

# 'We have risen to the Covid challenge'

Delegates swapped gathering in Brighton for meeting online in our first virtual national conference. While face-to-face contact is sorely missed, delegates heard that the union's improved digital capabilities had increased participation in PCS.

**SUNDAY 13 JUNE**



Delegates to the union's first ever virtual conference were welcomed by PCS President Fran Heathcote paying tribute to how members have risen to the challenges of the Covid crisis.

While the pandemic has wreaked havoc in many workplaces, some changes have led to increased participation. She said: "What

matters ultimately in a situation not of our choosing is what we as a union choose to do with it.

"Covid-19 has changed everything and will continue to present us with many challenges, but our union has risen to the challenge with new approaches, enhancing our digital capabilities, recruiting more members and strengthening PCS in the process."

PCS and its activist network – the "envy of the union movement"

– are now well placed to fight against the "rotten" Tory government and its attacks on our workplaces, she said.

### Membership increase

In presenting this year's annual report, general secretary Mark Serwotka thanked members, activists and staff for their hard work in ensuring members are safe and keeping the union operating.

He said the UK having the worst levels of sick pay of any European country has had a devastating effect and condemned arbitrary targets forcing staff back into offices.

Mark outlined the union's

achievements, including a 4% increase in membership, an increase in the number of union advocates to support our reps, the call hub system to increase participation, the conversion of education courses to online versions and using technology to communicate with more members than ever before.

Challenges ahead include pay, pensions, redundancy rights and job cuts, including "firing and rehiring" policies.

He said: "We are the people who can stop this from happening and we can go on to win better terms and conditions if we use our potential power."

**"Covid-19 has changed everything and will continue to present us with many challenges, but our union has risen to the challenge with new approaches, enhancing our digital capabilities, recruiting more members and strengthening PCS in the process."**

## COVID-19 AND HEALTH & SAFETY

### DVLA strike has 'united the movement'

The conference's first motion supporting the "pivotal" dispute over Covid safety at DVLA Swansea, where more than 600 workers have tested positive, was overwhelmingly carried.

Staff sat less than two metres apart for months at the Swansea site, and senior management only came into the office "a handful of times", conference heard.

The motion was moved by DVLA DfT delegate and branch chair Sarah Evans, who said: "We have not only united our branch but united the whole of the trade union movement."

She demanded the resignation of transport secretary Grant Shapps, who many suspect pulled a deal to end the strike action off the table at the eleventh hour.

Mark Serwotka praised Sarah and the branch leadership, along with supportive local MPs known as the "Swansea six", and said the dispute represented "everything that is great about our union."

### Post-pandemic settlement

Delegates also supported a motion calling for a post-pandemic settlement to protect members, their families and communities.

NEC member Jackie Green highlighted how the havoc wreaked by the coronavirus has brutally exposed the fault lines of inequality within society.

"As we have seen, its most detrimental effects fall disproportionately on those already suffering the effects

**"Our members ... deserve more than a hand clap and the kick in the teeth that is the pay freeze."**

of deep discrimination – humanity can, and must, do better," she said.

"Our members ... deserve more than a hand clap and the kick in the teeth that is the pay freeze."

The motion instructs the NEC to campaign for a protective settlement, including no compulsory redundancies,

a shorter working week, the right to flexible working and decent pay levels.

### Long Covid

Those suffering from Long Covid also need protection, conference agreed.

A recent study showed the majority of people catch Covid-19 in the home or the workplace and certain professions are more likely to get it. In the civil service this includes security guards, cleaners and those in front-facing roles.

There should be no detriment to any member through attendance management disciplinary procedures after contracting Long Covid.

PCS should also work with our parliamentary group to have Covid-19 recognised as an industrial injury.

While the union has achieved success in several departments in having Covid discounted for sickness records, it has not so far achieved this for Long Covid.

It is important for members to complete accident report

forms and also report "near misses" to provide a clear picture of what is happening in workplaces.

### Covid and disabilities

The most up-to-date information about Long Covid should be available to reps to help them support our members, delegates heard.

Any long-term impacts of the virus are likely to affect people in the same way as other disabilities.

Andrew from Defence Sector group North West branch said the motion was needed so reps can "come back on any errant arguments that employers may bring to the table" and combat "social media think".

Steve from DWP Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders branch said several members in his workplace were off work with Long Covid and were anxious about the future.

The motion, which was carried, called on the NEC to ensure up-to-date guidance is available to reps, including what demands should be made of employers.

## STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE UNION

### Winning for members a priority

A higher proportion of the union's resources should be diverted into winning for members in order to sustain financial stability, build the activist base and grow the membership, conference agreed.

In a debate about the strategic future of PCS, it was agreed the possibility of a merger with another union should also be kept under review but not actively pursued.

Staff pay costs will be kept at 33% of subscription income and a budget surplus maintained to build general reserves and the Fighting Fund.

The NEC will also develop proposals to allow PCS policy on decisions made by devolved nation parliaments and assemblies to be made by members in those nations. The English regional structure will also be looked at.

A review will also consider

online voting and other voting systems aimed at increasing turnout in elections; changes to the way GECs are elected; consideration of extending elections to posts not currently elected; and a new national activists' forum.

"To build a union that can win against the cuts that are coming we need our union to be as effective as possible," said Mark Serwotka in moving the motion, which was put following a wide consultation with members.

### Devolved nations

The NEC was instructed to investigate the merits of a more federal decision-making structure for the union.

A motion will be brought next year outlining possible structures and necessary rule changes that further facilitates devolved region and nation democracy within PCS.

Keith from SG Edinburgh said issues particular to the nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be dealt with by those in the same location.

Seconding the successful motion, Malcolm from SG Saughton said the issue was "not about whether the union supports Scottish independence" but about updating its structures to fit the modern devolved era.

He said: "We are [as a union] very centralised at the moment."

### Privatised workplaces

PCS must do more to keep track of members whose workplaces are privatised and help keep hard-won protections and bargaining rights in place.

If and when any TUPE transfer happens, branches must notify the PCS Private Sector Members' Association (PSMA) secretary at once with details of its current members and agreements, conference agreed.

Moving the motion, Adrian from Atos IT Services Durham said: "This really should be given. Sadly, the

experience of our private sector members is that it doesn't happen on a systematic basis.

"TUPE should never be a cliff edge for members to fall off."

Seconding, Eric from HMPO Northern said: "I was shocked to see this motion. I can't believe that we don't already do this.

"This is basic rights to protect those people whose jobs have been privatised."

**"TUPE should never be a cliff edge for members to fall off."**

## MONDAY 14 JUNE

## CAMPAIGNING & BARGAINING

### Intensify the pay campaign

The public sector pay freeze is a slap in the face to those who kept the country going throughout the pandemic, delegates agreed.

The overwhelming vote for the NEC motion followed a passionate debate on the future direction of PCS on pay.

NEC member Martin Cavanagh warned the same trick used to make

workers' pay for the financial crisis of 2008 will be done again over Covid-19.

He said: "It is incumbent on our movement and this union to ensure that the outcome for workers is very, very different. PCS

have already set out our stall. We've submitted the national pay claim to the employer, set in the context of justice for our members in a post-pandemic world.

He added: "We will organise educate and agitate around our agenda in order to ready our members to fight for a just and lasting settlement."

Martin said that it was vital

**"We will organise educate and agitate around our agenda in order to ready our members to fight for a just and lasting settlement."**

we "build the confidence" of members, around the union's objectives of winning "better pay, including eradicating and closing the gender and race pay gap, a shorter working week, more annual leave, and stopping the theft of our pensions and redundancy payments."

He concluded: "It's our job to persuade our movement to learn the lessons of the last crisis and to ensure we stand united; ensure we stand firm and ensure that the outcome is very different for workers everywhere."

### Wage demand rises

A demand for a minimum wage of £12 an hour will now form part of PCS' pay campaign and be included in claims lodged with civil service employers.

Proposing the motion, Richard from R&C Wales said: "We know that many members are currently paid so poorly they must claim tax credits and make use of food banks to survive, to feed themselves and their families."

Seconding, Steve from DWP Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders said: "Last year, Britain's number of

billionaires increased from 45 to 56, and this has happened amid the horrors of the pandemic.

"This shows beyond any doubt that there is easily enough money to ensure every worker receives at least £12 an hour in wages.

"When you consider what workers have been through over the last year and how hard we have worked to support people through the pandemic... a £12-an-hour minimum wage is not only achievable, it's absolutely deserved," he said.

### Protect government communications jobs

Industrial action and campaigning should be considered to protect government communications workers from swingeing job cuts, conference agreed.

Plans to slash comms teams to 30 per department and bring them under centralised control were leaked to the media last summer.

Dominic Cummings' departure has slowed the review and its precise scope is now unclear.

James, from Public Sector group Ofwat branch, said the plans threatened to "de-fang

departments and suck up more power to Number 10 and the Cabinet Office".

He said the single employer model has been ditched and the maximum headcount watered down but he warned we need to remain vigilant.

"The threat is not over as it's entirely possible that we face the prospect of job losses in a new wave of austerity in the coming years," he said.



## OPEN SESSION

### Scottish independence

The power to call a referendum on independence in Scotland should clearly reside with the people of Scotland, PCS conference affirmed.

Motion A34 was moved by Ben from Registers of Scotland Branch, who argued that Scots should decide if it's time to call for a second referendum and said the conditions for it are in place.

"The election of Boris Johnson as prime minister with his abhorrent attitudes toward the working class and effectively his attitudes against everyone who is not rich and privileged, and also the Westminster government's tragic failure to deal with the Covid-19 epidemic, have accelerated discontent in Scotland towards the union," he emphasised.

### Covid cronyism

Civil servants who have been counting every penny through the pandemic shouldn't be asked to help funnel money to the Tories' cronies, conference heard.

Growing evidence of the volume of Covid-related contracts being handed to friends, relatives, donors and associates of government ministers are an insult to the hard work of PCS members.

Conference agreed this should be investigated and a plan drawn up to take action to protect civil servants from being involved in any such schemes.

Lee from Revenue and Customs HQ London said: "This motion simply asks that in view of the emerging evidence about awarding contracts, PCS should seek assurance that civil servants aren't put into a position where they are pressured into breaking the civil service code."

### Political strategy review

PCS will re-examine its political strategy in view of the transformed landscape since the 2019 general election, following a

motion put forward by the National Executive Committee.

The union will look at how political campaigning can win disputes, help organise and build the union and support campaigning over climate change, equality issues and human rights.

Speaking for the NEC in support of the motion, vice president Kevin McHugh said: "While we cannot depend on the Labour leadership and front bench's de facto support for our industrial struggles, we must and can win the support of local politicians to our cause."

"Focusing our political campaigning to building solidarity and support in communities, organising our members to win is absolutely necessary."

### Fight for rights

PCS members need to get ready for the fight of their lives to protect workers' rights, conference heard.

James, from Public Sector group Ofwat branch, said the government had recently announced that it was going to review workers' rights after Brexit.

The review will consider ending the 48-hour working week, changing the rules around rest breaks at work and no longer including overtime pay when calculating some holiday pay entitlements.

"After widespread outcry that review was withdrawn, but we know these people are shameless and bloodthirsty and not to be trusted," James said.

He proposed setting a national campaign to protect workers' rights, working with like-minded organisations and political parties.

### Racist outsourcing

PCS is to publicly highlight the institutionally racist system that operates within the civil service in relation to the outsourcing of work on worse terms and conditions.

The union will also demand urgent discussions to bring vital services back in-house.

Outsourcing on worse terms and conditions resulted in a two-tier workforce as the Covid crisis hit – particularly in Whitehall – where mostly white civil service staff were able to work from home and the largely outsourced black facilities staff were left with little protections and at risk.

Moving the motion, BEIS South London rep Katie said the practice of outsourcing is "racist to its core".

She said the NEC letter to the Cabinet Office should be done publicly "because we think this is a crucial thing that our members, and future members, see that we're campaigning on".

### 'Cultural genocide'

Conference voted to continue PCS's campaign for the rights of the Uyghur people being persecuted at the hands of the Chinese government.

Uyghurs, and other people of national minorities such as Kazakhs and Uzbeks, are being detained on a mass scale in concentration camps and are also enduring a surveillance state.

Proposing the motion, Catherine from the MHCLG national branch described the persecution of the Uyghur as "cultural genocide".

Businesses in as many as 30 different countries are profiting from their forced labour.

The NEC will continue to publicise PCS's position in solidarity with the Uyghur, to support safe, peaceful protests and press the PCS Parliamentary group to speak up on the issue.

### Menopause policy backed

PCS should develop a policy to help women going through the menopause in the wake of a PCS victory against unfair dismissal, conference agreed.

A policy for branches and groups to negotiate on should be in place by 30 September this year.

Catherine, from the Scottish Courts and Tribunals branch, proposed the motion, said it genesis had been an unfair dismissal case, which resulted in a £19,000 pay-out and reinstatement order for the dismissed PCS member.

She added: "This lack of understanding and awareness on an institutional level is a real barrier; one cannot help but wonder if this wouldn't be the case if it affected cis men. The menopause should not be a taboo subject."

Sandra from HMRC Northern Ireland said that women have not been taken seriously when they try to explain how unwell they are because of the menopause process.

She said: "We need to develop detailed guidance and push for formal policies within the civil service, to educate everyone about this medical condition."

### Tax justice focus

Conference voted to renew the union's existing tax justice work, increasing publicity for the campaign and member involvement.

The challenges of rebuilding Britain after both Brexit and the pandemic mean making the rich pay their way is more important than ever.

Gulferaz from Revenue and Customs West Mercia branch said: "If tax rises aren't used to pay for the crisis then it seems inevitable that there will be spending cuts instead."

"The UK also has Brexit to address and there are concerns [it] will be used as an excuse to reduce UK corporation tax rates and create a 'business-friendly environment' to encourage inward investment."

"These are code words for 'tax haven'."

## PCS national elections The union's national elections were held ahead of conference, with the following people elected:

### President

Fran HEATHCOTE (DWP)

### Deputy and vice presidents

Martin CAVANAGH (DWP)  
Jacqueline GREEN (HMCTS)  
Kevin MCHUGH (HMRC)  
Zita HOLBOURNE (Acas)

### NEC Ordinary Members

Angela GRANT (DWP)  
Hector WESLEY (DWP)  
Robert EAGLETON (DWP)  
Bridget CORCORAN (DWP)  
Ian POPE (DWP)  
Tracey HYLTON (HMRC)  
Marianne OWENS (HMRC)  
Lorna MERRY (HMRC)  
Hannah DAVID (Historic England)  
Sam HALL (DWP)

Sarah ENSOR (IOPC)  
Liz McGACHEY (DWP)  
Jimmy GILL (DWP)  
James COX (Home Office)  
Steve SWAINSTON (DWP)  
Harvey CRANE (HMRC)  
Karen WATTS (HMCTS)  
Paula BROWN (HSE)  
Felicity FLYNN (Parole Board Eng & Wales)  
Clive BRYANT (HMRC)  
Ros HEWITT (MoJ)

Kris HENDRY (HMRC)  
John MAGUIRE (HMCTS)  
Austin HARNEY (Off. of the Public Guardian)  
Paul WILLIAMS (DfT)  
Rachelle MCDUGALL (HMRC)  
Mark BAKER (Planning Inspectorate)  
Steve THORLEY (CPS)  
Jas MCGUINNESS (CHDA)  
Adrian HEDLEY (Atos IT Services)

# Financial statement to members

The 2021 PCS Financial Report was published on the PCS website ([www.pcs.org.uk](http://www.pcs.org.uk)) on 9 April 2021 and is available for download. The financial breakdown summary provided here is best read with the full financial report, which includes detailed commentary and a strategic review of the union's financial position.



## Income and Expenditure

The total income of the union for the period was £24.06m. This amount included payments of £21.79m in respect of membership income of the union. The union's total expenditure for the period was £21.03m. The General Secretary's remuneration was: salary £96,851; pension contributions £15,435; employer's national insurance contributions £12,322. For a detailed overview see page 6-12 of the Financial Report 2021.

## Political Fund

In respect of the union's political fund, its total income was £184k and total expenditure was £59k.

## John Moloney

National Treasurer

## Jeff Evans

Director of Central Services

Access the Financial Report 2021 here: [www.pcs.org.uk/news-events/news/pcs-2021-financial-report-online-now](http://www.pcs.org.uk/news-events/news/pcs-2021-financial-report-online-now)

## Financial breakdown

### Summary income and expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2020

All figures: 000s

**Income £24,060**

Analysis:

Membership subscriptions	£21,799
Member contributions to fighting fund	£1,046
Investment Income	£60
Other Income	£1,155

**Expenditure £21,033**

Analysis:

Network administration	£14,302
Members representative costs	£559
Members communications	£1,484
Members benefits	£1,285
Affiliations and donations (TUC £506)	£756
Depreciation	£1,114
Transfer to campaign and disputes fund	£478
Transfer to fighting fund	£1,046
Political fund contributions	£185
Subscription collection costs	£130
Transfer from property fund	(£391)
Taxation	£86
Net operational surplus	£3,027

**FRS 102 actuarial adjustments on pension schemes £2,800**

Loss on revaluation of investment property (£708)  
**Net surplus for year to general fund £5,118**

### Summary balance sheet for the year ended 31 December 2020

Fixed Assets	
Tangible fixed Assets	£24,210
Investments	£1,552

#### Current assets

Debtors	£2,968
Cash	£4,959
Current liabilities	(£2,101)
Total assets less current liabilities	£31,587
Deferred taxation	(£963)
FRS 102 pension asset	£10,900

**Net Assets £41,524**

Represented by:

General fund	£15,815
Property fund	£11,508
Campaign and disputes fund	£286
Political fund	£898
Fighting fund	£2,118
Pension reserve	£10,900
<b>Total funds &amp; reserves</b>	<b>£41,524</b>

## Statutory Statement

A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring, or has occurred, in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and, if necessary, securing regularisation of that conduct. The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with: the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union,

the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police. Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been, or are being, conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, they should consider obtaining independent legal advice.

## Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 section 84A

PCS members who joined on or after 1 March 2018 and have chosen to opt in to contributing to the Union's political fund have the right to withdraw their decision to opt in by giving notice to the union (a withdrawal notice). The withdrawal notice can be given by: (a) delivering the notice (either personally or by an authorised

agent or by post) at the head office or a branch office of the union; (b) sending it by email to the following address: [membership@pcs.org.uk](mailto:membership@pcs.org.uk); (c) completing an electronic form provided by the union which sets out the notice and sending it to the union by electronic means with instructions to the union.

## Independent auditors report to the members of the PCS Union

We have audited the financial statements of the Public and Commercial Services Union (the 'Union') for the year ended 31 December 2020 which comprise the total funds income and expenditure account, the general fund income and expenditure account, the statement of comprehensive income, the balance sheet, the statement of changes in funds and reserves, the cash flow statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including

FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the Union's affairs as at 31 December 2020 and of its surplus for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

BDO LLP, Chartered accountants & Registered auditors, Gatwick, United Kingdom

Date: 14 April 2021

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