

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BALLOT Nov 23

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are UNISON recommending that I vote to accept the latest offer?

Your local government committee agreed that the movements secured by your negotiating team were sufficient to suspend planned industrial action whilst we consult you on the revised offer. The committee recommend you vote to accept the latest improved offer for the following reasons:

- The improved offer goes much further in terms of the commitment to tackling low pay in local government whilst at the same time protecting those in the squeezed middle.
- In terms of tackling low pay the improved offer contains a much stronger commitment to achieving a minimum underpinning rate of pay of £15 per hour for all local government workers. COSLA's previous offers referred only to setting up discussions on whether or not this was something that could be done - this improved offer commits to ensuring it actually happens. This will have a significant impact on the pay rises for those on the lowest pay, who should as a result, see above inflation increases for at least the next three years.
- Helping those in the squeezed middle - we have worked with COSLA and the Scottish Government to secure an additional £17.2m that will be used to backdate all elements of the September offer for all members to 1st April 2023. The previous offer meant that a large number of members would have a staged increase, which would reduce the value of their in-year offer – this improved offer means that everyone gets the benefit of the 1st April implementation and the associated uplift in their in-year offer.

- We now believe this improved offer is the best that can be achieved this year through negotiation and without further extensive and prolonged industrial action. From the original offer presented to us on 31st March 2023 to today the action taken by UNISON members has added over £100m to the local government pay bill, including the additional £17.2m found in the last couple of weeks after others had accepted what was on the table.

What exactly is the latest offer and what does it mean for me?

This is a complex offer - the amount of money it equates to is dependent on where you sit on the pay scale, what job you do, how many hours you work in a week and which local authority you work in.

There are a number of documents you can help you work out what it means for you.

- COSLA's September is [here](#).
- The improvements to that offer made to us in November are outlined [here](#).
- The proposed revised Spinal Column Points (SCP) for this improved offer are [here](#).

In calculating the monetary value of the increase for yourself the rule of thumb would be to take the hourly rate for the relevant SCP, multiply that by the number of hours worked and then multiply that by the number of weeks worked in the year (52.14 for full time workers).

If in doubt please speak to your local UNISON branch who will be able to help.

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Here are a couple of examples *for illustrative purposes only*:

- A full-time waste driver in Stirling who works 35 hours a week, earning an existing annual salary of £28,030.46 will see their annual salary go up to £29,873.61. That's because they are currently earning £15.36 per hour and under the improved offer will see their hourly rate will go up to £16.37.
- A full-time care worker in South Lanarkshire who works 35 hours a week, earning an existing annual salary of £28,833.42 will see their annual salary go up to £30,731.32. That's because they are currently earning £15.80 per hour and under the improved offer will see their hourly rate go up to £16.84.
- A full-time Early Learning and Childcare officer in Renfrewshire who works 37 hours a week, earning an existing annual salary of £28,513.28 will see their annual salary go up to £30,693.25. That's because they are currently earning £14.78 per hour and under the improved offer will see their hourly rate go up to £15.91.

Others have said this is a flat rate offer where we get £2006 – is this not true?

Whilst it always tempting to simplify something that is complex it can also be dangerously misleading.

This is not a flat-rate offer and none of the previous offers from COSLA this year have been flat-rate offers either. This offer is for a percentage uplift, and what that uplift equates to in monetary terms depends on where you sit on the pay spine, the number of hours worked, the job you do and the local authority that you work for.

The £2006 figure quoted applies only if you currently earn the lowest rate of pay AND are working a 37 hour working week.

Why is the fight for a minimum underpinning rate of pay of £15per hour so important and how does this revised wording help?

- Whilst previous offers have proposed setting up discussions to talk about the possibility of reaching a minimum underpinning rate of pay of £15phr, this improved offer commits the employer to setting up a task force to develop the principles and plans for how and when this will be delivered locally.
- COSLA leaders and the SJC will oversee the work of this taskforce to prevent it falling down the list of COSLA priorities.
- This improved commitment puts a date on the delivery of this which did not exist before – the first area of the public sector we believe to do so. The aspiration is to achieve implementation by date of 1st April 2026, with backstop of 1st April 2027, subject to continued improvement in the overall economic outlook and fiscal conditions for Scottish and Local Government.
- We know that low pay is an issue that affects many occupational groups in local government. That is why UNISON believed it was important to fight for this to apply to ALL local government workers in low pay, not just those in one occupational group.

I have heard my employer is imposing this regardless of our vote – is this true?

No. We understand that a number of local authorities are keen to start processing payments to ensure that members received some money sooner rather than later. It would have been our clear preference for members to have received their uplift in April as per the implementation date but equally we will not apologise for fighting for a better deal. We do not believe payment of some monies, on account and pending the outcome of our ballot, is the same as imposition. If you reject the offer the fight will continue.



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Is this not the same offer that the other two unions have already accepted?

No. This improved offer delivers a greater commitment to tackling low pay for all local government workers and helps protect those in the squeezed middle. The improvements UNISON members have secured since others indicated their acceptance put an additional £17.2m into the pockets of local government workers and should see above inflation increases for the lowest paid over at least the next three years.

Others have said that this improvement only benefits 'the higher paid' – is this true?

No. There are three issues with this statement:

1. It ignores the very real progress we have secured in getting a commitment to achieving a minimum underpinning rate of pay of £15phr for all local government workers;
2. It assumes that those on very modest incomes e.g. £25k are 'highly paid' and not as deserving of an improved offer
3. It pits worker against worker in the fight for fair pay. This is not a narrative that UNISON will engage in.

We do not believe that people earning below the average Scottish wage (£33k) are highly paid. We will always fight for all our members to get a decent uplift, wherever in the pay spine they sit. We will not hold down pay for anyone.

Has our strike action made any difference?

Absolutely. And all of you who stood up and took action should be very proud that it did. From the original offer made in March to today your action has delivered an additional £100m into the pay packets of local government workers.

UNISON was the only union to take strike action in this dispute. It was UNISON members who stood on picket lines to fight for a better deal. It was UNISON negotiators who brokered this deal. And it will be UNISON members - you - who determine whether this deal is accepted.

I have other concerns about life at work e.g. violence in schools that are not covered by the pay offer – what will be done about those?

This was a dispute over pay but we have absolutely heard the very clear views of members who have been out on picket lines taking action on behalf of all our local government members and the views of all of you who got in touch during the dispute letting us know what other concerns you have.

Our Education Issues Group continues to lead the campaign against violence in schools and are actively seeking school contacts to help raise awareness of this – please contact your local UNISON branch if you'd like to get involved.

If we reject this offer will there be further strike action?

Your Local Government Committee will consider all options once the outcome of this consultative ballot is known.

If the offer is rejected it is very possible that we will need to escalate our industrial action plans and or seek further industrial action mandates from other groups of local government workers. You should consider whether you are prepared vote for and take part in industrial action if you vote to reject the offer.

Will we have to go through all this again next year?

We have secured a commitment from the employer to conducting a full review of the bargaining process to ensure that lessons are learnt from the way negotiations have progressed over the past two years. We will engage positively in that review to ensure we don't face the same issues next year. And of course as soon as pay for this year is settled we will immediately start working on the 2024 pay claim.

