
PENSIONS COUNCIL

Meeting on Thursday, 14 November at 3.00pm
Verschoyle House, 28/30 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2

Attendance: Jim Murray
Kirstie Flynn
Brendan Kennedy
Tim O'Hanrahan
Joanne Roche
Shane Whelan
Conor McGinn
Sinead Ryan
Alan Flynn
Roma Burke

Apologies: Sandra Rockett
Deirdre Cummins
Brendan Keenan

Also present: Niamh Crowley (Secretariat)

Minutes

1. Adoption of agenda

The proposed agenda for the meeting was agreed.

2. Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Approval of draft minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October were approved subject to the inclusion of an amendment proposed by Conor McGinn.

4. To Do List from previous meeting

Alan Flynn to liaise with Jim Murray regarding the Council assessment

Alan Flynn contacted three firms regarding the Council assessment, two of which replied. He will prepare a note outlining the cost and liaise with Jim Murray on this matter.

Contact Central Bank of Ireland regarding their Code of Practice

Jim Murray spoke to Tim O'Hanrahan in relation to the Central Bank's Code of Practice, noting that a code was recently published on Intermediaries.

Rosheen Sen to send on information regarding Decumulation in Auto Enrolment

Alan Flynn to follow up with Rosheen Sen regarding further information on Decumulation in other relevant countries.

Revise answers to AE questions

This item was completed by Jim Murray and circulated to members for review.

5. Response to questions from DEASP - continue discussion

Conor McGinn outlined his reservations in respect of the 'state annuity' proposal in his note dated 16 November and requests that the downsides to such a proposal should be spelt out explicitly.

Conor McGinn noted the Minister's request for the Council's views and analysis of how 'potential decumulation options for AE could operate in the Irish context. He suggests offering 'state annuity' as one of a range of options, clearly setting out the pros and cons of each.

The Council members queried what happens in other countries in relation to Automatic Enrolment Decumulation, adding that no information is provided on Decumulation in the Automatic Enrolment Strawman. Alan Flynn to follow up with Rosheen Sen.

The Council members discussed the area of 'consumer focus' to which Conor McGinn stressed the importance of not only giving due regard to the needs of consumers but also about the long-term sustainability and affordability of the solutions it proposes, and about ensuring a fair sharing of the burden across all the actors in the pensions sector. Sinead Ryan noted that if the system is not sustainable it will affect consumers and future pensioners. Alan Flynn added that the whole ethos of the proposed Automatic Enrollment system is in the best interest of members.

Jim noted the comments made and agreed to revise the document and circulate to members.

6. Response to Minister on follow up to gender study

Jim Murray provided a note on the follow up to the Gender Study. He advised that the Minister has requested a meeting with him to discuss the items identified in the gender study.

Sinead Ryan suggested pointing out the gender gap which is due to historic legislation which over time has decreased due to the introduction of equal pay legislation for example.

The Council members discussed the area of Home Carers. Sinead Ryan noted that

the Home Carer tax credit is currently at €1,500. However, should women care for their parents when they get older, their spouse will benefit from this tax credit. Alan Flynn explained that should an individual give up work in order to become a full-time carer, they are entitled to Carers Benefit provided they meet the PRSI contribution conditions. However, an individual must satisfy a means test to qualify for Carer's Allowance.

The Council members discussed a scenario where a husband in receipt of a pension, could spend as he wishes without his spouse knowing anything about the pension. Should a spouse have a right to know how much is in it? Roma Burke noted that on a Trustee level, should a scheme member wish to transfer out of a pension scheme the spouse's signature is required. Shane Whelan added that women have contingent rights if a spouse has a pension.

Sinead Ryan queried whether there has been any change in work policy in the last two decades? Alan Flynn to check age working policy and revert to the Council.

7. Discuss Research Projects

The following research topics were discussed:

House Ownership Trends and Effect on Pension Income

Alan Flynn presented a detailed note completed by Brian Purcell on Pensions and Housing along with a draft Research Proposal for 2020 research. Alan Flynn requests that the Pensions Council approves the project and commence the tender process.

Academia Research

Brendan Kennedy suggested inviting experts from academia to make suggestions on potential research topics.

Jim Murray queried whether there was any terms of reference/ procedures in relation to such tenders. Alan Flynn to revert on whether this has been done before.

It was also queried whether there is a minimum amount for such a tender, Brendan Kennedy to liaise with PA Procurement team and revert.

8. End of Term – including responses to two questionnaires

Jim Murray advised that the end of term report is due and welcomes ideas and suggestions of its contents.

Shane Whelan suggested the report could include an Annex outlining all proposals submitted by members during the term therefore highlighting work completed / list of outputs.

As the last meeting of the current council is being held on 23 January 2020, Jim Murray suggested organising a dinner to mark the end of term. Suggestions are welcome.

9. Other Business

Pensions Council Views on Climate Action Plan

Alan Flynn advised that as part of the Government's Climate Action Plan, the

Department are responsible for progressing an action around Pensions and Fossil Fuel assets. The Department is seeking the Pensions Council's views/ observations in relation to Action 12. Specific items for consideration are set out in the note. If the Council has any further views, the Department would also welcome these.

Alan Flynn noted that the timetable which has been set for the Department to report on this issue is very aggressive, requiring a report by Q4 2019.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 12 December 2019 at 3.00pm at Verschoyle House.

11. To-do list

Prepare a note in relation to the council assessment and procurement rules	AF
Check Age Working Policy and revert to Council	AF
Check whether academia research has be done before	AF
Liaise with PA Procurement team regarding tender process - minimum amount	BK
Observations in relation to the Climate Action Plan - Action 12. Specific items for consideration are set out in the note	All Members
Review note and Research Proposal on House Ownership Trends and Effect of Pension Income	All Members