

Introduction

In March 2023, members of the Local Pension Board ('Board') independently completed a survey which aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Board. This is the third such review conducted by the Board.

Members also attended a workshop to discuss the results of the survey and agree potential changes to improve its effectiveness. At the start of the workshop, officers from the Authority were invited to feedback to the Board on areas of the its work which they felt were working, and areas to improve. This note summarises the workshop.

The Board is asked to agree the actions to improve its effectiveness as outlined below.

Actions from previous Reviews of Effectiveness

The Board discussed the progress on the actions from previous reviews and were generally pleased with the progress made, particularly since the Authority's new governance team was established.

Outstanding actions relate to:

- Developing communications between the Board and the Authority.
- Informal actions agreed at Board meetings to be recorded.

The Board is asked to agree that the above outstanding actions remain relevant.

Officer Feedback

Officers provided their views on the effectiveness of the Board, including the increased effectiveness in scrutinising the Authority's work. This has been helped by greater stability of Board membership, albeit councillor members continue to have shorter tenure than other Board members.

Officers felt that the Board should consider the following areas for improvement:

- Reducing the time spent in meetings on pensions administration and increase the focus on wider Authority matters, for example the corporate strategy.
- Introducing rotation of the chair and vice-chair roles.
- Ensuring diversity characteristics of Board members are recorded and monitored.

The Board were supportive of all the suggestions for improvement provided by officers.

The Board is asked to agree the following actions:

- *Support the Authority in recording diversity characteristics and provide feedback on the characteristics which the Board feel are important.*
- *Support the Authority in amending the Board's constitution to require rotation of the chair and vice-chair roles.*

Board Survey Results

The survey of Board members included questions on the way Board meetings are conducted and knowledge, skills and capacity. The survey was completed by 7 of the 10 members of the Board.

The results of the survey were positive in a number of areas. All (or a significant majority of) members of the Board agreed that:

- Board papers are timely, relevant and focused on priorities.
- Discussions are facilitated to allow all Board members to contribute in order to seek opinion and develop ideas.
- Board members are not afraid to ask obvious or simple questions to ensure collective understanding.
- Meeting minutes are accurate and record decisions made and actions agreed.
- The Board works in an open and transparent manner.
- All Board members act with integrity, declaring and managing any personal conflicts of interest.
- The Board's independent adviser helps to Board to fulfil its responsibilities.

Meetings

Members felt that the minutes of the meetings could be more succinct, reducing content included in the papers.

Whilst the report on pensions administration is thorough, the Board would welcome a more succinct report which better highlighted areas of concern. The Board would also welcome more time in meetings to spend on broader Authority matters.

The Board is asked to agree the following actions:

- *Request the Authority attempts to provide a shorter, more succinct report on pensions administration for future meetings.*
- *Request that the Board's chair and vice-chair work with the Authority to better manage the time at meetings to reduce time spent on pensions administration and increase time spent on broader Authority governance matters.*

Knowledge, Skills and Capacity

The Board recognised the Authority's increased focus on developing knowledge and skills for both Board and Authority members. The on-line knowledge library and the knowledge assessment were discussed and the Board looks forward to reflecting on the results of the most recent knowledge assessment when they are available.

Some members of the Board felt that the on-line learning was somewhat isolating and they preferred to learn with others present to benefit from discussions. The Board were generally supportive of having an extended training/development day.

In relation to the knowledge assessment, members felt that there were some questions which were not covered in the training material. Undertaking the knowledge assessment directly after the on-line training could mean that the results may not necessarily reflect the knowledge retained by members in the medium term.

The Board is asked to agree the following actions:

- *Request that the Authority reflects on the Board's feedback on the on-line training and knowledge assessment when planning future activities.*
- *Board to further reflect on the results of the recent knowledge assessment (when available).*

General

The Board discussed the need to develop succession planning for members but acknowledged the difficulties of doing so. The Board discussed options including working with trade unions and increasing its profile with employers.

The Board is asked to agree the following actions:

- *Develop plan to improve succession planning for Board membership.*

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April 2023