



Cllr Tim Oliver
Leader of Surrey County Council

Woodhatch Place
11 Cockshot Hill
Reigate
Surrey
RH2 8EF
02085418003

tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk

Mr Paul Couchman,
Surrey County Branch Secretary, UNISON
Mr Stuart Fegan,
Senior Organiser, GMB Trade Union
[by email]

Monday 22 May 2023

Dear Paul and Stuart,

PPDC – Consideration of Dispute – Surrey Pay 2023/24

The People, Performance and Development Committee (PPDC) met on Tuesday 9 May 2023 to consider the dispute that has been registered by Unison and GMB in respect of the 2023/24 Surrey Pay offer made by management in February 2023. This followed a consultative ballot by both Unions where, the Committee heard, there was a rejection of the offer.

The Committee meeting is the final stage in the Internal Collective Disputes Procedure. Both parties had agreed to proceed directly to this stage in the light of a failure to agree the offer through internal negotiations with officers. The Committee considered written and verbal submissions from both management and Trades Unions, and in its deliberations considered the following key points:

The Union pay claim and management offer for 2023/24 was made in the light of challenging economic circumstances with cost of living challenges being felt by most of our staff. In the light of this, the offer made was again weighted towards a greater percentage increase for lower paid staff (as it had been in 2022/23). The Committee noted that neither side was in disagreement with this approach as a principle.

However, this year's offer also included an increase for higher graded staff as there had been little or no pay increase for these employees for the past two years. Members asked if a greater distribution of the offer from higher to lower graded staff might be a possible option to reach agreement. However, neither side was in favour of this; not least because the increase for lower paid staff would not be sufficient for Unions to recommend acceptance.

The Committee heard from both sides that the fundamental issue at stake is one of cost. From management, the case was put that the offer represented the limits of affordability and from the Unions that the amount set aside for the offer was not enough. The offer adds 5% to the paybill whereas the Trades Unions are seeking an offer that is nearer to their initial claim of 12%.

The Committee acknowledged the challenges that staff are facing with the cost of living crisis and high levels of inflation. They also recognise the vital work that staff do to support our communities. However, the issue of funding pay increases must be the overriding factor. The submissions from management made it clear that the County Council could not afford a pay increase of the nature being sought.

In the light of this, the Members of the Committee were of the view that they could not uphold the Union claim of a pay award that would add to the budgeted 5% already made. This decision

represents the final stage of the internal Collective Disputes Procedure. However, the Committee would wish both parties to continue to work together to try to resolve this matter.

Finally, the Committee would ask both sides to ensure that staff are made aware of the pay offer and the financial context in which it is made.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Oliver', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tim Oliver
Leader of the Council and Chair of the PPDC

Cc: Leigh Whitehouse, *Deputy CEO and Executive Director of Resources*,
Sheila Smith, *Director of People and Change*.