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Sheffield & District Group

Newsletter

December 2024

Come and hear what happened at the CSPA National AGM, then enjoy a bit of fun and friendship at our December meeting - Thursday 12th December, gathering from 1.30 pm

Please have a look at Group Chair, Mike Buckley's report of this year's CSPA AGM. There will be plenty for us to discuss and to do next year. Meanwhile, it's time to enjoy our annual festivities, with a raffle, quiz, and mince pies.

Please join us at the meeting if you can. There's always a friendly atmosphere, We'll gather, socially at 1.30 pm. The meeting will start at 2 pm. We look forward to seeing you there.

Your Guide to Sheffield & District Group's December Quarterly Meeting

- **When:** Thursday, 12th December 2024 - Gathering 1.30 pm. Meeting starts 2 pm
- **Where:** The Hilton Room, Sheffield Cathedral, Church St, Sheffield S1 1HA - see photos below (please contact the Group Secretary if you need directions).
- **Why:** This is the meeting when we review the CSPA National AGM, held in October, discuss key local and national issues, then enjoy festive fun with friends and colleagues.
- **Who:** Most importantly, **YOU**. (Please let the Group Secretary know if you would like to contribute to any items on the Agenda, but are unable to attend)

What's on the Agenda?:

1. Welcome & Introductions (Chair)
2. Apologies.
3. Discussion on CSPA AGM
4. Brief reports on Group, Regional & National activities.
5. Raffle, quiz, tea, coffee and mince pies
6. Any other business



Next Quarterly Meeting: AGM - Thursday 20 March 2025,

Group Chair, Mike Buckley, reports back on events at this year's CSPA National AGM



So, What Happened at the AGM this year? - Mike Buckley recalls.

CSPA's annual get together never disappoints, and this year was no different.



CSPA 2023 Annual Report Headlines

General Secretary, Sally Tsoukaris presented the **Annual Report for 2023**. The Alliance had been fully engaged in the Capita contracting process as a Stakeholder (as instructed in our 2023 motion): 'transformational change' is being promised. The announcement around the Winter Fuel Allowance was a shock to all. Finally, Sally unveiled proposals for CSPA electoral reform: consultation was about to start with the aim of rules reform for debate at the 2025 National AGM.

Treasurer Mike Sparham reported that 2023 had been a 'very good' year for CSPA with an excess of income over expenditure of £10,142 exceeding the budget plan

Key AGM Debates and decisions

- **Our motions on recruitment and organisation (A12 and 13)** were 'remitted' to the National Executive Committee for further consideration and proposed action.
- Despite the NEC's opposition we carried motion (A15) reinstating the **Newsletter of the Year competition**.
- **Uprating income tax thresholds was carried (A18)**. 8.5m pensioners are now paying income tax: the threshold would be over £15000 had it kept pace with inflation.
- **Winter Fuel Allowance (WFA)**. A number of 'emergency motions' – submitted after the deadline for normal motions in light of events were all carried
- Motion **A30** demanded progress on **NHS and Social Care**. A Royal Commission must mean progress and action, not just more thinking time.
- Our motion on **Social Care (A31)** was carried - I pointed out we cannot fix a broken Health Service without mending the drain on resources and finances caused by the blockages resulting from inadequate Social Care provision.
- Our motion, **A39**, on **improving public transport** particularly buses, was carried. We opposed 'floating bus stops' (A41), the **legalisation of e-scooters** (an Emergency Motion), renewed our call for an **England Commissioner for Older People (A42)**, called for the **abolition of 'regressive' utilities standing charges (A44)** and seeking a **cap on Insurance Premium Tax (A49)**, maintained our pressure for progress establishing **Banking Hubs (A50)**, and **remitted A53 on the sale of Royal Mail** to allow the Executive to monitor and respond to developments

(Continued on Page 3)

Group Chair, Mike Buckley, reports back on events at this year's CSPA National AGM (Continued)

Key election results

- Our very own **Les Priestley** was elected **National CSPA Chair**, and
- **Roisin Lilley** from Northern Ireland Branch was elected as **Vice-Chair**.
- Former Chair, **Linda Ridgers-Waite**, **Richard West** and **Charlie Cochrane** were re-elected as **NEC Members**, as was our **Andy Aitchison** as **North East Regional Representative**.
- I was newly elected to the **NEC**, alongside **Pam Flynn** from Manchester Group.




Other News - New CSPA Travel Insurance Scheme

The Civil Service Insurance Society gave a good presentation on the new **CSPA Travel Insurance Scheme** (No questions about pre-existing conditions, one must simply be fit to travel).

Take a look at csis.co.uk/partners/cspa. I have!

Mike Buckley - And so to the road home



- Congratulations to Les Priestley on his election as CSPA National Chair 
- Congratulations to Mike Buckley on his election to the National Executive Council 
- Congratulations to Andy Aitchison, re-elected as NE Regional Representative 

The future success of CSPA and Our Group really matters, and depends on our continued commitment.

- Mike's report shows us how **the discussions we have in our Group lead to national commitments on issues** such as Social care, transport and defending our pensions.
- **Our commitment has led to 3 of our members being elected to key National Executive Posts**, committed to stabilising and growing our membership, as well as raising the positive profile of Civil Service Pensioners within the wider community.
- **We now have a worthwhile replacement for the CSPA travel insurance scheme** thanks to the Civil Service Insurance Society - please see the online link on Mike's article, above, or phone 01622 766 960.
- **For these reasons alone, it's really important that we continue to meet, exchange ideas, decide on priorities and, whenever possible, encourage eligible family, friends, old colleagues and acquaintances to join us in our Group.**

Group Committee Meeting - 8th August 2024 - key decisions & recommendations



Firstly, a very warm welcome from us all to new members:
Mrs L. J. Exley and Mr S. Cullumbine.

- **AGM Report Back**

The Committee welcomed and discussed Chair, Mike Buckley's report-back (see Page 3). We particularly thanked Mike for representing us as a lone delegate, following the need for fellow delegates to withdraw due to immediate family/health reasons. Thanks to his efforts, all outcomes were positive for our Group.

Looking forward, Groups will continue to be the building blocks to take CSPA forward. We will need to use flexible thinking how we pull areas together to maximise member access and representation.

- **Group Financial Status/2025 Group Subscriptions**

Linda Garner reported that Group Funds are stable, but we rely on the generosity of a small percentage of our Members. The Committee will recommend to our December meeting that we freeze 2025 Group Local Subscription at £2 per year (additional donations are obviously still welcomed), but should continue to try and persuade more members to contribute what amounts to under 4p a week, which isn't much to ask, even in today's hard-pressed financial situation.

- **Group Membership**

Group Membership is currently stable, now reductions arising from HQ work to correct our national member database have worked through. We need to do all we can to increase our profile amongst eligible Civil Servants and recruit new members.

- **December Members Meeting**



Details are on Page 1. Beryl will be leading the raffle and the quiz. Linda Woollen will bring her renowned mince pies for us to enjoy. Prizes will be donated by Committee Members - to be organised by the Group Secretary.

- **Changes to HQ Group Newsletter circulation arrangements**

CSPA HQ have announced that they will be circulating our Newsletters by email to members who prefer paperless distribution. They will continue to circulate hard copy versions to all other members to ensure that there is no digital exclusion. We will work with them over the next few editions to ensure all members are kept informed and to minimise avoidable duplication.

- **National Pensioners Convention**

Andy Aitchison gave the Committee a comprehensive report of the Yorkshire & Humber Pensioners meeting held, in Leeds, on 24th October. He has kindly provided a written feedback for members on Page 5 of this Newsletter.



News from North East Region

CSPA North East Regional Representative, and Sheffield & District Group Committee Member, Andy Aitchison writes:



The latest quarterly meeting of the Yorkshire and Humber Branch of the National Pensioners Convention took place on Thursday 24th October 2024 at the Unite Offices in Leeds.

The meeting was very well attended and after the early formalities there was a tribute paid to Ronnie Morrison, a long-standing member who had died recently.

There were 2 guest speakers, Michael Agboh-Davison from Unite The Union and Jenny Simms from the NPC's Digital Working Party.

The speaker from Unite concentrated on the ongoing campaign against the removal of the Winter Fuel Allowance. He wasn't hopeful of much concession in the budget and said that even a rise in the threshold for pension credit would not help those poorer pensioners who don't apply. He said that Unite are working on a judicial review with Thompsons Solicitors. They are also organising several demos in the 4 Doncaster constituencies culminating in one in the town centre on Saturday November 30th. All Doncaster's MPs would be invited to come and speak to their constituents.

Jenny Simms explained how the NPC are trying to help those pensioners who wish to get themselves online as well as campaigning against digital exclusion, ensuring there are alternatives. They are working closely with Age UK, The Good Things Foundation and Digital Poverty Alliance and need as many stories and contributions as possible to be sent to the Digital Working Party.

The YHPC branch officers then gave their reports. Chair Rosie Pickard apologised for her recent absence from meetings due to ill health. Treasure Jill Ainsworth said that funds were in a very healthy state and that a new savings account had been opened.


Secretary Fran Postlethwaite said that the Older People's Day gathering in York on October 1st had gone very well and the lobby of Parliament on October 7th regarding the Winter Fuel Allowance had received a great deal of support. There were a number of reports from national NPC Working Parties.

I was able to feed back from the latest Finance Working Party meeting that some cutbacks will be needed in the next year as well as membership subscriptions and affiliate fees increasing. There had also been serious discussion regarding a proposed change in legal status of the NPC. After a number of local affiliated group reports the meeting was closed.


The next meeting of YHNPC will be at 11am on Thursday 30th January 2025 at C-View, Doncaster.

I send my warmest Christmas greetings to you all at Sheffield Group and I hope to see some of you at the December meeting.

Andy Aitchison



Many thanks Andy. Season's Greetings to you and everyone in CSPA NE Region. - Ed



Introducing your Group Committee

In order to protect the future of our Group, we need people willing to help on our Group Executive Committee. So we are producing a series of short articles by existing Committee Members and Officers showing what we do to keep our Group active and provide you with the support you need. Any member is welcome to observe our Committee Meetings. Why not log in to join us and observe our Quarterly Zoom Committee Meeting, particularly if you're interested in becoming a Committee member. If you want to know more, please contact the Group Secretary.

Our contributor to this edition is Judith Roe, our Organiser, also one of our Auditors.

I asked Judith for a short article on her experiences as a Sheffield & District Group Committee member. Here is her response:



I joined CSPA as soon as I retired having been introduced to it by a friend. It's a good way to find out about developments regarding our pensions and other things that affect us retirees. I enjoy the meetings and have made new friends. As I got more involved, I took on the role of Organiser booking meeting rooms, and equipment and generally liaising with the venue. A couple of years ago we unexpectedly had to find a new meeting place which is central, accessible and affordable. Aided by suggestions from fellow CSPA members I contacted several venues and put the options to the CSPA committee. Sheffield Cathedral ticked all our boxes so we now meet in one of their rooms. Its not a big job but I hope by sorting out these practical bookings I can take a little pressure off our busy Secretary.

As Group Secretary, I'm so grateful for everything Judith has done to take this weight off my shoulders through her organisational work. She's a great friend and colleague to all of us, who contributes so much to our Group.

With all the work Officers & Members are taking on, we are urgently seeking to fill the standing vacancy on our Committee. If you can spare just 4 days a year, you could really help our Group.

*I hope to persuade more on Group Committee to tell us about their role and experiences as Committee Members in future Newsletters, so you can get to know our unsung heroes, and maybe, join us - **John Houghton, Editor***

Please subscribe next year, to help support our Group for 2025

As reported in the notes of our August Committee Meeting our finances are stable, but this is on the back of the generosity of less than 100 members contributing though the **annual £2 local subscription** and individual donations. These subscriptions and donations are the only income we have to do the work required to represent and support you.

Thank you, if you've subscribed already. If not, please do contribute.

Cheques and cash will be gratefully accepted at any quarterly meeting.

Or you can pay by:

- **Bank transfer** - to CSPA Sheffield Group, **Bank Code** 08-92-99, **A/c No.** 65467264, **Reference.** Please give your initials and surname.
- **Cheque** - please post a cheque, payable to **CSPA Sheffield Group**, to: **Linda Garner**, CSPA, Sheffield & District Group Treasurer, 6 Moorwoods Avenue, Sheffield S35 2WA

Sheffield & District Group Representatives elected at the 2024 Group AGM

Sheffield & District Group Officers

Group Chair: Mike Buckley
29 Adelaide Road, Sheffield S7 1SQ
jmwibuckley@hotmail.com
Tel. 07885 560878

Group Secretary: John Houghton
85 Whirlowdale Road
Sheffield S7 2NF
jhoughton85@gmail.com
Tel: 07952 304628

Group Treasurer: Linda Garner
6 Moorwoods Avenue,
Chapelton,
Sheffield S35 2WA
lindagarner1@hotmail.co.uk
Tel: 0114 240 3381

Membership Secretary: Linda Woollen
40 Richmond Park Avenue
Sheffield S13 8HA
lindawoollen54@gmail.com

Group Committee Members

Andy Aitchison

Steve Anderson

Les Priestley

Judith Roe (Organiser)

Beryl Wardley (Social Secretary)

Vacancy

Group Auditors

Brenda Pinhorn

Judith Roe

Please remember that we're here to represent your interests as a CSPA member.

If you need any help or advice, please contact the Group Secretary, or another officer. We'll do our best to set you in the right direction,



Sheffield & District Group

Representing and reflecting your views within CSPA and protecting your interests locally and regionally.

Please subscribe to YOUR Group