

## **Minutes of the PCS Cross-Party Group meeting held on Wednesday, 12th July 2023 in Dining Room 1, 12.30-1.30pm**

Present: Mike Hedges MS (Chair); Heledd Fychan MS (Vice-Chair); Ryland Doyle (MS Support Staff, Mike Hedges); Helen West (MS Support Staff, Julie Morgan); Jayne Smith (PCS); Darren Williams (PCS).

Apologies: Huw Irranca-Davies MS; Adam Price MS; Sian Boyles (PCS); Marianne Owens (PCS)

1. The Chair welcomed those present and apologies were noted.

### **2. PCS national dispute over pay, pensions, jobs and redundancy rights**

PCS reported on the industrial action campaign it had undertaken since the conclusion of its ballot on 7 November 2022, involving a mixture of targeted, sustained action within particular employers, workplaces or groups of workers and one-day strikes involving all PCS members for whom a ballot mandate had been secured. Within Wales, workers involved in targeted action had included Home Office Border Force staff working at Cardiff Airport; driving examiners working for the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency; various sections within the DVLA in Swansea; and Audit Wales staff. Three one-day strikes had been held, on 1 February, 15 March and 28 April, the first two of which had been co-ordinated with other unions and seen strike rallies held in various locations including Cardiff and Aberystwyth.

The action had been consistently well-supported. A second ballot between March and May had secured mandates for a number of additional employers and between 20 March and 9 May, a further re-ballot had renewed the mandate for almost all employers where the union had secured a mandate in November.

While the UK Government did not initially change its position in response to the PCS campaign, the Treasury's headline pay remit figure for 2023/24, of 4.5%, with an extra 0.5% for the lowest paid, had been significantly more than the previous year's 2% figure, which the union had expected to be repeated. Moreover, there had been a breakthrough in talks with Cabinet Office Minister, Jeremy Quin on 2 June, where significant concessions were made, including a nonconsolidated lump sum of £1500 in recognition of cost-of-living pressures in 2022/23; a commitment to further talks on low pay, greater coherence of pay and on strengthening redundancy avoidance measures; and a commitment to make no further changes to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme until 2025.

Although a decision to pay the £1500 was left to individual departments and agencies, most had already made a commitment to do so, as a result of which the union's National Executive Committee was expected to pause its industrial action campaign, other than for those employers refusing to make the payment.

Cross-Party Group members welcomed the progress that had been made in the union's national dispute.

### **3. Welsh devolved sector pay update**

PCS explained that, although the Cabinet Office proposal did not apply to the devolved administrations, the Welsh Government had decided to replicate the award for its own civil service staff and an agreement giving effect to this had been reached with the trade unions. Arms-length bodies had been encouraged to pay the award to their own employees and a few had already said they would do so but there were concerns that a few key employers, such as Amgueddfa Cymru, the National Library, the Senedd Commission and Audit Wales might not follow the Welsh Government's example and strike action might be necessary to bring pressure to bear on them.

The Group discussed the long-standing funding issues relating to these bodies and expressed sympathy with their predicament, while supporting the unions' aspiration that their staff should receive the cost-of-living payment. They offered to use whatever influence they might have to help bring this about, especially with respect to the Senedd Commission.

### **4. Sport Wales outsourcing update**

PCS reported that, following the outsourcing in February of Sport Wales' Plas Menai site to Legacy Leisure, a subsidiary of Parkwood Leisure, some issues had begun to arise concerning the contractor's apparent willingness to cut corners for financial reasons. The union would keep Group members informed and might seek intervention if the situation seemed to demand it.

Heledd pointed out that she was now Plaid Cymru's spokesperson on Sport, putting her in a strong position to address any issues, and said that she would liaise with the constituency MS, Sian Gwenllian.

### **5. A.O.B.**

The union reported that there were concerns over DVLA's intention to cease funding the shuttle-bus service, on which many staff relied in order to get to work. As the local constituency MS, Mike gave his own perspective on the situation and the chances of its being resolved.

Group members also reported that there were efforts underway, which they supported, to bring Senedd catering in-house. As well as being in tune with PCS' own policy, this could potentially present recruitment opportunities for the union.