

# Minutes of National Pension Officer Group (NPOG) meeting

## 6 December 2024, LGA Offices, London

### Attendees - Standing Members

NPOG Member	POG
Phil Drury	East Midlands Pension Officer Group
Vinny Kinder	East Midlands Pension Officer Group
Martin Doyle (Chair)	London Pension Officer Group
Richard Smyth	London Pension Officer Group
Heather Chambers	Northeast Pension Officer Forum
Zena Kee	Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee
Erin Savage (Secretariat)	Scottish Pensions Liaison Group
Joel Ellner	Southeast Counties Superannuation Officer Group
Dave Kellond	Southern Area Pension Officer Group
Sandy Armstrong	Southern Area Pension Officer Group
Emma Sanders	Southwest Area Pension Officer Group
Nicky Russell	Southwest Area Pension Officer Group
Joanne Griffiths	Welsh Pension Officer Group
Kevin Gerard	Welsh Pension Officer Group

### Attendees - Others

Name	Organisation
Rachel Abbey	LGA

### Apologies

NPOG member	Organisation
Matt Mott (Vice Chair)	Southeast Counties Superannuation Officer Group
Vicky Jenks	Shrewsbury Pension Officer Group
Helen Tomkins	Shrewsbury Pension Officer Group

MD opened the meeting by welcoming all to the first meeting of the National Pension Officer Group.

MD explained that the aim of today's meeting was to discuss and agree the Terms of Reference, using the previously circulated draft as a guide. He reiterated the reason for the change from Technical Group to National POG: the desire for a change of focus to administration matters and the need to challenge on behalf of LGPS administrators.

## **Voting rights**

Voting rights were discussed to progress the meeting. Each POG has two attendees, apart from SPLG who has one attendee, with the other attendee coming from NILGOSC who attend SPLG meetings. As such, should there be 9 votes (1 per POG) or 10 (1 per POG plus 1 for NILGOSC)?

All agreed that given NILGOSC has separate regulations, 10 votes would be fairer.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Purpose**

Following discussions at Technical Group, the following was proposed:

The purpose of the National Pension Officer Group is to:

- provide advice and guidance to LGPS regional pension officer groups (POGs), administering authorities, local pension boards and pension committees, especially with regard to legislation that is open to different interpretations.
- consider the general direction and content of the statutory framework of the LGPS in England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- liaise, as and when required, with Scheme Advisory Boards by way of the Local Government Pensions Committee (LGPC).
- liaise, as and when required, with the responsible authority: LGPS England & Wales - Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government on behalf of Secretary of State, LGPS Scotland - Scottish Public Pensions Agency on behalf of Scottish Ministers, LGPS Northern Ireland - Department for Communities
- liaise, as and when required, with other government departments (e.g. HMRC, DWP etc) in matters pertaining to the LGPS.
- assist with the development of consistent standards and improve the quality of information available to LGPS scheme managers.

- voice the views of LGPS scheme managers in consultation with stakeholders or when a change to the LGPS is being considered.
- appoint representatives to serve on other bodies.

The National Pension Officer Group will not:

- provide legal advice
- undertake risk management

All agreed with the draft terms of reference.

## **Membership Principles**

### **Standing members**

HC suggested that Regional POGs have one standing member and one floating member to allow technical/subject matter experts to attend. The group acknowledged that it can be difficult to find volunteers, but the terms of reference do allow members to nominate a substitute.

### **Representative members**

Proposed representative members are as follows:

- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
- Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA)
- Department for Communities (Northern Ireland)

The group discussed this list. It was suggested that the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) could be included but it was felt it would be more appropriate to include GAD as an ad hoc member.

All agreed with the above list.

In terms of a representative from LGA, RA suggested that it may be helpful to rotate LGA attendees, with the appropriate subject matter expert attending meetings reflecting the agenda at each meeting.

The group discussed SAB and decided it would be more appropriate for SAB to attend as an ad hoc member.

### **Ad hoc members**

Proposed ad hoc members are as follows:

Ad hoc members are persons who are invited to attend by the National POG and may include such organisations, bodies or individuals as the group deems to be appropriate for the efficient functioning of the group or to assist LGPS colleagues in the devolved administrations. Examples include but are not limited to actuaries and software providers.

Further to previous discussion, the group agreed to add SAB and GAD to this list as examples of ad hoc members.

### **Voting rights**

As discussed, there will be a maximum of 10 votes across the group.

### **Officers**

The proposed TOR suggests that National POG will have three officers:

- Chair
- Deputy Chair
- Secretariat

The group discussed tenure and titles and agreed that the Deputy Chair should be referred to as 'Vice Chair' and that the Chair and Vice Chair will be elected for a maximum of three years.

Final wording will read as follows:

The group will have three officers:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretariat

Each post-holder will be appointed by election, and each regional pension officer group will have a single vote. Voting shall take place either at the relevant National Pension Officer Group meeting or by email or other method. In the event of a tie, the outgoing Chair will have the casting vote.

The post-holders, Chair and Vice Chair, are elected for the duration of their membership of their regional pensions officers group with their tenures limited to a duration of three years from their first meeting as Chair and Vice Chair. Neither postholder may serve two consecutive terms in the same post.

## **Subgroups**

The group discussed subgroups. RS asked if we should consider nominating individuals from the regional POGs to join subgroups rather than the National POG representatives – potentially someone with more experience in the area being considered. The group agreed that this could be considered at the time the subgroup was set up when specific terms of reference were agreed.

RA said that LGA would be happy to join subgroups if this would be helpful.

KG suggested adding text to the proposed TOR to confirm that National POG may invite any standing representative that is considered appropriate to join subgroups.

The group agreed final wording as follows:

Standing members of the National Pension Officer Group may, from time to time, decide to form a subgroup or subgroups of the National Pension Officer Group.

Generally, any subgroup will be formed for the purpose of examining in more detail any subject that the National Pension Officer Group wishes to be considered.

The terms of reference for any subgroup will be decided by the standing members of the National Pension Officer Group at the meeting in which the subgroup is proposed.

Membership of the subgroup will also be determined by the standing members of the National Pension Officer Group at the meeting in which the subgroup is proposed. Members of the National Pension Officer Group may invite any standing representative who is considered appropriate to join a subgroup.

Any subgroup can be dissolved at any time by the standing members of the National Pension Officer Group at any meeting of the National Pension Officer Group by a simple majority of the standing members.

## **Meetings**

### **Meeting minutes and agenda**

MD and RA confirmed that the intention would be for minutes to be passed to the LGA for publication on the 'Bulletins, Circulars, Minutes' section of [www.lgpsregs.org](http://www.lgpsregs.org) and [www.scotlgpsregs.org](http://www.scotlgpsregs.org) sites.

The group agreed that draft minutes will be circulated to the group and that a minute of any closed/private agenda items would not be published more widely.

HC asked about the timing for agenda items. It was agreed that where possible items should be submitted in advance to give group members time to review. Aligning meeting dates more closely with those of regional POG meetings should help.

### **Absences and substitutions**

Proposed processes:

**Procedure for issuing apologies for absence:** If a member of the group is unable to attend a National POG meeting, they should provide apologies of absence prior to the meeting to the Chair and Secretariat.

**Procedure for nominating a temporary substitute member:** If a member of the group wishes to nominate a substitute in their place, they should provide the name and email address of the substituted member prior to the meeting to the Chair and Secretariat.

**Procedure for permanently replacing a member:** If a member of the group is to be permanently replaced by another individual, they should provide the name and email address of the new member to the Chair and Secretariat.

The group agreed with the proposed process.

RA asked if representative members should attend in person or online. The group agreed that this will depend on the individuals and the topics for discussion.

### **Meeting frequency**

The group agreed that meetings would be held quarterly, in person and that meetings would continue to be held on Fridays.

Meetings will be held March, June, September and December, with the potential for an online ad hoc meeting in January or February 2025 to discuss any urgent issues.

To aid discussion, it was agreed that regional POG meetings should align with National POG meetings and that National POG meeting dates would be set in advance, with regional POGs held around two weeks in advance.

**ACTION:** MD/ES to circulate potential meeting dates next week.

The meeting format was discussed: it was suggested that ad hoc members join virtually for their section only and that we would invite ad hoc members to attend meetings as and when we need them, for instance inviting an actuary to attend as valuations progress.

It was agreed that we would provide ad hoc members with a broad idea of what is to be discussed in advance of the meeting. To ensure that matters are progressed, the group agreed that if any questions can't be answered then we would set a short deadline for a follow-up response.

PD asked if it would be helpful to add payroll providers to the group of ad hoc members? Due to funds being one step removed from the payroll providers, it was agreed not to add for now, but to consider any feedback from regional POGs and if helpful we can consider at a later date. RA advised that she sits on payroll provider working group and she is happy to take forward any issues to that group.

The group agreed that any closed/private items would be taken at the start or end of the meeting and acknowledged the previous suggestion to extend the meeting duration if necessary.

### **Meeting agenda**

The following standing agenda items were proposed:

- apologies for absence and circulation of attendee list
- minutes of the last meeting
- feedback from regional POGs
- Local Government Association (LGA) update
- MHCLG update
- SPPA update
- LGPS England & Wales SAB update
- software provider update

All agreed with the draft.

The group discussed feedback from regional POGs: what information should be fed back, and in what format, for instance do we continue with the template style used by Technical Group?

All agreed that the National POG should now be a formal agenda item for all regional POG meetings to enable discussion and two-way feedback.

It was suggested that to encourage feedback in the first instance, we should provide a topic or examples that should be discussed at regional POGs and then fed back to National POG.

As an initial topic, we should ask the regional POGs to consider the current regulation query list and choose one or two that they would like to be taken forward for amendment. LGA has this list and will circulate to regional POGs in advance of meetings.

**ACTION:** RA to arrange for regulation list to be circulated.

**ACTION:** All to arrange for standing item to be added to regional POG agendas.

### **Input from representative and ad hoc members**

The group discussed the contributions from representative members.

**LGA:** As regional POGs will be held close to the date of the National POG, updates will be shorter and will focus on more recent updates. The LGA input will develop as the group develops and will depend on the agenda items.

**MHCLG:** MHCLG are happy to attend future meetings and contribute. All agreed that it would be helpful for MHCLG to attend the full meeting to understand current issues.

**SPPA:** ESavage said it would be helpful if SPPA could attend every meeting - also helpful for understanding current issues and developments in England and Wales which generally mirror those in Scotland.

**Department for Communities:** ZK noted that the Department had previously been invited to attend Technical Group but did not always do so. It was suggested that they be invited to join online and to provide a written update.

### **Technical Group Subgroups – update**

JG advised that the Scottish Widows AVC subgroup is ongoing. JG now has a contact at Scottish Widows, and they have advised that they believe most of the issues are resolved. Updates have been fed back to funds who previously raised issues. JG noted that issues seem to be dealt with in silo, and therefore although there is some improvement now, there is concern that any future issues will also be dealt with piecemeal.

The dashboard subgroup was focussed on AVC issues and working with Prudential, however the last meeting was cancelled. HC confirmed she was happy to take a lead



on this and will discuss a handover with Jayne Wiberg. All agreed that this was an important piece with a lot still to be done.

MD asked if anything was needed regarding McCloud. There had been discussions relating to teachers' excess service which may have warranted further work.

The group were asked to feedback to their groups to find out if anything further was needed which would warrant the creation of a subgroup. One example may be software issues. JG confirmed she is on the Class Management group and asked the group to pass on any relevant Aha ideas that can be taken forward.

### **Update from LGA – Rachel Abbey**

- LGA have successfully completed a recruitment exercise to expand the team.
- A calculator will be produced to deal with Club transfers out for McCloud. East Sussex will be assisting with this. It is intended that two versions of this (England & Wales and Scotland) will be in place before Christmas.
- LGA will be responding to the HMRC consultation on inheritance tax on pensions, however administering authorities know more of the day-to-day process. RA advised that the consultation is on process, rather than the actual policy. SPLG are collaborating on a response.

**ACTION:** All to share any responses to the inheritance tax consultation with MD before the consultation closes on 22 January 2025.

### **AOB**

- 1) PD: Currently dealing with a transfer in from the Teachers' Pension Scheme. They have given a very short timescale for a response, saying that if this is not met, then they will charge for another transfer value. Has anyone experienced this issue? RA suggested sending details to LGA to see if they can resolve.
- 2) VK: Is it possible for guidance to be issued earlier when scheme changes are made – with McCloud, guidance was issued a year after the effective date. RA noted that there were several issues with McCloud such as all public sector schemes requiring GAD guidance. However, she noted that amendment regulations are planned for Summer 2025 with a consultation exercise in February. LGA will see these early in the new year and this early sight and an expanded team will help, however until regulations come into effect, software suppliers are unlikely to make changes.

- 3) SA: can a member of one POG join another and remain a member of the first POG? Would it impact on voting rights for instance? There have been precedents for logistical reasons, with some funds attending two POGs. The group suggested that the POG should discuss – perhaps they could join but without voting rights.
- 4) ESanders: currently dealing with a transfer in where the member is threatening to take the case to the ombudsman due to delays, however until previous transfers are reviewed, the current transfer cannot progress. RA advised that there is no way round this: the previous transfers have to be reviewed first, however it may be helpful to advise the member that if the transfers are part of the transfer Club, then any delay won't make any difference – the transfer should still be treated as a Club transfer. If the ceding schemes refuse to treat the transfer as a Club, then refer to LGA who can follow up with the other schemes.
- 5) DK: Has received a query about implications of a backdated pay award for members currently receiving APP: does this mean that APP must be recalculated? RA confirmed that APP is backward looking figure and therefore nothing will change.
- 6) ZK: currently experiencing issues with the other public sector schemes in Northern Ireland. They are exerting pressure to review transfers, so that they can issue remediable service statements to members. All agreed that this is difficult, but prioritisation has been agreed.