of this morning, 32,786 members. I can't guarantee you that every single member has been bullied, harassed, victimised or discriminated against. There's probably a proportion of individuals that have, as identified within the Rademaker report, but of course the whole report wasn't published in order to keep people's identities private and I understand that, and I think Jennifer explained that as well. But we are on top of that and I think it's for us to negotiate a better outcome for our members from that report rather than the employer, when we do enter a national dispute, to rule it out of scope, because that's exactly what they'd do. So, we're asking you to reject it. If individuals feel that strongly about the way that they've been treated, then they go through the grievance procedure and get their branch officials to assist them during that grievance procedure. We cannot deal with a national dispute as a blanket on this particular issue because, one, we'd be asked who is that you're putting the dispute in for, and if we say every single member we're just going to get laughed at. We wouldn't win it, quite frankly. It's as simple as that. Thank you. Please reject.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Any right to reply?

BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH: Thank you Chair. Chair, Conference, NEC, I disagree with the comments that Steve's made. He's saying that this is more of an individual issue and this is more of a local issue. Unfortunately, all of your local data of all the occasions where members are bullied, victimised, discriminated against and harassed in their workplaces, all of that data which you deal with locally through the grievance procedure, as Steve said, that data feeds into the national data. The Rademaker report was done on the national data. And the NEC are there to represent us on the national picture. If the national picture says that we're being bullied, victimised, discriminated and harassed in our workplaces, then the NEC have a duty to lodge a dispute with the employer and show the employer this is unacceptable. Conference, please support the motion.

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all. That vote is now open. Thank you, we can now view the results. Motion is lost.

102, Durham. Seconder for Durham? Thank you.

Motion 102

That Conference instruct the NEC maintain and publish a central record of all NEC decisions taken in line with the Rules and Constitution from the close of Conference 2025.

DURHAM

KEITH HOW – BRANCH CHAIR, DURHAM: Chair, NEC, honorary life members, Conference – motion reads, "That Conference instruct the NEC maintain and publish a central record of all NEC decisions taken in line with the Rules and Constitution from the close of Conference 2025." I can't reiterate how important I think this motion is. It's vital we have a published record that branches can refer to. This will ensure there's no confusion and no ambiguity moving forward. It allows branches' committees to function better and more importantly uphold and support the NEC's agreed position. I can't tell you how many times we've stopped maverick governors attempting to change working practices without proper consultation on the back of a quote. This has been agreed nationally. The NEC are aware, but I can tell you most of the time at Durham this is simply not true. After reaching out to my NEC rep, Ian, and finding out the correct NEC position. However there are many occasions when someone on the NEC or from another branch have agreed to something in a different area of the country. For example, <inaudible> the tasks within job descriptions, reception processes. Branches need to know what the NEC have agreed to, which impacts on us. More importantly, this needs communicating effectively and recorded. For transparency, branches need to be able to see what has been agreed and to stick to this so they do not deviate away from the NEC agreed position. Also, if a branch is not happy with the NEC position, they can challenge this and bring this back to Conference to let Conference decide. Here at Conference, all our decisions are recorded. When Conference finishes, the NEC assume control of the Union, so why aren't their decisions recorded? Please support this motion to ensure we have clear transparency moving forward as a union.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, I'm asking you to support this motion. We talk about accountability logs with disputes, we talk about accountability logs with the RMP, the orderly officer has to have an accountability log as well. It evidences a decision and you can see the rationale behind it and we're all singing off the same page. I totally agree with the sentiments from Durham and I think having a central recorded decision that the NEC make allows us to all sing off the same hymn sheet. It will prevent governors from playing us off one another and I think it will offer a lot more transparency and make things more effective going forward. Please support the motion. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nobody else. Steve Gillan for the NEC.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you very much, Chair. Conference, this is a really important motion, Conference, and we're going to ask you to go against it. And there's certain principles as to why we're going to ask you to go against it. The NEC take decisions about legal strategy in litigation that the POA would not want to be placed in the public domain for obvious reasons. The NEC takes decisions with regard to without prejudice negotiations in legal cases that could not be put into the public domain, otherwise legal privilege would be breached. The NEC makes determinations over industrial strategy which could be undermined if those decisions were put into the public domain before being properly implemented and pursued. The NEC receives information relating to union staffing matters which are also confidential in nature. The NEC do need to have the ability to maintain confidentiality in regard to some decisions it reaches in order to effectively represent and bargain for its members. If all those decisions were put into the public domain at the time they were made, then the Union would be undermined at every turn and it would be hindered in its ability to negotiate robustly to achieve the best outcomes for its members.

Conference, do you put out every single minute when you have a branch Committee meeting, that might be sensitive to particular issues? I don't think you would. You shouldn't expect us to do that either because it's not about transparency, actually, it's about us protecting you, branch officials and members, because there's some decisions that this Executive make that we wouldn't want to be handing over documentary evidence to government lawyers to use against us in the High Court. So, there will be certain times where you've got to place your trust in this Executive, and I know that you do that, but the reality is this is potentially a dangerous motion. We've had it before over the years that we want verbatim reports, we want action points, we want this, we want that. Trust us. You don't, because it would undermine the position of your National Executive Committee. Thank you very much and please vote against.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: OK, to the vote then please. Thank you and we can close that vote. Motion is lost.

103, Hull. Seconder please? Thank you, Swaleside.

Motion 103

For Conference to mandate the NEC to engage with the employer to renegotiate Annex B of the existing Crime in Prison Referral Agreement between HMPPS, National Police Chief's Council and the Crown Prosecution Service; to recognise that assaults on HMPPS operational staff fall within the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 and as such, that assaults that cause little or no injury are to be handled under this act and should be investigated by the police and considered for prosecution unless directed otherwise by the victim of the assault.

HULL

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, motion 103 reads, "For Conference to mandate the NEC to engage with the employer to renegotiate Annex B of the existing Crime in Prisons Referral Agreement between HMPPS, National Police Chief's Council and the Crown Prosecution Service; to recognise that assaults on HMPPS operational staff fall within the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act

2018 and as such, that assaults that cause little or no injury are to be handled under this act and should be investigated by the police and considered for prosecution unless directed otherwise by the victim of the assault." I think the bulk of its already in there, in that motion and many of us have seen it, where we've had staff assaulted, black eyes, on the floor, but it's just reddening, it's just bruising so the police send it back to us. Now, in my current work role outside of POA duties, I see a lot of MG5, see a lot of CPS packs, for people who've got Assault on Emergency Worker out in the street. These are people who are necessarily going up and punching coppers in the face. These are examples of people getting in someone's personal space, threatening them, six-month sentence for assault on an emergency worker.

Can you imagine if we tried to refer that to the police from our nicks? It's getting laughed back to us. There is the caveat in there that, unless otherwise directed by the victim, because we know that some assaults, whilst we'd love everyone to get reprimanded properly, we do work in a risky environment, in a hostile environment and sometimes there's a push. There needs to be times where we can deal with low-level assaults, whilst they're all unacceptable, the adjudication purpose is fit for some, but when I've got members with black eyes, with missing teeth and they're getting told by the police well actually, because of your annex here it's only redding and bruising and this should be handled through an adjudication, so your boyo's getting losing his TV for 14 days whilst my member's living with that injury for the next 10, 20 years, eventually getting diagnosed with PTSD – it's not on. All I'm asking is for us and our members to be treated the same as police. We were granted these permissions under the Emergency Workers Act, it's time they were enforced. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

LEE LASSMAN – BRANCH CHAIR, SWALESIDE: Conference, Chair, NEC, thank you for bringing this motion. I'm in total support with it and I would urge everyone else to be as well. It's no secret that assaults against staff in our prisons are at record levels. Our members face daily violence and aggression, and this ongoing crisis is having a devastating impact on their safety and wellbeing. However, what is equally concerning is that prosecutions for those committing violent assaults against our honest, hardworking staff do not reflect the severity of the violence we're facing. Too often we see assault charges being returned to the establishment to be dealt with internally. Reasons such as not being in the public interest or not being severe enough are cited, which effectively means that many of the perps are not held accountable in the way that their actions deserve. This approach fails to recognise the seriousness of the violence inflicted upon our staff and sends a damaging message in that assaults on prison staff are tolerated and they're not taken seriously enough by the justice system.

At no point does CPRA consider the psychological effects that an assault can and does have on the victim. The trauma caused by violence can be long-lasting and profoundly affecting and impacting the victims, both professionally and personally. The scars are not always visible but they are real. The current application of CPRA highlights a troubling reality, that our service is often seen as the forgotten service. It devalues the dedication and resilience of our officers, who put themselves in harm's way every single day. We have a right to be protected against violence. Our members deserve that assurance and it's unacceptable that many of those who bravely serve do not feel the protection is in place.

I just want to give you a bit of a – we challenged this one at Swaleside with our police liaison and a certain DS that shall remain unnamed. He quite openly told me, and I'm happy to quote it, that any prisoner can make an allegation to his team and they will be treated as a member of the public and the police will investigate. However, if prison service refer an assault to him or his team, they will only take it on if a bone is broken or a wound requires stitches. Why are convicted prisoners being treated better than us? This document and the misinterpretation of it by those that do the referring is allowing the perps to get away with these cowardly attacks. The document as it stands at the minute does not afford our members the respect, safety or justice that we so rightly deserve. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: Conference, I'm going to ask you to reject this motion. I can understand where you're coming from, but I can't see it as something that Union will win. The amount of resources and money that we'd have to put into it. The Crown Prosecution Service isn't something that the Union can control. It's legislated with laws that are put in place by Parliament. I just can't see us winning that. It's through Parliament. The Union doesn't have a say over what Parliament does, so I think we'd be fighting a losing battle there. Thank you.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECREARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I would go for reject this motion and the simple reason is there is already a mechanism coming in place called CIPS, and obviously yesterday she was there talking to us. I feel that basically, if we put this in, we're going to be undermining that particular area, and obviously I believe Sarah can give more details on that one. I do have a background on these sorts of cases and I've dealt with many of them. Sometimes yes, the officer turns round and says, "Yes, it's basically not in the public interest" – but if the victim decided to pursue it further, they do take it onboard. The problem is the right wording and right <inaudible> is not getting there, and what's happening is it gets missed, and also the resources and everything, so they've got pressure from their sergeant and everyone and it's literally coming down, down, down. With the CIPS, it's actually working very, very closely with the department and obviously it's going to take time. It's a new baby – give a chance to that baby, so that's why I say reject this motion so you give somebody else a chance. Thank you very much.

<Applause>

PAUL FOSTER – BRANCH CHAIR, NORTHUMBERLAND: Conference, NEC, invited guests, I'm asking you to reject this. You've just heard this morning that 20% of your members work in the private sector. This actually says only HMPPS operational staff. You're victimising your own members. Please reject.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nobody else, so over to Sarah Rigby.

SARAH RIGBY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Chair, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC against the motion. Sadly, this would be very difficult to achieve because of the way the agreement is formulated. It does not just include HMPPS and the POA when the conversations around the agreement take place. The Crime and Prisons Team on behalf of HMPPS enter into consultation with the CPS and the National Police Chief's Council over the terms of the agreement. The Crime in Prisons Team then present it more widely within HMPPS for any further input, but any changes would need to be ratified by the CPS and the Police Chief's Council. With so many different agencies involved it can be a very time-consuming process. Wider topical issues also impact on the agreement. For example, the Jonathan Hull report into terrorism legislation impacted on the Crime in Prisons Agreement and it was updated to reflect some of his recommendations. At the heart of it all, the victim's wishes must be considered and respected. Not all staff want every assault reported to the police. A lot of staff see faster and more effective justice being carried out at establishment level, for example with added days by the judge. The very recent changes to guidance encourage Magistrates Courts to deal with the offences that they are able to in an attempt to bring swift justice, rather than victims waiting years for their case to reach Crown Court and be deal with. There has finally been some resource put in place within HMPPS to try and improve outcomes for staff when they are assaulted, but as I've said previously, it's nowhere near enough.

They are starting to make a difference in terms of pushing back and trying to facilitate better processes and more effective working relationships between prison staff and the police. Some forces are better than others, and there's still a long way to go before staff and our members can begin to have confidence in the process. It's also important that decisions are challenged where appropriate and there are processes in place to enable us all to do that. It is so important the focus remains on getting better outcomes and, if this motion were carried, it has the potential to increase the number of police referrals dramatically. In turn, this would add additional pressure to an already overburdened group of staff. We need to get the basics right before we look at expanding the Annex B to include every offence. Please reject this motion.

<Applause>

JORDAN COOMBS – BRANCH CHAIR, HULL: Chair, NEC, Conference, thank you, I've heard what's being said there and obviously I know it was touched on about the victims' wishes, that's why I've tried to include at the end of this motion saying "unless directed otherwise by the victim". I take on board the point that was raised regarding the operational side of things, the private sector – 100% agree, something that we may have missed when putting together this motion. However, if you were to support this, there's nothing to stop another motion coming forward next year to add on to it and bulk it up. But a lot of the things that I have heard in response to it are around the resourcing, the time it will take, the pressure it will put onto the police, on to a strained system – I don't care. I can't come here on behalf of my members with their black eyes, with their broken teeth, and say, "Sorry mate – the courts are full sir. You're just prison staff remember." No, I can't do that. I'm sorry. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you Jordan. That vote is now open. We can close that vote. The motion is carried.

We're on to motion 104 which is a debate so no need for a seconder. Opening the debate for the NEC is Steve Gillan.

Motion 104

Conference debate the impact the Labour Government has had so far, in achieving the priorities contained within Strategic Aims and Objectives 2024 - 2029 - 5 Year Plan.

NEC

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you, Conference. I'll try and be very brief on this particular issue. So, the motion reads "Conference debate the impact the Labour Government has had so far in achieving the priorities contained within Strategic Aims and Objectives from 2024 to 2029, the 5-Year Plan" – that we laid out in 2024. So just to recap, what were those objectives: to achieve on the following and improve pay, terms and conditions; break the link between pension age and retirement age; improve staffing levels, training and professionalisation; reduce violence in the workplace with clear health and safety policies; to campaign for a Royal Commission into Prisons and the Criminal Justice System; to restore the right to strike for prison officers who currently do not have it. So, the impacts so far, after nine months of Labour Government, has been no improvement. But it still doesn't change our objectives, and we will continue to campaign on those aims and objectives that you set for us through Conference paper 3 in 2024. I'm hoping we might have some improvements next year or the year after or whatever. But if we don't, then we'll hold them to account, of course we will. Thank you, Conference.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, guests and visitors, once upon a time, not so long ago, I worked in a prison under a Conservative government but with a Labour council and a Labour MP adamant to shut this prison down. The Conservative government and HMPPS invested tens of millions of pounds updating the flooring, the cells. One of my colleagues that works with me in the Works Department at Send trained up four young offenders and they painted the whole prison and it looked immaculate. And the officers thought, "They're going to sell us to the private sector. That's what they're getting ready for." And then they introduced the biometric system for visits and the gate, which cost about £43,000. And then they thought, let's spend some more money, so they decided to change all the windows, £5 million, they decided

because we didn't have very good smoke detection system in the prison that they'd spend another £5 million and that didn't really work properly, and then they installed a tracker system when OSGs were really good at giving out keys and collecting them in with their £43,000 biometric system. Those tracker units were tested by a few CMs and a few governors and then they decided to shut us down. There was no fight from the Labour MP and there was no fight from the Labour council. They wanted that prison to be closed down, they wanted it bulldozed, they wanted to build flats on that land. Op Cap was about 395 prisoners if I remember rightly, and I think they've got 500 spaces less. Please join the debate.

<Applause>

MIKE KIMPTON – BRANCH CHAIR, WHATTON: Chair, NEC, Conference, I'm going to keep this short because just like you I want to go home! I think we're going to get more of the same, to be honest. So, listening to that Minister today, a Labour MP, who Labour obviously all about nationalising stuff, etc. – well they used to be, should I say? So, we want to nationalise, bring back into the fold the Works Department, but they're still putting it out to tender. Three new prisons being built, he's already just told us today that only one of them's going to be HMPPS, with the other two going out to tender. So yeah, I'm not convinced that we're going to get anything different from a Labour government we've not already seen with the Conservatives. Give them their due, though. Two years ago, Amy Rees was up at Conference saying that they're going to look at giving PAVA to the YCS area, and it didn't come into place until the Labour were here, so they get some kudos points for that one, but all in all I really don't think that we're going to see much improvement from Conservatives to Labour, to be honest with you. I hope that I'm wrong, I really do. I don't think we're going to get an impressive pay rise whenever they announce it, but – keep our fingers crossed. Let's hope that Labour do actually improve our conditions, but I'm not holding my breath.

<Applause>

NATHAN STANLEY – BRANCH CHAIR, STYAL: Winnie the – walking through Ten Acre Wood! No, seriously, we're going to discuss what Labour have brought so far. They promised to reintroduce our right to strike within the first 100 days. Well they haven't done that, have they? As far as I can see, they're no different from the last government. But hopefully – who knows. As far as I can see there's not much change in government. Sorry.

<Applause>

BILL BUPARAI – BRANCH CHAIR, BELMARSH: Chair, Conference, NEC, I wasn't planning on speaking on this but I just had to come up, unfortunately. We've heard what Steve said, has our pay got better? No. Have our terms and conditions got better? No. Have our pensions been resolved? No. Have staffing levels got better? No. Has training got better? No. Has violence got better? No. And have we achieved a Royal Commission? No. And have we got our right to strike back? No. The real issue is we're now left waiting and left hoping, as Steve said, and as a Union we can't be in a position where we're left hoping and waiting for the next four years that some of this is going to be achieved. The real question should be, what are we going to do about it, and we need a plan as a Union and a strategy to make sure that we achieve this. These are things that we should be pushing for, not hoping and waiting. Conference, please join the debate.

<Applause>

ADAM CLARK – BRANCH SECRETARY, SUDBURY: Chair, Conference, colleagues of the NEC, like many of us that are trade unionists in the room, when the Labour government ascended to power I thought it was a breath of fresh air, getting rid of the austerity measures and the Tory government. However, whilst we were at the TUC Conference, Kier Starmer said he was going to repeal anti-trade-union legislation and, like the National Chair has touched on, and other speakers, we still haven't got the right to strike back. The only difference I can see is, same old Tories, different shade of blue. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you for that debate, Conference. Two left, nearly there.

Motion 105, Wetherby. Seconder for Wetherby? Thank you.

Motion 105

Conference instructs the NEC to challenge Government policy, that was enacted after the 2017 Taylor report, to close all Young Offender Institutes and replace them with secure schools.

WETHERBY

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Morning, Conference, Chair, I'm asking for your support for motion 105 which reads, "Conference instructs the NEC to challenge Government policy, that was enacted after the 2017 Taylor report, to close all Young Offender Institutes and replace them with secure schools." So, Charlie Taylor, in relation to the YCS, is not our friend. He has misrepresented facts of events at Wetherby that our Chair, Mr Fairhurst, has rightly backed us on. Charlie Taylor has never apologised for the harm his words have caused our colleagues. We lost a number of them off sick because he wrongly accused them of stripping girls, which just did not happen. The government's current policy following its adoption of the Taylor Report is to close all YOIs and replace them with secure schools. The one that's already open is already failing. Medway is in chaos. There are offers for detached duty for Custodial Managers to go down there to try and repair it and gain control. They have minimal use of force. Prison officers are replaced by teachers – to coin a phrase, those who can do and those who can't teach. It's being partially overseen by Ofsted,

so it's not being held to the same standards as YOIs. The YOI estate is literally crumbling.

Instead of closing YOIs, we need proper investment to make them safe, able to house rehabilitation activities and thus be fit for purpose. We need to keep improving training, improving standards, not only for ourselves but for the behaviour of the young people that are in there. We need to try to reduce reoffending before it becomes embedded and becomes a problem for the wider estate. Although our current cohort are exceptionally violent, with many serving long sentences for violent crimes, our good work in the YOI should be viewed as preparatory and not conclusive, which is always held against us. This policy must be scrapped. The government needs to stop outsourcing responsibility to third-party settings. We demand real improvements to YOIs and no more experiments.

Just to finally digress, we have had one prisoner recently that was returned to Wetherby, left us as an enhanced level YP, somebody that was on the road to being rehabilitated and being released. He has been returned to us because he destroyed classrooms, cells – bedrooms for that. This system does not work. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC, we lost a lot of our staff that wanted to continue their work rehabilitating these young children that left us to join Medway STC Oasis, as it is now called. Some of the tales that are coming out of that place beggar belief. Just last week, one of their young children was refusing to bang up because he hadn't had his dinner. Their what would be a governor took it upon himself to send two staff to Asda to pick up a steak dinner, cook it and return it to the young person on the unit. He had the staff cook the steak dinner to make this lad bang up. One of my old colleagues turned up to work, he goes in, goes into his place of work, which they call flats, walked into the office where he's met with one of these young people, didn't know what was going on. "Do you want a cup of coffee mate? How you getting on? You alright?" "Yeah, no worries." Nothing was said, lad gets up and walks out. Within about three minutes one of the managers turns up, a few extra staff. "How did you get him out? He's been in here for six hours with weapons refusing." He's just turned up to work, no one's told him anything about it. It's absolute chaos and carnage. They've had staff radios taken, staff punched in the face repeatedly to then be told, "Just take him back to the gym, let him cool off in there. He can do a session and he'll be alright." It is absolute carnage. We think the YCS was bad. This place is absolutely deplorable. Charlie Taylor and his merry band of cowboys haven't got an absolute clue what they're doing, condemning us and letting this place run, an absolute travesty. Please support this motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Nobody else? Terry McCarthy.

TERRY MCCARTHY – NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: Conference, speaking in support of the motion. Firstly, why anybody would pay attention to a report written by Charlie Taylor's beyond me, but that's just a different story!

<Applause>

There's no evidence at all to suggest that secure schools are more effective than the YCS estate. There's only one place for feral young criminals and it's not school. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: That vote is now open. And we can view the results. That motion is carried.

106, Wetherby. Thank you.

Motion 106

Conference instructs the NEC to lobby Government to repeal the law that allows charities to run custodial and secure settings.

WETHERBY

ANDREW COX – BRANCH CHAIR, WETHERBY: Thank you for that! Conference, Chair – asking for support for motion 106, which is "Conference instructs the NEC to lobby Government to repeal the law that allows charities to run custodial and secure settings." So just as this is the final motion, I just want to say thank you very much for being able to come up here and speak, and for everyone else as well. A lot of these issues have been affecting us all and this motion cuts to the core of the justice, professionalism and public accountability for custodial and secure settings. The last motion broached the subject of secure schools. Conferences has shown we disagree with the notion over the future of the YCS. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, section 164, enables charities to run custodial and secure settings for 16-19-year-olds. The Medway Secure School, Oasis Restore, is run by the Oasis Charitable Trust. A couple of points to note here. The cost of converting Medway STC to the Oasis Restore was an incredible £36.5 million, instead of the projected £4.9 million that was put forward at the beginning of the project. We've already heard this week about millions and millions of pounds being wasted by HMPPS. What if somebody competent administered these projects? We're told Oasis Restore doesn't have a veto on who goes to them, but I know they do. We've seen emails sent to our governors that show that they're able to reject people because they're too violent or they don't fit their criteria, and they go to Feltham, Wetherby or Werrington, where we deal with them. They cherry-pick their prisoners. I've already shared a story, Tyler II, of what happens when they have a problem. They like to outsource their problems too. The secure

school opened saying their theme is relentless love – imagine that, relentless love. Love is not a behaviour management or rehabilitation strategy and, when deployed in a custodial setting as the main theme, it risks blurring professional lines. We've already touched on this week job descriptions, adverts, recruitment being not fit for purpose. This feeds into that. We need to remember we're friendly, not friends. Let's call this what it is – it's a dangerous experiment being driven by an ideology with no evidence, but there is maybe a hint of self-interest too. The ex-YCS Executive Director in position at the time is now on the board of trustees for Oasis Restore. This is the latest incarnation of the failed Big Society, where government abdicates its responsibility for society. It's austerity on paper, but in reality it's a very, very expensive mistake. It's outsourcing wrapped in a halo. Conference, Wetherby asks that you support this motion to help the NEC have a platform to lobby government to repeal this bill. Thank you very much for listening to me, now and all week. I hope you support this motion.

<Applause>

GARY MILSOM-JAMES – BRANCH SECRETARY, SEND: Chair, NEC, Conference, invited guests and visitors, I ask you to support this motion. In His Majesty's prisons there is space for charities and they do really, really good work, day in and day out. A lot of the charities keep people alive that are incarcerated in our prisons because of laws and evidence from 38 years ago, and then two years ago they found out that this person was totally innocent – but these charities keep those people alive and build up their resilience in our prisons. The NEC, the POA, we have to have public prisons and institutions with professionally trained prison officers and prison colleagues to look after, support each other first and foremost, but the people in our care, ensuring that the don't get more damaged and we send them back to society where they're safe to live in the community. Please support the motion.

<Applause>

TYLER TIERNEY – BRANCH SECRETARY, COOKHAM WOOD: Chair, Conference, NEC, I'll keep this brief because I'm eager to get home and get some relentless love, but that's a topic for another time.

<Laughter>

You've got to ask yourself, where's the money going? This place, Oasis, cost over £40 million. £40 million! The staff salaries – we had officers leaving Cookham, going around there, going part time and still earning an extra £10,000 on top each year. Where's the money going? It's far too expensive. They're taking massive dividends out of this, going back into their pockets, all the shareholders, the charity trust members. Like he said there, they all sit on these boards, they all take the money back. Where's the money going? It's far too expensive. They've not tipped over a roll of 15 since they've been open. It beggars belief. You've got prisons up and down the country that are falling apart – can't get cages for windows, can't afford netting for drones – but yet we can keep this place going for 15 young children/juvenile offenders. It's criminal. They're the criminals, not the ones they're locking up.

<Applause>

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: Conference, Chair, NEC, honourable invited guests, I just have one question, that when NEC does go up there to ask them, charity means basically money in their pocket?

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Well, every charity I know has a CEO on about 200 grand a year, so work that one out.

TAYYAB HAMEED – BRANCH SECRETARY, FELTHAM: That's what I'm saying, so far as I can tell I'm on a charity <inaudible> and I almost give my life away, so if this institution has been opened by the Director who is there and now he's on the board of Directors, what is next? Where does our help come in? Support this motion to make sure we don't have these sort of things happen again. Thank you.

<Applause>

MICK PIMBLETT – DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY: Chair, NEC, Conference, speaking on behalf of the NEC, for a change asking you to support the motion! Conference, when is a charity not a charity? The answer is simple enough, it's when they're running a prison or a custodial or secure setting. Charitable organisations are increasingly becoming the preferred model for running Britain's increasingly marketised penal system, and this is morally wrong. So why is it wrong? Most charities will argue against prison expansion whilst maintaining their commitment to seeing fewer people incarcerated, but until that happens we'll get involved in it. Whilst the impulse is noble, the execution's a tad naive. This means that charities are now being party to decisions about security, the use of physical restraint, the treatment of suicide risks – as well as the cuddly stuff like art therapy – which is surely anathema to their original charitable aims. The fundamental compromise is a domino effect.

How can the public take seriously the penal reform implications of a charity bidding to build another prison? How does a prisoner relate to the rehab work proffered by an organisation he used to think of as independent but is now involved in decisions about his lockup time. How will <inaudible> the media, which seems to drive debate as much as any Justice Secretary, respond to the first riot of a prison run by woolly liberals? Not only must the charity reconcile its role in rehabilitation and advocacy of prisoners' rights, with its new position as keeper of the keychain, it must also find a way to remain credible whilst also being focussed on profit-making and providing services at the lowest cost. This is the real catch-22. Over the past decade, funding of the charity sector has shaped it dramatically. It's no longer donations that are keeping charities in business, but government contracts. Competition is fierce and it's the beefier, more corporate charities that can now front up to the likes of Group 4 and Serco. And they're also the ones who feel the pressure to participate in private partnerships, less someone get to the cash before them. The discourse around charitable government of prisons can of course appear a bit niche, but the broader question is, what are charities really for? To bolster or replace the state, or is it to legitimise privatisation? Conference, support the motion.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Thank you all. The vote is now open. And we can look at the results of that vote. That motion is carried. That brings us to the end of the motions for Conference.

Before I address you briefly, I will invite Steve Gillan to make some announcements.

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Conference. The first announcement is in relation to the charity, the specified charity, Air Ambulance. The Finance Committee have agreed to give £2,000 to that. I hope you endorse that decision, Conference.

<Applause>

Conference, I never like to close Conference on a negative basis but there is a slight negative and we'll have to address it. There's at least 20 branches missing from the Conference floor at different parts of the day today. One, that is disrespectful to the POA membership for their branches. Two, it is disrespectful to the tail-end motions of some of them, which were vitally important. And three, I applied for facility time for the whole duration of Conference and the employer sanctioned it. Now our rules are quite clear that you can only depart Conference with permission of the National Chair and the General Secretary, otherwise you have to pay your subs back. Now I'll be gently reminding the branches because we do electronic balloting so I know who's missing, because they haven't voted, but the reality is I'll be gently reminding them that they're here on POA business and I don't think it was fair to the likes of Wetherby and other branches that had really important motions there, when some branches were missing. And I know I'm preaching to the converted because you're all here. We've still got the employer sitting at the back of the hall and, each year – because facility time was withdrawn for trade union activities, which this is, in 2012 – and each year now I have to make a business case. It's not automatically given, and quite frankly the employer listened to our business case for the last few years and granted that facility time, so we can't let ourselves down, Conference. With that, I'm now going to introduce the National Chair for his final speech and then I will close Conference after the National Chair. Thank you.

<Applause>

MARK FAIRHURST – NATIONAL CHAIR: Let's finish on a high. Conference, NEC, honorary life members, invited guests, thank you so much for a truly enjoyable week. You've been absolutely fantastic, each and every one of you. Professional, passionate, some good debates, delivered your motions well. Your branches should be proud of you so well done and thank you for everything this week.

<Applause>

And of course, this doesn't happen overnight. First thing tomorrow morning, Angela Sinclair will be hard at it preparing for next year's Conference. She puts so much work into this running so smoothly, which it has all week, and we've got a lot of people to thank for that, not only Angela. Her support team, the girls who check you in, Nicola Hubert and Paula Larwill. We've got Steve Lewis, the research officer who organises all the livestreams. We've got our tech team at the back there, your electronic voting – this stage set is the best I've seen for a while. It's absolutely amazing. It looks fantastic! And of course the venue staff who satisfy our every need. We couldn't run Conference without our dedicated volunteers who run security. So, let's give them all a big round of applause.

<Applause>

Well done to the first-time speakers. You've all popped your cherries now so there's no excuses in future Conferences. For those who haven't popped your cherry yet, you've seen how it all works now, so get up next year and let's have more first-time speakers. It seems to improve year after year, which is fantastic. You did very well. With some of the debates, the drone debate, what can I say about drones? It's only a matter of time. You know better than me and we've briefed the Prisons Minister this morning, over breakfast. Every delegate there in the room said the same thing about drones. I cannot understand why we haven't introduced drone-blocking technology to secure our airspace. Why? It can't be about cost. What cost do you put on one of your lives when a gun is smuggled in by a drone? So, we will keep chipping away at this government and this employer to do the right thing by you and secure our airspace once and for all.

<Applause>

The open estate, it's been very vocal this conference. They know what's coming, we know what's coming, people serving five years or less farmed off to the open estate to create space for the rest of us. It's going to be a disaster. They are seeing record levels of returns already. At Kirkham last weekend, they had a slashing of a prisoner. Absconds are rife, drug use is rife, elicit item finds are rife. It's only a matter of time before we lose an open estate like we did at Ford years ago, because the allocations system is completely and utterly wrong and you know, in the closed estate, what you're sending to the open estate simply to create more space. It's wrong and it needs to be addressed and what we're asking for the open estate is more staff, the introduction of keywork because they're going to need it, and we want enhanced gate security so all those prisoners coming back from work and from their communities can be searched thoroughly to stop these items coming in. The open estate – I can guarantee you we will push that agenda for you. We've heard from the private estate and the NHS. Listen, the private sector, you have got a voice. You're very much valued in this Union. You're part of this family, we will always back you. And the biggest growth in membership is from the private sector, and we will try our best to engage with your employers and get recognition rights for you all in every private sector jail. It's no secret that we want the private sector brought back into the public sector, of course we do, because we'll get you better terms and conditions, better pay and a better pension, so we want that for everyone – but please don't think you haven't got a voice. It doesn't matter where you're working – immigration, escort services, private prisons, the NHS – you are very much valued so please do not think anything less.

We've discussed and we've had fringes on the Health and Safety protocol and the High Court injunction. Look, I don't care about no High Court injunction. Who's going to bang me up when you're all stood outside? And by the way, they're going to have to catch me first!

<Laughter>

But I always say this to you whenever I address a branch – if it's not safe to do, don't do it. It's as simple as that, because I and we, we will always back you, I promise you that. The General Secretary said it and I've said it. We will never, ever repudiate any action you take – get that in your heads now.

<Applause>

Uniform's come up again. Look, it doesn't matter what you want. You're getting polo shirts and cargo kecks.

<Applause>

The employer's already decided because 8,000 of you filled in a survey out of a workforce of over 30,000 and the majority of those respondents wanted polo shirts and cargo kecks – so we'll look forward, when you get them, in two years' time, for a load of you to bring motions to Conference saying the uniform's crap, it shrinks in the wash, it stains, it looks scruffy and it's not fit for purpose. That's uniform, isn't it? It doesn't change.

I'm glad you've mentioned the appalling treatment from some of your SMT. It has to stop. I've privately met some delegates – I won't divulge which branch they're from – who have been seriously affected by the treatment from their SMT. Bullying, intimidation, threats – it's affected their personal life, it's affected their mental health. Can I please implore each and every one of you, do not suffer alone. No matter what you're going through – if it's mistreatment at work, if it's your personal life, if it's the fact that you've been involved in traumatic incidents and there's not enough support for you – please, please, please do not suffer alone. We are here for you. We'll get you help. We'll get you that support, whatever it takes. We'll do it for you. You've got it on offer from the employer, but we'll do it for you. Please do not suffer. We hear what you're saying and we're trying our best to get you that support in the workplace, but we will do our best for you. We know how bad things are, so please take that on board and accept any offers of help that we give you.

Listen, when we're talking about assaults, let's get it clear. Every single assault is a serious assault, whether it's injurious physically or not. And I'll tell you why – because it affects you psychologically. It might be a threat, it might be a push, it doesn't matter. It might be a nose-to-nose confrontation, it doesn't matter. If you are assaulted physically, no matter how minor, it affects you psychologically. And the more you accept it, over time, as it happens time and time and time again, you eventually break down and you get PTSD, as the research at this Conference has proven, and our employer needs to do more. We need to engage with the CPS and police forces more, and we are working on that for you. It's getting better but it's still not good enough. And all this procedural justice rubbish must apply to you just as much as it applies to the convicts in your care.

<Applause>

There is only one way to get back control of our prisons and that's by your governors listening to you. No more regime, regime, regime, over safety, safety, safety. We must unlock manageable numbers of prisoners and, if you don't want full wing unlocks, don't have them. Make a stand with our support. We have proven what it takes to get back control of our prisons. Smaller, manageable numbers of prisoners, getting those positive prisoner-staff relationships back on-board, getting the intelligence to lock down our wings and our jails, to get rid of those mobile phones, those drugs and those weapons. That's what it's going to take, but only you can do it, because it's clear to me after this Conference your SMT ain't interested in your safety. Well, I'll tell you now, that's going to change, and you're going to be the implementors of that change. I can promise you, with our support, we will get control of our prisons again because enough is enough. Look what's happened this week with the assaults on staff, the hospitalisations of staff. It's all over the country and it needs to stop and it needs to stop now.

<Applause>

We've heard about our OSG colleagues, the dangers they face. When did you ever think that OSGs working in the open estate would be put at risk? But it's happening more and more because they're facing prisoners in that role more and more. So, we'll support our OSG colleagues and we'll fight for protections as well. And we're not forgetting the private sector because many of you are not even carrying batons. We will do our best, I promise you, over the next 12 months, we will do our best for you.

I have to mention a few motions. Motion 53, support when you're suspended. Many of our colleagues get suspended. Instead of sending them on alternative duties or giving them different options, many of them are suspended. When do you ever hear of senior managers getting suspended? Very rare, isn't it? Why are they so exempt? Why aren't they suspended? And listen, I'm talking from personal experience. It's not nice. I used to think ah, suspended full pay, time off, great – till it happens to you! I'll tell you what it's like being suspended and accused of something you haven't done. Every single morning you wake up, you think I've done nothing wrong, they're going to sack me. Before you try and get some sleep, you think I've done nothing wrong, they're gonna sack me. Your head goes, you don't know how to think, it affects your private life, it affects your health, it affects your mental wellbeing. It's not exactly a rush to get it resolved either. It takes months and months and months. If you're under police investigation, it could take years. You know the only people who supported me, and the only people who support our suspended members, are the POA. You won't get many phone calls from your line managers. You'll get told to phone in once a week to report for duty, even though you're suspended, and boy oh boy, if you miss that phone call you'll know about it because they'll threaten to dock your pay. The only people who will ever support staff who are suspended are you, the only people. So, we will be pushing that because it's quite right. You need support if you are suspended and it's the employer who's done it to you, so they should fund it as well.

And then we had motion 59, the debate about FARM meetings. Well, this is what we're up against and our members are up against. I know a governor who now thinks that they are a medical expert and that anxiety and depression is not a medical condition, so on a FARM meeting this governor decided to dismiss this member of staff with zero percent compensation. Zero percent. The NEC rep has just won the Civil Service appeals board appeal over that compensation. It's gone from zero percent to 100 percent and guess what? There would be no repercussions for the most inept, incompetent, overpromoted governor in this service. None whatsoever. Is it any wonder that staff have no faith in the senior leaders in this service? Absolutely ridiculous.

And then motion 61 about extending trigger points for operational staff – yeah, it makes perfect sense, doesn't it? And the problem is, this is what we're up against at a national level. The MoJ are trying to align all their policies and bring us into line with them, because they think when it comes to line managing staff, that CEMs can sit down every eight weeks and have a meaningful conversation with you. Well, you can in the MoJ because you've got nice tea rooms and you're only line managing about half a dozen staff, but you can't do it operational. Well, why aren't there trigger points for when you go sick, extended because of the trauma and stress and the dangers you face on the frontline, because you're not sitting in an office in the MoJ in an air-conditioned office with a nice coffee machine. So, it makes sense to extend those trigger points and maybe it'd stop most of us getting stupid sickness warnings and then getting threatened with the sack for doing our job and getting assaulted on duty because we can't get a sick-leave excusal. It needs to change and we will push that change for you, I promise you that.

Weatherby, listen – I'll tell you why you haven't had an apology from Charlie Taylor. Because he's a coward, that's why. Because he hasn't got the morals or the ethics to give you an apology, even though he knows it's wrong. He knows he is wrong to criticise staff for saving a young girl's life. That's how much of a man he is. He can't even apologise when he gets it wrong.

<Applause>

We've had some great guest speakers and I was particularly proud of Sally Jameson addressing Conference. Former prison officer, now a Member of Parliament, what an ally we've got there. But my favourite speaker was Jennifer Rademaker, because if the POA had conducted the review we couldn't have come up with any better recommendations than her. And I know Jennifer values the input from the POA. In fact, if it wasn't for our engagement I doubt any of those recommendations would have been so forceful. She knows what's going on. You know what's going on, and we will force that change, I can promise you that. And what this Conference has proven to me is that the warmth in the room and the faith and the support you give me and this NEC is palpable, and we really appreciate that and long may that continue. We are here for you and, under my leadership, I can promise you we always will be. We will never back down. It's true, this has proven it, we are united not divided! Standing up and never bowing down!

<Applause>

Fighting, never giving up. We're battling together and we will win together. No more chaos – let's get control of our prisons! In unity, in strength, in solidarity to you all. Thank you.

<Applause>

STEVE GILLAN – GENERAL SECRETARY: Just before I close Conference, I've also got some remarks that I've taken from Conference. Clearly, security, order and control must be the order of the day going forward. No doubt in my mind. Said that this morning on TV and will continue to say it on TV and through the media and different things. The Labour government talk about a new deal for workers. Of course we welcome a new deal for workers, but I want a new deal for prison officers and OSGs, and we'll be reminding the Labour government about that. We want the right to strike restored. It's a basic fundamental human right that should never have been taken away from us and, if it takes another 30 years to get back, then so be it, but the reality is our campaign goes on.

I went to Downing Street a few months ago as part of a TUC delegation of the General Council and I told Rachel Reeves to her face, because it wasn't Chatham House Rules, we made certain demands. I said, "Save yourself £4.6 billion and don't build any more prisons. Invest in the staff and the prisons that you already have. Let the minister that you've brought in do his bit about reducing the prison population. Why on earth would we want to spend £4.6 billion on new-build prisons that they're going to hive off to the private sector so that they can make a profit when it could be invested in our public services now? James Timpson's on record as saying he believes that the prison population could be reduced by 30%. So why would you want to build more prisons? Why don't you give him time to get the reforms that they want to take the British public with them to have a prison service that we can proud of, rather than just warehousing people? That's the reality.

But let me now turn to the POA. God, are we in safe hands! I remember years ago, just before I became General Secretary, in 2010, when people told me the POA were a spent force, people told me we were doomed, people told me we'd a falling membership, we had no clout anymore, because we didn't have the right to strike and we couldn't do anything. Well, I think you've proved them wrong! This Executive have proved them wrong and we'll continue to go from strength to strength because of you, and because of our members, but mainly because of what you do for the POA. You are our root and branch, you are our eyes and ears and I'm proud of each and every one of you for the passion that you bring to Conference and the brilliant debates that we've had over the past few days. Give yourselves a round of applause.

<Applause>

I look forward to being your General Secretary for the next five years because my new term of office starts. We've got much work to do because we haven't actually scratched the surface. They don't call the trade union movement the struggle for nothing, because no-one gives us anything. We're going to have to educate, agitate and organise going forward, and we do that together. And it gives me great pride, because I've been around the Executive a long time, since about 2002, and I used to see the bad old days when we had motion after motion about internal issues, votes of

no confidence in the Executive. Votes of no confidence, you had political issues, people inter-fighting in branches and different things. And guess what? Our agenda was one of positivity over the last few years and it's getting better. It's getting better every year as young people as well gain confidence in getting up the rostrum, and long may that continue. Of course, I'd like to see more women delegates here because we've got about 25% women density in our Union. We will continue to push forward. I think the delegate, the young woman that got up about breastfeeding and different things in prisons – God, I thought we were going back to the dark ages – well done her for showing up the employer, quite frankly. But that's a male responsibility as well, to make sure that we champion women as well in the workplace, because for too long now women have been abused in the workplace, had inuendoes, been the butt of jokes and different things. No more. No more. We should be championing women.

<Applause>

And championing women, I've got to say, because it's mainly women that work for the POA in support grades. If you've not listened to the podcast, please listen to the podcast. Angela Sinclair, 43 years' service. I mean she started when she was 10, but y'know –

<Laughter>

But seriously, 43 years of working for the POA! Paula Larwill, not far behind her either. Nicola Hubert, brilliant secretary to me and Mark. Paula, brilliant as well in finance. I couldn't do my job without those individuals. And then we've got them back at Cronin House working this week as well in Lindon House. They're fabulous, fabulous people! I couldn't wish for a better workforce, quite frankly.

And now turning to the National Executive Committee and full-time officers. They are decent people. Transparent. Ian Carson at the end said to me the other day, "Who cares for the carers?" Because you know what? You're the carers. And we need to put systems in place to care for you. Mark touched on it about mental health. We've got to look after each other because nobody's going to do it for us. And then of course you made my day yesterday by renaming Lindon House to Simpson House. Thank you so much for that.

<Applause>

I was contacted this week by a woman called Caroline Curry. Caroline had been a victim in the Manchester Arena bombing and she was outraged by what happened at Frankland, as we all are. She cannot believe the facilities this individual was given – and neither can we, quite frankly. And let me tell you, it's going to change because we're going to force that change. So, from a "spent force," the POA, let me tell you, politicians are sitting up and listening to us, because they fear what our next steps may be if they don't do certain actions. We will force through change. Make no mistake about that, because the status quo is simply not good enough and, over the coming weeks and months, because I'll tell you what, the Manchester victims and their families have written to Keir Stamer and Shabana Mahmood seeking meetings and, so far, because of a police investigation, that hasn't been sanctioned. Well, let me tell you, I stand side by side with them and I'll do everything in my power as well with the National Chair to make sure that we work with the Manchester Arena victims and their families so that we never see the likes of this again in the high-security estate.

<Applause>

Now, Mark Fairhurst paid tribute to me, which I was humbled by and I thank him, in his opening speech, but we're a team. Everybody's a team up here, there's no individuals. But let me be clear, I've watched Mark since he was a branch official at Liverpool. Then he got on the National Executive Committee, and then he became our National Chair in 2017. I've watched Mark mature into the Chair that he is today and, let me tell you, I've worked with lots of Chairmen over the years since I've been a local branch official – this man is right up there with the best of them.

<Applause>

When me and Mark go to events, when we go and meet ministers, politicians of all political parties, they listen to what this man says. They listen to what he says because he does it with passion. He's sincere and he follows your agenda to the hilt. No backstepping. He's a brilliant National Chair. You've seen him deliver this week. You've seen both of us delivering in the media, but let me tell you, Mark was superb in the media, absolutely brilliant. And let me tell you, if you don't return him as National Chair there's something wrong, because he deserves to be the Chair not just for the next five years but for five years after that and after that. Absolutely fantastic Chair and I don't just consider him as one of the best, I consider him a true friend as well.

And finally from me, and I'll let you all go home, it's got to be said, one of my favourites this week was Brian Goodman, Honorary Life Member. I learned a lot off Brian as a young delegate. Brian was always dapper at Conference back in the '90s and early '00s. I'll tell you what, when Brian got up at that rostrum on behalf of Wandsworth or any other branch, people listened. People listened, the Executive listened, and by God he wasn't slow in coming forward when he'd an issue with the National Executive Committee. But he did it in such a professional manner. And I can see some people developing along the lines of what Brian Goodman did, so we are in safe hands, Conference. We're a trade union and the old saying is, the past we inherit, the future we shape. Have a safe journey home.

<Applause>

END OF CONFERENCE