

20 January 2025

Naomi Cooke
Employers' Secretary
Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities
Local Government Association
18 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

Dear Naomi,

JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY CHIEF EXECUTIVES

PAY CLAIM FOR APRIL 2025 ONWARDS

I am pleased to submit the pay claim from the Association of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers in respect of staff covered by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities.

ALACE was pleased to see that in the 2024 the link was made between the Chief Executive pay award and that of the top scale point of NJC. Given this principle has been established ALACE believes there is no reason why this cannot now be continued, and an immutable link put in place in line with the proposals set out in this claim.

Like last year, ALACE seeks a pay increase for all chief executives in April 2025 and subsequent years that is the same percentage increase (or equivalent percentage if expressed in £'s) as those local government colleagues at the top point of the NJC scale.

Context – contribution and reward

The pressures facing Heads of Paid Service (HoPS) continue unabated, indeed, the English Devolution White Paper steps these up considerably for English local authorities.

ALACE is aware of the workloads being carried by Chief Executives and the impact this can have on well-being. The pressures on chief executives are intense and the Devolution and LGR changes envisioned in the White Paper, will increase these further and require English Chief Executives to lead staff and elected members through an extraordinary time of change

It is presumably in the employers' interests to support Chief Executives to lead councils through these huge changes. A pay settlement in 2025 that is consistent with that for staff, is a clear way of recognizing the vital role Chief Executives will play.

We do not expect pay settlements in 2025 and beyond to undo the real terms cut in pay that Chief Executives experienced to 2023. But we expect the Employers to continue the approach agreed last year and award Chief Executives a pay increase that matches that awarded to colleagues on the top of the NJC scale

Recruitment and retention

Last year we provided powerful data that showed the erosion of pay of local government chief executives compared to other senior public servants (Headteachers, senior NHS colleagues, Fire & Rescue etc.).

These discrepancies remain. You will recall that chief executives have seen a very significant real terms reduction in pay over the period since 2008, amounting to well over 40%.

The scale and significance of the changes envisaged in the Devolution Bill will naturally not only increase the pressure on existing Chief Executives but will also mitigate against new talent joining local government, given the significant uncertainties.

Therefore, it is vital those in post continue to be valued by the employers and that there is acknowledgement that the successful achievement of the changes envisaged for our sector by the Government will be carried on the shoulders of Chief Executives. Their experience, judgement and impartiality has arguably, never been more important.

Affordability

The Employers have repeatedly acknowledged that affordability is not a major consideration in deciding what offer to make to chief executives. Therefore, we assume there is no need to explore this matter in detail again, other than to make the point that each 1% increase in pay for chief executives would represent less than 0.003% of the total pay bill.

Therefore, there is no financial reason why the Employers should not continue to treat our members the same as other local government staff.

In our view, the low impact of the increase for chief executives on the total pay bill continues to demonstrate why ALACE's proposal for an immutable link with the NJC would both be affordable and entirely justified.

Pay claim

As you know, ALACE warmly welcomed the approach adopted for pay increases from 2016 onwards, which have applied to all chief executives. We expect the Employers' side to maintain this approach and that an award should apply to all relevant officers covered by the JNC and should not be selective.

ALACE seeks a pay increase for all chief executives in April 2025 and subsequent years that is the same as the percentage increase (or equivalent percentage if the offer is expressed in £s) for the top point on the scale for local government staff covered by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services.

We are proposing again that there should be a direct and immutable link for increases for April 2025 onwards, to ensure that chief executives receive the same percentage increase as the top point on the NJC scale.

Like last year, we remake the point that the approach outlined above would be more efficient for both sides if it is accepted for (say) a 5-year period by the Employer. This would mean during this period, ALACE would not have to submit a claim, and the Employers would not have to respond to it. It would provide certainty for both sides and our members.

Again, we stress that the linkage of pay increases to those of staff, should not be interpreted as meaning there is no longer a need for the JNC for Chief Executives. Pay is only one aspect of the terms and conditions of chief executives. Their unique role as heads of paid service and the statutory provisions that protect them (and are reflected in the special arrangements set out in the handbook) justify the continuing need for a separate negotiating body for local government's most senior officers.

In light of the change made to leave for NJC staff in 2022, and if the unions' claim proposes a further increase in leave allowances, we also flag up the potential need to review the provision that the leave allowance for chief executives is a minimum of 30 days (inclusive of any long service leave, extra statutory and local holidays). If the 2025 pay deal for NJC staff involves any further increase in annual leave, we would expect to see a matching increase in the minimum leave allowance for chief executives.

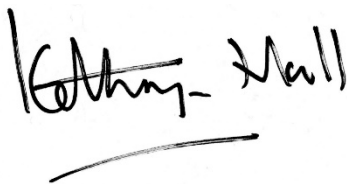
We look forward to receiving the Employers' response but only after we have had the opportunity to discuss our pay claim. If the Employers can accept our proposal of a direct and immutable link with the percentage pay increase received by the top point on the NJC scale, it will not be necessary to convene a meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee.

We again hope that the Employers' response to this claim will not be described as a "final offer". This overused terminology implies that there is to be no negotiation. ALACE respectfully requests that the Employers remain open to negotiation.

Finally, we respectfully emphasise, that our sector remains under significant strain. Our members continue to support councillors in their roles and provide visible, impartial leadership to staff, contractors and local communities. 2025 and the years that follow will be very demanding and as outlined above, chief executives will bear the brunt of this challenge.

Therefore, we submit this claim in expectation that the employers also recognise the unique contribution of our members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Kathryn Hall
Honorary Secretary
ALACE

ALACE
'Stronger Together'