

November 2023

There will be a meeting of the West Yorkshire Group of the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance at 11 AM on Wednesday 13 December 2023.

The venue is the PCS Offices in the Merrion Centre, Leeds.

AGENDA

- 1.) Apologies for absence
- 2.) Minutes of the last Group Meeting held on 13 September 2023
- 3.) Report from the Committee Meeting held on 8 November 2023
- 4.) Oral Report from National AGM held 11-12 October 2023
- 5.) Social Care 'Where are we now?'
- 6.) Feedback from the Regional Representative
- 7.) Guest Speaker 'Scams and How to Avoid Them,' Niccolo Sto Tomas, Crime Prevention Officer, West Yorkshire Police, based in Leeds
- 8.) Future Guest Speakers
- 9.) Any other Business (to be notified in writing to the Chair prior to the commencement of the meeting)

FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Committee has scheduled the following dates for future Group Meetings:

Wednesday 20 March 2024 (AGM)

Wednesday 27 June 2024

Wednesday 25 September 2024

Wednesday 11 December 2024

It is our intention that these dates are published in The Pensioner but just in case please store in electronic diaries or keep this paper safe until 2024 paper diaries are available in W.H. Smith

NEWS ON THE TRIPLE LOCK

The increase in average earnings figure for the May-July quarter which is used to calculate the triple lock came in at 8.5%. As this exceeds the September price inflation rate of 6.7%, it should be used to determine the rise in the state pension next April. However, as this figure includes 'one-off' bonuses used to settle some public sector pay claims, there has been speculation that these will be stripped out of the calculation of our state pension, thus reducing the rise to 7.9%. At the time of writing, we can only wait and see.

HOW MUCH WILL OUR CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONS INCREASE IN 2024?

Our Civil Service pensions are due to increase in April 2024, by the CPI rate of inflation in September 2023. The figure is 6.7% and has aroused the traditional harrumphing from the Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph. Thus, there will be two different figures used to calculate pension increases next year for Civil Service pensioners who have reached state pension age.

WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS

What is the Winter Fuel Payment?

The Winter Fuel Payment, or Winter Fuel Allowance, is usually an annual tax-free payment of between £100 and £300 made during the winter months to help older people with their heating costs. For winter 2023 -24, it rises to £250 – £600, as it includes a payment of between £150 and £300 to help with the cost of living.

How much you'll get

You should have got a letter in October or November telling you how much Winter Fuel Payment you'll get, [if you're eligible](#). If you do not get a letter but think you are eligible, [check if you need to make a claim](#).

The amount you get is based on when you were born and your circumstances between 18 to 24 September 2023. This is called the 'qualifying week.'

The amounts listed include a 'Pensioner Cost of Living Payment.' This is between £150 and £300. You'll get this extra amount in winter 2023 to 2024. Any money you get is tax-free and will not affect your other benefits.

If you live alone or no one you live with is eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment

You'll get either:

- £500 if you were born between 25 September 1943 and 24 September 1957
- £600 if you were born before 25 September 1943

If you are eligible and live with someone else who's eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment

You'll get a payment of either:

- £250 if you and the person you live with were both born between 25 September 1943 and 24 September 1957
- £250 if you were born between 25 September 1943 and 24 September 1957 but the person you live with was born before 25 September 1943
- £350 if you were born before 25 September 1943 but the person you live with was born between 25 September 1943 and 24 September 1957
- £300 if you and the person you live with were both born before 25 September 1943

Thus, if both parties are over 80 on the qualifying date, the total household payment is £600, if one party is over 80 and the other over 66 but less than 80, the total household payment is £600. If both parties are between 66 and 80, then the total to the household is £500. Each of you will be paid individually. You should also get these payments if you live in a care home.

For the purposes of the above information and considerations of space I've left out the section whereby one or both parties claims pension credit as this will affect very few civil service pensioners. Information can be found on Gov.UK Winter Fuel Payments. The same applies if you or your partner claim working age benefits. Unfortunately, there are stories circulating in the press that winter fuel payments may be means tested from 2024-25 which would mean that those above the state pension age would need to be in receipt of Pension Credit to be eligible, which as I have said earlier would disqualify most Civil Service Pensioners. I would describe it as electoral suicide.

NATIONAL AGM OCTOBER 2023

The winter edition of The Pensioner should soon reach your doormats. You may have noticed from the Autumn edition of The Pensioner that the West Yorkshire Group had two resolutions on the agenda: Motion A32 regarding buses, and A39 on banking hubs. I'm pleased to tell you that both resolutions were carried. David Parkinson and myself attended the AGM on behalf of the Group and will give a verbal report at the next Group meeting. The Winter edition of The Pensioner will give you a full disposal of business.

GROUP MEETING 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

This was sparsely attended with just nine people present including four of the Committee. However, we did welcome new attendees in Leslie and Brenda Dickinson, and Michael and Christine Marks, as well as welcoming back Jean Ainsworth. As it turned out the 'Scams' speaker was unable to attend but we will be having the speaker on 13 December. So, let's have a good attendance and perhaps a social drink after the meeting. As we are still without a Secretary, I

am having to Chair and minute. As such the minutes will be brief, and available at the next meeting.

MATTHEW TOPHAM: WE OWN IT and WY CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER BUSES

Matthew Topham gave a presentation to the Committee in November. There is currently a consultation running lead by the Labour Mayor of West Yorkshire. Public control of buses is Labour party policy but MT did not want to pre-judge the outcome. The likely model is franchising, given that the companies own both the buses and the depots with the private operators paid a management fee to provide a service demanded by the Mayor rather than the services they wish to provide at whatever fare the market will stand. Cross subsidy of unprofitable routes, currently denied under competition rules, then becomes possible. Currently WY bus operators make around 13% profit, three times the London figure.

Bus usage has declined severely since deregulation in 1986. London, under public control (although not under public ownership) has reversed that. Since 1986, travel costs have doubled in real terms, numerous routes have been axed, and there is no effective sanction against unreliability. WY would also aim to control timetables which leaves potential for rail integration. Going forward given a favourable political wind, Mayors could buy back buses and depots, and give drivers common pay and conditions, thus totally reversing deregulation. The Consultation closes 7 January 2024.

DID YOU KNOW?

That if the £10 Christmas bonus had been up rated in line with inflation since its introduction in 1972, it would now be worth £162 and well worth having. Similarly, the 25p supplement for over 80's would be worth £4.36 had it been increased in line with inflation.

PAUL LAXTON,
Chair - CSPA West Yorkshire Group