

Cllr Claire Young and Cllr Ian Boulton
 South Gloucestershire Council
 PO Box 1953
 Bristol
 BS37 0DE

07 July 2023

Dear Cllrs Young and Boulton,

Thank you for your letter regarding the ongoing industrial action in South Gloucestershire. John Scanlon has asked me to reply as the Regional Director responsible for SUEZ's operations in the South West, including our contract with your authority. In this letter I will explain our pay offer and discussions with Unite the Union and provide some context to the situation.

Firstly, I'd like to apologise for the disruption households in South Gloucestershire are experiencing and thank them for their continued efforts to recycle through the Sort It centres and the additional bring banks during the strike. We are immensely proud of the work achieved by our staff together with the Council, delivering essential services throughout South Gloucestershire. Our people are at the heart of our business and industrial action is the very last outcome we want to see; however, we have so far been unable to reach an agreement with Unite.

We have been in discussions with Unite since December last year over an appropriate increase in pay for our frontline teams, which include Sort It centre staff, loaders and drivers.

In 2022 we agreed and awarded a higher than inflation pay increase of 7% for loaders and Sort It centre staff, and 8.75% for drivers.

When negotiations began for the 2023 pay increase, we initially offered 7.5% and subsequently in April increased this to 8%, which would see staff receiving a combined increase of 15-16.75% over the two years – we believe this far exceeds the pay increases seen in many other sectors over the past two years and it represents both a fair and competitive offer for our people. It is also worth noting that the contract indexation increase that we received this year from the Council was 5.8% and so both offers that we have made are above this level.

The table below shows the hourly pay for staff on the contract over the last two years.

	Loader	Sort It centre	Driver
2021 pay	£10.73	£10.73	£11.93
2022 pay	£11.53	£11.74	£13.02
2023 pay with 8%	£12.45	£12.68	£14.06

In terms of bringing this dispute to an amicable conclusion, we had ongoing regular meetings with Unite from January to April 2023, shortly before they announced their intention to strike. Since then, we have asked them to come back to the table with a revised offer, however, they remain fixed on a 15% pay increase. In the absence of a revised offer, discussions have stalled.





As you mention in your letter, the waste and recycling contract we have in South Gloucestershire comes to an end in 2025. After this, a new contract will be awarded, or the Council may decide to bring the service in house. In either case, it will remain a publicly funded service and any pay increases for staff will ultimately need to be paid for by residents and will have an impact on their council tax.

Obviously, I am hopeful that Unite will come back and resume negotiations to allow the service to return to normal, but in the meantime, I once again apologise for the inconvenience this has caused and would like to thank everyone for their patience and understanding during this time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Pike', written in a cursive style.

James Pike
Regional Director South West