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Central Park, New York City



A very warm welcome to the latest edition of **eNews from GAD**.

The air of change continues here at GAD, with further developments in the reform of public service pension schemes and in the reform of public bodies. We have also seen an increased interest in the role we can play in risk governance and strategic risk management.

Earlier this year we sadly came to the conclusion that we should withdraw from carrying out overseas insurance regulatory work. I am truly grateful for the outstanding service and professionalism of our insurance team over many years.

I am delighted that the commitment of all our staff has resulted in improvements in client satisfaction as shown in our recent client survey. The survey also showed how many of our clients value these newsletters, noting the useful and concise information provided on a variety of interesting topics.

Please continue to send us your feedback on eNews, either to your usual GAD contact or to our central email address enquiries@gad.gov.uk. As always, previous issues of eNews are available on our website www.gad.gov.uk.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Trevor Llanwarne".

TREVOR LLANWARNE GOVERNMENT ACTUARY

NEWS FROM GAD

Client Survey

We are delighted that our recent client survey shows improvements in client satisfaction across the board both in terms of our commitment to service and living up to our values. Detailed results of the survey will be available on our website in due course.

Chief Actuary appointment

Dermot Grenham has been appointed Chief Actuary of the Insurance and Social Security team. The team's responsibilities include providing insurance, risk and modelling advice to UK central government departments and providing actuarial advice to the UK National Insurance Fund and overseas social security schemes.

Queen's Diamond Official Souvenir Album

GAD was honoured to be selected for inclusion in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Album, which celebrates a wide variety of British achievements during the 60 years of Her Majesty's reign. [GAD](#) is featured in the chapter on Charity, Community and Public Service.

Secondments

Trainee actuary Dan Osborne has returned to GAD following successful secondments to both the Asset Protection Agency and the Pension Protection Fund. Dan provided support in connection with the Asset Protection Scheme and the Financial Assistance Scheme.

DEVELOPMENTS

Public Service Pensions Bill

The [Public Service Pensions Bill 2012-13](#) was introduced to Parliament on 13 September 2012, setting out reforms to schemes covering the NHS, Teachers, Civil Service, Local Government, Police, Fire and the Armed Forces. The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2013.

UK public sector staff transfers

In a [Written Ministerial Statement](#) on 4 July, HM Treasury confirmed that the Government had reviewed the Fair Deal policy and agreed to maintain the overall approach, but deliver this by offering access to public service pension schemes for transferring staff. These arrangements will replace the current broad comparability and bulk transfer approach under Fair Deal. Detailed proposals for implementation are expected in the autumn.

Overseas Insurance

Earlier this year we sadly came to the conclusion that we should withdraw from carrying out overseas insurance regulatory work in line with the UK Government's philosophy, as applicable to us.

Promotions

Michael Scanlon and Matt Gurden have recently been promoted to the role of Deputy Chief Actuary. Michael is supporting Ian Boonin in our Local Government, Fire and Railways team and Matt is supporting Sue Vivian in our NHS and Funded Schemes team. Congratulations to them both and we wish them success in their roles.

GAD Principles for Actuarial Quality and Statement of Understanding

We have recently launched a set of [Principles for Actuarial Quality](#) which apply for all work carried out by GAD in a professional capacity. At the same time we have updated our [Statement of Understanding](#) which is designed to ensure that the applicable provisions of the [Technical Actuarial Standards](#) (TASs) produced by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) will be met in relation to all pensions work.

GAD Annual Report

The [GAD Annual Report for 2011-12](#) is now available on our website. This sets out our aims, service commitments and values and highlights our achievements during 2011-12, as well as details of the plans in place to meet our 2011-14 strategy objectives.

Review of RPI inflation formula

The [National Statistician's consultation on options for improving the Retail Prices Index](#) began on 8 October and runs until the end of November. It invites views on options for amending the way the Retail Prices Index (RPI) is calculated, including aligning the formula used more closely with that used to calculate the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). Julia Leunig's article in our [November 2010 edition](#) provided information on some of the differences between RPI and CPI. Any changes are expected to take effect from March 2013.

Changes to UK State Pension

The UK Pensions Minister, Steve Webb, announced in July that a white paper on the proposed changes to a single-tier state pension will be published in the autumn.

Over 200 non-departmental public bodies are due to be abolished or restructured under the UK government's public bodies reform programme. Many of these bodies sponsor or participate in funded defined benefit pension schemes for their staff. The abolition or restructuring of the body may leave the pension scheme without a viable sponsor and if no action is taken, the scheme may seek large up-front cash payments from the body or the sponsoring government department.

What are the issues?

Funded defined benefit pension schemes build up a fund of assets from member and sponsor contributions to meet future benefit payments. Some benefits may not be due to come into payment for many years, and may then be payable for many more. Even if employment with the sponsor ceases, benefits already built up must still be paid to scheme members.

However, the amount of funding required to pay future benefits is uncertain. Future benefit payments depend on members' experience, notably their longevity, and the fund of assets held, which depends on the investment returns earned. A scheme sponsor provides security that any additional contributions required in the future will be provided.

If a scheme is left without a viable sponsor, this removes the security of additional future contributions and there is the risk that members may not receive their benefits in full. Therefore schemes will want to seek an alternative source of funding or security.

Options for dealing with pension implications

Some options on the re-structuring or abolition of a public body are:

- > buy out benefits with an insurance company
- > transfer to another pension scheme
- > run off the scheme for existing members.

> Buy out benefits

A scheme's first preference may be for sufficient cash to be paid so that benefits can be 'bought out' with an insurance company. This transfers out the risks associated with paying all future benefits. The insurance company will charge an up-front premium for accepting these risks. This may be a large cash sum and may be relatively high compared to the scheme's assets.

> Transfer to another pension scheme

Staff in a public body being restructured or abolished may be transferred within government. In this case, the Fair Deal policy may apply. Under Fair Deal staff must have access to a new pension scheme, which must be actuarially assessed to be 'broadly comparable' with their original scheme. Staff must also have the option of transferring their past service benefits into the new scheme. Often negotiations are required on the amount of funds transferred and any up-front payment required.

> Run off the scheme for existing members

In some circumstances it may be preferable to continue to run the pension scheme. Future funding of the scheme could be addressed by finding a replacement sponsor or by putting in place some form of contingent security to be called on in the event of a funding shortfall.

What is the best approach?

There is no simple rule for handling these situations; every situation is different. The best solution in any particular case will depend on:

- > the risk and cost objectives of the sponsoring department
- > the circumstances of the body and the scheme
- > the interaction between pensions and other aspects.

There will be additional considerations for bodies which participate in multi-employer schemes such as the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The optimal outcome in a particular situation is likely to depend on the preferred balance between total cost, short-term cash requirements and the ongoing risk of uncertain future cash requirements.



Alan Dorn

'The scheme may also seek large up-front cash payments.'

Case studies

The following case studies illustrate some scenarios and possible solutions.

> Case study 1

A public body is being abolished and staff will not be transferring elsewhere within government. The body sponsors a funded defined benefit pension scheme of around £3m which is in deficit. To buy benefits out in full would require immediate funding of perhaps around £1m from government.

Possible solution

If no action is taken, the trustees will wind the scheme up and buy out benefits with an insurance company, with the extra amount needed to do this being paid immediately. Given the size of the scheme, the immediate cash cost of buying out benefits may well be smaller than the total cost of negotiating an alternative solution and running the scheme on in the medium term. This solution immediately removes the pension risk from government (noting that a premium is paid to do so).

> Case study 2

A public body is being abolished and staff will not be transferring elsewhere in government. The body participates in a local authority pension fund (LAPF) of the LGPS and has an 'admission agreement' with the LAPF. Under this agreement, when the body stops having active members, the LAPF will require a cash 'cessation payment' of around £5 million. This is calculated by the LAPF's actuary and reflects any underfunding in the body's part of the LAPF fund. The LAPF may accept a lower payment or no payment if the sponsor can be replaced or contingent security can be provided.

Possible solution

The sponsoring department will make the requested cessation payment and remove this pension risk. Actuarial advice should be taken on whether the size of the cessation payment is reasonable and legal advice should also be taken on whether there is an obligation to make the cessation payment.

> Case study 3

A public body is being abolished but staff will be transferred within government. The body participates in a local authority pension fund (LAPF). Staff will become eligible to join the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS). The staff transfer is covered by TUPE legislation and the Fair Deal policy applies. (This policy is currently under review.)

Possible solution

The body will need to devise a proposal involving PCSPS which can be assessed as 'broadly comparable' with the LGPS for this group of staff. Transferring staff will also be offered the option of a transfer payment from the LAPF to PCSPS in respect of benefits already earned. A cessation payment may be required in respect of former staff. A short-fall payment may also be required. This solution will remove the pension risk from the sponsoring department.

Issues for other funded pension schemes

The funded pension risks discussed above may also be relevant for government departments or arms-length bodies outside of the public bodies reform programme. Departments may want to take this opportunity to consider their long-term strategy for managing funded pension risk.

Support and guidance

The world of funded pension schemes is complex. Specialist actuarial and legal advice will normally be needed to help ensure that the chosen solution is appropriate and practicable. Because of the complexity and the amount of money which may be involved, it is important to discuss the issues with scheme trustees or managers as early as possible.

Cabinet Office has produced a [checklist](#) for departments providing high level pointers on issues they may need to address. GAD is working with a number of sponsoring departments to help them address the pension issues relating to the restructure or abolition of public bodies.

'It is important to discuss the issues with scheme trustees or managers as early as possible.'

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Risk management is increasingly important for organisations in the complex world in which we now live. The news is filled with high profile failures linked to ineffective risk management so it is essential that organisations understand the big strategic risks they face and what can be done to manage them.

Risk management in government

In July 2011 the UK government issued a white paper on Open Public Services, driven by the desire to ensure everyone has access to the best possible public services. As one of the steps to achieve this the government seeks to continually improve risk management throughout the public sector.

HM Treasury's [Orange Book](#) provides an overview of the principles and concepts of risk management and useful guidance on the development and implementation of risk management processes in government organisations. GAD has been liaising with a number of departmental boards to further develop their strategic risk management.

Our work with departmental boards for a number of different organisations across government has highlighted some common themes:

- > the focus of departmental boards should be on the big, strategic risks
- > traditional risk management tools may not be appropriate for strategic risks
- > focussing on outcomes can improve handling of strategic risks
- > reporting to departmental boards should reflect their needs and concerns
- > a desire to enable non-executive directors to contribute to the discussion of strategic risk with the benefit of their wider corporate knowledge.

What are strategic risks?

Strategic risks are the big risks that could result in an organisation losing its 'licence to operate' or failing to deliver its intended strategy. For government organisations, this can have far-reaching effects with potentially significant financial and reputational repercussions.

The role of departmental boards

The corporate governance code for central government departments sets out the role of the departmental board. The code states:

'the board should operate collectively, concentrating on advising on strategic and operational issues affecting the department's performance as well as scrutinising and challenging departmental policies and performance, with a view to the long-term health and success of the department'.

The board therefore forms the collective strategic and operational leadership of the department and should focus on the strategic risks which could jeopardise the successful delivery of the strategy.

Every organisation faces a wide spectrum of risks which need to be managed effectively. While it is important that departmental boards are aware of all the risks the organisation is exposed to, the time that boards have available to consider risk issues is limited and therefore the board's focus should be on the risks that could result in failure or withdrawal of their licence to operate.

Why is management of strategic risks different?

Often risks are managed by use of a risk register and assessed by considering the combination of:

- > the likelihood of a risk occurring
- > the likelihood impact if it does.

In such risk registers, the likelihood of a risk occurring is often assessed in terms of likelihood bands, for example, likelihoods of 0% - 5%, 5% - 20% or more than 20%. However, the use of such likelihood bands means that risks that are considered very unlikely to happen, for example with a likelihood of less than 1%, are often overlooked.

The nature of strategic risks is such that, while they may be very unlikely to happen, the impact if they do occur can be catastrophic. Therefore, in respect of strategic risks, focussing on degree of impact is largely irrelevant as by definition, all strategic risks are high impact.

This difference in the nature of strategic risks means a different approach is required to ensure effective identification, management and monitoring of these risks.



Matt Gurden

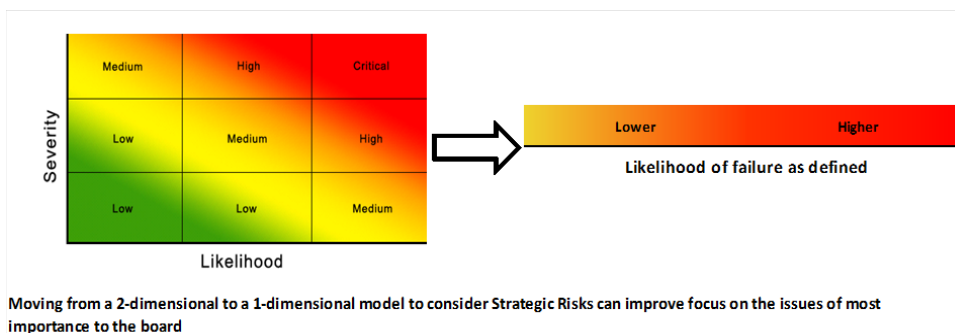
'Strategic risks are the big risks that could result in an organisation losing its 'licence to operate'.'

Identifying strategic risks

Strategic risks can often be best identified by considering failure outcomes. The departmental board needs to have a clear definition of what would constitute failure in order to identify the strategic risks that the department is exposed to. Generally there are relatively few failure outcomes to define.

Attention can then turn to the ways in which such outcomes could arise, for example, high level, broad descriptions of the events that could cause the outcomes. It is important to include consideration of risks that may be very unlikely to occur. Non-executive board members are often particularly well placed to leverage their knowledge from other organisations to suggest the sorts of events that can lead to undesirable outcomes, and their perspective is less likely to be clouded by detailed operational issues.

This approach moves away from the traditional two-dimensional risk heat map, towards a one-dimensional model. This should enable the board to establish a list of the organisation's strategic risks and prioritise them by reference to their relative likelihood.



The precise likelihood of each risk occurring is not as important as the likelihood relative to the other strategic risks and, for monitoring purposes, the relative movement in the likelihood over time can be just as important as the absolute level.

It is also important to consider the interactions between the different strategic risks. Monitoring the movement of likelihood for each of the strategic risks at regular intervals can help highlight correlations between the risks. With this information the board are better placed to implement mitigation actions that alleviate the problems created by correlated risks.

Managing strategic risks

A departmental board's involvement in the risk management process does not end once the high-level strategic risks have been identified. Departmental boards may wish to prioritise their strategic risks in line with the department's objectives.

The small number of failure outcomes should mean that, for many departmental boards, a simple list of strategic risks, together with details of the steps being taken to reduce their likelihood, will be sufficient. A detailed risk register, cross-referencing likelihood, impact and actions for individual risks, is often not desirable at this level, as the detail can obscure the most important issues.

Organisations' risk exposures are constantly evolving. It is important that failure outcomes and strategic risks are reviewed and reported on a regular basis to:

- > ensure existing risk management is effective
- > determine if risk correlations are changing
- > identify if action is required.

An element of 'horizon-scanning' is also required to recognise and manage new risks emerging.

GAD's role

Effective strategic risk management is unique to every organisation, with the approach adopted to identify, monitor and manage strategic risks tailored to the specific needs of the organisation. Actuaries are experienced at dealing with uncertainty and placing financial values on risks, and GAD's Chartered Enterprise Risk Actuaries (CERA) have specialist risk management skills and experience.

For further information on strategic risks and how GAD can assist with strategic risk management, please contact Matt Gurden or Colin Wilson.

'Chartered Enterprise Risk Actuaries (CERA) have specialist risk management skills.'

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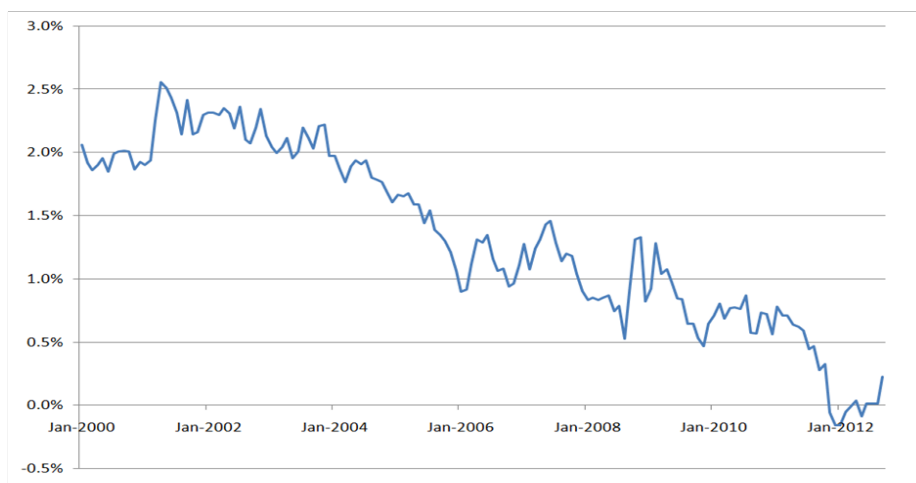
UK long-dated index-linked gilt yields are at an all-time low. This is putting pressure on UK funded defined-benefit pension schemes, with implications for a wide range of public sector organisations.

Index-linked gilt yields – how low can you go?

UK index-linked gilt yields represent the expected returns on UK government bonds (gilts) relative to RPI price inflation. For example, a yield of 1% a year means that a bond should provide an annual return of price inflation plus 1% if held to maturity.

These yields are at an all-time low, at around 0%. The following chart shows how yields have fallen since January 2000:

Yields on long-dated (over 15 years) index-linked gilts – January 2000 to September 2012 (% a year)



Source: FTSE Actuaries UK Gilts Index Series

Why are yields so low?

Yields are low due to a number of economic factors, predominantly those affecting the supply of and demand for gilts. In particular, the Bank of England's Quantitative Easing programme and a perception of UK government bonds as a safe haven from some Eurozone bonds have increased the demand for UK gilts. This increase in the demand for gilts relative to supply increases gilt prices, which in turn reduces the value of the gilt proceeds relative to the purchase price. In other words, the expected return (or yield) is reduced.

Impact on pension scheme funding

In general, lower gilt yields have increased the values of schemes' liabilities, leading to, or increasing, scheme deficits and increasing the sponsor contributions required to eliminate the deficit.

UK funded defined-benefit pension schemes are required by legislation to have regular valuations of their assets and liabilities. Where the value of a scheme's assets is less than the value of its liabilities, ie where there is a deficit, the scheme sponsor is usually required to pay extra money into the pension scheme to bridge the gap.

The value of a defined-benefit pension scheme's liabilities can be thought of as the amount of money needed now such that, allowing for future investment returns on the scheme's assets, the pension scheme will have enough money in the future to pay the benefits members are entitled to.

Therefore, a fall in expected future investment returns on the scheme's assets, due to lower gilt yields, means that more money needs to be held now in order for the scheme still to be able to pay members' benefits in the future. In other words, as gilt yields fall, the value placed on a scheme's liabilities rises.



Aidan Smith

'Yields are low due to a number of economic factors, predominantly those affecting the supply of and demand for gilts.'

While UK government bonds are unlikely to be the only assets held by a pension scheme, gilt yields are an important ingredient in deriving expected returns on other asset classes. Lower gilt yields have also contributed to reduced expected returns on other asset classes.

What about the other side of the equation – how have schemes' assets performed?

Pension schemes holding gilts will have seen strong investment returns on their gilt assets due to the increase in gilt prices. However, returns on other asset classes have not been so strong. For example, the FTSE All-share UK equity price index fell by 10% over the 5 years to September 2012.

For pension schemes with a diversified asset portfolio, investment returns on assets are unlikely to have kept pace with the increase in the value of the liabilities. This has led to, or increased, scheme deficits.

The Pensions Regulator

The Pensions Regulator (tPR) oversees UK defined-benefit pension schemes' funding valuations and has a number of statutory powers in relation to such valuations.

The Pensions Regulator issued a statement, '[Pension scheme funding in the current environment](#)', in April 2012. This sets out the Regulator's views on funding valuations in the current economic conditions. The key points in this statement include:

- > the Regulator recognises that the current economic conditions put pressure on scheme funding
- > current market conditions serve as an example of schemes' economic risks
- > technical provisions (the terminology used in scheme funding legislation for the value of a scheme's liabilities) should not anticipate improvements in market conditions, although such considerations can be factored into agreements for how any deficit will be met
- > a strong and ongoing sponsoring employer is the best support for a scheme
- > there is sufficient flexibility in the scheme funding framework to achieve an appropriate and balanced outcome.

Recent developments

The National Statistician is currently carrying out a [consultation on options for improving the Retail Prices Index](#) which could have implications for index-linked gilt returns. Index-linked gilt yields increased slightly during September, perhaps partially in response to this consultation, but remain at historically low levels. Such developments illustrate the uncertainties around future developments and the need to keep the position under review.

Potential considerations for public sector organisations

A wide range of public sector organisations play a role in UK funded defined-benefit pension schemes, as scheme trustees or managers, scheme sponsors (either directly or ultimately), guarantors or regulators.

The implications of current economic conditions will differ depending on the organisation's role and circumstances. However, there are a number of common issues which organisations should consider. These include:

- > the scheme's current funding plan
- > the scheme's investment strategy
- > different parties' roles and risks
- > the potential need for increased contributions
- > pensions risks overall.

Further information

For further information about how GAD can help with these issues, please contact Aidan Smith.

This article considers funded pension schemes only. Different considerations apply to unfunded public service pension schemes. To discuss any issues relating to unfunded schemes, please contact George Russell (Deputy Government Actuary), or your usual GAD advisor.

'The implications ... will differ depending on the organisation's role and circumstances.'

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