



To: Mr Humza Yousaf MSP, First Minister of Scotland
Ms Shona Robison MSP, Deputy First Minister of Scotland & Cabinet Secretary for Finance
Joe FitzPatrick MSP, Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning

c.c.: Cllr Katie Haggmann, COSLA Resources Spokesperson
Simon Cameron, COSLA SJC Joint Secretary

9th May 2023

-- via e-mail --

Dear First Minister, Deputy First Minister and Minister,

SJC Pay 2023

We write following our most recent negotiations with COSLA on the 2023 SJC pay settlement, the offer sent to us following the meeting of COSLA Leaders on 31st March 2023, the result of our collective membership consultations on that offer and the, then, Deputy First Minister's letter to us of 14th March 2023.

You will note that each of our trade union memberships have, overwhelmingly, rejected the pay offer put forward by COSLA and have indicated a willingness to take some form of action, up to and including strike action, in pursuit of an improved offer.

In rejecting the current proposal we note that the offer:

- Falls short of the Joint Trade Union's claim, which was submitted on 26th January 2023.
- Falls far short of the current rate of inflation, which remains above 10%. It would therefore amount to a real-terms pay cut for our members during the current cost of living crises and as such will plunge more of them into debt.
- For those on the lowest pay, falls short of the offer made to local government workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Has a cost envelope which falls short of that which has applied to other areas of the public sector in Scotland.
- Fails to address other items contained within our claim including any real proposals to move to a minimum rate of pay of £15 per hour.

It is very clear to us that the current cost envelope within which COSLA is working means that we cannot lift those on the lowest pay up without disadvantaging those on the middle-income brackets and our members there would, quite understandably, not agree to that. The current cost envelope needs to be increased to deliver a decent uplift for all.

We understand that COSLA Leaders have, inexplicably, chosen not to approach the Scottish Government for additional funding to improve the offer put before us. At the same time we are being told that the continued financial constraints facing local authorities mean that any additional monies directed towards pay will have a direct impact on staff numbers and ultimately the ability to maintain essential services.

We believe it is precisely because of those concerns that the Scottish Government need to come to the table to provide additional funding to improve the offer.

The financial crises that local government faces is a direct result of underfunding over a protracted period of time and only by providing a long term solution to this will we avoid a cycle of industrial dispute year after year with the result that local government workers become increasingly exasperated and disillusioned at the way they are being treated.

In his letter earlier this year the then Deputy First Minister made clear that he was open to discussion with COSLA and the Trade Unions on this issue - indeed, he noted in our discussions last year there was a recognition that the Scottish Government had a role to play in this given they are the biggest funder of local government – and we would wish to arrange a meeting to discuss this with you at the earliest possible opportunity. The alternative is that we continue our preparations for a formal statutory industrial action ballot of our members.

Local Government cannot continue to be the poor relations of the public sector. Whilst we note the announcement of a New Deal for local government announced on the 31st March 2023¹ this came with no details or timescales attached and it is unlikely to be the solution to a fair pay rise for workers this year.

We would therefore request an urgent face to face meeting with you and COSLA representatives to discuss the challenges the local government settlement presents in delivering a fair pay award for the vital workers we represent.

We look forward to an early response.

Best wishes,

Johanna Baxter
SJC Joint Secretary
UNISON

Graham McNab
SJC Joint Secretary
UNITE

Keir Greenaway
SJC Joint Secretary
GMB

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/news/a-new-deal-for-local-government/>