

CITIES OF LONDON & WESTMINSTER TRADES COUNCIL

TC NEWS

2 Disputes this week in the area

FBU NATIONAL STRIKE 25 FEB



Firefighters confirm 24 hour strike on 25 February after sham pensions' guarantee. Firefighters and Parliament have been misled, says union



Firefighters in England will strike for 24 hours from 7am on 25 February in a long running dispute with the government over its unworkable pension plans.

This latest period of strike action comes after the 2015 firefighters' pension scheme legislation was voted through by MPs when Westminster fire minister Penny Mordaunt gave a guarantee that firefighters aged 55 who failed a fitness test through no fault of their own would receive a full, unreduced pension or a redeployed role.

This guarantee was subsequently confirmed by Eric Pickles, secretary of state for communities and local government.

However when the FBU wrote to all fire authorities asking if they would implement this parliamentary guarantee, the responses from the national employers and a number of authorities clearly stated that they would not.

In fact, London Fire Brigade confirmed that they had legal advice which showed why they could not implement the guarantee. This supported the FBU position that any guarantee would need a regulation change. They also confirmed that they had informed the minister of this before she gave the guarantee.

Despite this the minister used the promise of a guarantee to influence the Parliamentary vote knowing full well that the assurance was worthless.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "It is clear that when Penny Mordaunt gave the guarantee in Parliament she would have been aware that no fire authority ever planned to implement the 'guarantee'.

"In order to win the vote to pass the flawed firefighters pension regulations Penny Mordaunt misled firefighters and Parliament.

"The minister is still writing to firefighters telling them they have the guarantee when she clearly knows that they do not.

"Firefighters are unbelievably angry with the disgraceful actions of this government.

"Since the debate where the guarantee was given, the FBU has written to Penny Mordaunt asking for an explanation and meeting to clear this up once and for all. The fire minister has simply ignored these requests and refused to meet the FBU in order to resolve this dispute.

"Firefighters still face the choice of either being sacked or receiving a severely reduced pension if they fail fitness tests as a result of naturally declining fitness through age. Exactly the opposite of what the minister told Parliament."

Firefighters in Northern Ireland have lifted their trade dispute as the result of a revised and improved offer with a lower pension age.

Firefighters in Scotland will not be on strike as a result of genuine negotiations having delivered changes to the proposals facing firefighters.

Firefighters in Wales will not be on strike as a result of ongoing genuine negotiations and clear indications that they will improve the proposals facing firefighters.

The 24 hour strike will coincide with a rally and protest in Westminster, assembling from noon at Methodist Central Hall, Storeys Gate, London SW1 9NH.

Rally & protest, Westminster 25 February, 12 noon

Methodist Central Hall, Storeys Gate, London SW1 9NH



NATIONAL GALLERY SECOND 5 DAY STRIKE

PCS members at the National Gallery are on strike for 5-days against privatisation Feb 22-26.

The gallery has told **400** of its **600** staff they are to be taken over by a private company. Our members are responsible for the security of the paintings and the public and look after the millions of visitors to the world renowned institution. The National Gallery is the only major museum that does not pay the London Living Wage of **£9.15**.

Following a successful 5-day strike earlier this month there was a public meeting in parliament on 10 February to discuss the campaign.

Thousands against privatisation

More than 40,000 people have signed PCS petition and supported the to halt the privatisation.

The gallery has brought in CIS to 'temporarily' take over services in a third of the gallery. Guardian columnist Polly Toynbee revealed recently the private security firm had been drafted in "to give the gallery staff a fright".

On the eve of the first 5-day strike, gallery bosses suspended Candy Udwin, one of senior reps who is involved in ongoing talks at Acas, for drafting a question about the cost of CIS for the PCS negotiating officer. More than 8,500 people have already signed a statement condemning this victimisation and calling for her reinstatement.

Show your support on picket lines outside the gallery from **9-11am, 22-26 February**.

Support the Day of Action Thursday 26 February.

Rally from 1-1.30pm outside the Gallery followed by a march.