

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL PENSION FUND
Pension Fund Panel Meeting 20 September 2019**

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Report of the Chair of the Northumberland LGPS Local Pension Board

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is for the Pensions Panel to learn of the Board's observations on topics referred from the Panel and to consider any recommendations and assurances gained by the Northumberland Local Pension Board, and any other relevant information, emanating from the meeting of the Board on 12 July 2019.

Recommendation: The Panel is requested to note the feedback on items referred to the Board (paragraph 1), which includes a technical recommendation, to note the seven assurances gained by the Board in paragraph 2, and to note the points of interest set out in paragraph 3.

Outcomes from Pension Board Meeting on 12 July 2019

1. Items referred by the Panel at its meeting on 21 June 2019

1.1. Review of Breaches of the Law (report A16: part)

The one recorded breach related to the late receipt of scheme member and employer contributions from one employer. After prompt chasing by NCC officers, the contributions quickly followed. The Board supported the view from officers that the breach was not of material significance, and did not require reporting to the Pensions Regulator (tPR).

1.2. Review of Data Processing Information (also report A16: part)

To enable its better understanding of the duration of unresolved breaches, the Board recommended that a further analysis be provided in future reviews by South Tyneside Council (STC). This was agreed by officers.

1.3. Review of Data Improvement Plan: DIP: (also report A16: part)

Having been advised that the DIP was a working document which was regularly updated, the Board noted the pleasing percentage data scores for both Common Data and Scheme Specific data (measuring both the presence and accuracy of the data) but acknowledged that the current lack of a nationwide definition of scheme specific data made external performance comparisons inconclusive at this stage.

2. Other Assurances Gained by the Board

- 2.1. The Interim Executive Director of Finance assured the Board that the current NCC finance staffing resource which supports the Pensions Panel and Board would remain in place (subject to personal choice) thereby helping facilitate the successful completion of the current joint working proposals (subject to the County Council ratifying such proposals) by providing effective management of the risks inherent in the project.
- 2.2 The Board reviewed the Risk Register and found nothing untoward, but gained assurance from high level of ownership of the risks to the Pension Fund. The Board requested that risks relating to further joint working with TWPF be added to the Register.
- 2.3 The Board reviewed the report by Hymans Robertson regarding arrangements for the access to and choices available for the optional facility for NCC scheme members of making Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs). The Board gained assurances from the conclusions regarding reasonable choice and value for money. Reference was made to complying with tPR's Codes of Practice 13 and 14.
- 2.4 The Board was assured that Board members would be offered an input into any proposed communication with NCC scheme members should the further proposals for joint working with Tyne and Wear Pension Fund (TWPF) come to fruition.
- 2.5 The Board gained assurance from the information received on NCCPF's Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) processes, which complies with the expectations as set out in tPR's Code of Practice 14.
- 2.6 The Board gained assurances from STC that progress was satisfactory for ensuring that Annual Benefit Statements (ABSs) and Pension Saving Statements would be issued and available on or before their statutory deadlines. Should any subsequent problems arise which threatened meeting this deadline, the Committee and Board would be informed.
- 2.7 The Board gained assurance that the submissions of data to the Fund Actuary to kick start work on the Triennial Valuation 2019 had been in advance of the agreed timescales.

3. Other Information

- 3.1. A second Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) survey of Local Pension Boards is imminent.
- 3.2 Following the identification of an appropriate approach at its last meeting, the Board reviewed an early draft of the 2018/2019 Annual Report and Accounts of the Fund, to check for compliance with both the Regulations (Regulation 57) and the guidance regarding content to be included. In studying the check list, the Board was mindful that further work was to be done, before a final review.
- 3.3 The Chair provided feedback from the meeting of BCPP Board Chairs which had been held on 22 May 2019, with its focus being on access to papers of the Joint Committee.
- 3.4 The Board received a summary of outcomes for NCCPF from the 2019 National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data comparison. The Board probed the processes for chasing and / or writing

off any debts, mindful of materiality. Further detail will be provided at or before the next Board meeting.

Gerard Moore

Independent Chair: Northumberland LGPS Pensions Board