

24 May 2023

Members vote to push on with strikes campaign and win

PCS members have pledged to press on with their campaign of combining targeted and all-member strike action to keep pressure on the government and ultimately win justice on pay, pensions and job security.

Delegates from across the UK took part in a robust debate on a key set of NEC and branch motions aimed at agreeing the union's national campaign strategy for the coming period.

A motion from the NEC (A290), seconded by DWP Glasgow, was overwhelmingly supported by delegates on Tuesday (23) afternoon.

In moving the motion, general secretary Mark Serwotka said members should congratulate themselves for what they have achieved in the battle so far, including delivering unprecedented amounts of targeted action, and forcing the government into a number of concessions. "But, of course, it's not enough," he said, adding that we need to push on with the current strategy which is "incredibly popular" with members and designed to be sustainable.

Delegates agreed that PCS would call further targeted and all-member action to build further pressure on the employer to agree to our reasonable demands.

To support this, PCS will continue to collect the strike fund levy at the current rate for the duration of the dispute.

Conference also resolved to organise a targeted political lobbying campaign of Tory ministers and to explore coordinated action with other unions, particularly civil service unions.

In moving an alternative motion (A291), Steve from DWP Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders branch said there were many points of agreement on the strategy, but his branch believed it should go further, with a commitment to national strike dates for 3 days every month.

“Our action needs to be more hard hitting,” he said.

Speaking against this proposal, the NEC’s Martin Cavanagh said calling action 3 days a month would “demonstrate a callous disregard to the conditions all members are finding themselves in” due to poverty pay and the cost-of-living crisis.

Proposing a further motion (A292), which included a call to include action short of strike action on upcoming re-ballots and all future re-ballots, Dave from DWP Wigan said his branch believed national action should have been called earlier in the campaign.

“The question that we have to ask ourselves is are we fighting the most effective, most vigorous campaign possible?” he said.

Speaking in support of the NEC motion, Beth from Defra said it provided the most flexibility: “We can be creative, we can escalate, we can move our action.”

She highlighted that her area had held a successful ballot on action short of a strike and that this is possible for any branch.

In his right of reply, Mark welcomed the debate and said the NEC is happy to take on board constructive criticism “because we want to bring everybody with us”.

He said it was notable that so many of those speaking to support the strategy had taken sustained and effective targeted action in this campaign, such as members in Ofgem, Defra, DWP and HM Passport Office.

“The key point is, we all want to win,” he added.

In agreeing to A290, which meant the other 2 motions fell, conference acknowledged that the action taken so far has:

- Forced the employer to move from a planned headline figure in the civil service pay remit guidance of 2% to 4.5%, with an additional 0.5% for the lowest paid.
- Halted progress on the planned cuts to the civil service compensation scheme.
- Led to 3 pay deals accepted by members in Scotland which have included substantial pay rises, progress on the minimum wage and on a shorter working week and more coherent bargaining arrangements.
- Generated willingness from the employer to discuss our demands for a job security agreement following the government’s abandonment of a

headcount cut.

It was also agreed that areas in the recent mandate renewal ballot that fell short of the 50% threshold should be invited to request a re-ballot from the union and that all areas can make requests for ballots on action short of a strike.

[Read more news from PCS conference.](#)

#PCSADC23