



To; COSLA
From: SJC Trade Union Joint Secretaries
Date; 16th December 2020
Subject; SJC Pay Claim 2021

Colleagues,

SJC Pay Claim 2021

The pay claim outlined below is submitted by the SJC Trade Union Side for Local Government workers covered by SJC conditions for the period 1 April 2021 to 31st March 2022. Our claim is for:

- A settlement that runs for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022
- A £2,000 flat rate increase to all spinal column points, or 6%, whichever is greater (based on a 37 hour working week).
- An underpinning minimum rate of pay of £10.50 per hour.
- A separate, additional payment towards pay restoration.
- An equivalent percentage or, the median paid where the base salary increase is paid as a flat rate, uprating of all allowances.
- No less than parity with other Local Government bargaining groups.
- All professional costs associated with the role to be met by the employer.
- A commitment to exploring ways in which to achieve a no-detriment reduction in the working week.
- An assessment of the pay gap against all protected characteristics.

The Trade Unions welcome the Scottish Government's stated intention not to follow Westminster's lead and apply a public sector pay freeze beyond the NHS. Whilst welcoming the commitment to ensuring that the Scottish public sector pay policy provides for a pay increase we know that the Scottish Government have in the past argued that the public sector pay policy should not apply to Local Government workers. We call on COSLA and the Scottish Government to ensure that the commitment to providing for a pay increase extends to SJC conditioned workers.

The claim is set at a level that we believe recognises the following key points:

- Substantial increases in the cost of living over recent years have significantly reduced the value of staff wages;
- Appropriate reward is needed to sustain the morale of staff in their crucial role of delivering high quality services;
- Appropriate reward is needed for the increased workload and stress placed on staff against a background of unprecedented changes in working practices.

Restoration

Despite the introduction of, and the employer's commitment to, the Scottish Local Government Living Wage our members have not been immune to the squeeze in living standards brought about by years of austerity and below inflation pay increases.

The table below demonstrates the major fall in living standards suffered by staff over recent years.

	SJC pay awards	Rise in cost of living (as measured by Retail Prices Index April figures)
2010	0.65%	5.3%
2011	0%	5.2%
2012	0%	3.5%
2013	1%	2.9%
2014	1%	2.5%
2015	1.5%	0.9%
2016	1%	1.3%
2017	1%	3.5%
2018	3.5%	3.4%
2019	3%	3%
2020	3%	1.5%

For the value of staff wages not to fall back even further, they must at least keep pace with predicted rises in the cost of living, which Treasury forecasts put at 2.3% in 2021.

The Trade Unions' are clear that this year's pay settlement must not only protect workers from falling back further but should start to reverse the many years of real terms cuts to wages through pay restoration.

This pay claim is therefore designed to protect the lowest paid workers but also start to bring workers earnings back into line with where they should be. We appreciate this cannot be done in one year but would remind you that this principal was accepted as part of our previous pay agreement.

Parity across the Local Government bargaining groups

It is COSLA policy to apply parity of pay increases across the Local Government bargaining groups. We note however that this policy was breached in our last pay round, through the intervention of the Scottish Government, when additional funds were found to give a larger increase to Teachers.

We cannot overstate the level of anger this caused amongst our members who, understandably, felt like some workers were being given preferential treatment above others.

Never again can we be in a position where SJC workers are treated as the poor relations of the Local Government workforce. COSLA need to enforce the policy they purport to hold – SJC workers deserve no less than parity with colleagues in other Local Government bargaining groups.

Professional costs associated with the role

A significant number of low paid members, the majority of whom are women, are incurring costs associated with carrying out their role which had been previously funded and, we believe, should continue to be funded by the employer.

The costs of SSSC registration to allow essential workers such as health & social care and social workers start at £25, for all support workers, going up to £35, for residential child care and school care workers, and rising to £80 per annum for social work managers and care inspectors.

Those same workers have demonstrated their worth and value before and during this global pandemic by continuing to care and support those most vulnerable in our communities despite the real threat of infection, particularly in the early days when PPE was in short supply. Those same workers should not have to pay to continue to do a difficult role every single day.

Reduction in the Working Week

The challenges presented to Local Government workers both before and during the period of the pandemic have resulted in a rise of work-related stress.

The SJC Trade Unions believe it is necessary therefore to review ways in which we can achieve a no-detriment reduction in the working week, including reviewing leave entitlement, to ensure that work-life balance of workers can be maintained.

This proposal does not absolve Employers from their Health and Safety responsibilities.

Fair Funding for Local Government

As Trade Unions we do not underestimate the effect that austerity has had on Local Authorities or the additional pressures created by the Covid pandemic.

We know that there has already been £2bn of 'efficiencies' taken out of Local Government over the last decade. Many of those 'efficiencies' have been our members jobs.

We also know that the financial impact of COVID-19 will not be confined to the next few months and with Brexit looming the effects of both on the wider economy are going to make the crises in Local Government much worse.

It is untenable for the Scottish Government to continue to starve Local Authorities of funding when it is due to receive a 3.1% increase to the block grant from Westminster. We have supported calls for a fair funding settlement for Local Government to the Scottish Government and we will continue to press for this.

However whilst many services have been cut or outsourced the remaining staff are being expected to do more for less. This is having an impact on staff morale and job security.

The key to the future of Local Government, and the recovery of our economy, lies with the dedicated staff who provide these essential services to our communities – you simply cannot afford not to recognise and reward staff through this pay round.

Recognition

The SJC Trade Unions have sought to discuss with you the issue of recognition for staff who have gone above and beyond the remits of their roles to respond to the Covid pandemic for several months now with no progress.

We wish to be clear that we believe a separate, additional, payment, fully funded by the Scottish Government, to recognise the enormous contribution SJC workers have played in responding to the Covid pandemic. This should be made separate, and in addition, to this pay claim as a Thank You to all Local Government workers and we hope it will be resolved before our pay negotiations begin.

Whilst we welcome the Scottish Government's announcement of a £500 'bonus' for staff in health and social care we believe this payment should be extended to the many other public service workers, many across Local Government, involved in responding to the Covid pandemic. This has

been a year of exceptional effort and sacrifice for the workforce and they all deserve equal recognition for their efforts.

Local Government has been operating under difficult circumstances - distributing food/medicine/essential items across Scotland, protecting/caring for our vulnerable and elderly, collecting waste, setting up and staffing temporary mortuaries, staffing the hubs of “keyworker” children, kept schools and early years open, staffing the asymptomatic testing sites, Environmental Health & Trading Standards Officers enforcing public health and wellbeing, Mental Health Workers with increased caseloads, Housing workers who have been working in tenants homes, those who have been processing and issuing emergency support grants. And the army of cleaning staff without whose efforts no one else would have been able to work at all, far less do so safely. Even this list is very far from complete.

We welcome the recent announcement that COSLA Leaders unanimously supported our call that the efforts of all our SJC staff are recognised – that statement now needs to be backed up by action.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that all SJC workers have seen the value of their earnings fall considerably over recent years. Combined with these developments, the last year has seen intensified pressures placed on staff against the unprecedented background of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Staff have had to adapt to new ways of working during the pandemic, placing significantly increased stresses on all staff. Many staff have also faced the pressure of juggling their workload with extra demands in their private life, particularly where they have been caring for children or elderly relatives.

Nonetheless, the dedication of staff over the pandemic has enabled Local Government to maintain the services, and enhance the support, it has provided to our communities throughout this unprecedented period.

Therefore, this pay claim represents a very reasonable estimate of the reward staff deserve for their dedication, skill and hard work and the minimum improvement in pay needed to maintain workforce morale for delivering consistently high-quality services.

Our claim is submitted in time to seek to influence ongoing discussions with Scottish Government over the future of the Local Government settlement and to seek an agreed conclusion to pay discussions in order that the settlement date of 1 April 2021 can be met.

We look forward to the employer’s full consideration of this claim and early engagement in negotiations.

Best wishes,

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UNISON

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