
PENSION BOARD 19/04/21

Present: Osian Richards - Chair (Member Representative), Cllr Aled Evans (Employer's Representative), H. Eifion Jones (Member Representative), Sioned Parry (Employer's Representative) and Huw Trainor (Employer's Representative) and Sharon Warnes (Member Representative).

Officers: Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance Department), Delyth Jones Thomas (Investment Manager), Meirion Jones (Pensions Manager) and Lowri Haf Evans (Democracy Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Peredur Jenkins - Chair of the Pensions Committee

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee, held on 22 February 2021, as a true record.

In response to a question, following information shared by the Pensions Regulator in a recent webinar regarding consultation on a draft version of the single practice code, the Head of Finance noted that he would try to find out more information about the situation. He suggested that any response would be formulated between the Board and the Pensions Committee

5. MINUTES OF PENSIONS COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Pensions Committee held on 25 March 2021 were accepted for information.

It was reported that some of the items discussed at the Committee had already been pre-scrutinised by the Board. It was noted that an update of the Risk Register had been submitted to the Committee following implementation of the amendments suggested by the Board.

6. PENSION BOARD CHAIR DRAFT REPORT FOR 2020/21 FOR GWYNEDD PENSION FUND'S ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

The Chair of the Pension Board's initial draft report for 2020/21 was submitted,

with Members invited to contribute additions or amendments to the report. The members were reminded that the Chair of the Pension Board was required to submit an annual report as part of the Pension Fund annual report and as part of the Fund's annual meeting. It was noted that the reported needed to be completed by 31/07/21.

It was explained that the layout of the report corresponded to the 2019/20 report, and offered factual statements that reflected the subjects discussed.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

Possible additions and amendments to the draft:

- Add the 19/04/21 meeting to the attendance table
- There was a need to include more information regarding training - Members were requested to submit information about training sessions they had attended

In response to a question regarding creating a central record for a training register, it was noted that an arrangement had now been established.

RESOLVED to accept the report

7. PENSION ADMINISTRATION

A comprehensive report was submitted by the Pensions Manager, providing a general overview of pensions administration over the past six months, along with information about the work completed over the period, an update on various projects along with a list of the challenges faced by the Administration Unit on a daily basis.

Gratitude was expressed for the report.

In response to an observation regarding the suggestion of establishing a small team to complete the work deriving from the McCloud ruling, the Pensions Manager expressed that recent investments in the Unit would allow hours to complete this additional work. It was agreed that the staff needed to be responsible, experienced and trained. It was noted that the closing date suggested to complete the work (March 2022) was unrealistic as the solution had not been introduced to the process.

In response to an observation regarding correspondence with individuals by letter, perhaps every five years, regarding the death grant, it was noted that the Pensions Unit communicated with Members, but was striving to avoid doing so by letter. It was highlighted that 'the nominee' was included on annual statements, and that it was possible for members to update their policies online via the Self Service portal. In addition, as old information was uncovered, the Unit also sent relevant forms to the member in question asking them to update their details. It was emphasised that the Council's Communication and Engagement Service had been supporting the Pensions unit to upgrade information sharing methods, and that a 'My pension online' tile had been added to the Council's staff intranet.

In response to an observation regarding the reason the benefits of the career average element appeared low in the summary table of Scheme-specific data results, it was noted that work was being done to improve this by adding more data / records to the system. It was noted that the results submitted had been produced

from data extracted from the Gwynedd Altair live service on 29 September 2020. It was hoped that the Unit would invest in software to produce its own reports in future - this would make it possible to obtain information regarding the latest situation, and accurate, current data.

RESOLVED to accept the information

8. WALES PENSION PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Investment Manager submitted a report, updating members on the Partnership's work, the performance of the Fund, and ongoing developments since its establishment in 2017. A summary was provided of the funds' performance up to 31/12/20, with attention drawn to the key messages.

It was reported that regular meetings via Teams allowed matters to be discussed in a timely manner, and this appeared to be effective, with matters progressing more quickly. It was reported that the easy transfers had been implemented, and work was now being undertaken on matters that seemed more challenging, such as Private Markets. It was emphasised that Hymans supported the work of asset pooling in this category, with continuous business discussions arranged to discuss the appropriate structure and mechanisms for investment.

Attention was drawn to the discussion around the Member representative appointment process for the Joint Governance Committee. It was highlighted that the recommendation put forward in a report to the Joint Committee (24 March 2021) was that each local Pension Board should nominate one scheme member representative who would meet the requirements of the job description. The appointment process would be undertaken by a sub-group who would recommend a nomination for approval by the Joint Governance Committee. The Head of Finance expressed that he would support Osian Richards (Chair of Gwynedd Pension Board) to become a member of the Joint Committee.

Gratitude was expressed for the report

In the context of Private Markets, and in response to a question regarding the term 'infrastructure' and whether the field would include 'technology', it was expressed that the term covered a very wide base and that there was no formal detail to the field at the present time. A tendency to keep to traditional matters within the field was reported, but that there was a willingness to consider other alternative options. It was added that there were interesting opportunities ahead, some of which would be relevant to Wales.

In response to a question regarding the percentage split within the key fields of focus (5% for Private Equity and 2.5% for Infrastructure), it was noted that returns were consistent, but that it was likely the split would need to be reviewed in the future.

The Head of Finance's proposal to support Osian Richards as a member of the Joint Governance Committee was supported

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.00 pm

CHAIRMAN