



LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

EMPLOYER DISCRETION POLICY

Drafted: May 2025

Next Review:

1. Overview

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in England and Wales was amended from 1 April 2014. The provisions of the new LGPS together with protections for Member's benefits accrued before 1 April 2014, are now contained in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014 ("**LGPS Transitional Regulations 2014**") (as of 14 May 2018).

Therefore, this statement now relates to the application of discretions under:

- a. The **LGPS Regulations 2013**
- b. **LGPS Transitional Regulations 2014**; and
- c. the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 1997 ("**LGPS Regulations 1997**") and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007 ("**LGPS Benefits Regulations 2007**"), which continue to have effect in so far as is necessary under *Regulation 3 (Membership before 1 April 2014) of the LGPS Transitional Regulations 2014*.

Ledbury Town Council (the employer) is considered to be a local authority for the purposes of these regulations.

The purpose of this statement is to manage the severance arrangements for employees where voluntary redundancy or early retirement is in the best interest of efficiency of service, whilst giving regard to workability, affordability, and reasonableness.

This policy Statement explains how the Council will exercise the discretions available to it under the regulations. However, the Council will consider each case individually, and in exceptional circumstances may apply a different discretion (particularly where there is no other option to resolve an issue, which is not of the individual's making).

2. Introduction

*Under Regulation 60 (statements of policy about exercise of discretionary functions) of the LGPS Regulations 2013 and paragraph 2(2) of Schedule 2 of the LGPS Transitional Regulations 2014, employers are required to make and publish policy statements n how they will exercise **five specific mandatory discretions**.*

In addition, there are **two further discretions** relevant to employers, which relate to members who left before 1 April 2014. These are under *Regulation 66 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008* (in respect of leavers between 1 April 2008 ad 31 March 2014) and under *Regulation 106 of the LGPS Regulation 1997* (in respect of leavers between 1 April 1998 and 31 March 2008).

3. **Scheme Employer Discretions - Specific discretions under the LGPS Regulations 2013 and the LGPS Transitional Regulations 2014**

Details of the five discretions available are as follows:

3.1 Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC) – Regulation 16 (2)(e) and 16 (4)(d)

Note: Where an active member pays Additional Pension Contributions by regular or lump sum contribution to purchase extra annual pension, an employer can choose to voluntarily contribute towards the cost of purchasing that extra pension through a SCPAC.

The employer does not consider contributions towards additional pension contributions to be an essential part of its employment strategy. However, **the employer** will consider applications under these specific provisions having regard to **the employer's** general policy from time to time, on the employee pay strategy and the particular circumstances surrounding each case.

It is likely that decisions will be made on the merits of each case having particular regard to factors such as:

- **the employer's** ability to meet the cost of granting such a request; and/or
- the member's personal circumstances.

3.2 Awarding Additional Pension – Regulation 31

*Note: An employer can choose to grant additional pension up to the maximum allowed by the scheme rules provided that the member is active **or** is within 6 months of leaving **for reasons of** redundancy **or** business efficiency **or** whose employment was terminated by mutual consent on grounds of business efficiency.*

Employers may wish to use this Regulation as an aid to recruitment, an aid to retention or to compensate or reward an employee who is retiring.

*Employers should also consider provisions of this Regulation, in particular Regulation 31(4), if they decide to exercise their power under **Section 1 (general power of competence) of the Localism Act 2011.***

The employer will consider applications made under this *Regulation* having regard to the particular circumstances surrounding each case. Decisions will be made on the merits of each case having particular regard to the following:

- the member's personal circumstances
- the interests of **the employer**

- the additional contributions due to the Fund by **the employer** in respect of the exercise of this discretion
- any potential benefits or savings to **the employer** arising from the exercise of this discretion
- other options that are, from time to time, available under **the employer's** severance arrangements
- the funding position of **the employer** within the Fund
- the ability of the employer to meet the cost of granting such an award.

3.3 Flexible Retirement - Regulation 30(6)

Note: An employer can decide whether to permit a member who has attained the age of 55 to draw all or part of their retirement benefits (both pension and lump sum) whilst continuing in employment and Fund membership provided that:

- there has been a reduction in hours, or
- a reduction in grade

An employer may agree to waive in whole or in part any actuarial reductions that would be required (see below: Regulation 30(8)).

The employer will consider applications made under this Regulation having regard to the particular circumstances surrounding each case. Decisions will be made on the merits of each case having particular regard to:

- the operating requirements of the employing department
- **the employer's** ability to meet the cost of granting such a request
- whether any demonstrable cost saving in excess of potential savings available under any severance arrangements in place from time to time can be made
- the member's personal circumstances
- whether to permit the member to choose to draw all, part or none of the pension benefits they have built up after 1 April 2008. The flexible retirement policy should set out the Council's position on this matter.

3.4 Waiving actuarial reductions – Regulation 30(8)

Note: An employer may agree to waive in whole or in part the actuarial reductions that would be required:

- all of the reductions in respect of pre-1 April 2014 benefits but only on compassionate grounds (paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 of the LGPS Transitional Regulations 2014)
- all or some of the actuarial reduction in respect of post 1 April 2014 on any grounds

Where 85-year rule protections exist and the member has full or tapered protection the employer can waive all of the reductions but only on compassionate grounds for the service up to the date the 85-year rule protection ends (31 March 2016 (full) or 31 March 2020 (tapered)).

The employer will consider applications made under this Regulation having regard to the particular circumstances surrounding each case. Decision will be made on the merits of each case having particular regard to:

- **the employer's** ability to meet the cost of granting such a request
- whether any demonstrable cost saving in excess of potential savings available under any severance arrangements in place from time to time can be made
- the members personal circumstances

Applications for the payment of unreduced benefits for service before 1 April 2014 on the grounds of compassion will be granted if:

- **the employer's** sole opinion, the special extenuating circumstances surrounding the application, along with the supporting evidence provided justify approval
- **the employer** can meet the cost of granting such a request

3.5 Switching on the 85 rule – Schedule 2 – 1(1)(c) of the LGPS Transitional Regulations 2014

Note: An employer can decide whether to “switch on” the 85-year rule to allow members who have protections under old regulations, and who choose to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60 to receive benefits either unreduced or with a smaller reduction to their 85-year rule date. The employer will be responsible for meeting any strain costs relating to benefits being paid before age 60. If the employer does not “switch-on” the 85 year rule the member's benefits will be reduced to age 60 or the date they meet the 85-year rule if later.

4. **Further discretions under the LGPS Regulations 1997 and LGPS Benefits Regulations 2007**

There are also two other mandatory discretions for employers, but these relate specifically to members who left before 1 April 2014.

Whilst the LGPS Regulations 2013 repeals the LGPS 1997 and the LGPS Benefits Regulations 2007 (in so far as they had not already been repealed), Regulation 3(1) of the LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014 allows for the LGPS Regulations 1997 and the LGPS Benefits Regulations 2007 to still have effect in so far as they relate to certain member benefits before 1 April 2014. As such, the other discretions still available for certain members only, are as follows:

4.1 **Early payment of Deferred Pensions for members who left before 1 April 2014 – Regulation 2 of the LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014. Regulation 30(2) and 30(5) of the LGPS Benefits Regulations 2007 & Regulation 31(2) and Regulation 1(5) of the LGPS Regulation 1997**

Note: From 14 July 2018, all deferred members may voluntarily elect for early payment of their deferred benefits prior to their Normal Retirement Date. An employer can decide on compassionate grounds whether to waive any actuarial reduction to benefits-paid before age 65. An employer can decide whether to “switch on” the 85-year rule where a member has taken voluntary early payment of deferred benefits from age 55.

The employer will consider applications made under this Regulation having regard to the particular circumstances surrounding each case. Decisions will be made on the merits of each case having particular regard to:

- **the employer’s** ability to meet the cost of granting such a request
- the members personal circumstances

Applications for the payment of unreduced benefits on the grounds of compassion will be granted if:

- in **the employer’s** sole opinion, the special extenuating circumstances surrounding the application, along with the supporting evidence provided justify approval and
- **the employer** can meet the cost of granting such a request

N.B. Deferred members who left the Scheme before 1 April 2008 can still make application for the early payment of their deferred benefits after age 50 under LGPS rules. However, under HMRC rules such payments would be classed as “unauthorised” and would be subject to a punitive tax charge.

4.2 **Early Payment or Deferred Pensions for members who left before 1 April 2014 and have ceased to be entitled to a tier 3 ill health benefit – Regulation 2 of the LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014, Regulation 30A(3) and 30A(5) of the LGPS Benefits Regulations 2007**

An employer can decide whether to grant early payment to members who have ceased to be entitled to a tier 3 ill health benefit and who are over the age of 55. An employer may on compassionate grounds agree to waive any actuarial reduction to an employee. An employer can decide whether to “switch-on” the 85-year rule where voluntary early payment of suspended tier 3 ill health pension is taken.

The employer will consider applications made under this Regulation having regard to the particular circumstances surrounding each case. Decisions will be made on the merits of each case having particular regard to:

- **the employer's** ability to meet the cost of granting such a request
- the member's personal circumstances

Applications for the payment of unreduced benefits on the grounds of compassion will be granted if:

- in **the employer's** sole opinion, the special extenuating circumstances surrounding the application, along with the supporting evidence provided justify approval
- **the employer** can meet the cost of granting such a request

5. **Recommendation (non-mandatory) LGPS 2013 & 2014 discretions**

There is no requirement to have a written policy in respect of non-mandatory discretions. However, it is recommended to consider a written policy on the following so that both members and the Fund are clear on the employer's policy.

5.1 Extending the 12-month limit for transfer of pension rights - Regulation 100(6) LGPS 2013

Note: An employer can decide to extend the 12-month time limit to permit a member to transfer their previous pension rights from another scheme if an election had not been made within 12 months of joining the LGPS.

The employer, will only consider applications made under this Regulation in the most exceptional circumstances and if:

- evidence indicates that the Fund had not informed the member about the transfer within the 12-month time limit, or
- verifiable evidence indicates that the member made an election to transfer within 12-months of joining the LGPS, but the election form was not received by the Fund.

5.2 Extending the time limit for a member to elect for a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contributions (SCAPCs) – Regulation 16 (16) LGPS Regulation 2013

Note: An employer can decide to extend the 30-day deadline for a member to purchase additional pension by SCAPCs upon return from a period of unpaid absence (other than because of illness or injury, relevant to child-related leave or reserve forces leave).

The employer will exercise its discretion to allow late payment and decide each case on its individual merits.

- 5.3 Determining and reviewing an employee's contribution band – Regulation 9 and Regulation 10 LGPS Regulations 2013

Note: An employer must decide how to allocate the pension contribution band for a new employee, and review at each subsequent April.

The employer will determine and review the rate of employee contributions in accordance with Regulation 9 and Regulation 10 of the LGPS Regulations 2012.

- 5.4 Whether to include a regular lump sum payment when calculating Assumed Pensionable Pay – Regulation 21 (4)(a)(iv) – Regulation 21 (4)(b)(iv) and Regulation 21 (5)#

Note: An employer can when calculating Assumed Pensionable Pay decide to include the amount of any regular lump sum payment received by the member in the 12 months preceding the date the absence began or the ill health retirement or death occurred.

The employer will not include any regular lump sum payment received by the member in the 12 months preceding the date the absence began or the ill health retirement or death occurred.

- 5.5 Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contributions Arrangement (SCAVC) - Regulation 17(1) and TP 15 (2A) and A 25(3) and definition of SCAVC in R Sch 1

Note: An employer can choose to pay for or contribute towards a SCAVC arrangement.

The employer will not exercise its discretion to contribute towards a SCAVC arrangement.

6. **Applications**

All requests for any of the above listed discretion will be referred to the Resources Committee in the first instance.

7. **If you are unhappy with the Employers Decision**

If an employee is unhappy with the Employer's decision, they have the ability to invoke the Scheme's Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure (IDRP) or refer the matter to the Pensions Ombudsman for determination.

8. **Review and Amendment Regulations**

This policy will be regularly reviewed and amended as necessary based on good practice or evidence taken forward. All revisions MUST be approved by Council.

9. Alternative Formats & Other Queries

If you need this information in a different format or have any other queries regarding this policy, please contact the Admin Assistant to the Clerk:

- by email: adminclerk@ledburytowncouncil.gov.uk
- by phone: 01531 632306
- by post: Ledbury Town Council, Church Lane, Ledbury, HR8 1DL

Date Drafted: 15 May 2025

Date Approved:

Review Date: