

Ines Lage

Regional Secretary
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Terence Herbert, Chief Executive Officer

Richard Clewer, Council Leader

Tamsin Kielb, Head of HR

Wiltshire County Council
County Hall
Bythesea Road
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Dear Mr. Herbert, Cllr. Clewer, and Ms. Kielb;

The Trades Union Congress is unequivocal that the tactic of threatening “fire and rehire” to water down workers’ terms and conditions is unacceptable.

We are therefore extremely disappointed to learn that Wiltshire Council is using it to push through changes to contracts that will reduce workers’ pay during a cost-of-living crisis and an unprecedented period of real wages squeeze.

We strongly urge you to change your approach.

Fire and rehire is a deeply controversial tactic which severely undermines workplace relations.

There is cross-party opposition to “fire and rehire”. Former prime minister Boris Johnson described the practice as “unacceptable”, and the current government has sought to impose a code of practice to restrict its use. Meanwhile the Labour Party says it will outlaw its use.

We urge you to consider the impact on relations with workers, on the goodwill that is essential to running council services and on staff turnover at the council.

As you will undoubtedly be aware, there is a skills and hiring crisis in the social care industry across the region and beyond. The job vacancy rate in social care stands at 9.9% across the UK (source:health.org.uk). Private employers, and indeed other local authorities, are eagerly seeking opportunities to “poach” trained staff from other organisations. Threatening or even carrying out “fire and rehire” risks causing a severe staffing crisis.

We are very aware of the pressure on council budgets. Many local government authorities are facing similar crises.

But the way to resolve this is not to force through wage cuts with "fire and rehire" threats that have been the favoured approach of some of the UK's worst employers.

I urge you to reconsider.

Regards,

Ines Lage