**REPORT ON RESTRUCTURING ANNUAL RETIRED MEMBERS’ CONFERENCE**

**(UPDATED FOLLOWING INITIAL RESPONSES)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The report arises from motion 19 carried at the 2014 UNISON retired members’ conference and motion 20 which was remitted.

1.2 Motion 19 was primarily concerned with exploring ways of allowing more time for debate of conference whilst not extending the duration of conference. Reference was made to the number of delegates speaking on motions when there were none opposing. It was suggested that the Chair could curtail debate in these circumstances. However the NRMC believes that this goes beyond the prerogative of the Chair. Delegates themselves can curtail debate by asking for the question to be put and then voting. In addition speaking times can be reduced on the recommendation of the standing orders committee (SOC) if agreed by delegates voting for the proposal.

1.3 Motion 20 addressed the issue making the caucuses more effective. Three main areas requiring action were identified: publicising the meetings, producing reports of the meetings for inclusion in the annual report and extending the length of the meetings from the current 30 minutes.

1.4 As explained elsewhere in the annual report. The following action is proposed with regard to the issues raised in 1.3:

1.4.1 In addition to information concerning the caucuses being contained in the conference bulletin, the meetings will also be publicized in the various equality e bulletins produced by UNISON.

1.4.2 The conference guide will contain advice that the caucuses should appoint a member to produce a report for consideration by the National Committee and inclusion in the Annual Report.

1.4.3 The timings of the caucuses will be considered in this report on the restructuring of annual retired members’ conference.

**2. PARAMETERS OF REPORT**

2.1 The following factors are relevant when considering any restructuring of conference:

2.1.1 Duration of conference cannot extend beyond the current two days (usually the second Tuesday and Wednesday in October).

2.1.2 Conference venues are booked at least 3 years in advance. Future venues are 2015 Brighton, 2016 Southport and 2017 Llandudno.

2.1.3 Plenary sessions cannot be held without a standing orders report being available.

2.1.4 Budgetary requirements mean that any restructuring cannot involve additional expenditure.

2.1.5 Any proposals for conference timings must allow for meetings of the NRMC, SOC, regional meetings and caucuses.

2.1.6 Conference must close at 4.00pm to allow set-up for Police and Justice Conference which follows on straight after Retired Members’ Conference.

**3. INITIAL VIEWS OF REGIONS AND LGBT CAUCUS**

3.1 Regions were asked to indicate which of the options contained in paragraphs 6 to 9 of this report they preferred.

3.2 Eastern region stated that the status quo should be maintained.

3.3 Yorkshire & Humberside region stated that it preferred option 1 but made the point that workshops/discussion groups should be maintained and have preference. But this is contrary to the information in paragraph 6.3.3 which explains “Option 1 provides no time for panel debate or workshops. An alternative to these may be a keynote speaker during either the second or third conference sessions on the Wednesday.”

The region also made a further number of proposals but they exceeded the parameters of this report as established by motions 19 and 20:

3.3.1 Caucus meetings should all be held at the same time. This would not be possible as it would exclude participation by any member self identifying as belonging to more than one self-organised group.

3.3.2 Regional meetings should all be held at the same time. This would require 12 rooms rather than the current 6 rooms which conflicts with paragraphs 2.1.2 and 2.1.4.

3.3.3 Reduce speaking times from the start of conference. This is provided for by the arrangements outlined in paragraph 1.2.

3.3.4 Reference was made to workshop registration at the conference venue being unfair towards delegates with long journeys. Workshop registration was not referred to in motions 19 and 20.

3.4 Scotland region supported option 1 but proposed a number of further amendments to the timetable in paragraph 3.4.1.

3.4.1 Monday

2.30pm – 4.00pm National Retired Members‟ Committee

4.00pm - 6.00pm Standing Orders Committee

Tuesday

10.00am – 10.30am Black Members‟ Caucus

10.30am – 11.00am Women‟s Caucus

11.00am – 11.30am Disabled Members‟ Caucus

11.30am – 12 noon Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus

12 noon – 1.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

1.00pm – 2.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

2.30pm – 4.30pm First Conference Session

(4.45pm - 6.00pm Fringe Meetings)

Wednesday

9.30am – 12.30pm Second Conference Session

12.30pm – 2.00pm Lunch/Fringe Meetings

2.00pm – 4.00pm Third Conference Session

4.30pm Ballot closes

3.4.2 Scotland region explained their amendments as follows:

“The SOC meeting on Monday would not incur extra costs. As with the NRMC a hotel room could be booked to accommodate the Monday late afternoon meeting and most Members will travel to the Conference location on the Monday whether the meeting is on Monday late afternoon or Tuesday morning.

We consider Fringe Meetings could take the place of the workshops and panel debate and could cover a wider range of topics than is currently available.

We agree debating time should be increased but should not then be eroded by hearing a keynote speaker who may or may not stick to time or be of interest to all Delegates. This could easily be covered in a fringe meeting.

We consider the General Secretary should be invited to address Delegates but not his/her substitutes.

3.5 A number of references relating to the options were received from the West Midlands region and answered by the National Retired Members’ Committee as follows:

3.5.1 **Financial Considerations**

**These should not be considered as they formed no part of the motions that requested the restructuring and are the responsibility of the NEC.**

Any proposals that have financial consequences have to be highlighted.

3.5.2 **Tuesday morning meeting of the NRMC**

**Can this start earlier say at 9.30?**

The meeting could start earlier but this would not provide additional time for other meetings due to the need to set up rooms which are only available from mid day.

3.5.3 **More efficient timings on Tuesday**

**Why is 2.00 to 2.15 and 3.45 to 4.00 left blank?**

Within the current timetable this provides time for comfort breaks and moving between meetings.

3.5.4 **Regional Meetings**

**Do these need one hour?**

Only opportunity for regional delegates to come together to discuss the agenda prior to conference. There may be opposition to shortening the duration of these meetings whilst proposing the lengthening of other meetings.

3.5.5 **Plenary Sessions**

**Could these be split between Tuesday and Wednesday?**

Yes – subject to there being sufficient time to produce a standing orders report for the Tuesday plenary session.

3.5.6 **Standing Orders Committee**

**Could Standing Orders meet on Tuesday morning or during the time allocated to caucus meetings? Could individual members of the SOC be asked for their view on this? Also a fairly short SOC meeting at lunchtime on Tuesday could enable a plenary session to be held later that afternoon. The agenda would have to be flexible to allow for non-discussion on any item that SOC had not considered. SOC could then meet during a plenary session to agree a second report for Wednesday morning.**

One option suggested in the report is that SOC meet on Tuesday morning. Tuesday lunchtime would not be viable due to the need to print a SOC report for the afternoon plenary session.

3.5.6 **Length of Conference**

**To enable full and proper consideration of motions the amount of plenary time needs to be increased by at least one hour. This could be achieved by an earlier start, shorter lunch break or slightly later finish, say 4.15 if there is not to be a plenary session on Tuesday afternoon.**

Report contains proposals to increase the amount of plenary time.

3.5.7 **Inclusiveness**

**What measures could be taken to promote more inclusiveness?**

Previously there have been workshops for new delegates to explain how conference works and to encourage their involvement.

3.5.8 **Fairness of Speaker’s time**

**It is not fair that afternoon speakers are given less time than morning speakers. If there is to be a reduction in speaker’s time it should apply to the whole of the Conference.**

Speaking times is the responsibility of the Standing Orders’ Committee with the approval of delegates. There is nothing to prevent the SOC proposing a reduction in all speaking times from the start of conference and delegates voting on it.

3.5.9 **Possible revised timetable**

**Tuesday**

**9.15 – 10.45 National Retired Members’ Committee**

**10.50 – 1.45 Caucus meetings**

**11.00 – 1.00 Meet and Greet/SOC/Meeting with President**

**1.50 – 2.20 Regional meetings**

**2.45 – 3.35 Regional meetings**

**3.45 – 6.00 Plenary Session/SOC**

**Wednesday**

**9.15 – 10.30 Panel debate and Workshops**

**10.45 – 12.45 Plenary Session**

**12.45 – 2.00 Lunch**

**2.00 – 4.00 Plenary Session**

A number of options for timetables are included in the report. There would be a lack of time to prepare and print a written SOC report for the Tuesday plenary session. An earlier start for Panel debate/workshops could make it more difficult to secure speakers and may involve additional expense with regard to overnight accommodation.

3.6 The Derby City branch retired members’ section supported option 1.

3.7 The South East region supported option 1.

3.8 The East Midlands region did not indicate support for any specific option but proposed an alternative timetable as contained in paragraph 3.8.1. The National Retired Members’ Committee’s response to this is contained in paragraph 3.8.2.

3.8.1 Tuesday

11.00am Conference desk opens

11.30 onwards Meet and greet table opens

12.00-12.40 Black members' caucus

12.45-1.25 Women members' caucus

1.30-2.10 Disabled members' caucus

2.15-2.55 LGBT members' caucus

3.00-3.55 1st Conference session

4.00-4.55 Regional meetings

5.00-6.00 Regional meetings

Wednesday

8.30am Conference desk opens

9.15-12.45 2nd Conference session

1.45-4.00 3rd Conference session

This suggested timetable would allow an extra 1 hour and 25 minutes for debate of motions, keynote speakers etc. It increases the time of the caucuses from 30-40 minutes and allows a 5 minute break in between, and with the 1st Conference session on Tuesday afternoon would effectively dispense with workshops. With half a day less than the 4 SOG and Young Members' Conferences we need to maximise the time available and try to ensure that all motions are debated and that the need to reduce speaking time is avoided.

In regard to speaking time and its reduction, which usually occurs for the afternoon session, consideration should be given to either (i) a prioritisation of motions, as happens at NDC and LGBT Conferences or (ii) a change each year in the order of business to ensure that all topics get the same opportunity for debate in a 4 year rotation.

The meetings of the NRMC, usually Tuesday morning, and the SOC, also Tuesday morning, would have to be fitted into this revised timetable, but since the members usually arrive on Monday, it would be feasible to hold the former on Monday afternoon if needed.

3.8.2 It should be pointed out that this is very similar to option 2 contained in the report as it provides for longer caucus meetings - 40 minutes in East Midlands’ proposal and 45 minutes in option 1. However holding regional meetings after the first plenary session would mean that regions could not discuss the agenda and the earlier timing of the plenary session would limit the time available to produce and print the standing orders report.

3.9 The LGBT caucus stated that they were in favour of option 2 as follows:

We prefer option 2 to option 1 since it provides for caucuses to continue to be held near the beginning of conference and to extend them to 45 minutes. In practice, we would prefer 40 minutes with a 5 minute gap between because then we know we can start on time without excluding anybody and continue to end of our allocated time without fearing we encroach upon somebody else’s meeting.

The LGBT caucus also submitted a number of points as follows:

3.9.1 We endorse your point at 3.2.1 that caucuses must be held sequentially not all at once.

3.9.2 We wish to add that members wishing to attend two consecutive caucuses cannot get from one to the next in an instant, nor can rooms empty and fill in an instant. So there is a need for a 5-minute gap between caucuses for each to start and finish on time.

3.9.3 We do not understand your point at 4.3 that caucuses may be held on Wednesday afternoon. They mustn’t be held during plenary sessions or national committee. As for lunchtime, there may be a case for shortening lunchtime but that is a separate matter on which we do not comment. Lunchtime fringe meetings are probably a good idea providing they are of the nature of “optional extras”. Caucuses are not optional extras. They are an integral part of conference. Those who wish to take part should not be expected to forgo their lunch break.

3.9.4 We reject the point you appear to make at 4.2. If you are going to compare our conference to others, do it across the board not just with respect to caucuses. As for the comparison, while the time allocated to caucuses at Retired Members’ Conference may well be comparable to that at other UNISON conferences, the difference is that whereas, say, Black LGBT members have a whole-day meeting as well as the caucuses at Black Members’ and LGBT conferences, Retired LGBT Members only have the half-hour caucuses. Any comparison should take this into account.

3.10 Wakefield branch retired members’ section indicated support for an additional plenary session on the Tuesday afternoon as proposed by options 1 and 2.

3.11 Leicestershire County branch retired members’ section wanted there to be more time for debate of motions. They expressed an increasing concern that too many motions have fallen off the agenda in recent years or have had too little debating time, and that trying to address this by reducing speaking time is not the way to resolve it. They appreciated that this could lead to the reduction or removal of workshops but believed that since they involve only a limited percentage of all the delegates attending Conference, having more time for debate of motions was unquestionably more democratic and inclusive. Leicestershire County also supported an increase in the time allocated to Caucus meetings from 30 – 40 minutes with a break to allow delegates time between meetings. These proposals were very similar to the proposals contained in option 2.

Leicestershire also proposed a re-ordering of the agenda. Their views were passed on to the Standing Orders Committee who have responsibility for the order of motions on the agenda.

**4. CACUS MEETINGS**

4.1 Motion 20 asked for consideration to be given to rearranging the timings on Tuesday to allow more than 30 minutes for caucus meetings.

4.2 Caucus meetings at retired members conference currently have a duration of 30 minutes. The length of caucus meetings at self-organised group conferences varies from a minimum of 20 minutes to a maximum of 35 minutes.

4.3 One option for extending the caucus meetings could be to hold them on the Wednesday afternoon but this raises some concerns:

4.3.1 The caucuses would not be able to consider conference business that had already been debated.

4.3.2 Hiring additional rooms could involve expenditure contrary to paragraph 2.1.4.

4.3.3 Rooms may not be available due to the UNISON police & justice conference which overlaps with retired members’ conference.

4.3.4 Utilising the available time between 12.30pm and 2.00pm may impede delegates from having lunch.

**5. CURRENT CONFERENCE TIMETABLE**

5.1 The current timetable for retired members’ conference is as follows:

Tuesday

10.30am – 12.00pm National Retired Members’ Committee

12.00pm – 12.30pm Black Members’ Caucus

12.30pm – 1.00pm Women’s Caucus

1.00pm – 1.30pm Disabled Members’ Caucus

1.30pm – 2.00pm Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus

2.00pm – 4.00pm Standing Orders Committee

2.15pm – 3.45pm Panel Debate / Workshops

4.00pm – 5.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

5.00pm – 6.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

Wednesday

9.30am – 12.30pm First Conference Session

12.30pm – 2.00pm Lunch

2.00pm – 4.00pm Second Conference Session

4.30pm Ballot closes

**6. OPTION 1 FOR CONFERENCE TIMETABLE**

6.1 Option 1 allows more time for debate of motions (an additional 1 hour and 45 minutes):

Monday

2.30pm – 4.00pm National Retired Members’ Committee

Tuesday

10.00am – 12.00pm Standing Orders Committee

12.00pm – 12.30pm Black Members’ Caucus

12.30pm – 1.00pm Women’s Caucus

1.00pm – 1.30pm Disabled Members’ Caucus

1.30pm – 2.00pm Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus

2.00pm – 3.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

3.00pm – 4.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

4.15pm – 6.00pm First Conference Session

Wednesday

9.30am – 12.30pm Second Conference Session

12.30pm – 2.00pm Lunch

2.00pm – 4.00pm Third Conference Session

4.30pm Ballot closes

6.2 This option involves moving the meeting of the NRMC back to the Monday afternoon to enable the SOC to meet on the Tuesday morning to prepare the standing orders report for printing prior to the additional conference session on the Tuesday afternoon.

6.3 Issues for consideration arise from this option as follows:

6.3.1 The Monday meeting of the NRMC may involve additional expenditure but this could be minimised by using the hotel’s meeting room facilities and should not overly conflict with paragraph 2.1.4.

6.3.2 Currently accessible formats e.g. Braille of the standing orders report are prepared overnight. Option 1 would provide approximately 3 hours to prepare accessible formats.

6.3.3 Option 1 provides no time for panel debate or workshops. An alternative to these may be a keynote speaker during either the second or third conference sessions on the Wednesday.

6.3.4 Option provides no additional time for extending the caucus meetings.

**7. OPTION 2 FOR CONFERENCE TIMETABLE**

7.1 Option 2 allows more time for the caucus meetings (45 minutes rather than 30 minutes):

Monday

2.30pm – 4.00pm National Retired Members’ Committee

Tuesday

10.00am – 12.00pm Standing Orders Committee

12.10pm – 12.55pm Black Members’ Caucus

12.55pm – 1.40pm Women’s Caucus

1.40pm – 2.25pm Disabled Members’ Caucus

2.25pm – 3.10pm Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus

3.10pm – 4.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

4.00pm – 4.50pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

5.00pm – 6.00pm First Conference Session

Wednesday

9.30am – 12.30pm Second Conference Session

12.30pm – 2.00pm Lunch

2.00pm – 4.00pm Third Conference Session

4.30pm Ballot closes

7.2 This option involves moving the meeting of the NRMC back to the Monday afternoon to enable the SOC to meet on the Tuesday morning to prepare the standing orders report for printing prior to the additional conference session on the Tuesday afternoon.

7.3 It also involves reducing the duration of regional meetings by 5 minutes and the first conference session by 45 minutes.

7.4 Other issues for consideration arising from this option are as outlined previously in paragraphs 6.3.1, 6.3.2 and 6.3.4.

**8. OPTION 3 FOR CONFERENCE TIMETABLE**

8.1 Option 3 proposes moving caucus meetings to the Wednesday afternoon utilising the time available between 12.30pm and 2.00pm.

8.2 However, the concerns outlined in paragraph 4.3 would apply to this option making it possibly the least viable option.

**9. OPTION 4 FOR CONFERENCE TIMETABLE**

9.1 Option 4 proposes maintaining the status quo with the conference timetable remaining as follows:

Tuesday

10.30am – 12.00pm National Retired Members’ Committee

12.00pm – 12.30pm Black Members’ Caucus

12.30pm – 1.00pm Women’s Caucus

1.00pm – 1.30pm Disabled Members’ Caucus

1.30pm – 2.00pm Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Caucus

2.00pm – 4.00pm Standing Orders Committee

2.15pm – 3.45pm Panel Debate / Workshops

4.00pm – 5.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

5.00pm – 6.00pm Regional Meetings (6 regions)

Wednesday

9.30am – 12.30pm First Conference Session

12.30pm – 2.00pm Lunch

2.00pm – 4.00pm Second Conference Session

4.30pm Ballot closes

**10. SUMMARY**

10.1 Increasing the amount of conference time for debates will inevitably impact on other aspects of conference. The biggest impact would be on the panel debate and workshops as the time currently allocated for these would not be available. It should be mentioned that many regions organize annual seminars which contain a workshop element.

10.2 The regional and caucus meetings cannot be removed from the conference timetable. These are integral parts of conference which increase the democratic participation of members in conference. This is not the case with the panel debate and workshops.

10.3 The role that the panel debate and workshops currently play could be replaced with a keynote speaker during one of the conference sessions.

10.4 Members need to consider whether they wish the status quo (Option 4 in paragraph 9) to continue or pursue one of the options outlined in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of the report.

**11. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

11.1 Initial responses have been inadequate to enable the National Retired Members’ Committee to establish which option members would prefer.

11.2 This report will be emailed to delegates who attended the 2016 retired members’ conference.

Members will be asked to pass on their preferred choice from the options in paragraphs 6 to 9 of this report by email no later than Friday 22 September 2017 to [c.derrig@unison.co.uk](mailto:c.derrig@unison.co.uk). The report will also be printed in full on the UNISON website.

11.3 The replies will be collated and considered by the NRMC with a view to implementing the preferred option from 2018.