

PENSION FUND COMMITTEE

4 September 2026

REVIEW OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27

Report by the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer)

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- i) Review the progress against each of the key service priorities as set out in the report;**
- ii) Note the Annual Report of Local Pension Board and training log for 2025-26; and**
- iii) Agree any further actions to be taken to address those areas not currently on target to deliver the required objectives.**

Executive Summary

2. This report provides the Pension Fund Committee with an update on progress against the 2026/27 business plan.
3. Overall, the Fund is making good progress across its key priority areas for 2026/27. With key areas highlighted where there are challenges which includes Workforce Strategy, procurement and implementation of Government policy on Access and Fairness and Access and Protections.

Purpose

4. The purpose of the report is to review the progress against the key service priorities set out in the business plan for the Pension Fund for 2026/27 as agreed by this Committee in March 2026.

Introduction

5. The key objectives for the Oxfordshire Pension Fund as set out in the Business Plan for 2026/27 remain consistent with those agreed for previous years.
6. The overall objectives are summarised as:
 - To fulfil our fiduciary duty to all key stakeholders
 - To administer pension benefits in accordance with the LGPS regulations, and the guidance set out by the Pensions Regulator
 - To maintain a funding level above 100%
 - To ensure there are sufficient liquid resources to meet the liabilities of the Fund as they fall due, and

- To maintain as near stable and affordable employer contribution rates as possible
7. The service priorities for the year do not typically include the business as usual activity which will continue alongside the activities included in the service priorities. Business as usual activities are monitored as part of the Administration Report, the Governance and Communications Report and the report on Investment Performance

Key Service Priorities – Review of 2026/27

8. The service priorities for 2026/27 were developed through a workshop to which all members of the Pension Committee and Pension Board were invited. This year, the workshop was held on 9 February 2026 and was facilitated by Hymans Robertson.
9. The workshop enabled members of the Committee and Board to identify key priority areas for the Fund for 2026/27. Fund officers have sought to bring this together under the 4 key priorities within the 2026/27 Business Plan which are summarised as follows:
- To deliver further improvements to the governance arrangements of the Fund.
 - To deliver further operational effectiveness of the service delivery/administration function, including delivery of regulatory changes.
 - To develop further the Fund's Investment and Funding service.
 - To deliver service enhancements and cost reductions through increased use of technology.
10. The latest position on each is set out in the paragraphs below. The assessment criteria for each measure of success is as follows:
- Green – measures of success met, or on target to be met
 - Amber – progress made, but further actions required to ensure measures of success delivered
 - Red – insufficient progress or insufficient actions identified to deliver measures of success
6. Deliver further improvements to the governance arrangements of the Fund. The position against the 5 agreed measures of success are set out in the table below.

Actions	Measure of Success	Key Progress Achieved	Outstanding Actions/Next Steps
Review and Implement the Workforce Strategy RED	Phase 1 – Benchmarking Phase 2 – Fund structure/capacity review Phase 3 – Employee value proposition Council Organisational Redesign	Phase 1 – Completed Phase 2 – has been completed, see report later in the agenda Organisational redesign is in	Phase 3 (Employee Value Proposition) due to commence in the coming weeks Organisational redesign – Internal interviews to be completed

		progress, as at August 2026: Review by Design Authority completed Consultation with unions completed Consultation with employees completed Internal interviews are currently underway	Implement changes effective 1 October 2026 Advertisement and recruitment for vacant roles
Finalise work on General Code compliance and provide external scrutiny/review ahead of preparation for the Independent Governance Review (IGR) GREEN	Finalise review of remaining GCOP modules Independent review of last modules Select modules for ongoing deep dives	Remaining GCOP modules reviewed Independent review by Hymans Robertson completed and included in the agenda for this meeting Ongoing modules for review selected on based of the fit for the future changes	The fund has prioritised further modules for detailed review later in the year, forming a continuous cycle of review and improvement
Review and implement confirmed Good Governance Review outcomes as part of the 'Fit for the Future' consultations GREEN	Review and update Training Strategy as required Review and update Governance Strategy and other policies as required Review, advertise, recruit and appoint an Independent Person to Pension Fund Committee (non-voting)	Finalised regulations and some of the draft guidance received late June 2026 Appointment of Senior LGPS Officer completed in June Committee Proposed changes to Oxfordshire County Council Constitution	Review various policies once final regulations and guidance issued (still awaiting guidance on Pensions Administration Strategy, training and Governance Strategy) Appointment of Independent Person

	Review and prepare for the Independent Governance Review (IGR) Appoint Senior LGPS Officer	included in today's agenda Draft brochure for expression of interests in Independent Person currently under review internally	Scheme documentation and delegations to be updated Preparation for IGR
National Knowledge Assessment (NKA) and Knowledge and Understanding AMBER	All Committee and Board members complete TPR Toolkit First year of scoring baseline for new Committee. Board to maintain or improve NKA score from previous year All Committee and Board members enrolled on LOLA and complete 50% of modules	Updated LOLA launched, with training session run on how to make best use of the online learning tool Pre-Committee training from LGPS Central LGR and the Fund workshop taking place 27 August 2026	Take part in the NKA autumn 2026 Continue with formal training plan for Committee/Board
Local Government Reform (LGR) - tracking and responding to potential risks and resource implications GREEN	Respond effectively to Government consultations Keep Committee and Board regularly consulted and updated Identify stakeholders impacted and track any associated risks through risk register Review Fund position in light of LGR and propose structure that safeguards the smooth operations of the Fund	Government minded to decision on Oxfordshire LGR has been announced, 3 unitary option selected Updates provide to S151s and LGR Programme Board Engagement and sharing of best practice with other Funds ongoing Report on Fund structure post LGR included later in the agenda and workshop provided on 27 August 2026	Additional employer training and roll out of self-service functionality on Early Retirement Costings (ERCs) to wider group of employers Recruit additional resource to support increased work volumes Planning and preparation to continue during 2026

		for Committee and Board	
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7. Out of the 5 measures of success under this objective, 3 have been rated green. The last few modules on the General Code of Practice (GCOP) have been completed, and independent review is complete and contained within a paper later in the agenda. GCOP will then be on a routine review cycle to ensure compliance standards are maintained and will support compliance with the Fit for the Future requirements and aid preparation for the Independent Governance Review (IGR).
8. The National Knowledge Assessment (NKA) has been marked as amber to reflect the required preparation needed by Committee and Board through the completion of the LOLA modules which support all the key areas covered by the NKA.
9. The Workforce Strategy action has been assessed as red and remains a critical area of work if the Fund is to meet future challenges, including Fit for the Future, Access and Fairness, and Access and Protections. The Council's organisational redesign is underway, Fund roles have been through job evaluation, the business case has been approved by the Design Authority, the trade union and employee consultations have been completed.

Local Government Reform (LGR)

10. LGR is a standing item on this report, the risk register has been updated to reflect the potential impact of LGR on Fund services through the significant period of change.
11. There is a paper later in the agenda covering more detailed options for Fund structure post LGR.
12. The Government minded to decision on LGR for Oxfordshire was announced in July 2026 as the 3 unitary model.
13. More information is available within the LGR update report later in the agenda.
14. Deliver further operational effectiveness of the service delivery/administration function, including delivery of regulatory changes. There were also 5 specific measures of success set out in the 2026/27 Business Plan in respect of this priority. The progress against these is set out in the table below.

Actions	Measure of Success	Key Progress Achieved	Outstanding Actions/Next Steps
Complete McCloud (data and IT requirements) AMBER	Finalise remaining McCloud cases by 31 August 2026	Majority of cases completed before 31 August 2026 Further details on the current position of the McCloud implementation	System issues under investigation by software provider Awaiting regulatory guidance

		are included in the administration report	
Monitor and improve Common Data scores GREEN	Maintain or improve data score	LGPS Common Data is 94.6% and Scheme Specific Data is 99.13%	Next assessment late 2026
Employer Engagement/Client Relationship (including escalation process/fines) AMBER	Contributions reconciled monthly Member data reconciled monthly Late data and/or contributions pursued within 1 week - large employers, smaller employers within 2 weeks Develop Employer Services team to be centre of excellence for customer service (to employers), on valuation and employer covenant and all other employer matters Improve employer knowledge and understanding of responsibilities Review and update of all Fund provided employer policies/processes and procedures completed	Team training provided by Hymans Robertson Software currently being reviewed to support the team with increased volumes of Admission Agreements (likely to increase further with LGR) Standardise employer processes and workflows, currently under review with the support of Hymans Robertson Training for employers delivered Team structure has been updated as part of the organisational redesign	New team structure effective from 1 October 2026 More work is required around processes, policy documents and team structure
Customer Satisfaction - (Compliments/ complaints/ feedback) [Employer and Member] GREEN	Improve scores from member surveys Reduce number of upheld complaints from members Improve scores	Overall complaints remain low along with stage 1 and 2 Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures (IDRPs) Customer satisfaction reported annual as part of administration update	Continued monitoring of cases and reporting of common themes

	from employer surveys		
	Formalise customer satisfaction reporting to Committee and Board as part of annual administration update		
Implement Government Policy - Access – Fairness/Protections RED	Once guidance confirmed, review and implement: • New Fair Deal • Academies in the LGPS • Normal Minimum Pension Age • Pension access for mayors and councillors • Survivors benefits • Gender Pensions Gap • Other areas detailed in guidance	Project plan in place with timeline contained within annex 12 of the administration report Key changes have been communicated to employers around gender pensions gap, access to the LGPS for elected members and opt out reporting requirements Currently working through the identification of any possible survivors	Significant amount of work of work involved in historic cases Continued monitoring for remaining guidance and regulations Review historical records and where records are incomplete taking reasonable steps to obtain evidence. Survivors will to be identified by 1 October 2026

15. Out of 5 measures of success, 2 are rated as green, due to positive data quality scores under the measure of common and specific data, 94.6% and 99.13% respectively and waiting the autumn when this will be reviewed again.

16. We have rated amber the McCloud measure of success; this is largely due the remaining complexity of cases that need completion before 31 August 2026.

17. The employer engagement/client relationship model remains as amber reflecting progress has been made, however there continues to be significant work in this area to move to the structure we need in order to provide an improved level of support to our employers. Hyman's Robertson are providing team training to support knowledge and understanding and to strengthen in-house processes.

18. Implementation of Government policy on Access and Fairness and Access and Protections is flagged as red, due to the short timescales for implementation and lack of timely regulations or guidance, creating challenges on processing of cases on the already stretched operational teams.

19. Develop further the Fund's Investment and Funding service: There were 6 actions set for this service priority within the Business Plan, and progress against these measures is set out below.

Actions	Measure of Success	Key Progress Achieved	Outstanding Actions/Next Steps
Preparation for 2028 Valuation AMBER	Review, develop and implement employer covenant monitoring Actuarial procurement by December 2026 Complete and finalise any remaining activity on the 2025 valuation	Actuarial procurement has commenced with engagement with the procurement team and legal Tidy up from 2025 valuation	Planning for the 2028 valuation Develop employer covenant monitoring Actuarial procurement Review and finalise any remaining lose ends/clarifications around policies Incorporate Gender Pensions Gap requirements into future planning
Develop Cashflow modelling reporting GREEN	Expecting to be cashflow negative during 2027/28, development of more detailed cashflow monitoring	See funding and investments update later in the agenda Ongoing conversations with LGPS Central on distributing asset classes	Implement regular reporting to Committee and Board
Working with our Investment Pool, implement our Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) GREEN	Seek approval of SAA at March 2026 Committee Work closely with LGPS Central to implement our SAA	SAA approved by Committee in March 2026 Engagement with LGPS Central is currently underway	LGPS Central to implement SAA
Implement the 'Fit for the Future' requirements AMBER	Become Shareholder and Client in LGPS Central	The necessary steps to become a shareholder in LGPS Central were	Implement taking principal advice from LGPS Central

	Transition Brunel portfolios to LGPS Central Delegate implementation of investment strategy Implement taking principal advice from LGPS Central Transfer non-pooled assets to LGPS Central Closure and wind up of Brunel Pensions Partnership	completed before 1 April 2026 deadline Transition completed in June 2026 Brunel, FCA permissions surrendered Brunel employees to end employment Winddown and liquidation of Brunel underway	Trading accounts prepared and then audited Management accounts prepared, along with Statement of assets and liabilities, and corporate tax submission Dissolution during 2027
Responsible Investment GREEN	Pooling – ensure continuity of data through the transition Reporting – completion of TCFD and Stewardship Code reports. Improve the presentation of reports to enhance stakeholder engagement. Development of RI metrics dashboard Climate Change – review of the Climate Change Policy as part of the strategic asset allocation review Natural Capital – develop in collaboration with LGPS Central and	Access to Brunel document library provided to LGPS Central Enhanced RI portfolio currently being worked on by collective of likeminded partner Funds Further updates later in the agenda	Natural Capital Portfolio development Local Investment capacity build out Cash management UK Portfolio development with other partner funds

	other partner Funds		
Value for Money analysis GREEN	Cost transparency reviewed and monitored with focus on LGPS Central costs	Value for Money added to Oversight Board Terms of Reference Tracking of costs and comments from Independent Investment Advisor	Continue to monitor and oversight to ensure LGPS Central offerings are Value for Money

20. Out of 6 measures of success 4 are rated green, largely due to work progressing well.

21. Implementation of Government policy is rated as amber, largely reflecting the challenging timescales associated with delivering the Fit for the Future changes, a pooling update is included below and LGPS Central will cover a more detailed update later in the agenda.

22. Preparation for the 2028 valuation continues to be rated as amber, to reflect delays in both internal processes and the limited officer capacity available to progress the procurement at the required pace.

Pooling Update

23. All requirements regarding the admission to LGPS Central were completed by 1 April 2026.

24. The transition of assets from Brunel to LGPS Central has been completed as at the time of writing this report and in line with the transition plan. Further details of the progress on Fit for the Future are included in the presentation from LGPS Central.

25. Following completion of the asset transfer from Brunel and the cessation of regulated activities, as at 1 July 2026 the Brunel Pension Partnership Limited is no longer authorised by the FCA. The register has been updated on the FCA website to reflect this change.

26. The wind up of Brunel continues with the majority of employees leaving in two tranches at the end of June and end of July. The remaining employees will leave on 31 August 2026. Three contractors will remain to support the wind up.

27. The wind up of Brunel can now be broken down into three phases:

Phase One – present to November 2026

28. This is the pre liquidation stage and will include a range of activity such as terminating the office lease and addressing any activity around services closure of an office, e.g. service charges.

29. Finance and tax activity in order to complete audit and tax returns to ensure liquidation can be completed as soon as possible.

30. Resolve any legal matters ahead of liquidation.

31. Settle any pension cessation liability linked to former Brunel employees and cessation of Brunel as an employer within the Wiltshire Pension Fund.

Phase Two – Late November 2026

32. Declaration of Solvency and appointment of liquidator, which includes preparing and approval of all documents and resolutions, Companies House updated as to the company being in liquidation.

Phase Three – December 2026 to July 2027

33. This is the statutory liquidation process and involves advertising and notifying creditors, agreeing and settling any claims, resolving any matters brought into the liquidation process. The final distribution is calculated (if any) and final account summarising what has happened in the liquidation. Then the dissolution stage which typically takes 3 months from when the filing of the Final Account at Companies House.

34. Deliver service enhancements and cost reductions through increased use of technology.
There were 6 actions set for this service priority within the Business Plan, and progress against these measures is set out below.

Actions	Measure of Success	Key Progress Achieved	Outstanding Actions/Next Steps
Website launch and development GREEN	New website launched by end of the scheme year (March 2026) Accessible requirements completed - WCAG 2.2 requirements, useable on all devices (mobile, computer etc) Development of contact forms, review of materials	Website launched April 2026 Retirement smart guide, new video and flipbook launched New 'Using AI Safely' webpage New 'Work with Us' webpage Updated forms, documents and news items	Development of website Development of contact us form Development of media materials for the website
Implement Pensions Dashboard GREEN	Finalise work Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs)	Software upgrade has been completed for one AVC provider	Awaiting Government Further development is required to enable

	Implement further activity as confirmed by Government	See project plan in Annex 10 on the administration report	connection for second AVC provider
Development of iConnect - continue to utilise further improvements to the service GREEN	Patches implemented on release day Regular engagement with Heywoods maintained to understand upcoming improvements and how to utilise them Training delivered to relevant officers	System updates are covered in the administration report	
Procurement Heywoods GREEN	Procurement required contract end 2029	Initial procurement stages have commenced	Ongoing procurement will continue over the 2026/27 and beyond due to system complexity
Increase usage of and develop Fund LinkedIn GREEN	Use for wider audience: - Recruitment - Fund policies and consultations - Employer information Increase outward knowledge of Oxfordshire Pension Fund and work as a responsible investor	The Fund makes regular posts including voting matters, Fund statistics, career opportunities, employer forums, team away days etc	Expand our reach More use for recruitment
Other developments – Cyber Security, electronic pension payslips, EA2P	Cyber Security audit Explore further system developments to support operation of the Fund	Electronic pension payslips Procurement of mailing solution underway EA2P - Scoping procedures and testing an enhance version of the connection between calculating benefits and making payment of benefits through the payroll	EA2P implementation

35. Out of 6 actions all are rated green, largely due to work progressing in these areas or awaiting clarity from Government on next stage of requirements.

36. Progress is being made on technology enhancements such as the testing of enhanced admin to pay, which will improve efficiency between the calculation of benefits and the payment via the pensioner payroll.

Budget 2026/27

37. The budget for 2026/27 was agreed at £31,193,000 as part of the Business Plan at Committee on 6 March 2026.

2026/27 Pension Fund Budget - Q1 Update

	Budget	YTD	%	Forecast Outturn	Variance
	2026/27	2026/27		2026/27	2026/27
	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000
Administrative Expenses					
Administrative Employee Costs	2,377	398	17%	2,377	0
Support Services Including ICT	1,193	95	8%	1,193	0
Printing & Stationary	85	24	28%	85	0
Advisory & Consultancy Fees	5	0	6%	5	0
Total Administrative Expenses	3,660	516	14%	3,660	0
Investment Management Expenses					
Management Fees	22,000	6,000	27%	22,000	0
Transition Fees	2,000	1,607	80%	1,700	-300
Custody Fees	35	0	0%	35	0
Pool Contract Costs	2,100	10	0%	2,100	0
Total Investment Management Expenses	26,135	7,617	29%	25,835	-300
Oversight & Governance					
Investment & Governance Employee Costs	588	81	14%	588	0
Support Services Including ICT	13	0	0%	13	0
Actuarial Fees	450	131	29%	450	0
External Audit Fees	120	25	21%	120	0
Internal Audit Fees	19	0	0%	19	0
Advisory & Consultancy Fees	81	12	15%	81	0

Committee and Board Costs	35	0	0%	35	0
Subscriptions and Memberships	92	2	2%	92	0
Total Oversight & Governance Expenses	1,398	251	18%	1,398	0
Total Pension Fund Budget	31,193	8,384	27%	30,893	-300

38. Key points to note that there is a forecast underspend on staff costs resulting from the team carrying several vacancies and the allowance made for the increased costs coming from the organisational redesign and regrading of staff.

Training Plan

39. The Training Plan for Committee and Board Members was set out in the relevant paper to March 2026 Committee. This reflects the feedback from Committee and Board members in 2025.

40. The National Knowledge Assessment (NKA) will take place again in the autumn 2026, with Committee and Board focusing on developing the foundation of knowledge built last year after the election of an almost entirely new Committee.

41. The plan also includes reference to the on-line training offered by Hymans Robertson which all Members are encouraged to complete as good preparation for the NKA. The Committee and Board are currently working through this.

42. A list of recommended external courses and conferences which Members are invited to consider as well as the offer of individual sessions with officers and the development of a specific training plan to meet individual needs is also covered in the Plan.

43. Should you need any further information please see the links in the Training Plan and for any questions, please contact Anna Lloyd our Governance and Communications Officer.

Cash Management

44. The Strategy is based on the Treasury Management Strategy for the Council but has a significantly reduced number of counterparties reflecting the lower sums of cash involved, and the wider set of alternative investment classes open to the Pension Fund.

45. Cash management will be an increased focus over the coming years as the Fund changes to a more mature demographic and becomes cashflow negative as a result.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

46. The overall priorities of the Pension Fund are summarised as:

- To fulfil our fiduciary duty to all key stakeholders
- To administer pension benefits in accordance with the LGPS regulations, and the guidance set out by the Pensions Regulator

- To maintain a funding level above 100%
- To ensure there are sufficient liquid resources to meet the liabilities of the Fund as they fall due, and
- To maintain as near stable and affordable employer contribution rates as possible

Legal Implications

The legal implications section should be completed by a member of the legal service

47. This report has been prepared in accordance with the Oxfordshire County Council's (the "**Council**") responsibilities as the Administering Authority for the Oxfordshire Pension Fund.
48. As Administering Authority, the Council is responsible for managing and administering the Local Government Pension Scheme pursuant the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 ("**LGPS Regulations 2013**").
49. The Council as Administering Authority determines its own governance arrangements and the delegation of those responsibilities which is set out in the Council's Governance Strategy Statement (v 2025). Pension Fund Reports are a non - executive function and presentation before Cabinet is not required.
50. Oxfordshire County Council as Administering Authority for the Fund delegates all functions relating to the management of the Pension Fund to the Pension Fund Committee. Certain functions are then further delegated by the Pension Fund Committee to Officers in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation. Officers report decisions back to the Pension Fund Committee.
51. Regulation 53A (Appointments that must be made by administering authorities) of the LGPS Regulations 2013 to be implemented with effect from 1st April 2026 by the Local Government Pension Scheme Amendments Regulations 2026 will requires the Administering Authority to have a senior Local Government Pension Scheme officer, "who has senior responsibility across all pension functions to ensure the fund is appropriately managed and resourced across administration, investment and governance matters" which much be in accordance with guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (**S53A(1)**) The senior Local Government Pension Scheme officer ("**the senior LGPS officer**") is a statutory role.
52. The senior LGPS officer role is responsible for all aspects of managing the Local Government Pension Scheme within the Administering Authority.
53. In carrying out its functions, the Pension Fund Committee must act within the statutory framework governing the Local Government Pension Scheme (the "**LGPS**"), including pursuant to the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013, the Administering Authority's required governance and administration requirements, and the approved Pension Fund Governance Policy and Scheme of Delegation.
54. The Administering Authority must have regards to and publish its Pension Fund Strategy and any revisions pursuant to s59 of the LGPS Regulations 2013.

55. Any procurement, contractual, or data-handling matters connected with the implementation of decisions are managed in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Data Protection obligations. Further legal advice will be requested and provided where required. The senior LGPS officer has provided the legal team with full information relating to this report for review and consideration and answered any queries raised.
56. Both Section 151 Officer and the senior LGPS officer should approve pension fund accounts.
57. Legal team is assured that the Pension Fund Committee has taken appropriate advice to ensure the Committee fulfils its fiduciary duties to Scheme members and employers.
58. In view of all information provided, legal review of legislative and regulatory requirements, including impending enacted amendments to LGPS Regulations 2013, and the cogency of information provided by the senior LGPS officer who has consulted with the S151 Officer, the Pension Fund Committee Report, provided appropriate approval of pension fund accounts is provided pursuant to paragraph 70 above, the contents of this report satisfy the requirements of the LGPS Regulations 2013 (as amended) in respect of its administration, operation and management. The Council's legal team is satisfied that all regulatory, legislative and governance requirements pertaining to Oxfordshire County Council as Administering Authority are complied with, by the level of engagement, documentation provided for review, explanation and scrutiny offered by the senior LGPS officer and our opportunity for review.

Contact :

Staff Implications

59. There are no direct staff implications arising from this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

60. There are no direct equality and inclusion implications arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications

61. There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

62. The Local Pension Board provides scrutiny and support to the Pension Fund Committee, in relation to their responsibility to ensure there is effective risk management over the Pension Fund operations.

Consultations

63. Officers of the Fund.

Lorna Baxter
Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

Annex: Annex 1 – Annual Report of Local Pension Board – July 2026
(including appendix 1 – LPB Training Log 2025-26)

Background papers: N/A

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August 2026