

Council workers keeping vital local services running deserve a proper pay rise



Staff keeping vital local services running deserve a proper pay rise.

Staff keeping vital local services running – including schools, refuse collection and child protection – during the pandemic deserve a proper pay rise, say the three unions representing council staff in England and Wales today.

Responding to the 2.75% pay offer for 2020/21 made today by the Local Government Association (LGA), GMB, UNISON and Unite are urging the Chancellor Rishi Sunak and other ministers to heed the call from the local government employers to fund a top up to reward council and school support staff.





A much-needed increase would ensure that social workers, teaching assistants, refuse collectors and others – who are going above and beyond during the crisis – can have a decent pay rise. The three unions say the LGA offer – which also includes an extra day of leave for some – falls well short of their 10% claim for this year. They add that it fails to recognise the hard work of local government staff in keeping services running while the country is in lockdown. The LGA has already asked the government to fund an additional pay increase in addition to its offer. The unions are calling for the employers to write a joint letter with them to Rishi Sunak and communities secretary Robert Jenrick, urging them to reward staff properly.



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GMB National Secretary Rehana Azam said:

“We rejected the initial opening offer of 2% as it was woefully low – and that was before the seismic shift caused by coronavirus.

“Right now, our most precious resources are our key workers. They are getting us through this pandemic with their invaluable and selfless dedication in numerous critical roles.

“That’s why we are so disappointed the LGA hasn’t made a strong enough case before tabling a 2.75% offer to government to fund a key workers allowance.

“The ask is simple; we want employers and the government to recognise the strain and huge risks our members are working under. Many of them are struggling to access PPE and are still waiting for the coronavirus testing they have been promised.

“We will continue to make representations for the best settlement and let GMB members have their say on pay.



UNISON head of local government Jon Richards said:

“While many are at home, council staff are going above and beyond keeping vital local services running.

“Some are facing huge risks as they go about their work. The least the government can do is to reward them with a proper pay rise and ensure all those that need protective equipment to help keep them safe have access to it now.

“The LGA say they’d like to give council staff more but it’s all cash-strapped local authorities can afford.

“Although an increase on its previous offer of 2%, it still falls well short of what’s both needed and deserved. Staff running key local services are amongst the lowest paid workers in the country and have seen their pay drop substantially in recent years.”

Unite national officer for local government Jim Kennedy said:

“This is a totally unrealistic offer, especially given the current crisis where it is our frontline local authority workers who are protecting our communities and vital services, caring for our young and our vulnerable elderly, collecting our rubbish, cleaning our streets, and working in our crematoria to ensure dignity for those who have, sadly, fallen victim to this terrible virus.

“We know the public are appreciative and supportive of our frontline council workforce. Unfortunately, the local government employers are not mirroring public opinion with this low offer, seemingly oblivious to their many years of cynically undervaluing some of the public sector’s lowest paid workers.

“The employers say that they will lobby ministers for additional money for pay – and while we will support that call to government, there can be no kicking the can down the road, yet again, for some of the most low-paid workers in the country, whose true value has come to the fore as they play a critical part in the battle against coronavirus.”

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