

COSLA calls on First Minister to intervene to avert bin strikes

The local government body COSLA has called upon The Scottish Government to step in with more funding to avert bin strikes in a few weeks's time.

There was a special leaders' meeting held on Wednesday to find a way to avoid rubbish piling up in the streets due to strike action threatened by refuse workers in Edinburgh and elsewhere.

Scottish Labour councillors asked for a joint meeting with The Scottish Government to seek more money for pay and to discuss the possibility of a multi-year deal. They also asked that unions suspend their industrial action until discussions with the government have taken place. The SNP members of COSLA are understood to have offered a different solution – to pass the matter to the UK Chancellor, while noting the new more constructive relationship between the two governments.

The deal on the table is that COSLA offered a rise of 3.2% for the year between April 2024 and March 2025, but this has been rejected by the unions. Unions have to give two weeks' notice of any action which would then take place right in the middle of the Edinburgh festivals.

Cllr Cammy Day, Leader of The City of Edinburgh Council said he is pleased at the outcome from today's meeting. He said: "I

was pleased the Labour amendment was agreed, and not that from the SNP which was trying to pass the responsibility to the UK Government.

“We’ve been quite clear all along that The Scottish Government are responsible for funding local government.

“We do need to engage with Ian Murray, the Secretary of State for Scotland and Chancellor Rachel Reeves, but but right now we need a solution to the local government pay deal. As Nicola Sturgeon intervened and Shona Robison intervened we are now calling on John Swinney to intervene and meeting and make sure The Scottish Government are at the table with the trade unions and council leaders to negotiate a settlement, a reasonable pay award and allow strike action to be called off.

“In Edinburgh we would then be able to stop any industrial action particularly over the summer when local people and tourists are enjoying the city and the festivals. We want to do everything we can to avert the strike action and I was pleased that the Labour motion was supported. It is disappointing that the SNP Group were playing politics with people’s jobs.”

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: “Local government pay negotiations are a matter for local authorities as employers and unions – the Scottish Government has no formal role.

“The Scottish Government urges all parties involved to work together constructively and reach an agreement which is fair for the workforce and affordable for employers. Any request for a meeting will be considered carefully when received.”



Cllr Cammy Day Council Leader in Edinburgh

Speaking after today's COSLA meeting, Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats Group on COSLA, Cllr Peter Barrett, said: "The SNP Government need to bring something meaningful to the table. COSLA have made the best offer that councils can afford. Council budgets are stretched as far as they can go and the current offer is at the limit of affordability.

"Two years ago rubbish was allowed to pile up in the street while the Scottish Government stuck to the line that there was nothing they could do. Eventually they crumbled and hammered out a deal. This time they should skip the posturing and go straight to the solution. We need them to come up with the goods and the money to fully fund any improved offer.

"The unions need to be reasonable too. They are not the only public sector workers who need a pay rise.

"Scottish Liberal Democrats will continue to make the case for long term funding deals for local councils so that they can invest for the future and avoid the threat of strikes popping

up every year.”

UNISON Scotland local government lead David O'Connor said: “First Minister John Swinney needs to step up and help solve this dispute. The vast bulk of council funding comes from the Scottish government, and it’s responsible for the council tax freeze, which prevents local authorities from raising further funds.

“Cosla leaders’ decision to request a joint meeting with government is to be welcomed. UNISON has been calling for this to happen for months.

“It appears the threat of rubbish piling up in the streets and school closures is the only thing Cosla and the government will listen to. But they both need to show a commitment to solve this dispute before industrial action is suspended.”