

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CLWYD PENSION FUND COMMITTEE**

DATE: **21st MAY 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (PEOPLE AND RESOURCES)**

SUBJECT: **FUNDING AND FLIGHT-PATH UPDATE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To update Committee Members on the funding position and liability hedging undertaken as part of the Flight-path strategy for managing liability risks.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 A role of the Committee is to monitor the funding position of the Fund and the management of the liabilities.

2.02 Mercer provides advice to the Fund on liability hedging and flight-paths. Insight Investments were appointed to manage the assets on behalf of the Fund.

2.03 The flight-path strategy commenced from 1st April 2014 with the following aims:

- Achieve a 'base level' of interest rate and inflation hedging (10% hedge ratio) at the outset.
- Aim for a target interest rate and inflation hedge of 40% by April 2019.
- Achieve a target interest rate and inflation hedge ratio of 80% in the long term.

To this end, Insight will construct and manage a portfolio of assets that aims to hedge a proportion of the Fund's liability cash flows.

2.04 By replacing the Fund's passive equity exposure with an Equity Total Return Swap (synthetic equity exposure) the Fund freed up capital to be used as collateral for a liability hedging portfolio. This enables the Fund to maintain its exposure to return seeking assets, while reducing the interest and inflation risks.

2.05 From the 'base level' further hedging will be achieved through an incremental build up over time overlaid with triggers according to prevailing market conditions. In addition there are funding level triggers which will result in the disinvestment of growth assets as the funding level improves. All the above is fully documented and understood by Mercer and Insight.

2.06 The triggers have been formulated on the understanding that the Fund's overall objective is to be fully funded within 10 to 12 years which is ahead of the average recovery plan based on deficit contributions of 18 years.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 The monthly summary report from Mercer on the funding position and an overview liability hedging mandate is attached as at 30 April 2015. There was no hedging activity in April 2015. It includes a "traffic light" of the key components of the Flightpath and hedging mandate with Insight. This will be presented at the Committee meeting including a verbal update on how things have moved. Based on the preliminary data from Insight, the analysis shows that all traffic lights are "green" at 30 April meaning the mandate is operating in line within the tolerances set by the our advisors. However, there is continuing volatility in markets so the current funding position is closer to an amber rating. This is because the funding position is behind the expected recovery plan given the recent change in market conditions.

3.02 Since the commencement of the strategy a number of interest rate triggers have been met and the Fund had an interest rate hedge of approx. 24.0% and an inflation hedge of approx. 40.0% at 30 April. No funding triggers had been reached.

3.03 As a result of the hedging noted above we have already reached the planned target level for inflation hedging at April 2019. Mercer is in the process of producing a health check to consider options that exist to adapt the hedging mandate to reflect current market conditions and opportunities.

3.04 The estimated funding position as at 30 April is 66% and an estimated deficit of £721m which is behind expectations. The hedges in 3.02 have protected the funding position against the recent changes in interest and inflation rates to the extent the deficit would have been approx. £90m higher if the hedges since inception had not been implemented via the triggers and the original strategy had remained in place.

3.05 The Actuary will verbally update the Committee on developments since 30 April 2015 at the April meeting.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That Committee Members note and discuss the estimated funding level and the liability hedging undertaken to 30 April 2015.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None directly as a result of this report.

6.00 ANTIPOVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None directly as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None directly as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None directly as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None directly as a result of this report

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None directly as a result of this report

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None directly as a result of this report

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Overview of risk management framework – Q4 2014

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: Philip Latham, Clwyd Pension Fund Manager
Tel: 01352 702264
Fax:01352 702279
e-mail: philip.latham@flintshire.gov.uk