



4th September 2024

Dear Mr Burnham

Concerns regarding Passenger Transport Forum (PTF) Employers Bargaining Practices

I am writing to you in your capacity as leader of your region in regard to the Passenger Transport Forum (PTF) concerning an issue that is crucial not only to the well-being of our members but also to the integrity of industrial relations and the transport networks within the Combined Authorities (West Midlands and West Yorkshire) and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), which collectively form the PTF.

It is noticeable that there has been a decline of proper engagement with trade unions by the employers within the Combined Authorities and TfGM. This lack of engagement is not in line with the principles of good employment relations and disregards established bargaining machinery on key matters including pay. Despite multiple attempts to address these issues through the appropriate channels, our concerns have remained unacknowledged and unresolved.

Members of both unions (UNISON and Unite) overwhelmingly rejected the 2024/2025 pay offer made by PTF employers and voted in a consultative ballot in favour of sustained industrial action. As a result, the unions are currently preparing statutory industrial action ballots of our members.

There has been a significant delay in responding to requests for information, which is essential for constructive dialogue and negotiation. This compounds the growing dissatisfaction among our representatives and membership. The unions have already proposed the reopening of negotiations for an improved and decent award which is reflective of the current economic climate and the hard work of our members. Regrettably, the employers engaging with the PTF did not respond at all by the deadline we set, and subsequently responded negatively to this request. Instead, the employers have said they are awaiting

the outcome of the separate Local Government Pay Award – a separate bargaining unit.

To provide context, here is a timeline of the events to date:

- **13 February 2024:** Unions submit a pay claim to the Passenger Transport Forum (PTF) employers.
- **1 April 2024:** Due date for annual pay rises.
- **18 April 2024:** First negotiation meeting takes place. Employers state they will wait to see the Local Authority employers offer before making one.
- **16 May 2024:** Local Authority employers provide pay offer to their staff.
- **4 July 2024:** PTF Employers provide a pay offer.
- **8 July 2024:** PTF Employers provide clarification on the offer.
- **7 August 2024:** Union members finish voting - and decide to reject the offer.
- **8 August 2024:** Unions inform employers of the ballot result and invite them to reopen negotiations for an improved pay offer.
- **21 August 2024:** Deadline set by unions for employers to agree to reopen negotiations for an improved pay offer.
- **23 August 2024:** Employers reject proposal to reopen negotiations.

As the mayor and public leader committed to the welfare and fair treatment of all employees under your jurisdiction and the transport networks within your area, we urge you to intervene in this matter to enable a satisfactory resolution to be found. We ask that you facilitate a meeting between our representatives and the relevant authorities to discuss these issues thoroughly and to find a mutually agreeable resolution. It is imperative that we reestablish a dialogue that respects the rights and contributions of the workforce as well as a general improvement in industrial relations.

A similar letter has been sent to the mayors of West Midlands and West Yorkshire Combined Authorities.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and look forward to your prompt response. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



Donna Rowe-Merriman

UNISON, National Secretary – Business, Community and Transport

Cc: Kevin Lee