

Friday, June 24th, 2011

FAO Mr A Neill

Chief Executive, Southampton City Council

An open letter to Southampton City Council management

The Joint Unions, UNISON and Unite, write to register their extreme disappointment at the outcome of the talks facilitated by ACAS on 16 June and 22/23 June respectively.

Southampton City Council has stated publicly that it wants to restore good industrial relations with unions and yet it has acted in a manner contrary to this when given the opportunity to progress a solution through the respected conciliation channels.

As employers, it is your duty to ensure that your conduct during negotiations would not in any way undermine those negotiations. However, the nature and tone of your communications to the workforce during the period of the negotiations, along with your media statements, in our view did not comply with this duty and served only to confirm our worst fears; that you have very little intention seeking a resolution by negotiation and agreement.

For our part, despite the unfortunate approach taken by the Council, we remain committed to a negotiated solution and will be contacting ACAS shortly to organise further talks for next week.

It is not too late for Council management to act responsibly and call off the dismissal date of July 11th. This would allow a positive atmosphere for discussions to flourish without the backdrop of escalated industrial action.

On behalf of both unions, UNISON and UNITE, we would like to appeal again to the City Council management to suspend the dismissal notices for 11 July. In return the joint unions will suspend all industrial action in order for intensive talks to commence to find a negotiated solution.

We should not have to remind you of the significant costs this will save the Council by averting possibly thousands of potential unfair dismissal claims by the workforce which will be heading for employment tribunals. Additionally, there is a possible claim against you as employers for failing to consult with your workforce on your plans to sack them and reinstate them on lesser terms, which could cost Southampton some £12 million pounds.

We have a moment now whereby we can make progress. We urge you not to quash this opportunity but to act upon our common duty to the people of this city to find an honourable agreement.

We hope to hear from you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Mike Tucker

Unison, Branch secretary

Mark Wood

Unite, Branch secretary