



Staffordshire
Pension Fund
Local Government Pension Scheme

Pension Board Annual Report 2020/2021

Approved by Local
Pensions Board
25 June 2021



Introduction

This is the sixth annual report from the Staffordshire Pensions Board, the Board having been established by Staffordshire County Council Pensions Committee during spring 2015.

The Board is required by The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 to assist the Administering Authority, to secure compliance with the LGPS Regulations and help ensure that the Staffordshire Pension Fund is managed and administered effectively and efficiently and complies with the Code of Practice on the governance and administration of public service pension schemes issued by the Pension Regulator.

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=994>

Executive Summary

The opinion of the Board is that we do not have any concerns about the Staffordshire Pension Fund or its administration.

Board Members

The Board consists of six members, three representing scheme members and three representing scheme employers drawn from employer organisations.

During the last year we have lost year three members from the Board with one resignation and two members having completed their terms of office. We thank Ian Jenkinson, Gordon Alcott and Tracy McCready for their hard work and contributions to the Board. They brought to the Board a level of experience and scrutiny that has been a tremendous asset during their time as members. Ian Jenkinson, who performed the role of Chair of the Board has now been replaced as Chair by Rob Birch. Corrina Bradley joined the board as an Employer Representative at the end of the year and was elected as Vice Chair. We hope to fill the remaining vacancies in the coming months. Work continues to attract interested candidates to come forward.

Employer Representatives

Councillor Gordon Alcott - Staffordshire Borough & District Councils
(appointment ended 26 March 2021)

Rachel Bailye - Staffordshire University Academies Trust
(appointed 27 September 2019)

Tracy McCready - City of Stoke on Trent Council
(appointed 17 January 2020) (Resigned 29 October 2020)

Corrina Bradley – Vice Chair of the Board, Staffordshire Police
(appointed 26 March 2021)

Scheme Member Representatives

Rob Birch - Active Scheme member – Current Chair of the Board
(appointed 27 Sept 2019)

Ian Jenkinson - Retired Scheme member and former Chair of the Board
(appointment ended 18 December 2020)

Kate Salter - Unison Representative
(appointed 7 July 2017)

Indicates Member as at 31 March 2021

Meeting Attendance

The Board has met on three occasions during the year and attended joint training events and briefing events with the Pensions Committee. The majority of meetings took place online, due to the Covid restrictions in place throughout the year. The meeting scheduled for the 26 June 2020 was cancelled due to Covid restrictions preventing face to face meetings and there being insufficient time to make arrangements for online meetings. Consequently, the Board did not meet the requirement to hold 4 meetings during the course of the year. However, under the circumstances this is not a significant concern. In addition to Board meetings, one or more of the members have attended every Pensions Committee and Pensions Panel meeting, to ensure that there is a full understanding of the decisions made and discussions undertaken. These meetings also took place online for the main part of 2020 due to the Covid restrictions.

Meeting	26 June 2020	25 Sept 2020	18 Dec 2020	26 Mar 2021
Gordon Alcott	Cancelled	Present	Absent	Present
Rachael Bailye	Cancelled	Absent	Absent	Present
Rob Birch	Cancelled	Present	Present	Present
Ian Jenkinson	Cancelled	Present	Present	NA
Tracey McCready	Cancelled	Absent	NA	NA
Kate Salter	Cancelled	Absent	Absent	Absent
Corina Bradley	Cancelled	NA	NA	Present

The meeting of the Board held on the 18 December 2020 was not quorate. This meeting saw the end of the tenure of Ian Jenkinson as a Board Member and Chair. Due to not being quorate it was not possible to elect a new Chair until the next meeting which was held on the 26 March 2021.

Work Programme

During the year Board members have monitored compliance with the Regulations, the Risk Register and the development of the LGPS Central Pool arrangements. In addition, Board members are reviewing internal and external Audit Reports to ensure that there are no significant or high-level recommendations being made and that all other recommendations are being acted upon within a reasonable time-frame. Board members also attend the risk register review meetings and are actively involved in the discussions and scrutiny involved in identifying the various risks across the Staffordshire Pension Fund.

Breaches

The Board has a responsibility to report upon any matter that appears to be materially significant. There were no significant issues of concern raised with, or by the Board, throughout the year.

Scheme members data is subject to specific targets set by The Pensions Regulator. On review of the Data Scores for 2020/21, it was noted that whilst there had been some improvement in the scores over the previous year, there are still several scheme members for whom incorrect address details are held. This is largely due to deferred members not updating their personal details and is largely outside of the control of the Fund. The Board will continue to monitor the compliance with data targets as set by the Regulator. The Board suggested that the website be updated to remind all scheme members to keep their personal details updated.

Risk Register

The Pensions Committee at its meeting of 25 September 2020, once again, accepted the content and recommendations of the Board's review of the Pension Fund Risk Register carried out during 2019/20 and requested the Board continue to play an active role in the ongoing review process.

This work has been carried out by individual Board Members attending, as observers, a series of meetings of the Officer Working Group where the Risk Register is discussed in line-by-line detail.

The view of the Board is that the Risk Register is a robust, comprehensive and appropriate approach to risk management. The risk rating through RAG colour coding (a 'traffic light' indicator) is an understandable way to identify and categorise the risks.

The Board considers that the Officer Working Group manages the whole process through an appropriate procedure, has ownership of both the individual risks and the whole register and takes their responsibility seriously.

Online governance arrangements

During 2020/2021 most of the Board's review work was carried out online. The Covid pandemic has forced online governance processes to be adopted and this has predominantly been successful.

LGPS Central Pool arrangements

The costs of running LGPS Central continue to be an ongoing concern and the Board were pleased to see pushback from the Pensions Committee members in relation to discussion on terms and conditions of employment for LGPS Central staff which would have increased costs further.

It remains outside of the Board's remit to engage directly on the subject of LGPS Central costs, but the Board remains confident that the Pensions Committee and Officers engage effectively and challenge the LGPS Central Pool, when needed, in order to ensure value for money is delivered by LGPS Central.

Audit Report

The Board receives and monitors Audit Reports. It was noted at the meeting of the Pensions Committee, held on the 18 December 2020, that there had been a delay in producing the External Audit opinion on the 2019/20 Pension Fund Annual Accounts, by the deadline of 1 December 2020. This was due to the issues caused by the pandemic and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had been informed. An interim audit report had been produced and was accepted, with no significant issues identified. The draft of the 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts was approved by the Pensions Committee, with the caveat that should there need to be any minor adjustments in the final version, this would be agreed by the Chair of the Committee, in due course.

Other matters

The impact of Covid19 on the market value of the investments of the Fund has been of concern to the Board, and no doubt to the Pensions Committee and Officers, as well as scheme members. It remains to be seen how the pandemic might impact investments longer term but given the market rebound in 2020/21, it is possible that new investment opportunities will arise. The Board will continue to monitor the impact of Covid19 on the Fund and also how it is managed over the coming year.

Conflicts of Interest

Declarations of interest are recorded on a declaration form completed by Board members, which should be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate. There may also be conflicts of interest with regards to items under discussion. Any conflicts that arise during the year are shown in the minutes. No conflicts of interest have arisen during the meetings over the year 2020/2021.

Training

The Board has a duty to monitor its own training needs to ensure that each member has the knowledge required to exercise their responsibilities. The Board, individually, undertakes training through The Pension Regulators Public Service Toolkit and has adopted the CIPFA Knowledge and Skills Framework to aid and audit their understanding. A Training Needs Analysis has not taken place this year, primarily due to the difficulties with Covid19 restrictions but also the fact that a number of Board members were coming to the end of their term of office. Training will be a high priority, once restrictions are lifted, particularly as there will be several new members on the Board.

Costs and Expenses

The costs and expenses of the Board are met as part of the administration costs of the Fund. The total costs during the financial year 2020/2021 were as follows:

Board members travel, training and conferences expenses	£17.90
Total	£17.90

It is of note that the expenses this year are significantly lower than previous years. This is because of meetings taking place online. It is anticipated that cost will revert to more normal levels following the return of face to face meetings and regular training events.

Robert Birch

Chair of the Staffordshire Local Pension Board
May 2021