

Agenda Item 8

Supplementary Paper to General Purposes Committee on 31st Jan 2022 from UNISON

Regarding the Proposed Pay Award

The Chief Executive's report has proposed a 2.0% pay rise to all staff and UNISON understands the financial position, constraints and pressure the council is under in making this recommendation. However the financial pressures on staff at this time are unprecedented and UNISON therefore considers that a more realistic pay award is needed.

Pay has not kept up with the cost of living for many years. The following table shows the pay awards with respect to the CPI and RPI over the last 10 years:

	Pay award%	CPI %	RPI %
2011	0	4.8	5.4
2012	0	2.7	3.9
2013	1	2.9	3.2
2014	1	1.9	2.8
2015	1	0.5	1.4
2016	2	2.9	2.5
2017	0	3.1	3.9
2018	2	2.7	4.1
2019	2.5	1.8	3.3
2020	2.5	1	2.9
2021	1	5.4	7.5

To summarise, pay today is worth 16% less than CPI and 27% less than the RPI since 2011. To fully bring pay into line with the CPI over last 10 years, we would need a 22% pay award now. Nationally, unions are asking for 10%, but even that would only reduce the gap to 12%.

Notwithstanding the historical erosion of the value of our pay, the CPI was 5.4% and the RPI was 7.5% in December 2021- there is still a big disparity between these and the proposed pay offer.

With reference to many recent news reports, Members will be fully aware that the cost of living has already risen and is expected to rise significantly more this spring, especially for:

- NI
- Energy bills
- Council Tax

Following the circulation of the above report to staff, UNISON members have been proactively approaching the UNISON Committee (we did not seek their views) concerned at the level of proposed award. Since then, we have asked a few more members for their views. A good many members stressed that they understand the Council's position and would not wish for services to be affected, but their own cost of living is drastically going up too:

Energy – bills have more than doubled for some owing to failure of their energy suppliers and likely to increase further. For many staff now working from home, their heating now has to be on during

the daytime too. The consequent reduction in office space will inevitably have produced economies for the Council.

Petrol and Diesel – prices have been steadily increasing.

Food – various UNISON members had noticed their monthly food bills had increased, in one case by as much as £40 per month (not including Christmas). Another member noticed that even “Value” products had gone up significantly. A recent news report also highlighted price increases of up to 150% on these “Value” items which those on lower incomes might be relying on.

Rental for property – some UNISON members have experienced significant rent increases recently.

Mortgage rates – some UNISON members are worried interest rates will increase when their fixed rate deals end later this year.

Council Tax – TMBC’s Council Tax rose by 2.3% last year – and it would seem likely to us that it will increase by the same or more again this year. Not all members live in the Borough, so some may face larger increases.

Phone/Broadband – BT have already announced a 10% increase – other suppliers may follow. Now that most of us are working from home, a good internet connection is even more important.

Clearly staff are already ***particularly feeling the pinch this year***, with worse to come – and we’re especially concerned about those on the lower grades.

Members will already be aware that many staff have been putting in far more than their contracted hours regularly over many months – and often at some increased personal risk – to maintain the Council’s services throughout the ongoing pandemic. In addition, as the Chief Executive’s report states, staff have been “doing more with less” in the context of deleted posts.

To conclude, we appreciate the financial challenges the Council faces - but the Council must also appreciate the financial challenges their employees face whilst still providing excellent services in difficult times. In light of this, UNISON are making a reasonable request for a pay rise in line with the lower index, the CPI index, of 5.4%.