

FUNDING STRATEGY STATEMENT

DYFED PENSION FUND

JULY 2018

Carmarthenshire County Council

This Funding Strategy Statement has been prepared by Carmarthenshire County Council (the Administering Authority) to set out the funding strategy for the Dyfed Pension Fund (“the Fund”), in accordance with Regulation 58 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended) and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ensuring that the Dyfed Pension Fund (the “Fund”) has sufficient assets to meet its pension liabilities in the long term is the fiduciary responsibility of the Administering Authority (Carmarthenshire County Council). The Funding Strategy adopted by the Dyfed Pension Fund will therefore be critical in achieving this.

The purpose of this Funding Strategy Statement (“FSS”) is to set out a clear and transparent funding strategy that will identify how each Fund employer’s pension liabilities are to be met going forward.

The details contained in this Funding Strategy Statement will have a financial and operational impact on all participating employers in the Dyfed Pension Fund.

It is imperative therefore that each existing or potential employer is aware of the details contained in this statement.

Given this, and in accordance with governing legislation, all interested parties connected with the Dyfed Pension Fund have been consulted and given opportunity to comment prior to this Funding Strategy Statement being finalised and adopted. This statement takes into consideration all comments and feedback received.

THE FUND’S OBJECTIVE

The Administering Authority’s long term objective is for the Fund to achieve a 100% solvency level over a reasonable time period and maintain sufficient assets in order for it to pay all benefits arising as they fall due. This objective will be considered on an employer specific level where appropriate.

The general principle adopted by the Fund is that the assumptions used, taken as a whole, will be chosen sufficiently prudently for pensions already in payment to continue to be paid, and to reflect the commitments that will arise from members’ accrued pension rights.

The funding strategy set out in this document has been developed alongside the Fund’s investment strategy on an integrated basis taking into account the overall financial and demographic risks inherent in the Fund. The funding strategy includes appropriate margins to allow for the possibility of events turning out worse than expected. Individual employer results will also have regard to their covenant strength and the investment strategy applied to the asset shares of those employers.

SOLVENCY AND LONG TERM COST EFFICIENCY

Each employer’s contributions are set at such a level to achieve full solvency in a reasonable timeframe. Solvency is defined as a level where the Fund’s liabilities i.e. benefit payments can be reasonably met as they arise.

Employer contributions are also set in order to achieve long term cost efficiency. Long term cost-efficiency implies that contributions must not be set at a level that is likely to give rise to additional costs in the future. For example, deferring costs to the future would be likely to result in those costs being greater overall than if they were provided for at the appropriate time. Equally, the FSS must have regard to the desirability of maintaining as nearly constant a primary rate of contribution as possible.

When formulating the funding strategy, the Administering Authority has taken into account these key objectives and also considered the implications of the requirements under Section 13(4)(c) of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. As part of these requirements the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) must, following an actuarial valuation, report on whether the rate of employer contributions to the Fund is set at an appropriate level to ensure the "solvency" of the pension fund and "long term cost efficiency" of the Scheme so far as relating to the Fund.

DEFICIT RECOVERY PLAN AND CONTRIBUTIONS



As the solvency level of the Fund is 97% at the valuation date i.e. the assets of the Fund are less than the liabilities, a deficit recovery plan needs to be implemented such that additional contributions are paid into the Fund to meet the shortfall.

Deficit contributions paid to the Fund by each employer will be expressed as £s amounts (flat or increasing year on year) and it is the Fund's objective that any funding deficit is eliminated as quickly as the participating employers can reasonably afford given other competing cost pressures. This may result in some flexibility in recovery periods by employer which would be at the sole discretion of the Administering Authority. The recovery periods will be set by the Fund, although employers will be free to select any shorter deficit recovery period if they wish. Selected employers may also elect to make prepayments of contributions which could result in cash savings over the period of the valuation certificate.

The objective is to recover any deficit over a reasonable timeframe, and this will be periodically reviewed. A key principle for any bodies in deficit will be to maintain the total contributions at the expected monetary levels from the preceding valuation (including any indexation in these monetary payments over the recovery period) and where appropriate consider the affordability of contributions. Full details are set out in this FSS.

The average recovery period for the Fund as a whole is 16 years at this valuation which is 1 year shorter than the average recovery period from the previous valuation. Subject to affordability and other considerations the majority of individual employer recovery periods would be expected to reduce by 3 years at this valuation.

Where there is an increase in contributions required at this valuation the selected employers will be able to defer their increases to 1 April 2018, or to step-up their contributions over a period of 3 years. The employers should be aware that using these options may have an effect on contribution requirements arising at future valuations.



ACTUARIAL ASSUMPTIONS

The actuarial assumptions used for assessing the funding position of the Fund and the individual employers, the "Primary" contribution rate, and any contribution variations due to underlying surpluses or deficits (i.e. the "Secondary" rate) are set out in an Appendix to this FSS.

The discount rate in excess of CPI inflation (the “real discount rate”) has been derived based on the expected return on the Fund’s assets based on the long term strategy set out in its Investment Strategy Statement (ISS). When assessing the appropriate prudent discount rate, consideration has been given to the level of expected asset returns in excess of CPI inflation (i.e. the rate at which the benefits in the LGPS generally increase each year). It is proposed at this valuation the real return over CPI inflation for determining the past service liabilities is 2.2% per annum and for determining the future service (“Primary”) contribution rates is 2.75% per annum.

For certain employers with a weaker covenant, their asset share may be linked to corporate bond investment assets. In these circumstances the discount rate is directly linked to the yields on corporate bonds of appropriate duration.

The demographic assumptions are based on the Fund Actuary’s bespoke analysis for the Fund, also taking into account the experience of the wider LGPS where relevant.

EMPLOYER ASSET SHARES



The Fund is a multi-employer pension scheme that is not formally unitised and so individual employer asset shares are calculated at each actuarial valuation. This means it is necessary to make some approximations in the timing of cash flows and allocation of investment returns when deriving each employer’s asset share.

At each review, cash flows into and out of the Fund relating to each employer, any movement of members between employers within the Fund, along with investment return earned on the asset share, are allowed for when calculating asset shares at each valuation.

Other adjustments are also made on account of the funding positions of orphan bodies which fall to be met by all other active employers in the Fund.



FUND POLICIES

In addition to the information/approaches required by overarching guidance and Regulation, this statement also summarises the Fund’s practice and policies in a number of key areas:

1. Covenant assessment and monitoring

An employer’s financial covenant underpins its legal obligation and crucially the ability to meet its financial responsibilities to the Fund now and in the future. The strength of covenant to the Fund effectively underwrites the risks to which the Fund is exposed. These risks include underfunding, longevity, investment and market forces.

The strength of employer covenant can be subject to substantial variation over relatively short periods of time and, as such, regular monitoring and assessment is vital to the overall risk management and governance of the Fund. The employers’ covenants will be assessed and monitored objectively in a proportionate manner, and an employer’s ability to meet their obligations in the short and long term will be considered when determining its funding strategy.

After the valuation, the Fund will continue to monitor employers’ covenants in conjunction with their funding positions over the inter-valuation period. This will enable the Fund to anticipate and pre-empt any material issues arising and thus adopt a proactive approach in partnership with the employer. More details are provided in the relevant appendix to this statement.

2. Admitting employers to the Fund

Various types of employers are permitted to join the LGPS under certain circumstances, and the conditions upon which their entry to the Fund is based on the Fund's separately maintained policy. Examples of new employers include:

- Scheme Employers
- Designated bodies - those that are permitted to join if they pass a resolution
- Admission bodies - usually arising as a result of an outsourcing or a transfer to an entity that provides some form of public service and their funding primarily derives from local or central government.

Certain employers may be required to provide a guarantee or alternative security before entry will be allowed, in accordance with the Regulations and Fund policies.

3. Termination policy for employers exiting the Fund

When an employer ceases to participate within the Fund, it becomes an exiting employer under the Regulations. The Fund is then required to obtain an actuarial valuation of that employer's liabilities in respect of the benefits of the exiting employer's current and former employees, along with a termination contribution certificate.

Where there is no guarantor who would subsume the liabilities of the exiting employer, the Fund's policy is that a more prudent discount rate linked to corporate bond yields is used for assessing liabilities on termination. Any exit payments due should be paid immediately although instalment plans will be considered by the Administering Authority on a case by case basis. The Administering Authority also reserves the right to modify this approach on a case by case basis if circumstances warrant it.

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INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended) (“the 2013 Regulations”) and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014 (“the 2014 Transitional Regulations”) (collectively; “the Regulations”) provide the statutory framework from which the Administering Authority is required to prepare a Funding Strategy Statement (FSS). The key requirements for preparing the FSS can be summarised as follows:

- After consultation with all relevant interested parties involved with the Dyfed Pension Fund the Administering Authority will prepare and publish their funding strategy;
- In preparing the FSS, the Administering Authority must have regard to:
 - the guidance issued by CIPFA for this purpose; and
 - the Investment Strategy Statement (ISS) for the Scheme published under Regulation 7 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016 (as amended);
- The FSS must be revised and published whenever there is a material change in either the policy set out in the FSS or the ISS.

BENEFITS

The benefits provided by the Dyfed Pension Fund are specified in the governing legislation contained in the Regulations referred to above. Benefits payable under the Dyfed Pension Fund are guaranteed by statute and thereby the pensions promise is secure for members. The FSS addresses the issue of managing the need to fund those benefits over the long term, whilst at the same time facilitating scrutiny and accountability through improved transparency and disclosure.

The Fund is a defined benefit arrangement with principally final salary related benefits from contributing members up to 1 April 2014 and Career Averaged Revalued Earnings (“CARE”) benefits earned thereafter. There is also a “50:50 Scheme Option”, where members can elect to accrue 50% of the full scheme benefits in relation to the member only and pay 50% of the normal member contribution.

EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS

The required levels of employee contributions are specified in the Regulations. Employer contributions are determined in accordance with the Regulations (which require that an actuarial valuation is completed every three years by the Fund Actuary, including a rates and adjustments certificate specifying the “primary” and “secondary” rate of the employer’s contribution).

PRIMARY RATE

The “Primary rate” for an employer is the contribution rate required to meet the cost of the future accrual of benefits, ignoring any past service surplus or deficit, but allowing for any employer-specific circumstances, such as its membership profile, the funding strategy adopted for that employer, the actuarial method used and/or the employer’s covenant.

The Primary rate for the whole fund is the weighted average (by payroll) of the individual employers’ Primary rates.

SECONDARY RATE

The “Secondary rate” is an adjustment to the Primary rate to arrive at the rate each employer is required to pay. The Secondary rate may be expressed as a percentage adjustment to the Primary rate, and/or a cash adjustment in each of the three years beginning 1 April in the year following the actuarial valuation.

Secondary rates for the whole fund in each of the three years shall also be disclosed. These will be the calculated weighted average based on the whole fund payroll in respect of percentage rates and the total amount in respect of cash adjustments.

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PURPOSE OF FSS IN POLICY TERMS

Funding is the making of advance provision to meet the cost of accruing benefit promises. Decisions taken regarding the approach to funding will therefore determine the rate or pace at which this advance provision is made. Although the Regulations specify the fundamental principles on which funding contributions should be assessed, implementation of the funding strategy is the responsibility of the Administering Authority, acting on the professional advice provided by the Fund Actuary.

The Administering Authority's long term objective is for the Fund to achieve a 100% solvency level over a reasonable time period and maintain sufficient assets in order for it to pay all benefits arising as they fall due.

The purpose of this Funding Strategy Statement is therefore:

- to establish a clear and transparent fund-specific strategy which will identify how employers' pension liabilities are best met going forward by taking a prudent longer-term view of funding those liabilities;
- to establish contributions at a level to "secure the solvency" of the pension fund and the "long term cost efficiency",
- to have regard to the desirability of maintaining as nearly constant a primary rate of contribution as possible.

The intention is for this strategy to be both cohesive and comprehensive for the Fund as a whole, recognising that there will be conflicting objectives which need to be balanced and reconciled. Whilst the position of individual employers must be reflected in the statement, it must remain a single strategy for the Administering Authority to implement and maintain.

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AIMS AND PURPOSE OF THE FUND

THE AIMS OF THE FUND ARE TO:

- manage employers' liabilities effectively and ensure that sufficient resources (i.e. liquid assets) are available to meet all liabilities as they fall due
- enable employer contribution rates to be kept at a reasonable and affordable cost to the taxpayers, scheduled, designating and admitted bodies, while achieving and maintaining fund solvency and long term cost efficiency, which should be assessed in light of the profile of the Fund now and in the future due to sector changes
- maximise the returns from investments within reasonable risk parameters taking into account the above aims.

THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO:

- receive monies in respect of contributions, transfer values and investment income, and
- pay out monies in respect of scheme benefits, transfer values, costs, charges and expenses as defined in the 2013 Regulations, the 2014 Transitional Regulations and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016.

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RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KEY PARTIES

The efficient and effective management of the pension fund can only be achieved if all parties exercise their statutory duties and responsibilities conscientiously and diligently. The key parties for the purposes of the FSS are the Administering Authority (and, in particular the Pensions Panel), the individual employers and the Fund Actuary and details of their roles are set out below. Other parties required to play their part in the fund management process are bankers, custodians, investment managers, auditors and legal, investment and governance advisors, along with the Local Pensions Board created under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013.

KEY PARTIES TO THE FSS

The **Administering Authority** should:

- operate the pension fund
- collect employer and employee contributions, investment income and other amounts due to the pension fund as stipulated in the Regulations
- pay from the pension fund the relevant entitlements as stipulated in the Regulations
- invest surplus monies in accordance with the Regulations
- ensure that cash is available to meet liabilities as and when they fall due
- take measures as set out in the Regulations to safeguard the fund against the consequences of employer default
- manage the valuation process in consultation with the Fund Actuary
- prepare and maintain a FSS and an ISS, both after proper consultation with interested parties, and
- monitor all aspects of the Fund's performance and funding, amending the FSS/ISS as necessary
- effectively manage any potential conflicts of interest arising from its dual role as both fund administrator and a scheme employer, and
- establish, support and monitor a Local Pension Board (LPB) as required by the Public Service Pensions Act 2013, the Regulations and the Pensions Regulator's relevant Code of Practice.

The **Individual Employer** should:

- deduct contributions from employees' pay correctly after determining the appropriate employee contribution rate (in accordance with the Regulations)
- pay all contributions, including their own as determined by the Fund Actuary, promptly by the due date
- develop a policy on certain discretions and exercise those discretions as permitted within the regulatory framework
- make additional contributions in accordance with agreed arrangements in respect of, for example, augmentation of scheme benefits, early retirement strain, and
- have regard to the Pensions Regulator's focus on data quality and comply with any requirement set by the Administering Authority in this context, and

- notify the Administering Authority promptly of any changes to membership which may affect future funding.

The **Fund Actuary** should:

- prepare valuations including the setting of employers' contribution rates at a level to ensure fund solvency after agreeing assumptions with the Administering Authority and having regard to their FSS and the Regulations
- prepare advice and calculations in connection with bulk transfers and individual benefit-related matters such as pension strain costs, ill health retirement costs etc
- provide advice and valuations on the termination of admission agreements
- provide advice to the Administering Authority on bonds and other forms of security against the financial effect on the Fund of employer default
- assist the Administering Authority in assessing whether employer contributions need to be revised between valuations as required by the Regulations
- advise on funding strategy, the preparation of the FSS and the inter-relationship between the FSS and the ISS, and
- ensure the Administering Authority is aware of any professional guidance or other professional requirements which may be of relevance to the Fund Actuary's role in advising the Fund.

The **Fund's Investment Manager(s)** should:

- invest funds given in accordance with the ISS and the Investment Management Agreement (IMA)
- meet investment performance targets and risk constraints, and
- comply with all the legislative, commercial and mandate requirements.

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SOLVENCY FUNDING TARGET

Securing the “solvency” and “long term cost efficiency” is a regulatory requirement. To meet these requirements the Administering Authority’s long term funding objective is for the Fund to achieve and then maintain sufficient assets to cover 100% of projected accrued liabilities (the “funding target”) assessed on an ongoing past service basis including allowance for projected final pay where appropriate. In the long term, an employer’s total contribution rate would ultimately revert to its Primary rate of contribution.

SOLVENCY AND LONG TERM EFFICIENCY

Each employer’s contributions are set at such a level to achieve full solvency in a reasonable timeframe. Solvency is defined as a level where the Fund’s liabilities i.e. benefit payments can be reasonably met as they arise.

Employer contributions are also set in order to achieve long term cost efficiency. Long term cost-efficiency implies that contributions must not be set at a level that is likely to give rise to additional costs in the future. For example, deferring costs to the future would be likely to result in those costs being greater overall than if they were provided for at the appropriate time.

When formulating the funding strategy the Administering Authority has taken into account these key objectives and also considered the implications of the requirements under Section 13(4)(c) of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. As part of these requirements the Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) must, following an actuarial valuation, report on whether the rate of employer contributions to the Fund is set at an appropriate level to ensure the “solvency” of the pension fund and “long term cost efficiency” of the Scheme so far as relating to the Fund.

DETERMINATION OF THE SOLVENCY FUNDING TARGET AND DEFICIT RECOVERY PLAN

The principal method and assumptions to be used in the calculation of the funding target are set out in **Appendix A**. The Employer Deficit Recovery Plans are set out in **Appendix B**.

Underlying these assumptions are the following two tenets:

- that the Fund is expected to continue for the foreseeable future; and
- favourable investment performance can play a valuable role in achieving adequate funding over the longer term.

This allows the Fund to take a longer term view when assessing the contribution requirements for certain employers.

In considering this the Administering Authority, based on the advice of the Fund Actuary, will consider if this results in a reasonable likelihood that the funding plan will be successful potentially taking into account any changes in funding after the valuation date up to the finalisation of the valuation by 31 March 2017 at the latest.

As part of each valuation separate employer contribution rates are assessed by the Fund Actuary for each participating employer or group of employers. These rates are assessed taking into account the experience and circumstances of each employer, following a principle of no cross-subsidy between the distinct employers and employer groups in the Fund.

The Administering Authority, following consultation with the participating employers, has adopted the following objectives for setting the individual employer contribution rates arising from the 2016 actuarial valuation:

- The Fund does not believe it appropriate for monetary contribution reductions to apply compared to the existing funding plan (allowing for indexation of deficit contributions where applicable) where deficits remain unless there is a compelling reason to do so.
- Certain employers may follow a bespoke investment and funding strategy pertaining to their own circumstances determined by their risk and maturity characteristics. This will be documented separately.
- As a general rule the deficit recovery period will reduce by at least 3 years for employers at this valuation when compared to the preceding valuation. This is to target full solvency over a similar (or shorter) time horizon. Employers will have the freedom to adopt a recovery plan on the basis of a shorter period if they so wish. Subject to affordability considerations and other factors, a bespoke period may be applied in respect of particular employers where the Administering Authority considers this to be warranted (see Deficit Recovery Plan in **Appendix B**). Application of these principles have resulted in an average recovery period of 16 years being adopted across all Fund employers.
- Individual employer contributions will be expressed and certified as two separate elements:
 - the **Primary rate**: a percentage of pensionable payroll in respect of the cost of the future accrual of benefits
 - the **Secondary rate**: a schedule of lump sum monetary amounts or % adjustments over 2017/20 in respect of an employer's surplus or deficit (including any phasing adjustments).

For any employer, the total contributions they are actually required to pay in any one year is the sum of the Primary and Secondary rates (subject to an overall minimum of zero). Both elements are subject to further review from April 2020 based on the results of the 2019 actuarial valuation.

- Where increases (or decreases) in employer contributions are required from 1 April 2017, following completion of the 2016 actuarial valuation, the increase (or decrease) from the rates of contribution payable in the year 2017/18 may be deferred until 1 April 2018 or with the agreement of the Administering Authority implemented in steps, over a maximum period of 3 years. Employers should be aware that any stepping or deferral of increases may affect the contribution requirements arising at future valuations.
- On the cessation of an employer's participation in the Fund, in accordance with the Regulations, the Fund Actuary will be asked to make a termination assessment. In such circumstances:

The policy for employers who have a **guarantor** participating in the Fund:

The residual assets and liabilities and hence any surplus or deficit will transfer back to the guarantor. This is subject to agreement from all interested parties who will need to consider any separate contractual agreements that have been put in place between the exiting employer and the guarantor. If all parties do not agree, then the surplus will be paid directly to the exiting employer within 3 months of cessation (despite any other agreements that may be in place).

The policy for employers who **do not** have a **guarantor** participating in the Fund:

- In the case of a surplus, the Fund pays the exit credit to the exiting employer following completion of the termination process (within 3 months of cessation).
- In the case of a deficit, the Fund would require the exiting employer to pay the termination deficit to the Fund as a lump sum cash payment (unless agreed otherwise by the Administering Authority at their sole discretion) following completion of the termination process.
- The Administering Authority can vary the treatment on a case by case basis at its sole discretion if circumstances warrant it based on the advice of the Actuary. The termination policy is set out in Appendix C.
- In all cases the Administering Authority reserves the right to apply a different approach at its sole discretion, taking into account the risk associated with an employer in proportion to the Fund as a whole. Any employer affected will be notified separately.

FUNDING FOR NON-ILL HEALTH EARLY RETIREMENT COSTS

Employers are required to meet all costs of early retirement strain by immediate capital payments into the Fund, or in certain circumstances by agreement with the Fund, through instalments over a period not exceeding 3 years or if less the remaining period of the body's membership of the Fund.

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LINK TO INVESTMENT POLICY AND THE INVESTMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT (ISS)

The results of the 2016 valuation show the liabilities to be 97% covered by the current assets, with the funding deficit of 3% of liabilities being covered by future deficit contributions.

In assessing the value of the Fund's liabilities in the valuation, allowance has been made for growth asset out-performance as described below, taking into account the investment strategy adopted by the Fund, as set out in the ISS.

It is not possible to construct a portfolio of investments which produces a stream of income exactly matching the expected liability outgo. However, it is normally possible to construct a portfolio which represents the "minimum risk" investment position which would deliver a very high certainty of real returns above assumed CPI inflation. Such a portfolio would typically, in normal circumstances, consist of a mixture of long-term index-linked, fixed interest gilts and possible swaps.

Investment of the Fund's assets in line with this portfolio would minimise fluctuations in the Fund's funding position between successive actuarial valuations.

If, at the valuation date, the Fund had been invested in this portfolio, then in carrying out this valuation it would not be appropriate to make any allowance for growth assets out-performance nor any adjustment to market implied inflation assumption due to supply/demand distortions in the bond markets. This would result in real return versus CPI inflation of nil per annum at the valuation date. On this basis of assessment, the assessed value of the Fund's liabilities at the valuation would have been significantly higher, resulting in a funding level of 62%.

Departure from a minimum risk investment strategy, in particular to include growth assets such as equities, gives a better prospect that the assets will, over time, deliver returns in excess of CPI inflation and reduce the contribution requirements. The target solvency position of having sufficient assets to meet the Fund's pension obligations might in practice therefore be achieved by a range of combinations of funding plan, investment strategy and investment performance.

The current strategy is:

	Benchmark (%)	Range (%)
UK Equities	25.0	23.5 – 26.5
Overseas Equities	25.0	23.5 – 26.5
Global Equities	19.0	10.0 – 30.0
Pan European Property	10.0	5.0 – 15.0
Bonds	20.0	18.5 – 21.5
Cash	1.0	0.0 – 10.0
TOTAL	100.0	

	Benchmark (%)	Range (%)
Overseas Equities		
North America	10.00	5.00 - 15.00
Japan	3.50	0.00 - 8.50
Developed Pacific (excl. Japan)	3.25	0.00 - 8.25
Emerging Markets	8.25	3.25 - 13.25
TOTAL	25.00	

	Benchmark (%)	Range (%)
Bonds		
Index Linked Gilts	10.0	5.0 - 15.0
UK Corporate Bonds	10.0	5.0 - 15.0
TOTAL	20.0	

As documented in the ISS, the investment strategy and return expectations set out above equate to an overall best estimate average expected return of 3.8% per annum in excess of CPI inflation. For the purposes of setting funding strategy however, the Administering Authority believes that it is appropriate to take a margin for prudence on these return expectations.

Additional Restrictions are as follows:-

Overseas Bonds	0 - 7%
Total Overseas Exposure	43.0 – 53.0%

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IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS AND COUNTER-MEASURES

The funding of defined benefits is by its nature uncertain. Funding of the Scheme is based on both financial and demographic assumptions. These assumptions are specified in the actuarial valuation report. When actual experience is not in line with the assumptions adopted a surplus or shortfall will emerge at the next actuarial assessment and will require a subsequent contribution adjustment to bring the funding back into line with the target.

The Administering Authority has been advised by the Fund Actuary that the greatest risk to the funding level is the investment risk inherent in the predominantly equity based strategy, so that actual asset out-performance between successive valuations could diverge significantly from that assumed in the long term. The Actuary's formal report includes a quantification of the key risks in terms of the effect on the funding position.

FINANCIAL

The financial risks are as follows:-

- Investment markets fail to perform in line with expectations
- Market outlook moves at variance with assumptions
- Investment Fund Managers fail to achieve performance targets over the longer term
- Asset re-allocations in volatile markets may lock in past losses
- Pay and price inflation significantly more or less than anticipated
- Future underperformance arising as a result of participating in the All Wales pool.

Any increase in employer contribution rates (as a result of these risks), may in turn impact on the service delivery of that employer and their financial position.

In practice the extent to which these risks can be reduced is limited. However, the Fund's asset allocation is kept under constant review and the performance of the investment managers is regularly monitored.

DEMOGRAPHIC

The demographic risks are as follows:-

- Longevity horizon continues to expand
- Deteriorating pattern of early retirements (including those granted on the grounds of ill health)
- Unanticipated acceleration of the maturing of the Fund resulting in materially negative cashflows and shortening of liability durations

Increasing longevity is something which government policies, both national and local, are designed to promote. It does, however, result in a greater liability for pension funds.

Apart from the regulatory procedures in place to ensure that ill-health retirements are properly controlled, **employing bodies should be doing everything in their power to minimise the**

number of ill-health retirements. Early retirements for reasons of redundancy and efficiency do not affect the solvency of the Fund because they are the subject of a direct charge.

With regards to increasing maturity (e.g. due to further cuts in workforce and/or restrictions on new employees accessing the Fund), the Administering Authority regularly monitors the position in terms of cashflow requirements and considers the impact on the investment strategy.

INSURANCE OF CERTAIN BENEFITS

The contributions for any employer may be varied as agreed by the Fund Actuary and Administering Authority to reflect any changes in contribution requirements as a result of any benefit costs being insured with a third party or internally within the Fund.

REGULATORY

The key regulatory risks are as follows:-

- Changes to Regulations, e.g. changes to the benefits package, retirement age, potential new entrants to scheme,
- Changes to national pension requirements and/or HMRC Rules

Membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme is open to all local government staff and should be encouraged as a valuable part of the contract of employment. However, increasing membership does result in higher employer monetary costs.

GOVERNANCE

The Fund has done as much as it believes it reasonably can to enable employing bodies and scheme members (via their trades unions) to make their views known to the Fund and to participate in the decision-making process. So far as the revised Funding Strategy Statement is concerned, it has been shared with the Pensions Panel in March and a copy published on the Fund's website inviting comments from all interested parties. The final Statement will be formally approved prior to 31 March 2017 in accordance with Council delegations.

Governance risks are as follows:-

- The quality of membership data deteriorates materially due to breakdown in processes for updating the information resulting in liabilities being under or overstated
- Administering Authority unaware of structural changes in employer's membership (e.g. large fall in employee numbers, large number of retirements) with the result that contribution rates are set at too low a level
- Administering Authority not advised of an employer closing to new entrants, something which would normally require an increase in contribution rates
- An employer ceasing to exist with insufficient funding or adequacy of a bond
- Changes to senior Fund Officers and the Panel membership.

For these risks to be minimised much depends on information being supplied to the Administering Authority by the employing bodies. Arrangements are strictly controlled and monitored, but in most cases the employer, rather than the Fund as a whole, bears the risk.

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Administering Authority has taken advice from the Fund Actuary in preparing this Statement, and has consulted with the employers participating in the Fund.

A full review of this Statement will occur no less frequently than every three years, to coincide with completion of a full actuarial valuation. Any review will take account of the current economic conditions and will also reflect any legislative changes.

The Administering Authority will monitor the progress of the funding strategy between full actuarial valuations. If considered appropriate, the funding strategy will be reviewed (other than as part of the triennial valuation process), for example, if there:

- has been a significant change in market conditions, and/or deviation in the progress of the funding strategy
- have been significant changes to the Scheme membership, or LGPS benefits
- have been changes to the circumstances of any of the employing authorities to such an extent that they impact on or warrant a change in the funding strategy
- have been any significant special contributions paid into the Fund.

When monitoring the funding strategy, if the Administering Authority considers that any action is required, the relevant employing authorities will be contacted. In the case of admitted bodies, there is statutory provision for rates to be amended between valuations but it is unlikely that this power will be invoked other than in exceptional circumstances.

APPENDIX A - ACTUARIAL METHOD AND ASSUMPTIONS

METHOD

The actuarial method to be used in the calculation of the solvency funding target is the Projected Unit method, under which the salary increases assumed for each member are projected until that member is assumed to leave active service by death, retirement or withdrawal from service. This method implicitly allows for new entrants to the scheme on the basis that the overall age profile of the active membership will remain stable. As a result, for those employers which are closed to new entrants, an alternative method is adopted, which makes advance allowance for the anticipated future ageing and decline of the current closed membership group potentially over the period of the rates and adjustments certificate.

FINANCIAL ASSUMPTIONS – SOLVENCY FUNDING TARGET

Investment return (discount rate)

The discount rate has been derived based on the expected return on the Fund assets based on the long term strategy set out in the Investment Strategy Statement (ISS). It includes appropriate margins for prudence. When assessing the appropriate discount rate consideration has been given to the returns in excess of CPI inflation (as derived below). The discount rate at the valuation has been derived based on an assumed return of 2.2% per annum above CPI inflation i.e. a real return of 2.2% per annum i.e. a total discount rate of 4.4% per annum. This real return will be reviewed from time to time based on the investment strategy, market outlook and the Fund's overall risk metrics.

For those employers who are funding on a corporate bond based the discount rate used will be linked directly to the yields available of corporate bond assets of an appropriate duration.

Inflation (Consumer Prices Index)

The inflation assumption will be taken to be the investment market's expectation for RPI inflation as indicated by the difference between yields derived from market instruments, principally conventional and index-linked UK Government gilts as at the valuation date, reflecting the profile and duration of the Scheme's accrued liabilities, but subject to the following two adjustments:

- an allowance for supply/demand distortions in the bond market is incorporated, and
- an adjustment due to retirement pensions being increased annually by the change in the Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index

The overall reduction to RPI inflation to account for the above at the valuation date is 1.0% per annum, resulting in a CPI inflation assumption of 2.2% per annum.

Salary increases

In relation to benefits earned prior to 1 April 2014, the assumption for real salary increases (salary increases in excess of price inflation) will be determined by an allowance of 1.5% per annum over the inflation (CPI) assumption as described above. This includes allowance for promotional increases. Instead of the long term salary increase assumption, a fixed allowance of 1.5% per annum for four years has been made for expected short term pay restraint.

Pension increases/Indexation of CARE benefits

Increases to pensions are assumed to be in line with the inflation (CPI) assumption described above. This is modified appropriately to reflect any benefits which are not fully indexed in line with the CPI (e.g. Guaranteed Minimum Pensions where the LGPS is not required to provide full indexation).

DEMOGRAPHIC ASSUMPTIONS

Mortality/Life Expectancy

The mortality in retirement assumptions will be based on the most up-to-date information in relation to self-administered pension schemes published by the Continuous Mortality Investigation (CMI), making allowance for future improvements in longevity and the experience of the scheme. The mortality tables used are set out below, with a loading reflecting Fund specific experience. The derivation of the mortality assumption is set out in a separate paper as supplied by the Fund Actuary. Current members who retire on the grounds of ill health are assumed to exhibit average mortality equivalent to that for a good health retiree at an age 4 years older whereas for existing ill health retirees we assume this is at an age 3 years older. For all members, it is assumed that the accelerated trend in longevity seen in recent years will continue in the longer term and as such, the assumptions build in a minimum level of longevity ‘improvement’ year on year in the future in line with the CMI projections with a long-term improvement trend of 1.5% per annum.

The mortality before retirement has also been adjusted based on LGPS wide experience.

Commutation

It has been assumed that, on average, 50% of retiring members will take the maximum tax-free cash available at retirement and 50% will take the standard 3/80ths cash sum. The option which members have to commute part of their pension at retirement in return for a lump sum is a rate of £12 cash for each £1 per annum of pension given up.

Other Demographics

Following an analysis of Fund experience carried out by the Fund Actuary, the incidence of ill health retirements, withdrawal rates and the proportions married/civil partnership assumption have been reviewed and modified as appropriate from the last valuation. In addition, no allowance will be made for the future take-up of the 50:50 option (an allowance of 10% of current and future members (by payroll) for certain employers was made at the last valuation). Where any member has actually opted for the 50:50 scheme, this will be allowed for in the assessment of the contribution requirements for the next 3 years.

Expenses

Expenses are met out the Fund, in accordance with the Regulations. This is allowed for by adding 0.5% of pensionable pay to the contributions as required from participating employers. This addition is reassessed at each valuation. Investment expenses have been allowed for implicitly in determining the discount rates.

Discretionary Benefits

The costs of any discretion exercised by an employer in order to enhance benefits for a member through the Fund will be subject to additional contributions from the employer as required by the Regulations as and when the event occurs. As a result, no allowance for such discretionary benefits has been made in the valuation.

METHOD AND ASSUMPTIONS USED IN CALCULATING THE COST OF FUTURE ACCRUAL (OR “PRIMARY RATE”)

The future service liabilities are calculated using the same assumptions as the funding target except that a different financial assumption for the discount rate is used. A critical aspect here is that the Regulations state that contributions are set at such a level to achieve: full solvency in a reasonable timeframe, and long term cost-efficiency. Long term cost-efficiency implies that contributions must not be set at a level that is likely to give rise to additional costs in the future. The Regulations also state that the Fund Actuary should have regard to the *desirability* of keeping the “Primary Rate” (which is the future service rate) as stable as possible. All of these requirements need to be taken into account when setting the assumptions.

As future service contributions are paid in respect of benefits built up in the future, the Primary Rate should take account of the market conditions applying at future dates, not just the date of the valuation, thus it is justifiable to use a slightly higher expected return from the investment strategy. In addition the future liabilities for which these contributions will be paid have a longer average duration than the past service liabilities as they relate to active members only.

The financial assumptions in relation to future service (i.e. the normal cost) are not specifically linked to investment conditions as at the valuation date itself, and are based on an overall assumed real discount rate of 2.75% per annum above the long term average assumption for consumer price inflation of 2.2% per annum.

EMPLOYER ASSET SHARES

The Fund is a multi-employer pension scheme that is not formally unitised and so individual employer asset shares are calculated at each actuarial valuation. This means it is necessary to make some approximations in the timing of cashflows and allocation of investment returns when deriving the employer asset share.

In attributing the overall investment performance obtained on the assets of the Scheme to each employer a pro-rata principle is adopted. This approach is effectively one of applying a notional individual employer investment strategy identical to that adopted for the Scheme as a whole unless agreed otherwise between the employer and the Fund at the sole discretion of the Administering Authority.

At each review, cashflows into and out of the Fund relating to each employer, any movement of members between employers within the Fund, along with investment return earned on the asset share, are allowed for when calculating asset shares at each valuation.

Other adjustments are also made on account of the funding positions of orphan bodies which fall to be met by all other active employers in the Fund.

SUMMARY OF KEY WHOLE FUND ASSUMPTIONS USED FOR CALCULATING FUNDING TARGET AND COST OF FUTURE ACCRUAL (THE “PRIMARY RATE”) FOR THE 2016 ACTUARIAL VALUATION

Long-term yields	
Market implied RPI inflation	3.20% p.a.
Solvency Funding Target financial assumptions	
Investment return/Discount Rate	4.40% p.a.
CPI price inflation	2.20% p.a.
Long Term Salary increases	3.70% p.a.
Short Term Salary increases	1.50% p.a. (for four years)
Pension increases/indexation of CARE benefits	2.20% p.a.
Future service accrual financial assumptions	
Investment return/Discount Rate	4.95% p.a.
CPI price inflation	2.20% p.a.
Long Term Salary increases	3.70% p.a.
Short Term Salary increases	1.50% p.a. (for four years)
Pension increases/indexation of CARE benefits	2.20% p.a.

Life expectancy assumptions

The post retirement mortality tables adopted for this valuation are set out below:

Current Status	Retirement Type	2013 study	2016 study
Annuitant	Normal Health	95% S1PMA_CMI_2012[1.5%] / 94% S1PFA_CMI_2012[1.5%]	97% S2PMA_CMI_2015[1.5%] / 90% S2PFA_CMI_2015[1.5%]
	Dependant	157% S1PMA_CMI_2012[1.5%] / 108% S1DFA_CMI_2012[1.5%]	122% S2PMA_CMI_2015[1.5%] / 101% S2DFA_CMI_2015[1.5%]
	III Health	95% S1PMA_CMI_2012[1.5%] + 3 yrs / 94% S1PFA_CMI_2012[1.5%] + 3 yrs	97% S2PMA_CMI_2015[1.5%] + 3 yrs / 90% S2PFA_CMI_2015[1.5%] + 3 yrs
Active	Normal Health	95% S1PMA_CMI_2012[1.5%] / 94% S1PFA_CMI_2012[1.5%]	97% S2PMA_CMI_2015[1.5%] / 90% S2PFA_CMI_2015[1.5%]
	III Health	95% S1PMA_CMI_2012[1.5%] + 4 yrs / 94% S1PFA_CMI_2012[1.5%] + 4 yrs	97% S2PMA_CMI_2015[1.5%] + 4 yrs / 90% S2PFA_CMI_2015[1.5%] + 4 yrs
Deferred	All	95% S1PMA_CMI_2012[1.5%] / 94% S1PFA_CMI_2012[1.5%]	97% S2PMA_CMI_2015[1.5%] / 90% S2PFA_CMI_2015[1.5%]

Other demographic assumptions are set out in the Fund Actuary's formal report.

APPENDIX B – EMPLOYER DEFICIT RECOVERY PLANS

As the assets of the Fund are less than the liabilities at the effective date, a deficit recovery plan needs to be adopted such that additional contributions are paid into the Fund to meet the shortfall.

Deficit contributions paid to the Fund by each employer will be expressed as £s amounts and it is the Fund's objective that any funding deficit is eliminated as quickly as the participating employers can reasonably afford based on the Administering Authority's view of the employer's covenant and risk to the Fund.

Recovery periods will be set by the Fund on a consistent basis across employer categories where possible and communicated as part of the discussions with employers. **This will determine the minimum contribution requirement although employers will be free to select any shorter deficit recovery period and/or pay higher contributions if they wish.**

The determination of the recovery periods is summarised in the table below:

Category	Average Deficit Recovery Period	Derivation
Unitary Authorities, and Police & Crime Commissioner	17 years	On the grounds of affordability and covenant strength the deficit recovery period adopted at the preceding valuation is retained (effectively reset 3 years back to 17 years).
Mid and West Wales Fire Authority	3 years	Targeting a fully funded position at the next actuarial valuation date
Open Employers	13-14 years	Determined by reducing the period from the preceding valuation by at least 3 years and to ensure overall contributions do not reduce versus those expected from the existing recovery plan.
Closed Employers	Minimum of 14 years and the average future working lifetime of the membership	Determined by reducing the period from the preceding valuation by at least 3 years and to ensure overall contributions do not reduce versus those expected from the existing recovery plan.
Employers with a limited participation in the Fund	Determined on a case by case basis	Length of expected period of participation in the Fund

In determining the actual recovery period to apply for any particular employer or employer grouping, the Administering Authority may take into account some or all of the following factors:

- The size of the funding shortfall;
- The business plans of the employer;
- The assessment of the financial covenant of the Employer, and security of future income streams;
- Any contingent security available to the Fund or offered by the Employer such as guarantor or bond arrangements, charge over assets, etc.

The objective is to recover any deficit over a reasonable timeframe, and this will be periodically reviewed. Subject to affordability considerations, a key principle will be to maintain the deficit contributions at the expected monetary levels from the preceding valuation (allowing for any indexation in these monetary payments over the recovery period).

Other factors affecting the Employer Deficit Recovery Plans

As part of the process of agreeing funding plans with individual employers, the Administering Authority will consider the use of contingent assets and other tools such as bonds or guarantees that could assist employing bodies in managing the cost of their liabilities or could provide the Fund with greater security against outstanding liabilities.

It is acknowledged by the Administering Authority that, whilst posing a relatively low risk to the Fund as a whole, a number of smaller employers may be faced with significant contribution increases that could seriously affect their ability to function in the future. The Administering Authority therefore would be willing to use its discretion to accept an evidenced based affordable level of contributions for the organisation for the three years 2017/2020. Any application of this option is at the ultimate discretion of the Fund officers and Section 151 officer in order to effectively manage risk across the Fund. It will only be considered after the provision of the appropriate evidence as part of the covenant assessment and also the appropriate professional advice.

For those bodies identified as having a weaker covenant, the Administering Authority will need to balance the level of risk plus the solvency requirements of the Fund with the sustainability of the organisation when agreeing funding plans. As a minimum, the annual deficit payment must meet the on-going interest costs to ensure, everything else being equal, that the deficit does not increase in monetary terms.

Notwithstanding the above, the Administering Authority, in consultation with the Fund Actuary, has also had to consider whether any exceptional arrangements should apply in particular cases.

APPENDIX C - TERMINATION POLICY

EXITING THE FUND

TERMINATION ASSESSMENT OF AN EMPLOYER'S RESIDUAL PENSION OBLIGATIONS AND METHOD TO CALCULATE BOND/ FINANCIAL GUARANTEES

On the cessation of an employer's participation in the Fund where an employer becomes an exiting employer, the Actuary will be asked to make a termination assessment. Depending on the circumstances of the termination this assessment may incorporate a more cautious basis of assessment of the final liabilities for the employer. Typically this will be where the employer does not have a guarantor in the Fund who has agreed to subsume the orphaned liabilities from the exiting employer.

Where it may be appropriate to use a more cautious basis, the discount rate assumption used will be derived to be consistent with a lower risk investment strategy based on corporate bond yields of an appropriate duration. This is subject to the financial assumptions used being no less cautious than the equivalent valuation assumptions updated appropriately based on the advice of the actuary. The Administering Authority retains the discretion to adopt a different approach (e.g. one based on a "minimum risk" approach) for any particular employer related to the size of the risk and the employer will be notified of this accordingly.

In addition to using a more cautious discount rate, the Actuary will also use a more prudent mortality assumption when assessing the size of the liabilities for termination purposes. In particular, the Actuary will assume a higher improvement rate for future life expectancy than is used for ongoing funding purposes. Where it is appropriate to apply a more cautious assumption, the Actuary will assume that the accelerated trend in longevity seen in recent years will continue in the longer term. The assumption, therefore, will build in a level of longevity 'improvement' year on year in the future in line with the CMI projections subject to a long term improvement trend of 2% per annum for males and females.

The appropriate method adopted depends on the characteristics of the exiting body (and in particular whether there is another employer in the Fund who is prepared to act as sponsor for any residual liabilities) and the risk in the context of the potential impact on other employers' contributions. This is because where liabilities are "orphaned" all employers have to cover any deficits (or surpluses) that arise in relation to these liabilities via their contribution rates at each valuation.

In summary, depending on the employer type, participation basis and covenant there are three alternative approaches to value liabilities on termination and to assess bond requirements:-

1. Assessing the final termination liabilities using assumptions consistent with the most recent valuation basis adjusted as necessary to reflect the expected return outlook in relation to the investment strategy which supports the exiting employer's liabilities.
2. Assessing the final liabilities using a discount rate which is linked to a lower risk investment strategy, so that the calculation of the liabilities will be based on corporate bonds of

appropriate duration to the liabilities. In addition, the Actuary will apply the more prudent mortality assumption as described above.

3. Assessing the final liabilities using a discount rate which is based on a "minimum risk" approach where the discount rate will be based on government gilt yields of appropriate duration to the liabilities and a more prudent mortality assumption as above. Typically this will be applied to an employer who would have a material effect on the Fund on exit by leaving significant residual orphan liabilities.

The approach to be adopted would be varied dependent on whether there is a guarantor who participates in the Fund who would be prepared to assume responsibility for the liabilities and the type of participation as follows:-

(I) ADMISSION BODIES PARTICIPATING BY VIRTUE OF A CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENT

For employers that are guaranteed by a guarantor (usually the original employer or letting authority), the Fund's policy at the point of cessation is for the guarantor to subsume the residual assets, liabilities and any surplus or deficit. This is subject to the agreement of all parties involved (i.e. the Fund, the exiting employer and the guarantor) who will need to consider any separate contractual agreements that have been put in place between the exiting employer and the guarantor.

As the guarantor will absorb the residual assets and liabilities, it is the view of the Actuary that the ongoing valuation basis described above should be adopted for the termination calculations. This is the way the initial admission agreement would typically be structured i.e. the admission would normally be fully funded based on liabilities assessed on the valuation basis.

If a guarantor deviates from the policy to subsume the residual assets, liabilities and any surplus or deficit, for future termination events the Fund will not normally allow the guarantor to subsume any residual deficits. In such cases they would normally require the exiting employer to pay off the deficit as a single lump sum.

If the guarantor refuses to take responsibility for the liabilities then the residual deferred pensioner and pensioner liabilities should be assessed on the more cautious basis. In this situation the size of the termination payment would also depend on what happened to the active members and if they all transferred back to the original Scheme Employer (or elsewhere) and aggregated their previous benefits. As the transfer would normally be effected on a "fully funded" valuation basis the termination payment required would vary depending on the circumstances of the case. Where this occurs the exiting employer would then be treated as if it had no guarantor as per the policy below.

(II) OTHER EMPLOYERS WITH A GUARANTOR IN THE FUND

The approach for these will be the same as (i) above and will depend on whether the guarantor is prepared to accept responsibility for residual liabilities.

(III) EMPLOYERS WITH NO GUARANTOR IN THE FUND

These are cases where the residual liabilities would be “orphaned” within the Fund, although it is possible that a bond would be in place. The termination calculation would be on the more cautious basis as noted in 2. above although the approach in 3. above could apply at the discretion of the Administering Authority.

The actuarial valuation and the revision of any Rates and Adjustments Certificate in respect of the outgoing employer must be produced by the Actuary at the time when the employer exits the Fund; the policy will always be subject to change in the light of changing economic circumstances and legislation.

The policy for such employers will be:

- In the case of a surplus, the Fund pays the exit credit to the exiting employer following completion of the termination process (within 3 months of cessation).
- In the case of a deficit, the Fund would require the exiting employer to pay the termination deficit to the Fund as a lump sum cash payment (unless agreed otherwise by the Administering Authority at their sole discretion) following completion of the termination process.

The above funding principles will also impact on the **bond requirements** for bodies. The purpose of the bond is that it should cover any unfunded liabilities arising on termination that cannot be reclaimed from the outgoing body.

RELEVANT REGULATIONS WITHIN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME REGULATIONS 2013

Regulation 64 sets out special circumstances where revised actuarial valuations and certificates must be obtained including Regulation 64 (2) where an admission agreement ceases to have effect, the Administering Authority who made it must obtain –

- an actuarial valuation as at the date it ceases the liabilities in respect of current and former employees of the admission body which is a party to that admission agreement ("the outgoing admission body"),
- a revision of any rates and adjustments certificate for any Pension Fund which is affected, showing the exit payment due from the exiting body or exit credit payable to the exiting body. Where it is not possible for any reason to obtain revised contributions from the exiting body, or from an insurer or any person providing an indemnity or bond on behalf of the body, the Administering Authority may obtain a further revision of any rates and adjustment certificate for the Pension Fund, showing –
 - a) in the case where the exiting body falls within paragraph 1(d) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 , the revised contributions due from the body which is the related employer in relation to that admission body, and
 - b) in any other case, the revised contributions due from each employing authority who contributes to the fund.

If the Administering Authority becomes aware or is of the opinion of a Scheme employer becoming an exiting employer, Regulation 64 (4) provides that it may obtain from an actuary a certificate

specifying, in the case of an admission body, the percentage or amount by which, in the actuary's opinion -

- the contribution at the primary rate should be adjusted, or
- any prior secondary rate adjusted should be increased or reduced, with a view to providing that assets equivalent to the exit payment that will fall due from the Scheme employer are provided to the fund by the likely exit date or, where the Scheme employer is unable to meet the liability by that date, over such period of time thereafter as the administering authority considers reasonable.

APPENDIX D – COVENANT ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING POLICY

An employer's covenant underpins its legal obligation and ability to meet its financial responsibilities now and in the future. The strength of covenant depends upon the robustness of the legal agreements in place and the likelihood that the employer can meet them. The covenant effectively underwrites the risks to which the Fund is exposed, including underfunding, longevity, investment and market forces.

An assessment of employer covenant focuses on determining the following:

- > Type of body and its origins
- > Nature and enforceability of legal agreements
- > Whether there is a bond in place and the level of the bond
- > Whether a more accelerated recovery plan should be enforced
- > Whether there is an option to call in contingent assets
- > Is there a need for monitoring of ongoing and termination funding ahead of the next actuarial valuation?

The strength of employer covenant can be subject to substantial variation over relatively short periods of time and, as such, regular monitoring and assessment is vital.

RISK CRITERIA

The assessment criteria upon which an employer should be reviewed could include:

- Nature and prospects of the employer's industry
- Employer's competitive position and relative size
- Management ability and track record
- Financial policy of the employer
- Profitability, cashflow and financial flexibility
- Employer's credit rating
- Position of the economy as a whole

Not all of the above would be applicable to assessing employer risk within the Fund; rather a proportionate approach to consideration of the above criteria would be made, with further consideration given to the following:

- The scale of obligations to the pension scheme relative to the size of the employer's operating cashflow
- The relative priority placed on the pension scheme compared to corporate finances
- An estimate of the amount which might be available to the scheme on insolvency of the employer as well as the likelihood of that eventuality.

ASSESSING EMPLOYER COVENANT

The employer covenant will be assessed objectively and its ability to meet their obligations will be viewed in the context of the Fund's exposure to risk and volatility based on publically available information and/or information provided by the employer. The monitoring of covenant strength along with the funding position (including on the termination basis) enables the Fund to anticipate and pre-empt employer funding issues and thus adopt a proactive approach. In order to objectively monitor the strength of an employer's covenant, adjacent to the risk posed to the Fund, a number of fundamental financial metrics will be reviewed to develop an overview of the employer's stability and a rating score will be applied using a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating structure.

In order to accurately monitor employer covenant, it will be necessary for research to be carried out into employers' backgrounds and, in addition, for those employers to be contacted to gather as much information as possible. Focus will be placed on the regular monitoring of employers with a proactive rather than reactive view to mitigating risk.

The covenant assessment will be combined with the funding position to derive an overall risk score. Action will be taken if these metrics meet certain triggers based on funding level, covenant rating and the overall risk score

FREQUENCY OF MONITORING

The funding position and contribution rate for each employer participating in the Fund will be reviewed as a matter of course with each triennial actuarial valuation. However, it is important that the relative financial strength of employers is reviewed regularly to allow for a thorough assessment of the financial metrics. The funding position will be monitored (including on the termination basis) by officers based upon advice provided by the Fund Actuary.

COVENANT RISK MANAGEMENT

The focus of the Fund's risk management approach is the identification and treatment of the risks. It will be a continuous and evolving process which runs throughout the Fund's strategy. Mechanisms that will be explored with certain employers, as necessary, will include but are not limited to the following:

1. Parental Guarantee and/or Indemnifying Bond
2. Transfer to a more prudent actuarial basis and investment strategy (e.g. the termination basis)
3. A higher funding target, shortened recovery periods and increased cash contributions
4. Managed exit strategies
5. Contingent assets and/or other security such as escrow accounts.

APPENDIX E - GLOSSARY

Actuarial Valuation: an investigation by the Fund Actuary into the ability of the Fund to meet its liabilities. For the LGPS the Fund Actuary will assess the funding level of each participating employer and agree contribution rates with the Administering Authority to fund the cost of new benefits and make good any existing deficits as set out in the separate Funding Strategy Statement. The asset value is based on market values at the valuation date.

Administering Authority: the council with a statutory responsibility for running the Fund and that is responsible for all aspects of its management and operation.

Admission bodies: A specific type of employer under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) who do not automatically qualify for participation in the Fund but are allowed to join if they satisfy the relevant criteria set out in the Regulations.

Benchmark: a measure against which fund performance is to be judged.

Best Estimate Assumption: an assumption where the outcome has a 50/50 chance of being achieved.

Bonds: loans made to an issuer (often a government or a company) which undertakes to repay the loan at an agreed later date. The term refers generically to corporate bonds or government bonds (gilts).

Career Average Revalued Earnings Scheme (CARE): with effect from 1 April 2014, benefits accrued by members in the LGPS take the form of CARE benefits. Every year members will accrue a pension benefit equivalent to 1/49th of their pensionable pay in that year. Each annual pension accrued receives inflationary increases (in line with the annual change in the Consumer Prices Index) over the period to retirement.

CPI: acronym standing for “Consumer Prices Index”. CPI is a measure of inflation with a basket of goods that is assessed on an annual basis. The reference goods and services differ from those of RPI. These goods are expected to provide lower, less volatile inflation increases. Pension increases in the LGPS are linked to the annual change in CPI.

Covenant: the assessed financial strength of the employer. A strong covenant indicates a greater ability (and willingness) to pay for pension obligations in the long run. A weaker covenant means that it appears that the employer may have difficulties meeting its pension obligations in full over the longer term or affordability constraints in the short term.

Deficit: the extent to which the value of the Fund's past service liabilities exceeds the value of the Fund's assets. This relates to assets and liabilities built up to date, and ignores the future build-up of pension (which in effect is assumed to be met by future contributions).

Deficit recovery period: the target length of time over which the current deficit is intended to be paid off. A shorter period will give rise to a higher annual contribution, and vice versa.

Discount Rate: the rate of interest used to convert a cash amount e.g. future benefit payments occurring in the future to a present value.

Employer's Future Service Contribution Rate (Primary Rate): the contribution rate payable by an employer, expressed as a % of pensionable pay, as being sufficient to meet the cost of new benefits being accrued by active members in the future. The cost will be net of employee contributions and will include an allowance for the expected level of administrative expenses.

Employing bodies: any organisation that participates in the LGPS, including admission bodies and scheme employers.

Equities: shares in a company which are bought and sold on a stock exchange.

Fund Actuary / Actuary: an individual appointed by the Administering Authority who is a Fellow of the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries and is suitably authorised and experienced to perform an LGPS actuarial valuation.

Funding or solvency Level: the ratio of the value of the Fund's assets and the value of the Fund's liabilities expressed as a percentage.

Funding Strategy Statement: this is a key governance document that outlines how the Administering Authority will manage employer's contributions and risks to the Fund.

Investment Strategy: the long-term distribution of assets among various asset classes that takes into account the Funds objectives and attitude to risk.

Government Actuary's Department (GAD): the GAD is responsible for providing actuarial advice to public sector clients. GAD is a non-ministerial department of HM Treasury.

Guarantee / guarantor: a formal promise by a third party (the guarantor) that it will meet any pension obligations not met by a specified employer. The presence of a guarantor will mean, for instance, that the Fund can consider the employer's covenant to be as strong as its guarantor's.

Minimum risk funding basis: more cautious funding basis than the existing valuation basis. The relevant discount rate used for valuing the present value of liabilities is based on the yields from Government Bonds or Swaps.

Letting employer: an employer that outsources part of its services/workforce to another employer, usually a contractor. The contractor will pay towards the LGPS benefits accrued by the transferring members, but ultimately the obligation to pay for these benefits will revert to the letting employer.

Liabilities: the actuarially calculated present value of all benefit entitlements i.e. scheme cashflows of all members of the Fund, built up to date or in the future. The liabilities in relation to the benefit entitlements earned up to the valuation date are compared with the present market value of Fund assets to derive the deficit and funding/solvency level. Liabilities can be assessed on different set of actuarial assumptions depending on the purpose of the valuation.

LGPS: the Local Government Pension Scheme, a public sector pension arrangement put in place via Government Regulations, for workers in local government. These Regulations also dictate eligibility (particularly for Scheduled Bodies), members' contribution rates, benefit calculations and certain governance requirements.

Maturity: a general term to describe a Fund (or an employer's position within a Fund) where the members are closer to retirement (or more of them already retired) and the investment time horizon is shorter. This has implications for investment strategy and, consequently, funding strategy.

Members: The individuals who have built up (and may still be building up) entitlement in the Fund. They are divided into actives (current employee members), deferreds (ex-employees who have not yet retired) and pensioners (ex-employees who have now retired, and dependants of deceased ex-employees).

Orphan liabilities: liabilities in the Fund for which there is no sponsoring employer within the Fund. Ultimately orphan liabilities must be underwritten by all other employers in the Fund.

Percentiles: relative ranking (in hundredths) of a particular range. For example, in terms of expected returns a percentile ranking of 75 indicates that in 25% of cases, the return achieved would be greater than the figure, and in 75% cases the return would be lower.

Phasing/stepping of contributions: when there is an increase/decrease in an employer's long term contribution requirements, the increase in contributions can be gradually stepped or phased in over an agreed period. The phasing/stepping can be in equal steps or on a bespoke basis for each employer.

Pooling: employers may be grouped together for the purpose of calculating contribution rates, (i.e. a single contribution rate applicable to all employers in the pool). A pool may still require each individual employer to ultimately pay for its own share of deficit, or (if formally agreed) it may allow deficits to be passed from one employer to another.

Prepayment: the payment by employers of contributions to the Fund earlier than that certified by the Fund Actuary. The amount paid will be reduced in monetary terms compared to the certified amount to reflect the early payment.

Present Value: the value of projected benefit payments, discounted back to the valuation date.

Profile: the profile of an employer's membership or liability reflects various measurements of that employer's members, i.e. current and former employees. This includes: the proportions which are active, deferred or pensioner; the average ages of each category; the varying salary or pension levels; the lengths of service of active members vs their salary levels, etc.

Prudent Assumption: an assumption where the outcome has a greater than 50/50 chance of being achieved i.e. the outcome is more likely to be overstated than understated. Legislation and Guidance requires the assumptions adopted for an actuarial valuation to be prudent.

Rates and Adjustments Certificate: a formal document required by the LGPS Regulations, which must be updated at least every three years at the conclusion of the formal valuation. This is completed by the Fund Actuary and confirms the contributions to be paid by each employer (or pool of employers) in the Fund for the three year period until the next valuation is completed.

Real Return or Real Discount Rate: a rate of return or discount rate net of (CPI) inflation.

Recovery Plan: a strategy by which an employer will make up a funding deficit over a specified period of time (“the recovery period”), as set out in the Funding Strategy Statement.

Scheduled bodies: types of employer explicitly defined in the LGPS Regulations, whose employers must be offered membership of their local LGPS Fund. These include Councils, colleges, universities, police and fire authorities etc, other than employees who have entitlement to a different public sector pension scheme (e.g. teachers, police and fire officers, university lecturers).

Scheme Employers: employers that have the statutory right to participate in the LGPS. These organisations (set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the 2013 Regulations) would not need to designate eligibility, unlike the Part 2 Scheme Employers.

Section 13 Valuation: in accordance with Section 13 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2014, the Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) have been commissioned to advise the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in connection with reviewing the 2016 LGPS actuarial valuations. All LGPS Funds therefore will be assessed on a standardised set of assumptions as part of this process.

Solvency Funding Target: an assessment of the present value of benefits to be paid in the future. The desired funding target is to achieve a solvency level of a 100% i.e. assets equal to the accrued liabilities at the valuation date assessed on the ongoing concern basis.

Valuation funding basis: the financial and demographic assumptions used to determine the employer’s contribution requirements. The relevant discount rate used for valuing the present value of liabilities is consistent with an expected rate of return of the Fund’s investments. This includes an expected out-performance over gilts in the long-term from other asset classes, held by the Fund.

50/50 Scheme: in the LGPS, active members are given the option of accruing a lower personal benefit in the 50/50 Scheme, in return for paying a lower level of contribution.