



27 January 2023

Dear Colleague

Prospect Civil and Public Services Statutory Industrial Action Ballot

In November and early December of last year, Prospect balloted members in the Sector (on an indicative basis) on their willingness to take industrial action on pay, threats of headcount reduction and attacks to redundancy terms. A remarkable 80% of members voting, voted in favour of strike action and 93% in favour of action short of strike. We have sought to use the emphatic vote of members in our indicative ballot to force the Government and employers to change their stance.

Whilst we have met with ministers and officials, there has been no substantive change to the Government or employer's positions. Against the backdrop of the strong vote for action from members we are now escalating to ballot members on a statutory basis. We do not do this lightly but believe now is the time that we need to stand together to ensure our voice is heard.

Prospect members in the civil service and wider public sector have experienced a decade of real terms pay cuts and in the last year endured attacks on their standing and contribution. This has played out in the context of a government using the civil service as a political punch-bag. The recent warm words from the current Prime Minister, praising 'our brilliant civil service' must not mask the reality of what lies ahead and what you have had to endure.

We believe if the attacks on real terms pay, and redundancy terms go unchecked, the attacks will only accelerate and increase. Now is the time for us to make our voices heard and to stand together across the sector.

Your vote is vital, and it is crucial that you vote as turnout is a key part of the legal process. Statutory ballots are required by law to be postal. For an industrial action ballot to be lawful it requires that there must be a 50% turnout of those entitled to vote as well as a majority voting to take action. The law is designed to seek to suppress and prevent lawful industrial action.

Whilst we have made every effort to engage with the UK Government and individual employers, we believe we are at a stage where our members living standards, job security and terms and conditions are under unparalleled attack. We must make a stand together and send a clear message to employers and the government that this is not acceptable, and things must change.

The issues

- **Pay** – The failure of the Cabinet Office, UK Government and employers to recognise the impact of inflation and the effective 'capping' of pay offers at 3% with inflation reaching double digits. Even where 'business cases' have been submitted for higher figures – they have not recognised the cost-of-living crisis facing members.

Continued...

- **Staffing** – Whilst the government has announced that it has ‘dropped’ its central target of 91,000 civil service job losses by 2025 – we believe very significant job losses will be an inevitable consequence of the real terms budget cuts being considered – with the government pressing for even further ‘efficiency’ savings. Against that backdrop, the dropping of the ‘91,000’ as a target should give little solace to members or enhance any feelings of job security.
- **Redundancy terms** – At the same time, the Government has tabled proposals to slash redundancy terms, reducing the value from 4 to 3 weeks per year of service and reducing the maximum payment from 21 months to 18 months’ salary. The Government wants to make it cheaper to get rid of staff whilst at the same time imposing savage real terms reductions on budgets which will lead to inevitable cuts to staffing numbers.

Our view

We are asking members to vote **Yes** to strike action and **Yes** to action short of strike action .

What type of action?

For strike action – we propose ‘discontinuous’ action – starting with one day of strike action coordinated across areas voting in favour in the statutory ballot. We are balloting on an employer by employer basis to comply with legislation, but doing it on a coordinated basis, so where members vote for action we can take it together.

For action short of strike, we propose action such as working conditioned hours and a ban on voluntary overtime.

Conclusion

In the face of soaring inflation, the Government announcement that they would not increase the funding levels for public sector organisations, and more recently that they are looking for more real terms cuts, has only increased our concerns on pay and job losses. If these concerted attacks go unchallenged it will only beckon on further attacks on our members.

There is no more important time to be a member and take part in union activities. The measure, contribution, and good will of Prospect members can no longer be taken for granted. Please vote **Yes**.

Yours sincerely



Garry Graham
Prospect Deputy General Secretary



Geoff Fletcher, President
Prospect Public Services Executive Committee