

# Heads of Agreement New Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) - Summary

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Agreed by: Scottish Local Government  
Pensions Advisory Group (SLOGPAG)



## Foreword

This document sets out the terms of the agreement reached by the Scottish Local Government Pensions Advisory Group (SLOGPAG)<sup>1</sup> on the content and operation of a new Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) 2015 for Scotland. Re-convened in October 2012, SLOGPAG has taken a collaborative approach towards developing this new scheme - a scheme that meets Scottish needs which has been forged in partnership. All parties have participated equally in an open and transparent process, which has been underpinned throughout by an ethos of mutual respect.

The reform of the LGPS, as with all the main public sector pension schemes, follows Lord Hutton of Furness' report of March 2011 and the resulting Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The primary aim of SLOGPAG was to facilitate the delivery of a scheme that takes a balanced consideration of the unique Scottish position, continues to provide valued benefits for scheme members, and is affordable, sustainable and fair to employers, scheme members and tax payers. Consequently, the high level objectives for the reform of the LGPS were set as follows:

- To ensure the sustainability of the scheme, the design of the new scheme should be such that existing members remain in the scheme and non-members are encouraged to join
- Levels of contribution rates which ensure protection of the lowest paid within the workforce
- Provide quality benefits to scheme members.

The scheme design is also subject to a robust and independent Equality Impact Assessment to ensure it meets all legislative equality requirements in both effect and intent; to include inter-gender and inter-generation equity.

The new LGPS (Scotland) will take effect from 1 April 2015 replacing the existing scheme from that date. As the new scheme commences all existing scheme members and new entrants will become members of the new LGPS (Scotland).

This agreement provides for a reformed scheme, which meets the legislative requirements of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 (the Act), and delivers a scheme which is fair and valued by all scheme members – full time and part time workers; managers, administrators and manual workers; and long and short serving employees alike. The new scheme represents a fair deal for Local Government workers, employers and for the taxpayer, ensuring that the scheme remains both affordable and sustainable.

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<sup>1</sup> SLOGPAG is a partnership between COSLA, trade unions for Local Government in Scotland and the Scottish Government

## Executive Summary

1. This agreement meets the requirements of the Act and the high level objectives set by SLOGPAG for a new, reformed LGPS in Scotland. It delivers a scheme that provides valued benefits for scheme members, is fair for all stakeholders and, crucially, is affordable and sustainable for the longer-term. Headline features of the new scheme include:
  - a) Change to Career Average Revaluation - this change reflects a requirement within the PSP Act. This type of scheme is particularly beneficial for lower paid members, individuals for whom promotion opportunities are limited or those where their earnings may reduce towards the end of their career.
  - b) Change in the accrual rate from 1/60th to 1/49<sup>th</sup>
  - c) Retention of the 5 point tiered employee contribution rate, which is 'banded'. This provides for fairer contribution rates for scheme members at the lower end of the pay scale. As contributions benefit from tax relief, a tiered arrangement of contributions, where scheme members pay a proportion of earnings up to each limit and then higher contributions on earnings above each limit, also improves the perceived fairness of contributions at different salary levels.
  - d) Lump sum death in service benefit remains at three times pay
  - e) Pensions for partners who cohabit and civil partners equal to those benefits afforded to married couples.
  - f) Retention of the ill-health pension provisions through a two-tier benefit scheme, with a third tier provided by a discretionary employer lump sum payment to operate alongside the scheme.
  - g) The 50:50 Option – this is a new scheme design feature which allows employees eligible for LGPS membership or scheme members to elect to pay 50% of normal contributions, and in return accrue only 50% of their pension during that time. Benefits such as death in service lump sum would still be retained. This feature is not designed to replace long term membership of the full scheme.
  - h) The scheme has been designed to help ensure it is both fair and affordable into the future. The Act also requires that costs are managed through a cost control mechanism which requires the scheme to set a cap, the 'employer cost cap'. This cap is used when measuring changes in the cost of the scheme as assessed at valuations and will ensure that action is taken if the cost of the scheme increases or decreases outside of the margins set around the 'employer cost cap'.
2. An 'at a glance' guide to the features of the proposed post 2015 LGPS can be found at **Annex A**.
3. SLOGPAG recognises the critical role governance has in supporting the delivery of excellent LGPS performance and therefore encourages and supports good practice through open and transparent governance arrangements. SLOGPAG is reviewing the governance arrangements within its agreed remit of developing a new Scottish LGPS. Current governance proposals can be found at **Annex B**.

## **Role of SLOGPAG**

4. SLOGPAG comprises representatives of COSLA (on behalf of councils and administering authorities), Local Government Unions and the Scottish Government.
5. This group was tasked with developing a new Scottish LGPS in line with Scottish needs and within the framework of pensions legislation, which delivered a scheme which is fair to all, as well as being legal and affordable over the longer term. All parties agreed to work towards achievement of the high-level objectives. Specific responsibilities were agreed, as follows:
  - The Scottish Government has responsibility for facilitating the work of the tripartite group, liaising with Ministers, and ensuring proposals aligned with strategic policy issues in relation to local government (including financial aspects).
  - The Scottish Public Pension Agency will support the wider Scottish Government role, whilst also providing advice on regulatory issues and the broader public service pension context (including consistency with other schemes), and validation of the legal, financial and evidential elements of options. SPPA are also responsible for working in conjunction with the Scottish Government Legal Directorate (SGLD) to develop the new scheme regulations.
  - Supported by employers' representatives, COSLA's key role will be to discuss with unions the options for, and terms of, the new scheme, preparation of the affordability case and provision of statistical and other evidence from local authorities. COSLA and employers' representatives will also play the key role in liaising and consulting with local authorities, disseminating outcomes to local authorities, and supporting co-ordination of local authorities' dissemination of outcomes to scheme members.
  - Unions will have responsibility for discussing with COSLA the options for, and terms of, the new scheme. Unions also have a role to liaise and consult with trade union members.
  - The Government Actuaries Department will provide actuarial advice throughout the reform process. All parties reserve the right to take separate advice if thought necessary. All parties will take responsibility for obtaining their own legal advice.

## Annex A – At a glance proposed terms

Scheme Feature	New LGPS(S)
Type of scheme	Defined Benefit, Career Average Revaluation of Earnings (CARE)
Revaluation (CARE)	Based on the Consumer Prices Index
Normal Pension Age	Set equal to an individual's State Pension Age, with a minimum of age 65
Accrual rate	Annual pension benefits to accrue at a rate of 1/49 <sup>th</sup>
Lump sum	The option to convert up to 25% of pension to lump sum (in line with the HMRC upper limit)
Commutation of Pension to Lump Sum	At a rate £1 of pension for each £12 of lump sum
Certificate of Protection	Certificate awarded where reduction in pensionable pay is outside of the member's control. Certificate means that upon retiring within lifetime of certificate (10 years) their pension is calculated based on their previous (higher) salary, rather than on their reduced pay <sup>2</sup> . Implementation of certificate of protection to cover circumstance where member is required to take lower salary due to ill health. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Actual pensionable pay

<sup>3</sup> Agreed in principle, final decision awaiting HM Treasury clarification.

## Annex A – At a glance proposed terms

Scheme Feature	New LGPS(S)												
Contribution rates for scheme members	<p>Maintaining the five-tier employee contribution rate structure agreed for the LGPS in 2008 to deliver an average employee contribution rate of 6.3%. Employee contribution tiers operate on a banding system, as follows:</p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Pensionable pay</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Rate (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">On earnings up to and including £19,800</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">On earnings above £19,800 and up to £24,200</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7.25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">On earnings above £24,200 and up to £33,200</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">On earnings above £33,200 and up to £44,200</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">On earnings above £44,200</td> <td style="text-align: center;">12%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Employee contributions payable on actual earnings rather than Whole Time Equivalent earnings. Employee contribution rates apply to all active members of the LGPS in Scotland.</p>	Pensionable pay	Rate (%)	On earnings up to and including £19,800	5.5%	On earnings above £19,800 and up to £24,200	7.25%	On earnings above £24,200 and up to £33,200	8.5%	On earnings above £33,200 and up to £44,200	9.5%	On earnings above £44,200	12%
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Contribution Flexibility - 50/50 option	<p>Able to opt to earn half of the level of pension benefits in return for paying half the amount of contributions. Individuals opting for this will accrue pension at a rate of 1/98<sup>th</sup> of their pensionable pay received, rather than at the scheme's standard accrual rate of 1/49<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>To be reviewed, to determine impact on low paid workers, once the outcome of the 2017 scheme valuation has taken place<sup>4</sup></p>												
Contribution rates for employers	<p>These will vary depending on LGPS fund and will be set as a result of triennial valuations (actuarial reviews) of the scheme.</p> <p>The scheme will also incorporate a cost sharing mechanism to ensure sustainability of the scheme over the long term, in line with the requirements of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.</p>												

<sup>4</sup> Based on an assumed take-up rate of 10% of members.

## Annex A – At a glance proposed terms

Scheme Feature	New LGPS(S)
Ill health benefits	<p>Remains as before - two entry point ill health provision where scheme members who are permanently incapable of carrying out efficiently the duties of their job:</p> <p>(i) have no reasonable prospect of undertaking gainful employment before scheme normal retirement age of 65(Tier 1) ; or</p> <p>(ii) have a reasonable prospect of undertaking other gainful employment before age 65 (Tier 2).</p> <p>Transitional protection for existing scheme members whose service enhancement would be less than under current arrangements (to be reviewed after three years).</p>
Ill-health gratuity	<p><u>Third tier</u>, outside the pension scheme, consisting of one-off lump sum payment by employer at their discretion. Calculated on one week's pay per year of service and limited to maximum of 30 weeks' pay. Covers those whose employment is terminated on capability grounds, who are not in receipt of ill-health benefits and who have a reasonable prospect of undertaking further gainful employment before age 65.</p>
Death in service arrangements	<p>A lump sum death grant of 3 times 'assumed pensionable pay' (see below for definition of assumed pensionable pay)</p>
Early retirement	<p>A member who has not attained normal pension age but who has attained the age of 55 or over, may elect to receive immediate payment of a retirement pension - adjusted on an actuarially neutral basis by the amount shown as appropriate in actuarial tables issued by the Scottish Ministers with guidance from the scheme actuary.</p>
Flexible retirement	<p>An active member who has attained the age of 55 or over who reduces working hours or grade of an employment may, with the Scheme employer's consent, elect to receive immediate payment of all or part of the retirement pension to which that member would be entitled to in respect of that employment.</p>
Working beyond Normal Pension Age	<p>The ability to accrue service in the LGPS beyond Normal Pension Age up to age 75. Cost-neutral uplift factors for benefits accrued beyond Normal Pension Age.</p>

## Annex A – At a glance proposed terms

Scheme Feature	New LGPS(S)
Minimum Pension Age (MPA)	All new scheme members to have Minimum Pension Age of 55 years. Transitional arrangements permit all current scheme members to have Minimum Pension Age of 55 from 6/4/2010, except for any member who was in the scheme on or before 5 April 2006 whose employment is terminated on grounds of redundancy or efficiency and is aged 50 or over at that point. Such members will have a protected pension age of 50.
Partner + Survivor pensions	Dependants' benefits payable in respect of widows, widowers, civil partners, children's pensions plus unmarried partners who cohabit, at rate of 1/160 <sup>th</sup> . No requirement to nominate cohabitee.
Pensionable Pay	Retain "non-contractual overtime" under exclusions. Amend Regulations to include a definition of non-contractual overtime; "overtime above the hours of a standard full-time working week (37 hours) that the employee is not contracted to work".
Assumed Pensionable Pay	Assumed Pensionable pay used where previous calculations were based on service e.g. relating to sickness / injury, child-related leave and reserve forces service leave. <b>(1) where the member is paid monthly;</b> (i) the pensionable pay the member received relating to that employment in the 3 months preceding the start of the pay period in which the sickness/ leave began; (ii) less any regular or irregular lump sum received; (iii) with the resulting sum being grossed up to an annual figure; (iv) to which any regular lump sum payment received should be added; <b>(2) where the member is paid otherwise than monthly;</b> (i) the pensionable pay the member received relating to that employment in the 13 weeks preceding the start of the pay period in which the sickness/ leave began; (ii) less any regular or irregular lump sum received; (iii) with the resulting sum being grossed up to an annual figure; (iv) to which any regular lump sum payment received should be added. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Subject to agreement of final detail



## Annex A – At a glance proposed terms

Scheme Feature	New LGPS(S)
Best of the last three years for calculating final pension	Not applicable to a CARE scheme. However, transitional provisions will apply for those with pre-2015 service in the scheme.
Vesting period	2 Years - If a person's qualifying service in the Scheme is for less than two years, that person is entitled, when that active membership ceases, to be repaid contributions by the administering authority.
Abatement	None
Separate employments	None <sup>6</sup>
Buy back (child-related/reserve forces/trades dispute/absence with permission)	Option to make retrospective contributions in respect of certain periods of leave, to enable such periods to count as pensionable.
Transitional Protection	Benefits for pre-1 <sup>st</sup> April 2009 service calculated on 1/80 pension and 3/80 lump sum basis.  Benefits for post-1 <sup>st</sup> April 2009 service calculated on 1/60 pension only (with option to commute up to 25% of value to lump sum). <sup>7</sup>
Rule of 85	Rule of 85 - transitional protection to 2020 retained.

<sup>6</sup> Fees for returning officers at Local Government, Scottish Parliament & European elections was a final salary issue.

<sup>7</sup> Pension benefits based on final salary at date of retirement for pre-2015 service

## Annex A – At a glance proposed terms

Scheme Feature	New LGPS(S)
Award of Additional Pension	Employing authority may resolve to award an active member additional pension of not more than £5,000 per year.
Commutation of small pensions	Calculated in accordance with guidance issued by Scottish Minister with advice from the scheme actuary.

### Scheme Governance proposals

- The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 identifies 4 core governance related roles which must be established from 1 April 2015:
  - a. Responsible Authority – the Scottish Ministers who make the regulations for the LGPS (Scotland)
  - b. Scheme Manager – the function of managing and administering the scheme
  - c. Pension Board – the body responsible for assisting the Scheme Manager in relation to compliance with scheme regulations and the requirements of the Pensions Regulator
  - d. Scheme Advisory Board – the body responsible for providing advice to the Responsible Authority, at the authority’s request, on the desirability of changes to the scheme. The Scheme Advisory Board also provides advice to the Scheme Manager and Pension Board in relation to the effective and efficient administration and management of the scheme.
  
- SLOGPAG recognises the critical role governance has in supporting the delivery of excellent LGPS performance and therefore encourages and supports good practice through open and transparent governance arrangements.
  
- SLOGPAG will review the governance arrangements within its agreed remit of developing a new Scottish LGPS. Topics for consideration will include, but are not limited to:
  - a. The structure of the 4 governance related roles identified by the Public Service Pensions Act 2013
  - b. The membership and constitution of the Scheme Advisory Board
  - c. Operation of the cost control mechanism
  - d. The requirements of the Pensions Regulator
  - e. Publication of scheme information
  - f. Relevant provisions in the Institutions of Occupational Retirement Provision (IORP)
  - g. Data collection
  
- SLOGPAG will discharge its duties, as defined in the ‘Role of SLOGPAG’ document agreed by SLOGPAG members in December 2012, and will then cease to operate.
  
- The Scheme Advisory Board will be established from 1 April 2015 and the establishment of a Shadow Scheme Advisory Board will be kept under review, but such a Shadow Scheme Advisory Board is anticipated to be beneficial from Autumn 2014 onwards.
  
- It is anticipated that the Scheme Advisory Board will be bilateral with an equal number of employer and employee representatives. There will be an independent

## **Annex B – governance proposals**

chair and the size of the Board will be around 15 people. In addition, advisors and observers will also attend the Board but will not have membership status.

- SLOGPAG or the Shadow Scheme Advisory Board, as appropriate, will establish a process, commencing April 2014, to consult on, and collate data relevant to, a review of the structure of the Scottish LGPS, in order for the Scheme Advisory Board to be in a position to complete such a review.