


Non-Executive Report of the: PENSIONS COMMITTEE 9 March 2016	
Report of: Zena Cooke, Corporate Director Resources	Classification: Unrestricted
Pensions Committee Work Plan for 2016/17	

Originating Officer(s)	Bola Tobun, Investment and Treasury Manager
Wards affected	All

Summary

This report outlines the Work Plan for the Council's statutory function as the administering authority of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Pension Fund.

Members of the Pensions Committee are required by the Council's Constitution to consider pension matters and meet the various statutory obligations and the duties of the Council. This Work Plan provides for certain statutory requirements to be met and for members to be well trained and kept up to date and thus fit for purpose.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

- Agree the work plan attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations, the Council is required to maintain a Pension Fund for its employees and other 'scheduled bodies' as defined in the Regulations. The Regulations also empower the Fund to admit employees of other 'defined' (e.g. other public bodies, housing corporations) bodies into the Fund.
- 1.2 The proposed work plan for the authority has been put together to assist in the management of the Fund, so that the Council is able to perform its role as the administering authority in a structured way. The Work Plan is not intended to cover all aspects of Pension Fund administration; rather it is designed to assist with meeting part of its delegated function as administering authority to the Fund.
- 1.3 The Pension Committee is charged with meeting the duties of the Council in respect of the Pension Fund. Therefore it is appropriate that the Committee formally adopts a work plan to assist with the discharge of its duties.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The development and implementation of a work plan should ensure that a structured approach is in place for the monitoring and management of the Pension Fund. This should in turn ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations as administering authority to the Fund. However, the Committee is under no obligation to adopt a work plan in carrying out its duties.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The Council has specific delegated functions that it has to fulfil as the administering authority to the Pension Fund. This requires that a number of monitoring and management activities are undertaken to ensure that it fully discharges its oversight and governance responsibilities to the Fund.
- 3.2 It is appropriate that the Committee should set out how it intends to fulfil its obligations as the delegated authority appointed by the Council to be responsible for the Fund. Adopting a planned approach should make monitoring easier for the Committee and ensure that activities critical to the effective management of the Fund are being undertaken.
- 3.3 The Key Performance Indicators cover the following areas:
 - Investment performance
 - Funding level
 - Death benefit administration
 - Retirement administration
 - Benefit statements
 - New Joiners
 - Transfers in and out
 - Employer and member satisfaction
 - Data quality
 - Contributions monitoring
 - Overall administration cost
 - Audit

3.4 In line with best practice, future Pensions Committee meetings will be provided with a schedule of Pension Fund key performance indicators (KPIs) covering investment and administration practices.

3.5 An annual Work Plan will be presented to Committee for agreement. The Work Plan should be presented to Committee by the last committee meeting of the prior financial year to which the Work Plan applies.

3.6 WORK PLAN

3.6.1 In designing the work plan, the priorities of the Council as the administering authority of the Fund have been considered and incorporated into the Plan. The Work Plan has been developed using the below outline action plan.

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE
Administration & Governance	
Member training on specific and general issues	To provide training on specific issues based on identified need or emerging/ current issues. To provide ongoing training to members to enable them to challenge the advice received and equip them with the tools to enter into constructive dialogue with advisers.
Pensions Committee to receive key performance indicators report on a quarterly basis.	To ensure scheme is run in accordance with agreed service standards; and compliance with regulations and to deal with and rectify any errors and complaints in a timely way.
Review the current pension administration strategy	To ensure scheme is run in accordance with the rules.
Review and refresh key policy documents; the Statement of Investment Principles, Funding Strategy Statement, Governance & Communications Policy Statement as necessary (i.e. where significant changes are made)	Seek member approval and formally publish any updated documents where this is deemed appropriate.
Set up pensions specific website or microsite	A pension specific website is scheduled to be set up towards the latter half of 2016, which will include details on pension administration, pension investments. And to provide a platform for on-line training facilities.
Minimum of four Pensions Committee meetings to be held during the financial year 2016/17.	To ensure that members are kept up to date on key developments with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Pension Fund and to ensure that approval is received on key tasks/issues that affect the effective operation of the Fund.
Each Fund manager will attend at least one meeting during the year 2016/17 and more if deemed necessary	To oversee fund manager activities and monitor performance to ensure that they are achieving performance targets and investing fund assets within the confines of the risk parameters and approach agreed with the Council.

Ensure high level support is available to monitor and review, monitor and manage the risks taken by the Fund.	High level support is available via the Risk and Investment Management Team (RIMT) (this consists of officers and advisers) which oversees the implementation of the Pensions Committee decisions and as well as conceive and discuss new ideas for consideration by the Committee.
Investment & Accounting	
Draft Pension Fund Annual Accounts approved by the Corporate Director of Resources in July 2016.	To ensure that the Council meets the regulatory timetable and fulfils its stewardship role to the Fund.
Audited Pension Fund Annual Report to be published on or before the statutory deadline of 1 December 2016	Ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory obligation and to keep members abreast of the Pension Fund activities in a transparent and accessible way.
Review of the Funds investment strategy	To ensure that the Fund's investment strategy is optimal. There are no current plans for a major investment strategy review over the financial year, although manager underperformance/ market developments may require a review of Strategy.
Review of (Actuarial, Investment Consultant and Independent Adviser and Custodian Services)	This may not lead to full re-tendering for these services, but reviews will be commissioned to ensure that the Fund is still receiving good value for its major services. All options will be considered in the review including joining existing framework contracts.
Triennial Valuation of Pension Fund Assets and Liabilities for March 2016	The Fund is bound by legislation to undertake an actuarial valuation of its assets and liabilities to ensure that appropriate future contribution rates are set and that any Fund deficit is recovered over an appropriate period of time in line with the Fund's Strategy Statement. This report will present to Members the outcome of this exercise.

4. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 4.1 The comments of the Corporate Director of Resources are incorporated in the report.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1 Members of the Pensions Committee are required by the Council's Constitution to consider pension matters and meet the various statutory obligations and the duties of the Council. This Work Plan provides for certain statutory requirements to be met and for members to be well trained and kept up to date and thus fit for purpose.

- 5.4 When making decisions regarding investment of pension funds, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who don't (the public sector duty).

6. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Pension Fund represents an asset to the Council in terms of its ability for attracting and retaining staff who deliver services to residents. The adoption of a Work Plan should lead to more effective management of the Fund.
- 6.2 A significant element of the Council's budget is the employer's contribution to the Fund. Therefore, any improvement in the efficiency of the Fund that leads to improvement in investment performance or cost savings will likely reduce contributions from the Council and release funds for other corporate priorities.

7. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A work plan and budget should result in a more efficient process of managing the Pension Fund.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There is no Sustainable Action for A Greener Environment implication arising from this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The adoption of a work plan will minimise risks relating to the management of the Fund and should assist in managing down the risk of non-compliance with the Council's obligations under the Regulation as the administering authority of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Pension Fund.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no any crime and disorder reduction implications arising from this report.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Pensions Committee Work Plan 2016/17

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

- NONE

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