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## Leicestershire & Rutland Group

### Newsletter No. 42 (January 2025)

Hello to all CSPA members in Leicestershire and Rutland. I hope you are enjoying a very good start to the new year.

We held our last Group meeting of 2024 on the 28th of October and welcomed General Secretary, **Sally Tsoukaris** who provided a full update on the activities and campaigns of the CSPA.

Our next meeting and AGM is set for **Monday 31st March at 2pm**, once again at the **Royal British Legion Club, 4A Wigston Road, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5QA**. The club has its own (free) carpark. There is a regular bus service from Leicester. Tea and coffee will be available from 1:30 p.m. At this meeting we will be electing our Group committee.

#### **GEOFF HARRIS - TOASTMASTER AND PUBLIC SPEAKER.**



We will be welcoming Geoff to our AGM as guest speaker. Ten plus years ago he started to train as a Toastmaster and he is now a Fellow of the National Association of Toastmasters, working in some of the grandest hotels and houses in the country. His enthusiasm for this work and a love of history is reflected in his talk which is promised to be vivid, amusing and engaging. The talk will last for approximately 45 minutes.

The AGM agenda will be as follows;

1. WELCOME and APOLOGIES
2. CHAIR'S ADDRESS (Rob Jameson)
3. TREASURER'S REPORT (Liz Ellis)
4. ELECTION OF GROUP OFFICERS, COMMITTEE and AUDITORS
5. GUEST SPEAKER (Geoff Harris)
6. MIDLANDS REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT (Kevin Billson)
7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**Minutes of the CSPA Leicestershire & Rutland Group meeting 28<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

## **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies: Jackie Towl and Margaret Bagur and John Pearse

## **2. Chair's Address**

Rob Jameson opened the meeting by introducing the Guest Speaker, Sally Tsoukaris, CSPA's General Secretary.

Rob referred to the main issues which had taken place since the last meeting held on 8 July 2024 (four days after the General Election) notably the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Allowance for Pensioners not in receipt of Pension Credit.

The National CSPA AGM which had taken place on 9 & 10 October. The Group had been represented by Rob Jameson and Simon Connolly with Kevin Billson also being in attendance as the Midlands Region Representative. The results of motions could be found in General Circular 962 available on CSPA'S website. All the people our Group had nominated had been elected to the Executive Committee.

As to the future, Rob confirmed the State Pension would increase by 4.1% and the Civil Service Pension by 1.7% from April 2025.

Rob concluded by referring to the Budget which was to take place in two days' time and which CSPA would be keeping a careful eye on.

## **3. Treasurers Report**

Money at bank - £1143.27, payment due out for Xmas lunch and other expenses of £290.00 = £853.27 balance.

Room hire for today's meeting still to be paid of £20.00.

Finally, Christmas lunch this year we only have 10 booked and 4 of those are guests. Do we want to reserve again for next year or not?

## **4. Guest Speaker, Sally Tsoukaris**

Sally Tsoukaris reported that the Alliance's purpose remains that of campaigning to protect what Civil Service Pensioners have earned during their years of service. The recent AGM was reported as being successful and through the use of webinars, new members had been attracted to join the Alliance. Issues of concern include retaining the triple lock on the State Pension, the raising of Tax thresholds so that the basic state pension remains below the personal tax threshold, making sure Civil Service Pensions rise with inflation, the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel allowance from Pensioners not on Pension Credit and better provision for integrated Health and Social Care.

In April this year, the Civil Service Pension rose by 8.7%. However, the next settlement is likely to be only 1.7%. The State Pension rose by 8.7% after the Triple Lock was applied. The settlement for 2025 will be announced in the forthcoming Budget. The Alliance is campaigning to get the personal Tax thresholds to be increased with inflation. Sally reported that there had been some success in negotiating with the Pensions Administrator to reduce the time it takes for Widows' pensions to come into payment. Capita is due to take over the role of Pensions Administrator shortly and Sally hopes to meet representatives from Capita in the New Year.

CSPA is campaigning with other partners in the National Pensioners' Alliance on the issue of raising the State Pension Age and in particular the Government's proposal to bring forward the date when the retirement age rises to 68. The Civil Service Pension retirement age is linked to the State Pension Age. Women's pension issues are also part of this campaign.

Sally was struck by the announcement that the Winter Fuel Payment will be withdrawn from pensioners not in receipt of pension credit. Take up of Pension Credit is low and it is a 'cliff edge' benefit, where an income only slightly above the qualifying limit will result in the loss of the whole benefit. There is a call to get the Winter Fuel payment reinstated.

On the issue of Health and Social care the Alliance, along with 100 other organisations, is supporting the Age UK campaign.

Issues affecting the Alliance were also reported including the move of its HQ to Clapham Junction in a bid to modernise the way it works and the consequences of falling membership numbers. Forty percent of members are no longer in a functioning group and under the existing constitution will not have a say on Executive Council proposals or the election of members. It is proposed that the existing rules be suspended and allow members to vote directly. A survey of Members on these proposals will be included in the December magazine.

## **News and Updates**

### **Group Circular 965**

#### ***Group & Branch consultation on the proposal to introduce all-member ballots to elect to EC posts in 2026***

All members are invited to share their views on proposals to tackle the growing 'democratic deficit' our organisation faces. An online and postal ballot is proposed in 2026. Individual members are invited to have their say on these proposals using the Pensioner magazine or emailed links to complete and return a survey. Any member not in receipt of the December magazine or an email from the CSPA and would like to participate, please get in touch by telephone calling **020 8688 8418** or email [enquiries@cspa.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cspa.co.uk).

### **Reminder regarding Email addresses**

Please let us know if you are happy to be contacted by email rather than post as it saves the CSPA money if able to communicate electronically rather than through the postal service.

If you would like to donate toward the continual running costs of your local CSPA Group please contact Liz Ellis, Treasurer on the address below.

## Leicestershire & Rutland CSPA Group Committee

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That's all for now in our Winter Newsletter. We hope to see as many members as possible at our AGM on 31<sup>st</sup> March. Please let us know if you would like to stand for a position on our committee.

**Rob Jameson** and **Kevin Billson**, CSPA Leicestershire & Rutland Group.