



To: COSLA

From: SJC Trade Union Joint Secretaries

Date: 1st April 2021

Subject: SJC Pay 2021

Colleagues,

SJC Pay 2021

We write following receipt of your letter of 31st March on this issue.

To say we are disappointed that COSLA Leaders have made no improvement to the current pay offer to our local government members would be to understate our position.

It is with regret that we have to inform you that all three of our trade union representative bodies have taken the decision to reject the current pay offer. We will now move to consult our wider local government membership with this recommendation and what action they might wish to take in order to achieve an improved offer.

In doing so we note:

- COSLA left little time for meaningful negotiations on this matter, having only put forward this initial offer some three months after the submission of our claim.
- The current offer put to the Joint Trade Unions falls far short of our submitted pay claim and now also falls far short of the offer being made to other public sector workers.

Many of our members work alongside colleagues in Health who have recently been offered a 4% uplift in pay (with some receiving up to 5.4%). We understand this uplift will apply for 16 months rather than the usual 12 months, due the additional backdating to 1st December 2020, and is in addition to the £500 'thank you bonus' payment which has already been paid to these workers. Whilst trade union members in Health will consider and take their own view on this offer it clearly goes beyond the Scottish public sector pay policy. We note that other public sector workers, such as those in the prison service, have also received Covid bonus payments to recognise their efforts during the pandemic.

- The current offer does not 'address the issue of low pay' as has been suggested. We note your own figures demonstrate that 55% of local government workers earn below £25k per annum. The average wage in Scotland right now is £31k per annum. It is therefore the case that the vast majority of our members are in receipt of a wage that is considerably lower than the average wage in this country.
- The current offer makes no attempt to address the costs our members incur in having to carry out their roles.

- The current offer contains no proposals to review or address the issues of the length of the working week, taking steps to address the significant work pressures our members face or achieving a work-life balance.

Our members in Local Government members have, like their colleagues in Health and elsewhere, been integral to the pandemic response. They have gone above and beyond in delivering local services during what can only be described as a year of unprecedented challenges and pressures. Social care workers who have looked after the most vulnerable in our communities, environmental health workers who have set up temporary mortuaries, education support workers who have staffed the education hubs that provided childcare for the children of key workers, leisure workers who have been redeployed to assist with test and trace – to name but a few – are all key workers without whom our communities would have been left wanting. And yet they have to date received no recognition or reward for their considerable efforts and many have not even been reimbursed for the additional costs they have incurred as a result.

The level of frustration and anger amongst our local government members, who feel like they are being ignored by both their employer and the Scottish Government, is palpable.

Given their efforts and the disparity in treatment with other public sector workers there is a real expectation that a reasonable pay offer should be made to ensure their efforts are valued as a matter of urgency.

We remain committed to finding a solution to this issue but we need movement from the employer in order to achieve this.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Johanna Baxter
SJC Joint Secretary
UNISON

Wendy Dunsmore
SJC Joint Secretary
UNITE

Drew Duffy
SJC Joint Secretary
GMB