

RECORD OF THE FORTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE PENSION BOARD (NICSPB)

Date: Thursday 26 March 2026

Time: 10.30AM

Venue: Online via Teams

In attendance:

Chairperson: Bumper Graham (Chairperson)

Employer Representatives: Gary Fair (TEO)
Brian Quinn (DE)

Shadow Employer Representative: Sheila Ward (DOF)

Employee Representatives: Joanne Veighey (NIPSA)
Laurence McCann (FDA)

Shadow Employee Representative: Ryan Wilson (NIPSA)

Non-voting Representatives: Peter Philip (DoF - Policy)
Olivia McMenamy (DE)

Scheme Representatives: Johnny Butler (Scheme Manager, CSP)

Secretariat: Catherine O’Kane (CSP Policy & Legislation Branch)
Kara Saunders (CSP Policy & Legislation Branch)

Apologies: Maria Morgan (NIPSA)
Carolyn McCarthy (DOJ)
Colette Heaney (Director of Pensions Division)

No	Description
1.	Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Board Membership
	Chairperson: Bumper Graham

No	Description
	Apologies: Maria Morgan, Colette Heaney, Carolyn McCarthy The Chairperson welcomed all members to the forty-third Pension Board meeting and noted apologies. He advised that Ryan Wilson would step up as Shadow Employee Representative in the absence of Maria Morgan and that Sheila Ward would step up as Shadow Employer Representative in the absence of Carolyn McCarthy for this meeting only.
2.	Conflicts of Interest
	The Chairperson asked Board Members if they had any conflicts of interest they wished to declare. No conflicts were raised by Board Members. They were advised to contact the Secretariat if any did arise in the future.
3.	Minutes of previous meeting
	Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4 December 2026 were agreed after suggested amendments were incorporated. The Chairperson asked if there were any redactions to the minutes of the forty-second meeting. No suggestions for further amendments were made. The Secretariat are to circulate the minutes by email for final approval ahead of publication on the Civil Service Pensions (Northern Ireland) [CSP(NI)] website. <i>AP 01/43 – Secretariat to re-issue minutes from the forty-second meeting for final review/ redactions prior to arranging publication of the record on the CSP(NI) website.</i>
4.	McCloud Remedy Update
	Board Members received an update paper on the McCloud Remedy in advance of the meeting. Peter Philip confirmed that McCloud Implementation team are currently on track with the issuance of Remedial Service Statements (RSS) for the March 2027 deadline. He reiterated that CSP continue to send the members a reminder before the twelve-month deadline. Peter Philip reminded the Board that Deferred Choice Underpin (DCU) cases have now been embedded into Business as Usual processes. He also highlighted that approximately 80% of members are opting for alternative benefits compared to legacy benefits – this is down to the accrual rate for the alpha scheme which is more beneficial to members. In regards to Contingent

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	Decision cases, he confirmed that there have been no applications to buy back service to date. Peter Philip confirmed that the consultation on Remediable Service Amendment Regulations for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) scheme closed on 30 January 2026. He thanked the Trade Unions for their engagement and co-operation in respect of launching the consultation. He informed the Board that the next step will be to write to the Minister and that new procedures have been introduced in the Assembly for the SL1. This will result in the addition of a four-week period to the legislative timeline. He also advised that SL1s are now required to be published on the Assembly's Citizen Space platform for scrutiny as part of the public-engagement process. The Chairperson highlighted the importance of having this legislation in place before the Assembly break for summer recess. Peter Philip confirmed that CSP anticipate receiving feedback from the Finance Committee by end of May/ early June 2026 and subject to the Committee noting the legislation, it will be brought into effect by summer Recess. Laurence McCann commented on the new legislation procedure being introduced, the Chairperson agreed and highlighted that it could further extend the four-week timeline for Committee scrutiny. He reiterated his previous comments around the delays in processing legislation and stated that anything else that affects this further is of great concern. The Chairperson asked the Board if they had any further questions, but they were none. He raised a concern around the response rate from the Immediate Choice members and that he didn't know of a way to help improve this. He expressed hopes that the members were seeking financial advice before making their decisions as advised. Otherwise, the Board members were content to note the current position with McCloud.
5.	Pensions Division Balanced Scorecard 2025/26
	The Pensions Division Balanced Scorecard 2025/26 was shared in advance with Board members. Peter Philip advised the Board that some of the areas within the Scorecard were amber but that they would be added on to the 2026/2027 version and actioned accordingly. He highlighted the review of the Occupational Health Service (OHS) Medical Guidance Notes as an example, which will be taken forward in due course. The Board were content to note the Scorecard.

No	Description
6.	Pensions Division Risk Register 2025/26
	The Pensions Division Risk Register was shared in advance with Board members. The Chairperson stated that the Risk Register will be kept under review but that the risks will remain the same at this stage. Olivia McMenamy recommended that “reliance on third party provider” is added as a primary cause to Risk PD6. The Chairperson agreed with this proposal and Management agreed to consider it. <i>AP 02/43 – Management to consider adding “reliance on third party provider” as a primary cause to Risk PD6 on the Pensions Division Risk Register .</i> The Board were otherwise content to note without further comment.
7.	NICSPB Risk Register 2025/26
	The NICSPB Risk Register was shared in advance with Board members. The Chairperson indicated that he wanted to pick up Risk R5 (Resourcing) under Agenda Item 9 (Business Continuity). Otherwise, the Board were content to note the NICSPB Risk Register for 2025/26.
8.	Website Analytics 1 July 2025 – 31 December 2025
	A table comparing the current statistics to the previous Website Analytics report was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting. The Chairperson expressed concern around the statistics provided and how the CSP(NI) website is being under-utilised by members. He further raised concerns around the increasing trend of members opting out of the pension scheme, especially new entrants under the age of 35 years old. He explained that this is due to competing financial priorities such as higher mortgage deposits and student loans. For comparison purposes, he requested recent and historical opt out data for the NICS pension scheme with the aim of identifying emerging trends.

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	Peter Philip confirmed that CSP are reliant on employers to provide this type of information and that he will be engaging with employers to request the data. The Chairperson queried if CSP could provide this information, but Johnny Butler confirmed that this was not possible. Gary Fair queried whether employers still make contributions if a member chooses to opt out of the scheme. Peter Philip confirmed that if a member opts out of the scheme, all contributions cease. The Chairperson raised concerns around the impact on employee contribution rates due to the increasing number of opt-outs. Peter Philip explained that the Pension Scheme Valuation process reviews employee/ employer contribution rates with any shortfall covered by Treasury payments. Peter Philip confirmed that opt-out data from 2024 onwards will be requested from employers. Laurence McCann suggested that data from 2023 onwards may be of more benefit as this would identify direct entrants from the SO/ DP competitions. The Chairperson stated that the information would need to be looked at in great detail. He is concerned that if members do then decide to opt back into the scheme, they may never be able to catch up with their pension. Peter Philip advised the Board that members are fully informed of the benefits they will lose if they choose to opt out on the Opt-Out Form. The Chairperson reiterated his concern for the younger members who are choosing to opt out of the scheme, not only might they find it harder to recover their benefits in the future, but some may never choose to join the scheme at all. Peter Philip reminded the Board of the auto-enrolment process and how this may encourage member to remain in the scheme beyond auto re-enrolment. <i>AP 03/43 – Scheme to approach employers requesting opt out data of the NICS pension scheme including their specific reasons and provide update at next meeting.</i> Board members were content to note.
9.	Business Continuity
	A written update on the staffing position was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting for discussion. The Chairperson noted that, in accordance with the information provided in the shared paper, the resourcing issue seemed to be improving over the last 18 months. He cited concerns over the financial position recently highlighted by the Executive and how this could impact resourcing within the NICS.

No	Description
	Johnny Butler confirmed interviews for the internal EO1 competition will take place at the end of April and will fill 3 positions within the Pensions Division. He asked if the Board had any further questions around Staffing. The Chairperson expressed his concern over the high number of Agency Staff currently working within NICS. He asked Johnny Butler if CSP were impacted by this issue. Johnny Butler confirmed that there are 20 Agency Staff currently employed within CSP and that it would be a great loss to the Division if they were to lose them. He also confirmed that a few of these Agency Staff are awaiting appointment of permanent posts due to being successful in the NorthWest AO competition. The Chairperson noted ongoing resourcing challenges across the NICS. Reference was made to the most recent NIAO Audit Review, which highlighted delays in recruitment. It was noted that HR is exploring alternative recruitment approaches, but funding was having an impact. The Chairperson noted that, should staffing pressures arise due to funding constraints, the matter would be raised with the Permanent Secretary to highlight the importance of appropriate resourcing for the Pensions Division. It was also noted that, if required, the matter could be escalated to The Pensions Regulator. The Board was reminded of its responsibility to ensure effective governance. A discussion around the IT System ensued and it was agreed that an update would be provided at each meeting under 'Business Continuity'. <i>AP 04/43 – Secretariat to add 'CSP IT System update' as a sub-item under 'Business Continuity' on the Pension Board Agenda.</i> Board members were content to note.
10.	Training Needs
	The Chairperson suggested to the Board that they have a joint training session with the other NI Public Sector Pension Boards some time at the end of the year. He highlighted that this would help reduce training costs. The Chairperson confirmed that the NICSPB would have a separate training session with the Governments Actuary Department (GAD). He asked the Board if they were content to explore the possibilities with the Secretariat as to what can be arranged and they were content to do so. <i>AP 05/43 – Secretariat to consider training areas to be covered at the joint training session with the other NI Public Sector Pensions Boards and share with Board for consideration/ suggestions.</i>

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	The Chairperson further advised the Board to contact the Secretariat with details of any training needs. The Board were content to do so.
11.	Pensions Dashboards
	A written update on the Pensions Dashboards was provided to the Board in advance of the meeting for discussion. The written update on Pensions Dashboards was noted. Discussion highlighted risks associated with meeting the statutory connection deadline. Concerns were raised regarding third-party dependencies and potential consequences of non-compliance and data cleansing. It was agreed that engagement with relevant stakeholders, including The Pensions Regulator and the Department, would continue. The Chairperson also requested that a letter is drafted on his behalf to be sent to TPR. Board members were content to note the update. <i>AP 06/43 – Secretariat to draft a Letter on behalf of the Chairperson to TPR regarding the delay in connecting to the Pensions Dashboard.</i>
12.	Open Action Points from Previous Meeting
	Members were content to close all currently open Action Points: AP 02/41 - Contact Communications team to ascertain if a table of website analytics can be created which can compare the current statistics to the previous report. AP 01/42 - Secretariat to re-issue minutes from the forty-first meeting for final review/ redactions prior to arranging publication of the record on the CSP(NI) website. AP 02/42 - Secretariat to add the Remedy Regulations Consultation as an agenda item for the next Pensions Forum meeting on 18 December 2025. AP 03/42 - Secretariat to remove CSP Systems Project Update as a standing item on the Pension Board Agenda.

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	AP 04/42 - Management to provide an update to the Board on the Pensions Dashboards if a new connection date has not been set before the next Pension Board meeting in March 2026. AP 05/42 - Secretariat to share the link to the Public Office (Accountability) Bill and issue with the NICSPB Breach Reporting Policy for the Board to assess if will have an impact on the Policy in the future. AP 06/42 - Secretariat to issue invite to the next Pension Board meeting on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 10.30am via Teams.
13.	AOB
	None
14.	Date of time of next meeting
	The date for the next meeting was agreed and set as Thursday 20 August 2026 at 10.30am via Teams. <i>AP 07/43 – Secretariat to issue invite to the next Pension Board meeting on Thursday 20 August 2026 at 10.30am via Teams.</i>
	BELOW THE LINE PAPERS
	The Chairperson asked for further clarity on the update provided for the Civil Service Injury Benefits Scheme (NI) in Paper 17 where it stated that CSP have agreed a joint approach with DOJ moving forward. The Chairperson queried whether it would be appropriate to proceed at this stage or defer to the next mandate. It was noted that there was merit in issuing a response, given the time elapsed. However, there was a concern that if published now it may cause an influx of queries. The Chairperson informed the Board that there have been no changes to the Conflicts of Interest Policy (Paper 13A /2026) and asked if the Board were content to continue you with it as it is. The Board were content to sign off on the Conflicts of Interest Policy. Board members were content to note below the line papers. The meeting concluded at 11.55am.

