Paper A: Minutes of meeting held on 20 July 2026 - Hybrid

PRESENT

Cllr John Fuller	LGA
Cllr James Gamble	LGA
Cllr Keith House	LGA
Cllr Mark Jeffery	LGA
Cllr Jordan Meade	LGA
Cllr Jim Robbins	LGA
Cllr Amanda Sergeant	LGA
Cllr Georgia Taylor	LGA
David Murphy	NILGOSC
Will King	MHCLG
Ben Lavelle	MHCLG
Neil Mason	SAB representative
Martin Doyle	National POG representative

Secretariat

Clair Alcock	SAB
Lisa Clarkson	LGPC
Lorraine Bennett	LGPC
Rachel Abbey	LGPC

1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

Cllr John Fuller [JF] welcomed everybody to the meeting. JF explained that, following the recent change in leadership of the Labour Party, the Chair, Cllr Yeowell had been called to another meeting and was not able to attend. In the Chair's absence, JF chaired the meeting and noted that this would be his final meeting after 15 years as a member and former Chair.

For the benefit of those attending their first LGPC meeting, JF gave an introduction to the LGPS and the purpose of the LGPC. There are 6.9 million members of the LGPS in England and Wales, whose benefits are backed by £400 billion of assets.

The Committee is an important part of the structure of LGPS, supporting the administration and development of the Scheme.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Nathan Yeowell, Linda Welsh and Annette Greenslade.

Cllr Keith House [KH] and Cllr Mark Jeffery [MJ] declared an interest as members of the LGA Board and Resources Committee respectively.

3. MINUTES

Cllr Jordan Meade [JM] pointed out that he was listed as both present and absent from the previous meeting. Other than that correction, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2026 were agreed as a true and correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

JF noted that the breadth of topics covered in the comprehensive minutes indicate the importance of the work done by the LGA pensions team supported by the Committee. JF asked for an update on the LGA reorganisation and how it might affect the team.

Lorraine Bennett [LB] confirmed that the Chairs of the LGPC and the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) had contacted the LGA Chair to express their concerns about the reorganisation and its impact on service delivery. The LGA Chair acknowledged the independent funding of the team, but was not able to provide any updates on how the team might be affected and when. The inability to recruit, particularly to administrative support roles, remains a significant risk. It has been necessary to cancel some training courses.

JF expressed concern about the current position and suggested exploring other structures if the LGA is not able to support the essential work of the pensions team.

5. REGULATIONS UPDATE ENGLAND AND WALES

LB presented the key points from Paper B:

- the impact of recent regulation changes on administering authorities and the resources produced by the LGPC Secretariat to support them
- the implementation of new factors following the SCAPE rate change

- commissioning legal advice covering what process to follow to pay outstanding pension or lump sum payments to a member, their dependants or estate
- commissioning legal advice on cohabiting partner eligibility where one partner is in residential or hospital care
- employer resources produced to promote the benefits of LGPS membership to new, prospective and existing members
- Dashboard guides updated to reflect the latest position
- updates for employers and administering authorities on HMRC low earners top-up payments
- procuring a new provider to host the National Insurance database
- developing a new website for LGPS employers and administrators.

JF asked whether the promotional materials would promote the 50/50 section of the Scheme. This option allows members to pay reduced contributions and build up half the pension they would build up in the ‘main’ section of the LGPS, but take-up is very low at less than 1 per cent of members. LB confirmed that the resources cover the 50/50 option.

David Murphy [DM] welcomed HMRC’s progress on making top-up payments to low earning pension scheme members. He anticipates that queries to pension funds will increase when HMRC starts to contact members in scope.

Cllr Jordan Meade [JM] raised the backdated calculations required following the recent rules changes and asked whether there will be a standard approach across all administering authorities to revisiting and prioritising past cases. LB referenced MHCLG guidance that sets out a timetable for rectifying past calculations, but does not prioritise particular cases. She pointed out that administering authorities’ progress has been affected by software development and that this may influence prioritisation. Neil Mason [NM] noted the significant resources that will be needed to process the retrospective cases.

Cllr Georgia Taylor [GT] asked about the definition of cohabiting partners in the LGPS regulations. LB confirmed that the definition covers couples ‘living together as if they were married or as if they were civil partners’. It therefore covers all couples in the same way, irrespective of their genders.

6. SAB UPDATE [E&W]

Clair Alcock [CA] introduced herself and summarised the role of the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) and its three committees. The SAB is a statutory body which has responsibility for:

- advising the Secretary of State on desirability of changes to the LGPS rules
- providing advice to Scheme managers and local pension boards on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Scheme.

CA presented the key points from Paper C which covers the current SAB workstreams:

- supporting the implementation of the 'Fit for the Future' changes, focusing on local investment and the requirement to work with strategic authorities to identify investment opportunities
- fiduciary duty of LGPS funds, particularly related to responsible investment
- reviewing governance arrangements of the Board following the introduction of the LGPS Senior Officer and Independent person, and the change in pool responsibilities
- plans for further peer review pilots in 2027 in preparation for compulsory independent governance reviews
- valuations and cost control process
- gender pensions gap and pensions gap for other groups
- pensions administration and governance strategies
- annual report and reporting breaches guidance
- working groups covering oversight of pools, investment strategy and reporting.

JF raised a concern about the definition of 'local' investment if a project crosses fund or regional boundaries. CA agreed that certain investments would not be considered local based on the definition in the regulations.

Cllr Jim Robbins [JR] welcomed the working group set up by the Investment Committee to develop local investment guidance. He asked when the guidance was likely to be published. CA confirmed the working group will first meet in autumn and will work swiftly to produce a timeline.

GT noted that pension funds no longer make investment decisions, this is done by pools. She recognised further work to be done on investment strategies and how they are interpreted by pools.

GT asked about timelines for SAB responsible investment (RI) guidance and a report on the review of funding strategy statements. CA confirmed that the Responsible Investment Advisory Group (RIAG) will progress the RI guidance over the summer, aiming for publication in autumn. SAB has produced a report on the funding strategy statement which she expects will be published after the afternoon SAB meeting.

JM asked about whether central government were consistently feeding into the RIAG project looking at investment in conflict zones. CA confirmed that the project covers how funds should develop a policy and how to take member views into account. It will not look at international law. The SAB has written to Ministers to ask for support and advice for funds on the international legal position.

JF pointed out the increase in the average funding level and the corresponding reduction in employer contribution rates in the LGPS following the 2025 valuation. The average funding level increased from 107 per cent in 2022 to 122 per cent. From April 2026, the average employer contribution rate dropped to 16.5 per cent of payroll from 21 per cent. JF welcomed the reduced costs for employers, which will mean councils have more money to spend on central services.

GT expressed concern that the discount rate used in valuations does not fully take into account the impact of climate change on future returns.

7. REGULATION UPDATE SCOTLAND

The Committee noted the key points from Paper D, which was provided in writing before the meeting by Annette Greenslade and Iain Coltman. The paper covered many of the same issues that affect the LGPS in England and Wales.

8. REGULATIONS UPDATE NORTHERN IRELAND

The Committee noted the key points from Paper E, which was presented by DM:

- the Department for Communities is introducing an exemption that means they do not have to include McCloud information in 2027 annual benefit statements for certain members. These are members for whom an accurate calculation cannot be performed because of missing actuarial guidance
- the Department is considering a Bill to deliver regulations on local investment, mirroring those that apply in England and Wales. This would have to be done quickly if it is to be in force before the Assembly dissolves in advance of elections in May 2027
- the Department has received a pre-action protocol letter for a judicial review. The challenge concerns investment in arms companies and the situation in

Gaza. DM will keep the Committee updated as the decision could have implications for the other LGPS schemes.

9. NATIONAL PENSION OFFICER GROUP UPDATE

Martin Doyle [MD] presented the key points from Paper F.

MD highlighted the challenge administrators face in retrospectively amending benefits following recent regulation changes. Surveys suggest that most administering authorities do not expect to meet the timeline for completing retrospective changes set out in MHCLG guidance. Limited resources and delays in software development is affecting funds' progress.

MD was more positive about the progress that has been made in communicating with councillors in England about their new right to join the LGPS.

JF thanked MD for all the hard work done by administration teams to implement the recent complicated changes to the LGPS rules.

10. TRAINING AND CONFERENCE UPDATE

Lisa Clarkson [LC] presented the key points from Paper G:

- demand for online training remains high, with lower demand for in-person sessions
- all courses have been updated to reflect the recent regulation changes
- two new courses introduced – pension tax and buying extra pension
- resignation of a team member meant some courses had to be postponed
- prize draw scheme to encourage those attending courses to provide feedback
- the LGPC team and a team member have been nominated for PMI Pinnacle awards
- LGPS qualification is proving popular – there will be 180 students enrolled at once before the first cohort completes the course at the end of September
- administrative support may limit the amount of training that the team can deliver. Recruitment restrictions are in place and a current postholder is about to start maternity leave
- LGPC members were invited to attend Fundamentals training in London or online free of charge.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Committee recorded its thanks to JF for his longstanding contribution and for being such a passionate advocate for the Scheme. Members wished him well for the future.

12. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting will be held on 23 November 2026.