

Unions reject COSLA's latest pay offer

Unite, UNISON AND GMB Scotland have all rejected the new COSLA offer meaning that strike action will continue from 6 September after a short gap in Edinburgh.

UNISON will recommend that its members vote to reject the offer in a consultative ballot in the coming days.

Following days of intense negotiations, a new offer has been tabled by COSLA but Unite has criticised it as a 'waste of precious time' because the structure of the proposal continues to disproportionately hit the lowest paid.

UNISON has confirmed that strike dates in waste and recycling, schools and early years, that have already been notified to the local authorities in which the union has legal mandates, will continue as planned during the period of consultation.



The key elements of COSLA's offer include:

- A minimum pay uplift of £1925, based on a 37 hour working week, which matches the offer made to Local Government south of the border. However, in Scotland only part of this payment will be consolidated into council workers ongoing pay, the rest will be delivered via one-off payments.
- Those earning less than £20,500 – around 1 in 5 of the council workforce – will receive a pro-rata gross pay increase in 2022 equal to £2,000.
- The removal of SSSC fees for all roles and grades where applicable, including social workers and social care workers among others.
- One additional day's leave for all.

The offer remains a minimum of five per cent on average across the local government pay grades with a varying one-off payment – for the lower paid it is estimated to be around £989.

Unite further estimates that the offer in total represents for around 85 per cent of the workforce between £1,925 and

£2,000.

Unite say that as the offer will not be consolidated into salaries, it is non-recurring and it fails to recognise that the cost of living is projected to increase for all workers.

The unions point out that Ofgem raised the energy price cap to **£3,549** as broader inflation (RPI) has soared to hit a forty-year high of 12.3 per cent with warnings that headline inflation (CPI) could reach 18 per cent by the start of next year.

UNITE THE UNION STATEMENT

Unite industrial officer Wendy Dunsmore, said: “Unite has rejected outright the latest pay offer from COSLA. The structure of the offer continues to disproportionately and unfairly effect the lowest paid with the majority of those being women. In real terms it leaves the lowest paid workers no better-off and a significant proportion of the offer does not enhance overtime, allowances or pensions.”

“The offer remains unacceptable and it represents a waste of precious time. We understand the gravity of the situation across the country but equally our members are facing the worst cost of living crisis in a generation. Unite’s strike action remains scheduled for next week unless COSLA gets back to us with a credible offer which addresses our primary concerns.”

UNISON STATEMENT

UNISON is the largest trade union in local government. Johanna Baxter, UNISON Scotland head of local government, said: “UNISON negotiators have worked day and night to find a solution to this crises. We welcome the contribution the Scottish Government have made to date and COSLA’s commitment

to scrapping SSSC fees, their agreement to a one-off cost-of-living increase, and additional day's leave. However as we have repeatedly told them both the size of the current cost envelope is simply not big enough to deliver a decent consolidated wage rise for the majority of our members.

“UNISON’s local government committee met this morning and confirmed that strike action will continue while we consult our members on this latest offer. Council workers are struggling to cope with the cost-of-living crisis after ten years of austerity. This is another pay cut they simply cannot afford, which is why we are recommending they reject the offer and continue with the action already planned to try to secure a bigger consolidated sum.”

Mark Ferguson, chair of local government committee at UNISON said: “This is the first time since devolution that we have embarked on industrial action like this. Half of council workers earn less than £25k per year and 85% earn less than £39k per year – they are all worrying about paying their bills. Inflation is continuing to rise, and our members are being asked to take a real-terms pay cut which will plunge even more of them into debt. Strike action is the last resort and we are always open to get around the table to reach a solution.”

Strike action across [14 councils](#) in waste services across Scotland involving Unite members is scheduled to end in Edinburgh tomorrow (30 August) and on 31 August in the remaining 13 councils.

The next phase of strike action set to take place in education and waste services impacting [20 councils](#) from 6 to 13 September.

It is reported that more than half of Scotland’s 250,000 council workers are earning less than £25,000 a year for a 37-hour week.

GMB SCOTLAND statement

following an initial meeting of GMB Scotland's local government committee members this afternoon, GMB Scotland Senior Organiser for Public Services Keir Greenaway said: "A flat rate award is a key demand from unions to ensure more consolidated money goes into the pockets of frontline workers and not the highest paid in our councils. COSLA knew this but instead tabled this offer as an across-the-board percentage rise that only feathers the nests of service directors.

"This was unacceptable to our local government committee members. It's not credible that in the grip of the biggest cost-of-living crisis in forty years, and with inflation and energy bills soaring, a head of service gets four times the consolidated increase than a bin collector, cleaner or carer.

"That's why we have written to COSLA again this evening urging them to return to talks as soon as possible and to negotiate a new offer based on a flat rate increase. If they don't do this, then when our committee reconvenes tomorrow, we will outline our plans to fully consult GMB members."

SCOTTISH LABOUR blame the SNP Government

Scottish Labour local government spokesperson Mark Griffin MSP said: "This news will come as a disappointment to millions of Scots, but the blame lies squarely with this SNP government.

"It is all too clear that local government alone cannot solve this dispute and that the SNP government has to put its money where its mouth is.

"Make no mistake, the disruption that thousands of Scots are facing to council services is the direct result of the SNP government's cuts, incompetence and intransigence.

“Streets across Scotland are covered in litter and rubbish because this SNP government will not give workers the deal that they deserve.” Scottish Labour will continue to work with COSLA and the trade union movement to get a settlement that delivers fair pay for workers and protects council services.”

