



OPA Chairman's Annual Report for the year 2014

As we now move finally towards the 2015 General Election on May 7th we are now experiencing the full impact of the actual reductions in Benefits and the imposed changeover from RPI to CPI indices in 2013 and which is further compounded by the CPI Zero inflationary rate in contrast to the RPI of nearly 1%. The very low inflationary climate alluded to by the Government and Bank of England has now impacted severely on our Pensions increases and reduced our Savings Incomes and this will continue during the coming financial year and well into 2016.

As indicated previously in May 2014 Report technical arguments on the replacement of RPI by CPI for Pensions indexation and setting up parallel indices still continue through the NSA/RSS Working Parties but without any satisfactory Outcome. Malcolm Booth and Mike Moriarty have been available to attend meetings but frankly there have been hardly any major consultation and progress to record in 2014. The RPI is no longer a UK National Statistic.

We have continued to use the services of Cyber Central and its Director Adam to maintain and sustain our Website and WebPages which cover our Meetings and Presentations including the most recent in February on Insurance Buy-Outs.

John Scholey, as our Treasurer, has coped with a more challenging year than in 2013 as result of OPA now having to pay for its use of Meeting accommodation in London and the investment in Gemma Pettman services to attempt mounting a Media Campaign on Pensions prior to the General Election . This has not worked out as we had originally anticipated due to the insufficient provision of data from Member Associations to give a reliable and valid sample of statistical data. In addition the numerous Pension Annuity and other Changes recently announced by the Coalition Government last December and then further in March 2015 which has led to a huge Media surge of comment and swamped any other Pensions Initiative. We also thank Bill Pitt from ITB Pensioners in this matter.

Our Council continues to meet regularly every three months. It considers various papers put forward to it arising from the work undertaken by Council members together with Malcolm Booth, Chief Executive of the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners. David Reeve and Alan Bilyard have provided great support and in ensuring the accuracy of our proceedings. We continue to meet in London in Kennington at Roots & Shoots Training Centre after Community closed its excellent facility in Covent Garden. Our AGM's continue to be held at Lower Sunbury.

Roy Causton has continued very successfully in coordinating a stimulating range of presentations at our Regional Meetings which led to a variety of stimulating presentations including from the PPF and The Pensions Regulator on the changes to Code of Practice and Methods of assessing applications by Trustees and Employers where Funds continued in Deficit and sought further financial help. We are also very grateful to Eric Champion of TEPA and also to the Riverside Arts Centre for the use of its Meeting accommodation at Lower Sunbury.

In the late Summer of 2013 we were approached by British American Tobacco Pensioners to seek membership of OPA and I am pleased to say they have joined and now have a Council Member elected in Adrian Barnes. More recently the Association of Daily Mirror Pensioners applied to join and became Members in Autumn of 2014. We do thank all our Council members (Alternates, Guests and recent Co-optees) for their contributions and current attention to the critical issues which we have continued to consider in 2014 into early 2015.

We continue to look for new Council members and welcome any new Nominations.

Peter Austin
Chair of OPA
27th April 2015