

West Lothian facing strikes by bin men and waste collection staff

West Lothian is one of sixteen local authorities now facing strikes by bin men and waste collection staff.

Unite rejected the latest offer from CoSLA the umbrella body for Scottish councils claiming the 3.2% offer, 41p an hour, “grossly undervalues” Scottish council workers.

With a late summer of rolling strikes looming the group representing communities across the county urged a return to talks and a plea to CoSLA to reconsider the offer.

An offer of £1,290 has been made to council workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by the National Joint Council (NJC). This equates to a rise of 67p per hour or 5.2% for a council worker earning around £25,000 based on a 37-hour week.

In contrast, the COSLA offer of 3.2% equates to £800 or a 41p per hour increase. The pay offer difference means that a Scottish council worker would need to earn above £40,000 to match the offer being made to council workers across the UK. This means the lowest paid council workers are being disproportionately hit by CoSLA’s offer.

Graham McNab, Unite industrial officer, promised a “stinking summer” on the streets evoking images from Edinburgh during the festival last August when waste bins were overflowing and

street bins and commercial waste bins were left during industrial action.

He added: "CoSLA's latest pay offer doesn't add any extra cash. It continues to grossly undervalue Scotland's council workers compared with the offer made to their counterparts across the UK.

"A stinking Scottish summer looms unless CoSLA and the Scottish government quickly sort this out by injecting more cash into a new offer."

A spokesperson for the Joint Forum of Community Council feared the effects a strike could have on West Lothian householders. "The Joint Forum is deeply concerned about the potential disruption this could cause to essential waste collection services in our towns and villages.

"We urge both sides to return to the negotiating table and find a fair resolution that prioritises the well-being of our communities and the hard-working refuse workers."

A West Lothian council spokesperson said: "Negotiations over pay for council staff are conducted nationally between CoSLA and the trade unions, and cover all local authorities in Scotland.

"We hope an agreement can be reached soon that will deliver a fair and affordable increase for our hard-working staff."

Unite has a mandate for strike action in neighbouring councils. Waste operations staff in Falkirk, Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire are among those being re-balloted following the rejection of the latest CoSLA offer.

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter