

FAO Scottish Joint Council Trade Union Side Joint Secretaries

29 October 2021

Dear Johanna, Wendy and Drew,

Scottish Joint Council Pay Negotiations 2021/22 – Employers’ Side Pay Offer

I write to advise you that at COSLA Leaders meeting today, 29 October, it was agreed to mandate Cllr Gail Macgregor, COSLA Spokesperson for Resources, to respond to your claim asks, highlighted in bold below, with the following offer of a settlement which runs for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022:

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 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). This covers national SCP 2-40 and is calculated on a nominal 37 hour working week.
- A 2% increase for those earning between £25,000 and £40,000
- A 1% increase for those earning between £40,000 and £80,000
- A £800 flat rate increase for those earning more than £80,000 annually.

As Leaders have been clear throughout, and as was reiterated in the meeting today, they are extremely appreciative of the efforts of the workforce during the COVID 19 Pandemic. They wish to put on record their continued thanks and appreciation during these ongoing difficult times. As such Leaders have today agreed to revise the offer made in July to now include a backdated element as follows:

- 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.

For absolute clarity, the backdating of the SLGLW does not mean that the pay award taking effect on 1 April 2021 applies as an uplift on top of the £9.78 rate.

This meets the union request for a settlement that is differentially targeted at those who earn less than £25,000 though does now offer an increase settlement for all pay bandings. While significantly exceeding the affordability limits of councils, the offer nonetheless seeks to meet the expectations of employees and the need to be sustainable in delivery of essential services.

An underpinning minimum rate of pay of £10.50 per hour.

The offer of an £850 flat rate uplift, if applied to an employee earning the Scottish Local Government Living Wage would provide a £9.78 minimum rate of pay. Had we simply offered to maintain the current differential between the Living Wage Foundation recommendation and the Scottish Local Government Living Wage this would lead to an offer to raise it to £9.54. Instead, Leaders seek to ensure that our whole workforce, including those whose salaries are pegged to the Scottish Local Government Living Wage, benefit from the improved flat rate offer. This means the SLGLW will be notably higher than the Living Wage Foundation recommended living wage which is £9.50 per hour.

A separate, additional payment towards pay restoration.

The offer, weighted as it is, continues to represent an above inflation increase for those on lowest wages and near inflation increase for those earning £25-40,000 that follows the previous 3-year deal which was above inflation for each year. This is at a time where the settlement provided by Scottish Government continues to fail to address the real terms cost increases faced by Councils in continuing to safeguard the delivery of services and jobs.

An equivalent percentage or, the median paid where the base salary increase is paid as a flat rate, uprating of all allowances.

The offer made provides for 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.

No less than parity with other Local Government bargaining groups.

COSLA Leaders remain committed to providing an equivalent offer to all bargaining groups and have done so based on the settlement provided. They have, however, in drafting this offer, paid attention to the request of the SJC to tailor it to those on the lowest wages.

All professional costs associated with the role to be met by the employer.

Leaders continue to be of the view that paying the professional costs associated with roles to be an equitable or fair solution given the broad range and varying statutory requirements of professional regulation across the workforce. They believe that the revised offer for those on the lowest wages addresses the request in the claim to improve the finances of the lowest paid. They are also mindful that steps were agreed and taken to ensure those who were redeployed during the COVID response were not at detriment due to the requirements of the SSSC. There is a commitment to continue to discuss the matter of professional fees in future outwith this settlement.

A commitment to exploring ways in which to achieve a no-detriment reduction in the working week.

Leaders remain committed to COSLA officers exploring with professional advisors and SJC Unions ways in which a no-detriment reduction in the working week may be achieved. However, with a focus on work-life balance Leaders would seek to ensure that discussions consider effective hybrid models for homeworking, as well as, how employers and unions can work together to provide a programme of support for the mental health and wellbeing of all employees as we work through recovery.

An assessment of the pay gap against all protected characteristics.

COSLA's Employers' Team has provided links to the data that all Councils are required to publish as per their public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010. Currently they are required to publish gender pay gap information annually and a statement on equal pay every four years. This includes their policy among women and men, people who are disabled and not, and people from a minority racial group and those not. Therefore, currently there is no requirement nor the information available to carry out an assessment against all protected characteristics. Councils remain committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations.

I should be obliged if in receiving this pay offer from COSLA Employers the Trade Union Side would undertake such steps as appropriate to confirm your agreement to present this offer to your respective members and in due course provide COSLA with your response on the expectation that best endeavours are made to provide this settlement in the wages of employees at Christmas time.

Yours sincerely

Simon Cameron
Employers' Side Joint Secretary