

Business Plan, Budget & Risk Management



ACCESS Joint Committee

Date: 16 June 2025

Report by: Director of ACCESS Support Unit

Subject:	Business Plan, Budget & Risk Management
Purpose of the Report:	To provide an update on the activities undertaken since the last Joint Committee, associated spend and risk summary.
Recommendations:	<p>The Committee is asked to note the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2024/25 Business Plan summary;• 2024/25 financial outturn;• 2025/26 Business Plan update; and• risk summary.
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Joint Committee (JC) have a role to keep the performance against the strategic business plan agreed by the Councils under review.
- 1.2 The Section 151 Officer Group are responsible for making recommendations to the Joint Committee on budget and business plan matters, reviewing / advising on budget variations throughout each financial year and advising the Committee on the identification of, and mitigation of, any risk to the operation or success of the Pool. In response to decisions made by the Joint Committee, the Section 151 Officers should ensure appropriate resourcing, support, advice and facilitation to the Joint Committee.
- 1.3 The ACCESS Support Unit (ASU) have a responsibility to manage the development and implementation of the strategy, business plan and budget including the identification and management of risks.
- 1.4 This report was prepared by the ASU following consultation with the Officer Working Group (OWG). In draft form, it was presented to Section 151 Officer Group at their meeting on 30 May 2025 and their feedback has informed this final version.

2. 2024/25 Business Plan

- 2.1 The Business Plan for **2024/25** was agreed by the JC in December 2023 prior to being recommended to the Councils. At the same meeting, the JC also determined the budget necessary to implement this year's plan and to be charged to the relevant Authorities.
- 2.2 A significant amount of work was undertaken during the year. During the first half of the year work on the *Third-Party Review* took place alongside the re-procurement for the pool's ACS Operator. From September onwards the year was dominated by the Government's Pension Review which commenced with the Call for Evidence and included the work to respond to the requirements of the LGPS: Fit for the Future consultation.
- 2.3 The activities within last year's **2024/25** Business Plan, along with commentary on the status of each milestone at the end of the year are shown in the table below. The ongoing nature of a number of areas result in milestones spanning different years.

Theme / Milestone	2024/25 activity	Reference	Year-end Status	2025/26 related milestone
Actively managed listed assets				
Launch of Tranche 7b Launch of Tranche 8	1 Fixed income sub-fund; 1 global equity sub-fund 1 sustainable Global equity sub-fund	Item 18, 10 June 2024 Item 13, 9 September 2024	Complete In progress	No Yes
Scheduled BAU evaluation				
The conclusion of the re-procurement of ACS Operator services in relation to the Pool's actively managed listed assets	Completion of the formal re-procurement process Implementation of re-procurement outcome Commencement of new contractual arrangements	Item 7, 9 September 2024 Item 7, 9 September 2024 Item 5, 24 March 2025	Complete Complete Complete	No No No
Alternative / non-listed assets				
Initial investment within real estate mandates	The first investments within the Real Estate mandates	)	In Progress	Yes
The development of pooled asset solutions for other non-listed asset classes	The procurement of pooled asset solutions for private debt and private equity	)	In Progress	Yes
	The alignment of investments within infrastructure and timber	) Item 15, 10 June 2024) Item 12, 9 September 2024	Complete	Yes
	The exploration of further non-listed investment opportunities	) Item 3 2 December Briefing, 2024) Item 10, 12 February 2024)	In Progress	Yes
Passively managed assets				
Ongoing monitoring of passive assets	Ongoing dialogue with UBS	Officer dialogue included UBS presenting to Investment User Group in June 2024	Complete	Yes

Theme / Milestone	2024/25 activity	Reference	Year-end status	2025/26 milestone
Governance				
Meetings and oversight	Arrangements will made to support meetings of the Joint Committee	4 JC in-person meetings held: <i>10 June; 9 Sept; 12 Feb & 24 Mar.</i> 4 Virtual JC briefings held: <i>10 May; 23 Sept; 2 Dec & 16 Jan.</i>	Complete	Yes
	Meetings of s151 Officers will also be held	11 meetings in total were held throughout the year	Complete	Yes
Operational protocols	Implementation of outcome of Third-party Review	Item 13 & 14, 10 June 2024	In progress	Yes
Engagement with HM Government	The Pool will actively participate in any Cabinet Office/MHCLG pooling-related consultations.	Item 8, 9 Sept 2024	Complete	Yes
	The Pool will explore options to meet Government expectations outlined within the “LGPS Fit for the future” consultation.	Item 8, 12 February 2025 Item 7, 24 March 2025	In Progress	Yes
	ACCESS will liaise with the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) as appropriate.	ACCESS continued to be represented on both the SAB’s Cross Pool Working Group on TCFD measures and the SAB’s RI Advisory Group	In Progress	Yes
	Periodic reports will be provided to MHCLG as required.	Item 5, 24 March 2025	Complete	Yes

Theme / Milestone	2024/25 activity	Reference	Year-end status	2025/26 milestone
Joint Policies & guidelines ESG / RI	The implementation of RI reporting arrangements for the Pool.	Item 10, 9 September 2024	Paused	Yes
	An annual review will be conducted of the Pool's RI Guidelines.	Item 5, 24 March 2025	Paused	Yes
Communications	A review of the Pool's communication Plan will be undertaken.	Item 5, 24 March 2025	Paused	Yes
	Communications support to the pool will continue.	Tavistock presented to the June 2024 JC and continued to support on communication requirements throughout the year	In Progress	Yes
ASU ACCESS Support Unit	The outcome of the third-party review of the ASU will be implemented.	Item 14, 10 June 2024	Complete	Yes
	An Internal Audit of the ASU will be conducted by Essex CC.	Item 5, 24 March 2025	In Progress	Yes

3. 2024/25 Budget

3.1 At its March 2025 meeting, the Committee agreed an increased budget totalling **£2,256,918** to support the 2024/25 business plan. Details are shown within the following table.

	Original Budget 2024/2025 £	Budget increase agreed Sep 24 JC £	Budget increase agreed Mar 25 JC £	Revised Budget 2024/25	Outturn 2024/2025 £	Overspend / (Underspend) 31-Mar-25 2024/2025 £
ASU						
ASU Salaries (incl. on cost)	522,436	100,000		622,436	596,948	(25,488)
ASU Operational	24,000			24,000	12,792	(11,208)
ASU Host Authority Recharge	37,307			37,307	36,414	(893)
Technical Lead Recharge Costs	55,000			55,000	49,697	(5,303)
ASU Total	638,743	100,000	-	738,743	695,851	(42,892)
Professional Costs						
<i>Internal Professional Costs</i>						
JC Secretariat	24,255			24,255	28,017	3,762
Procurement	180,000			180,000	125,000	(55,000)
<i>Internal Professional Costs</i>	204,255	-	-	204,255	153,017	(51,238)
<i>External Professional Costs</i>						
Strategic & Technical	664,000		200,000	864,000	1,070,248	206,248
Legal & Governance	199,920		250,000	449,920	546,981	97,061
<i>External Professional Costs</i>	863,920	-	450,000	1,313,920	1,617,229	303,309
Professional Costs Total	1,068,175		450,000	1,518,175	1,770,246	252,071
Total Costs for the Financial Year	1,706,918	100,000	450,000	2,256,918	2,466,097	209,179
Cost Per Authority	155,174	9,091	40,909	205,174	224,191	19,016

3.2 An overspend of £209,179 has been incurred principally as a result of pressures on External Professional costs, for which detail is provided in the Part II Annex B to this report.

3.3 It is highlighted that within Business Plan's non-listed theme a lower number of procurements took place than was originally assumed when the budget was originally agreed leading to an underspend of £55,000.

4. 2025/26 Business Plan & budget

- 4.1 At the time of writing the key focus of activity is the ongoing implications of the Minister's written response to ACCESS Authorities on 9 April 2025. This continues certain aspects of the Project Castle work initiated in response to the Consultation *LGPS: Fit for the Future* during 2024/25 and is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.
- 4.2 Officers are keeping the 2025/26 Business Plan under review, in light of the work currently being undertaken around Project Castle, and further updates will be brought to the Committee's meeting in September. The 2025/26 Business Plan is included within Annex A to this report.
- 4.3 At its March 2025 meeting, the Committee agreed an increased budget totalling **£13,309,633** to support the 2025/26 business plan. Given the budget's scale, the Committee also agreed to consider a different cost sharing arrangement at its June meeting. As part of the review for the 2025/26 Business Plan highlighted above, a review of the 2025/26 budget is also now necessary, which will include considerations around cost sharing. These matters will now be brought to the next meeting in September for the Committee's consideration. To date, charges for one quarter of the total 2025/26 budget have been raised on a 1/11th basis – no further charges will be levied until the Committee's September meeting.

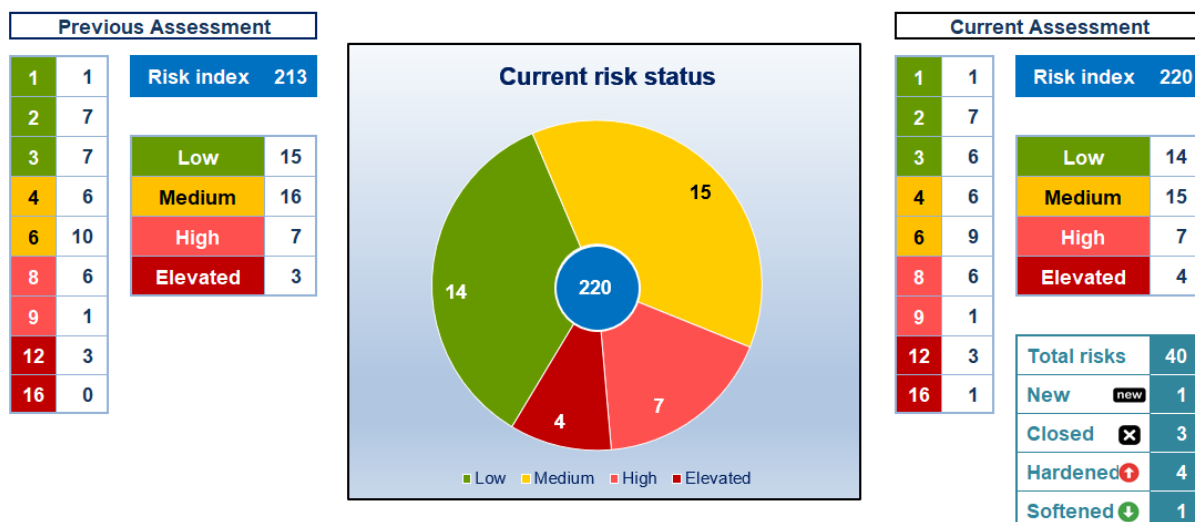
5. Risk Summary

- 5.1 A summary of the current risk profile is shown below.



Risk Management Dashboard

June 2025



6. Recommendations

6.1 The Committee is asked to note the:

- 2024/25 Business Plan summary;
- 2024/25 financial outturn
- 2025/26 Business Plan update; and
- risk summary.