

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

WILTSHIRE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE
30 September 2021

CURRENT STAFFING STRUCTURE AND NEEDS

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide for the Committee's consideration, an outline of the Fund's current structure and staffing needs.
2. This report also requests that the budget that was set for 2021-2022 to appoint three staff for up to 12 months is made permanent, to allow the appointment of three permanent appointments to take place (filling one vacancy and making two temporary posts permanent).

Background

3. Since 2018, the Fund has operated a dual Head of Service model, with overall oversight and officer responsibility for Pension matters sitting with the s151 officer.
4. Following a full section restructure in 2017 and further partial restructures in 2020 & 2021, the Fund's current structure is outlined in Appendix 1.

Current situation

Current staffing areas:

5. Outlined below is a brief overview of the different staffing roles within the section, their responsibilities, how their work relates to the performance of the Fund and where vacancies exist:

a). Administration and Relations team

Administration and relations team	Brief description of responsibilities and qualifications required	Impact on KPIs	Vacancies
Member Services Team (c11 Full-time Equivalent Staff)	Maintenance of pension records on Altair, calculating pension benefits, creating payment instructions* and member enquiries.	Retirement, deferred into pay and death cases (all high priority cases)	None – although the Member Services Manager is leaving the Fund shortly.
Employer Services Team (c10 FTE)	Overall responsibility for the i-Connect system, all connected checks and processing of deferreds, refunds	Deferred & starter notifications and the backlog work relating to	One (temporary) – although some staff are currently seconded to work on the payroll

	and aggregations. Overall responsibility for data quality.	deferreds, refunds and aggregations. Annual Benefit Statement and tPR common/conditional measures.	rectification project (2 FTE)
Systems Team (2 FTE)	Overall responsibility for maintenance of key systems, applying updates and systems and software development.	No direct impact on KPIs	None
Governance, Technical and Compliance (2 FTE)	Detailed technical advice on complex cases, assistance with case work, Governance support training and detailed technical advice.	No direct impact on KPIs as the focus is supporting with ensuring compliance and achieving accuracy.	None – But both staff are currently seconded (part-time) to work on the payroll rectification project (around 0.75 FTE in total)
Communications & Relations (2 FTE)	Communications with all employers and members through all means and managing the onboarding and cessation of employers.	No direct impact on KPIs	None
Business Analyst and Project Manager (1 FTE)	Responsible for making Fund processes more efficient and using digital means and also for overseeing and completing all projects.	Process improvements have an impact on all KPIs.	None

**Note actual responsibility for payments currently sit with the Council's payroll team and accounts payable team.*

b). Investments and Accounting team

Investments and Accounting team	Brief description of responsibilities and qualifications required	Impact on KPIs	Vacancies
Entire team – 5 members of staff (4.8 FTE)	Accounting (including production of the statutory accounts and annual report), Committee reporting,	No impact on admin KPIs	None

	management of the investments, responsible investment issues. Highly technical team requiring 2 accounting technicians, individuals with full accounting qualifications and investment qualifications.		
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Considerations for the Committee

Staffing skills needs

6. In 2018, and following the 2017 restructure, there were vacancies in around a quarter of roles. Furthermore, a number of staff which were inexperienced in their roles due to recent appointments or promotions. Since then the number of staffing roles overall has increased as well as nearly all roles being filled. Staff experience has gradually increased through 'on the job' and formal training and support.
7. Officers consider the collective skill set of the team to be good although ideally some further development is needed in technical advice and systems/technology related areas, in recognition of the highly complex regulatory framework within which the Fund operates and its desire to modernise its approach to services to make the best use of modern technology and maximise the Fund's efficiency.
8. Detailed technical knowledge is typically acquired through study and large amounts of pensions experience whilst systems/technology related skills may be more readily available within the market but need to be combined with the other skills required to work effectively within the pensions industry.

Recruitment

9. As the Fund's officers are employees of the Council, the Fund follows the Council's HR policy in relation to setting of pay grades for each particular role, the approach to recruitment (including advertising) and all other general employee terms and conditions.
10. However, as the Fund's budget is separate from that of the Council, the Wiltshire Pension Committee is able to approve the finance necessary to appoint the necessary staff.
11. At times, officers have had difficulty recruiting to various roles. Typically officers have had great difficulty attracting staff with previous pension experience (particularly for those who also have the other attributes sought) and therefore officers often appoint staff without pensions experience upon starting and rely on training the staff on pensions. After a number of good appointments in recent years, this approach has generally proved highly effective although in the initial months when a new employee starts, there is steep learning curve and a demand on colleague's time to provide the necessary support.
12. These recruitment difficulties have created challenges in relation to appointing temporary resource to support the completion of projects (e.g. the payroll rectification project) and therefore officers have investigated using external resource from consultancy firms.

Unfortunately, this typically comes at great cost and can still create challenges as any new staff also need to be familiar with our processes, procedures and policies.

Resourcing impact on KPIs

13. Whilst the level and skills of the available staffing has a direct impact on the Fund's ability to meet KPIs, equally important are the following factors:
- a). The implementation of relevant automation software, for example, i-Connect;
 - b). The efficiency, in terms of Lean principles, of administrative processes;
 - c). The performance of employers in meeting their administrative responsibilities;
 - d). The implementation of new legislation (which typically adds, rather than removes, complication).
 - e). Member demand and willingness to self-serve.
 - f). The emphasis placed on improving checks and controls and improving accuracy.
14. By definition, the Fund's KPIs are important. However, officers have also invested considerable time in improving the infrastructure of the fund to improve overall data quality, controls, accuracy and customer service.

Current and future staffing needs

15. Last year, officers requested the budget for three roles for a 12 month period of time to help support the work required to reduce processing backlogs and deliver the payroll rectification project. After initial delays and complications in obtaining the appropriate resource, it is clear that this level of resource will be required on a longer term basis.
16. Therefore, officer request that the budget approval is agreed on a permanent basis to allow the permanent appoint of suitable staff.

Environmental Impact

17. There is no environmental impact from this report.

Financial Considerations

18. There financial considerations related to this paper are outlined in the proposal.

Risk Assessment

19. There are no risks related to this paper.

Legal Implications

20. There are legal risks related to this paper.

Safeguarding Considerations/Public Health Implications/Equalities Impact

21. There are no implications at this time.

Proposals

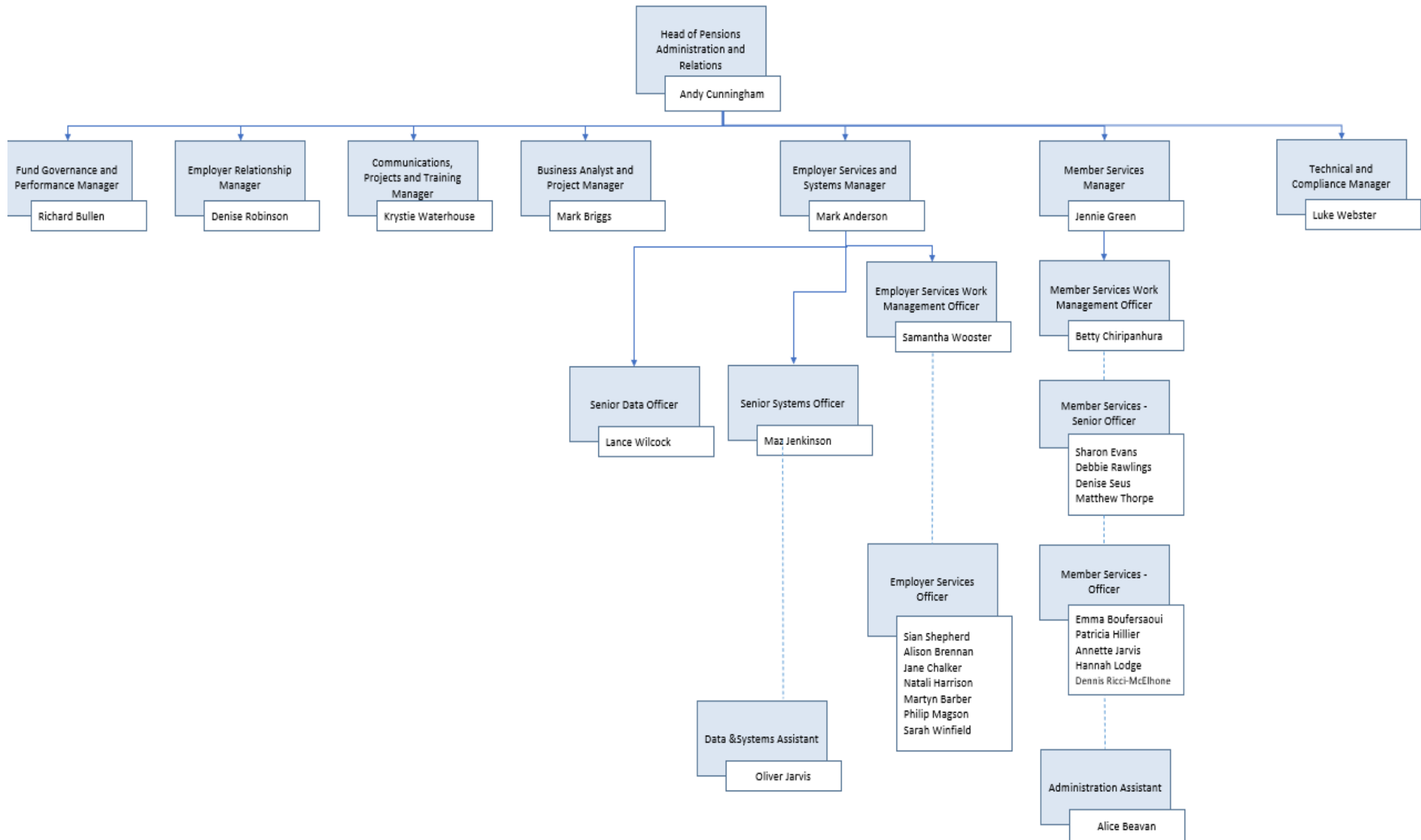
22. Officers recommend that budget approval is given to officers to allow the three current temporary roles in the structure to be made permanent (this will not effect the budget for this year but is an alteration to the initial agreement).
23. The Committee is asked to consider the contents of this paper and to provide any comments or recommendations that it has.

Andy Cunningham

Head of Pensions Administration and Relations

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Appendix 1: Current structure of the Administration and Relations team



Appendix 2: Current structure of the Accounts and Investments team

