



## **Special Pension Fund Committee**

**Date** Tuesday 28 January 2025  
**Time** 1.00 pm  
**Venue** Committee Room 1A/1B , County Hall, Durham

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

##### **Items which are open to the Public and Press**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest (if any)
3. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the Meeting is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration
4. Any resolution relating to the exclusion of the public during the discussion of items containing exempt information

#### **Part B**

##### **Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)**

5. Global Equity Review (Pages 21 - 92)
6. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

**Helen Bradley**

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
20 January 2025

To: The Members of the Pension Fund Committee

**County Council Members**

Councillors D Sutton-Lloyd (Chair), M Stead (Vice-Chair), J Atkinson, K Earley, C Fletcher, D Freeman, B Kellett, J Quinn, J Shuttleworth, W Stelling and C Varty

**Darlington Borough Council Members**

Councillors R Baker and M Porter

**Scheme Member Representatives**

A Delandre and J Taylor

**Further Education Colleges Representative**

A Broadbent

**Scheduled Bodies Representative**

(vacant)

**Admitted Bodies Representative**

(vacant)

**Advisers**

**County Council Officers**

J Hewitt – Chief Executive

P Darby – Corporate Director of Resources

H Bradley – Director of Legal and Democratic Services

P Cooper – Head of Pensions (LGPS)

J McMahon – Finance Manager

**Independent Advisers**

S Dickson – Mercer

A Fletcher – MJ Hudson Allenbridge

**Investment Managers**

Alliance Bernstein

CBRE

Foresight

BCPP

**Observers**

L Timbey – GMB

Councillor A Hopgood – Local Pension Board

L Oliver – Local Pension Board

W Pattison – Local Pension Board

I Pritchard – Local Pension Board

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**Contact: Martin Tindle**

**Tel: 03000 269 713**

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Pension Fund Committee



Abbreviations

List of commonly used abbreviations

<b>AB</b>	Alliance Bernstein, the Fund's Bonds manager
<b>ACS</b>	Authorised Contractual Scheme, the collective investment scheme used by BCPP for asset pooling
<b>AUM</b>	Assets Under Management
<b>BCPP</b>	Border to Coast Pensions Partnership, the Fund's asset pool
<b>CBRE</b>	Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis, the Fund's Real Estate manager
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CIO</b>	Chief Investment Officer
<b>CIPFA</b>	The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
<b>CLG</b>	Communities and Local Government (former name of MHCLG)
<b>COO</b>	Chief Operating Officer
<b>COP</b>	Conference of Parties, a UN conference on climate change
<b>CPI</b>	Consumer Price Index
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility, a term under which companies report their social, environmental and ethical performance
<b>DAA</b>	Dynamic Asset Allocation
<b>DGF</b>	Diversified Growth Fund

<b>EM</b>	Emerging Markets
<b>EMEA</b>	Europe, Middle East & Africa
<b>ESG</b>	Environmental, Social, and Governance – factors in assessing an investment’s sustainability
<b>FCA</b>	Financial Conduct Authority
<b>FRC</b>	Financial Reporting Council
<b>FSS</b>	Funding Strategy Statement
<b>FTA</b>	FTSE Actuaries UK Gilts Index Series
<b>FTSE</b>	Financial Times Stock Exchange
<b>GEM</b>	Global Emerging Markets
<b>GRESB</b>	Global ESG Benchmark for Real Assets
<b>HMT</b>	Her Majesty’s Treasury
<b>Infra</b>	Infrastructure
<b>IRR</b>	Internal Rate of Return
<b>ISS</b>	Investment Strategy Statement
<b>JC</b>	Joint Committee
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Association
<b>LGPS</b>	Local Government Pension Scheme
<b>LAPFF</b>	Local Authority Pension Fund Forum
<b>LIBOR</b>	London Inter Bank Offered Rate, a benchmark interest rate at which global banks lend to one another
<b>LPB</b>	Local Pension Board
<b>MAC</b>	Multi Asset Credit
<b>MHCLG</b>	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
<b>MSCI</b>	formerly Morgan Stanley Capital International, publisher of global indexes

<b>NED</b>	Non-Executive Director
<b>NT</b>	Northern Trust, the Fund's Custodian
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PF</b>	Pension Fund
<b>PFC</b>	Pension Fund Committee
<b>PLSA</b>	Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association
<b>PRI</b>	The UN-supported Principles for RI
<b>RI</b>	Responsible Investment
<b>RPI</b>	Retail Price Index
<b>S&amp;P</b>	Standard & Poor's, ratings agency and provider of equity indices
<b>S151</b>	An officer with responsibilities under s151 of the Local Government Act 1972
<b>SAB</b>	Scheme Advisory Board
<b>SDG</b>	the UN's Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SILB</b>	Sterling Index Linked Bonds
<b>SONIA</b>	Sterling Over Night Index Average, the overnight interest rate paid by banks
<b>TCFD</b>	Taskforce on Climate Related Financial Disclosures
<b>TER</b>	Total Expense Ratio
<b>TPR</b>	The Pensions Regulator

**Author(s)**

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## Glossary of commonly used terms

### A

#### **Active Management**

Appointing investment professionals to track the performance of the Fund's mandates, making buy, hold and sell decisions about the assets with a view to outperforming the market.

#### **Active Member**

A current employee who is contributing to the pension scheme.

#### **Actuary**

An independent professional who advises the Council in its capacity as Administering Authority on the financial position of the Fund.

#### **Actuarial Valuation**

The Fund's actuary carries out a valuation every three years and recommends an appropriate rate of contributions for each of the Fund's participating employers for the following three years. The valuation measures the Fund's assets and liabilities, with contribution rates set according to the Fund's deficit or surplus.

## **Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs)**

An option available to active members to build up a pot of money which is then used to provide additional pension benefits. The money is invested separately with one of the Fund's external AVC providers.

## **Administering Authority**

The LGPS is run by local Administering Authorities. An Administering Authority is responsible for maintaining and investing its own Fund for the LGPS.

## **Admission/Admitted Body**

An organisation whose employees can become members of the Fund by virtue of an admission agreement made between the council in its capacity as Administering Authority and the organisation. It enables contractors who take on council services to offer staff transferred to the organisation continued membership of the LGPS.

## **Asset Allocation**

The apportionment of the Fund's assets between different types of investment (or asset classes). The long-term strategic asset allocation of the Fund will reflect the Fund's investment objectives and is set out in the Investment Strategy Statement.

## **Authorised Contractual Scheme (ACS)**

A collective investment scheme used by BCPP. An ACS is a form of investment fund that enables a number of investors to 'pool' their assets and invest in a professionally managed portfolio of investments, typically gilts, bonds, and quoted equities. Regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, it is "tax transparent"; making it particularly useful for pooling pension assets.



## **B**

### **Benchmark**

A measure against which the investment policy or performance of an investment manager can be compared.

### **Border to Coast Pension Partnership (BCPP)**

The Fund's chosen asset pool. BCPP has 11 Partner Funds who collectively have around £45bn of assets. The Partner Funds have appointed a Board of Directors, chaired by Chris Hitchen, which is responsible for ensuring that Border to Coast is run effectively and in line with the guiding principles set by the shareholders. The Chief Executive Officer, Rachel Elwell, is responsible for the day to day running of Border to Coast along with her team.

### **Border to Coast Joint Committee**

As part of their oversight, BCPP Partner Funds formed a Joint Committee which consists of the Chairs of each of the Partner Fund Pension Committees together with other non-voting representatives.

## **C**

### **CARE (Career Average Revalued Earnings)**

From 1 April, 2014, the LGPS changed from a final salary scheme to a Career Average (CARE) scheme. The LGPS remains a defined benefit scheme but benefits built up from 2014 are now worked out using a member's pay each scheme year rather than the final salary at leaving.

### **Cash Equivalent Value (CEV)**

This is the cash value of a member's pensions rights for the purposes of divorce or dissolution of a civil partnership.

## **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**

A method of measuring the changes in the cost of living, similar to the Retail Price Index. Since April 2011 LGPS pensions are increased annually in line with movement in the Consumer Price Index during the 12 months to the previous September.

## **Commutation**

A scheme member may give up part or all of the pension payable from retirement in exchange for an immediate lump sum.

## **Convertible Shares**

Shares that include an option for holders to convert into a predetermined number of ordinary shares, usually after a set date.

## **Custodian**

A financial institution that holds customers' securities for safekeeping to minimise the risk of theft or loss. Most custodians also offer account administration, transaction settlements, collection of dividends and interest payments, tax support and foreign exchange. Custody is currently provided to the Fund by Northern Trust.

## **D**

### **Death Grant**

A lump sum paid by the Fund to the dependents or nominated representatives of a member who dies.

### **Deferred Member/Pensioner**

A scheme member who has left employment or otherwise ceased to be an active member of the scheme who retains an entitlement to a pension from the Fund.

## **Defined Benefit Scheme**

A pension scheme like the LGPS where the benefits that will ultimately be paid to the employee are fixed in advance and not impacted by investment returns. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring organisation to ensure that sufficient assets are set aside to meet the future pension promise.

## **Denomination**

The face value of a bank note, coin or postage stamp, as well as bonds and other fixed-income investments. Denomination can also be the base currency in a transaction or the currency a financial asset is quoted in.

## **Designating Body**

Organisations that can designate employees for access to the LGPS. Employees of town and parish councils, voluntary schools, foundation schools, foundation special schools, among others, can be designated for membership of the scheme.

## **Discretion**

The power given by the LGPS to enable a participating employer or Administering Authority to choose how they will apply the scheme in respect of several its provisions. For some of these discretions it is mandatory to pass resolutions to form a policy as to how the provision will apply. For the remaining discretionary provisions, a policy is advised.

## **Direct Property**

Direct investment in property is buying all or part of a physical property. Property owners can receive rent directly from tenants and realise gains or losses from the sale of the property.

## **Diversified Growth Funds (DGF)**

An alternative way of investing in shares, bonds, property and other asset classes; DGFs are funds that invest in a wide variety of asset classes in

order to deliver a real return over the medium to long-term. The Fund's DGF is managed by BlackRock.

## **E**

### **Employer Contribution Rates**

The percentage of an employee's salary participating employers pay as a contribution towards that employee's LGPS pension.

### **Employer Covenant**

The covenant is an employer's legal obligation and financial ability to support their defined benefit (DB) obligation now and in the future.

### **Equities**

Ordinary shares in UK and overseas companies traded on a stock exchange. Shareholders have an interest in the profits of the company and are entitled to vote at shareholders' meetings.

## **ESG**

ESG is the consideration of environmental, social and governance factors alongside financial ones in the investment decision-making process. E, S, and G are the three key factors in assessing an investment's sustainability

## **F**

### **Fiduciary Duty**

Fiduciary duties exist to ensure that those who manage other people's money act in beneficiaries' interests rather than their own.

## **Financial Instruments**

Tradable assets of any kind, which can be cash, evidence of an ownership interest in an entity or a contractual right to receive or deliver cash or another financial instrument.

## **Fixed Interest Securities**

Investments, mainly in Government stocks, which guarantee a fixed rate of interest. The securities represent loans which are repayable at a future date that can be traded on a recognised stock exchange in the meantime.

## **Fund of Funds (FoF)**

A fund that holds a portfolio of other investment funds.

## **G**

### **Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP)**

The LGPS guarantees to pay a pension that is at least as high as a member would have earned had they not been contracted out of the State Earning Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) at any time between 6 April 1978 and 5 April 1997. This is called the guaranteed minimum pension (GMP).

## **I**

### **Index**

A calculation of the average price of shares, bonds or other assets in a specified market to provide an indication of the average performance and general trends in the market.

## **Internal Rates of Return (IRR)**

The internal rate of return (IRR) is a metric used to estimate the profitability of potential investments. Generally, the higher an IRR, the more desirable an investment is to undertake.

## **L**

### **Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)**

The LGPS is collectively the largest public sector pension scheme in the UK, which provides DB benefits to employees of local government employers and other organisations that have chosen to participate.

### **Local Pension Board (LBP)**

Since April 2015, each Administering Authority is required to establish and operate a Local Pension Board. The Pension Board is responsible for assisting the Administering Authority in securing compliance with the LGPS regulations, overriding legislation and guidance from the Pensions Regulator. The Board is made up of equal representation from employer and scheme member representatives.

## **M**

### **Myners Principles**

A set of principles based on Paul Myners' 2001 report, Institutional Investment in the United Kingdom. The Myners' principles for defined benefit schemes cover:

Effective decision-making

Clear objectives

Risk liabilities

Performance assessment

Responsible ownership

Transparency and reporting.

## O

### **Ordinary Shares**

An ordinary share represents equity ownership in a company and entitles the owner to vote at the general meetings of that company and receive dividends on those shares if a dividend is payable.

## P

### **Partner Funds**

The Fund's chosen asset pool, BCPP, has 11 Partner Funds - Bedfordshire, Cumbria, Durham, East Riding, Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Surrey, Teesside, Tyne & Wear, Warwickshire.

### **Pension Liberation Fraud**

Members with deferred benefits may be approached by companies offering to release funds early from these benefits. The Pensions Regulator has advised pension funds to make members aware of the potential warning signs of pension liberation fraud.

### **Pensions Online**

The Fund's online portal where scheme members may view their pensions records, complete retirement calculations, and update personal details.

### **Pensions Regulator**

The Pensions Regulator (TPR) is the UK regulator of workplace pension schemes. TPR make sure that employers put their staff into a pension

scheme and pay money into it. TPR also make sure that workplace pension schemes are run properly so that people can save safely for their later years.

## **Pooled Funds**

Funds which manage the investments of more than one investor on a collective basis. Each investor is allocated units which are revalued at regular intervals. Income from these investments is normally returned to the pooled fund and increases the value of the units.

## **Pooling in the LGPS**

Central government requires local authorities to pool their pension assets, to achieve four principles:

1. Cost savings through economies of scale
2. Improved governance
3. Improved approach to responsible investment
4. Improved ability to invest in infrastructure

## **Proxy Voting**

Proxy voting allows shareholders to exercise their right to vote without needing to attend AGMs. This can involve shareholders with voting rights delegating their votes to others who vote on their behalf.

## **Q**

## **Quantitative Easing**

Quantitative easing (QE) is when a central bank creates new money electronically to buy financial assets like Government bonds with the aim of directly increasing private sector spending in the economy and returning inflation to target.



## **R**

### **Related Party Transactions**

This is an arrangement between two parties joined by a special relationship before a deal, like a business transaction between a major shareholder and a corporation.

### **Responsible Investment (RI)**

Responsible investment involves incorporating environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations into investment decision-making while practising active ownership. RI can help deliver sustainable, long-term returns for investors.

### **Retail Price Index**

A method of measuring the changes in the cost of living. It reflects the movement of prices covering goods and services over time. Until April 2011, the amount by which LGPS pensions were increased annually was based on movement in the Retail Price Index during the 12 months to the previous September. From April 2011, the Government changed the amount by which pensions increase from Retail Price Index to Consumer Price Index (CPI).

### **Return**

The total gain from holding an investment over a given period, including income and increase or decrease in market value.

### **Rule of 85**

Under previous LGPS regulations, when a member elected to retire before age 65, the Rule of 85 test was used to find out whether the member retired on full or reduced pension benefits. If the sum of the member's age and the number of whole years of their scheme membership was 85 or more, benefits were paid in full. If the total was less than 85, the benefits were reduced. The Rule of 85 was abolished on 1 October, 2006 - however, members contributing to the LGPS prior to this date will have some or all of their pension benefits protected under this rule.

## **S**

### **Scheduled Body**

An organisation that has the right to become a member of the LGPS under the scheme regulations. Such an organisation does not need to be admitted as its right to membership is automatic.

### **Spot Rate**

The price quoted for immediate settlement on a commodity, security or currency. It is based on the value of an asset at the moment of the quote, which in turn is based on how much buyers are willing to pay and how much sellers are willing to accept depending on factors such as current market value and expected future market value.

### **State Pension Age (SPA)**

The earliest age at which State Pension can be paid, which different to the earliest age LGPS may be claimed. Under the current law, the State Pension age is due to increase to 68.

### **Stock Lending**

This is loaning a stock, derivative or other security to an investor or firm. It requires the borrower to put up collateral (cash, security or a letter of credit). When stock is loaned, the title and the ownership is transferred to the borrower and title is returned at the end of the loan period.

## **T**

### **TCFD**

The Taskforce on Climate Related Financial Disclosures was set up to develop voluntary, consistent, climate related financial risk disclosures to guide companies in providing information to investors, lenders, insurers and other stakeholders. It is expected that MHCLG will consult on mandatory TCFD disclosures in the LGPS by the end of 2021.

## **The Pension Advisory Service (TPAS)**

The Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS) gives information and guidance to members of the public on state, company and personal pensions. It helps any member of the public who has a problem with their occupational or private pension arrangement. TPAS is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions.

## **Transfer Value**

A transfer value is a cash sum representing the value of a member's pension rights.

## **Transferred Service**

Any pension that members have transferred into the LGPS from a previous pension arrangement that now counts towards their LGPS membership.

## **U**

## **UK Stewardship Code**

A code first published by the FRC in 2010 to enhance the quality of engagement between asset managers and companies in the UK. Its principal aim is to make asset managers more active and engaged in corporate governance matters in the interests of their beneficiaries. The Code was revised in 2020.

## **Unrealised gains/losses**

The increase or decrease in the market value of investments held by the fund since the date of their purchase.

## **Author(s)**

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