

COSLA's Pay Offer: the Facts

Introduction

COSLA's offer dated 17 Feb is for a **uniform 3%** increase in pay at all pay points. COSLA says this is an above inflation offer, based on the CPI rate of 2.5% in December 2024.

The Facts:

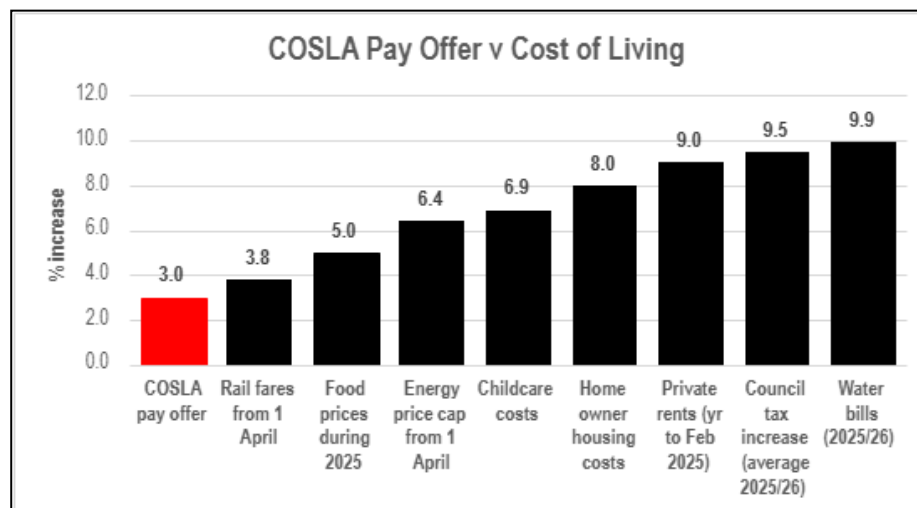
COSLA's offer is not, in fact, even a 'standstill' offer, it is real terms pay cut:

- **CPIH is 3.7%** (Feb 2025, includes owner occupiers housing costs)
- **RPI is 3.4%** (Feb 2025).
- It is not 'inflation-proofed'. The Treasury forecasts inflation will continue to rise by just short of **4%** over the course of 2025¹.

COSLA Pay Offer v Cost of Living Increases

Basic living costs continue to rise.

This is how COSLA's offer stacks up against the increases announced or projected for the rest of 2025 and into 2026.



The rising price of essentials is responsible for local government workers suffering a major fall in living standards over recent years.

Sources: Office for National Statistics, [Consumer Price Inflation](#), UK: February 2025
Office for National Statistics, [Private Rent and House Prices UK](#), February 2025
[Scottish Housing Regulator](#), [Audit Scotland](#), [Coram Family & Childcare Trust](#),
[Scottish Water](#), [Transport Scotland](#), [British Retail Consortium](#).

KEY POINTS:

- **COSLA's 3% pay offer is a real terms pay cut**
- **The basic cost of living continues to rise: 9% rent increases, 9.5% average council tax rises, another 6.4% rise in the energy price cap.**
- **The average public sector worker has seen a decline in the real value of their pay packet of 22% since 2009.**
- **COSLA's offer does nothing to correct this.**



Contact UNISON's Bargaining & Campaigns team:

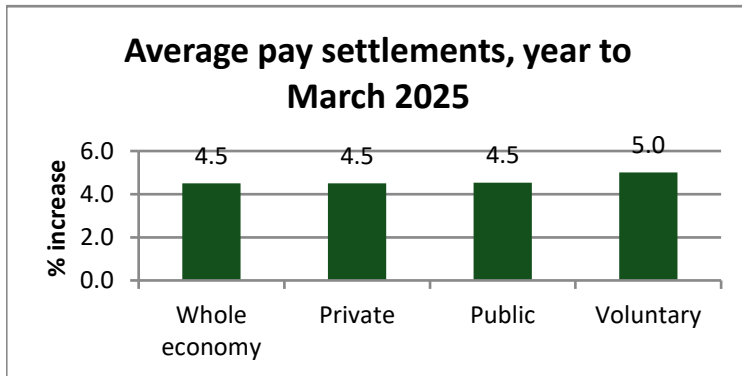
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Comparison with wider pay settlements

COSLA's offer is also well below average pay settlements in the wider economy in 2025 to date.



Source: Labour Research Department

Falling Value of Local Government Pay

An offer of 3% does nothing to make up for the real terms cut in local government pay since 2009.

Local Government workers have suffered a major fall in living standards over recent years. Between 2022 and 2023 workers faced the steepest rise in the cost of living in over 40 years - 11.6% in 2022 and 9.7% in 2023.

The last decade and a half has seen enormous jumps in the basic costs of living as follows:

House Prices	73%
Bus & Coach Fares	93%
Electricity	144%
Gas	92%

Sources: Office for National Statistics, UK Consumer Price Inflation Tables, December 2024, for bus /coach, electricity and gas prices, HM Land Registry Index, House Price Index, November 2024 for house prices.

The most recent data from the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings shows the average public sector worker has seen a decline in the real value of their pay packet of **22%** since 2009, so that the real value of wages were worth **over £11,000 less** in 2024 than in 2009. The average public sector worker would have accumulated almost £76,000 more had their wage kept pace with inflation.

Action for branches

- Please utilise the information contained within this briefing to inform your communications with members.
- Stay up-to-date and access campaign materials on the Local Government Pay Campaigns page: <https://unison-scotland.org/local-government-pay-2025-26/>

Additional reading

- [Local Government Pay 2025/26 Campaigns page](#)
- [UNISON report on the cost of living crisis and how to solve it](#)
- [ONS Inflation and Price Indices](#)



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