



Dear Member,

Local Government Pay

You will be aware that UNISON, along with the other trade unions representing members in Local Government, submitted a joint pay claim to your employer on the 12th January 2018. This claim was constructed following consultation with all members working in Local Government and you can read the detail of that [here](#). This briefing is to bring you up to date with what has happened since then and what our next steps are in trying to secure you a decent pay rise.

The Offer

Whilst our claim was submitted early, in the hope that the employer would get round the table quickly to ensure a negotiated settlement in time for the pay implementation date of the 1st April, the employer did not deal with our claim until much later - they wait until they are in receipt of all of the pay claims for all of the different Local Government bargaining groups. There are four bargaining groups in Local Government – yourselves as local government employees, Teachers, Craft Workers and Chief Officials.

We finally received a response from the employer on Monday 26th March, less than 48 hours before we were due to meet them. You can read this offer letter [here](#). The key points of the offer are:

- The policy and aspiration to achieve parity of pay awards across the bargaining groups, in as far as it is within COSLA's control, has been re-affirmed by COSLA Leaders and a uniform pay offer is being made to the entire workforce, across all four of the local government bargaining groups.
- The pay offer is for one year and covers the period 1 April, 2018 to 31 March, 2019. The award will be back dated to the 1 April, 2018 application date.
- The offer has been aligned, for the most part, to be consistent with public sector pay policy in Scotland and is based on a 37 hour working week viz:-
 - A 3% pay increase will apply to all employees earning up to £36,500.
 - A 2% pay increase will apply to all employees earning £36,501-£80,000
 - A flat rate increase of £1,600 to employees earning more than £80,000.
- The pay offer deviates marginally from public sector pay policy in relation to the Living Wage. It is proposed to increase the 'Scottish Local Government Living Wage' from its present level of £8.51 per hour to £8.77 per hour, thereby providing a full 3% increase.
- The offer provides for a 3% increase on all allowances that are normally agreed through the Scottish Joint Council (SJC), with the exception of the First Aid Allowance, which is under separate discussion between the Employers and Trade Unions Sides of the SJC.
- The employer has stated that pay offer is being made against a backdrop of a challenging settlement for local government and continued cost pressures for councils. They state that no additional monies have been made available in the 2018/19 local government settlement for this pay award, consequently, COSLA Leaders have stated that the offer now put to the various trade unions across the four bargaining groups is the best and final offer which can be made for this year.

Whilst the employer termed this is a best and final offer we discovered that they had, at the same time as sending this to us, also written to the Scottish Government pressing for parity across the bargaining groups (i.e. ensuring that whatever increase you get is the same as that achieved for Teachers or Craft workers) and asking that if the Scottish Government was so minded to give any one group of workers a higher increase that this that they provide the necessary funding to ensure that this extends to all Local Government bargaining groups.

Our Response

Your UNISON representatives met with the other trade unions' representatives prior to meeting with the employer. All of the SJC Trade Unions agreed that we should 'note' the employers offer, their representations to the Scottish Government and that we should make our own representations to the Scottish Government in pursuit of our full claim. This position was put to the employer verbally and in writing on the 28th March 2018 - you can read this letter [here](#). - and we wrote jointly to Derek Mackay MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution, pressing the issue of parity and calling for additional funding for COSLA to deliver an increase which addressed both the cost of living and an element of restoration – you can read that letter [here](#).

The objective in doing both of these things was two-fold – to call on the Scottish Government to provide COSLA with additional funding to meet our claim and to keep the employer at the negotiating table.

As the trade union representing by far and away the largest number of workers in Local Government we are conscious of our responsibility to explore all available avenues open to us before coming to you with a recommendation to accept or reject the offer before us. We know that taking industrial action is not an easy option – we would only ever ask you to do this if we thought there was no possible alternative.

It is unfortunate that the GMB have chosen to ballot on a recommendation to reject, with a view to taking industrial action, before those avenues are exhausted, however that is a decision for them. As far as your UNISON representatives are concerned we will always be guided by what we believe is in the best interests of our members - there is a window of opportunity here that we believe we should explore before taking a view on whether we have an offer we could recommend to you in a ballot. That may take a couple of weeks and that window of opportunity may prove fruitful, or it may not, but we believe we have a responsibility to explore it before making a recommendation to you.

Next Steps

The next meeting with the employer is on the 4th May 2018 and we would hope to have had a response from the Scottish government by then. As soon as we have that we will be in a better position to know if there is any more money available to improve the offer that is currently before us and we will get in touch then with more information for you.

In the meantime we will continue to work with our trade union colleagues on a co-ordinated approach to lobbying the Scottish Government and your employer in pursuit of our full claim.

Pay Survey

Special thanks to all 9,263 members who participated in the Pay claim survey – you have given us some very useful data on what you think about pay and what action you are prepared to take in support of our claim that we can use in our deliberations about how we handle the current negotiations. In the coming days each UNISON branch will receive a breakdown of the survey responses for their branch and will start to build on that information to target their campaign strategies going forward.

We hope this update is helpful but if you have any questions or queries please don't hesitate in contacting me on j.baxter@unison.co.uk.

Many thanks,

Johanna Baxter
UNISON, Head of Local Government Bargaining