



To: Tom Young, COSLA SJC Secretary
From: SJC Trade Union Joint Secretaries
Date: 15th September 2018
Subject: Revised Pay offer - Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 6th September outlining the Employer's side revised pay offer for local government workers covered by the Scottish Joint Council (SJC).

We write to confirm the trade union side's position on this as outlined in our meeting with you on Friday 14th September 2018.

Whilst we of course welcome any improvement to the original offer we remain concerned that the revised offer does not go far enough to meet the expectations of our members, as set out in our pay claim of 12th January 2018. Our particular areas of concern are outlined below.

Negotiation

Once again we must express our deep frustration and disappointment that COSLA have chosen to put forward an offer without first entering into negotiation on the terms of that offer with trade union representatives. We expressed similar concerns when the initial offer was put forward but it appears that these concerns have been disregarded.

We believe that describing this as a final offer, without having entered into meaningful negotiations with the trade unions, undermines the principle of, and our shared commitment to, collective bargaining as outlined in Part 1 of the SJC Red Book, section 3, which states:

"The SJC has a strong commitment to joint negotiation and consultation at all levels and to this end encourages employees to join and remain in recognised unions. Co-operation between employers, employees and unions will help ensure the successful delivery of services."

The SJC is a negotiating body and we expect to be able to enter into negotiations on behalf of our members. The employer's actions mean that once again we are placed in the position of having a final offer put to us without having had the opportunity to influence either the quantum or distribution of that quantum in advance.

Parity

A key element of our pay claim related to the issue of maintaining the principle of parity across the four local government bargaining groups (SJC employees, Craft Workers, Teachers and Chief Officials) with respect to pay. That concern arose from the fact that additional funding was found to increase Teachers pay for the 2017/18 pay round and for the forthcoming 2018/19 pay round, which was over and above what the other local government bargaining groups received. This meant that

Local Government Workers, covered by SJC negotiations, working in education establishments were receiving lower increases than the Teachers they were working alongside.

Despite assurances from COSLA that the principle of parity would be maintained, and that all four local government bargaining groups were receiving the same revised pay offer, we have since learned through the press¹ that in fact an additional £25m has been made available to fund revision of the Teachers pay scales. This is on top of the additional £10m funding that was found to provide Teachers with this current, revised, pay offer. This additional money will see some Teachers receiving pay rises of over 10% whilst our members receive only 3%.

This does not deliver the parity you have promised but in fact demonstrates a gross unfairness in how COSLA chooses to treat their workforce.

In our meeting you argued that this additional funding was not part of the Teachers pay offer and was in fact intended to address a recruitment and retention issue. However, it is clear that this additional funding will go straight into the pay packets of those workers - arguing that it does not form part of the pay offer hides behind a technicality and is disingenuous. Also, whilst none of us would argue against teachers being appropriately rewarded for their contribution, we would make the point that there remain significant recruitment and retention issues within local government that similarly need to be addressed, particularly in areas like social care.

In your letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution, Derek MacKay MSP, of 27th March 2018 you wrote *"should the Scottish Government be minded to influence a higher pay settlement for teachers than the one now made by COSLA, then this should be extended to all our bargaining groups"*.

Clearly the Scottish Government have been so minded to influence higher pay for teachers so we would urge you to ensure that this is extended to all local government bargaining groups.

Restoration

Our members have suffered a real terms loss in pay over the past ten years of some 15% because of austerity that they did not create.

The Trade Union's have been clear that this year's pay settlement must not only protect workers from the sharp rise in inflation but start to reverse the many years of real terms cuts to wages through pay restoration.

We acknowledged, and appreciated, this could not be done in one year but proposed that it should be an aim for everyone at the SJC and put forward a means of addressing it over a period of not more than 5 years.

It is disappointing that the revised offer makes no acknowledgement of this issue or any proposal to try to address it now or in the longer term.

Low Pay

Of significant concern is the fact that the revised offer does not improve the position of those workers on the lowest salaries.

Our pay claim sought to address low pay in a number of ways. One of those was a request that any increase should be applied after the uprating of the Scottish Local Government Living Wage has taken effect. We are disappointed that this has not been considered.

¹ <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/16735846.teachers-could-get-10-pay-boost-under-35m-government-proposal>

Additionally, we have repeatedly pressed for consolidation of the living wage. Indeed Derek MacKay MSP has stated in correspondence to us that “all bodies covered by the Scottish Government’s Public Sector Pay Policy for 2018-19 must pay their staff at least the Living Wage, and that all pay increases for those staff are awarded on a consolidated basis”². It would be untenable for COSLA to argue that local government should be exempt from this.

We should point out that a 3% increase would be below the current rate of inflation. In-work poverty is at record levels and many of our members are seeking the assistance of Foodbanks simply to get by.

We would argue that the employer could and should be doing much more to address low pay than that put forward under the current offer.

Joint Meeting with Derek MacKay

The trade unions are acutely aware that the Scottish Government could be doing more to adequately resource local government and that in doing so COSLA would find it easier to address some of these concerns.

That is why during the course of this year we have lobbied the Scottish Government for more money for Local Government, recognising that between 2013-14 and 2017-18 there was a 7.1% fall (-£744.7m) in the local government revenue settlement in real terms (2018-19 prices).

During the course of our discussions with Derek MacKay MSP we discussed the need to resolve and improve the issue of funding for local government and the possibility of a tri-partite meeting to help facilitate that. It was disappointing to hear today that you did not feel there would be any benefit in such a discussion and would urge you to reconsider this position.

In Conclusion

In conclusion the Trade Unions have significant concerns with the offer before us. We have put forward a number of proposed solutions to try to find a way forward that would be agreeable to our members however all of those proposed solutions have been rejected by the employer.

In the absence of any movement from the employer to improve this offer we have to inform you that we will be forced to recommend our members reject the offer when we consult them in the coming weeks.

That is clearly not where any of us would wish to be and we urge you to get back round the table and engage with us in meaningful negotiations to try to resolve this issue.

Kind Regards,

Johanna Baxter
SJC Joint Secretary
UNISON

Drew Duffy
SJC Joint Secretary
GMB

Willie McGonigle
SJC Joint Secretary
UNITE

² <http://www.unison-scotland.org/library/L-from-Derek-Mackay-100718.pdf>