



Richard O'Leary, GMB By Post and email	Your ref: Our ref: Date: 26 May 2011
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Dear Richard,

Proposed Changes to Terms and Conditions **Copy for General Purposes Committee**

Thank you for your letter of 24 May 2011 about the ongoing consultation process. I will make sure that members of the General Purposes Committee receive a copy of your letter in advance of Friday's meeting. I will also make sure that they have a copy of this letter in reply.

We are also disappointed that we have not been able to reach an agreement with you and our other recognised unions on how to make the necessary savings from staff costs. However, we believe that both sides have made considerable efforts to explore alternatives. The outcome of the consultation has not been and is not a fait accompli. We have genuinely considered every suggestion from unions and staff during the process. We have explained our position on each suggestion via the staff communications and in meetings with yourselves. The fact that we have changed our position on some elements of the proposals shows that we have approached this with an open mind and a willingness to listen and act on suggestions coming through the process. The letter from the Joint Secretaries supports this.

This is still our approach. But we have to maintain momentum towards our target implementation date in order to make the necessary savings. If you have new suggestions to bring to the table, as we said at the Joint Secretaries Meeting, we are happy to meet with you to explore them. We will be suggesting, however, to the General Purposes Committee, that we would do so alongside any individual consultation, to avoid jeopardising the current timetable. This is because we are conscious that the timetable to ensure a fair process is challenging and we would be concerned to spend further time discussing ideas which we have already discussed before.

You mention four options in your letter: voluntary redundancies; use of reserves; unpaid Council tax; and Councillors' Allowances. You raised all of

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these during the consultation process. On Councillors' Allowances, we have already explained that members will be taking the same 2% cut on their allowances. We did consider your other suggestions and fed back to you on each one during the consultation process. We then shared further financial and costing information with you at the Joint Secretaries meeting in an effort to reach an agreement. Again, the Joint Secretaries' letter reflects this.

We understand that you are concerned to protect your members' position and you will, of course, take legal advice as to how best to do that. We are also concerned to act lawfully and to treat all staff fairly in very challenging circumstances for the Council. The process that would be followed if the General Purposes Committee decides to go ahead with the proposals has been designed with that in mind. We very much hope that the Council and staff will not become involved in any legal dispute, but we are confident that if you advise your members to do so, we will be able to demonstrate a fair and lawful process.

If you do have new ideas which we have not discussed before, please let me know. Please could you also confirm whether you have had a chance to give any thought to my earlier letter about planning ahead to ensure union representation for the individual consultation phase, if approved by the General Purposes Committee.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



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