

**PRESIDENT: Mike Card CHAIRMAN: Brian Sturtevant VICE CHAIRMAN: Derek Williams**  
**SECRETARY: Sylvia Sturtevant TREASURER: Vacant SOCIAL SECRETARY: Brian Barton**  
**EDITOR: Ralph Groves**

**The Group Officers and Committee wish you all a Happy Christmas and healthy New Year**



Dear Colleague

## **WELCOME**

Welcome to the November group newsletter. We set out below the known dates for next year's programme of meetings which have been moved back to the second Wednesday of the month at the Orchard in Crawley. Many speakers have yet to be booked but we hope we can welcome you to our future meetings.

## **GROUP DELEGATES' REPORT BACK FROM THE CSPA NATIONAL AGM HELD ON 11/12 OCTOBER 2023**

The group delegates made their usual significant contribution to the national AGM. Delegates Brian and Sylvia Sturtevant, Derek and Marilyn Williams and Margaret Weddell, represented the group. We moved several motions and contributed to the debates on other important issues. A full report of the proceedings will be included in a supplement with the next edition of The Pensioner magazine.

Before the AGM started we tried to change the standing orders to get motions A4 and A7 "B" marked as we felt the issues raised were already policy and motion A42 "X" marked as it covered a several issues. The Standing Orders committee (SOC) was not convinced and the motions were debated.

The AGM was formally opened by the Deputy Mayor of Kenilworth who welcomed everyone and encouraged us to visit the historic town and castle. The Alliance's Vice Chair Linda Ridgers-Waite chaired proceedings because of the continuing ill health of the Chair Don Makepeace. The AGM sent its' good wishes for his recovery. After adoption of Standing Orders the new General Secretary Sally Tsoukaris presented the Annual Report, which she did very well. Group members will have a chance to meet Sally at the group AGM in Crawley on **Wednesday 13 March 24** please make a note in your diary.

First speaker for the group was Sylvia Sturtevant, who moved motion A3 a constitutional amendment which corrected a grammatical error in the existing Rule. Her arguments won the day and the motion was carried unanimously.

Derek Williams bravely opposed motion A7 an Executive Council (EC) motion, on the grounds that it was already policy and we wanted to hear Motion A8 which would have fallen if this motion had been carried. This was a highly contentious issue which aroused strong feelings on both sides of the argument and eventually remittance was moved in an effort to save face. Tellers had to be called to declare that Remittance was carried.

We then went on to debate motion A8 which was highly critical of the EC, we supported the motion and Tellers were again called to count the votes which were tied. A card vote was called and the motion was lost but many of those present felt that we had made our point. Further concern was expressed in a debate about the national membership database but the EC assured us that steps were being taken to resolve the problems.

The next group involvement was the moving of motion A16 by Derek Williams and calling for the abolition of the over eighty 25p addition and the £10 Christmas Bonus and for their inclusion in the Basic State Pension so that they would be up-rated every year. The AGM agreed. Derek went on to support motion A19 which called for the CSPA to be involved in the appointment of the new Civil Service Pension Scheme provider. To conclude the afternoon the Lifeboat Fund made a presentation and thanked all Civil Servants retired or working for their support. The AGM Dinner was a welcome relief after a hard day's work and very enjoyable with presentations of Certificates of Merit and friendly greetings amongst delegates.

The next morning started with the Fire Alarm going off which meant we all had to troop out into the rain, fortunately a false alarm but we were all awake for the first session of the day which a presentation by the Cabinet Office on the McCloud remedy an item featured in The Pensioner magazine likely to affect younger pensioners.

Motion A23 moved by Derek Williams called for alternatives to continue to be made available for those who were digitally excluded citing the Equality Act 2010 as our defence. Motion A24 in a rousing speech from the Northern Ireland Branch criticised the Government's failure to set up a National Social Care System and was well supported by many speakers including Derek Williams which was unanimously carried.

Then came Margaret Weddel's turn to present the motion A31 on the decline of bus services, asking the Government to provide additional support to bus companies during their conversion to electric vehicles in order to maintain and improve bus services. Margaret achieved overwhelming support and the motion was carried.

Our next motion was A41 moved by Derek Williams asking for the use of Artificial Intelligence to be closely monitored in order to protect older people. The EC asked us to Remit the motion which we agreed and the AGM also agreed.

The AGM then closed with the Vote of Thanks and we started our journey home. We hope members will appreciate that we put a lot of effort in representing their views in deciding Alliance policy and we hope to see you all at our next meetings especially at the group **AGM on 13 March 2024**.

## **The Group Delegation**

### **GROUP MEETING DATES FOR 2023/2024**

#### **REMAINING MEETING DATES FOR 2023**

15 November Speaker Major Ian Stewart from the Salvation Army;

6 December Christmas Quiz lots of lovely prizes followed by the group Christmas lunch.

### **MEETING DATES FOR 2024**

Further details regarding guest speakers and other activities will be made available just as soon as possible and will be published on the group website as soon as they become available:

[www.cspa-crawley-group.org.uk](http://www.cspa-crawley-group.org.uk)

January, no meeting is held

13 March, the group AGM, guest speaker, Sally Tsoukaris CSPA's new General Secretary

10 April, guest speaker, Bernadette Lawrie BEM, from the Specialist Crime Command of the Sussex Police.

August, summer lunch so no meeting will be held

## **NEWS ITEMS**

### **Civil Service and Analogous Pension Schemes Increases from April 2024**

Civil service and analogous pension schemes are reliant upon the increase in the level of the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in the previous September to determine the amount by which the pensions will increase from the month of April in the following year. Given that the CPI was set at **6.7%** in September, this will mean Civil Service and Analogous pensions will increase by this amount from April 2024.

### **State Retirement Pension Increase from April 2024**

The State Retirement Pension (SRP) currently relies on the 'Triple-lock mechanism to determine the amount by which the SRP increases in April each year. The Triple-lock is not set down in legislation but has been agreed at the start of each new Parliament following a General Election as the means by which SRP increases will be determined. This is either the higher of the CPI or average Earnings or 2.5% minimum increase where these two measures are lower. The average earnings figure excluding one-off payments was 7.8% or 8.5% if such payment were included both of which were higher than CPI. It is not yet clear which figure will be used by the Government but CSPA nationally is pressing for the higher figure to be applied and for the continued use of the triple-lock mechanism.

### **Energy Costs**

Whether energy costs have stabilised for the near future has yet to be determined especially with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine that sparked the original instability in the energy market. The possible impact that the Israeli war in Gaza may also have some effect on the stability of the international energy market as well so it remains important that no member enters into a fixed tariff with their energy supplier, unless they are able to change the tariff without incurring unacceptable exit costs. The use of fixed rate tariffs may not be as useful as they were because of the quarterly review of the energy price cap by OFGEM in comparison to when such reviews were six monthly, but it important that any unnecessary additional costs are avoided if possible.

### **National Health Service (NHS) – Contract with Palantir to run new NHS database**

The Government is proposing to enter into a £480 million multi-year contract with a US company called PALANTIR. This is to run a new database that will contain large amounts of health information held by the NHS – 'The Federated Data Platform'. Concerns have been raised by Doctors and Patients and a large number of organisations about the plan to ensure that NHS data remains in the public sector using a platform that patients and NHS staff can trust. Recent reports have indicated that the Secretary of State for Health, Steven Barclay may be delaying the contract because of the level of concerns that have been raised. You can assist the campaign to make sure that NHS data is held on a secure and trusted basis by supporting and signing the petition at the following link:

<https://www.foxglove.org.uk/campaigns/palantir-last-chance-petition/>

### **Proposed Closures of Railway Station Ticket Offices**

A welcome recent development on the proposed closure of nearly 1,000 station ticket offices put forward by the Rail Delivery Group in response to the Government's call for cost savings was the decision by the Secretary of State for Transport to completely reject the Rail Delivery Group's proposals. This followed some 700,000 responses to the extended period of consultation the Rail Delivery Group were made to follow, and the view reached by the Secretary of State was that the proposals failed to take into account the high passenger standards required.

## **FUTURE OF THE CRAWLEY & DISTRICT GROUP**

As a local group we are well aware that Members are spread across the District and that active participation and travel to the monthly meetings in Crawley is not easy for some. Nonetheless, it is perhaps appropriate to remind readers that your small committee works actively on your behalf, and has done so for many years, often devoting precious personal time in the pursuit of support for the CSPA and its policies. Without such activities on many fronts, some of the benefits achieved could potentially be jeopardised as the Government seeks to curtail public expenditure. Should we be unable to secure an injection of participation from Members, there is a very real risk that this local group will at some point cease to remain a viable option. We really would welcome your participation so please think hard and support your future interests.

## **GROUP TREASURER VACANCY**

The role of the Treasurer is not arduous and only takes a few hours a month, it is important part of the group's activities that an accurate record of income and expenditure is kept for the group to remain a viable entity. **If you are able to help please let us know.**

## **GROUP OFFICERS' AND COMMITTEE CONTACT POINTS**

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## **A LITTLE LIGHT RELIEF with Mike Card and Brian Sturtevant**

I like long walks especially when they are taken by people who annoy me. (Noel Coward)

Bigamy is having one wife too many. Monogamy is the same. (Oscar Wilde)

If I had my life to live over again, I'd make the Same mistakes, only sooner. (Tallulah Bankhead)

Don't retouch my wrinkles in the photo; I would not want it to be thought that I had lived for all those years without anything to show for it. (The late Queen Mother)

What training do you need t be a refuse collector? None, you pick it up as you go along.

Quote from Benjamin Franklin: 'In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is freedom, in water there is bacteria.

'Cheese, wine and friends must be old to be good'...could we adopt this as our motto?