

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR, 27 OCTOBER 2021

I hope this briefing finds you and your family well. I wanted to write to you all to provide an update on the national pay dispute that is currently ongoing between the Scottish Joint Council (SJC) Trade Unions and the Scottish Government in relation to the 2021/22 pay award for Local Government employees. I also wanted to provide clarification on the outcome of the recent industrial action ballots as I am aware that there have been inaccurate reports in certain recent press articles.

Pay Awards

Tayside Contracts is bound by nationally agreed pay awards meaning that our annual cost of living pay awards are negotiated and agreed at a national level between the Trade Unions and COSLA which is the body that represents Local Government in Scotland. Therefore, Tayside Contracts cannot determine or implement any pay awards independently or out with this process.

The joint Trade Unions submitted their claim for the 2021/22 pay award to COSLA on 16 December 2020 – this is what the Trade Unions believe the pay offer should look like or elements it should incorporate. Discussions have been ongoing since this time between the joint Trade Unions and COSLA but ultimately, to date, both parties have been unable to agree a settlement that meets all their requirements. This has led to all three Trade Unions formally rejecting the latest pay offer from COSLA, declaring a formal dispute and most recently balloting their members on industrial action.

Outcome of the Industrial Action Ballots

The industrial action ballots were specifically targeted by the Trade Unions at members employed in school catering, school cleaning, school janitorial and mechanics, as well as members employed in waste and refuse collection. Unison's ballot closed on 22 September and Unite the Union's and GMB's on 7 October 2021. In order to achieve a mandate for industrial action, current legislation dictates that Trade Union ballots have to achieve at least a 50% turnout of eligible Trade Union members, with a majority voting in favour of strike action.

As per their legal obligation, all three Trade Unions have now provided me with the results of their industrial action ballots which were that none of the Trade Unions achieved a ballot mandate for industrial action by Tayside Contracts' employees. This means that no Tayside Contracts' employees can participate in any forthcoming industrial action related to the 2021/22 pay dispute.

Unfortunately, and rather unhelpfully, certain recent press articles published have suggested that school janitorial and cleaning employees will be 'striking' across the Tayside and Fife areas but I think it is important for me to stress that this is not the case for any Tayside Contracts' employee. I have written to the author of these press articles and requested that they amend this inaccurate reporting in their articles, and I understand that this has been corrected in the online versions of these articles. I apologise if this has caused you any upset or confusion, but this was out with my control as Tayside Contracts was not approached for comment prior to the press articles being published.

What Happens Next?

Some employee groupings within certain Local Authority areas across Scotland did achieve a mandate to take industrial action and therefore you may see or hear of other Local Government employees in different areas taking part in strike action over the coming weeks. The Trade Unions will be hoping that this encourages COSLA to make an improved offer.

Going forward, Tayside Contracts will write to you whenever the pay award is settled or a decision taken by COSLA to impose a pay award, as has happened in previous years. If you are a Trade Union member, your Trade Union will also keep you updated. In the meantime, please raise any queries you may have with your line manager.

Thank You

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to once again convey my deep appreciation and thanks to each and every one of you for your hard work and commitment to Tayside Contracts and to the communities of Tayside which we enhance by providing the public services that we do on a daily basis. The Corporate Leadership Team and I absolutely value your effort and never more so than over the past 18 months when many of you continued to attend work during the height of the pandemic to ensure our essential services were provided.

Should you have any questions about any of the topics covered in this briefing please speak to your line manager.

If you have not already done so and wish to provide your email address to us in order to benefit from electronic access to communications such as these, please forward your email address to Communications@tayside-contracts.co.uk. We will not forward your email address onto any third parties or use it for any other purpose other than to communicate with you.

Keith McNamara, Managing Director, 27 October 2021