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6 November 2023

PCS members are the best in this movement

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I want to start with an important update on our national campaign and the next steps PCS will take. We've made real progress so far and put much-needed money in your pockets. For the first time, we forced the government to increase the pay remit and we secured a cost-of-living payment of £1,500. Your action led to the talks that have got us to this point and we are also engaging regularly with the government to protect your jobs, as well as continuing the fight over your pensions in the courts.

These concessions are down to your sacrifices during our strike action and are a testament to our campaign strategy. After the latest offer from the government, we put our proposed plan to members. The strategy of pausing strike action, taking stock of progress, and continuing talks, was emphatically endorsed by you.

With strike action and the strike fund levy paused, we entered eight weeks of centralised negotiations with the Cabinet Office and with departmental bodies. We are negotiating hard with every employer included in the national campaign to ensure that every member gets what has been promised. We have forced several concessions from the government so far and we have done substantially better on average than the 4.5% available under the pay remit guidance.

The NEC is clear that if the government falls short of what our members deserve, we should begin work for another strike ballot. We've shown that our action can force their hand and, if necessary, we will do so again.

I'm immensely proud of how far we've come in this campaign and it's an illustration of the strength and determination I've seen from PCS members during my time as general secretary. With my retirement fast approaching, this will be my last column for PCS People. The campaign to elect the new general secretary and assistant general secretary (AGS) is underway and it's an incredibly important decision.

Your opportunity to elect the leaders at the top of this great union only comes around every five years. I strongly encourage members to read the election addresses, decide who would best represent you, and cast your vote.

It's been a massive honour to lead this union for nearly a quarter of a century and the progress we've made – in the face of relentless attacks from hostile governments – has been phenomenal.

PCS members are the best in this movement and with you this union can only go from strength to strength.