

PENSION FUND COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 5 June 2026 commencing at 10.15 am and finishing at 13:10

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Peter Stevens – in the Chair

Councillor Leigh Rawlins (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Nick Field-Johnson

Councillor Dan Levy

Councillor Imade Edosomwan

Non-Voting Members: Steve Moran, Pension Scheme Member (non-voting)

By Invitation:

John Arthur, Independent Financial Advisor

Russell Oades-Client Director, LGPS Central

Mark Davies, Head of Public Markets, LGPS Central

Tom Powell, Portfolio Manager, LGPs Central

Jeff Houston, Barnett Waddingham

Officers:

Mark Smith, Head of Pension Fund, Vicki Green,

Pension Services Manager, Josh Brewer, Responsible

Investment Manager, Greg Ley, Financial Manager:

Pension Fund Investment, Mukhtar Master Governance

and Communications Manager, Anna Lloyd Governance

and Communications Manager, Mohamed Cassimjee

(Democratic Services Officer)

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with [a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting][the following additional documents:] and decided as set out below. Except as insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents], copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

22/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies from Councillor Cotter, Councillor Henwood, and Lorna Baxter (Section 151 Officer).

23/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda No. 2)

None received.

24/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 3)

There were no public addresses or petitions to be received at this meeting.

25/25 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2026 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

26/25 MINUTES OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee RESOLVED to note the unconfirmed minutes of the Local Pension Board.

27/25 REPORT OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

(Agenda No. 6)

Alistair Bastin, Local Pension Board Member, presented the report, that set out the items the Local Pension Board wished to draw to the attention of the Committee following their last meeting on 24 April 2026.

The following was indicated:

- Reminded members that the Board was a statutory body established under the Public Sector Pensions Act 2013 and operated to assist the Committee in the effective governance and management of the Fund.
- He referred to the Board's most recent meeting in April and expressed the Board's expectation that Committee members attend future Board meetings to support engagement between the two bodies.
- He reported that the Board had been reassured that all Committee members had now completed the required mandatory training and also highlighted a key issue discussed by the Board relating to local government reorganisation.
- He explained that as Oxfordshire County Council currently acts as the administering authority, any reorganisation would require the Fund to identify a new host authority, depending on the final structure of one or more unitary councils.
- The Board had therefore recommended that this matter be recorded on the Fund's risk register.

The Chair thanked board members for the report and confirmed that members would seek to attend future Board meetings

The Committee Resolved:

- a) **To note the comments of the Board as set out in the report.**

28/25 REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2026/7

(Agenda No. 7)

Mark Smith, Head of Pensions presented the report which reviewed progress against the key priorities set out in the Annual Business Plan for 2026/7 and outlined progress against service priorities.

The following was indicated:

- That the 2026/27 plan had been developed through a workshop in February involving both Committee and Board members.
- Attention was drawn to areas rated red or amber and the workforce strategy was identified as a critical risk, reflecting ongoing challenges around recruitment, retention and capacity, particularly in the context of organisational redesign and new legislative requirements arising from “fit for the future” reforms.
- The job evaluation had been completed; approval had been obtained from the design authority and consultation with trade unions was imminent. It was emphasised that the Fund’s self-funding status placed it in a strong position to invest in future workforce capacity.
- An update was provided to the Committee on legislative reform, and confirmation that the Pensions Act had received Royal Assent on 29 April and that implementation guidance would follow.
- All requirements relating to LGPS Central pooling had been completed by 1 April, including legal agreements and governance arrangements. And the Fund was now a shareholder and client of LGPS Central, and the transition of assets had progressed successfully, albeit with increased costs.

In response to Members, the following was noted:

- That officers had confirmed that the workforce strategy would be brought back regularly.

Action: The Workforce strategy to be included as a standing item on future Committee agendas and officers to report back to the next meeting on the implications of local government reorganisation following the expected Government announcement in July 2026

The Committee RESOLVED to:

- a) Review the progress against each of the key service priorities as set out in the report; and**
- b) Agree any further actions to be taken to address those areas not currently on target to deliver the required objectives.**

29/25 RISK REGISTER REPORT

(Agenda No. 8)

Mukhtar Master, Governance and Communications Officer presented the latest position on the Fund's risk register, including any new risks identified since the report to the last meeting.

The following was indicated:

- That two new risks had been identified. The first related to insufficient workforce resources resulting from recruitment and retention challenges, and the second concerned the risks arising from local government reorganisation.
- It was further reported that the risk relating to insufficient officer skills and knowledge had been increased due to reliance on temporary staffing, while the risk associated with Committee member training had been reduced following completion of mandatory training. Furthermore, the risk relating to pool vehicles had also been reduced due to progress in transition arrangements.
- Mitigation plans were in place for the red risks identified and that budget provision had been made for anticipated staffing costs.

In response to Members, the following was noted:

- Mitigation plans were in place for the red risks identified.
- Provision had been made in the budget for staffing costs and that expenditure was expected to align broadly with forecasts could be confirmed.

The Committee Resolved to:

- a) Note the latest risk register and accept that the risk register covers all key risks to the achievement of their statutory responsibilities, and that the mitigation plans, where required, are appropriate.**

30/25 GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

(Agenda No. 9)

Mukhtar Master, Governance and Communications Officer, provided the Governance and Communications report from This report covered the key governance and communication issues for the Fund, including a report on any breaches of regulation in the last quarter.

The following was indicated:

- An update was provided on compliance with the General Code of Practice, confirming that the Fund had completed the relevant modules and was regarded as being in a strong position following external assessment.

- Further actions arising from completed modules would be finalised by July and that additional oversight work would be undertaken during the summer with an update to be presented to the Committee in September.
- Members were required to complete the LGPS Online Learning Academy (LOLA) by October 2026 in preparation for the national knowledge assessment. It was emphasised that the programme was intended to ensure members met statutory knowledge requirements under evolving legislation.
- Minor amendments to the Local Pension Board constitution were noted, which were approved, and it was confirmed that no material breaches requiring regulatory escalation had occurred.
- An update was also provided on communications, including the successful launch of the Fund's new website

In response to Members, the following was noted:

- Agreed that in relation to Members concerns about engagement with the online training platform, additional support to be provided, including refresher sessions and regular progress updates. It was also suggested that diary reminders be issued to maintain momentum throughout the training programme.

Actions: Officers to arrange a further introductory / support session on LOLA training.

Officers to consider arranging a follow-up session in September 2026. Monthly progress reminders on LOLA completion to be circulated to Committee and Board members.

The Committee Resolved to:

- a) Note the Fund's update on General Code of Practice Compliance 2026/27.**
- b) Note the Pension Fund Committee training update.**
- c) Approve the revised Local Pension Board Constitution.**
- d) Note the latest quarter's breaches for the fund.**
- e) Note the communications update.**

31/25 ADMINISTRATION REPORT

(Agenda No. 10)

Vicki Green, Pension Services Manager presented the report which updated the Committee on the key administration issues including service performance measurement, the debt recovery process and any write offs agreed in the last quarter.

The following was indicated:

- Case volumes had increased significantly, with over 9,800 cases to process, but that overall performance had improved, with 92.9% completed within service level agreements.
- Backlogs had been reduced through targeted overtime and use of agency staff

- The introduction of a new member self-service portal had resulted in increased enquiries, particularly relating to re-registration, but that these were expected to be reduced over time.
- It was noted that overall member engagements remained high and likely to continue due to ongoing changes in local government and pensions policy.
- Updates were provided on McCloud remedy work, pensions dashboards, system development and staffing challenges and it was confirmed that although there were still multiple vacancies, recruitment activity was underway and workforce planning would be critical to addressing future demand.

In response to Members, the following was noted:

- That pressures relating to sustainability of workloads and the impact of local government reorganisation were being factored into workforce planning.
- On the continuing risks associated with staff shortages it was said that the workforce planning exercise was intended to address these longer-term capacity issues.

Action: To provide an update at the next meeting on member self-service statistics once data issues with the system provider have been resolved.

The Committee RESOLVED to:

- a) **Note the report.**

32/25 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT INVESTMENT ADVISOR

(Agenda No. 11)

John Arthur, Independent Financial Advisor presented the report. The report will cover an overview of the financial markets, the overall performance of the Fund's investments against the Investment Strategy Statement and commentary on any issues related to the specific investment portfolios.

The following was indicated:

- It was reported that the Fund had experienced underperformance relative to benchmarks over the quarter, largely driven by global equity portfolios and specific private equity investments.
- Ongoing volatility in global markets was highlighted, including the influence of AI-driven equity growth, inflationary pressures linked to energy markets, and geopolitical uncertainty.
- It was emphasised that asset allocation decisions must be viewed over the long term, particularly given the Fund's open and well-funded position.
- In relation to Fund performance, the Committee was advised that the Fund had fallen by 2.4 per cent over the quarter and had underperformed its benchmark by 1.9 per cent, with most of that underperformance attributable to the former Brunel global equity portfolios, particularly the global sustainable and global high alpha funds.

In response to Members, the following was noted:

- The implications of pooling, transition to LGPS Central and the need for strategic clarity on risk appetite and investment direction were required
- Agreed that the Fund should make clear its expectation that appropriate investment risk should be taken in order to deliver long-term returns.

Action: It was requested that LGPS Central be asked to respond to the Adviser's report and provide further detail on strategy and performance.

The Committee RESOLVED to:

a) Note the report

33/25 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

(Agenda No. 12)

Greg Ley, Financial Manager Pension Fund Investment and Josh Brewer Responsible Investment Manager, presented the report. The report focused on Corporate Governance and Responsible Investment.

The following was indicated:

- That the Fund remained on track in respect of climate-related metrics, though limitations in methodology and broader economic factors were acknowledged.

In response to Members, the following was noted:

- The views emphasised by Members were acknowledged by officers with regard to the importance of balancing environmental objectives with financial performance and the implications of differing approaches across partner funds within LGPS Central and the need for continued engagement with LGPS Central on responsible investment delivery

Actions: Officers / LGPS Central to report back to the next meeting on how Oxfordshire's responsible investment beliefs and commitments will be implemented through LGPS Central.

Officers to review the Fund's current exclusions, including previous decisions relating to country exposure, and to report back to the Committee.

The Committee RESOLVED to:

a) Note the report

34/25 FUNDING AND INVESTMENTS UPDATE

(Agenda No. 13)

Greg Ley, Financial Manager: Pension Fund Investment, presented the report. This report covered updates on fund cashflow monitoring, pool transition costs and local investments.

The following was indicated:

- That consultations on the Investment Strategy Statement had closed with support for proposals.
- Updates were provided on asset transitions, with progress noted in transferring investments to LGPS Central.
- The Fund had remained cash-flow positive but was expected to become cash-flow negative from 2027.
- The Independent Investment Adviser had confirmed that, given the size of the Fund and the level of expected income generation, there remained considerable capacity to absorb a moderate cash flow shortfall without requiring a material change in investment strategy.
- The revised Investment Strategy Statement had now closed and that one response had been received, which was supportive of the proposals

In response to Members, the following was noted:

- Furthermore, local investment opportunities were under consideration and that LGPS Central had also begun work on developing its own local investment capability.

Action: Final Investment Strategy Statement to be brought to the September 2026 meeting for approval.

The Committee RESOLVED to:

- a) Note the report.

35/25 EXEMPT ITEMS

(Agenda No. 14)

36/25 POOLING TRANSITION UPDATE

(Agenda No. 15)

Russel Oades, Client Director at LGPS Central representative presented a transition progress report to the Committee.

The Committee discussed this item in a private session.

Actions: LGPS Central to be engaged on current fund exclusions and how these may be reflected in future implementation
LGPS Central to respond to Committee concerns regarding risk, performance and strategy.

The Committee RESOLVED to:

- a) Note the report.

37/25 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION FUND STRUCTURE UPDATE

(Agenda No. 16)

Mark Smith, Head of Pensions and Jeff Houston from Barnett Waddingham presented the report. The report provided updates on the approach to identifying the appropriate Fund structure post LGR.

The Committee discussed the item in private.

Actions: Officers to continue engagement with stakeholders and Government ahead of any formal designation decision by the Secretary of State.

A member workshop to be arranged during the summer to consider governance options in more detail.

A fuller report to be brought to the September 2026 Committee meeting.

The Committee RESOLVED to:

- a) **Review the independent report from Barnett Waddingham and note the details contained within report in annex 1; and**
- b) **Agree the approach that Fund officers should explore further option 1, alignment with a new unitary authority and option 5 a new Single Purpose Pensions Authority as outlined in the report.**
- c) **Agree that Fund officers continue engagement with stakeholders and Government ahead of any formal designation decision by the Secretary of State.**

38/25 APPROVAL OF SENIOR LGPS OFFICER

(Agenda No. 17)

Ian Dyson, Dir of Financial and Commercial Services presented the report. The report presented the final recommendation for the appointment of the Senior LGPS Officer.

The Committee discussed the item in a private session

Action: Officers to update the relevant role profile and governance documentation to reflect the statutory Senior LGPS Officer responsibilities

The Committee RESOLVED to:

- a) Review the independent report from Aon (annex 1) and note the suggested actions as set out in the report; and
- b) Agree the appointment of Senior LGPS Officer as the Head of Pension Fund role.
- c) Note that further updates will be provided to Committee as the "Fit for the Future" changes are implemented over the next 7 months.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing