



South Tyneside Council

Local Pensions Board Minutes

7 July 2020

Present: Jim Woodlingfield (*in the Chair*), John Pearson, Tom Hunter, Mick Brodie, Nicholas Wirz and Phil Smith

Ian Bainbridge (Head of Pensions)
Paul McCann (Principal Governance and Funding Manager)
Lindsey Davison (Communications Manager)
Siân Forster-Purvis (Strategy and Democracy Support Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Hay and Chris Sharkey

1. Declarations of Interest

J Woodlingfield, N Wirz, M Brodie, P Smith, T Hunter, I Bainbridge, P McCann, L Davison, and S Forster-Purvis declared non-pecuniary interests in all issues, as members of the Pension Fund.

They remained in the meeting for the discussion and determination of all matters.

2. Minutes of 19 December 2019

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019 be confirmed as a true record.

3. Matter arising from the minutes

Item 11 – Staffing Changes

The Head of Pensions advised the Board that the Principal Investment Manager was due to leave and that the post would be vacant for approximately 3-6 months. It was also noted that in line with the Service Plan for 2019/20 there would be a review of the organisational structure of the pensions service.

It was noted that Paul McCann had been appointed to the post of Principal Governance and Funding Manager. At the current time this was a fixed term appointment and consideration to making this permanent would be form part of the organisational structure review.

4. External Audit Plan 2019/20

The report set out Ernst and Young's audit plan which summarised the work undertaken. It was noted that the report was compiled pre Covid-19 and that materiality had fallen although it was not seen as a problem. The issue would be monitored and any significant changes would be reported to the Board.

The Board asked questions relating to concerns around Local Government funding as a result of Covid-19. Officers assured the Board that the financial position of South Tyneside Council and the Pension Fund was secure.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

5. Local Pension Board Quarterly Report to Pensions Committee

The Chairman took that the report was for information and read only and no discussion took place on the item.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

6. Meeting Dates for 2019/20

Submitted: Report of the Head of Pensions

The report set out the meeting dates for the Pensions Committee, the Investment Panel and the Local Pensions Board for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

The Board felt that the remote format for the meeting was not ideal, but understood that it was needed at the current time. A request was made, however, that if possible, the meeting in October should be a physical face to face meeting. The Officers noted the preference but stated that any decisions on meetings could only take place if it was

consistent with South Tyneside Council policy at that time and in line with Government guidance.

Agreed: That the Board note the dates.

7. Local Pension Board – Annual Report

The Chairman updated the Board on his report setting out the work undertaken by the Board during 2019/20.

Agreed: That the report be noted. Once prepared the Annual report will be presented to Pensions Committee.

8. Work Programme for 2020/21

Submitted: Report of Legal Services

The Head of Pensions presented a report which detailed a range of items that the Board may want to include on their work programme for the 2020/21 year.

A number of comments were received from Board members who were unable to attend and these were discussed and noted.

The Board understood that there was a lot of uncertainty at present and therefore the programme needed to be flexible. A Board member requested that a Review of the Service Plan be included on the work programme.

The Head of Pensions noted that the Board had input to the Service Plan as there was an annual presentation to the Committee and the Board in September each year. It was also noted that this could be discussed as a follow up item at the Board meeting in October, to ensure that the Boards views were fully reflected at an early stage of the planning process.

The proposed Work Programme which was detailed at paragraph 24 of the report was discussed and agreed.

Agreed: That (a) the report be noted and (b) the changes detailed at paragraph 24 of the report be agreed.

9. Risk Management and Internal Audit

Submitted: Report of the Head of Pensions

The Head of Pensions detailed a report which set out the current position on the Fund level Risk Register. The current version of the risk register was reviewed in May and resulted in six new risks being added

to the risk register and nine risks having had their ranking increased. This was largely to reflect the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Fund and the wider economy.

A number of comments were received from Board members who were unable to attend and these were discussed and noted.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

10. Chairman's Urgent Items

There were no urgent items to discuss.

11. Resolution to Exclude the Public

Resolved: That the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the agenda items as they involve exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

12. Annual Scheme Employer Overview

The Chairman took that the report was for read only and no discussion took place on the item.

A comment was received from a Board member who was unable to attend and this was noted.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

13. Covid-19

The Head of Pensions detailed a report which updated the Board on a number of areas where Covid-19 had impacted on the Fund and its operations.

A comment was received from a Board member who was unable to attend and this was discussed and noted.

The Board felt that the Fund had coped really well. As well as new ways of working due to the pandemic, the delivery of the Merger and the ability to carry out the year end processing was a great achievement. The Board passed on their congratulations to the team.

The Board were informed that the Fund was monitoring the position of employers in the Fund.

The Head of Pensions stressed that whilst there were new systems of working in place, the governance arrangements in operation ensured

that decisions could still be taken at either a virtual meeting or under delegated powers.

The Fund's recovery plan was discussed and it was noted that a small number of staff were working from the office but strict social distancing rules were being applied.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

14. Pensions Committee Agenda and Minutes of 11 June 2020

The Board had received the full Pensions Committee Agenda for information.

Agreed: That the agenda, reports and minutes be noted.

15. Review of Meeting and Report to Pensions Committee

The Board and officers discussed what had worked well and not as well during the virtual meeting. The Chairman agreed to collate his report to the Pensions Committee and forward it to Officers.

The Board re-iterated they were keen to resume face to face meetings as quickly as possible and asked whether hybrid meetings could be considered as an option going forward.

Agreed: That the update be noted.

16. Date and time of next meeting

Agreed: That the next meeting of the Local Pensions Board would be held on Wednesday 21 October 2020 at 10.00am
