

PENSION FUND COMMITTEE – 1 MARCH 2024

WORKFORCE PLANNING

Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to
 - i) Agree to the development of a **Succession Plan** for both the Pension Services Manager and the Service Manager Pensions;
 - ii) Agree to the development of a **Workforce Strategy** for the fund which:
 - a) Covers a short, medium and long-term horizon;
 - b) Facilitates the implementation of the appropriate structure, staffing, skills and knowledge to meet new and changing demands;
 - c) Makes use of new technologies and new ways of working, including agile working where appropriate;
 - d) Considers succession planning, retention, and development of the workforce

Introduction

2. Workforce Planning is a vital function of any organisation to ensure that the appropriate workforce is in place to deliver improved services, greater productivity and better customer focus.
3. Effective Workforce Planning can help organisations in many ways.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It promotes greater awareness of the importance of sound human resources throughout all levels of the organisation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It can support factors such as an aging workforce, attract the people and facilitate the other changes such as use of new technologies and agile working.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It provides a better basis for planning employee development that makes optimum use of everyone's skills and abilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It improves the overall business planning process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It provides more opportunities for underrepresented groups in the future growth and strategic plans of the organisation.

Workforce Issues for the Fund

4. **Turnover of staff** - This is a issue for most funds in England and Wales. This is caused by a number of factors:

- i) An aging workforce who are retiring;
 - ii) Competent staff being promoted or moving on;
 - iii) Desirability of experienced and skilled staff by other funds and pools.
- 5. **Difficulties in recruitment** – Primarily due to the lack of appropriately skilled staff, which can be exacerbated by organisations who offer more flexible ways of working, including agile working. This can be a particular challenge in areas like Oxford given the high pricing of housing.
- 6. **Structural Issues** – The current structure of the Administration Service could be reviewed to facilitate increased efficiencies and equity in workloads for staff members. Additionally, the structure should:
 - i) Match resources to the workload demand;
 - ii) Minimise the number of times a case is handed off to another worker or team;
 - iii) Clarify exactly where specific responsibilities lie.
- 7. **Agile Working** – Since the Covid pandemic, most staff within Pension Services have been largely working from home. Currently the main exception is the Benefit’s Team where all team members attend the office one day a week (one sub-team per day, Monday – Thursday) which enables them to deal with the high levels of physical post, manage the telephone helpline, as well as provide support and assistance to each other, and strengthen team bonds. Any review needs to consider:
 - i) Benefits of remote working in increasing the potential candidates for any recruitment drive
 - ii) How technology advances will impact on the current postal and phone cover arrangements
 - iii) How we retain a team ethos and commitment to the service when everyone works remotely
 - iv) The on-going requirement for face to face meetings with scheme members, scheme employers and other key stakeholders
- 8. **Better Use of Existing and new Technologies** – The fund could make better use of the current administration system for greater efficiencies. There are many new technologies which could be used to increase efficiencies and effectiveness – some such technologies and improvements could include:
 - i) Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI);
 - ii) Technologies that improve ‘Self Service’ such as a chatbot;
 - iii) Technologies that reflect and adapt to the needs of customers of varying ages.

Increasing Demands

- 9. The demands on funds have increased over the years due regulation, legislation and central government requirements. There are numerous new requirements

of the next few years which will no doubt stress test workforce structures and staffing that funds have in place. These requirements include:

- i) McCloud;
- ii) Sergeant;
- iii) O'Brien;
- iv) General Code of Practice;
- v) Pensions Dashboard

Recommendation

10. It is clear that many, if not, all LGPS funds, and not just Oxfordshire, are facing clear challenges in ensuring that they have the right numbers of people in the right jobs with the right skills to deliver improved services, greater productivity, and better customer focus. The following actions are proposed to ensure that the fund achieves this objective:

1	Development of a Succession Plan for both the Pension Services Manager and the Service Manager Pensions.
2	Development of a Workforce Strategy for the fund which: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Covers a short, medium and long-term horizon.• Facilitates the implementation of the appropriate structure, staffing, skills and knowledge to meet new and changing demands.• Makes use of new technologies and new ways of working, including agile working where appropriate.• Considers succession planning, retention, and development of the workforce.

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