



To: COSLA
From: SJC Trade Union Joint Secretaries
Date: 17th January 2022
Subject: SJC Pay Claim 2022

Colleagues,

SJC Pay Claim 2022

The pay claim outlined below is submitted by the SJC Trade Union Side for Local Government workers covered by SJC conditions for the period 1 April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

1. Summary of claim

Our claim is for:

- A settlement that runs for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- A £3,000 flat rate increase to all spinal column points (based on a 35 hour working week).
- An underpinning minimum rate of pay of £12 per hour.
- The payment of SSSC fees for all by 1st April 2022 and completion of the review, established as part of our 2021 settlement, of all other professional fees incurred by members in the course of their employment by March 2023.
- Early completion of the review, established as part of our 2021 settlement, on how we achieve a no detriment reduction in the working week.
- Agreement to change the national calculator for the normal working week to 35 hours.
- An agreement that in future all allowances are automatically uprated in line with October inflation rates.
- Agreement of home/hybrid working guidance that provides appropriate recompense for expenses incurred as a result of home/hybrid working.
- A review of the job evaluation scores for roles that have changed during the period of the pandemic and/or have new additional qualification requirements.
- No less than parity with other local government bargaining groups.
- Early commencement of negotiations with a clear expectation of settlement implementation by 1 April review date.

The claim is set at a level that we believe recognises the following key points:

- The RPI rate, at the time of writing, is sitting at 7.1%¹;
- Substantial increases in the cost of living over recent years which have significantly reduced the value of staff wages;
- Appropriate reward is needed to sustain the morale of staff in their crucial role of delivering high quality services;
- Appropriate reward is needed for the increased workload and stress placed on staff against a background of unprecedented changes in working practices and demands placed on them during the Covid pandemic.

¹ Office for National Statistics, Retail Price Inflation, 15 December 2021

2. The falling value of pay

Despite the employer's commitment to the Scottish Local Government Living Wage our members have not been immune to the squeeze in living standards brought about by years of austerity and below inflation pay increases.

The table below demonstrates the major fall in living standards suffered by staff over recent years.

	SJC pay awards	Rise in cost of living (as measured by Retail Prices Index April figures)
2010	0.65%	5.3%
2011	0%	5.2%
2012	0%	3.5%
2013	1%	2.9%
2014	1%	2.5%
2015	1.5%	0.9%
2016	1%	1.3%
2017	1%	3.5%
2018	3.5%	3.4%
2019	3%	3%
2020	3%	1.5%
2021	2.86% (this was the average – the award was differentiated)	2.9%

For the value of staff wages not to fall back even further, they must at least keep pace with current and predicted rises in the cost of living which Treasury forecasts put at 3.8% in 2021 and 5.8% in 2022². At the time of writing the rate of RPI is sitting at 7.1% and the Bank of England forecasts that inflation will average 6% in Spring 2022. It should be noted that within these figures some costs are rising significantly faster, such as gas bills at 28.8%, petrol and oil at 20.2%, electricity bills at 18.8% and council tax and rates at 10.2%. Additionally over the 2022/23 tax year, employees will be facing a 1.25% increase to National Insurance contributions.

The Trade Unions' are clear that this year's pay settlement must not only protect workers pay from falling back further but should start to reverse the many years of real-terms cuts to wages through pay restoration.

This pay claim is therefore designed to protect the lowest paid workers but also start to bring workers earnings back into line with where they should be. We appreciate this cannot be done in one year but would remind you that this is a principal that has been accepted in previous pay agreements.

3. Detail of the claim

Further to the summary above additional details in relation to the different elements of the claim are:

- **A settlement that runs for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.**

Whilst the claim is for a one year settlement we are open to discussion and consideration of a multi-year deal if it helps the employers' financial planning and so long as any such deal was inflation-proofed.

² HM Treasury, Forecasts for the UK Economy, Nov 2021

- **A £3,000 flat rate increase to all spinal column points (based on a 35 hr working week).** Members expressed a clear desire for a flat rate increase to be applied to all this year.

- **An underpinning minimum rate of pay of £12 per hour.**

The objective of the Scottish Local Government Living Wage has always been to ensure the lowest pay rate continues to be higher than the national living wage. In recent years the gap has continued to narrow such that the lowest pay bands are now only a few pence above the national living wage.

With 55% of local government workers earning below £25k per annum low pay remains a significant issue and if employers want to plug the recruitment and retention gaps that exist across the local government workforce – notably in social care, early years, environmental health and planning – much more needs to be done to lift up wage levels.

- **An agreement that in future all allowances are automatically updated in line with October inflation rates.**

In order to safeguard allowances from economic instability we seek agreement that in future these are automatically updated according to the October inflation rates, as currently happens with the Distant Islands Allowance.

- **The payment of SSSC fees for all by 1st April 2022 and completion of the review, established as part of our 2021 settlement, of all other professional fees incurred by members in the course of their employment by March 2023.**

Our 2021 settlement committed COSLA to working with us to review all professional fees incurred by our members during the course of their employment. Since then we note that the Scottish Government have announced it is to waive the SSSC and PVG fees for new entrants to social care³.

It is welcome that the Scottish Government is now recognising that the burden of professional fees may be a barrier to entry into low income roles. However we believe it is wholly unfair to expect the existing local government workforce, who have put their lives at risk throughout this pandemic, to continue to be expected to pay these fees themselves. Many already feel taken for granted – this move risks reinforcing that feeling and deepening divisions within the workforce.

SSSC fees in particular are a burden shouldered by some of the lowest paid, predominantly female, workers in local government so there are issues of pay equality here also.

We believe the case for meeting these costs has been made clear so we would see agreement that SSSC fees should be paid for all by 1st April 2022 and our review of all other professional fees to be complete by March 2023.

- **Early completion of the review, established as part of our 2021 settlement, on how we achieve a no detriment reduction in the working week.**

- **Agreement to change the national calculator for the normal working week to 35 hours.**

Our 2021 settlement committed COSLA to exploring with us ways in which we could achieve a no-detriment reduction in the working week. Given the impact of over a decade of cuts to local government and the resulting increase this has meant for those who have remained, combined with the additional workload increases and stress caused by the pandemic we believe it is important this work is taken forward quickly.

We note the Scottish Public Sector Pay Policy⁴ continues to encourage employers to work towards standardising to a 35 hour working week.

³ <https://www.gov.scot/news/staff-joining-social-care-to-have-fees-waived>

⁴ Scottish Public Sector Pay Policy, published 9 December 2021

We therefore seek an agreement to change the national Red Book calculator for the normal working week to 35 hours and early completion of our review on how we achieve a no-detriment reduction in the working week to ensure that the work-life balance of workers can be maintained.

These proposals do not absolve the Employers from their Health and Safety responsibilities.

- **Agreement of home/hybrid working guidance that provides appropriate recompense for expenses incurred as a result of home/hybrid working.**

We note that the Scottish Public Sector Pay policy also introduces the requirement for employers to have meaningful discussions with staff representatives about the Right to Disconnect. We also note that a number of local authorities are seeking to change the future model of work in light of the pandemic, with many seeking to introduce new home/hybrid working policies.

We believe that these policies should follow nationally agreed guidelines which must provide appropriate recompense for expenses incurred as a result of home/hybrid working. This must include, as a minimum, payment of the HMRC £6 per week home-working allowance directly by the employer.

- **Review of the job evaluation scores for roles that have changed during the period of the pandemic and/or have new additional qualification requirements.**

We note the existing commitment to review the job evaluation scores for workers whose roles have changed as a result of the pandemic and those who have new qualification requirements. Those reviews need to be completed in a timely manner.

- **No less than parity with other local government bargaining groups.**

It is COSLA policy to apply parity of pay increases across the Local Government bargaining groups. We note however that this policy has been breached in previous pay rounds, through the intervention of the Scottish Government, when additional funds were found to give larger increases to Teaching colleagues.

We cannot overstate the level of anger this caused amongst our members who, understandably, felt like some workers were being given preferential treatment above others.

Never again can we be in a position where SJC workers are treated as the poor relations of the Local Government workforce. COSLA needs to enforce the policy they purport to hold – SJC workers deserve no less than parity with colleagues in other Local Government bargaining groups.

- **Early commencement of negotiations with a clear expectation of settlement implementation by 1 April review date.**

Our claim is submitted in good time for Leaders to consider it, alongside those of other local government bargaining groups, and make an offer ahead of and in good time for the 1 April review date to be met. With this in mind we would expect to receive an offer mid February.

Our members will not accept a position where implementation of a pay agreement is only made a year after their claim was submitted, and some seven months after the pay implementation day, as happened last year. It not only causes uncertainty for these critical workers it also causes significant difficulties for members in receipt of state benefits.

4. Morale under threat

The Local Government workforce has gone above and beyond the remits of their roles to respond to the Covid pandemic for almost two years now - distributing food/medicine/essential items across Scotland, protecting/caring for our vulnerable and elderly, collecting waste, setting up and staffing temporary mortuaries, staffing the hubs of “key worker” children, kept schools and early years open, staffing the asymptomatic testing sites, Environmental Health & Trading Standards Officers enforcing public health and wellbeing, Mental Health Workers with increased caseloads, Housing workers who have been working in tenants homes, those who have been processing and issuing

emergency support grants. And the army of cleaning staff without whose efforts no one else would have been able to work at all, far less do so safely. Even this list is very far from complete.

Just this week they have been asked to do even more to support their colleagues in health and social care – many working additional hours, in different roles and in different environments – to keep our NHS going and our country running.

The surveys we have conducted of our members lay bare the enormous toll the pandemic has had on their working lives and mental health. We cannot over-state the necessity for the terms of this claim to be met to maintain the morale of these essential workers.

5. Fair Funding for Local Government

The economic context going into our 2022 pay negotiations is more acute than ever. Local government needs a new deal from the Scottish Government. Empowering our local councils and communities will be critical to our economic recovery. That requires investment in our local services and the key workers who deliver them.

We have supported calls for a fair funding settlement for Local Government to the Scottish Government and we will continue to press for this. But we must be clear – we will not tolerate our members being used as a political football between your two organisations. The issues they face and the services they deliver are bigger than that and they deserve better.

6. Conclusion

There can be no doubt that all SJC workers have seen the value of their earnings fall considerably over recent years. Combined with these developments, the last year has seen intensified pressures placed on staff against the unprecedented background of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Staff have had to adapt to new ways of working during the pandemic, placing significantly increased stresses on all staff. Many staff have also faced the pressure of juggling their workload with extra demands in their private life, particularly where they have been caring for children or elderly relatives.

Nonetheless, the dedication of staff over the pandemic has enabled Local Government to maintain the services, and enhance the support, it has provided to our communities throughout this unprecedented period.

Therefore, this pay claim represents the reward staff deserve for their dedication, skill and hard work and the minimum improvement in pay needed to maintain workforce morale for delivering consistently high-quality services.

We look forward to the employer's full consideration of this claim and early engagement in negotiations.

Best wishes,

Johanna Baxter
Joint Secretary
UNISON

Wendy Dunsmore
Joint Secretary
UNITE

Keir Greenaway
Joint Secretary
GMB