

**Secretary's Report to Executive Committee  
on ZOOM Meeting of National Pensioners' Convention  
Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 10.30am**

1. Secretary was invited as an 'Observer' only and was one of 12 attendees on screen;
2. RTANI was the only respondent who followed through on the invitation to become affiliated with NPC. None of the other associates of Age Sector Platform responded to the invitation;
3. Michael Monaghan reported on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 meeting of the Pensioners' Parliament:
  - It lasted 90 minutes;
  - Deirdre Hargey (Minister of Communities), was questioned about age discrimination and an Active Ageing Strategy;
  - Ivan Baxter suggested that we get Hansard, as it is published, to pick out and identify ministerial obligations and enquire whether Age N.I. has statutory lobbying rights;
  - It was agreed to follow up on Hansard and to lobby Deirdre Hargey to research the Warm Homes Discount Scheme which operates in GB;
  - Michael Monaghan stated that for NI to be integrated into the GB scheme would require primary legislation which would be difficult as there is no Poverty Strategy in Northern Ireland;
  - Jan Shortt, NPC General Secretary, replied that the Warm Homes Discount Scheme in GB is run and managed by local Utility Companies and results in £140 discount off the October to March bill on a first-come-first-served basis which excludes a large number of needy people;
  - She also stated that the Winter Fuel Allowance has been static for 10 years and, when coupled with the rejection of the Triple-Lock Guarantee and the TV Licence subsidy, the future looks bleak for very many retired pensioners;
  - She had featured on the Jeremy Vine Show, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021, challenging the widely held viewpoint that pensioners are wealthy, adding that not all pensioners are wealthy; only the top 2%, pay tax at the higher rates, with around 6 million pensioners not earning enough to pay any tax at all;
  - She stated that, as there are 12 million pensioners in the UK, that means that 50% of them are in this category;
  - Digital Exclusion was mentioned and discussed with regard to the Equality Act NI 2010 which aims to prevent disability discrimination and provide protection for disabled people under the law;
  - Jan Shortt also explained the Government's new policy on Integrated Care Costs insofar as the £86,000 ceiling on costs is for actual *care-costs* only and nothing else. She said that capping the cost of care will not make inroads into what is a grossly underfunded system and will go against the PM's statement that nobody would have to sell their houses to pay for care. In fact, it will drive more into the arms of equity release companies, she suggested. Only radical change to a National Care Service funded by taxation, free at the point of need for everyone, will bring a publicly accountable service;
  - Jan ended by stating that the newly introduced Double-Lock will increase pensions by Inflation or 2½% but, with inflation standing at 3.6%, the prediction for the 2022 increase will be 4.4% not the 8% which pensioners are actually due.
4. Hon. Sec. apologised and excused himself from the meeting just after 12pm, thanking the Officers and Committee for the invitation to attend as an observer and Jan Shortt for her information.