



ACCESS JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the ACCESS Joint Committee held at 18 Smith Square, LGA, Westminster, London on Monday, 6th September, 2021.

PRESENT: Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee (Hampshire), Cllr Susan Barker (Essex), Cllr Nick Chard (Kent), Cllr Vanessa Churchman (Isle of Wight), Cllr Jeremy Hunt (West Sussex), Cllr Gerard Fox (East Sussex), Cllr Judy Oliver (Norfolk), Cllr Karen Soons (Suffolk), Cllr Andrew Williams (Hertfordshire)

ALSO PRESENT: Kevin McDonald (ASU), Mark Paget (ASU), Paul Tysoe (ASU), Clifford Sims (Squire Patton Boggs) and John Wright (Hymans Robertson)

OFFICERS: Alison Mings (Kent), Andrew Boufflower (Hampshire), Glenn Cossey (Norfolk), Jo Thistlewood (IoW), Jody Evans (Essex), Mark Whitby (West Northants), Patrick Towey (Hertfordshire), Paul Finbow (Suffolk), Rachel Wood (West Sussex), Sharon Tan (Suffolk), Sian Kunert (East Sussex), Andrew Lowe (Hampshire), Alexander Younger (Norfolk)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chairman.
(Item. 1)

1. It was proposed and seconded by Cllr Chard and Cllr Oliver respectively, that Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee (Hampshire) be elected as Chair of the Joint Committee for a period of two years.

RESOLVED through unanimous vote that Cllr Kemp-Gee be elected as Chair.

2. Election of Vice Chairman.
(Item. 2)

1. It was proposed and seconded by Cllr Kemp-Gee and Cllr Fox respectively, that Cllr Susan Barker (Essex) be elected as Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee for a period of two years.

RESOLVED through unanimous vote that Cllr Barker be elected as Vice-Chair.

3. Apologies and substitutes.
(Item. 3)

1. Apologies were received from Cllrs Simkins (Cllr Chard Substituting), Cllr Jarman (Cllr Churchman substituting), Cllr Whelan and Cllr Longley.

RESOLVED apologies be noted.

4. Declaration of interests in items on the agenda.
(Item. 4)

None.

5. Chairman's remarks.
(Item. 5)

1. The Chair welcomed those new Members in attendance and the returning substitutes. He noted the positive aspects of returning to a physical meeting for the first time since March 2020.
2. The Chair highlighted an upcoming conference which he would be attending along with the Director of the ASU and asked any Members interested in joining them to contact the ASU to make arrangements.

RESOLVED that the Chair's remarks be noted.

6. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March.
(Item. 6)

1. Mr McDonald highlighted a factual correction required to the minute of item 256 (Sub-Fund Implementation) from the last formal meeting. This related to an incorrect reference to 'Fund Managers' which needed to be removed.

RESOLVED that, subject to the required amendment, the minutes were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

7. Business plan, forecast outturn and risk summary.
(Item. 7)

1. Mr McDonald provided an update to the Committee. He commented that the business plan highlighted various workstreams which were subject to specific items later on the agenda, where they would be discussed in more detail.
2. Mr McDonald confirmed that the projected outturn was a £150k underspend on the budget approved in January 2021 and it was noted that part of the underspend related to delayed recruitment process for the ASU. Congratulations were extended to Paul Tysoe who had joined the ASU as the ACCESS Client Manager. Mr McDonald also highlighted that external advice spend was subject to change depending on project progression through the remainder of the financial year.
3. Mr McDonald updated the Committee on progress made in ACCESS working with other authorities on commissioned research into pooling arrangements outside of the UK. He explained that report would be released in the near future and he highlighted that the reports outcomes would focus on providing information about the international arrangements rather than delivering recommendations for change – consideration about how the information should be used would be a matter for each Pool to progress separately.

4. It was highlighted that a briefing on Responsible Investment (RI) was being organised for later in September.
5. It was confirmed that the formal Outturn would be brought to the December 2021 meeting for consideration and approval.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

8. Communications and Spokespeople.

(Item. 8)

1. Mr McDonald updated the Committee on progress of training for ACCESS Member spokespeople. It was highlighted that the ASU Director would remain the spokesperson in the first instance (as agreed via previous decision by the Committee) and a number of Members would serve as the spokespeople for particular areas of ACCESS Business:
 - Cllr Fox (East Sussex) – Responsible Investment
 - Cllr Oliver (Norfolk) – Governance
 - Cllr Soons (Suffolk) – Media Strategy
 - Cllr Kemp-Gee (Hampshire) and Cllr Barker (Essex) – Political and Government Relations, Parliamentary, inter-pool and overall strategy.
2. Members highlighted the need for a co-ordinated approach to communications and press enquiries. The Chair noted that it was important that all Joint Committee members needed to be appropriately well-briefed to handle relevant issues as and when they arose.
3. Mr McDonald, responding to questions, advised that previous press queries and relevant responses would be reviewed to confirm any required updates or changes to manage future issues.

RESOLVED that;

1. The update be noted.
2. The spokespeople proposals be agreed.
3. The training arrangements be noted.

9. Motion to Exclude the Press and Public.

(Item. 9)

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 & 5 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

10. Implementation Adviser procurement.

(Item. 10)

1. Mr McDonald updated the Committee on the procurement exercise undertaken to secure an Implementation Advisor. Members discussed the procurement process, including scoring metrics and weighting. They highlighted areas for reflection on how they may be managed and communicated in future.

RESOLVED that;

- (a) The update on the procurement process be noted;
- (b) The outcome of the procurement exercise be endorsed; and
- (c) That Essex County Council, as Procurement Lead Authority, would enter in the required contracts with the successful bidder on behalf ACCESS, be noted.

11. Scheduled BAU Evaluation.

(Item. 11)

(Considered after Item 15 which was taken early to help inform later discussions)

1. John Wright (Hymans Robertson) gave a presentation which outlined the findings and resulting recommendations of the Business As Usual Evaluation.
2. Members discussed the recommendations and asked a range of questions for clarification. John Wright, Mr McDonald, Mr Paget and Mr Tysoe all provided answers and information to support the consideration of the recommendations regarding future operating arrangements for the ACCESS Pool as part of Business As Usual.

RESOLVED that;

- (a) The presentation be noted.
- (b) The report's recommendations be agreed by unanimous vote; and
- (c) Hymans Robertson and the ASU provide a detailed timetable for progressing the approved recommendations.

12. Performance, Annual Report and MHCLG return - to follow.

(Item. 12)

1. Sharon Tan (Suffolk) provided an overview of current ACCESS performance, including reference to the Investment Performance Report, which detailed that pooled assets of all ACCESS Authorities amounted to £32.602bn at the end of June 2021 (up from £31.510bn in March 2021).
2. The update highlighted the collaborative work with other pools in relation to updating the annual MHCLG return report template and that as a result of this work, the return would be submitted later in September.
3. Responding to questions, Ms Tan and Mr McDonald clarified how savings were calculated via engagement with all administering authorities and noted that the overall fund manager savings had exceeded expectations as they had been set at cautious levels as part of the ACCESS set up because it was not appropriate to assume significant savings early on in the organised pooling environment.

Resolved that;

- (a) The performance report be noted;
- (b) The progress with the annual MHCLG return be noted; and
- (c) The Annual Report be recommended for publication by each ACCESS Authority.

13. Review of Emerging Markets process.

(Item. 13)

1. Mr McDonald updated the Committee on the outcome of the review of Emerging Markets and the associated recommendations, building on discussions from the previous informal briefing. The recommendations outlined potential developments regarding updating sub-fund establishment arrangements and amending relevant governance processes.

Resolved that;

- (a) The seven recommendations outlined in the report be agreed for implementation.

14. Response to Emerging Markets Review.

(Item. 14)

1. Mr McDonald provided an update on the initial response to the recommendations in the Emerging Markets Review.

RESOLVED that;

- (a) The update be noted.

15. Sub-fund implementation.

(Item. 15)

(This item was discussed after Item 10 and before item 11 to assist with consideration of other relevant agenda items)

1. Update on progress with Sub-funds provided by Andrew Boutflower (Hampshire). Members discussed various points in relation to the ongoing Sub-Fund implementation, including mention of specific experiences of individual authorities. Mr Boutflower, Mr McDonald, Mr Paget and Mr Tysoe responded to Member questions and technical points in relation to timescales and engagement with the Operator.

RESOLVED that;

- (a) the report be noted.

16. Contract and Supplier Relationship Management.

(Item. 16)

1. Mark Paget (ASU) and provided the regular update on Contract and Supplier Relationship Management activity, with key work and future areas of focus highlighted to the Committee.

RESOLVED that;

- (a) the update be noted.

17. Risk Management.

(Item. 17)

1. Mr McDonald (ASU) updated the Committee on the current risk profile of the Pool with a detailed overview of the risk register. It was also highlighted that the recording and presentation of the risk register had been updated to a 4x4 matrix and improved dashboard.

RESOLVED that the risk register update be noted.