**AN OPEN LETTER TO DORSET COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Dear Councillor

When Dorset County Council transferred staff to Tricuro, the Council told them that their terms and conditions would not change. One of the arguments in favour of setting up Tricuro was that it ‘retains and builds on the existing asset of experienced, committed and well-trained staff.’

On 10 March 2017 a pay cut was imposed on staff. The pay cut was authorised by Councillors representing Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth.

* 805 of the lowest paid ex-Dorset staff had their weekend enhancements cut – saving Tricuro £540,000
* 456 of the lowest paid ex-Dorset staff had their bank holiday pay cut – saving Tricuro £90,000
* 449 staff had both their weekend enhancements and bank holiday pay cut

Some are losing £100/month.

Morale is low. Some of those experienced, committed and well trained staff are leaving or have gone already. Others are seriously thinking about it because they feel they have been betrayed and treated appallingly.

Competitors are head hunting these staff. They know how good they are because they were trained by Dorset County Council. As one member told us “I now feel worth my weight in gold to other organisations but not to Tricuro”.

As experienced, committed well trained staff leave they are replaced with inexperienced, untrained staff. Service quality suffers and our members tell us that is what is already happening. They say that standards have dropped considerably, increasing the risk that a major incident will occur because of that loss of knowledge and experience and the increased use of untrained, inexperienced and agency staff.

Two days before the pay cut the Government announced that Dorset County Council would receive extra money for social care on top of the adult social care grant, the 3% council tax precept and the money from the improved better care fund. All these announcements mean Dorset has an extra £15m each year to spend on social care.

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|   | 2017/18£m | 2018/19£m | 2019/20£m |
| Council tax social care precept | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| Improved Better Care Fund |   | 4.3 | 9.0 |
| 2017/18 Adult Social care grant | 1.9 |   |   |
| Budget 2017 | 7.432 | 5.479 | 2.728 |
| Total | 15.332 | 15.779 | 17.728 |

Not only did Dorset agree a flawed business plan. It has not provided any inflation uplift in the Tricuro contract in 2017/18. Now it appears Tricuro has been told it must give Dorset Council money back by reducing the contract price that Dorset pays, even though the same (and more) services are being provided.

That cut in the contract price is being paid for from the pay cut that has been imposed on the lowest paid staff. They will feel even more betrayed when they discover that after being promised their terms and conditions would not change, Councillors agreed that their pay would be cut and are now demanding that it is used to cut the price that the Council pays Tricuro. Some would call that immoral.

It also now appears that these ‘contract price cut arrangements’ have been designed to avoid paying Corporation Tax.

Dorset Cabinet meets on 5 April 2017. It is the first meeting since the Government announced that Dorset (and the other councils) would get a massive boost to the money they can spend on social care.

UNISON urges you to use that opportunity to honour the promises you made to staff, forgo your 2017/18 contract price cut and give Tricuro the contract price uplift it should have. Tricuro would then be able to re-instate the cut to terms and conditions, morale would be lifted, experienced, committed, well trained staff planning to leave would reconsider, trust would begin to be re-established and most importantly the quality of services provided to the your most vulnerable residents would improve.

Pete Challis

National Officer