

RECORD OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE PENSION BOARD (NICSPB)

Date: Wednesday, 30 June 2021
Time: 11.00am
Venue: Via Webex

In attendance:

Chairperson: Bumper Graham (Chairperson)

Employer Representatives: John Crosby (DoF)
Michael Cowan (DoJ)

Employee Representatives: Dooley Harte (NIPSA)

Non-voting Representatives: Gary Fair (DE- Finance)
Margaret Coyle (DoF - Policy)

Secretariat: Grace Nesbitt (Director of Pensions Division)
Anne Stewart (Scheme Manager, CSP)
Peter Philip (CSP Policy, Legislation & Communications Branch)
Catherine O’Kane (CSP Policy, Legislation & Communications Branch)
Finvola Harkin ((CSP Policy, Legislation & Communications Branch)

Apologies: John McCloskey (NIPSA)
Laurence McCann (FDA)
Jayne Forster

No	Description
1.	Welcome, Apologies and Introductions
	<p>Chairperson: Bumper Graham</p> <p>Apologies: John McCloskey, Laurence McCann and Jayne Forster</p> <p>In accordance with paragraph 5.3 of the NICSPB Terms of Reference, in the absence of a quorum for any items requiring a decision, any items requiring a decision are to be circulated by email as set out below.</p> <p>Introductions: The Chairperson introduced Katie Tate, a postgraduate student currently studying a PhD in History at QUB. Katie was in attendance at the meeting as an observer and initiated a round of introductions.</p>

	<p>Margaret Coyle announced to the Board that Grace Nesbitt will officially retire in September. The Chairperson expressed gratitude and thanked Grace for her input and service to the Board since its inception in 2015 and wished her well on her retirement.</p>
2.	Conflicts of Interest Statement
	<p>None were declared.</p> <p>The Chairperson also reminded Board members to notify the Secretariat of any conflicts of interest.</p>
3.	Minutes of previous meetings
	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2021 were agreed.</p> <p>Request will issue for redactions to the minutes of the twenty-fourth meeting.</p> <p>Redacted version to be circulated by email for final approval ahead of publication on the CSP(NI) website.</p> <p><i>AP 1/25 – Secretariat to re-issue minutes from the twenty-fourth meeting, requesting redactions to be returned by Friday 9 July 2021.</i></p>
4.	Open Action Points from previous meetings
	<p>Members agreed to close the following Action Points: AP 1/24, AP 2/24, AP 3/24, AP 4/24, AP 5/24, AP 6/24, AP 7/24 & AP 13/24.</p> <p><i>The following Actions Points to remain open:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>AP 1/22 – Extension granted on review until Winter meeting;</i> • <i>AP 8/22 – Ongoing;</i> • <i>AP 8/24 – TPR presentation to be arranged for December/January meeting;</i> • <i>AP 9/24 – Close, consultation circulated and covered under Item 12.</i> • <i>AP 10/24 – Close as covered under Item 14.</i> • <i>AP 11/24 – Keep open, paper to be shared when permissible.</i> • <i>AP 12/24 – Close as covered under Item 14.</i> <p><i>AP 2/25 – Secretariat to place Website Analytics as an item on the agenda at the Winter/ December meeting.</i></p> <p><i>AP 3/25 – Policy lead to update Board on progress with amending literature to include details on the Early Resolution Process at the Winter/ December meeting.</i></p>

5.	Balanced Scorecard 2021/22
	<p>Board Members reviewed the Balanced Scorecard and agreed that no other objectives required highlighting for consideration during 2021/22. Secretariat to circulate to ratify decision.</p> <p><i>AP 4/25 – Secretariat to re-issue a copy of the Balance Scorecard to the Board requesting any further areas of interest to be returned by Friday 16 July 2021.</i></p>
6.	Risk Register 2021/22
	<p>Members reviewed the Risk Register and agreed that no other risks required highlighting for consideration during 2021/22. Secretariat to circulate to ratify decision.</p> <p>A discussion ensued regarding IP3 and recharging employers for centralisation services provided by CSP. Grace acknowledged that work pressures and increased resourcing had led to an increase in centralisation costs. The Grade 6 over Public Sector Pensions Policy and Legislation Branch recently delivered a presentation on McCloud to Finance Directors. It is hoped this year's Centralisation letter to Directors will issue in August 2021. All agreed that given existing budgetary pressures, identifying issues beyond a year at a time would help avoid unexpected issues leading to increased centralisation charges.</p> <p>Grace confirmed the staffing structure is reasonably stable moving forward with a staffing plan in place. A discussion ensued and whilst Members welcomed the progress made to date, they retained some reservations, particularly around resourcing pressures within CSP, given Grace's retirement, approach taken to filling the EO/EOII by way of open recruitment competition rather than internal trawl competition and approval of the G6 post on a temporary basis only. The Chairperson proposed writing to Mr Colum Boyle, the Interim DoF Permanent Secretary setting out the resourcing issues and those present agreed. Secretariat to circulate to ratify decision.</p> <p><i>AP 5/25 – Secretariat to re-issue a copy of the Risk Register to the Board requesting any further areas of interest to be returned for highlighting by Friday 16 July 2021.</i></p> <p><i>AP 6/25 – Secretariat to contact absent Board Members to ratify decision for Chairperson to write to the Interim Permanent Secretary in the Department of Finance on resourcing within CSP.</i></p>

	<i>AP7/25 – Chairperson to draft letter to Interim Permanent Secretary to express concern at recent resourcing developments.</i>
7.	NICSPB Risk Register 2021/22
	<p>Members reviewed the NICSPB Risk Register for 2021/22 and agreed that subject to updating R1, the RAG status can be updated to green. However, in the absence of a quorum, it was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate the Risk Register for members to review and notify the Secretariat of any amendments/comments.</p> <p><i>AP 8/25 – Secretariat to re-issue a copy of the NICSPB Risk Register to the Board for sign off by Friday 16 July 2021.</i></p>
8.	NICSPB Annual Workplan 2021/22
	<p>Board members reviewed the NICSPB Annual Workplan and the following updates were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pension Board Annual Report – draft to be prepared over summer months and circulated for review at September meeting of the Pension Board; • Balanced Scorecard 2020/21 – reviewed and closed at Pension Board meeting on 22 April 2021; • ABS preparation remains on track, with printing anticipated to begin week commencing 5 July 2021; and • Review of Chancellor’s Spring Statement - no requirement as statement did not take place. <p><i>AP 9/25 – Secretariat to draft Pension Board Annual Report for 2020/21 and circulate for comment/discussion at September meeting.</i></p>
9.	Pensioner May payments
	<p>Grace updated on the delayed May pensioner payments and again offered a fulsome apology to all concerned. Grace expressed confidence that with the lessons learned and additional controls and measures put in place, there will be no repeat in future. The Chairperson acknowledged that he had been contacted by Grace Nesbitt very quickly, setting out the circumstances and the counter measures put in place to rectify issue. The Chairperson expressed confidence that all measures which could have been taken were put in place. Board Members noted the update, thanking all involved for the speed at which a resolution was put in place both at the time and going forward.</p>
10.	Business Continuity – Covid 19
	<p>Board members were informed that business continuity continues to function well. Normal pension administration targets continue to be met and the Resource Accounts have been finalised. Anne Stewart indicated that with</p>

	<p>the easing of restrictions, attention is turning to seeing a blended approach to working from home and office. The Chairperson again expressed his gratitude to CSP staff for the continued delivery of services, a point endorsed by Board Members.</p>
11.	Update on McCloud
	<p>Grace advised that the primary legislation will be progressing in GB before the summer recess at Westminster. A Legislative Consent Motion to make amendments to the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 has been approved by the Executive, with a debate on the LCM taking place in the Assembly in September. Margaret Coyle acknowledged that the timescale for progressing the secondary legislation will be tight and that CSP continues to liaise with officials in Cabinet Office.</p> <p>Grace advised that Colette Heaney and the Project Team are in regular contact with our IT Providers working on system changes, both retrospective and prospective in order to embed the DCU option for decades ahead. Officials await decisions from HMT on how to deal with issues such as tax. Important a decision is made as soon as possible in order to deal with detriment and pipeline cases.</p>
12.	Injury Benefit Scheme Consultation
	<p>Margaret confirmed that the consultation launched on Monday 7 June 2021, with it closing on Friday 10 September 2021. Officials have received a number of responses, and will brief the Finance Committee in September. The Chairperson stated that whilst the consultation seeks views on a number of proposals, the area of interest to the Board is the removal of the link between the Injury Benefit Scheme and main pension schemes.</p> <p>Margaret provided members with an overview of the purpose of the scheme.</p> <p>The Chairperson asked if Board members had any comments and were content to endorse the proposal to remove the link between the IBS and Pension Schemes. Board members present agreed - Secretariat to circulate to ratify decision.</p> <p><i>AP 10/25 – Secretariat to contact absent Board Members to ratify Board’s decision to endorse the removal of the link between the IBS and pension schemes.</i></p>
13.	Pensions Dashboards Programme
	<p>Members considered this a positive development and the Chairperson was keen to see it progress. Grace concurred emphasising the need also however for accurate information so likely to be in a couple of years. Officials also met The Pensions Regulator on 21 May 2021 to discuss.</p>
14.	Training Needs

	<p>The Chairperson asked Members to consider the requirement of any further future training and forward the details to the Secretariat.</p> <p>The Chairperson was keen that the Board Meeting/Training Event scheduled for 24 September 2021 would permit members to attend in person. Secretariat to book a suitable venue in the Antrim area.</p> <p>The Chairperson suggested the following items for inclusion on the day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPR Single Code of Practice; • Pensions Dashboards; • Legislative issues and McCloud; • Scape Discount Rate Consultation; and • Governance and Accountability on Public Sector Boards. <p>The Chairperson asked Board members to notify the Secretariat by close of play on Friday 23 July 2021 on any additional topics for the day.</p> <p><i>AP 11/25 - Secretariat to follow up on training needs with members and arrange accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>AP 12/25 – Secretariat to book venue in Antrim area for next meeting on September 24th 2021.</i></p> <p><i>AP 13/25 – Board members to provide additional topics for training event on 24 September 2021 to the Secretariat by close of play on Friday 16 July 2021.</i></p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>Board Membership</p>
	<p>The Chairperson addressed the Paper 26/2021. The idea of an apprenticeship scheme is to attract interest particularly amongst younger and female groups. The only stipulation is that they should be members of the pension scheme. Apprentices will be non-voting, however, if necessary to make up a quorum then they may be designated as a voting member once they have completed a 6 month qualifying period.</p> <p>A discussion ensued on use of the term ‘apprentice’, in particular the requirement for apprentice at employee representative level to be a member of the pension scheme. The Chairperson stated that the intended aim is to encourage individuals to become actively involved at Board level and ensure continuity of membership and ensure the correct mix of skills and expertise. On the stipulation of scheme membership, the Chairperson suggested that a resolution be sought collectively at Trade Union level through the Civil Service Pensions Forum. The Chairperson asked the Secretariat to take forward and raise at the next meeting of the Pensions Forum.</p> <p>The Chairperson asked if Board Members were content to note Dooley’s reservation regarding scheme membership and to amend ‘apprentice’ to ‘shadow member’ but to note the paper. All Board members present agreed. Secretariat to circulate to ratify decision.</p>

The Chairperson informed Board Members that draft letters have been prepared for his signature to John Crosby and Michael Cowan to extend their terms of office for a further 5 years, with retrospective effect from April 2020. Grace Nesbitt indicated that this is pertinent given that in order to maintain continuity at employer level, Jayne Forster has agreed not to renew her tenure for a further full 5 year term. This provides scope to have rolling terms at employer representative level. Board members were reminded that where possible they are required to provide a minimum of six months' notice in writing to the Chairperson in order that a suitably nominated successor can be in place and shadow the out-going member before stepping up to Board level.

Gary Fair to continue as departmental finance director at Board level but also succeed Jayne Forster as Employer Representative. The Secretariat is to confirm succession timetable and prepare letters to Jayne Forster and Gary Fair for the Chairperson's signature.

The Chairperson advised that a letter for his signature to Finance Directors is being finalised to seek expressions of interest to join the Board as a Non-Executive Member. The Secretariat is to finalise the letter and forward to the Chairperson by close of play on 6 July 2021. Closing dates for Expressions of Interest to be confirmed.

AP 14/25 – The Secretariat to contact absent Board Members to ratify the decision to amend the term 'apprentice' to 'shadow member' as used in Paper 26/21.

AP 15/25 – Secretariat to raise the issue of scheme membership for employee shadow members through the Pensions Forum and ask TUS to consider collectively on way forward.

AP 16/25 – Secretariat to finalise letters for the Chairperson's signature to Employer Representatives extending the Board membership for second term with retrospective effective from April 2020.

AP 17/25 – Secretariat to confirm succession timetable and finalise letters for Chairperson's signature to appoint Gary Fair as Employer Representative and acknowledge Jayne Forster's resignation from the Board.

AP 18/25 - Secretariat to finalise Finance Director Letter and accompanying Annexes and forward to the Chairperson for signature by close of play on 6 July 2021.

AP 19/25 - Secretariat to issue letter to Finance Directors by close of play on Friday 9 July 2021.

16.	AOB
	Michael Cowan enquired when the next meeting of the SAB is scheduled,

	<p>mindful of the HMT consultations on the SCAPE Discount Rate and Cost Cap Control Mechanism. Margaret Coyle confirmed a meeting is scheduled for Friday 2 July 2021 and papers would issue in advance of the meeting. The Chairperson requested that an update on the HMT consultation on the cost cap mechanism be added to the next agenda. Margaret Coyle asked if Board Members would welcome a presentation from GAD, all Board Members present agreed.</p> <p>AP 20/25 – GAD presentation on HMT review of cost cap mechanism to be added to agenda for next meeting.</p> <p><u>Board Papers for Noting:</u></p> <p>The Chairperson confirmed that all Board Members had sight of the “below the line” papers. On Paper 29 - Agenda Item 20 – Legislative Update and Future Amendments, the Chairperson asked if the application process for bodies seeking to join the NICS pension schemes can be expedited. The Board were informed that due process must be followed but once the application to become a Schedule 1 Body has been received and clears legal scrutiny, Pensions Division seek to complete the legislative process as quickly as possible. The Secretariat agreed to review the process and provide an update at the next meeting.</p> <p>AP 21/25 - Secretariat to review application process to join the NICS pension schemes and provide an update at the next meeting.</p>
17	<p>Date and venue of next meeting</p>
	<p>The Chairperson confirmed that the next meeting of the Pension Board would coincide with the training event on Friday 24 September 2021.</p> <p>AP 22/25 – Calendar Invite: Secretariat to issue Calendar invite for next meeting/training event on Friday 24 September 2021</p> <p>The meeting concluded at 13:02hrs.</p>