

Unions hold out for more in bin workers pay dispute

As the Fringe and International Festivals draw to a close this weekend the city is showing signs of the effect of the bin workers strike action.

Bins are full all over the city, including in the city centre where Essential Edinburgh has confirmed that its Clean Team (sub-contracted to MITIE) has been working to clean up excess litter around bins and on pavements. The body is responsible for cleanliness in the city centre where businesses pay a levy in return for promotion of the city centre and work to keep it clean and also to improve it.

But the central issue is the workers who have taken industrial action as a last resort in an effort to be paid a fair wage. From Wednesday workers at a further 13 councils in addition to Edinburgh have walked out, striking for an improved pay offer.

Talks continue on Wednesday between representatives from COSLA who we understand are to meet the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney. As at Wednesday morning COSLA the umbrella group which represents the 32 councils in Scotland have not brokered a deal with the unions involved. The offer on the table is 5%, with some claiming there is no clarity over the detail in it.

COSLA

COSLA made a formal statement on Tuesday after meeting with

the unions but it is clear from the reactions from the unions and the City of Edinburgh Council leader Cammy Day that there is no resolution as yet in the ongoing pay dispute.

A COSLA Spokesperson said: “We met with our Trade Union Colleagues earlier today. It was both a constructive and a productive meeting and a new firm offer has now been put to them. It is our hope that they will now take this offer away and consult their membership on it.”

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Council leader Cammy Day said: “Naturally I’m disappointed that COSLA have once again failed to reach a deal with the Trade Unions.

“This is a national crisis playing out in Edinburgh’s streets during our busiest and most important time of the year. And while this clearly shows the value of our waste teams’ work, it also demonstrates a national failure to find an acceptable resolution.

“With strike action set to begin in Councils across Scotland from tomorrow, we need The Scottish Government to get back round the table.

“I’ve written to Nicola Sturgeon today to invite her to join me and the Unions for a walk around the city centre to see first-hand the impact this is having on our Capital city – the driving force of the Scottish economy.

“I want to thank our residents for bearing with us and for following our guidance, particularly around storing their waste. Our dedicated webpage has been viewed well over 150,000 times, which shows our message is getting out there, and we’re continuing to work with our partners across the city to reach visitors who may not be aware of the strike.

“We have a plan in place to get the city looking back to its

best as soon as the strike is over and will provide regular updates on the resumption of services along with our latest advice.”

Council Leader [@cllrcammyday](#) told us on Tuesday he was disappointed that [@COSLA](#) did nothing over the weekend to try and resolve the pay dispute by waste and cleansing workers pic.twitter.com/b1oRQ3fIZ9

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [August 24, 2022](#)

Cllr Day told us on Tuesday afternoon that he was disappointed that COSLA did nothing for four days since the last offer was made on Friday. We put some of the criticism to him which suggests he did nothing ahead of the strike. He said that he recognised and respected the right to strike.

COSLA Resources Spokesperson Cllr Katie Hagmann SNP Dumfries and Galloway tweeted that she was “Very grateful for my downtime this weekend”.

GMB Union

At the close of joint trade union talks on Tuesday with COSLA without progress on the local government pay offer, and following meetings of the union’s local government committee, GMB Scotland Senior Organiser Keir Greenaway said: “The fact that COSLA couldn’t even commit to the basic principle of a flat rate offer which would help the lowest paid is bitterly disappointing and frankly shameful.

“Strike action in Edinburgh continues, GMB members in waste and recycling services across sixteen councils will start strikes this Friday, and members in Glasgow and East Renfrewshire schools and early years will strike from 6 September.

“Our members are angry about the lack of value being shown to them by political leaders and scared about the prospect of pay that doesn’t confront a cost-of-living crisis that’s getting worse by the week.

“COSLA leaders meet again on Friday, and they have got to do so much better, because until our members concerns are addressed, strikes will continue, and they will grow.”

UNITE the union

Unite the union confirmed that waste services workers in a further **13 Councils** will join those in Edinburgh on strike action from Wednesday.

The trade union also announced that its local government committee has rejected outright the five per cent COSLA pay offer.

Planned Waste Services Strike Action

18 – 30 August – Edinburgh

24 – 31 August – Aberdeen City, Angus, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Lothian.

The City of Edinburgh Council branch tweets most of its updates and this latest appears to be aimed at countering claims from the opposition groups in the council:

Misinformation on [#edinburghbinstrikes](#) today is rife.

Strike is a national dispute—one council can’t stop it. 14 more councils tomorrow.

Local gov funding has been slashed for a decade.

Idea that 5% definitely would have stopped this is a fantasy. An insulting one at that.

– Unite CEC Branch (@UniteCECbranch) [August 23, 2022](#)

UNISON Scotland

Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland's head of local government, said: "It was a very long meeting but unfortunately there has been no breakthrough and we are a long way from a pay offer that we would be able to recommend to our members.

"COSLA negotiated within the cost envelope that leaders mandated them but that simply isn't enough and goes nowhere near matching the pay offer provided to council workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"The only thing that both parties could agree on is that we need the urgent intervention from the Deputy First Minister to put additional funding in place and both will be writing to the Deputy First Minister to that effect today."

The members of UNISON are updated on Twitter on their union's stance by Johanna Baxter the Head of Local Government:

UNISON Scotland's Head of Local Government [@JohannaBaxter](#) provides a quick update on today's pay talks with [@COSLA](#) pic.twitter.com/AFvvHbbs2a

– UNISON Scotland (@unisonscot) [August 23, 2022](#)