

Wiltshire Pension Fund Committee

MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Richard Britton (Chairman), Cllr Kevin Small (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Gavin Grant, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Vijay Manro, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Robert Yuill, Mike Pankiewicz, Jodie Smart, Karl Read, Fletcher and Cllr Nick Botterill

Also Present:

Karl Read, Anthony Fletcher and Cllr Nick Botterill.

82 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Claire Anthony and Lizzie Watkin.

83 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

84 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of disclosable interests.

85 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman noted that at the last Committee meeting feedback had been requested from Members to remove reference of the Investment Sub-Committee from the Constitution. No comments had been received, therefore the Chairman and Members were now happy to proceed with the required changes.

86 **Review of Actions Log**

The Committee reviewed the actions which had arisen from previous meetings.

87 **Public Participation**

No statements or questions were submitted.

88 **Investment Manager**

Jennifer Devine, Head of Wiltshire Fund introduced the Fund's new Investment Management Consultant, Redington.

The Fund were joined by Kieran Harkin (Managing Director) and Charlie Sheridan (Vice President) from Redington, who expressed that they were happy to be working with the Wiltshire Pension Fund. Mr Harkin noted that he had previously worked alongside the Wiltshire Pension Fund in another advisory role for four years which concluded with the 2022/23 Investment Strategy Review. It was outlined that Redington had a significant back-office team and would deliver advice linked to the Fund's aims, particularly with sustainability and member engagement. An overview of the work of Redington was provided including examples.

Following the introduction, there was time for the Committee to ask questions and raise points, which included but were not limited to a request for Redington's initial observations of the Wiltshire Pension Fund and an overview of their relationship with the Brunel Pension Partnership. It was also clarified that the appointment of Redington would be for a five-year period, with the working relationship of the Fund and Redington also discussed. Detail was also provided on Redington's views on NetZero.

89 **Fund Annual Report and Accounts**

Chris Moore, Investment and Accounting Team Lead presented the draft Fund Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24. The presentation covered the following points including but not limited to that the report aimed to be as engaging as possible with the inclusion of case studies. Reference was also drawn to the process of auditing accounts, with it further noted that at the previous Committee meeting, the Committee had approved the Going Concern Report. It was outlined that a further mini-magazine and one page summary would be produced for engagement purposes.

The Committee discussed the report with feedback provided that the document was attractive, informative and accessible. Clarity was provided regarding costs savings from Pooling table on page 100 of the agenda pack, with it suggested that the figures reported by the Fund were different to that of Brunel. Officers clarified that the figures reported by Wiltshire were consolidated by Brunel to report a pool wide total.

A discussion took place regarding the audit programme, which included that the Fund was now working with new auditors, Grant-Thornton and that their requests and sample list had been long, therefore creating extra work for the team. It was further outlined for the accounts going back to the year ending 2020, these accounts were still outstanding and waiting to be signed, with the Fund having previously answered all queries raised, with further queries being raised. Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development

Management and Strategic Planning explained that delays experienced on the unsigned accounts was due to the Council waiting for an asset valuation company to complete the valuation of assets.

The reputational risk to the Wiltshire Fund was discussed because of the delays, with it suggested that Deloitte no longer wanted to conduct local authority audits. Assurance was provided that this had been repeatedly flagged for concern to the Section 151 Officer, who had attempted to drive the process forward by contacting organisations involved.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed publication of the unaudited annual report and accounts 2023/24 and summary documents, and authorised officers to make any necessary minor amendments following the conclusion of the audit.

90 **Responsible Investment Update**

Chris Moore, Investment and Accounting Team Lead presented a report on the Funds responsible investment activities. The presentation covered the following points including but not limited to that this was a regular report on the actions of the Responsible Investment Plan for the year that showed many tasks green rated for progress and contained links to publications and case studies. It was noted that the phrase “Levelling Up” had now been dropped and therefore the report planned would be rebranded as an “investing in the UK” report, with research taking place to identify case studies.

The Committee discussed the update, with a discussion taking place on the consultation and engagement of younger members. It was outlined that though the Fund had attempted to run a focus group, only one member under the age of thirty signed up to attend. Furthermore, a review of the Member section of the Fund website was set to take place with this potentially being tailored to new joiners which might tap into the younger demographic. A point was raised that it would be important to understand how young people would like to be communicated with rather than the Fund thinking on their behalf. Possible ideas to improve engagement included speaking to unison, local universities and colleges.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to use the report as a basis for monitoring the progress that is being made towards implementing responsible investment policy.

91 **Responsible Investment Policy**

Jennifer Devine, Head of Wiltshire Fund presented the Fund's updated Responsible Investment policy. The presentation covered the following points including but not limited to that a covering paper had been included within the agenda that covered the main changes within the policy. It was outlined that structurally the policy aimed to state who the Pension Fund was, what it was trying to achieve and then detail of how it would achieve this.

The Committee discussed the report with clarity provided on impact investing statement, that the committee has not and will not sacrifice long term investment returns when achieving impact investing objectives. A discussion took place regarding how the differing age demographics within the Fund may have different perspectives and desires for investments, with it referenced that those under 30 years old tended to be more worried about environmental and social impacts. The level of risk involved with investing in oil and gas companies was discussed.

The separation of the policy from the Fund's Investment Strategy Statement (ISS) was discussed, with it suggested that it would be positive for the integration of the documents to be made obvious. It was suggested by officers that the reason for the separation of the documents was to highlight the strong work being conducted in this area by the Fund and that separation would allow for frequent updating.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to approve the Responsible Investment Policy 2024.

92 **Date of Next Meeting**

The dates of the next meetings were confirmed as:

- Administration focused meeting 10 October 2024
- Investment focused meeting 21 November 2024

93 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

94 **Exclusion of the Public**

It was,

Resolved:

To agree that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Minute Numbers 14 - 18 because it is likely that if members of the public

were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 & 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

95 **Minutes**

The private minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2024 were presented for consideration, and it was,

Resolved:

To approve and sign the minutes as a true and correct record.

96 **LGPS Pension Review**

Jennifer Devine, Head of Wiltshire Fund presented a paper concerning the Government's proposed LGPS Pension Reforms.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

The Committee:

- a) Discussed the potential changes resulting from the pensions review and decided on a "house view".
- b) Discussed and approved the draft response to the call for evidence.
- c) Delegated to the chair, in consultation with officers, to make any decision on how to respond to any consultation about or participation in the pensions review where timescales prevent involvement of the full Committee.
- d) Delegated the production of a cover letter for the response, to be signed off by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Wiltshire Pension Fund Committee summarising the principles discussed under this agenda item.
- e) Instructed that the submission and cover letter be sent to other local authority members of the Brunel Pension Partnership.
- f) Instructed that the submission and cover letter be sent to the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Brunel Pension Partnership to remind them of Wiltshire Pension Fund's status and what the Fund expected of them when formulating their response to reflect the views of the shareholders of the Brunel Pool Fund.

The Chairman called the meeting to a break at 11.41am and then resumed the meeting at 11.46am.

97 **Quarterly Investment Update**

Chris Moore, Investment and Accounting officer presented a report on the Fund quarterly investment performance.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to:

- a) Use the investment reports and the update provided by officers and advisers at the meeting as a basis for monitoring the investment performance and implementation of the strategic asset allocation.
- b) Defer approving the direction of travel around investing locally;
- c) Approve that a training session is arranged on the topic of social/local investment.

98 **Investment Manager Fees and Costs**

Chris Moore, Investment and Accounting officer provided an update on Investment Advisor fee costs.

At the conclusion of debate, it was,

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to use the report as a basis to monitor the Fund's investment management fees and costs for the year to 31 March 2024.

99 **Brunel Governance Update**

Jennifer Devine, Head of Wiltshire Fund provided a verbal update summarising the ongoing Brunel governance arrangements.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 1.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Ben Fielding - Senior Democratic Services Officer of Democratic Services, direct line: 01225 718656 or e-mail:

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