



SITREP 09/17

February SGM wrap-up

As reported in SITREP 8 yesterday, the IRC made new Permanent and Retained Awards yesterday and both Awards are now in force. All wages and *most* allowances increased today by 2.5% (meal and refreshment allowances are adjusted on 1 July each year).

The SGM saw 1,683 out of a possible 6,439 members (ie 26%) attend 101 separate meetings across the state. This is similar to the 1,917 members who voted in the last triennial Union elections in 2015 conducted by the State Electoral Commission, where reply-paid ballot papers were posted to every member's home address and members were then allowed 2 weeks to return their vote, which suggests that difficulty in attending meetings is not the only factor preventing even higher participation.

Of the 1,683 members who did attend, 1,098 (65%) were either Country or Retained Sub-Branch (RSB) members who met at their own station. At least 858 (51%) of the 1,683 members were RSB members so for the first time ever, retained participation was higher than permanent participation at an SGM in both relative and outright terms. There are presently 2,867 RSB members and 3,533 permanent members and so while 30% of the retained membership voted, only 23% of permanents did. Of the 825 permanent members who did vote, 240 did so at a local CSB or combined CSB/RSB meeting. This means that around 67% of all CSB members voted, and that the CSB vote was roughly 29% of the total permanent vote, yet the CSB (359 members) is 10% of the total permanent membership. It follows that only 585 out of the remaining 3,174 (18%) permanent members attended.

That is not to say that there is anything wrong with the SGM result, and it is certainly not a criticism of our more active Sub-Branches. Far from it. The membership has spoken clearly, and the Union's officials respect the decisions and results. The FBEU membership is never wrong. With our Awards resolved we can now focus on the many other challenges ahead, including RBRP, health and fitness standards/testing and millions of dollars in LEC cuts that are yet to be made by the Department.

Finally, SCOM had intended the proposed new J and Z Reliever provisions to replace the 30 or so J and Z Relieving positions that have been operating outside of the Award. The SGM vote means that these positions cannot continue and discussions with the Department are now underway for their cessation.

Meeting processes

There can be no doubt that the SGM results are genuinely representative of the will of the membership at large. That said, the above statistics indicate that our current (and various) meeting processes are working better in some areas and Sub-Branches than others. Regrettably, many RSB meetings experienced difficulty in forwarding their voting returns following their meeting, for which I apologise. We have already reviewed what went wrong there to ensure this does not occur again, and the State Committee is now undertaking a wider review of our Union's SGM and AGM arrangements generally to see how and where improvements can be made. I expect this review to be concluded and released for membership comment by June. In the interim, I encourage members to forward your comments and ideas via email to voting@fbeu.net.

Leighton Drury
State Secretary

Friday 17 February 2017