ACCESS JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the ACCESS Joint Committee held at Committee Room 1 - Islington Town Hall on Monday, 9th March, 2020.

PRESENT: Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee - Chair (Hampshire CC), Cllr Susan Barker – Vice-Chair (Essex CC), Cllr Adrian Axford (Isle of Wight), Cllr Jonathan Ekins (Northamptonshire CC), Mr Jeremy Hunt (West Sussex CC) Cllr Terry Rogers (Cambridgeshire CC), Cllr Judy Oliver (Norfolk), Cllr Ralph Sangster (Hertfordshire CC) and Mr Charlie Simkins (Kent CC).

ALSO PRESENT: Kevin McDonald (ASU Director), Mark Paget (ASU Contract Manager) Officer) and Clifford Sims (Squire Patton Boggs)

OFFICERS: Ian Gutsell (East Sussex), Michelle King (East Sussex) , Jody Evans (Essex), Andrew Boutflower (Hampshire), Patrick Towey (Hertfordshire), Jo Thistlewood (Isle of Wight), Paul Tysoe (Cambridgeshire), Mark Whitby (Northamptonshire), Alison Mings (Kent), Glenn Cossey (Norfolk), Paul Finbow (Suffolk) and Rachel Wood (West Sussex).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

176. Apologies/Substitutes.
(Item. 1)

Apologies were received from Cllr Gerard Fox (East Sussex) and Cllr Karen Soons (Suffolk).

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

No declarations made.

178. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2019.
(Item. 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

179. Meeting dates - 2020/2021.
(Item. 4)

1. Members discussed meeting date and venue selection and it was confirmed that the Clerk would liaise with all Members about future arrangements, including reviewing any already agreed dates.

RESOLVED that the meeting in the published agenda be noted.

180. Governance Update.
(Item. 5)

1. Kevin McDonald (ASU) provided an update on the Governance workstream. This included detailing the current status of the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) review, clarifying that ACCESS's Legal Advisors were working with Authority Monitoring Officers. It was confirmed that an updated version of the IAA would be circulated to Members in due course. The Clerk advised that all Authorities should review their internal approval mechanisms and inform the Clerk of planned processes to assist in the eventual execution of the final document as a Deed.

2. Mr McDonald outlined the review on Officer sub-groups to confirm key workstreams and areas of Officer focus. This review work reflected the need to consider what the key issues were for ACCESS and Pooling as the landscape and ACCESS's establishment evolved.

RESOLVED that the following be noted:

- The revised timetable for completion of phase 3 governance deliverables.

- The revised IAA to take effect upon execution by all participating authorities and completion of this process to be confirmed in writing by the Clerk to the Committee.

- Recent discussions on the structure of officer sub-groups.

181. Communications.
(Item. 6)

1. Mr McDonald introduced the item, referring Members to previous discussions regarding Communications and the adoption of the ACCESS Communications Protocol in 2018. He advised that the issue was being reviewed in recognition of how things have changed since then, including personnel changes and the shifting Pooling landscape.

2. Members discussed options for handling Communications, in terms of pro-active stakeholder engagement and responsive communications activity. It was noted that key objectives of the Communications Strategy needed to be outlined and clarified as part of its development.

RESOLVED that the that the outline for ACCESS communications and relations and the initial planning for the ACCESS Annual Report be noted.

182. Business plan, budget & risk summary.
(Item. 7)

1. Mr McDonald introduced the report, providing an overview of the Business Plan and Budget, which had been agreed at the December meeting. He commented that the Plan was subject to review and that it may have to be updated throughout the year.

2. Mr McDonald highlighted various key points in the plan and budget such as the sub-fund updates and transition arrangements, the rollout of the Governance Training at administering authority level and the full implementation and embedding of the ASU.

3. Mr McDonald confirmed to Members that the projected outturn for 2019/20 was approximately £200k below the approved budget level and explained that this was due to reduced reliance on external consultancy support following the full establishment of the ASU.

RESOLVED that the updated business plan and revised outturn for 2019/20 and the summary risk register be noted.

183. Motion to Exclude the Press and Public.
(Item. 8)

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.

184. Risk Register.
(Item. 9)

1. Mr McDonald provided an update on the risk register, outlining changes and additions as well as noting where risks remained unchanged and would be monitored.

2. Members discussed the risks and received relevant reassurances from Authority Officers and the ASU of appropriate risk management activity.

3. Members considered the potential for additional risks relating to the COVID-19 situation and were reassured that work was ongoing to explore options for managing normal business remotely if required. It was recognised that any COVID-19 related market volatility risks were likely but this was mainly a matter for the administering authorities. It was noted that without legislative change, formal ACCESS meetings could not take place remotely.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the additions to the Risk Register as set out in the report be approved.

185. Investment update.
(Item. 10)

1. Sharon Tan (Suffolk) presented the Investment performance update. The positive update was welcomed by Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

186. Sub-fund progress.
(Item. 11)

1. Andrew Boutflower (Hampshire) provided the regular update on Sub-fund progress. He advised the committee on the status of recent launches and highlighting where additional funds were required.

RESOLVED that;

- the asset allocations of ACCESS authorities and the progress in launching the ACS investment sub-funds and providing specific 'transition' sub-funds be noted.
- the request to Link to search for a fund manager(s) for the balanced mandate (Two sub-funds: Fixed Income and Global Equities) be approved.

187. Contract Management update.
(Item. 12)

1. Mark Paget (ASU) provided an update on contract management, highlighting key developments and progress made.

2. Members discussed the planned development of KPI monitoring around business as usual and noted the mitigations that had been put in place where issues had been identified.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

188. Link presentation (to follow).
(Item. 13)

Karl Midl and James Zealander from Link Fund Solutions were present for this item.

1. Mr Midl and Mr Zealander delivered a presentation, outlining recent activity and key issues. They provided reassurances that preparations were in progress to manage business continuity in the event of emergency issues related to the COVID-19 situation.

2. Members asked questions and discussed performance issues and progress with relevant sub-fund launches.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted and that a letter be sent to LINK from the Chairman, outlining the views of the Joint Committee on various matters discussed.

189. SAB engagement.
(Item. 14)

1. Mr McDonald introduced the update on Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) engagement, with particular reference to discussions of responsible investment and fiduciary duty.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

190. Alternatives update.
(Item. 15)

1. Mr McDonald provided an update on progress made with the Alternatives workstream. He advised that further work was being undertaken prior to any firm recommendations being proposed for consideration by the Committee.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

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