



*General Secretary
Andy Gilchrist speaking
at the public service
unions pensions rally
in November*

Protecting our pensions

The FBU is joining other public service unions in a battle to protect our financial security in retirement

AS *Firefighter* went to press, FBU members from across the country were preparing to take part in the TUC-co-ordinated campaigning day of activities on the issue of public service pensions on February 18 and to meet their MPs to press home our concerns about the government proposals on the Firefighters Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The day of action was to involve unions in the TUC's Public Services Liaison Group (PSLG) arguing the case to protect public sector pensions in their local and regional media, organise local rallies and other campaign events, and put pressure on local constituency MPs. To coincide with the campaign day, the TUC was seeking a meeting with David Miliband, the Cabinet Office minister with responsibility for the Public Services Forum.

At a meeting in January of the PSLG, which includes Unison, TGWU, GMB, PCS and the FBU, it was reported that senior members of the TUC would meet the political office of No.10 Downing St to discuss the governments' pensions proposals and to set up a meeting with the senior government ministers.

The FBU has been consulting members on the proposed changes to the FPS/local government pension scheme and on a new union strategy to protect pension benefits.

Details of the union's proposed strategy were sent to members' home addresses along with a detailed analysis that the union has submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Members were asked to attend branch

meetings to let their views be heard about the future of their pensions and how the union should take the campaign forward – including what action needs to be taken.

Other unions are also consulting members. Unison members, faced with detrimental changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, have backed a ballot for industrial action and now the decision to go ahead with a ballot lies with Unison's National Executive Committee.

Although the changes to the various pension schemes vary from sector to sector, the PSLG unions are united in their desire to preserve decent pensions for workers across the public services. Of particular concern is the government's determination to increase the retirement age for all public sector workers.

General Secretary Andy Gilchrist said: "The FBU is currently consulting members and they are angry. Our scheme is not generous, we get out what we put in and we pay a lot more than anyone else.

"Our scheme was in surplus for years but they spent all of the money instead of investing it. In the absence of any change in the Government's intention to rob our pensions it is highly likely we will be balloting members."

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