

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Local Pension Board** held in Remote Meeting - This meeting is being held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday 11 March 2021 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor A Hopgood - Chair

Scheme Member Representative:

Ian Densham

Paul Cooper – Pensions Manager
Beverley White – Finance Manager
Ashleigh Phillips – Pensions Team Leader
Bryan Smith – Legal Manager

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fraser Tinsley and Les Oliver.

2 Declarations of Interest

Ian Densham reported that he was now also a member of Tyne and Wear Local Government Pension Scheme by virtue of his employment as a casual customer services assistant for Tyne and Wear Metro.

3 The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 December 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

a Matter Arising from the Minutes

As requested at the last meeting Paul Cooper provided a summary of the decisions taken by the Pension Fund Committee between 12 March and 3 December 2020:

11 June 2020

The Committee approved the investment of 15% of the Fund's total asset allocation to BCPP's Sterling Index-Linked Bond sub-fund, and approved the transition from the Fund's existing Index-Linked Gilt holdings with Royal London Asset Management (RLAM).

10 September 2020

There were no investment decisions made at this meeting.

3 December 2020

The Committee considered BCPP'S Responsible Investment Policy and authorised the Corporate Director of Resources to amend the Fund's Investment Strategy Statement.

The Committee noted the Fund's Exit Policy and authorised the Corporate Director of Resources to make a determination on the amount of any exit credit payable to an existing employer, in line with the Policy.

In terms of investment decisions, the Committee approved the investment of 15% of the Fund's total asset allocation to BCPP's MAC Sub-fund and approved the transition from the Fund's existing Global Bond holdings with Alliance Bernstein.

Paul Cooper advised that in advance of each of the investment decisions being made the Committee undertook training supported by Officers of the Fund as well as Mercer, the Fund's Adviser and Anthony Fletcher, the Fund's Independent Investment Adviser. The Committee also received presentations from BCPP in the training sessions. Following discussion with the Local Pension Board Chair, he would circulate the training materials used at each of the training sessions so that Board Members could be assured that the Committee had made informed investment decisions.

4 Observations from Pension Fund Committee held on 11 March 2021

Local Pension Board Members Councillor Hopgood and Ian Densham were in attendance at the Pension Fund Committee, and had no particular observations to make. The Board members considered that the Committee had asked pertinent questions of Officers, Advisers and BCPP.

Paul Cooper added that the Committee received a presentation from BCPP which included progress with pooling and performance.

RESOLVED:

That the information given be noted.

5 Communications Review

The Board considered a report from the Corporate Director of Resources which provided details of how different stakeholder groups receive communication from the Pension Fund, and explained plans to develop the communication strategy (for copy see file of Minutes).

The online services for active and deferred members had been well-utilised since it was launched, and would be available for pensioners with effect from 1 April 2021. He would report back to the Board on progress.

Following a question from the Chair about access to on-line services, Paul Cooper advised that in three written notifications, members had been invited to opt out of using the on-line portal, and those who had would continue to receive written communications.

In response to questions from Ian Densham, Paul Cooper confirmed that the on-line portal for scheme employers was operational and included monthly data collection. Monthly data collection was useful for larger employers, but not necessarily for smaller scheme employers where there were few monthly changes. The Pensions Team had worked proactively with employers during the pandemic, and had provided guidance to all employers on the furlough scheme.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) Cases

The Board considered a report from the Corporate Director of Resources which provided a summary of the outcomes of internal dispute cases and Pensions Ombudsman cases the Pension Fund had been involved in since April 2020 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 LGPS Administering Authority Discretions

The Board considered a report from the Corporate Director of Resources which advised of the choices available to the Administering Authority under the regulations governing the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

and how these were being exercised within the Pension Fund (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Board was satisfied that the way the Council exercised its discretions under the LGPS was robust.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8 Local Pension Board Annual Report

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an overview of the work completed by the Local Pension Board during 2020/21 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Pension Fund Committee would receive the report for information.

At its next meeting the Board would set its Work Programme for the following two years.

The Chair also noted that scheme employer representatives on the Board may change following the forthcoming elections so it would be useful for any new members to be involved in setting the Work Programme.

Resolved:

That the information be noted.

9 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

That the next meeting of the Local Pension Board be held following the meeting of Pension Fund Committee on a date to be confirmed in June 2021.

10 Any Other Business

Ian Densham referred to the forthcoming elections which could see a change in the membership of the Pension Fund Committee and a loss of knowledge and experience. Paul Cooper advised that member training would be provided before the first meeting of the Committee following the elections, and the Committee would continue to receive the support of the Fund's Advisers.

The Chair highlighted the importance of specific training for the Chair who would also represent Durham as a shareholder of BCPP.