



Pensions Fund Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Pensions Fund Committee held at The Court Room, The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Wednesday 29 March 2023 at 4.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Malcolm Longley (Chair)
Councillor Charles Morton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Phil Bignell
Councillor Lloyd Bunday
Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Jamie Lane
Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor Peter Matten
Peter Borley-Cox
Andy Langford

Also Present:

Peter Gent, Senior Investment Consultant, Mercer
Chris West, Investment Consultant, Mercer
Douglas Green FFA, Hymans Robertson

Officers:

Michelle Oakensen
Cory Blose
Mark Whitby, Head of Pensions
James Smith, Assistant Director - Finance (Strategy)
Mark Whitby, Head of Pensions
David Crum, Independent Advisor
Michelle Oakensen, Governance and Regulations Manager
Sharon Grimshaw, Communications Officer
Cory Blose, Employer Services and Communications Manager
Marina Watkins, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Cathrine Russell

135. Declarations of Interest

Peter Borley-Cox declared a personal interest as members of LGPS.
Councillor Graham Lawman disclosed a pecuniary interest as his wife is a deferred member of LGPS. He also declared a personal interest as a member of Wellingborough Town Council and a member of the board for St Christopher Hatton Academy, Oakway Academy, Ecton Village Academy, Victoria Primary Academy and Croyland Academy.

136. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Pensions Fund Committee of 12 December 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

137. **Administration Report**

At the Chair's invitation, Michelle Oakensen, Governance and Regulations Manager presented the Administration report.

The Committee was advised that a non-material breach had taken place where 197 notification letters were not issued within the statutory 2 month deadline. The letters had been sent out in early February and the issue has been resolved.

In response to questions regarding the target to respond to 80% of requests for an estimate of benefits within 10 working days, Mark Whitby, Head of Pensions advised that Key Performance Indicators could be revised if deemed necessary. High priority estimates were prioritised for estimates.

RESOLVED:

That the Pension Committee:

- 1) approves the proposed development of Key Performance Indicators during 2023/2024 (section 5.1.2)
- 2) notes the contents of the report.

138. **Governance and Compliance Report**

Michelle Oakensen, Governance and Regulations Manager outlined the report. The Government had advised of a project reset regarding the dashboard programme. Further clarification was being awaited and the Committee would be kept updated on the situation.

The Committee was assured that recent changes to transfer guidance had been made as required.

The LGPS online learning platform was almost ready and it was hoped that it would be available from 12 April 2023.

In response to a question regarding the deferred connection guidance, it was noted that there would be a need to review the situation once there was more certainty on dates.

RESOLVED:

That the Pension Fund Committee:

- 1) notes the Governance and Compliance Report

2) approves the Training Strategy amendment to reflect the current core mandatory training approach (section 5.7)

139. **Annual Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy**

Mark Whitby, Head of Pensions outlined the report regarding the annual business plan and medium term strategy. The climate action plan for 2023/4 had been updated and expanded upon from the previous version.

Recommendation 3 referred to a request to move to a three year review cycle of strategies and policies. Should changes be required outside this timeframe, then the items would be submitted to Committee for approval. The intention would be to stagger the timeframes so that they were not all submitted to Committee at the same time.

Recommendation 4 requested appropriate delegations in order to progress procurements. The Committee queried whether it would be advisable to set a financial limit after which consultation should take place with the Committee Chair. The Head of Pensions advised that any contracts would always be discussed with the Section 151 officer.

The Chair suggested that a £100k limit could be imposed, upon which the Head of Pensions should discuss the outcome of the procurement with the Chair and Section 151 Officer or his Deputy.

In response to a questions, Douglas Green FFA, Hymans Robertson advised that being cashflow negative was not such an issue as long as there was awareness.

The contract for mortality and address screening services is due to expire in June 2023. . The intention is to continue with the current arrangements for a year and allow for further investigation into alternatives.

The Committee agreed the recommendations within the report, subject to changes to recommendation 4 whereby the Committee agreed that contracts over £100k were subject to consultation with the Committee Chair and the Section 151 Officer (or deputy). The decisions would be referred to Committee in the case of any issues.

RESOLVED:

That the Pension Committee:

1) notes the status of the 2022/23 business plan activities and current financial position (section 5.1)

2) approves the contents of the Business Plan and Strategy 2023/24 (see section 5.2)

3) a) approves a change in the Committee review cycle for Fund Strategies and Policies to a standardised 3-year review cycle (or as and when required should Regulations or other factors necessitate an earlier review of the Fund Strategy or Policy) (see section 5.3)

b) delegates to the Head of Pensions the approval of non-material amendments to Fund Strategies and Policies between triennial reviews (see section 5.3)

4) approves the delegation for the Head of Pensions to progress the procurements within the Business Plan and award contracts to the successful suppliers up to a

value of £100k. Contracts above this amount would be subject to consultation with the Chair of the Pensions Committee and the Section 151 Officer (or Deputy) (see section 5.4)

140. Overpayment of Pension Entitlement Policy

Michelle Oakensen, Governance and Regulations Manager outlined the report. The fundamental aspects of the policy remained unchanged, though the review had identified a need to include lump sum overpayments in order to provide clarity.

The Policy would now be reviewed and approved on a three year rolling programme along with other strategies and policies, in line with the committee's earlier decision.

RESOLVED:

The Pension Fund Committee is asked to approve the Overpayment of Pension Entitlement Policy.

141. Communication Strategy and Plan

Sharon Grimshaw, Communications Officer outlined the report and detailed the communications strategy, communications plan and the website review project for 2023.

In response to questions regarding how the number of online users could be increased, it was stated that personal emails were requested from employees before they retired. The number of online users of the scheme was relatively good in comparison to other funds.

It was noted that some people had no internet access or did not make use of it. The committee was assured that this group of people would not be excluded from communications and that communication by letter would always be made available.

RESOLVED:

That the Pension Committee:

- a) approves the Communication Strategy (see section 5.1)
- b) approves the Communication Plan (see section 5.2)
- c) notes the work being undertaken on the website development review (see section 5.3)

142. Employers Admissions and Cessations

Cory Blöse, Employer Services and Communications Manager outlined the report which detailed two employers ceasing participation in the Northamptonshire Pension Fund.

RESOLVED:

That the Pension Committee:

- a) Notes the exit of the following bodies from the Northamptonshire Pension Fund:
- ABM Catering Limited (Innovate MAT)
 - The Complementary Education Academy Limited
- b) Notes the update on previously reported cessations cases.

143. **Northamptonshire Pension Fund Forward Agenda Plan**

Michelle Oakensen, Governance and Regulations Manager outlined the Pension Fund Forward Agenda Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Northamptonshire Pension Fund Forward Agenda Plan be noted.

144. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Chair moved that the remainder of the meeting be held in private:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph(s) 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: Members agreed that the public and press were excluded from the remainder of the meeting and the Investment Sub-Committee moved into private session.

145. **Private Minutes**

146. **Valuation Update**

147. **Investment Strategy Review**

148. **ACCESS Update**

149. **Urgent Business**

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified

Chair: _____

Date: _____