



**JTU09-19**

Suki Binning, Chief Executive  
The Kent Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company

*(By email only)*

14<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Dear Suki,

### **Engagement with Trade Unions following the demise of Working Links**

It has been a full month since the Probation unions met with senior Seetec and KSS CRC management, where we discussed your transitional objectives following the variation of the KSS CRC contract to incorporate the ex-Working Links CRC footprint.

You will know that whilst the meeting was generally constructive, the trade unions voiced our serious concerns about the messages that Seetec sent to staff upon their transfer from Working Links to KSS CRC in relation to pay and measures, and how we needed to see adequate facilities time made available for our local representatives.

In particular, we restated the fact that the new employer is obliged to enter into meaningful negotiations with the trade unions under the terms of the Staff Transfer and Protections Agreement. As an aside, we were very surprised that this appeared to be news to your team which raised understandable questions about the extent of due diligence undertaken by Seetec prior to the company stepping into the former Working Links operational areas.

We were assured that there was a total commitment to engage with the unions on these issues and that we would not see any precipitate actions and we were led to believe that we would get sight of your 90 day mobilisation plan within a few days. This document has still to materialise, yet we have subsequently seen communications to staff that refer to engagement with partners but have failed to mention that this will also include trade unions. This is hardly the most auspicious of starts to a new working relationship.

The long delay in organising another opportunity for substantive discussion is no doubt due to a variety of reasons, and whilst we appreciate the demands on everyone's time, I have just seen an offer from Paul Giles for the parties to meet again on 9<sup>th</sup> April.

I will now canvass this date with colleagues but to be clear we expect a full day's work to be undertaken where we want to formally engage with your team on pay, measures and operational issues and how our representatives can be given the time to offer meaningful input going forward.

I should say that the delay in getting round the table again is hardly conducive in alleviating the residual anger of our members at the treatment meted out to them by their previous employers and I have received substantial feedback to suggest that not a lot seems to have changed. We have been assured by senior politicians and HMPPS officials that the introduction of Seetec/KSS CRC is the start of a new era in industrial relations, but at this point we feel that we have some way to go before our members are convinced.

We need to meet at the earliest opportunity; and while we must reiterate our disappointment at the continuing delay, I am sure that the unions will do all that we can to clear diaries and that you will facilitate release of reps where necessary for the meeting to take place on the 9<sup>th</sup> April. In turn, we would respectfully request that you instruct your senior management team to clear their diaries for that day to enable a full discussion on these issues to take place. We also need to agree a programme of future meetings and to firm up plans for the away day event that we also agreed should be organised.

Meanwhile, we will be finalising the 2019 pay claim that we promised would be with you in time for our next meeting so that we can commence formal negotiations, in return we expect to receive all of the relevant pay data that the unions are entitled to in advance of these discussions as well as your mobilisation plans. In this regard, you will not be surprised to hear that we do not expect to see any action taken on pay or measures or attempts to vary staff contracts until we have concluded negotiations.

The unions are very much hoping that we can do some meaningful business together, which in itself will be a major step forward from the abject misery and disrespect that staff have endured at the hands of their previous employers over these last four years.

We look forward to your reply and the opportunity to meet with you.

Yours sincerely,

**Ian Lawrence**  
**General Secretary**  
**Napo**

**Siobhan Brown**  
**Regional Organiser**  
**UNISON**

**George Georgiou**  
**National Officer**  
**GMB/SCOOP**

CC: Spencer Draper, Deputy Director, CRC Contract Management Group, HMPPS  
Paul Giles, Head of Employee Relations & Development, Seetec  
Sasha Ashton, Group HR Director, Seetec