

Our Ref: RS/MNC

Your Ref:

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6 September 2023

Dear Deborah

### **Pay Equity System**

UNISON received your offer on the proposed new JE system at *15:25 on 5 September 2023* and we note you want us to respond by *09:00 on 11 September*.

This is a proposal that affects all NJC conditioned staff (over 95% of the workforce) on a matter – pay – that is of primary importance to them, and you *expect us to respond in less than three and half working days*. There is not one other council in the country that would conduct industrial relations this way with such a ludicrously short timescale. But this is Birmingham, and UNISON have come to expect a woeful approach to industrial relations.

Like the council, UNISON has its own internal governance processes, and we cannot sign up to a collective agreement of such magnitude without having:

- the right information
- sufficient time to review the offer and supporting information
- sufficient time to consult across the relevant parts of the union

We especially must be careful in responding to an offer that relates to equal pay when that offer has come from a council that has repeatedly got it wrong on equal pay, not least when earlier this year *when the 2023-24 budget assessed the equal pay liability as zero!*

UNISON wrote to you on 4 September raising very serious concerns about the conduct of some current named senior officers who were undoubtedly involved in the catastrophic error of assessing the equal pay risk as zero in the 2023-24 budget. These same officers have been directly involved in advising the council on JE. If, as we very strongly believe, these named officers are culpable for this catastrophic error then asking them to advise on JE is like inviting an arsonist to give advice on fire safety.

Our letter made some very specific requests of the council as follows:

1. Information for the purposes of collective bargaining pursuant to s.181 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. This includes information we need to check the council's financial modelling on JE as given the council's woeful track record around the assessment of risk on equal pay, we need to check the modelling for ourselves as frankly we don't trust the council to get it right.

2. A review of the conduct of the named council officers to assess their culpability in the catastrophic error of assessing the equal pay liability as zero.
3. A bringing forward of the judge-led inquiry into the mistakes made by the council (not the unions) in creating the massive equal pay liability.
4. That you pass on a copy of our letter of 4 September to the external auditor

You have not yet responded to confirm you have done any of the above. It would help us immensely if you could respond to the issues raised in our letter of 4 September.

In the meantime, we will start the process of assessing the offer with the very limited information that we have.

Yours sincerely



**Ravi Subramanian**  
Regional Secretary

cc

Caroline Johnson / Tracy Mooney – Birmingham UNISON

Cllr John Cotton – Leader

Cllr Sharon Thompson - Deputy Leader

Cllr Jack Deakin – Chair of Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Fred Grindrod – Chair of Audit Committee

All members of the Council Business Management Committee

GMB regional office

Unite regional office