

UPDATE - PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

GOVERNMENT'S 'FALSE TIMETABLES' AND 'FINAL OFFERS' LEAD TO GROWING FRUSTRATIONS AND ANGER

Firstly, congratulations on the fantastic show of determination, confidence and increasing anger by hundreds of thousands of public sector workers - supported by a growing alliance of our youth, pensioners and anti cuts groups - in cities and towns across our nations on 30 November. **It was a day for our trade union movement to stand united and proud and we did!**

Secondly, you will have read over the past few days of 'deals' being reached between government and the joint unions over the future the schemes affecting millions of public sector workers. **This is simply not true.** Despite the rhetoric from government ministers, no 'deals' have been concluded in any of the schemes.

The position of your union, **Unite**, is very clear. We have approached discussions in each of the three schemes in which we have members; Civil Service, Health and Local Authorities, in a professional and committed way in order to explore every option in an attempt to convince government that its attack on public service workers is unjust and unacceptable. In return, government has imposed changes, failed to negotiate in good faith, refused to provide necessary information and forced deadlines and timetables into very complex and difficult negotiations that are simply unacceptable.

In each scheme various solutions have been sought to address our concerns, this update gives a brief summary of Unites position in respect of each scheme.

1. **Civil Service.** Despite our best efforts and those of the joint unions we **have not** signed up to the final 'Heads of Agreement' document put forward by government. This is a position shared by the PCS union and follows extensive discussions with our leading lay members within the sector who believe that the 'offer' is simply not good enough.
2. **Health.** While we remain concerned about the lack of progress in key areas contained in the final 'Heads of Agreement' document and have not had the opportunity to consult fully with our senior lay leadership in the sector we **have not** signed up and have been clear that we will not be bounced into accepting anything by false deadlines imposed by government.

We will be consulting fully with our national lay committee in the new-year on the proposals in Health and our members will rightly decide our future course.

3. **Local Government.** Only in Local Government - where we are negotiating with the employers directly and not government - has any genuine progress on the real issues between us been possible and a 'Principles Document' was agreed with the employers, following full consultation with our leading lay membership, between Unite, Unison and the GMB and the Local Government employers group.

This framework allows for further negotiations over the next year on a range of issues that are of central importance to our membership. This agreement however, **has now been suspended** following the issuing yesterday of a letter from the Communities Secretary; Eric Pickles, detailing an imposed 'cost ceiling' for the employers and other issues of serious concern.

We are now seeking an urgent meeting with Ministers and will not be lifting our suspension before a reconvened meeting of our lay national committee has had an opportunity to discuss and evaluate this development in the new year, we will be guided as always by our members.

As you can see from the above, negotiations in all three schemes has been extremely frustrating and with government refusing to lift its impositions on RPI/CPI, contributions increases and an increased state retirement age, very difficult at best.

Whatever the outcome of actual detailed negotiations, if and when these finally start in the new-year, it will be you, our members that will decide whether any deal is indeed acceptable.

We are a proud lay democracy and your leadership is extremely proud of you.

Whatever develops on the many fronts we face as a labour movement as we enter 2012, we wish you the best of wishes for the season and look forward to continuing our struggles in the new-year.

In solidarity



Len McCluskey
General Secretary