

Bin strikes postponed but one union recommend rejecting pay offer

The Scottish Government claims that its intervention, in offering more funding for a new pay offer to be put to council workers, has averted strike action.

The government has confirmed it will mean cuts in other areas, but sufficient funds have been made available for a new pay offer of an average of 4.27% for all staff. All pay grades will receive an increase of at least 3.6%.

COSLA the local government body has recommended that its workers accept the offer it is making.



Cllr Katie Hagmann

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“Intense but constructive discussions between COSLA, Trade Unions and Scottish Government in recent weeks have resulted in additional Scottish Government funding. This has allowed us to make an improved offer without further risk to our vital council jobs and frontline services. This is a positive and welcome outcome, and I thank everyone involved for their

valuable input.

“If accepted, this latest strong offer is worth an average of 4.27% across the whole workforce and would guarantee at least a 3.6% increase for all pay points. The offer directly reflects what trade unions have asked for with a greater increase for the lowest paid workers who would receive £1292 (or 5.63%). We are hopeful that this good offer, which is better than offers made to local government workers in the rest of the UK, will be accepted.

“We strongly urge all council employees who are eligible to vote to use this opportunity to accept the offer and secure a speedy settlement and pay uplift.”

In response at least one of the unions has recommended rejecting the offer.

UNISON Scotland local government lead David O'Connor said: “UNISON has suspended recycling and street cleansing strikes while staff are consulted on Cosla’s latest offer.

□ “UNISON’s view is that it’s still not enough. Council staff have seen the value of their pay reduced by 25% over the past 14 years and any pay deal needs to do more to reverse this.”

□ “The union has been clear all along that the wage deal needs to work for everyone in local government. This pause will provide some breathing space for further dialogue.”

But The Scottish Government maintains that its intervention has led to the suspension of planned industrial action by council workers, including refuse collectors, this week.

Any strike action has been suspended by all three trade unions after The Scottish Government provided £77.5 million to fund an improved pay offer.

New funding from the government enabled the local authority

organisation COSLA to make an offer to unions worth an overall value of 4.27%, with a rise of 5.63% being offered for the lowest paid workers.

Unite the union has also paused any strike action due to begin on 14 August, but it will now ball the members until 5 September.

The union says that this new offer represents a minimum cash increase of £1,292 for the lowest paid council workers, which is equivalent to 5.2 per cent for those earning around £25,000. The Scottish local government living wage will also increase by 5.63 per cent.

Graham McNab, Unite's lead negotiator for local government said: "Unite members across all of Scotland's councils should be applauded for standing firm. They have remained resolute in an effort to secure a fairer and better pay offer."

"We believe that the new pay offer is credible. For the first time in years, it will mean all council workers receiving an above inflation increase."

"Unite will now suspend the eight days of strike action so a ballot can take place on the new offer."



Deputy First Minister Shona Robison PHOTO courtesy of The Scottish Government

Finance and Local Government Secretary Shona Robison said: “We value this vital workforce and I welcome the fact that members will now be able to consider this strong pay offer which was reached following a strategic intervention from the Scottish Government.

“It has paused the prospect of costly industrial action this week which would have impacted businesses and communities across Scotland.

“Our swift action to ensure this strong offer could be made has been taken against an extremely challenging financial landscape and – while fair – represents the absolute limit of affordability.

“In order to fund the offer, we will have to move money from elsewhere in the budget and reduce funding for other programmes. We are taking on significant, additional financial pressure and have been clear painful choices have had to be

made to fund this pay deal.

“The offer will provide an above inflation pay increase for all and support the lowest paid. I am pleased it is now with the workforce for their close consideration and would urge members to strongly consider this significantly improved envelope.”

Keir Greenaway, GMB Scotland senior organiser in public services, said: “This offer is a significant improvement on what came before but our members will decide if it is acceptable.

“It is better than that offered to council staff in England and Wales, would mean every worker receives a rise higher than the Retail Price Index and, importantly, is weighted to ensure frontline workers gain most.

“As a gesture of goodwill, we will suspend action until our members can vote on the offer.

“It should never have got to this stage, however, and Scotland’s council leaders have again shown an absolute lack of urgency or sense of realism.

“For months, we have been forced to waste time discussing a series of low-ball offers when it was already clear the Scottish Government needed to be at the table.

“The obvious reluctance of some council leaders to approach ministers has only caused needless uncertainty and threatened disruption.

“That is no way to run a railroad or conduct serious pay negotiations.”



Bin strikes in Edinburgh in 2022 – Chambers Street PHOTO Alan Simpson