

Soulbury - Pay 2022 and pay 2023 - 19 October 2023

David Powell
Officers' Side Secretary
Soulbury Committee
Hamilton House
Mabledon Place
London
WC1 9BD

19 October 2023

Dear David

Soulbury - Pay 2022 and pay 2023

Thank you for your letter of 3 October.

The Employers' Side is disappointed that despite moving beyond our original pay offer (of a flat rate pay award for 2022) the Officers' Side has rejected our improved offer of 27 September. We believe that this revised offer reflects a substantial and significant improvement in pay for your members and should be carefully considered in the context of local government pay settlements and financial challenges.

To be clear, we acknowledge your disappointment in that the Employers' Side had tried to meet your aims in full regarding the pay structure reform. This was entirely well intended, but that offer was withdrawn following robust feedback from local authorities that it would have been unaffordable and extremely challenging for them to implement. While hugely frustrating, this surely demonstrates that the Employers' Side is constrained by local authority finance, not by good intention.

The offer that was withdrawn was only briefly in the public domain, and we were extremely disappointed that it was subsequently widely publicised and circulated by the AEP, particularly as this happened after we had indicated there were issues.

Good industrial relations rely on positive relationship management, and honest communication, even when mistakes are made. We should not have made this offer to you, we alerted you to this, and we have revised that offer accordingly. It is simply not affordable and not practical and for that reason it cannot form the basis of a settlement in this dispute. To that end we must ask that we find a way to move these discussions forward.

However, we are not yet prepared to enter into mediation on this matter. We do not believe we have exhausted our own abilities to meet and discuss and we would encourage the Officers' side to keep talking with us, and to conduct negotiations through dialogue – not through the media, and to understand the context in which we are bargaining.

As you know, Soulbury Officers, remain the only workforce in local government and across most of the public sector still waiting to receive a pay increase for last year (the local government pay settlement was on 1 November 2022) and the settlement date for this year has also passed. The Employers' Side completely agree that your members deserve a pay rise, and we would urge you to reach an agreement so that they can receive it.

As we have stated previously, the Employers' Side recognises that Soulbury Officers are affected by the current cost of living crisis and that there are recruitment and retention challenges, which while not unique to Education Psychologists, are causes for concern and we do not believe that this dispute helps. The Employers' Side has offered a pay award in line with other groups across local government. It is important to remember that many of those groups are on salary levels far below those of Soulbury Officers. In acknowledgement of the concerns articulated in your claim, the Employers' Side has gone further with pay scale amendments which will direct money into the pockets of some of your lowest paid members. This is an improved and good offer, but we need to be clear it is also at the limit of affordability, for local authorities.

The Employers' Side's position in making this offer is about going as far as possible to settle this dispute. It is an honest and transparent statement of the reality of the position in which we find ourselves. We all want our hardworking employees to receive a pay rise this year and we have worked hard to ensure we have sector-wide support for that. Our joint priority now should be to put that additional money into the pockets of employees and to move forward.

Therefore, we would urge each Staff Association to recommend the revised offer to their members. We would also ask the AEP to reconsider its decision to call industrial action and action short of in November and

December, not least because it will adversely affect those who can ill-afford it and also as it will impact so negatively on a highly valued and important service, but most of all, because it cannot result in an improved offer on pay for 2022 from the Employers' Side.

We reaffirm the offer as follows:

- An increase of £1,925 on all pay points with effect from 1 September 2022.
- An increase of 4.04 per cent on all allowances with effect from 1 September 2022.
- An increase of 3.5 per cent on all pay points with effect from 1 September 2023
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- In the spine for Education Improvement Professionals (EIPs), two additional points after point 50 from 1 September 2023.
- In the scale for Trainee Educational Psychologists, point 1 will be deleted from 1 September 2023.
- In the scale for Assistant Educational Psychologists, point 1 will be deleted from 1 September 2023.
- In the scale A for Educational Psychologists, three additional points after point 11 from 1 September 2023.
- In the scale for Senior and Principal Educational Psychologists, three additional points after point 18 from 1 September 2023.
- Paragraph 4.6 of the Soulbury Report - educational psychologists to be awarded an allowance equivalent to one additional incremental point on Scale A for the duration of supervising assistant educational psychologists as well as for supervising trainee educational psychologists from 1 September 2023.
- The Employers' Side can agree to a joint survey of local authorities and a review of SPA points.
- The Employers' Side can agree to discussions on the role of the Soulbury Officer and review of London Area Payments at Joint Secretarial level, on a without prejudice basis.

Yours sincerely

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