



West Yorkshire Group

Chair: Paul Laxton

There will be a meeting of the West Yorkshire Group of the Civil Service Pensioners Alliance at 11.15 AM on Wednesday 10 September 2025

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 Wednesday 11 June 2025
 - a.) Accuracy
 - b.) Matters arising not covered under agenda headings
- 3.) Chair's introductory remarks
- 4.) Finance and Membership Reports
- 5.) Transport Report
- 6.) Motions for the 2025 National AGM (These can be found as an insert in the Autumn 2025 edition of The Pensioner)
- 7.) Guest Speaker: Matt Walker, retired former senior police officer, subject; Scams
- 8.) Future Guest Speakers
- 9.) Consideration of moving Group meetings to Thursdays (PCS office is only staffed on Wednesdays and Thursdays)
- 10.) Any Other Business (to be notified to the Chair prior to the start of the meeting)

MINUTES OF A CSPA WEST YORKSHIRE GROUP MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2025

Present: Paul Laxton, (Chair), David Parkinson, Alan Swift.

Minutes of the last meeting: Accepted as accurate.

Matters Arising: The Chair reported that he had sent off the WYG response to the consultation on all member ballots. David Parkinson commented on some of the difficulties of merging groups.

Chair's Opening Remarks: He expressed concern at the poor attendance. Neither PL, AS or DP had received the agenda/newsletter in the post. PL had been assured that the agendas/newsletter had been sent out. Nor also had Jean Parkinson, whom PL spoke to the day before. (Update: At Regional Meeting on 12th June, it was reported that electronic copies were being sent to members who had given HQ their Email addresses and that there had been difficulties in getting out post.) PL will appeal for better support from members.

Finance report: AS reported a bank balance of £1596.16. Donations so far this year have amounted to £180. The group is currently solvent thanks to good support from members in giving voluntary donations last year. PL reminded members about voluntary donations for 2025 in the last Newsletter as it is important to maintain a healthy balance.

Membership Report: Our total Group membership is 675. No new members this year. AS will find out how many members we have lost this year.

Transport Report: DP gave an update. The government is providing £15 billion for public transport. A tram network will be developed between Leeds and Bradford. The White Rose Centre is excluded as it already has a rail connection. Long term it is envisaged connecting Dewsbury and Wakefield. The railway upgrade between Leeds and Huddersfield is expected to be completed in 2030. PL is attending a Better Transport Week event in Huddersfield on Monday 16 June. DP was invited to attend the event.

AGM Motions: The following two motions will go forward from the West Yorkshire Group.

This AGM calls for the Winter Fuel Allowance to be restored to all those who have reached the state pension age without clawbacks in time for the winter of 2025-26 and for them to continue in perpetuity unless and until the promise of substantially cheaper energy is delivered, and mandates the EC to campaign on this basis. This AGM reaffirms the principal of universality as to concede that principle would invite governments to attack other pensioner benefits such as the bus pass and free prescriptions in the same way as the Winter Fuel Allowance was decimated.

This AGM notes with alarm the recent announcements by the Health and Science Secretaries of State in which they envisage the public accessing the NHS and government departments via Artificial Intelligence and Chatbots using a smartphone. No announcements appear to have given any thought as to the adverse effects and digital exclusion for those who cannot afford smartphones and/or who struggle to cope with increasingly complex and impersonal information technology. This AGM mandates the EC to campaign for a government plan that maintains the ability of senior citizens to obtain NHS and government

services generally, in person, by letter, or by telephone to an employee of the relevant organisation.

Guest Speaker: Cancelled due to diary clashes. PL to try and book for September.

Meeting Days: PL said that John Welham and Steve Dodd are finding Wednesdays increasingly difficult. The only other day PCS offices are available is Thursday which is not convenient for AS unless it begins at 10.00, or alternatively 15.30. PL felt that afternoon meetings were viable for the Committee, but for a Group meeting it would be heading into the unknown. Agreed to keep the item on the agenda. PL will arrange a committee meeting for late July or early August when the National AGM agenda will be available.

Any Other Business: Nil

SHOULD PENSIONERS BE WORRIED ABOUT THE AUTUMN STATEMENT?

On the face of it, the partial U-turn of the government on the winter fuel payment was a good sign, as it shows that the government's own backbenchers are prepared to put their constituents before their careers. There is no doubt that the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Allowance from all pensioners apart from those claiming Pension Credits was hugely controversial. However, it may not pay to be complacent. The demands on the public purse have grown since July last year, and there are only three ways these demands can be funded; spending cuts, tax increases, and borrowing. The risk to the triple lock has not gone away. Its abolition is only waiting for the right political moment.

The government's own backbenchers have already had their say about spending cuts. The money markets are having their say about the cost of borrowing by government by raising the interest on governments to a level now higher than during the ill-fated tenure of Liz Truss. The nightmare scenario here is that the money markets pull the plug and the UK enters a full-blown financial crisis on a par with those of 1931 or 1976. Keir Starmer will have no desire to follow the example of Ramsay McDonald, and neither will Rachel Reeves want to follow in the footsteps of Denis Healey and go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund for a bailout in return for deep cuts in spending, from which pensioners would not be exempt. Given the likely impact on party unity with Jeremy Corbyn's new venture waiting in the wings, the government will be very keen not to get itself into that position. So that leaves tax rises, where Labour will either have to break its promises about raising at least one of the big three revenue raisers, or come up with alternatives, such as raising taxes on property.

So how may that affect civil service pensioners? There is obvious pain from the end of the triple lock, and Income Tax and V.A.T. rises. The cost of social care and special needs in Education is impacting hard on local government finances. A cross-party group of MPs is

arguing for a council tax revaluation as Council Tax is still based on 1991 house prices. This is a wealth tax in all but name. Local Authorities want the ability to abolish the single occupancy discount, which would at a stroke create a Widows and Widowers Tax. I'm sure you can all think of other options that might appeal to the Chancellor. The CSPA is not aligned to any political party, so I make no comment on my personal preferences, but I think I can fairly say there is pain to come.

VOLUNTARY SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just a reminder to any member who is minded to pay the £10 voluntary annual subscription that keeps the Group alive, and has not yet done so this year, we are asking you to donate via your bank. You can do this online or at your own branch, and if you are feeling really generous, set up an annual standing order. If £10 is too much, feel free to donate whatever you feel is affordable.

The bank details are:

Payee CSPA West Yorkshire Group
Bank Virgin Money
Address 94-96 Briggate, Leeds LS1 6NP
Account number 17518291
Sort code 05-05-35

GROUP VIABILITY

I'm becoming increasingly concerned about the viability of the Group. Although the finances have improved, attendances at Group meetings have not. The June meeting was attended solely by members of the Committee. That makes succession planning for the Committee impossible. It only needs the loss of one Group officer to render the Group unviable if it is not possible to identify a potential replacement. The other problem is democratic legitimacy. It feels like we are representing ourselves when taking motions to the National AGM. The Group has prided itself on taking motions to the AGM and contributing to the development of CSPA policy and campaign priorities. We are an established and welcome presence.

The next Group meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 10 September at 11.15 where refreshments will be provided. Recently we experimented with a Thursday afternoon Committee meeting. If that is a better fit for you, please let me know at relaxpaul@btinternet.com so that we can assess the need for change.

Unless there is a significant improvement in the attendance, I'm of the view that it will be necessary to table a mothballing motion at the March 2026 AGM. It will then be up to members to turn up in sufficient numbers if they want the Group to continue.