



Mark Fryer  
Leader Cumberland Council  
Cumbria House  
117 Botchergate  
Carlisle  
CA11RD

19<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Mark

I am very disappointed to see that you have decided to prolong the misery on the ratepayers and refuse workers of the former Allerdale district. There was no meaningful offer on the table, and it is hardly surprising that it was rejected.

I warned you last July that a failure to harmonise rates would lead to disruption for my constituents. But now talks have again broken down on your watch, I am concerned that you have not been negotiating in good faith. Indeed, the use of agency workers is a deliberate undermining of the strikers in the knowledge that you will ultimately harmonise rates.

Rather than harmonising rates now, you have opted to draw out this dispute unnecessarily. This is causing disruption for hardworking families across Allerdale, with a growing number of bins being missed week on week. Around 30,000 homes have missed weekly bin collections since 16<sup>th</sup> May – over and above the failure to collect any recycling, paper or garden waste for the last three months. Again, this was foreseeable and avoidable. It remains in your gift to resolve this crisis.

Meanwhile, I regularly receive complaints about rats. Rodents not only cause considerable property damage, but may carry many diseases. This poses a clear health hazard to my constituents, particularly those who may be elderly and vulnerable. This situation is a direct result of your political choices.

To be clear, I do not think it is fair or reasonable to expect the council to make a swift determination on taking waste collection directly back in-house. There is a comprehensive process to go through. Indeed, I went through it as Deputy Leader in 2019 when it couldn't meet statutory Best Value requirements. It wasn't in the interests of taxpayers who foot the bill (most of whom don't get 23 per cent pension contributions being sought here). However, the council has to pay the lads the same across the authority, and the services must be harmonised quickly. This is not only an ethical question. It is now a practical necessity.

I was surprised to hear the council plead penury. The council tax hike inflicted on my constituents raises more than £2.1m from Allerdale every year – more than enough to fund pay parity (all they are asking for is the same pay for the same job for the same council as their colleagues). To deny them this goes against common sense, decency, and fairness – not to mention the socialist principles for which you claim to stand.



I was also concerned to hear reports that what was discussed at the meeting bore little relation to what the binmen and their unions had been led to expect. Negotiations must be open and honest.

Please act in the best interests of the people you were elected to serve and reopen talks in a spirit of compromise. My offer of facilitating a meeting with a view to resolving this bin chaos remains open. I hope you will take me up on it.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark".

**Mark Jenkinson MP**