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Thursday 7 July

Dear

We have advised Somerset County Council of our intention to commence continuous Industrial Action short of a strike on 13th July 2011 (details overleaf).

After the ballot closed on 16th June we asked the employer to reconsider their position on redundancy compensation. The employer replied by widening the negotiations asking that we consider an incremental freeze and changes to sick pay. Sick pay which is part of the national agreement is non-negotiable, and members meetings have confirmed that an incremental freeze is unacceptable.

The employer then informed us that they will not move on redundancy compensation whilst UNISON members remain unwilling to accept more substantial changes to Terms and Conditions.

We are clear that the employer's refusal to consider redundancy compensation of 2x with a cap is not based on affordability grounds. The employer has advised us that they are not chasing specific savings from cuts to Terms and Conditions. Plans to cut Terms & Conditions were outlined by Ken Maddock two years ago even before government spending plans were announced.

The distance between our positions in terms of redundancy compensation was £1.4 million based on 400 staff being made redundant. In fact only 89 people were made redundant so the gap has narrowed. The Council has also put an additional £4.6 million into their reserves with no recommendation from the Auditor to do so, demonstrating that they have the money to fund decent redundancy compensation. It is clear that this dispute is about cutting public services rather than affordability.

While staff suffer an ongoing pay freeze, and the dual threats of redundancy and changes to their Terms and Conditions, Ken Maddock enjoys a £39,520 allowance as Council Leader (including an increase of 2%), Sheila Wheeler receives a salary of £161,000 and the Consultant brought in to 'revolutionise' the Council's services, receives £800 per day. This is a shameful situation given that the low paid staff in Somerset were denied the £250 promised by the government.

With this in mind we urge all members to:

- Engage in the Industrial Action.
- Recruit a friend to UNISON and ask them to join the Industrial Action.

www.unison.org.uk/join

- Dispel the myths that the Council cannot afford to pay decent redundancy compensation.
- Email us with your ideas and questions to actionforsomerset@unison.co.uk
- Check the Branch website for the latest updates www.somersetcountyunison.org

Yours faithfully

Helen Eccles

Helen Eccles
Regional Organiser
UNISON South West

SCC has been advised the Industrial Action will include:

- not undertaking any duties not specified in the member's job description or contract of employment;
- not working above or beyond contracted hours;
- not volunteering to work non-contractual overtime;
- taking all breaks members are entitled to take, at the designated times;
- withdrawing the use of their own car, thus not using it for business purposes;
- withdrawing the use of a car obtained through the assisted purchase scheme, thus not using it for business purposes.

What this means:

- You don't work any **additional hours**, whether these are paid or unpaid
- You don't work any non-contractual **overtime**
- You take your **lunch break** at the designated time
- You take **rest breaks** as entitled under Health & Safety rules – after six hours' working time, you take 20 minutes rest without interruption and away from the work station; for every hour spent at the computer, you take 10 minutes away from the VDU to do something else
- You **start and finish** work at your contracted time
- You ensure you leave meetings held away from your workplace in time to return to your workplace by finish time
- If you are on **flexitime** you ensure that you do not hand back flexi hours
- You do not take **work home** or check Blackberry devices / log-on at home to check work emails outside of working hours, unless you are counting this officially towards your flexi-time entitlement
- You use up or carry forward your **annual leave** rather than lose it
- You don't cover the work of **vacant posts** unless you have temporarily transferred into that job and you have received a temporary contract of employment or you are seconded to the post. If you have been covering parts of a vacant job up to

now you must tell your manager you can no longer cover the duties of that vacant post

- You work strictly to the tasks and duties listed in your **Job Description** and take a literal interpretation of what it says about them
- Where you are required to meet statutory obligations or specific policies as part of your job, you **prioritise these deadlines** and do so without cutting corners, ie fill out all paperwork and take due time to ensure this is done properly, no matter the pressures of other lesser priority work
- You no longer provide your car for business use even if purchased through the Assisted Purchase scheme

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the above are on the Branch website (www.somersetcountyunison.org) and should be available in your workplace through your UNISON Activist.

If you have any further questions about the action or any suggestions please e-mail actionforsomerset@unison.co.uk