

PAY DISPUTE UPDATE – NASUWT CALLS FOR COURT OF INQUIRY

Following unproductive talks with the Department for Education, Sport and Culture (DESC) over the pay dispute, the NASUWT has formally requested that a Court of Inquiry is convened.

This involves the Council of Ministers appointing an independent person or persons to investigate the dispute and write a report giving recommendations as to how the dispute can be resolved. This is the final stage of the dispute procedure. Although the NASUWT hopes that this will result in a positive outcome, if it fails, then the Union will consult with members on the next steps.

The NASUWT is demanding a substantial, above-inflation increase as part of a long-term pay strategy to address the chronic and severe erosion of teachers' pay since 2010, which stands at more than 30% when increased pension contributions are taken into account. This situation has worsened with the changes to the National Insurance (NI) regime from April 2019, which have led to a further significant pay cut for teachers, with many losing around £600 per year. The NI holiday for new recruits does nothing to address the issue and shows a complete disregard for the retention of existing staff.

Although other parties have suggested that an 'Isle of Man allowance' be applied to the current structure, the NASUWT does not believe this would be sufficient or address the root cause of the erosion, which is the link to the English pay review body recommendations. The NASUWT is demanding that this link is broken and local pay negotiations are commenced.

For comparison, data received from the DESC indicates that an across-the-board 1% uplift would cost £399,300. This represents less than 0.04% of the Isle of Man Government's total expenditure.

PENSIONS

Following the conclusion of the pensions negotiations, talks have been ongoing on the cost-sharing mechanism, which is designed to ensure the Pension Scheme remains sustainable and stable. The Public Sector Pensions Authority (PSPA) issued a consultation on three possible mechanisms for cost sharing, to which the NASUWT formally responded.

The NASUWT was disappointed that the consultation focused on the actual mechanism rather than the underlying assumptions, which are more important than the mechanism itself. The assumptions must exclude factors over which the Government has control, such as the rate at which the scheme is assumed to grow, as a small change can have significant impacts on the cost of the scheme.

The NASUWT also responded to a PSPA consultation on changes to pensions legislation. Although the changes appear not to be significant, the Union was nevertheless disappointed that the consultation document lacked important details and illustrations to demonstrate that the small changes would not have disproportionately large impacts.

Copies of both consultation documents are available on the Isle of Man page of the NASUWT website at www.nasuwt.org.uk/isleofman. They have also been shared on the NASUWT Facebook group.

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POLICY CONSULTATIONS

The DESC has recently provided the NASUWT with revised versions of the Pay, Performance Management and Redeployment and Redundancy policies.

The Union has significant concerns around all three policies, as they fall far short of our expectations and result in a punitive approach. In particular, the NASUWT considers the Redeployment and Redundancy policy to be incompatible with the Equality Act, particularly from an age discrimination point of view.

The NASUWT considers the Pay and Performance Management policies to be integral to the pay dispute, and will be tackling these through that dispute. The Union will be submitting a formal, written response to the Redeployment and Redundancy policy in due course.

TRADE UNION RECOGNITION

Although the NASUWT has cordial relations with the DESC, teachers are the only group within the Isle of Man Government not to have a written recognition agreement and constitution for a negotiation forum. The NASUWT considers this to be unacceptable as the lack of clarity is causing significant issues, not least attempts by the DESC to control who represents the NASUWT.

The NASUWT developed a new agreement, based on the agreement used extensively by employers in the UK, and submitted it, in conjunction with other unions, to the DESC. The DESC has refused to consider this and following unsuccessful attempts to rectify this situation through negotiation, the NASUWT has been forced to declare a second dispute with the DESC over this matter. The Union has written to the Manx Industrial Relations Service, and currently a response is awaited.

