

Welcome to the Spring 2025 newsletter. This issue focuses on CSPA Democracy, Later Life Ambitions and some regional developments.

Greater Manchester Group Annual General Meeting

The Greater Manchester Group AGM will be held on March 26th, 2025, at 11.00am. The venue will be the Methodist Central Hall Oldham Street Manchester. This is a short walk from Piccadilly Gardens tram stop.

Posts for election are Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary. The meeting is open to all Group members.

CSPA Democracy

There is currently a consultation on the proposal to introduce all-member ballots to elect the CSPA Executive Council posts in 2026.

At the Group meeting held in January 2025, members present supported the proposal. Individual members were consulted through The Pensioner magazine in December 2024. All responses received will be considered by the CSPA Executive Council in April 2025. If you wish to see a copy of the rationale for the consultation and the Group response, please email the Secretary on stiritup298@gmail.com. Circular GC965 can also be found on the CSPA website.

Royal Mail Sale - an update

The Government has given permission for the sale of Royal Mail to the entrepreneur Daniel Kretinsky. The sale is expected to be completed by April 2025.

As CSPA anticipated, the Universal Service Obligation has immediately come under scrutiny, if not attack. The regulator is proposing to Royal Mail that they address cost pressures by delivering 2nd class post only every other day. This could greatly inconvenience many older people who might, for example, experience missed hospital appointments should letters not be delivered on time. If you think you might be affected by this reduction in service, please let us know. And consider letting your MP know too.

Other dangers to Royal Mail customers include debt leverage, asset-stripping and staff cuts, leading to a further erosion of an already poor service.

Later Life Ambitions submission on Social Care

You will be aware that amongst other attacks on pensioners by the current government, they decided that the cap on what individuals would pay for social care which was to be capped in October 2025, was cancelled in favour of a Royal Commission to review the provision of care. Whilst most people just consider this as delaying the problem to a later date, the CSPA through Later Life ambitions have put together a submission to Adult Social Care Reform: The Cost of Inaction – House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee Inquiry – Submission by Later Life Ambitions.

This is their executive summary:

LLA's response to this inquiry focuses on the human costs and benefits that are being missed because of continual inaction on social care reform. We want people on later life to be able to have ambitions for their futures and live fulfilling lives without societal obstacles and hinderances getting in their way. Our members reflect on the instability, uncertainty and quality of adult social care across the country and the ways in which this stops them living the lives they reasonably deserve to live.

LLA want to see a decent quality, sustainably funded, free at the point of delivery social care service operating in cooperation with the NHS.

We are calling for the Government to legislate without delay to establish this National Social Care Service, to be integrated with the NHS that remains free at the point of delivery. The service was committed to by the Labour Party in its manifesto.

We are also calling for a minimum 10-year government spending commitment towards social care at the next Budget with a pledge to increase real-terms spending significantly across this period.

We need a comprehensive plan brought forward urgently to address the chronic workforce issues in the social care sector. We want to see recognition for paid and unpaid carers through professional development, fair pay and access to respite breaks and simplified carers benefits.

To better co-ordinate essential services for people in later life, including social care reform, we are calling for an Independent Commissioner for Older People and Ageing, as part of an overall strategy to tackle the challenges faced by older people now and in the future, and to offer those who need it, advocacy, and legal support.

After almost 2 decades of broken pledges and commitments on reform and 'fixing'; social care, this has to be the time for delivery.

Regional News

As your Regional Representative (and Treasurer of the Greater Manchester Group) I am pleased to say that we continue to have 4 active Groups in the Northwest – Chester, Liverpool, Manchester and the Wirral. We have 5 non-active Groups – Blackpool, East Lancs, Preston, Morecambe Bay and North Cumbria. I will be visiting those areas again this April/May in another attempt to get them re-started. I visit the active Groups when they have meetings and actively encourage them to keep going and I am pleased to say that the four Groups active seem reasonably secure, although Chester have just lost their very active (but in poor health) Chair, Cynthia Coltman who passed away in December.

If HQ have your email, then you will probably have received this Newsletter through email rather than post. It is intended in future to send where possible Group Newsletters via email, saving a great deal of money in postage, your money, and as it is only a 4-page letter, it is hoped this would be supported by the membership. Obviously if you would prefer to receive it by post, then all you need to do is to refuse to have it sent by that method. Additionally, if you have an email address and are happy to receive the Newsletter that way then please inform HQ on 0208 688 8418 or email Benedetta.makanju@cspa.co.uk. Under no circumstances is it intended to send the Pensioner, a much larger document, via email.

200 CLUB WINNERS and how to join

December – 1st Prize – Mrs E S Prickett 2nd Prize – Bob Ryan
January - 1st Prize - Jennifer Nelson 2nd Prize – Mrs E S Prickett
February – 1st Prize Peter Lowry 2nd Prize – Harry Brett

A new cycle will commence in March, the cost is £12 per year with a monthly prize. 1st Prize is 50% of the takings, 2nd Prize 25% and 25% go to the Group Funds. We would also appreciate donations to help run the Group. You can send either donations or submissions for the 200 club to myself, Harry Brett at 46 Severn Way Holmes Chapel Crewe CW4 8FT or direct to the Bank – RBS, Sort Code 16-12-11, Account Number 10177528, cheques payable to CSPA Manchester. Thank you in advance for your contributions. You can contact me on either 07999 874864 or at h_brett@sky.com.

Remember we do not receive any money from HQ and have to raise donations to enable us to send delegates to conference and affiliate to useful organisations, like the Northwest Pensioners Association.

Dates of future meetings 2025

The future meetings scheduled this year are:

Wednesday 26th March – AGM

Wednesday 18th June – Motions to Conference and delegate and E C nominations.

Wednesday 17th September – Mandating of delegates to Conference

Wednesday 22nd October – Conference Report

Wednesday 17th December – Christmas Lunch -all invited.

Wednesday 14th January – Preparation for AGM.

As always, if you wish to see copies of group circulars issued by the CSPA you can find them in the members' area of the CSPA Website.

Group Circular 966, which can be read in full by accessing the website, informs the membership that from 2025 the Annual Report, the AGM agenda and AGM report will not be sent to all members with the Pensioner. Copies will still be sent to Groups and will be available to read on the website or sent to members if requested. It is thought that this could save £4000 and by all so not distributing to each member a full report of the AGM, a summary will be provided in the Pensioner and the full report will be available on the website or via request, saving a further £4000.

We have recently launched a series of CSPA audio podcasts, on topics ranging from Civil Service pensions to the difference between the basic (or old) and new state pensions, to how to arrange a Power of Attorney. The podcasts are available via the CSPA website, but if you are not on line then you can request a transcript from HQ.

It is also possible to receive an audio version of the Pensioner if preferred, just contact HQ.

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