



FAO Scottish Joint Council Trade Union Side Joint Secretaries

David O'Connor, Joint Secretary – UNISON
Graham McNab, Joint Secretary – Unite
Keir Greenaway, Joint Secretary – GMB

Copy: Council Leaders, Chief Executives, Heads of HR, COSLA Resources
Spokesperson, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Scottish
Government

8th November 2024

By email

Dear David, Graham, and Keir,

Scottish Joint Council – Pay Negotiations 2024/25

I write following my letter to you on 1st October informing you of the decision made by council Leaders to implement the latest SJC pay offer for 2024/25. This was to ensure employees receive their pay uplift and backpay without further delay.

It is important to emphasise in that letter it was clear that the pay award was not being imposed and discussions remain ongoing. Leaders were very clear about this during their discussions on 27th September. COSLA remains fully committed to the negotiation process and have continued dialogue with you all, with the ambition of reaching a collective agreement.

As you know, a range of informal and formal discussions have taken place since Leaders' decision to implement the pay offer. This includes at officer level, an exploratory meeting that took place between COSLA officers, Scottish Government officials and UNISON representatives at UNISON's request on 18th October to discuss non-pay elements which could assist in reaching an agreement and suspending imminent industrial action within Perth & Kinross Council. At that meeting, which I was fully apprised of, no agreement was reached but COSLA officers and Scottish Government officials committed to consider further a number of proposals presented. An update on this informal exploratory engagement with UNISON was provided at the meeting of the SJC Joint Secretaries on 22nd October. A meeting of the SJC Steering Group also took place on 28th October where I re-emphasised that Leaders were clear that discussions need to continue on this year's pay negotiations.

I am now in a position today to formally respond to several non-pay issues proposed by UNISON, and in doing so formally supplement and enhance the pay offer made on 9th

August that has been accepted by Unite and GMB. We hope that this will enable all parties to reach a collective agreement and bring our negotiations for 2024/25 to a conclusion.

Although the Scottish Government has no formal role in Local Government pay negotiations, following the meeting on 18th October and subsequent discussions with GMB and Unite, Scottish Ministers have confirmed their full support for further engagement on Local Government finances as well as reduction in the working week and £15 per hour. This is welcomed and positive and I hope demonstrates the shared desire from COSLA and the Scottish Government for meaningful discussion with UNISON and other Trade Union partners on these important matters.

Local Government Finances

On Local Government finances, we propose official-level engagement with COSLA officers and Scottish Government officials meeting with all three SJC unions shortly following the Scottish Budget in early December and again in early 2025. We hope these sessions will support a shared and consistent understanding amongst all parties of the reality of Local Government finances looking ahead to 2025/26 and allow time for open discussion. I know that Scottish Ministers are fully supportive of this engagement.

Reduction of the Working Week and £15 per Hour

On the reduction in the working week and £15 per hour, we propose a political-level roundtable discussion in December, likely to be arranged around the same time as the above engagement on Local Government finances. This session would give all parties the opportunity to reflect on the findings from respective working groups that have been considering both these issues in recent months and would allow you to speak directly with myself and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government.

Pay Negotiation Protocol

At the SJC Steering Group on 28th October, a draft Pay Negotiations Protocol was shared by the Employers Side as one area which could be taken forward, to set key dates and milestones to guide future pay negotiations. It was emphasised that this is an early draft of a working document which has now been shared with the SJC Steering Group for discussion and comments. Agreement will be needed between the SJC Joint Secretaries, the respective trade union committees and from Leaders on the finalised protocol. The protocol will assist towards a commitment to making a credible offer for 2025/26 before 1 April 2025 **and subsequent pay offers before the 1 April each year.**

As has been consistently reiterated, there is no scope to increase the value of the offer given there is no more additional money available, However I believe these additional elements further strengthen and enhance the existing pay offer which is fair, meaningful and reflects the high value Leaders place on the Local Government workforce. Furthermore, I know that the First Minister was clear in his reply to UNISON's Perth and Kinross branch on 28th October about how much the Scottish Government values the Local Government workforce and the excellent public services they deliver.

This letter demonstrates our commitment to address and make meaningful progress in taking forward UNISON's requests. We would be obliged if UNISON can take this offer to their Local Government Committee for consideration and respectfully request that they suspend any plans for further industrial action.

I hope all three unions are able to consider and accept the proposals in this letter. We further hope in doing so, this will allow us to conclude the 2024/25 pay negotiations with an agreement and we can look forward to agreeing the practical details at future SJC Steering Group meetings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Hagmann'. The signature starts with a vertical line, followed by a series of loops and a final upward stroke.

Councillor Katie Hagmann
COSLA Resources Spokesperson