

Council strikes suspended after new offer recommended by unions to their members

Unite the union has confirmed a new 'credible' offer and the trade union is recommending acceptance with strike action next week now suspended.

Unite the union confirms that following talks involving the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, COSLA and the trade unions, a new 'credible' pay offer has been formally put on the table.

UNISON is also recommending to its members that strike action at schools and by waste and cleansing staff.

Unite can confirm that the substance of the new offer has led to a recommendation by its local government committee to accept. Three UNISON sticking points were overcome late last night with the First Minister. The first is that the pay envelope has been increased to £600m, second that the pay increases will be fully consolidated from the date of implementation and the calculations will be based on 36-hour week (rather 37hr wk).

Strikes scheduled to take place in waste and education services from [6 to 13 September](#) are now suspended. Unite will hold a consultative ballot of its local government membership on the offer which it aims to complete by 22 September.

Unite can confirm a flat rate fully consolidated offer

of £2,000 for those earning up to £20,500. This is the equivalent to an increase of around 10 – 11 per cent for the lowest paid who are estimated to be around 18 per cent of the total workforce. The offer is consolidated into overtime, allowances and pensions.

It further includes a £1,925 flat rate offer which is fully consolidated for those earning between £20,500 and up to £39,000. This is the equivalent to an increase of 8 per cent for those earning around £24,000. The offer would also be backdated to April.

Unite estimates that trade union negotiators have been able to secure around an extra £460 million for local government since the dispute in waste services began in Edinburgh on 18 August.

Wendy Dunsmore, Unite's lead negotiator for local government, welcomed the new offer, she said: "After the latest round of intensive talks a new credible offer has finally been put on the table by COSLA. Unite wants to acknowledge the First Minister's direct involvement as a primary reason for the breakthrough.

"The offer on the table is fully consolidated and as such there will be more cash in the pot going forward for local government workers. It provides a degree of security for the lowest paid with a flat rate offer of £2000 which is an uplift worth around 10-11 per cent.

"We now have a credible offer which our local government representatives can recommend to the membership for acceptance."

Johanna Baxter, UNISON head of local government said: "This offer is a victory for UNISON members. It has taken 8 months and the industrial might of UNISON members in schools and early years and waste and recycling workers to drag £600m out of Scottish government and COSLA and into the pockets hardworking people. COSLA originally offered 2%, then 3.5%,

then 5% – we now we have £600m on the table, which is a 7.5% increase to the total pay bill and 87% of our council workers will receive fully consolidated increases between 5% to 10%.

UNISON want to get this money into the pockets of council workers now while we continue the campaign to support people through the cost of living crisis,

It is only through the collective action of our members in school and early years staff threatening strike action and our waste and recycling workers taking action that we have forced these extra funds out of government and the employer. Our member's message was clear and unequivocal – UNISON's local government members are no longer prepared to be treated as the poor relations of the public sector. They will stand up, speak up and organise to win change together. There is always more to do but this is a welcome step in the right direction."

Mark Ferguson, chair of UNISON Scotland local government committee said: "Do not underestimate the scale of the achievement for UNISON members. We have won significant increases from where we started 8 month ago. We have had to drag the employer to the table to even talk to us. This will go some way to help them through the cost of living crisis but by no means is the fight over. UNISON will now continue its campaign to improve pay and conditions for all workers in local government."

GMB Scotland Senior Organiser for Public Services Keir Greenaway said: "GMB has been very clear that more must be done for the lowest paid in local government and this latest offer delivers a significant amount of consolidated money for these workers, including the frontline refuse and schools' staff that everyone depends on.

"It's not a perfect offer but it is the view of GMB Scotland's local government committee that it's worthy of members consultation and their acceptance, but ultimately our members

whose campaigning and strike actions have improved these terms will have the final say.

“In the meantime, we have agreed to suspend all planned strike action so this consultation process can take place and our GMB organisers and workplace reps will be visiting as many workplaces as possible to engage our members on this.

“Most importantly, we want to pay tribute to our members. Strike action is not easy, it requires sacrifice and solidarity to deliver outcomes that make work better, and they have fought long and hard for an improved offer to help confront this cost-of-living crisis.”

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.