

LBB Response to Joint Unions Claim LBB 24/25

SUMMARY CLAIM

We are seeking:

- A minimum of £3,000 or 10%, whichever is greater, across the board increase on all salary points and allowances. An additional increase on all salary points of 2% prior to the above, reflect the discrepancy following the LBB awards in 2022-23 of 2.25% and 2023-24 of 7.75%, when the GLPC Settlement of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 claims by the joint unions saw an average pay rise of 6% on both occasions.

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) currently report CPI at 4% and RPI at 5.2%. The Bank of England expects inflation to continue to fall in 2024.

The unions' claim of £3000 or 10% (whichever is greater) would cost the Council minimally £7.5m (based on 10%).

An additional increase on all salary points of 2% prior to this would cost the Council £1.5m.

In total, both elements would be in the region of £9m

The Council's pay offer has to be seen in the wider context of the pressures on Public Sector finances. The recent report 'Draft 2024/25 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28' details the potential budget gap of around £16.6m in 2025/26 increasing to £38.7m per annum in 2027/28.

Nationally, whilst the previous years pay award was finally settled in November 2023, there are currently no proposals for the 24/25 pay award.

- An additional increase on all allowances of 3.88% in accordance with the GLPC Settlement of the 2023/24 claim by the joint unions

In light of the proposed pay award, we will look at uplifting our allowances by 3% to ensure we remain competitive and don't compromise the Councils service delivery interests.

- Further to the above, backpay to all staff equivalent to any updated pay scales for the period 1 April 2023-31 March 2024

Members are not proposing to provide backpay for 2023/24. The pay award for 2023/24 was 2% + 5.75%.

Since the Council came out of national terms and conditions in November 2012, the pay award in Bromley has been delivered in time for staff to receive the increase in April of each year.

- Consideration of a flat rate increase to hourly rates of pay in order to bring the minimum rate up to £15 per hour within two years

The proposed increase would mean the minimum hourly rate at Bromley would be £12.76 per hour, an increase of 0.83 per hour compared to the current minimum rate at Bromley. The National Living Wage from April 2024 will be £11.44 per hour.

One of the key principles of adopting a local pay framework allows democratically elected Members/Councillors to determine staff pay and terms and conditions based on a number of factors including affordability and local benchmarks. In 2024/25, the Council are also proposing the removal of the equivalent of lower spinal points 9-11 (BR3).

- An increase in the annual leave entitlement by 1 day, in accordance with the GLPC Settlement of the 2022/23 claim by the joint unions

There are no plans to increase the minimum entitlements for annual leave. The minimum leave in the Council is 24 plus the statutory bank holidays, rising to 30 for long standing employees with 5 years or more service. This compares favourably with the leave provisions both in the private and public sector.

In addition, employees are given a discretionary additional concessionary day during the Christmas period.

- An additional day of annual leave for personal or well-being purposes

The Council is committed to the well-being of our employees and regularly promotes wellbeing initiatives such as the Telephone Lottery, Well-being webinars, Ask HR sessions as well as the introduction of our Volunteering Policy. Support is also available to all staff through the Employee Assistance Programme as well as our Mental Health First Aiders. Promotions from Workforce Development are sent to staff on a regular basis.

In addition, the Council already have a special leave scheme in place to support employees.

- A reduction in the working week by two hours

There are no plans to look at a reduction of the standard working week

However, we are committed to giving serious consideration to requests for flexible working arrangements. This includes 'compressed weeks' where staff work their usual 5-day week hours over the course of 4 days or 9 day fortnights. We already have a number of colleagues working under these arrangements.

- 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) A review of the pay spine, including looking at the top end, and

discussions about the link between how remuneration can be used to improve retention

The proposed increase would mean the minimum hourly rate at Bromley would be £12.76 per hour, an increase of 0.83 per hour compared to the current minimum rate at Bromley. The National Living Wage from April 2024 will be £11.44 per hour.

- 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 £13.15 per hour.

In 2024/25, the Council are also proposing the removal of the equivalent of lower spinal points 9-11 (BR3).

As above, the proposed increase would mean the minimum hourly rate at Bromley would be £12.76 per hour. The National Living Wage from April 2024 will be £11.44 per hour.

- A review of payments and consideration of improvements to conditions in relation to additional components such as unsocial hours, gender pay gap, disability pay gap, ethnicity pay gap, terms for working parents, and adjustments to hours

The Council recognises the need to ensure an adequate work life balance for its staff and empowers its managers and staff to ensure that this happens.

Bromley has a range of flexible working and benefits for working parents including the Childcare deposit loan scheme, parental leave and special leave along with flexible working practices. Bromley's pay arrangement is equality compliant.

- A review of job evaluation outcomes for school staff whose day-to-day work includes working on Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The Council uses the Greater London Provincial Council (GLPC) Job Evaluation Scheme for evaluating all BR roles across the Council. The scheme was jointly agreed by the employers and unions in London local government with all staff who undertake job evaluation at Bromley being trained in the scheme.

- A homeworking allowance for staff for whom it is a requirement to work from home

We do not currently have any staff who are required to work from home as part of their role.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, various support was made available including laptops and IT goody bags to support agile working, desks and chairs made available where required, mental health support and wellbeing initiatives and online training and support.

The Council's commitment to hybrid and agile working is very clear as stated in the Transforming Bromley Workplace Modernisation Programme. Therefore, when we eased back to the workplace following the lifting of the coronavirus restrictions, staff could continue to work smartly in a mixed arrangement including a combination of home and office working or wholly from the office, subject to the desk to staff ratio (approximately 50% desk occupancy).

- Special London Allowance for Residential Staff (should this apply) in accordance with the GLPC agreement (for reference, the agreed rate from 1 April 2023 was £1,321, the 2024 rate is awaited)

Not applicable

- Planned overtime rates in line with the GLPC recommendations for 2023-24 (see paragraph 2.4 of the Gold Book for guidance on the application of these rates)

In light of the proposed pay award, and also the ongoing review of our allowances we will look at uplifting our allowances by 3% to ensure we remain competitive and don't compromise the Council's service delivery interests.

- An agreement with the joint unions on behalf of staff in relation to the management of workloads across the Council

The Council recognises the need to ensure an adequate work life balance for its staff and empowers its managers and staff to ensure that this happens. Monitoring by Senior Management helps to reinforce this best practice. The introduction of a formal workload agreement between the Council and the Trade Unions is not therefore required

- 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 futureproofs 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

Bromley Council previously adopted localised terms and conditions giving democratically elected Members/Councillors the ability to determine staff pay and terms and conditions based on a number of factors including affordability and local benchmarks.

The Recruitment & Retention Board, chaired by the Director of HR, Customer Services & Public Affairs continues to monitor and benchmark a number of hard to fill positions across the Council. This includes undertaking regular benchmarking activities with London Councils and other neighbouring authorities in regard to pay and benefits.