



PAY CLAIM: 2021-22

Submitted by UNISON to the London Borough of Bromley

1. Introduction

This pay claim is submitted by UNISON on behalf of staff working for the London Borough of Bromley (LBB hereafter).

UNISON's claim is set at a level that we believe recognises the following key points:

- Major increases in the cost of living over recent years have significantly reduced the value of staff wages;
- Appropriate reward is needed to sustain the morale and productivity of staff in their crucial role of delivering high quality services during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Appropriate reward is needed for the increased workload and stress placed on staff against a background of major budget cuts and the pandemic;
- Average pay settlements across the economy have been running ahead of those received by Bromley Council staff over recent years, increasing the likelihood of recruitment and retention problems in the long term;
- Nobody should be paid less than the nationally recognised Foundation Living Wage (London Living Wage) rate, which has become a benchmark for the minimum level of decent pay across the UK and is now paid by large sections of the public services and many major private companies

UNISON is therefore submitting the following claim for 2021-22, which seeks to improve and enhance the morale and productivity of our members. Meeting our claim will give LBB the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to creating a workforce which is well paid and high in morale and productivity. The claim is straightforward and realistic.

2. Summary Claim

We are seeking:

- An increase on all salary points and allowances sufficient to equal, or better, their equivalents on the GLPC/NJC Framework Arrangements for 2021/22;
- A further review of the pay and grades structures following previous realignment and removal of the lowest bandings to achieve headroom above the Living Wage (National Minimum Wage) and the Foundation Living Wage (London Living Wage);
- An additional increase in rates for staff at the bottom of the pay scale to bring their pay up to the level of the Foundation Living Wage (London Living Wage) which is currently set at £10.85 per hour for 2020 (£10.55 for 2019);
- A review of payments and consideration of improvements to conditions in relation to additional components such as unsocial hours, gender pay, terms for working parents, and adjustments to hours;
- Special London Allowance for Residential Staff (should this apply) in accordance with the GLPC agreement (for reference, the agreed rate from 1 April 2020 was £1,200, an increase from £1,167 at April 2019);
- Planned overtime rates in line with the GLPC recommendations for 2021-22 (see paragraph 2.4 of the Gold Book for guidance on the application of these rates);
- An agreement with the joint unions on behalf of staff in relation to the management of workloads across the Council;
- Unions are asking the Council, as a non-NJC employer, to look again at their arrangements in the light of new national pay structures as they are forthcoming;
- The advantages of the NJC pay spine are:
 - The NJC pay spine is transparent
 - Using the NJC pay spines aids comparability with other NJC employers
 - It becomes easier to apply future NJC pay awards
 - Using the NJC pay spine future proofs the employer against National Living Wage
 - Increases and so provides stability
 - The NJC pay spine provides a sound basis for future pay and grading exercises

3. Background to the Claim

A substantial increase will help restore and maintain living standards of the staff who have seen their real pay eroded considerably.

Bromley UNISON consulted its members prior to this claim and found:

- 56% of respondents felt their pay was worse off compared to the cost of living than 12 months ago;
- 87% of respondents felt their workload had increased;
- 67% of respondents noted that stress was having a negative impact on their personal life, while 33% reported it affected their job performance;
- 67% of respondents reported feeling demotivated, while 53% described morale as Low or Very Low;
- 50% of respondents are worried about future job security

The greatest asset of LBB is its employees. In this pay round, our members are looking for evidence of the value that LBB places upon them for their contribution to the Council's response to the unprecedented circumstances created by the pandemic.

This claim is both realistic and fair. The following gives full justification for the claim. UNISON hopes that LBB will give this claim the full consideration and response which employees expect and richly deserve.

4. Falling Value of Pay

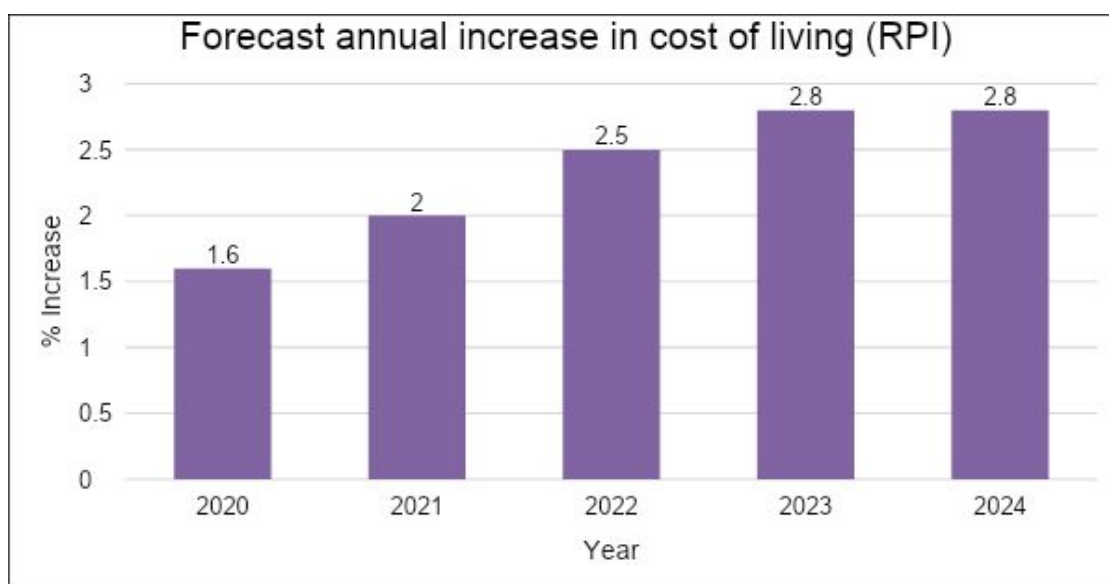
The table below demonstrates the major fall in living standards suffered by staff over recent years.

	LBB pay increases	Rise in cost of living ¹ (as measured by Retail Prices Index)
2010	0%	4.6%
2011	0%	5.2%
2012	0%	3.2%
2013	1.2%	3.0%
2014	1.2%	2.4%
2015	1.2%	1.0%
2016	1.2%	1.8%
2017	1.2%	3.6%
2018	2.0%	3.3%
2019	2.25%	2.6%
2020	2.5%	1.6%

¹ Office for National Statistics, Consumer Price Inflation Reference Tables, January 2021

This means that, while the cost of living has risen by 32.2% over the last decade, pay in LBB has risen by just under 13%, equating to thousands of pounds in cuts to the value of staff wages.

The Treasury average of independent forecasts states that RPI inflation will have averaged 1.6% over 2020. It will then escalate every year to reach 2.8% by 2023, following the pattern shown in the graph below. These annual rates show the rate at which pay rises would be needed for wages just to maintain their current value.



Source: HM Treasury Forecasts for the UK Economy, May 2020

5. Falling Behind Average Pay Rates

The ability of LBB to attract and retain staff in the long term will be damaged if the pay of its staff falls behind the going rate in the labour market.

The table below shows that pay settlements over the last year across the economy have been running at 2.5%, which, while commensurate with the average 2020 settlement, was marginally below the GLPC uplift (2.75%), allowing gaps created by previous settlements to widen further.

A sample of economic sectors that can provide alternative career options for LBB staff shows that pay settlements are running at the below rates.

Sector	Average pay settlements
Across economy	2.5%
Private sector	2.5%
Public sector	2.6%
Not for profit	2.0%
Energy & gas	2.5%

Water & waste management	2.3%
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Source: Labour Research Department, settlements year to June 2020

Year	Average pay settlements	LB Bromley pay increases
2010	2.0%	0%
2011	2.5%	0%
2012	2.5%	0%
2013	2.5%	1.2%
2014	2.5%	1.2%
2015	2.2%	1.2%
2016	2.0%	1.2%
2017	2.0%	1.2%
2018	2.5%	2.0%
2019	2.5%	2.25%
2020	2.6%	2.5%

6. Recruitment and Retention Pressures Building

Recruitment and retention are a key priority for councils. As of 2017/18, 78% of councils were experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties, with 10% feeling forced to enact a recruitment freeze at some point during 2017/18 (LGA workforce survey 2017/18). This issue is particularly acute for a variety of professional and specialist roles, including social work, planning and building control.

Successive workforce surveys conducted by the LGA make it apparent that pressures are rising. Local Authorities' reported average vacancy rate of 8% (rising to 9.5% for unitary authorities) is significantly higher than the averages for wider public sector and in the economy as a whole.

With the general unemployment rate in the UK economy set to rise as the country adapts to 'the new normal' created by Covid-19, competitive wages will only become more crucial if LBB wish to recruit and retain staff.

As temporary and agency staff are used to deal with staffing problems caused by absenteeism or recruitment and retention difficulties, this can, in turn, have a negative impact on workload and morale. UNISON's survey, undertaken in preparation for this claim, saw 20% of respondents note the usage of temporary/agency staff had increased in the last twelve months.

7. Morale Under Threat

Working against a background of consistent cuts and the ongoing threat to services caused by the pandemic, staff have been facing greater workload pressures. The

resulting increased stress puts the morale of the workforce at risk and poses a long-term threat to LBB's ability to provide a consistent quality of service.

Bromley UNISON's survey of members found:

- 66% of respondents felt that the number of service users had increased;
- 53% of respondents felt the number of staff had decreased;
- 87% of respondents reported feeling more stressed by their working conditions;
- 86% of respondents noted a decrease in morale overall;
- 73% of respondents felt that the quality of service had decreased;
- 36% of respondents felt that there were frequent staff shortages in their workplace or service area;
- 50% of respondents said they were Very Seriously or Fairly Seriously considering leaving their job, with half of those considering work for a different Local Authority

While requesting the above, it should be noted that LBB has followed best practice in terms of Working from Home guidance to its staff to protect their physical and mental health, but our survey still saw concerns raised about the consistency of application of WFH guidance and the availability of suitable equipment to perform job roles remotely.

8. Conclusion

There can be no doubt that all employees working for LBB have seen a significant fall in their living standards; their real earnings have fallen substantially.

To deliver a quality service, LBB relies on its workforce, and the retention of a specialist, skilled, experienced and dedicated workforce is important to the quality of service delivery. Competition for that workforce from other sectors is strong.

2021 is the year in which LBB can begin to demonstrate that its workforce is included as we begin to recover from the impact of Covid-19.

This is a fair and realistic claim which we ask LBB to meet in full.