



Pensions Fund Committee - Investment Sub-Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Pensions Fund Committee - Investment Sub-Committee held at The Court Room - The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Wednesday 22 November 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Malcolm Longley (Chair)
Councillor Charles Morton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor Phil Bignell
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Peter Borley-Cox

Also Present:

Chris West, Mercer Ltd
Jonathan Crowther, Mercer Ltd
David Crum, Independent Advisor

Apologies for Absence:

Robert Austin

Officers:

Ben Barlow, Funding and Investment Manager
Mark Whitby, Head of Pensions
James Smith, Assistant Director - Finance (Strategy)
Amala Jose, Pension Services Financial Manager

97. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Robert Austin.

98. Declarations of Interest

No new interests were declared

99. Chair's Announcements

Councillor Lawman was stuck in traffic and would be arriving late.

100. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Investment sub-committee of 27 September 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

101. **Review of the Action Log**

The Funding and Investment Manager drew attention to the Action Log and the three action points. In January APEX would be looking at a timberland product within the ACCESS pool and this review would hopefully be completed by the end of 2024. With regard to the private equity review, Harbourvest drawn down was expected in the next quarter. It was noted that the Property Portfolio review would be discussed later in the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Action Log be noted.

102. **Stewardship and Engagement Reporting**

The Funding and Investment Manager provided a summary of the voting activity for the six months ending 30 June 2023, including votes for and against management. The number of votes cast were 3,583 in favour, 446 against and 149 not cast. There were 74 instances where Baillie Gifford had voted outside the ACCESS voting policy in the last six months for assets held under pool governance, including voting relating to the appointment of auditors, election of directors and remuneration. This was not considered to be an issue. The report listed the meetings when the engagements with investment managers had been held.

RESOLVED:

That the Investment Sub-Committee noted the report.

103. **Quarterly Performance Report for the period ending 30 September 2023**

At the Chair's invitation, Chris West and Jonathan Crowther from Mercer presented the quarterly performance report.

Referring to the performance over the last quarter the returns had been slightly down on the third quarter and overall it had been more benign with the equity markets flat and interest rates high. However, the funding level was still 148% so was still strong. In the last quarter, there had been a strong performance for the dollar against sterling. The fund was in the process of switching from equity to fixed asset credit. It was likely that there would be changes to the alternative asset classes in the next 6 months. The performance of DGF was slightly behind the benchmark and Baillie Gifford and Longview had had the best performance. Commodities had provided positive returns.

David Crum noted that the funding level figure in the funding box on page 27 was incorrect.

With regard to manager performance, it was noted that this would be covered in the private session.

RESOLVED:

That the Investment Sub-Committee noted the quarterly performance report for the period ending 30 September 2023.

104. **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 4.15 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____