

Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme Advisory Board Terms of Reference

1. Scope of the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme Advisory Board (NICSSAB)

1.1 The NICSSAB is responsible for providing advice to the Scheme Manager and Department of Finance at their request, on the desirability of changes to the scheme and on matters of policy.

1.2 The NICSSAB will also facilitate discussion between the Department, civil service unions, employer representatives on policy development and policy implementation for the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Scheme (NICSPS).

1.3 The forum will be able to discuss issues and may reach common conclusions, however, the responsibility for the NICSPS Regulations and policy will remain with the Department of Finance and any changes to the regulations will be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholder and member representatives, including the Pension Forum¹.

1.4 The NICSSAB does not have responsibility for the administration of the NICSPS.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 The Department will set out the remit, roles and responsibilities of specific issues to be considered under paragraph 1.1 of these Terms of Reference (ToR). Further details are set out in Annex A.

2.2 Under paragraph 1.2, the NICSSAB will consider the development and implementation of changes to the NICSPS in response to over-arching legislative changes, e.g. tax and equality legislation, to assist the Department in implementing those changes to the NICSPS.

2.3 Under paragraph 1.2 and with the agreement of the chair, the NICSSAB will consider whether amendments are necessary to the NICSPS regulations and policy, to reflect changes to the Northern Ireland Civil Service environment.

¹ The Civil Service Pension Forum was established in October 2011 as a formal process for engagement between Departmental officials and a composite of Civil Service trade union officials on issues affecting Civil Service employees and staff in employments covered by the NICS pension arrangements. The Trade union officials represent civil servants, including industrial staff and senior civil servants.

2.4 Under paragraph 1.2 and with the agreement of the chair, the NICSSAB will consider whether the NICSPS regulations are operating to deliver the intended policy outcomes, including policy implementation in relation to scheme reform.

3. Composition

3.1 The NICSSAB will be chaired by a senior Departmental official at Grade 5 level. The chair will be supported by one employer and employee representative drawn from the NICSPB. Employer and employee representatives of the NICSPB will determine who will represent them on the NICSSAB, and if required NICSSAB representatives can nominate substitutions in the event of non-availability to attend meetings.

3.2 Civil Service Pensions within the Department of Finance will provide secretariat support to the NICSSAB. Duties of the Secretariat will include organising and circulating meeting agendas, papers, and minutes.

4. Meetings

4.1 To discharge its responsibilities under paragraph 1.2 the NICSSAB will meet on a regular scheduled basis and at such other times as agreed by the Board.

4.2 In respect of its responsibilities under paragraph 1.1, the NICSSAB will meet as required by the remit of the issues being considered and as agreed by the NICSSAB's members.

4.3 Wherever possible at least 7 days' notice will be given of any non-scheduled meeting.

4.4 Meetings can be conducted in person, over the telephone or via a video-link, as decided by the Chair. If the Chair is not present within fifteen minutes of the time appointed for holding the meeting, the members present may not choose one of their number to be Chair of the meeting. The meeting will be rescheduled to a date which suits all members.

4.5 The NICSSAB can decide to ask its professional advisers, representatives from third party suppliers, the scheme administrator, and any other person to attend its meetings as it sees fit.

4.6 Agenda: Any NICSSAB member may propose issues that fall within the Board's scope for discussion at the forum. It is expected that the organisation proposing an issue for discussion will present the issue to the Board and will be responsible for providing any papers or data to inform those discussions. Where a meeting is held at the request of the Department, the Chair will be responsible for presenting the issue to the Board.

4.7 Papers: The Board Secretariat must circulate all papers at least one week in advance of any meeting (unless a shorter period is agreed by the Chair).

4.8 Minutes: Draft minutes are to be forwarded to the Chair for agreement within five working days and thereafter circulated to NICSSAB members.

5. Sub-Groups

5.1 The NICSSAB may establish sub-groups, with equal representation (employers and employees). Additional members will be asked to join sub-groups if members are needed to make equal representation or if external advisers are required to consider matters in more detail. The NICSSAB will decide whether the sub groups need to have separate ToR.

5.2 The NICSSAB will be responsible for developing and agreeing, and subsequently can amend, each committee or sub-group's Terms of Reference.

5.3 The NICSSAB Chair will appoint the Chair of each committee or sub-group.

6. Authorities and Restrictions

6.1 The Scheme Manager and NICSPB will not be bound by the decisions of the NICSSAB, unless the Scheme Manager or NICSPB have specifically delegated that responsibility to the Board.

6.2 The Department must, in developing policy, have regard to any advice sought from the NICSSAB.

6.3 The NICSSAB will be acting in an advisory role to the Minister who makes the final decision.

7. Reporting

7.1 Minutes or any papers considered by the NICSSAB will not be published, except with the agreement of all Board members.

Signed 

Bumper Graham - Employee representative

Date: 17th November 2016

Signed 

John Crosby - Employer representative

Date: 17th November 2016

Signed 

Grace Nesbitt, Chair

Date: 16th November 2016

The Scheme Advisory Board is responsible for:

- Conflicts of interest requirements for members of the SAB;
- Having knowledge and understanding of relevant pension law;
- Reporting a breach of any duty imposed by law;
- Scrutinising GAD reports and scheme valuation reports;
- Scrutinising the Report of the Manager;
- Discussing and commenting on the potential implications of future valuation outcomes;
- Discussing identified cost cap breaches;
- Ongoing monitoring and advising and make recommendations on adjustments to the scheme in the event that costs breach the employer's cost cap;
- Providing advice to the Scheme Manager or the Scheme's Pension Board in relation to the effective and efficient administration and management of the Scheme.
- Providing advice on request about the desirability of changes to the design of the scheme; and changes to scheme regulations;
- Providing advice on policy matters when requested by Scheme Manager/responsible authority;
- Communicating with Scheme Manager, responsible authority and Pension Board on matters such as consultations.