

By email

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DATE 13/11/20

To: Hamida Ali, Council Leader
Katherine Kerswell, interim CEO

Following the announcement that Croydon Council has issued a section 114 and subsequent communications UNISON wanted to place a number of concerns on record.

UNISON recognises that local government has been chronically underfunded for years by the Government, however, the information contained in the 'Report in the Public Interest concerning the Council's financial position and related governance arrangements' cannot be ignored.

The email following the announcement regarding the section 114, from the interim CEO to staff, implies it was the failure of committed staff to cease non-essential spending that has caused the Council to issue a section 114.

The email states,

'Colleagues across the council are still putting forward requests to spend money and for growth next year that we simply cannot afford. Too many of us are still operating like business as usual and are not facing up to our new reality that we are actually in a financial crisis. We have not been able to identify enough savings proposals for this year and next that will help us balance the budget.'

The consequences of that behaviour are that we haven't found the savings we need and therefore Lisa Taylor our finance director is

issuing what is called a section 114 notice with the support of the whole of the executive leadership team.’

Croydon Council having no choice but to issue a section 114 is not the fault of the hard-working UNISON members, many of whom are already bearing the brunt of the Council’s mismanagement of finances.

Let us remind you that these staff have already been through one staff review process under the misleading guise of needing to cover the funding gap caused by Covid. They engaged in the process in good faith and many of them made sacrifices, some with their livelihoods, to help the Council make savings.

UNISON appreciates the seriousness of the Council’s finances, but we will not accept a section 114 as a blanket cover for attacks on our members terms and conditions or their jobs. Our members did not cause this mess; our members did not make the decisions that resulted in huge overspend of budgets; our members did not approach the Council’s finances with “corporate blindness”. In fact, our members and the UNISON branch have raised time and time again concerns about the money being spent on consultants, the money being spent on Brick by Brick, on the financial viability of a hotel amongst many others.

Difficult decisions will need to be made, and the next number of months won’t be easy, but let’s not confuse who is at fault.

UNISON appreciates the reference to the Council’s commitment to working closely with the recognised unions. We hope we can work together constructively in the coming months to mitigate the risk to members’ jobs.

Best wishes,

Louise O’Hara
Regional Organiser

Yvonne Green
Branch Secretary