

Thurrock Council caretakers in strike vote



Dozens of caretakers working for Thurrock Council have [25 August] begun voting for strike action, after a dispute over their terms re-opened.

The dispute first arose earlier this year, after caretakers who clean and maintain properties across the council's housing estate were told their roles would be downgraded and their salaries reduced by £2,000 a year on average.

The workers, who are represented by GMB, initially agreed to a trial period but are now asking for this to be brought to an end after alleging they are being asked to perform tasks that should be outside their current remit.



The council is under intense financial pressure after a series of failed solar farm investments, with estimated debts of £677 million.[1]

The ballot will close on 14 September.

A GMB member working as a caretaker said:

"The hardest part of all this is what it's doing to residents.

"The council has boxed us into a downgraded role that doesn't match the reality of what estates need and we're now told to ignore issues we would have dealt with straight away.

"We entered the trial in good faith, but instead of clarity we've been handed extra duties while still facing the threat of a pay cut.

"Residents deserve better than a service that's being hollowed out, and we refuse to stand by while the council's financial mistakes are pushed onto the people who rely on us most."

Gavin Davies, GMB Senior Organiser, said:

"Our members still face an ever-present threat of having their roles downgraded and we cannot accept this risk.

"Many of our caretaker members are already low paid, and the proposed cuts would leave them struggling to afford bills at a time when the cost of living is extremely high.

"They have been patient with the council and agreed to the trial so they can continue supporting residents, but the fact that they're being asked do additional tasks is a concerning sign of things to come.

"Until the council show our members that they respect the valuable work they do and take a downgrade off the table, we will remain in dispute and industrial action could follow."

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Member requiring help?

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