

NORTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL 2020 TO 31 MARCH 2021

Background

In June 2014 the Government published a consultation “The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2014: draft Regulations on scheme governance”. These Regulations were essentially a crystallisation of the governance arrangements framework set out in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.

The Regulations required Administering Authorities to each establish a Local Pension Board by 1 April 2015, being a formal body constituted by North Yorkshire County Council (the Administering Authority for the North Yorkshire Pension Fund (NYPF)), and the Board to be operational by 1 August 2015.

The Terms of Reference for the Pension Board were drafted in February 2015 to comply with the draft Regulations and guidance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Pension Fund Committee and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services). The document was approved by the Council on 18 February 2015.

The Pension Board was established and its membership developed, and it held its first meeting on 30th July 2015.

In April 2016, the LGPS Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) was established as a statutory body encouraging best practice, increasing transparency and co-ordinating technical and statutory issues at a national level. Alongside this the role of the Pensions’ Regulator had been extended to cover public sector schemes, and guidance has been introduced in the form of the Regulator’s Code of Practice 14, which includes the reporting of statutory and regulatory breaches, for example the late payment of contributions and the issue of Annual Benefit Statements after the statutory deadline.

Role

The role of the local Pension Board is defined by sections 5(1) and 5(2) of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 as follows:

1. To assist the Council as Administering Authority in its role as Scheme Manager to:
 - secure compliance with the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) regulations and any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the LGPS;
 - secure compliance with the requirements imposed in relation to the LGPS by the Pensions Regulator;
 - secure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the LGPS for the Pension Fund
 - assist in such other matters as the LGPS regulations may specify
2. To provide the Scheme Manager with such information as it requires to ensure that any member of the Pension Board or person to be appointed to the Pension Board does not have a conflict of interest

It is not the role of the Pension Board to be involved in the day to day running of the NYPF.

The operation of the Pension Board is open and transparent, its meetings are open to the public and all required details relating to the Pension Board, including minutes of meetings, are on the North Yorkshire County Council website, together with recordings of the virtual, formal meetings, as these were broadcast live –

<https://edemocracy.northyorks.gov.uk/>

www.northyorks.gov.uk/livemeetings

Membership of the Board

The Board consists of 9 members, 4 scheme member representatives, 4 employer representatives and an independent chair. The current Membership is as follows:-

PORTLOCK, David	Chairman - Independent Member (Non-voting)
BAKER, Bob (County Councillor)	Employer Representative – North Yorkshire County Council
HOOK, Ann (Councillor)	Employer Representative – City of York Council
BARBERY, Emma	Employer Representative – Askham Bryan College
BRANFORD-WHITE, Louise	Employer Representative – Hambleton District Council
HAWKINS, David	Employer Representative Co-opted Member, non-voting – York College
HOULGATE, David	Scheme Member Representative - UNISON
PURCELL, Simon	Scheme Member Representative - UNISON
VACANCY	Scheme Member Representative
GRESTY, Gordon	Scheme Member Representative – Retired Members

There have been no changes to the Membership of the Board during 2020/21.

Action is currently being taken to fill the vacant Scheme Member representative position indicated.

COVID 19

The restrictions brought about by the COVID 19 pandemic had an effect the work of the Pension Board during the 2020/21 Council year, with an impact on meetings initially, resulting in the April meeting being cancelled and the July meeting being an informal, virtual Meeting. Alterations to the Terms of Reference (detailed below) allowed virtual, formal meetings to take place in October 2020 and April 2021.

Terms of Reference

A copy of the Board's Terms of Reference is attached at **Appendix 1**. The Terms of Reference, agreed by the Administering Authority in February 2015, are reviewed at least annually, and were reviewed at the Meeting of the Board held on 29th October 2020 where it was agreed to include the following items in the Terms of Reference and Remit of the Board:-

- The Pension Board will undertake formal meetings remotely, through an appropriate media platform, and subject to the relevant live broadcast requirements, when circumstances arise that prevent physical meetings from taking place. The Meetings should be wholly remote or physical and should not be undertaken in a hybrid manner.
- Where a matter of serious concern arises regarding compliance or a potential breach of the regulations, the Pension Board must inform the Scheme Manager immediately, and may escalate reporting to the Monitoring Officer, to the National Scheme Advisory Board and the Pensions Regulator if considered necessary and appropriate.

The remainder of the Terms of Reference were unchanged.

Attendance at Meetings

Meetings of the Board would normally take place 4 times a year and are well attended but were affected by the COVID 19 restrictions during 2020/21 (see above).

Attendance at meetings was as follows:-

9th April 2020 – Meeting cancelled due to COVID 19 restrictions

9th July 2020 – Informal, virtual meeting. Louise Branford-White absent. All other Members in attendance.

29th October 2020 – Formal, virtual meeting – Simon Purcell absent. All other Members in attendance.

14th January 2021 – Formal, virtual meeting – County Councillor Bob Baker and Simon Purcell absent. All other Members in attendance.

Attendance at Pension Fund Committee

The Chair of the Board is an ex-officio, non-voting, Member of the Pension Fund Committee. Each ordinary Meeting of the Pension Fund Committee has an agenda item that provides an opportunity for the Chair of the Board to present feedback and the minutes of the previous meeting of the Board are submitted for information. The minutes of the Pension Fund Committee are also submitted to the Pension Board and, again, the Chairman provides feedback.

Members of the Pension Board attend meetings of the Pension Fund Committee to observe proceedings when available.

Issues Considered

The following have been considered by the Pension Board over the year:-

- NYPF Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2020
- External Audit Report on the NYPF for the year ended 31 March 2020
- Risk Register
- Internal Audit reports
- LGPS Pooling arrangements
- Investment Strategy Statement
- Investment Strategy Review
- Publication of Pension Board Annual Report
- Pension Administration – including Breaches Log, Annual Benefit Statements, Data Quality, etc.
- Pensions Regulator developments – including a consultation on Governance and Admin Risks in Public Service Pension Schemes
- Employer and Administering Authority discretions
- Governance Documents Review
- Board Evaluation and Skills Matrix questionnaires
- Feedback from training courses attended
- Management, administration and governance process and procedure
- Review of the Terms of Reference
- Receiving feedback from the Border to Coast Pensions' Partnership (BCPP)
- Meetings between representatives of the Pension Boards with partner Funds in the BCPP
- Budget, accounts and Business Plan – including cash-flow position
- Annual Review of Dispute Cases and Exercise of Discretions

Details in relation to the discussions on these issues can be found in the minutes for the meetings which are available on the North Yorkshire County Council website –

<http://democracy.northyorks.gov.uk/committees.aspx?commid=91>

The formal, virtual meetings were live broadcasted to allow the public to watch and participate. Recordings of the meetings can be found through the link below:-

www.northyorks.gov.uk/livemeetings

The LGPS Pooling arrangements have been a major issue of consideration for the Pension Board. The NYPF has committed to joining the Border to Coast Pensions Pool, along with 11 other LGPS. The pool began operating in July 2018 and the Pension Board has been committed to scrutinising the governance arrangements for the pool. This work is ongoing.

Data Quality

In line with the requirement introduced by the Pensions Regulator, to include each fund's data score in the annual return with effect from 2019, NYPF have submitted the following scores:

Common Data: ???%
Conditional Data: ???%?

Did we agree to put in comparison figures for future Annual Report publications?

Common data is that set of data that is defined as necessary and applicable to all members of all schemes. This data is that required to identify scheme members. For example, surname, date of birth, national insurance number, address, etc. There are 10 data items listed by the Pensions Regulator as being classed as common data.

Conditional data is that set of data that is defined as additional detailed data required for the administration of a pension scheme. This data is dependent on scheme type, structure and system design. For example, employer, salary history, contributions, transfer in details, etc.

A suite of reports have been developed to enable the identification of data errors and calculation of the annual data score. These reports will form the basis of targeted data cleansing work.

A data improvement plan has been created to ensure quality and scores improve from year to year. Part of this plan is the ongoing rolling schedule of data quality checking and cleansing.

Conflicts of Interest

The Board adopted a Conflicts of Interest Policy, attached as **Appendix 2**, at its inaugural meeting on 30th July 2015 and this is reviewed annually. The requirement to declare Conflicts of Interest is an item on every agenda for Board meetings. No conflicts were identified nor disclosed in the period to 31 March 2021.

Skills and Development Activities

Board Members have undertaken a comprehensive range of training and development opportunities, as required by the Pension Regulator's Code of Practice. An evaluation of skills and experience has been undertaken and is being evaluated to identify possible training requirements and areas where skills and knowledge need development.

Discussions have taken place, with the Pension Fund Committee, in relation to the requirement for Pension Fund Committee Members to undertake appropriate training and development in future, with a training policy having now being adopted. Members of the Committee have undertaken an evaluation of their skills, and the publication of the results of that are awaited, to enable a joint training plan to be developed for both the Committee and the Board.

The Board adopted a Training Policy, attached as **Appendix 3**, at its inaugural meeting on 30th July 2015.

Details of the training and development undertaken by Board Members are provided in **Appendix 4**.

Programme of Work

The Board has developed a programme of work which is reviewed and updated at every meeting of the Board. Details of the programme of work are provided in **Appendix 5**.

Pension Board Costs for 2020/21 and Budget for 2021/22

The Board's costs for 2019/20 were as follows:

Chair's Allowance	£????
Travel	£ ??
Skills development	£????
Total	£????

The Board's budget for 2020/21 is as follows:

Chair's Allowance	£????
Travel	£????
Skills development	£????
Total	£????

The above costs are borne by the Pension Fund.

In addition to the expenditure detailed above, the Board receives assistance and support from the Council's Legal & Democratic Services and Pension Fund Officers. An estimate of the cost and value of this assistance and support has not been calculated.

Pension Board self-assessment

The Board's terms of reference and guidance from the Pension Regulator's Code of Practice 14 require that the Board undertakes a review of its effectiveness and the knowledge and skills of Board members.

In relation to this, questionnaires have previously been circulated to Board Members to provide an evaluation of skills and experience. Details have been fed back into the Board accordingly and an appropriate joint training plan with members of the Pension Fund Committee will be developed. Consideration is currently being given to the provision of a dedicated training package to encompass both bodies.

Equality Impact Review

An Equality Impact Review is not required as there are no relevant decisions to be taken.

David Portlock
Independent Chair of the Local Pension Board - October 2021