

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

WILTSHIRE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE
17 DECEMBER 2019

Fund Training Strategy Update

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Committee with an update in connection with the Fund's training strategy for Board & Committee members and to present a new training strategy for officers.

Background

2. A framework of training strategies is offered by the Wiltshire Pension Fund to Board & Committee members, Scheme Employers and Officers to ensure that the Administering Authority's commitment to training fulfilled. As outlined in the Director of Finance & Procurement's (s151 Officer) written statement in the Scheme Administration Report of the Fund's Annual Account Report & Accounts all training strategies will be implemented and subject to periodic review.
3. Periodic review of each training strategy is to ensure that it remains pertinent to the needs of its target audience & this report seeks to review two of the three strategies, namely;
 - The annual review of the Board & Committee members training strategy; &
 - The presentation of a draft officer training policy intended for implementation during the period April 2020 to March 2023.
4. The current Board & Committee Member training policy was approved by the Pension Fund Committee on 12th December 2018 & was designed to ensure that all members achieve and maintain a sufficient level of knowledge and understanding to carry out their roles, as a crucial area of compliance for the Fund. It is noted that whilst Board members have a statutory obligation to ensure that they maintain their training and development requirements in accordance with the Public Services Pension Act 2013 (formerly Pension Act 2004 section 248a), good practice is being adopted by Committee members to ensure that they too abide by the requirements specified in the Pension Regulator's code of practice 14 & the Pension Act 2004 sections 247 to 249.
5. Similar to Pension Committee members, officers too have no statutory obligation to undertake training, however as set out in the Fund's Annual Report & Accounts good practice requires that officers charged with any financial decision making on behalf of the pension scheme collectively possess the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to discharge their duties and make the decisions required.

Considerations for the Committee

6. An annual self-assessment of member training needs was circulated to members during October. Each member was scored based on their responses from "No Knowledge" = 1 to "Highly Skilled" = 5 for each question. A summary of the results of the self-assessment are set out in Appendix 1, split by Board & Committee member. Based on the feedback provided the key areas for training and development during 2020 were identified as;

Governance & Legislation

- Governance relating to statutory responsibilities of the treasurer and monitoring officer, as well as managing conflicts of interest.
- Governance relating to the legal roles & responsibilities of members
- Governance relating to Fund delegation, internally in connection with the Administering Authority and externally in relation to the Brunel Pension Partnership
- Understanding LGPS discretions

Investment

- The fiduciary management protocols of the Fund & understanding the performance management of investments
- Understanding tax in relation to Fund investments, particularly those of overseas investments
- Understanding the regulatory investment restrictions placed on LGPSs, including the Myners Principles & MiFID II
- Understanding the nature of risk. Quantifying risk & considering concepts like the efficient frontier.

Accounting & Auditing

- Understanding the role of 3rd party assurance

7. The results show that overall the Committee & the Board feel they operate at a “Skilled” level with only developmental training required in specific areas. The results also demonstrated significant differences in the knowledge & understanding between members & the training themes identified seek to redress the balance between members & to eliminate over reliance on certain members who are highly skilled in a particular area.
8. The officer training policy is designed to address the needs of all officers within the Pension Department irrespective of their stage of development. In summary the policy (Appendix 2), covers the training needs of new inductees into the department, the maintenance of knowledge & understanding for experienced officers to ensure that they collectively continue to possess the requisite skills necessary to discharge their duties and make the decisions required & a development/advanced training strategy aimed at those officers seeking to operate over & above a requisite requirement.
9. The officer training policy will be implemented as part of Wiltshire Council's appraisal process, during which each officer's needs will be individually assessed. From that assessment an individual training plan will be formulated, split into mandatory, advisory & optional training. Training needs will further be categorised into pension technical and functional training to enable officers to effectively use the applications purchased by the Fund. A training log will be maintained & reviewed annually by the Head of Pension Administration & Relations & the Investment Manager.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

10. Not applicable.

Financial Considerations & Risk Assessment

11. The financial considerations of all training & development are expected to be minimal. Where a cost to the Fund is to be incurred it will form part of the budget setting process approved by Committee prior to the beginning of each Scheme year.

Legal Implications

12. There are no material legal implications from this report.

Safeguarding Considerations/Public Health Implications/Equalities Impact

13. There are no known implications at this time.

Reasons for Proposals

14. To fulfil the training & development compliance requirements of stakeholders associated with the Wiltshire Pension Fund.

Proposals

15. The Committee is asked to approve the Board & Committee member training self-assessment outcomes for 2020-21. Officers will implement the outcomes in the form of structured training.
16. The Committee is asked to approve the officer training policy presented in Appendix 2 and make any recommended enhancements or changes.

Andy Cunningham
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Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this report: NONE