



## **ACCESS JOINT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the ACCESS Joint Committee held virtually on Thursday, 12th November, 2020.

PRESENT: Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee - Chair (Hampshire CC), Cllr Susan Barker - Vice-Chair (Essex CC), Cllr Vanessa Churchman (Isle of Wight), Cllr Jonathan Ekins (Northamptonshire CC), Cllr Gerrard Fox (East Sussex CC), Cllr Terry Rogers (Cambridgeshire CC), Cllr Judy Oliver (Norfolk CC), Cllr Ralph Sangster (Hertfordshire CC), Cllr Charlie Simkins (Kent CC) and Cllr Karen Soons (Suffolk CC).

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

OFFICERS: Andrew Boutflower (Hampshire), Glenn Cossey (Norfolk), Jody Evans (Essex), Paul Finbow (Suffolk), Sian Kunert (East Sussex), Alison Mings (Kent), Sharon Tan (Suffolk), Jo Thistlewood (Isle of Wight), Patrick Towey (Hertfordshire), Paul Tysoe (Cambridgeshire), Mark Whitby (Northamptonshire), Rachel Wood (West Sussex), and Joel Cook (Kent - Clerk).

### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

**220. Apologies/Substitutes.**  
*(Item. 1)*

1. Apologies were received from Cllr Adrian Axford (Isle of Wight) and Cllr Jeremy Hunt (West Sussex). Cllr Vanessa Churchman substituted for Cllr Axford.

RESOLVED that the apologies and substitutes be noted.

**221. Declaration of interests in items on the agenda.**  
*(Item. 2)*

1. No declarations of interest were made.

**222. Chair's remarks.**  
*(Item. 3)*

1. The Chair confirmed that interviews for Communications/public relations partner had taken place on 9 November with Cllr Soons joining the Chair and Vice Chair on the panel. In thanking Cllr Soons and Cllr Barker for their involvement he highlighted that a report on the matter appeared later in the agenda.

2. The Chair assured Members that the development of new workstreams would involve the input of other members of the Joint Committee.
3. It was confirmed that training with public relations advisors would be made available to members of the Joint Committee.

RESOLVED that the Chair's remarks be noted.

**223. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2020.**  
(Item. 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 7 September 2020 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

**224. Business Plan.**  
(Item. 5)

1. Kevin McDonald (ASU Director) provided an update on the Business Plan and Risk Register. He confirmed that further budget information would be made available at the Joint Committee's January meeting. Mr McDonald stated that the risk profile remained unchanged, though assured Members that the profile was under constant review.
2. Mr McDonald outlined developments which had occurred since the publication of the agenda. He introduced a proposal which had been received from the Border to Coast Pensions Partnership pool, to commission research into the performance, structure and use of overseas pension pools. Mr McDonald noted that the proposal had been made due to the maturity of many overseas pools in comparison to those within the UK and that a majority consensus had been received from other pools within England and Wales to commission the research. In regard of timescale Mr McDonald estimated that the project from commissioning to completion would be 6 months.
3. Mr McDonald advised that the total cost implication for the ACCESS pool had been estimated at £20,000.
4. Members queried the MHCLG involvement in the project and whether any risks had been identified in terms of future relationships between the Ministry and participating pools. Mr McDonald assured the Joint Committee that MHCLG would be interested in the outcome of the research and no relevant risks had been identified.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee:

- a) note the Business Plan update;
- b) note summary Risk Register; and
- c) agree to ACCESS' involvement in the research report and the associated spend.

**225. Communications.**  
(Item. 6)

*Consideration of Item 6 was moved to after consideration of Item 7 – to allow for transition into exempt for the remainder of the meeting (Part II items as per published agenda).*

1. Mr McDonald outlined the progress made regarding the public relations arrangement and engagement terms which had been formed with Bloom in conjunction with advice from Squire Patton Boggs.
2. Mr McDonald noted that Hymans Robertson had been involved in the shortlisting of service providers from Bloom's category list and had identified two potential suppliers. John Wright (Hymans Robertson) confirmed that providers had been evaluated against a service specification and weighted scoring matrix.
3. The Chair congratulated Bloom and Hymans Robertson for their involvement in the sourcing and delivery of high-quality interviews.

**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.**

*The Committee moved into exempt session during consideration of Item 6.*

4. Mr McDonald introduced the supplementary report and outlined the timetable of actions taken to facilitate a well governed procurement.
5. Cllr Soons informed the Joint Committee that she had asked both interviewed agencies the same set of questions and that she had been impressed with the responses of the successful candidate in terms of the depth of understanding, experience and enthusiasm. The Chair concurred with these sentiments.
6. The Chair said he would value Cllr Soons' involvement in future workshops delivered by the public relations advisors.
7. Mr McDonald highlighted the cost of the advice on a year one and two cost basis, though reminded Members that the contract was for two years.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee:

- a) note the report;
- b) note the outcome of the procurement process; and
- c) agree the appointment of Engine MHP to provide external communications support for a period of 2 years.

## **226. ESG / RI Position Statement.**

*(Item. 7)*

1. Mark Whitby (Cambridge & Northamptonshire) provided an update on ESG and RI developments. He confirmed that the task and finish group for the procurement of ESG advice had been formed and that a two-stage

procurement had been planned, which comprised the implementation of guidelines and comprehensive information reporting.

2. It was noted that the task and finish group were due to meet next on 13 November 2020.
3. Members discussed proposals for the membership of the ESG advice selection interview panel.
4. Cllr Ekins agreed to substitute for members of interview panel if required.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee:

- a) note the content of the report; and
- b) determine that the Chair, Vice-Chair and Cllr Fox represent the Joint Committee on the selection interview panel.

**227. Motion to Exclude the Press and Public.**

*(Item. 8)*

Motion to Exclude passed during consideration of Item 6 – Communications.

**228. Contract Management.**

*(Item. 9)*

1. Mark Paget provided a verbal overview of the report and confirmed that negotiations had concluded successfully with Link regarding the addition of updated KPIs and the agreement to amend the level of Links Insurance cover.
2. Mr Paget informed the Joint Committee that a virtual Investor Day event was scheduled on 17 December between 1300-1500, that Northern Trust were due to present and that a recording would be made available.
3. Mr Paget outlined the insurance agreement covering Link's services and confirmed that insurance advice had been provided on contractual basis.
4. Mr McDonald confirmed to the Joint Committee that the ASU had been internally audited by Essex County Council and that the results of the audit would be brought to the January committee meeting.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee matters highlighted within the report, the activity that has taken place and forthcoming plans be noted.

**229. Sub-fund Implementation.**

*(Item. 10)*

1. Andrew Boutflower (Hampshire) updated the Joint Committee on the launch of the ACS investment sub-funds. He affirmed that the launch had to that point progressed as planned. The different tranches and progress of each individual sub-fund were outlined to Members.

2. It was confirmed that the agreement of all ACCESS member authorities had been required to launch the sub-funds.
3. Mr McDonald agreed to circulate figures with the Joint Committee subsequent to the launch of the sub-funds.
4. Planned sub-funds were highlighted.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee note the progress in launching the ACS investment sub-funds.

**230. ACCESS illiquid asset pooling approach.**  
*(Item. 11)*

*Sam Gervaise-Jones of bFinance was in attendance for this item.*

1. Alex Younger (Norfolk) provided a verbal overview of the illiquid asset pooling approach report. Real estate, private equity, private debt and infrastructure were highlighted as the primary categories of illiquid asset held by member authorities, Mr Younger stressed that these assets were long term investments.
2. Mr Younger confirmed that future new money investments in illiquid assets would be pooled and that it was economically inefficient to transfer or sell long term private market assets at the time of the meeting.
3. Sam Gervaise-Jones (bFinance) gave a summary of bFinance's engagement with member authorities. He noted that different approaches were required across each asset class. Mr Gervaise-Jones recommended the use of an Implementation Advisor and Allocator to consult and assist member authorities in the creation of common definitions for asset types and further private equity partnerships. He outlined the advantages an Allocator would have for the pool within the field of global real estate investment.
4. Mr Gervaise-Jones reassured the Joint Committee that investments were still able to be multi-classed and that there was no need to tightly define all illiquid assets during phase one.
5. Mr McDonald outlined the timeline for phase one of the illiquid asset pooling approach project and noted that the proposed developments were to be taken to Section 151 Officers prior to further consideration from the Joint Committee at its January meeting.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee note the report.

**231. Fiduciary Duties - Q&A update.**  
*(Item. 12)*

1. Clifford Sims (Squire Patton Boggs – Legal Advisor) provided a verbal update and overview of the report, which outlined the Q&A document produced by Norfolk County Council. He confirmed that contact had been made with the LGA on behalf of the Scheme Advisory Board.
2. Mr Sims suggested that further legal comments be presented at a subsequent Joint Committee meeting, in order that legal advice be consolidated and exhaustive.
3. It was confirmed that the draft document could be shared with ACCESS authority pension committees on a confidential basis as the document was still subject to further legal expert review.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee note the report and thanked Norfolk County Council for developing and sharing the Q&A document.