



West Northamptonshire Council

Pension Fund Board

24/4/2024

Mark Whitby – Head of Pensions

Report Title	Northamptonshire Pension Fund - Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy 2024/25
Report Author	Mark Whitby Head of Pensions mark.whitby@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Head of Pensions	Mark Whitby	22/03/2024
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Year-end status of Business Plan activities for 2023/24

Appendix B - Northamptonshire Pension Fund Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy 2024/25

Appendix C - Cyber activity action plan – **exempt**

Appendix D - Climate Action Plan 2024/25

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to the Pension Board the Northamptonshire Pension Fund Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy 2024/25.
- 1.2 To update the Board on the end-of-year position of 2023/24 Business Plan activities.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The report provides an update on the 2023/24 Business Plan activities, highlighting any activities not concluded and featuring in the 2024/25 Business Plan. A summary of the concluded procurements during 2023/34 are also provided in section 6.1 & Appendix A. The year-end position of the Cyber Resilience activities can be located in Appendix C (exempt).
- 2.2 The Business Plan and Medium-term strategy contains activities that are not considered as business as usual and provides key milestones and associated budget requirements. The Board are asked to note the contents of the 2024/25 Business Plan including resource requirements in section 6.2 & appendix B. The Climate Action Plan can be located in Appendix D.

- 2.3 The report also updates the Board on a decision to join the Pensions for Purpose community to support activities in connection with sustainable and impact investing (see section 6.3).

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Pension Board is asked to:
- 1) note the status of the 2023/24 Business Plan activities and current financial position (see section 6.1)
 - 2) note the contents of the Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy 2024/25 (see section 6.2)
 - 3) note the membership application to Pensions for Purpose on behalf of the Northamptonshire Pension Fund (6.3).

4. Reason for Recommendations

- To ensure adequate oversight of the activities impacting the Northamptonshire Pension Fund.
- To ensure continuous monitoring of business plan activities.
- To ensure resources are managed appropriately to meet the objectives of the Fund.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 It is considered good governance for the Northamptonshire Pension Fund to adopt a Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy that:
- Sets out the objectives of the administering authority with regards to the management of the Fund.
 - Documents the priorities and improvements to be implemented during the next three years to help achieve those objectives.
 - Enables progress and performance to be monitored in relation to those priorities; and
 - Provides a clear vision for the next three years.
- 5.2 The proposed Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy for the Northamptonshire Pension Fund for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27 is in Appendix B.

6. Issues and Choices

Update on the 2023/24 Business Plan

- 6.1 The Business Plan activities from the 2023/24 financial year have been reviewed with a year-end position being established. The majority of activities have achieved a 'green' RAG status whereby the activity is either completed or it was pre-determined that the activity would be completed after March 2024.
- 6.2 There were four exceptions where the RAG status was 'amber' in the following areas –
- Complete the Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) Rectification
 - Application of the McCloud age discrimination remedy.
 - Processing of undecided leaver records
 - Implement recommendations from the review of the website and digital communications.
- These activities did not progress at the desired rate for 2023/24 and have been rescheduled (with the exception of GMP rectification which should conclude by end of June 2024) as part of the 2024/25 Business Plan for resolution.

6.3 The procurements within the 2023/24 Business Plan were all concluded, and the outcomes were as follows:

Procurement	Award	Start date
Benefits and Consultancy Services	Hymans Robertson LLP (currently Aon)	1 April 2024
Actuarial Consultancy Services	Hymans Robertson LLP (incumbent)	1 April 2024
Legal Services	Squire Patton Boggs (incumbent)	5 February 2024
Administration and Pensioner Payroll	Heywood Pension Technologies (incumbent)	1 October 2024

6.4 Details of the year-end position of all the activities and actions that are being carried over can be located in Appendix A and the Cyber Resilience Action Plan can be located in Appendix C.

6.5 The financial forecast for end-of-year position for 2023-24 is included within the 2024/25 Business Plan in Appendix B.

Business plan and Medium-Term Strategy 2024/25

6.6 The Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy concentrates on activities that are not considered business as usual, identifying key milestones and budget requirements. It is split into the following core areas:

- Procurement of services
- Core governance activities
- Scheme member and data projects
- Investment related activities
- Communications

6.7 Progress made against the Business Plan will continue to be reported to the Board at each meeting via the Business Plan Update report or other relevant report (where appropriate). Where progress against the Business Plan has fallen behind schedule further detail will be provided.

6.8 Estimated costs for the activities in appendix B have been detailed alongside the activity and within the financial forecasting for the relevant years. Where further costs become known during the course of the new financial year these will be notified to the Board via the Business Plan Update report.

6.9 With the increasing complexities of the Scheme and the requirements of significant projects such as McCloud and Pension Dashboards it is becoming more challenging to administer the Fund (approximately 80,700 members and over 300 contributing employers) in a compliant and timely manner and on this basis, additional posts to the current establishment have been identified to alleviate pressure in the following areas -

- Three additional Pension Officer posts (full time) to support business as usual and facilitate the completion of undecided leavers backlog in time for the introduction of the government’s Pensions Dashboard initiative and the work that is required from the McCloud rectification.
- A new Training Officer post (full time) to facilitate consistent and robust training to Officers allowing for resource to stay in teams and not be diverted when training is required. This post will allow for more flexibility within the Service and enable more effective succession planning.
- A new Administration Assistant (part time) to support with general administrative tasks to allow for workloads to be effectively managed ensuring key activities are prioritised.

- 6.10 As only approximately half of this resource will be engaged in NPF activity, the posts will be funded accordingly to reflect this.
- 6.11 The Climate Action Plan for 2024/25 is located at Appendix D and it also published on the Fund's website.
- 6.12 The Business Plan and Medium-Term Strategy was approved by the Pension Fund Committee at its meeting of 27 March 2024.

Pensions for Purpose

- 6.13 Officers recommended the Fund joins the Pensions for Purpose community to support activities in connection with sustainable and impact investing. This is aligned with our investment strategy and responsible investment approach, as well as our climate action plan activities.
- 6.14 Pensions for Purpose shares best practice and promotes understanding of ESG and sustainable and impact investing. It does this by providing access to events, thought leadership, case studies, guidance and research.
- 6.15 Pensions for Purpose has a growing community of over 380 organisational members. Membership is free and the Fund's name would be formally included in the Members' Directory, hence the reason for a board decision on this matter.
- 6.16 Further information is available at [Home | Pensions For Purpose](#).
- 6.17 The Pension Fund Committee approved joining the Pensions for Purpose community at its meeting of 27 March 2024.

7 Implications (including financial implications)

Resources and Financial

- 7.1 Performance against the financial estimates in the Business Plan will be presented to the Pension Board each meeting. The Business Plan sets out the cost of each activity where known or where costs become known during the course of the year, the Pension Board will be updated accordingly.
- 7.2 The Fund's share of the cost of the additional posts is approximately £72k to £80k depending on appointment scale point.

Legal

- 7.3 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

Risk

- 7.4 The mitigated risks associated with this report have been captured in the Fund's risk register as detailed below -

Risk	Residual risk rating
Those charged with governance are unable to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.	Green
Pension Fund objectives are not defined and agreed.	Green
Failure to provide relevant information to the Pension Committee/Pension Board to enable informed decision making.	Green

The Fund's full risk register can be found on the Fund's website at the following link: [Northamptonshire Risk Register](#)

Relevant Pension Fund Objectives

7.5 The following objectives have been considered in this report -

- To have robust governance arrangements in place, to facilitate informed decision making, supported by appropriate advice, policies and strategies, whilst ensuring compliance with appropriate legislation and statutory guidance.
- To continually monitor and measure clearly articulated objectives through business planning.
- To continually monitor and manage risk, ensuring the relevant stakeholders are able to mitigate risk where appropriate.

Consultation

7.6 Not applicable.

8 Background Papers

8.1 Not applicable