

Local Government Pay 2010 Frequently Asked Questions

What was the pay claim?

In November 2009 the Trade Union Side of the Scottish Joint Council submitted this year's pay claim to the annual meeting of the SJC. The content is as follows:

- 1 year deal
- 3% or £600
- £7 minimum wage in line with living wage campaign with the settlement to be weighted towards lower paid
- Encourage voluntary sector organisations conditioned to the SJC to pick up the award

How did the employers respond?

CoSLA - the employers - met with us on 24 February and rejected our claim in its entirety. They were not prepared to make any offer to us on any of the three main components of our claim: Percentage award, flat rate award or minimum hourly rate.

On 13 April a further meeting with the employers took place. A proposal of 0.65% for 2010/11, 0% for 2011/12 and 0% for 2012/13 was floated. The trade union response was that a multi-year deal was not acceptable and certainly not acceptable in these terms. The offer of 0.65% for this year did not in any way address our claim. Further discussions did not realise any movement on the part of the employers and their position of a three year deal being a key theme was re-emphasised. No formal offer was made.

On 19 April the Scottish employers made a **Final Offer** in response to the Trade Union Side's Pay Claim as follows:

The offer is for a period of three years to run until 31 March 2013.

- 1% on all spinal column points, on all scales with effect **from 1 April 2010**
- 0% on all spinal column points, on all scales with effect **from 1 April 2011**
- 0.5% on all spinal column points, on all scales with effect **from 1 April 2012**

The UNISON Side and the Scottish Joint Council Trade Union Side (UNISON, Unite and GMB) unanimously agreed to recommend rejection of this offer.

My Council is making budget cuts, surely they have no money for a pay award?

Twenty eight of the thirty two Scottish Councils have budgeted for a pay award this year. 19 Councils for 1%, 4 Councils for over 1% and 4 Councils for up to 1%.

This year for the third year councils agreed to freeze council tax. We don't want big increases in council tax, but the effect of this decision puts jobs and services at risk. We know that local councils have saved £258 million in 2009/09. That was £83 million more than they were asked to - savings made by our members.

Management often talk of 'affordability', but it is a question of whether they can afford NOT to give their employees a decent wage. If they are to recruit and retain staff in vital jobs, they will have to pay them a living wage - otherwise people will vote with their feet. You can't keep cutting budgets and expect the lowest paid to fill the gap, particularly when last year Councils managed to 'afford' to spend £48m on consultants.

Why am I being offered a three year deal?

There is not a case for a multi-year deal other than that of political expediency - there are Scottish Parliament elections taking place in 2011, Local Government elections in 2012. Councillors do not want pay to cloud their election prospects. The Government's Public Sector Pay Policy advocates single year deals and not multi-year ones.

What are other people getting this year?

CoSLA has already agreed to pay teachers 2.4% and chief officers 2.5%. These are the final awards of a three year deal. Interestingly, the chief executives association have declined the third year of their pay settlement without any reference to their bargaining machinery. They were set to receive 2.5% too.

NHS employees received a 2.25% pay award this year and for the lowest paid they instead received a flat rate of £420. CoSLA says these kinds of pay deals can't be done because they skew the pay spine. Clearly the NHS says they can!

Outside the 'mainstream' public sector First Scotrail agreed a 3.7% deal and Scottish & Southern Energy 3.2%.

Is my pay really that bad?

Local government workers are amongst the lowest paid in the public sector. Three-quarters of the workforce are women, but there's a part-time gender pay gap in Scotland of 33%. This means that women working part-time earn 67p per hour, for every £1 per hour that a man working full-time earns.

A 1% pay rise will have a damaging effect on women's pay and will widen the gap between local government pay and the rest of economy.

Shouldn't I be more worried about losing my job through 'efficiencies'?

UNISON is fighting to protect jobs and services up and down the country. But we need to make a stand on pay now to protect your standard of living and show that we value what we do for local communities - even if the employers don't. This isn't a choice of either a three year pay deal or a job. The deal doesn't come with a three year guarantee of continuing employment!

What's inflation running at?

The Retail Price Index (RPI) for the last year is running at 4.4%.

But that 4.4% is an average, there's plenty of evidence that the real impact on ordinary people is much higher. To take just a couple of examples: Fares and travel costs increased 11.3% last year. Nursery fees for under-tuos were up by 6.3% and up 8.3% for those two and over. Fees for childminders rose by 2.6% for all ages.

If I reject the offer what happens next?

Your branch will be organising local meetings where the campaign and reasons for rejecting the offer can be discussed. You will then receive a ballot paper that will be issued on or around 21 June and must be returned by 29 July. There will be a telephone number available for anyone not receiving a ballot paper. It is essential that all home addresses and workplace details are correct on the UNISON membership system

If the ballot has a high return and a strong rejection, that will show the employers just how angry members are about the poor offer they have made.

The employers will then be asked again to re-open talks and make an improved offer to meet our claim.

If they refuse or there is no improvement, a further ballot of members will take place on taking some form of industrial action. The industrial action strategy will be determined by branches and again you will have an opportunity through your branch to influence the strategy.

Is Industrial Action a strike?

Yes it could be an all out strike, selected occupational groups can take strike action that can have significant effect on services, but there are other strategies that can be considered like overtime bans, boycotts etc.

What are the Councils saying about the offer and the unions advising members to reject it?

All Council Leaders and Chief Executives have been written to. All the responses will be collated but for your individual Council's response please ask your branch secretary as they will also be following up any written replies with a request for a local meeting.

Aren't there lots of people who are not UNISON members?

In many workplaces there are people that haven't yet joined UNISON. The more members there are in the union the more effective our message of rejection will be with the employers and the more likely we are to be able to win a decent pay rise.

What can I do?

Get involved in the discussion in your branch and get your colleagues to become union members. They can join by phoning **0845 355 0845** or by filling in an application form from a local rep or from www.unison-scotland.org.uk/join/index.html