



Local Pension Board

Minutes of a meeting of the Local Pension Board held at Jeffrey Room, The Guildhall, Northampton on Thursday 29 June 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Alicia Bruce (Chair)
Julie Petrie (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Andrew Weatherill
Kevin Standishday

Apologies for Absence:

Katy Downes
Paul Hanson

Officers:

Mark Whitby, Head of Pensions
Michelle Oakensen, Governance and Regulations Manager
Jeverly Findlay, Committee Officer

94. **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

95. **Minutes**

RESOLVED: The Local Pension Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2023.

96. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair asked that it be recorded that Councillor Ken Pritchard be thanked for his time serving on the Local Pension Board. It was noted that Councillor Greg Lunn had recently been appointed to serve on the Board.

97. **Action Log**

Members of the Board were asked to note the Action Log.

RESOLVED: The Local Pension Board noted the action log.

98. **Administration Report**

Consideration was given to a report which provided an overview of the administrative activities of the Northamptonshire Pensions Fund.

The Governance and Regulations Manager presented the report and advised that most of the key performance indicators had been met over the period, 5 had been missed, one of which was 1 red and the other 4 were amber. There are six newer employees within a team of nine who have less than 12 months experience and this inexperience had affected the performance, over time their skills and knowledge would increase, and the performance issue would be addressed. There was an increase of individuals changing jobs after the pandemic, and also a number of people in the team currently on maternity leave or due to go on maternity leave, as well as an isolated case of long-term sickness. The risk relating to the capacity of the team was included in the risk register. Councillor Weatherill queried what retention measures were in place for employees. The Head of Pensions advised that West Northants Council had a positive flexible working scheme and the remuneration for roles was appropriate.

The Governance and Regulations Manager advised that the new performance indicator development was on track and testing on three areas had commenced that week. It was expected that the first statistics would be able to be taken to Committee in October.

For the first time in over a year, the receipt of employee and employer contributions had not been 100% and this would continue to be monitored. The contributions received on time in March had been 99.4%.

Kevin Standishday queried why a member of the scheme had been refused a transfer to another fund which had resulted in a complaint. The Governance and Regulations Manager advised that it was a timing issue related to leaving dates.

Councillor Andrew Weatherill queried what the latest position was with regard to the WNC internal audit inspection. The Head of Pensions advised that he would contact the Section 151 Officer and then circulate a revised timescale for the completion of the audits. The accounts for the previous year had been closed down and processes were in place for this year. However, the WNC's audit would be over 5 months late. The Chair highlighted that from a system control point of view it would not be worth undertaking the audit if the information was from two years ago.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Local Pension Board note the Northamptonshire Pensions Fund - Administration Performance Report.**
- (ii) That an update be provided at the next meeting regarding the latest position with the internal audit inspections.**

99. Business Plan Update

The Head of Pensions updated the progress made on the key activities for the period, namely the procurement of new software. Submissions had been received from more than one supplier. There were 2 ambers referred to in the report in section 2.3, which were due to a change of control of the advisor MJ Hudson in the ACCESS asset pool and the processing of undecided leavers. The processing of undecided

leavers was amber as the Government's Actuary's Department had changed the discount rate and this had impacted on the factors involved in many benefit calculations, including transfer calculations required for leavers with less than 2 years' service. All pension funds were in the same position and it effected business as usual and backlogs. When the new factors were received it was expected that over a thousand cases would be able to be processed in bulk. The Benefits and Governance Advisor had been asked to review the processes to ensure that they were as efficient as possible. The previous year's figures would be submitted to the Pension Fund Committee in July.

Further to discussion, it was noted that back dated pay awards created problems in the system and this was difficult to manage. The data from the pay and grading project would be fed in and any patterns identified. If a payroll provider was changed by an employer, potentially all employees were deemed as leavers as new starters. This was obviously a universal issue for all funds.

RESOLVED: That the Local Pension Board note the Business Plan Update.

100. **Governance and Compliance**

The Governance and Regulations Manager reported that the Government had revised the guidelines with regard to the Pension Dashboard Programme and the new connection deadline was now 31st October 2026. Collaboration within the industry was being encouraged and further guidance was expected later in the year. Preparation was ongoing with data cleansing including the data improvement plan activities and whether the AVC providers would need to display the information separately.

With regard to the McCloud Remedy the second consultation had been issued on 30 May and would close on 30 June. The focus was on supplementary issues and scheme regulations. The response would include comments regarding the excess teacher service and was with the Chair and Vice-chair for their approval. The Local Government Association had published their response that day.

The service needed to consider member awareness and engagement in response to the gender pensions gap report and communications were key and were continually reviewed.

The Governance and Regulations Manager asked the Board to familiarise themselves with the Hymans online training platform.

RESOLVED: That the Local Pension Board note the Governance and Compliance report.

101. **Training Strategy**

The Governance and Regulations Manager drew Members' attention to the key proposals in the table and the new mandatory training framework. From an administrative point of view there would be a significant improvement with regard to the audit trail and key areas of measurement of knowledge. The mandatory modules

would need to be completed within 12 months with current issue modules to be completed within 3 months of release. The Online Training Platform would be reviewed after 12 months and a decision on maintaining knowledge would be made following the review. There would be core training required to be undertaken and bespoke training would be provided where beneficial. External training was still on offer to Members if requested and remains detailed in the Governance and Compliance Report. The Team would seek to achieve a balance between online training and face to face. The Training Strategy would be submitted to the next Pension Fund Committee and once approved the Board Members would be contacted and asked to commence the training.

RESOLVED: The Local Pension Board reviewed the Northamptonshire Pension Fund Training Strategy.

102. **Northamptonshire Pension Fund Agenda Plan**

RESOLVED: The Local Pension Board note the forward agenda plan.

103. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED: That Under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Pension Board agreed that the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act would be disclosed to them.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____