



Derby City Council

[MPs for Derby North, Derby South and Mid Derbyshire]

Your ref

Our ref PR/JMcC

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Date 9 September 2016

Dear [MP]

Re: Industrial Action by School Support Staff

Representatives of Derby City Council today met with Unison in an attempt to avert proposed industrial action by a small number of school support staff on Wednesday 14 September.

Regrettably, despite a generous offer to all support staff affected by the changes, Unison has unilaterally decided to pursue strike action without further consultation with their members.

The details of the Council's revised offer were as follows:

- A gross lump sum payment of £2000 where school support staff have been affected by a reduction in hours; a reduction in weeks and the loss of an allowance previously claimed in 2015/16. This represents double the previous offer.
- A commitment to work proactively with every school to, wherever possible, move every temporary increase in hours to permanent and increase the number of mitigation hours per week to 37.
- Repayment of any monies deducted in respect of industrial action taken between 1 June 2016 and 18 August 2016 so no-one is out of pocket as a result of taking strike action.

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This offer was contingent on the suspension of the proposed strike and would have covered all school support staff impacted by changes introduced on 1 June, irrespective of whether they are Unison members or if the school had mitigated their hours and weeks.

Unison's refusal to delay industrial action while still in talks with the authority is both frustrating and demonstrative of a wider reluctance to engage in meaningful negotiation to end this dispute.

The Council has always sought to reach agreement with the three trade unions throughout the job evaluation process. We have spent significant time, effort and expense in our attempts to reach a collective agreement, to the extent that the implementation of the project was delayed by five months at significant additional cost to rate payers in Derby.

While we were able to reach agreement with GMB and Unite, we believe Unison is acting disproportionately and without a clear mandate. There are 2700 school support staff impacted by changes to terms and conditions, of which Unison represent approximately 1200. Moreover, we understand that only 400 Unison members voted in the recent ballot. As you will be aware, this does not meet the threshold for strike action due to be implemented as part of the Trade Union Act 2016.

I am deeply concerned that further strikes will have a damaging impact on the education of children and young people across the city, as well as causing severe disruption for parents and carers. Previous strikes involved fewer than 270 employees, yet resulted in the closure of six Derby schools.

As has been emphasised in our previous correspondence, Derby City Council is required by law to implement the outcomes of job evaluation. The adverse impact experienced by school support staff is regrettable, however it is imperative that we ensure any settlement can be justified to other employees of the authority, as well as council tax payers and our external auditors. It is not possible to arbitrarily overrule the outcomes of job evaluation without placing the validity of the entire project in jeopardy.

We believe the offer that has been made to Unison represents a generous concession to those school support staff most severely impacted by change to terms and conditions, while fulfilling our responsibilities to other employees.

Our door remains open to Unison, however we cannot negotiate while industrial action closes our schools.

I hope you understand our position and that you can use your influence to change Unison's current unreasonable behaviour.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P. Robinson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul Robinson
Chief Executive