

Clarification regarding Pension Parity and Local Bargaining Issue

ASTI is recommending that members Vote YES in the ballot on Senior Cycle Redevelopment – Implementation Support Measures and Addendum.

The ASTI is aware of and shares the frustration of members regarding the delay in securing definitive clarity on whether, in the event that ASTI votes YES in the ballot, the local bargaining payments will be incorporated into teachers' salaries and as such will be applied in turn to the pensions of retired teachers. There is no doubt that serving teachers will attract the payments.

The Department of Education and Youth and the Department of Public Expenditure Infrastructure Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER) have stated that if increases were agreed to the pay scales as fulfilment of local bargaining, this would have regard to the pension increase policy as set out by DPER previously.

This position is bolstered further in the wording which appears in the implementation circulars and pension guidance documents issued after the wider public service unions agreed the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026. These documents confirm that "pension increases ... will continue to be applied under the policy known as 'pay parity' for the duration of the Public Service Agreement 2024-2026".

ASTI's senior leadership have been working tirelessly to secure clarification and have been holding the Department to account on this point.

ASTI is not alone in pursuing this matter. A number of other unions also wish to have local bargaining paid into members' salaries, preserving pension parity, and are pressing equally hard. ASTI has been in contact with the leadership of some of those unions and are working in concert with them.

The leadership of the Public Services Committee (PSC) of the ICTU have assured us that they are adamant in their support of us in this matter.

All the signals are positive that the outcome we require will be achieved.

ASTI accepts that it is less than ideal that full clarity on this matter is not in place as we commence the balloting process. However, the support of the PSC, along with the DEY and DPER statement, gives confidence that the pay parity outcome will be positive.

ASTI has heard opinion that suggests postponement of the ballot. This is not a realistic option as to do so would negate the terms of the SCRISM and Addendum on which members are currently being asked to vote. The position would be that the ability of ASTI members to be appointed to the Posts of Responsibility being made available to support Senior Cycle Redevelopment would be removed as we must confirm our position by 2nd June, 2026.

Therefore, postponement would effectively be cancellation of the ballot and any later vote would have to be on a different and reduced set of proposals (no Posts of Responsibility would be available).

It is not the case that a vote for the SCRISM and Addendum is a vote for a breach of pension parity.

The ballot is largely about supports for Leaving Certificate redevelopment. It would be an extraordinarily painful development if ASTI were to reject the proposals in this ballot primarily on the pension parity issue, to find out a short time later that the intention of the government side had never been to break pension parity. ASTI would needlessly forego a crucial support in the form of access to the Posts of Responsibility while members of all the other public sector unions and their retired emeritus members enjoy the benefits of payment into salary and retention of pension parity. It is noteworthy however that pay parity between serving ASTI and TUI teachers would be breached.

It should also be remembered that a negative vote in this ballot guarantees that both serving ASTI members and retired ASTI members will get no payments under local bargaining.

ASTI is confident that this matter will be resolved to the satisfaction of both serving teachers and retired teachers. We will, as always, fight to preserve the concept of pension parity. In this fight we have several allies across the public service unions and have a number of mechanisms we can use within the Public Service Agreement.

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