

CLWYD PENSION FUND COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 29 November 2023
Report Subject	Governance Update
Report Author	Head of Clwyd Pension Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An update on LGPS governance matters and the impact on the Clwyd Pension Fund (CPF) are provided for discussion at each Committee, including updates on the CPF's governance strategy and policies. This update report includes developments since the previous report provided at the August 2023 Committee meeting. It includes matters that are for noting only, albeit comments are clearly welcome, particularly in relation to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion proposals in paragraph 1.04.

The report includes:

- progress against the governance section of the 2023/24 to 2025/26 Business Plan
- updates on the membership of the Pension Board
- current developments and news both at national level and any CPF-specific governance matters including a recent internal audit report relating to the Fund's risk management
- changes to the governance risks on the Fund's risk register since the last meeting
- the latest changes to our breaches of the law register
- an update on the recent training needs analysis and initial suggestions on future training plans
- forthcoming training and events, some of which are essential for Members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee consider the update and provide any comments.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	GOVERNANCE RELATED MATTERS
1.01	<p data-bbox="320 271 659 304">Business Plan Update</p> <p data-bbox="320 344 1374 524">The business plan update in Appendix 1 shows the latest progress for the governance tasks in the 2023/24 Business Plan. Good progress is being made with all actions under the Fund’s control. There have been delays to national projects including TPR’s new Code of Practice, and the Good Governance recommendations.</p> <p data-bbox="320 564 1362 636">In relation to the priorities in the governance section of the business plan, the key points to note are as follows:</p> <ul data-bbox="368 676 1385 2107" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="368 676 1385 931">• <i>G1 – Committee and Board knowledge and skills:</i> Responses from the recent knowledge and skills self-assessment questionnaire have been collated. Additional training sessions have already been scheduled in February and March 2024, so it is proposed that the analysis of questionnaire responses forms part of a wider discussion on the training plan for 2024/25 to be developed as part of the Fund’s business planning process.<li data-bbox="368 936 1385 1151">• <i>G2 – Appointment of Local Pension Board and Pension Fund Committee Members:</i> Following receipt of more than one nomination for the vacant employer representative position on the Board, the Board Chair and I met with the candidates. The appointment process is now complete and a verbal update will be provided at Committee.<li data-bbox="368 1155 1385 1447">• <i>G3 – Review against TPR new General Code:</i> The Pension Regulator’s new General Code has still not been laid but is expected to materialise in early 2024. Essential training on the new code has been scheduled for 20 March 2024. A review of the Fund’s processes and practices against the new Code will be carried out when practical but may now need to be included within the 2024/25 business plan. The business plan timescales have been updated to reflect this further delay.<li data-bbox="368 1451 1385 1778">• <i>G4 – Ongoing developments in business continuity arrangements including managing cyber risk:</i> The Pensions Administration Manager is meeting with Flintshire IT colleagues on 23 November to discuss feedback on the Fund’s draft Incident Response Plan. We propose to discuss this and other documentation which has been developed to complete the implementation of the Fund’s cyber strategy and business continuity arrangements at the Board meeting on 6 December. There will be a more detailed update for the Committee at their February meeting.<li data-bbox="368 1783 1385 2107">• <i>G5: Succession Planning and Ongoing Resource requirements:</i> Following approval of proposals to increase the resilience of the administration team at the August Committee, work is ongoing to implement the agreed changes. Unfortunately, since then, the Communications Officer has recently accepted a role elsewhere within the Council and no suitable candidates were identified when the role was first advertised. Work is ongoing to fill that post. Further work is also being undertaken in relation to succession planning across the team.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>G6: Implement government changes relating to Scheme Advisory Board good governance review</i> There has been no further progress from Government nor the Advisory Board on the good governance proposals. DLUHC officials recently indicated that we should expect some progress “early next year” but this was before the Government re-shuffle. The business plan timescales have been updated to reflect this further delay. • <i>G7: Review of governance related policies</i> The Fund’s Risk Policy was scheduled to be reviewed in Q3 2024. Due to an ongoing review by Flintshire County Council of its risk management framework, the review of the Fund’s policy has been postponed until Q4 so we can consider any changes to the Council’s framework which are expected to be confirmed by the end of January 2024.
	Current Developments and News
1.02	<p><i>Pension Board meetings</i></p> <p>Following the update at the last Committee meeting, the minutes from the 18 August 2023 special board meeting are attached in Appendix 2 for information.</p> <p>A Board meeting was also held on 18 October 2023 and a summary of the key points of discussion is included below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Succession planning within the Finance team. The Head of the Fund explained it was unlikely to be possible to replace Mrs Fielder as Deputy Head of the Fund next year, so it is proposed to continue to develop the existing finance team members. The Board was supportive of ongoing planning in this area. - Workflow analysis and progress of the administration team restructure. The Pensions Administration Manager explained the changes approved at the August Committee meeting and the rationale. In addition to the workflow analysis undertaken, she also referred to telephone call analytics which had become available for the first time, giving further insight into the administration team workload. The Board was pleased with the resourcing plans of the administration team, and the support from HR colleagues at FCC which the Head of Fund advised had been instrumental in implementing the changes. - Cyber and Business Continuity – an update was provided on progress in implementing the Fund’s cyber security strategy, including the draft Incident Response Plan and the Business Continuity Plan. - Responsible investment and pooling – the Board viewed the PMI video recorded by the finance team and Capital Dynamics, and received an update on various issues including relating to WPP. The Board requested the Deputy Head of the Fund to share the overall results of the WPP Stewardship Themes survey.

	<p>- Administration - the Board noted the website analytics and were pleased with the increased engagement with pensioner members, The Board also noted plans to improve engagement with active members and the progress on employer engagement.</p> <p>The next Board meeting is scheduled for 6 December 2023.</p>
1.03	<p><i>Internal Audit Report</i></p> <p>A review was undertaken to assess the robustness of the processes the Fund has in place for the effective management of Funding, Investment and Governance risks, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequacy of processes in place to oversee the management of Funding, Investment and Governance risks. • Detailed testing of a sample of Funding, Investment and Governance risks from the risk register to ensure appropriate risk assessments are in place, risks outside of appetite are supported by action plans and expected target dates, risk ratings have been defined and risk owners have been assigned. • Review of the processes for managing risks around climate change, recognising this is a particular issue for Clwyd Pension Fund. • Consideration of whether the risk register should be updated to reflect recent changes made to FCC Risk Management Policy (assessment of value and benefits of using the new approach, in particular recognising the difficulties CPF have with risk scoring using the current system) <p>The Assurance Opinion was one of reasonable assurance: <i>key controls in place but some fine tuning required</i> with the conclusion: <i>key controls generally operating effectively.</i></p> <p>There were two green (low priority) actions relating to the following control issues:</p> <p>Appropriateness of the CPF risk scoring matrix The agreed action, to review the Fund risk registers and ensure the model is fit for purpose was already planned as part of the risk policy review and comparison against FCC’s new risk framework. As noted in the business plan update above, this action has been deferred due to an ongoing review of the FSS risk management framework.</p> <p>Weaknesses in evidence to support strategic risk monitoring / review The agreed action, to document all discussions and changes to the risks registers in one central place to ensure a full audit trail, is already being implemented by the Fund with the supports of its advisers.</p> <p>In addition, there is one amber (medium priority) action relating to the following control issue:</p> <p>Risks are not recorded in one place, as such they may be missed or appropriate mitigations may not be put in place</p> <p>The agree action is to produce a more detailed risk register for funding and investments to supplement and enhance the existing risk register, which</p>

	<p>will be considered on an ongoing basis by officers and advisers. We are working with Mercer as our actuary and investment adviser on implementing this.</p> <p>The Internal Audit Report is attached as Appendix 3.</p>
1.04	<p><i>Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)</i></p> <p>The Pensions Regulator (TPR)'s guidance on EDI for governing bodies suggests that scheme managers should develop and maintain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an EDI policy including an agreed definition of EDI • the EDI aims of the governing body and • an EDI training plan for the governing body. <p>A draft Fund policy on EDI will be brought to the Committee for approval in the new year. As part of this work, officers and advisers will be ensuring that the approach in developing the Fund's EDI Policy, including the definition of EDI, has regard to the Flintshire County Council Policy, given it is the administering authority. In the meantime, the Committee is asked to comment on the following working draft definition of EDI and its benefits for the Fund's policy (which in turn could be developed as part of the Fund's aims):</p> <p>Equality – for CPF, equality is about ensuring that all members and employers have equal access to information about the Fund, the benefits it offers and what the Fund needs from them to administer the benefits. The Fund also recognises that enhancing the diversity of those involved in managing the Fund, including officers, Committee and Board members can improve equality.</p> <p>Diversity – CPF considers diversity to relate all characteristics which make individuals different; from protected characteristics such as age, disability, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation and broader characteristics such as socio-economic background, life experiences, education levels and languages.</p> <p>Inclusion – CPF aims to create an environment in which all those individuals involved in managing the Fund can thrive and reach their full potential.</p> <p>The Fund commits to ensuring that, where possible, the Pension Board and Committee are made up of individuals with a broad range of characteristics, life experiences, expertise, and skills. By doing this, the Fund believes this will lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more effective decision-making that reflects member needs and values • better decision-making that benefits members and employers • greater understanding, insight and empathy for scheme beneficiaries in areas where discretions are exercised • improved communications with scheme members and employers* <p>*The Committee may also recall that the review of the Fund's Communications Strategy in June 2022 recognised the needs of different</p>

	<p>stakeholders, and it includes commitments around accessibility, ease of understanding and access in both English and Welsh.</p>
1.05	<p><i>LGPS Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) meetings</i></p> <p>The LGPS SAB met on 17 July. The meeting summary is attached at Appendix 4. The date of the next SAB meeting is on 4 December 2023.</p> <p>The update paper on the Knowledge and Skills Workstream for the 23 October meeting of the Compliance and Reporting Committee of the SAB, here, refers to the Knowledge and Skills survey which was issued to LGPS Pension Committees and Boards. It confirms the intention to announce the results at the Governance conference in January 2024 and “determine whether there are any specific recommendations which can assist funds in this area”. The Fund has confirmed with SAB that their survey is not intended to replace Fund-specific training needs analysis but it is hoped that SAB will share any relevant information relating to CPF Committee and Board member responses to assist in development of the training plan.</p>
1.06	<p><i>DLUHC's Consultation on Investment Issues</i></p> <p>DLUHC’s consultation “LGPS (England and Wales): Next steps on investments” closed on 2 October 2023. The Fund submitted its response based on the draft considered by the Committee at their August meeting. It is attached as Appendix 5. WPP also responded and the SAB’s response can be found here.</p>
1.07	<p><i>Government re-shuffle</i></p> <p>On 13 November, just a year after his appointment, Lee Rowley has been promoted from Local Government Minister (which included responsibility for the LGPS) to Housing Minister – the former role being a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and his new role a Minister of State. He has been replaced as Local Government Minister by Simon Hoare, MP for North Dorset and previously an Oxfordshire Councillor.</p> <p>It is not yet clear what these changes will mean for the LGPS, but unless the new Minister takes a much greater interest in the LGPS, we might expect further delays or changes to priorities affecting national initiatives such as TCFD reporting requirements, Good Governance, the Goodwin ruling and even the recent proposals relating to investments and asset pooling.</p> <p>At the same time, Laura Trott has been promoted from Pensions Minister to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, a role whose responsibilities include public sector pay and pensions. With employer contributions to the unfunded schemes going in the opposite direction to those of the LGPS, it will be interesting to see if and how her experience in relation to private sector schemes from her time at DWP influences her approach to public sector pensions policy.</p>
1.08	<p><i>Treasury publishes a Written Ministerial Statement on Treasury Cost Control Mechanism</i></p>

	<p>On 19 September 2023 the Treasury issued a written ministerial statement confirming the reforms to their cost control mechanism. The changes made are to address concerns that the mechanism did not meet its original objectives, following a review by the Government Actuary and a consultation. The SAB is in the process of reviewing its cost control mechanism for the LGPS which operates alongside the Treasury mechanism.</p>
1.09	<p><i>The Autumn Statement</i></p> <p>The Autumn Statement is taking place on 22 November, after the Committee papers have been finalised for publishing. A verbal update on anything of relevance to the Fund will be provided at the Committee meeting.</p>
1.10	<p><i>Procurement Act 2023</i></p> <p>The Procurement Act received royal assent on 26 October. It is part of the Government’s Transforming Public Procurement programme which aims to create a simpler and more flexible, commercial system; open up public procurement to new entrants such as small businesses and social enterprises and embed transparency throughout the commercial lifecycle.</p> <p>The Act is likely to impact the Fund’s procurement of advisers and suppliers in the future. Officers will therefore ensure the new requirements are understood, albeit Government has indicated that it expects the new regime to go live in October 2024, with at least 6 months’ advance notice. Further, Government has indicated that existing legislation will apply until the new regime goes live, and will also continue to apply to procurements started under the old rules.</p>
1.11	<p>Policy and Strategy Implementation and Monitoring</p> <p><i>Knowledge and Skills Policy and Training Plan</i></p> <p><u>Policy requirements</u></p> <p>The Fund’s Knowledge and Skills Policy requires all Pension Fund Committee members, Pension Board members and Senior Officers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend training on the key elements identified in the CIPFA Knowledge and Skills Framework as part of their induction and on an ongoing refresher basis • attend training sessions on “hot topic” areas, such as a high risk area or an area of change for the Fund and • attend at least one day each year of general awareness training or events. <p><u>Training Needs Analysis</u> – As part of the Fund’s 2023/24 business plan, and in line with the requirements of the Fund’s Knowledge and Skills Policy, a training needs analysis is carried out at least once every two years to identify any gaps in knowledge of Committee and Board members. Responses to the recent questionnaire have been collated and it is proposed to hold a briefing session in early 2024 to discuss the results and seek further views from the Committee and Board to inform the training plan for 2024/25. The development of the training plan will then</p>

form part of the Fund's business plan for 2024/25 which will be put forward for approval by the Committee at their meeting on 20 March 2024.

Appendix 6 sets out the Fund's training plan and training undertaken since the last meeting.

Training undertaken.

A summary of attendance at the Fund's essential training sessions (other than induction training) over 2023/24 to date is included below:

	Date	Number of Committee attending (Proportion of total)	Number of Board attending (Proportion of total)	Number of Senior officers attending (Proportion of total)
Essential Training Sessions – Target attendance is 75%				
Governance of Pensions	April 23	7 (78%)	3 (60%)	4 (80%)
Tactical Asset Allocation and Responsible Investing	May 23	9 (100%)	3 (60%)	3 (60%)
Divestment Framework	Aug 23	8 (89%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)
Total		(89%)	(50%)	(67%)

Non-essential, general awareness training attended by Committee members since the last update includes the LGC Investments and Pensions Summit and WPP training on Responsible Investment in September.

Future training and events

Officers will continue to provide information on further training sessions and events as this becomes available. In the meantime, if any Committee or Board members wish to attend any of the following optional events that count as general awareness training, please contact the Governance Administration Assistant:

- WPP Q3 Reporting on 13 December 2023
- LGA LGPS Governance conference on 18/19 January 2024 in York
The following are the next essential training sessions, which should be attended by all Committee and Board members. It is proposed to hold these sessions after the Committee meetings and so members should make themselves available for the full day. Lunch will be provided.
- CPF Investment matters essential training on 28 February 2024
- TPR General code essential training on 20 March 2024

1.12

Recording and Reporting Breaches Procedure

The Fund's procedure requires that the Head of Clwyd Pension Fund maintains a record of all breaches of the law identified in relation to the

	management of the Fund. Appendix 7 details the current breaches that have been identified. There were two new breaches, one relating to late remittance advice for a community council and the other relating to transfers out being delayed due to the delay in provision of GAD guidance. The late remittance advice has been escalated to the Deputy Head of the Fund as it now covers all months since April 2023.
1.13	<p>Delegated Responsibilities</p> <p>The Pension Fund Committee have delegated a number of responsibilities to officers or individuals. There have been no uses of general delegated powers for governance matters since the last update report, but use has been made of the following special delegations agreed by the Committee at their August meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee delegated responsibility for approving the final DLUHC consultation response to the Head of Clwyd Pension Fund. • The Committee delegated responsibility for approving the final (Stewardship Code) submission to the Head of Clwyd Pension Fund.
1.14	<p>Calendar of Future Events</p> <p>Appendix 8 includes a summary of all future events for Committee and Pension Board members, including Pension Fund Committee meetings, Pension Board meetings, Training and Conference dates. Committee and Board Members are asked to note that they have been invited to the Fund's Annual Meeting for employers and scheme member representatives on 7 December. There are no formal presentations at the event (as videos were sent out) but it is an opportunity to speak with officers and advisers.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	National developments do have an impact on workloads within the in-house CPF Team but given the lack of progress in relation to national issues, there are no resource implications to highlight from a governance perspective.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The Fund has now responded to the DLUHC's consultation "LGPS (England and Wales): Next steps on investments" as set out in paragraph 1.06 above.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Appendix 9 provides the risk dashboard showing current risks relating to the Fund as a whole, as well as the extract of governance risks. The risk

	register has been updated since it was last presented to the Committee in August.
4.02	<p>There are no changes to the risk scores since the last meeting. Key changes to actions and internal controls are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk number 2: Governance (particularly at PFC) is poor including due to: short appointments, poor knowledge and advice, poor engagement /preparation / commitment & poor oversight, meaning inappropriate or no decisions are made - the action relating to the training needs analysis has been updated to recognise progress made with this. - Risk number 3: Legal fiduciary responsibilities are not met due to decisions being influenced by conflicts of interest - a new action has been added to ensure a robust process where any decisions relate to “local” investments outside of WPP. A similar action already exists for investments via WPP. <p>Risk number 6: Insufficient staff numbers (e.g. sickness, resignation, retirement, unable to recruit) - current issues include age profile / FCC pay grades versus other LAs, asset pools, private sector / cost of living, meaning services are not being delivered to meet legal and policy objectives. A new action has been added to ensure a resource plan is agreed and implemented to address the retirement of the Deputy Head of Clwyd Pension Fund which is expected in June 2024, and the target date has been moved to July 2024. The risk has also been updated to recognise the new Administration Team structure which approved at the last committee.</p>
4.03	Risk number 6 remains the risk furthest from target given the need to implement the new Administration Structure and expected retirements in the next few years.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Business plan update for governance tasks</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Pension Board meeting on 18 August 2023</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Internal Audit Report</p> <p>Appendix 4 - SAB Meetings – Summary of 17 July meeting</p> <p>Appendix 5 – CPF response to Next Steps in Investments Consultation</p> <p>Appendix 6 - Training plan</p> <p>Appendix 7 - Breaches log</p> <p>Appendix 8 - Calendar of future events</p> <p>Appendix 9 - Risk Register</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Report to Pension Fund Committee - 2023/24 Business Plan (March 2023)

Full hyperlinks for referred to information:

- 1.04 – TPR’s Guidance on EDI for governing bodies
<https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/document-library/scheme-management-detailed-guidance/governing-body-detailed-guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/edi-overview>
- 1.05 - LGPS Scheme Advisory Board meetings –
<https://lgpsboard.org/index.php/board-meetings>
- 1.06 – SAB’s response to consultation
https://lgpsboard.org/images/Responses/DLUHC_Investment_consultation_SABresponse.pdf
- 1.08 – Written Ministerial Statement
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-09-19/hcws1051>
- 1.09 SAB Chair’s letter to DLUHC
https://lgpsboard.org/images/Other/ChairtoTeresaClay_deemedemployerstatus_October2023.pdf

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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>(a) CPF – Clwyd Pension Fund – The Pension Fund managed by Flintshire County Council for local authority employees in the region and employees of other employers with links to local government in the region.</p> <p>(b) Administering authority or scheme manager – Flintshire County Council is the administering authority and scheme manager for the Clwyd Pension Fund, which means it is responsible for the management and stewardship of the Fund.</p> <p>(c) Committee or PFC – Clwyd Pension Fund Committee - the Flintshire County Council committee responsible for the majority of decisions relating to the management of the Clwyd Pension Fund.</p> <p>(d) Board, LPB or PB – Local Pension Board or Pension Board – each LGPS Fund has an LPB. Their purpose is to assist the administering authority in ensuring compliance with the scheme regulations, TPR requirements and efficient and effective governance and administration of the Fund.</p> <p>(e) LGPS – Local Government Pension Scheme – the national scheme, which Clwyd Pension Fund is part of.</p> <p>(f) SAB – The national Scheme Advisory Board – the national body responsible for providing direction and advice to LGPS administering authorities and to DLUHC.</p> <p>(g) DLUHC – Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – the government department responsible for the LGPS legislation.</p> <p>(h) JGC – Joint Governance Committee – the joint committee established for the Wales Pension Partnership asset pooling arrangement.</p> <p>(i) CIPFA – Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy - a UK-based international accountancy membership and standard-setting body. They set the local government accounting standard and also provide a range of technical guidance and support, as well as advisory and consultancy services. They also provide education and learning in accountancy and financial management.</p> <p>(j) TPR – The Pensions Regulator – TPR has responsibilities to protect UK's workplace pensions and make sure employers, scheme managers and pension specialists can fulfil their duties to scheme members. This includes oversight of public service pension schemes, including the LGPS. Specific areas of oversight are set out in legislation and also expanded on within TPR's Guidance and Codes of Practice.</p>

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| <p>(k) PLSA - Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association – PLSA aims to bring together the industry and other parties to raise standards, share best practice and support its members. It works collaboratively with members, government, parliament, regulators and other stakeholders to help build sustainable policies and regulation which deliver a better income in retirement.</p> <p>(l) HMT – His Majesty's Treasury – HMT has a responsibility to approve all LGPS legislation before it is made.</p> |
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