How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?

In support

The Fire Brigades Union is committed to promoting equality and the members who identify as LGBT have made clear through the national LGBT Committee that they want marriage equality.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?

In support

Civil Partnership may have been a step towards equality but there has still been elements that resulted in less favourable treatment to members of the Fire and Rescue Service. In terms of the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS) access to partner entitlement was previously exclusive to members who were married. With the enactment of the Civil Partnership Act in December of 2005 members of the scheme in same sex relationships could receive partner benefits in the event of death if in a Civil Partnership. However the accrued entitlement was only eligible from December 2005. This means for example a firefighter in the FPS with twenty years service who is married to someone of the opposite sex and who dies would leave partner benefits from the scheme reflective of 20 years of contribution but should the same firefighter be in a Civil Partnership the benefit entitled would only be 8 years to there partner despite having made the exact same level of contribution to the scheme.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?

Neither

Our LGBT members have indicated that the desire obtain same sex marriage is not about access to religious ceromoniad but about the title and entitlements associated with marriage.

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?

In support

The LGBT Committee that those who wish to afford opportunity to perform same sex marriage should be given the right to opt to do so.

How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?
In support

It is widely felt that Civil Partnership is an inferior form of marriage and we would welcome a single title.

How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?

In support

The FBU LGBT Committee supports the right for freedom of choice.

How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?

In opposition

The overwhelming desire of the LGBT Committee is to achieve a single title for legal recognition of union and that should be marriage.

How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?

In support

This issue has been problematic for some members of the FBU. One member who was male and a watch manager with 24 years service and married to a woman transitioned in 2010 to a woman. The member was in a stable relationship and desired to remain married to their partner. However their membership of the Firefighters Pension Scheme did not allow for recognition of the relationship as in law they were now a woman and so in effect the relationship was classed as lesbian. This meant the marriage had to be dissolved and a civil partnership registered. This is a process that does not happen over night and the member was left without financial protection to death nbenefits to their partner during the time of transition from marriage to civil partnership. Again because the accrual of pension entitlement only started for those in civil partnership from December 2005 the contribution period of 24 years to the pension scheme has been reduced to 8 years for the purpose of benefits to their partner in the event of death again presenting less favourable treatment.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?

Marriage is primarily about the two people who wish to engage in that legal union. We do not believe it impacts significantly on wider society.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?

The debate on same sex marriage has produced many views that are without foundation and are often homophobic and transphobic.
Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?

As has been highlighted Civil Partnerships has not delivered equal benefits in terms of some public sector pension schemes. Same sex marriage must take account of this omission if equality is to be achieved.

Are you responding as...

an LGBT group
National Secretary FBU LGBT Committee

Pat Carberry
Fire Brigades Union LGBT National Committee
16 August 2013