

Report of UNISON National Retired Members' Virtual Conference 12/13 October 2021

General

I attended as the delegate from Enfield Local Government branch.

The National Retired Members' Committee (NRMC) decided to hold a virtual, online, conference rather than the usual gathering together at a seaside venue. At the time of planning the event, Government guidance etc was still changing, and it was also felt that a higher proportion of potential attendees might have underlying medical conditions that could dissuade them from participating.

UNISON's virtual conference arrangements inevitably involve some compromises around procedures, and also around the atmosphere generated by the buzz of a hall full of delegates.

Nevertheless, and despite a few technical glitches, the majority of the business was transacted smoothly.

Around 170 members participated.

The invited speaker was Jon Richards, Assistant General Secretary for Bargaining, Negotiating, and Equality, who stood in for the unavoidably absent General Secretary, Christina McAnea.

Caucuses for self-organised groups were held on the 12 October, and the debate of motions on 13 October.

The full report of motions will be put on the UNISON website in the near future, so I will confine myself to key points.

Enfield's amendment (amendment 13.2)

I was pleased to move the branch's amendment which, essentially, criticised Boris Johnson as unfit to be Prime Minister. It was carried overwhelmingly, and the substantive motion was, too. The NRMC are asked to seek to promote publicity in the union for that view.

How I voted

I voted in favour of all the other motions and amendments that were debated, except for two that I voted against.

One sought to criticise the NRMC for not doing enough for retired members during the covid crisis, claiming that the only sources of trade union information were the TUC and the National Pensioners Convention. Having experienced how difficult it was to operate at branch level during the crisis I felt it was unfair criticism. It was also pointed out that much of the information for retired members that came from the TUC had originated as UNISON material.

Another motion sought to campaign for strict measures on e-scooters. A speaker against quite reasonably suggested that as there were already tight restrictions on them, and there were pilots being run in various areas to determine what controls were needed, it would be jumping the gun somewhat.

However, the conference did not vote the same way as I did and both items of business were carried.

Motions to National Delegate Conference (NDC) 2022

The Retired Members' conference is entitled to send two motions to NDC and an online ballot was conducted to determine which of the motions carried should go forward. I voted for Composite A on care and motion 10 on not making the elderly carry the cost of the covid crisis. I am pleased to say conference felt the same way, so these will be submitted.

Retired Members' Conference 2022

This will take place 18/19 October at the Telford International Centre.

I am happy to answer any questions about the conference or my report.

Gary Williams
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