



## **ACCESS JOINT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the ACCESS Joint Committee held at Bevin Hall, 18 Smith Square, London, SW19 on Monday, 10th June, 2024.

PRESENT: Chair: Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee (Hampshire CC), Vice-Chair: Cllr Susan Barker (Essex CC), Cllr Vanessa Churchman (Isle of Wight Council), Cllr Gerard Fox (East Sussex CC), Cllr Karen Soons (Suffolk CC), Cllr Graham Lawman (West Northamptonshire Council), Cllr Tom FitzPatrick (Norfolk CC), Cllr Charlie Simkins (Kent CC) and Cllr Andrew Williams (Hertfordshire CC).

LOCAL PENSION BOARD OBSERVERS: Ray Martin (East Sussex), Neil Simpson (East Sussex), Barry O'Sullivan (Cambridgeshire) and Simon King (Cambridgeshire).

ALSO PRESENT: Kevin McDonald (ASU), Mark Paget (ASU), Alistair Coyle (ASU), Sallie Wilson (ASU), Chris Harper (Squire Patton Boggs), Felix Weston (Squire Patton Boggs) and John Wright (Hymans Robertson).

OFFICERS: Andrew Boutflower (Hampshire), Nick Buckland (Kent) Jody Evans (Essex), Glenn Cossey (Norfolk), Sharon Tan (Suffolk), Patrick Towey (Hertfordshire), Mark Whitby (West Northamptonshire / Cambridgeshire), Ben Barlow (West Northamptonshire), Sian Kunert (East Sussex), Tracey Woods (Suffolk), Rachel Wood (West Sussex), Alex Younger (Norfolk) and Joel Cook (Kent - Clerk).

### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Alison Whelan (Cambridgeshire).

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

No declarations were made.

**158. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2024.**  
*(Item. 3)*

RESOLVED that the minutes from the meeting held on 4 March be approved as a correct record.

**159. Chair's remarks.**  
*(Item. 4)*

- 1) The Chair formally welcomed Local Pension Board observers from East Sussex and Cambridgeshire Authorities and he advised the Committee that Cllr FitzPatrick had replaced Cllr Oliver as the Norfolk representative on ACCESS.

**160. Internal Audit report.**  
*(Item. 5)*

- 1) Mr McDonald (ASU Director) introduced the item, outlining that the review had been undertaken by Essex County Council's Internal Audit team who joined virtually.
- 2) Responding to questions from Members, Mr McDonald advised that the Terms of Reference of the review had been agreed with the s151 Officers, the Officer Working Group and the ACCESS Support Unit (ASU) and that their feedback had been sought following risk identification. In addition, it was confirmed that the review had been shared External Audit for transparency purposes and no substantive comments were received. Members asked questions about the presentation of the risk likelihood. Essex Audit and Mr McDonald clarified that where risks had been identified the language used was designed to flag that certain circumstances or a failure to maintain adequate controls could lead to increased levels of risk but this did not mean the review had found that there was a high level of current risk.
- 3) It was highlighted that the Audit Review had resulted in an opinion of 'Good Assurance' which was to be welcomed and confirmed as the highest rating.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**161. Business Plan, Budget and Risk Summary.**  
*(Item. 6)*

- 1) Mr McDonald introduced the report. He advised that the report sought to present an overview of the activity undertaken in the 23/24 period, outline any key milestones and clarify where work was completed, ongoing as planned or in a small number, delayed due to circumstances. Mr McDonald drew Members' attention to the fact that eighteen of the 23 activities listed had milestones that continued into the current business plan year.
- 2) The budget was highlighted, with thanks given to Sam Andrews and other colleagues at Essex County Council for their work supporting the finance monitoring. Mr McDonald clarified the financial position, noting that the overspend and underspends were in line with the financial situation discussed with the Committee at the end of 2023 and that consideration had been given to how this should be managed, with the advice continuing to be that the approved budget remained appropriate and manageable.

RESOLVED that the following be noted:

- 2023/24 Business Plan summary;
- 2023/24 financial outturn;
- 2024/25 Business Plan update; and

- risk summary.

**162. Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2024.**

*(Item. 7)*

RESOLVED that the exempt minutes from the meeting held on 4 March 2024 be signed as a true and accurate record.

**163. Operator reprocurement.**

*(Item. 8)*

- 1) Mr Paget (ASU) provided an update on the re-procurement. He advised that the report set out the timelines for the process.
- 2) Members discussed the process and sought clarity on areas of due diligence and the procurement requirements.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**164. Contract and Supplier Relationship Management.**

*(Item. 9)*

- 1) Mr Paget summarised the report and drew relevant key points to the Committee's attention. He outlined results of the most recent temperature check, which covered levels of satisfaction with the operator from various stakeholders. Mr Paget also confirmed that the operator's performance in relation to the core Authorised Contractual Scheme elements continued to be excellent.

RESOLVED that the report and activity outlined be noted.

**165. Waystone presentation.**

*(Item. 10)*

- 1) Representatives from Waystone presented an update on recent activity and discussed recent performance and client / supplier engagement feedback.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**166. Communications.**

*(Item. 11)*

- 1) Mr McDonald provided an update on the broad Communications work, focusing on the engagement with Government and other Pools.
- 2) Key points included noting that roundtable discussions had occurred and correspondence from the Minister to s151 Officers in May. Furthermore, the LGA were engaging with Authorities across all pools on LGPS matters.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**167. Tavistock presentation.**  
(Item. 12)

*Messrs David Cracknell and Henry Adefope from Tavistock were present for this item.*

- 1) Mr Cracknell and Mr Adefope (Tavistock – ACCESS Communications partner) provided an update on the ACCESS Communications plan.
- 2) The advisors and the Committee discussed some of the potential implications of the General Election and explored Communications planning to address any outcome.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**168. Third-party review.**  
(Item. 13)

- 1) Mr McDonald introduced the report, outlining the key points presented for consideration and agreement by the Committee.
- 2) He outlined the revision of the principles and objectives for ACCESS and the proposed changes, clarifying that they sought a better reflection on the current established position of ACCESS.
- 3) Members considered and discussed the practical elements of the changes and received responses of clarification regarding the proposed principles and objectives updates.
- 4) Members debated the potential committee arrangement / governance options included in the review. No substantive changes were supported, however the Committee confirmed a requirement that further information be brought to a future meeting regarding options relating to the involvement of independent non-voting co-optees. The inclusion of the above in the resolution was moved by Cllr Hunt and seconded by Cllr Fox and this was agreed by unanimous vote.

RESOLVED;

- to APPROVE the revised objectives and principles as detailed within paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the report;
- To AGREE the next steps in relation to the following options detailed in the report:  
(1), (2), (3), (29) and (13)
- To AGREE no change to current committee management and chairing arrangements; and

To REQUIRE that a report be brought to the September ACCESS Meeting outlining options for the inclusion of Independent non-voting co-optees on the Committee.

**169. Third Party Review - Resourcing.**

*(Item. 14)*

- 1) Mr McDonald outlined the potential resourcing arrangements proposed to address the findings of the Third-Party review. Specifically, he explained the proposal to recruit for additional posts within the ASU which would support the delivery of key milestones within the approved ACCESS Business Plan.

RESOLVED;

- To AGREE the commencement of arrangements for phase 1 recruitment of relevant posts to support the required ASU expansion.
- NOTE the development of further proposals in relation to Phase 2 for any further expansion for a subsequent Joint Committee cycle.

**170. Alternative Assets.**

*(Item. 15)*

- 1) Andrew Boutflower (Hampshire) provided an overview of the progress made with pooling alternative assets. He outlined activity with relevant contracted partners to identify appropriate specialists to support the Pool and administering authorities in managing the relevant asset classes.
- 2) Following discussion, it was agreed that the recommendation be approved subject to clarification being added regarding the status of the advice.

RESOLVED that;

- A) in the context of identifying and agreeing appropriate pooled investment options for alternative asset classes, the identified funds be recommended as the pooling options to Administering Authorities with a requirement in the relevant asset class;
- B) That Councils with existing investments with these investment managers report them as pooled.
- C) That the update on further alternative asset pooling progress be noted.

**171. Responsible Investment.**

*(Item. 16)*

- 1) Mark Whitby (Cambridgeshire & West Northamptonshire) provided an update on the Responsible Investment work. He outlined the activity undertaken with PIRC who had progressed a gap analysis on ACCESS' current RI arrangements.
- 2) He advised that a detailed report relating to Voting & Engagement Provider options and how this could assist with consistent voting across ACCESS Sub-Funds would be brought to the September Joint Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **172. Performance.**

*(Item. 17)*

*Item taken out order*

- 1) Sharon Tan (Suffolk) provided an update on the Investment performance across ACCESS.
- 2) Key points included the following:
  - 69% funds were pooled (approx. £45bn)
  - Pooled assets with Waystone were up by £2.7bn since previous report.
  - £2.17bn went into real-estate and £1.73bn went into Aviva.
  - 5.7% return was broadly in line with the benchmark.
  - 1.3% one-year return was positive.
  - The diversified nature of the pooled fund helped reduce impact of those specific sub-funds which performed less well.
  - Work was ongoing with Northern Trust to provide overall ACCESS total returns to give a clearer strategic picture.
- 3) Members commented on the benefits of combined data that would provide a broad overview but noted the challenge around benchmarking such a variety of sub-funds and investment areas.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **173. Sub-Fund implementation.**

*(Item. 18)*

*(Agenda re-ordered on the day – taken after item 9 - Contract Supplier item)*

- 1) Alistair Coyle (ASU) provided the Committee with an update on progress with establishing Sub-Funds.
- 2) The key points related to work undertaken to support the launch of four more sub-funds prior to contract end with the current provider. Progress was positive on all four, with launches expected in the near future. Mr Coyle also highlighted changes made to Global Equity and Global High Income Opportunities.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **174. Risk Register.**

*(Item. 19)*

- 1) Mr Paget outlined the key points in the report regarding risk review and management, including those related to operator procurement and performance.

RESOLVED that the report be noted