

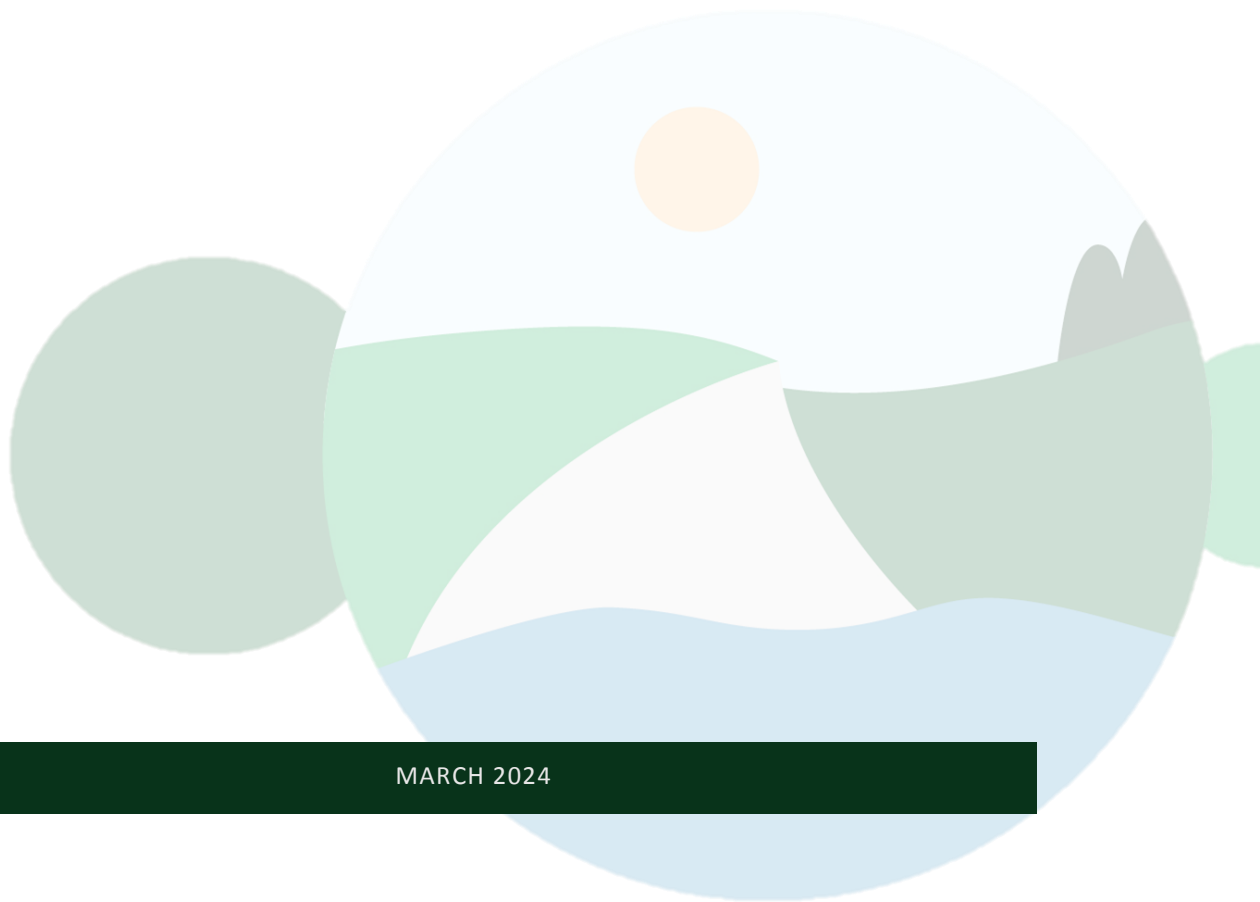


Kent Pension Fund
Delivering an outstanding service

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY FOR KENT PENSION FUND

THREE YEAR BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25 – 2026/27



MARCH 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This is the business plan for the Kent Pension Fund (KPF), which is managed and administered by Kent County Council. The business plan details our priorities and areas of key focus in relation to the KPF for 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27. This business plan was presented to the Kent Pension Fund Committee (PFC) meeting on 26 March 2024. The business plan is formally reviewed and agreed every year, and this takes place ahead of the start of each financial year. However, throughout the year it is monitored, and the PFC may be asked to agree to changes to it.

The purpose of the business plan is to:

- explain the background to and objectives for the management of the KPF document the priorities and improvements to be implemented by the pension service during the next three years to help achieve those objectives.
- Enable progress and performance to be monitored in relation to those priorities.
- provide all key stakeholders with a clear vision for the next three years.

In addition, this business plan includes a budget for expected payments to and from the KPF including the resources required to manage the Fund.

If you require further information about anything in or related to this business plan, please contact:

Nick Buckland, Head of Pensions and Treasury, Kent County Council

E-mail – nick.buckland@kent.gov.uk

Telephone – 03000 413984



BACKGROUND TO THE KENT PENSION FUND

The Kent Pension Fund ("KPF") is an £8 Billion (as at 31 December 2023) Local Government Pension Fund which provides retirement benefits for local government employees (other than teachers, police officers, and firefighters) in Kent and employees of other qualifying bodies which provide similar services, operating under the Local Government Pension Scheme ("LGPS") regulations.

Total Fund membership is 149,112 with 52,829 active contributors from 292 contributing employers, 46,706 pensioner and dependant pensioner members, and 49,577 deferred and other members.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE FUND

All decision-making and management of the Fund has been delegated by Kent County Council ("the Council") to a formal Pension Fund Committee ("PFC"). The terms of reference and membership of the PFC can be viewed here: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=128>

A Local Pension Board (LPB) is in place to assist in:

- securing compliance of Fund matters and
- ensuring the efficient and effective governance and administration of the Fund.

THE PENSION FUND MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Corporate Director of Finance has overall responsibility for the operation of the Fund, and delegates responsibility for managing all aspects of the Fund to the Head of Pensions and Treasury supported by the Pension Fund and Treasury Investments Manager, the Pensions Administration Manager, and the Senior Pensions Programme Manager. There are two distinct sections within the team:

- The Pensions Administration Section which is responsible for delivering the Fund's Administration and Communications Strategies. It is headed by the Pension Administration Manager.
- The Treasury and Investments Section is responsible for delivering the Fund's Investment and Funding Strategies, as well as accounting matters. It also has responsibility for supporting the Head of Pensions and Treasury in ensuring all governance matters are delivered. The team also has responsibility for Treasury Management for the Fund, and Kent County Council. It is headed by the Pension Fund and Treasury Investments Manager.
- In addition to these areas of focus, the Senior Pensions Programme Manager works with a small team supporting all aspects of the Fund and ensuring that all key projects are managed effectively and delivered efficiently.

More information about their day-to-day responsibilities is documented later in this Plan in the "Business as Usual".



VISION AND LONG-TERM PLAN

The purpose of the KPF Business Plan is to set out the Fund’s vision, goals, culture, improvement plan and actions for the current and future years, and a longer-term strategic direction.

The KPF is looking forward to developing its service to provide an excellent service to all of its key stakeholders, and the plan sets out how we will do this.

This updated plan builds on the previous versions, the latest having been agreed by the PFC at the meeting on 29 March 2023.

The Fund’s focus needs to be firmly set on achieving outcomes for our customers, i.e., the scheme employers and members. Everything that we do needs to keep this in mind, and decisions need to be made with an eye to the end goal of delivering an outstanding service, as set out in the Fund’s vision:

Our Vision is to deliver an outstanding and “best in class” service to our members and employers.

Everyone’s role in the team either directly contributes to the vision or creates the foundations and environment which make it possible. We will measure success against the vision by monitoring our progress against various service related KPIs, targets, and actions.

This document will be reviewed regularly and revised annually. The Strategic vision and overall goals will also be developed over time and will be included in future versions of the document.

KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The key actions and areas of focus in our business plan (as shown in the appendix) are grouped into the areas of Governance, Funding and Investments and Administration to align with the key aims and objectives of these strategies and policies. These aims and objectives are summarised below.

GOVERNANCE

- Act in the best interests of the Fund’s members and employers, leading the way in the LGPS.
- Have robust governance arrangements in place, to facilitate informed decision making, supported by appropriate advice, policies, and strategies.
- Ensure the Kent Pension Fund is managed, and its services delivered, by people who have the appropriate knowledge and expertise.
- Act with integrity and be accountable to our stakeholders for our decisions, ensuring they are robust and well based.
- Identify and deliver suitable projects as per programme, which encompass Continual Improvement and support the delivery of activity in Funding & Investments and Pensions Administration.
- Promote the successes and achievements of the Fund internally and externally, including through use of digital media.



FUNDING AND INVESTMENTS

- Achieve and maintain KPF assets equal to 100% of liabilities, whilst remaining within reasonable risk parameters
- Determine employer contribution requirements, whilst recognising the constraints on affordability and strength of employer covenant, with the aim being to maintain as stable employer primary contributions as possible.
- Recognising the constraints on affordability for employers, aim for sufficient excess investment returns relative to the growth of liabilities.
- Strike the appropriate balance between long-term consistent investment performance and the funding objectives.
- Manage employers' liabilities effectively through the adoption of employer specific funding objectives.
- Ensure net cash outgoings can be met as/when required.
- Be a responsible investor and a good long-term steward of the assets in which the Fund invests in order to deliver long-term sustainable returns. Achieve a 15% target allocation to sustainable investment assets by 2030.
- Achieve net zero carbon emissions in the investment portfolio by 2050 alongside interim emission reduction goals consistent with the latest science to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.
- Work with colleagues in the ACCESS pool <https://www.accesspool.org/> to develop opportunities so that it is the first choice for investing the Fund's assets subject to it being able to meet the requirements of the Fund's investment strategy and objectives (including environmental, social and governance requirements), within acceptable long-term costs to deliver the expected benefits and subject to ongoing confidence in the governance of the partnership.

ADMINISTRATION

- To pay the right benefits, to the right members, at the right time
- To collect income as necessary from external parties
- To develop a robust and effective Administration Strategy and ensure that all those involved with delivering under the strategy feel supported to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
- To develop effective ways of measuring the performance of the pensions administration team and scheme employers in order to deliver the highest possible standard of service to scheme members.
- To ensure appropriate, clear, and meaningful performance data is provided to the LPB and PFC to support them in their remit in scrutinising the management of the KPF.



- To build strong relationships with scheme employers and support them in fulfilling their statutory obligations under the LGPS.
- To build strong relationships with other external parties that may be involved with or support the delivery of the LGPS to KPF members including but not limited to the PFC and LPB
- To ensure the KPF maintains the highest level of data integrity and that all data is handled with due consideration given to data processing legislation.
- To communicate with and support scheme members so that they have easy access to their pension information and have a clear understanding of their pension in order for them to make informed decision.
- To ensure that any breaches of Regulations/legislation are reported to the necessary parties in a timely manner.
- To monitor all complaints, compliments and comments and use these as a learning tool to improve the service delivery.

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BUSINESS AS USUAL

Later in this business plan we highlight our key priorities for the next three financial years. This focusses on areas of change and project-like tasks which are in addition to our day to day “business as usual” duties.

Managing the Fund on a day-to-day basis involves a wide range of processes and procedures, some of which are outlined below and all of which have been designed around achieving our Fund’s objectives as outlined in our strategies and policies. The management of the KPF is significant, complex, and highly regulated. As such, these processes and procedures require expert knowledge and experience from both officers and external advisors in several diverse areas as illustrated below.

GOVERNANCE

Theme	Sub-theme	Timetable	Action
Governance	Financial Control	Annual	Prepare annual accounts and annual report in compliance with CIPFA requirements
Governance	Financial Control	Annual	Preparing and monitoring the Pension Fund's budget and cashflow
Governance	Financial Control	Ongoing	Assist internal and external auditors in their role and responding to comments as appropriate.
Governance	Financial Control	Ongoing	Undertake regular benchmarking of the Fund to review progress, and to deliver continuous improvement
Governance	Committee and Board	Ongoing	Set agenda, reporting and presentation to PFC, LPB and working groups
Governance	Committee and Board	Ongoing	Support Chairman in role on the ACCESS Joint Committee
Governance	Committee and Board	Ongoing	Participate in ACCESS officer groups (Section151, Officer Working Group (OWG), various sub-groups)
Governance	Committee and Board	Ongoing	Report on ACCESS progress on a quarterly basis to the PFC and LPB
Governance	Compliance	Ongoing	Develop and maintain training plan for PFC and LPB Members
Governance	Operational Control	Ongoing	Support, enable and embed Continuous Improvement through the delivery of specific operational projects
Governance	Operational Control	Ongoing	Establish, maintain, and test business continuity arrangements/plans, putting in place suitable adjustments where business cases agreed.
Governance	Operational Control	Ongoing	Implementing and monitoring the achievement of other governance areas such as training policy, conflict of interest policy, risk register, and compliance against The Pension Regulator’s Code of Practice
Governance	Compliance	Ongoing	Compliance with KCC policy and law re procurement, data protection and health and safety



Governance	Compliance	Ongoing	Reply to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests
Governance	Compliance	Ongoing	Respond to consultations and regulatory developments.
Governance	Compliance	Ongoing	Preparation of statutory and non-statutory returns
Governance	Compliance	Ongoing	Cyber Security maintenance, review and reporting
Governance	Continuous Improvement	Ongoing	Establish, develop and maintain a Fund employer database.
Governance	Continuous Improvement	Ongoing	Pro-active communication of the Fund's activities and successes through the use of Social Media, and other digital communication methods.

FUNDING AND INVESTMENT

Theme	Sub-theme	Timetable	Action
Funding	Employer governance	Ongoing	Monitor employers' funding positions and covenants
Funding	Employer governance	Ongoing	Facilitating employer events (admissions, cessations etc.) effectively
Funding	Employer governance	Ongoing	Support the provision of International Accounting Standards (IAS)19/Financial Reporting Standards (FRS)102 reporting for employers via submission of data to the Fund actuary
Funding	Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC's)	Ongoing	Review AVC provision on a regular basis
Investment	Asset pooling	Ongoing	Ongoing pooling of investment assets
Investment	Asset pooling	Ongoing	Support/Manage/Monitor/Contribute to ACCESS project
Investment	Monitoring	Ongoing	Monitor asset allocation and manage rebalancing in alignment with the Fund's investment strategy
Investment	Monitoring	Ongoing	Review performance and continuing suitability of risk management programme
Investment	Monitoring	Ongoing	Ongoing monitoring and management of investment performance
Investment	Monitoring	Ongoing	Appoint/Monitor/Terminate fund managers including within a pooling environment
Investment	Monitoring	Ongoing	Ensure investment costs are fully disclosed in line with Cost Transparency Initiative (CTI)
Investment	Responsible investment	Ongoing	Continue to develop and implement the Fund's responsible investment approach



Investment	Responsible investment	Ongoing	Implement the Fund's net zero commitment
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ADMINISTRATION

Theme	Sub-theme	Timetable	Action
Administration	Governance	Ongoing	Keep all KPF policies up to date
Administration	Governance	Ongoing	Ensure that all complaints are dealt with in a timely manner
Administration	Governance	Ongoing	Ensure processes are implemented to comply with ongoing McCloud Remedy requirements
Administration	Governance	Ongoing	Develop and adopt processes to ensure maintenance, accuracy, robustness and completeness of member data
Administration	Reporting	Ongoing	Produce quarterly administration performance reports for the LPB
Administration	Reporting	Ongoing	Monitor and report against the Administration Strategy
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Review and refresh the content of the KPF website to ensure it is compliant and fit for purpose
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Produce newsletters for members and employers
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Ensure annual Pensions increase is applied in a timely manner
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Annual existence checks on pensioners
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Timely production of Annual Benefit Statements for Active and Deferred members
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Timely production of Pension Saving Statements for members who exceed the Annual Allowance
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Communicate any scheme changes to PFC LPB, Members, and employers as appropriate
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Arrange Employer Forum and receive and respond to feedback from employers
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Employer related training program developed and delivered
Administration	Communication	Ongoing	Develop and deliver Fund surveys to capture feedback from all stakeholders in order to inform the future improvement of the service



ACHIEVEMENTS 2022-2024

Before Considering the key tasks for the forthcoming three years it is important to reflect on the successes of the Fund over the previous two years. The schedule below is by no means an exhaustive list but is designed to demonstrate and celebrate the work of the wider Kent Pension Fund team in the two financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

In addition to the Business-as-Usual activity a few highlights include:

- Creation of KPF Logo and Branding to support all Fund communications.
- Developed approach to stakeholder communication and engagement
- Procurement of Data Rectification Supplier
- Procurement of Actuary
- Procurement of Investment Consultant
- Further developed approach to climate risks and opportunities with Net Zero Commitment for the Fund's investments established
- Conclusion of GMP rectification project
- Investment strategy reviewed, strategic asset allocation updated, and implementation commenced.



KEY TASKS FOR 2024/25 – 2026/27

The Fund has many ongoing pieces of work, and also some key tasks for the forthcoming years, the tables below are grouped into the areas of Governance, Funding and Investments and Administration to align with the key aims and objectives of these strategies and policies.

GOVERNANCE

Action	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Implement recommendations of Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) Good Governance review (as necessary)	X		
Assess the Pensions Regulator (tPR) General code and implement changes where needed	X		
Develop and maintain cybersecurity policy and action plans	X		
Assess new LGPS pooling guidance (expected)	X		
Develop and review Risk Register reporting using KCC's new risk reporting system.	X		

INVESTMENT AND FUNDING

Action	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Prepare for and deliver Actuarial Valuation – with Fund's Actuary – Date of Valuation 31-03-2025	X	X	
Determine Funding Strategy Statement with actuary for three years – consulting with employers		X	
Review, revise and implement the Investment Strategy Statement		X	X
Implement changes to investment strategy and review intra asset class portfolio construction	X		
Review investment strategy, including risk management framework		X	X
Continue to develop responsible investment approach and implement the Fund's net zero commitment	X	X	X
Develop annual stewardship reporting	X		
Become Signatory to UK Stewardship Code	X	X	
Develop approach to and deliver first Taskforce for Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) report	X		
Develop approach to Impact investing and reporting	X	X	
Interim funding review	X		



ADMINISTRATION

Action	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Develop and deliver a Data Improvement Plan.	X		
Procurement of postage and printing services provider	X		
Develop and deliver a Service Improvement Plan	X		
Deliver McCloud project – historic Underpin cases	X	X	X
Plan for and deliver Pensions Dashboard project – including data cleansing and clearance of historic casework		X	X
Regular review of work allocation, capacity planning and succession planning			
Clear historic casework in an efficient and effective way (target end date = 30 September 2025)	X	X	
Promote digital offering to members and employers including but not limited to Member Self Service, i - Connect and Overseas Proof of Life system	X	X	X
Ensure that the impact of KCC changing Finance system is considered and managed effectively	X	X	
Fully implement telephony solution to improve customer call experience	X		
Support the Actuary in completing the 31 March 2025 Triennial Valuation	X	X	
Continue to develop and deliver training programs for Kent Pension Fund team members, Scheme Members and Scheme Employers	X		
Procurement of Administration system		X	
Prepare for and deliver anticipated regulatory changes including but not limited to:	X	X	
▪ Abolition of Lifetime Allowance	X		
▪ Goodwin – equalisation of benefits – implement outcomes	X	X	
▪ Exit Payment Caps	X	X	
▪ Minimum Pensions Age change		X	X



Pension Fund Budget will be added once finalised

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In order to identify whether we are meeting our agreed business plan we will:

- continue to monitor progress of the key priorities and budgets on an ongoing basis within the Pension Fund Management Team
- provide updates on progress against these key priorities on a quarterly basis to the P FC, which will be shared with the LPB.
- as part of these quarterly updates:
- highlight any areas where we are exceeding or failing to achieve our targets and the reasons why and identify any changes to the planned priorities as a result of this.
- highlight any significant additional spend or underspend in relation to the agreed budget as it becomes apparent.

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