



FAO: councillor Andrew Semple (sent via email)

Dear Andy,

It has been brought to my attention that you have been misleading those you represent over the cause of #binchaos – bizarrely attributing the cause of this crisis to “*Conservative privatisation*”. This claim is, frankly, rubbish. But this is what we have come to expect from Cumberland Council. Rubbish piling up on our streets, attracting rats and flies and standard of service that can be described, without exaggeration, as “*rubbish*”. Indeed, rubbish is the theme of new administration.

We saw 25 years of Labour privatisation, screwing down contractors until they finally failed in April 2019 with Labour Bin Chaos Part One – forcing the new Conservative administration to step into the breach. Indeed, it was the failure of the previous Labour executive on Allerdale that prompted the subsequent Conservative-led administration to take the service back in-house in the first place – hence the formation of the publicly-owned Allerdale Waste Services. They are wholly owned, and in the control of, Cumberland council. They are a public sector company - quite the opposite of privatisation.

I am delighted to hear that Cumberland council are looking to bring those employees in-house properly, and so will the employees of AWS with whom I’ll share the message. It was officers who resisted bringing them in-house in the first place, not wanting control of waste at all. Many of those officers are in Cumberland, so I wish you good luck. I fear you’re jeopardising that decision as it now looks like you have been suggesting that the outcome of that report, and the decision of your Executive, are predetermined.

The former Chief Executive told me: “*If you’re going to get issues, it will be the bin men*”. He moved on shortly thereafter. You mess with those lads at your peril, as your executive is learning.

And were it not for your selective amnesia, you might recall Labour’s ill-fated bin service had been set up when the present leader of Cumberland Council was Deputy Leader of the borough council. Now Labour is again in charge of the new council, we are all watching the sequel no one wanted to be made – Bin Chaos Part Two.

This is not a good start. Cumberland Council was quick enough to harmonise council tax in Allerdale by the highest possible amount. This council tax hike raises more than £2.1m from Allerdale every year – more than enough to pay refuse workers a fair wage and to resolve this dispute. It seems that the Labour administration is happy to harmonise council tax at the highest possible level but is unwilling to apply the same logic to staff wages or the service that ratepayers receive. So much for solidarity.

Those paying more council tax could reasonably expect to see a corresponding improvement in services, but what my constituents have had so far is a significant



reduction. If people are going to pay the same rate of council tax for services, then, by the same token, the people who deliver those services should expect the same pay for doing the same job. Again, it is entirely within the administration's gift to resolve these issues.

As you well know, I warned Cumberland Council about the possibility of strikes last July. The council had a full year as a Shadow Authority to iron out these disparities and fair warning. They failed to listen, and they failed to act – an abrogation of responsibility which has led us into another fine mess.

Local Government reform was supposed to mark the end of buck-passing but buck-passing and poor service is all we have seen so far from this new council.

Cumberland is operationally responsible for the disposal of waste, not the Conservatives. However, it is failing to deliver a basic level of service.

We are now in the eighth week of #BinChaos, with binmen across Allerdale being paid less than their Carlisle and Copeland counterparts despite working for the same authority and with no end in sight – a predicament that I understand could go on for months.

As you will know, I have called on Mr Fryer to meet with me, binmen and union representatives to come to an amicable resolution to the strikes. He has so far failed to respond to my invitation. A resolution can't wait. Residents need their bins and recycling collected. While the council waits for reports and decisions, we need an interim solution which I'm happy to help negotiate.

This is a Labour problem caused by a Labour council. I want to be part of a Conservative solution – just as we were back in 2019 during Bin Chaos Part One.

Please desist from peddling misinformation, and encourage your leader to see sense, and take responsibility for the crisis unfolding on his watch.

Yours sincerely

Mark Jenkinson MP