

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## Consultative pay ballot - Nov 2021

### Questions and answers

#### 1. What am I voting on?

We are asking for your views on the pay offer that has been put forward by COSLA. UNISON's Scottish Local Government Committee is recommending that you ACCEPT the offer. It is really important that you let us know your views.

#### 2. What are we being offered?

You can read COSLA's full offer letter [here](#). The key elements of the offer are:

- An increase in the Scottish Local Government Living Wage (SLGLW) hourly rate to £9.78.
- An £850 flat rate increase for those earning less than £25,000 annually (4.72% - 3.43% depending on starting salary). Note this covers national Spinal Column Points 2-40 and is calculated on a nominal 37 hour working week.
- A 2% increase for those earning between £25,000 and £40,000 annually
- A 1% increase for those earning between £40,000 and £80,000 annually
- A £800 flat rate increase for those earning more than £80,000 annually
- A back dating of the implementation date of the pay award and the increase in the SLGLW to 1 January 2021. To be clear this takes the value of the flat rate increase from £850 to approximately £1,062 in the year 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022. While it is acknowledged that the backdating element of the increase is non-recurring it equates to a 5.89% increase in the year for those earning at the current SLGLW rate.
- A 2% uplift of all nationally agreed allowances in line with the percentage uplift for those earning £25,000 to £40,000. This does not apply to First Aid and Distant Isles Allowances which are agreed separately
- A commitment to providing an equivalent offer to all Local Government bargaining groups, which we understand has been provided. We understand that the Teaching unions requested a non-differentiated uplift (i.e. the same % to apply to all regardless of current salary) and that they have been offered a 1.22% uplift to all SNCT pay points.
- A commitment to continue to discuss the matter of professional fees associated with role in future out-with this settlement.
- A commitment to exploring with us ways in which we could achieve a no-detriment reduction in the working week.

#### 3. Why is the Local Government Committee recommending acceptance of the offer?

In recommending this offer to you the Local Government Committee were mindful that:

- Significant progress has been made in negotiations with the employer – we have moved the amount of money the employer is offering those on the lowest pay up by a third and our negotiations have secured an additional £86m of investment into the pay bill.
- 55% of local government workers earn below £25k per annum and the flat rate increase secured for those workers is the highest single uplift in a one year settlement for the lowest paid that has been achieved and is higher than those on equivalent pay points received in the NHS.
- The increases for those on median and higher rates of pay are in line with the wider Scottish public sector pay policy and agreements reached in other public sector organisations.
- The principle of parity across the local government bargaining groups is reaffirmed and an equivalent offer has been made to them on this basis. SJC workers on the lowest pay will receive a higher percentage uplift than that proposed for their Teaching colleagues.
- Additional work will be undertaken to address the issues of work-life balance and the burden of professional fees.
- Whilst the offer does not meet all aspects of the claim it makes progress in all areas of it. If the offer is rejected we would have to proceed with the selective strike action in those branches that secured a mandate amongst their school cleaning, school catering, school janitorial, waste and recycling staff, and look at the possibility of conducting additional statutory ballots for industrial action in other service groups.
- The progress made has been as a direct result of the campaign that we have built and all of the actions you have taken as part of that throughout the year.

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### 4. What did we ask for?

You can read a full copy of our claim [here](#). We asked 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.

### 5. What are we being offered?

We know that the delay to securing this deal will have been a source of immense frustration for you. We submitted our pay claim on 16th December 2020. It took the employer over three months to respond to that. After consulting you about that offer we went back to the employer to let them know that offer had been rejected and needed to be improved.

Over the months that followed we negotiated with them for an improved offer, we lobbied the Scottish Government for additional funding for local government to improve the offer and we campaigned across the summer on the issue of pay and then conducted formal statutory ballots for industrial action amongst select groups of workers.

We wanted to give the employer every opportunity to put forward an acceptable offer. These efforts have seen the original offer revised upwards twice, to a point where your Local Government Committee can

now recommend acceptance of the offer to you as the best that can be achieved through negotiation.

### 6. What happens if we reject the offer?

If the offer is rejected we would have to proceed with the selective strike action in those branches that secured a mandate amongst their school cleaning, school catering, school janitorial, waste and recycling members, and look at the possibility of conducting additional statutory ballots for industrial action in other service groups.

Current Tory anti-trade union laws mean that a ballot for industrial action must secure a turnout of over 50% of eligible members and a majority of those voting in favour of industrial action for any action to be legal, to protect members from dismissal and the trade union from other law suits.

### 7. Does industrial action mean strike action?

The industrial action – in those branches that secured a legal mandate - which has been suspended to allow for this consultation to take place is for strike action amongst members working in school cleaning, school catering, school janitorial, waste and recycling services.

If we had to move to conduct statutory industrial action ballots of additional groups of workers to secure an improved offer the Local Government Committee would look at all available options.

### 8. Other Trade Unions are recommending rejection of the offer - why are UNISON recommending acceptance?

This is not true. Unite are recommending acceptance. GMB put the offer out to consultation without a recommendation but have informed members it is the best that can be achieved by negotiation.

### 9. Why are GMB members in Glasgow getting a higher offer than members employed elsewhere?

This is not the case. GMB members in Glasgow have raised a number of local issues with Glasgow City Council - there are no, and will not be any, local revisions to the pay offer. SJC pay is negotiated nationally by the joint trade unions - no discussions on SJC pay can take place without UNISON being in the room.

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### 10. What about people who aren't UNISON members – can they vote?

New members joining UNISON before the 22nd November 2021 will get a vote on this offer. If they provide an e-mail address to the union when they join they will be sent an e-mail with a link to their ballot after this date but before the close of ballot at midday on the 29th November 2021.

### 11. I haven't received my vote - where is it?

If you have not received an e-mail with your voting link please, in the first instance, check your junk/spam folders. If it is not there and you still have not received it by the end of this week please call 0800 0857857 or log in to MyUnison (<https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/>) to check that the details we hold for you are up to date.

### 12. I don't have an e-mail address on your system/my e-mail address has recently changed - how do I get a vote?

As long as your membership records are updated BEFORE 22nd November 2021 you will receive an e-mail with your voting link. To update your details call 0800 0857857 or log in to MyUnison at <https://www.unison.org.uk/my-unison/>

### 13. The system does not allow me to vote to Reject.

It does. The option is to select "vote here" on your e-mail and scroll to the bottom of the ballot page where the voting options are located.

### 14. The system is telling me that I have already voted when I haven't - how can I cast my vote?

This is a safety feature to help prevent duplicate voting. We suspect what is happening is that the member has clicked on the link and closed it before voting and the system is then blocking the IP address. Members should clear their cookies and try the link again. It should then work.

To clear cookies check online for advice on the specific device the member is using or the following steps may assist:

- On your computer, open Chrome.
- At the top right, click 'More'.
- Click 'More tools'.
- Clear browsing data.
- At the top, choose a time range.
- To delete everything, select 'All time'.
- Next to "Cookies and other site data" and "Cached images and files," check the boxes. Click Clear data.

### 15. I accidentally voted to accept (or reject) when I meant to reject (or accept) - can I change my vote?

No. Members should read the e-mail and ballot link they receive carefully before casting their vote. The vote is anonymous and the system quite rightly does not allow us to make changes to it.

### 16. What can I do to support UNISON?

There are a number of things you can do to help strengthen the union's hand in negotiations:

- Make sure you use your vote!
- Encourage your fellow members to vote.
- Recruit your colleagues to the union and get them to vote.
- Share this information on your social networks so people understand why the offer should be accepted.
- Get involved in the work of your local UNISON branch.