



Pensions Committee

19 June 2026

10.00 a.m.

**MINUTES OF THE PENSIONS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2026
10.00 AM - 12.00 PM**

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend
Email: sarah.townsend@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257721

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Gary Groves (Chairman), Alan Holford, Malcolm Myles-Hook and Charles Shackerley-Bennett

Co-Opted Members (Voting):

Councillors Paul Davis and Zona Hannington

Co-Opted Members (Non-Voting):

Tom Biggins, David Burton and Byron Cooke

Others Present:

Shropshire Council Officers:

Justin Bridges (Head of Pensions – LGPS Senior Officer), Peter Chadderton (Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager), Vicky Jenks (Pensions Administration Manager) and Martin Griffiths (Pensions Governance and Communication Team Leader)

Aon:

Colin Cartwright and Luke Hammond

Grant Thornton:

Avtar Sohal (remotely via MS Teams)

LGPS Central:

Russell Oades

Independent Advisor to the Committee:

Philip Hebson

Pensions Board Members:

John Hall (remotely via MS Teams)

52 Apologies and Substitutions

There were no apologies for absence received.

53 Disclosable Interests

None were declared.

54 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

55 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

56 Audit Plan for Shropshire County Pension Fund 2025/26

The Committee received the report of the External Auditor, Grant Thornton, which set out the Shropshire County Pension Fund Audit Plan for the year ending 31 March 2026. Mr Avtar Sohal, Engagement Lead on the Pension Fund, was in attendance virtually from Grant Thornton to present the report. In particular, Members' attention was drawn to the two significant risks identified, materiality and the audit logistics and the comments detailed therein.

It was confirmed that the audit plan would also be presented to a future meeting of the Audit Committee.

57 Pension Fund Treasury Strategy 2026/27

The Committee received the report of the Head of Pensions – LGPS Senior Officer which explained that Shropshire Council as the Administering Authority maintains a small working cash balance for the Pension Fund that is invested separately to the Council's own cash and is managed under the defined Treasury Strategy as set out within the report.

There were no questions from Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That authority be delegated to the LGPS Senior Officer to manage the Pension Funds day to day cash balances.
2. That the Pension Fund Treasury Strategy be approved.
3. That the LGPS Senior Officer be authorised to place deposits in accordance with the Pension Fund's Treasury Strategy.
4. That authority be delegated to the LGPS Senior Officer to add or remove institutions from the approved lending list and amend cash and period limits as necessary in line with the Administering Authority's creditworthiness policy.

58 Pensions Administration Monitoring

The Committee received the report of the Pensions Administration Manager which provided them with monitoring information on the performance of and issues affecting the Pensions Administration Team.

A question was asked regarding accessibility and whether the increase to 60% of members joining the digital platform My Pensions Online had resulted in a reduction of postal communications. The Pensions Administration Manager explained that postal communications were being incrementally reduced as more members moved online. However, the use of digital communication was not mandatory and some information would continue to be sent out by post as there would always be some members who would only ever receive communications this way due to them being unable to access digital services.

Concern was expressed regarding the accuracy of responses generated by Penny, the Pensions Bot, which could be accessed via the Fund's website with it noted that a proportion of responses were incorrect. The Committee were advised that monthly monitoring reports identified inaccuracies, enabling responses to be refined and where incorrect or incomplete responses occurred, these were escalated to Officers and directly followed up with the member concerned. It was noted that improvements, including the potential adoption of a more sophisticated bot, were under consideration.

The Committee requested that they be kept informed over the next twelve months regarding both the digital uptake and the Pensions Bot and were reassured that this monitoring data would continue to be included in future reports.

RESOLVED:

1. That the KPI chart and information on those KPI's not currently meeting the 95% target and the actions being taken to address this (Appendix A) be noted.
2. That the progress and completion of key activities from the business plan 2025-26 up to Q3 (Appendix B) be noted.
3. That the progress of the Pension Dashboard implementation which is provided in the update report (Appendix C) be noted.
4. That the regulatory updates coming up that will have a significant impact on the work of the team be noted.

59 Governance

The Committee received the report of the Pensions Administration Manager which provided them with information regarding regulatory breaches arising from 1st April 2025 to 31st December 2025 (Quarter Three) that have been recorded in the breaches log. Also reported were any stage one or stage two appeals that had been received under the internal dispute resolution procedure (IDRP). Finally, fund policies that had been reviewed in the last quarter and have been approved by Committee were also included within the report.

It was noted that the Governance report having previously been considered in the private section of the meeting, had been moved into the public section of the meeting

in order to improve transparency. It did not contain anything of a commercial, sensitive nature.

The Committee's attention was drawn to recommendation 3.1 of the report and they were informed that '30 September 2025' needed to be amended to read '31 December 2025'.

Regarding the Funding Strategy Statement (FSS), it was noted that there were a couple of items still highlighted yellow that needed to be updated and the Committee would be informed once this had been completed, prior to publishing on the Fund's website.

The importance of both Committee and Board members attending training was emphasised and where members were unable to attend, they were reminded of the need to watch the recording of the training to ensure compliance with governance standards.

Mr Thomas (Tom) Biggins was welcomed to his first Pensions Committee meeting as Pensioner Representative, having previously been Chairman of the committee for many years and brought a wealth of valuable knowledge and expertise.

A question was asked regarding the increase in amber breaches as shown in Appendix A and particularly, the spike in November 2025. The Pensions Administration Manager explained that the spike was attributable to a change in payroll provider affecting a multi-academy trust comprising twelve schools and that the issue had now been resolved. The breaches escalation process was outlined, with issues progressing from green to amber after three months and then to red where there was no interaction from an employer, at which stage the matter could be escalated further, including to the Pensions Regulator if necessary.

Regarding the introduction of the new sustainability reserve to improve contribution stability and reduce the risk of future increases, it was confirmed that this had been documented within the Funding Strategy Statement.

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of Appendix A to the report, breaches recorded from 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025, be noted.
2. That the final draft of the Funding Strategy Statement (FSS) be approved.
3. That the Funds Medium Term Business Plan for 2026-29 be approved.

60 Corporate Governance Monitoring

The Committee received the report of the Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager which informed them of corporate governance changes including the government's latest "LGPS - Fit for the Future" consultation and updates since the last committee together with a review of socially responsible investment issues arising in the quarter period 1st October 2025 to 31st December 2025.

Regarding the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and investments in conflict affected areas, it was reported that further consideration of whether independent or

further legal advice was required remained ongoing at Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) level and with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). In the meantime, the Fund continued to rely on existing independent legal advice confirming that its current approach was compliant and in line with its fiduciary duties.

Regarding the Pensions Bill and the Local Government Pension Scheme (England and Wales): Fit for the future consultation, the Committee were informed that, due to amendments still being considered in the House of Lords, it was now looking unlikely that the legislation would be in place by 1st April 2026. However, it was noted that the amendments did not alter the overall direction of travel on pooling and governance reform although, any delay would affect the issue of supporting guidance including the understanding of any constitutional changes needing to be made to the role of the LGPS Senior Officer and the impact of having an Independent Advisor to the Committee.

It was noted that the Fund had successfully maintained its status as a signatory to the Financial Reporting Council's (FRC's) Stewardship Code for a further twelve months.

There were no questions from Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That the position as set out in the report of the Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager in respect of voting and engagement activity be noted and accepted:
 - LGPS Central at Appendix A;
 - Columbia Threadneedle Investments Responsible Engagement Overlay Activity Report at Appendix B; and
 - LAPFF Engagement Report at Appendix C.
2. That the changes to the Climate Stewardship Plan as a result of the Climate Risk Report presented in December 2025 be noted and accepted. The revised plan is attached as at Appendix E.

61 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That under paragraph 10.2 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the proceedings of the Committee in relation to Agenda Items 11 to 16, be not conducted in public on the grounds that they might involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the categories specified against them.

62 Exempt Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Exempted by Category 3)

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

63 New Employers (Exempted by Category 3)

The Committee received the exempt report of the Pensions Administration Manager which provided them with details regarding new academy admissions to the Fund under Schedule 2, Part 1 (20) of the LGPS regulations 2013.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report of the Pensions Administration Manager be noted.

64 Financial Markets Update (Including Equity Protection) (Exempted by Category 3)

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Luke Hammond, Aon, which provided them with a financial markets update (including equity protection).

65 Investment Strategy Update (Exempted by Category 3)

The Committee received a presentation from Mr Luke Hammond, Aon, which provided them with an investment strategy update.

66 Investment Strategy Implementation Update (Exempted by Category 3)

The Committee received the exempt report of the Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager which provided them with an Investment Strategy Implementation update.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report of the Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager be approved.

67 Investment Monitoring - Quarter to 31 December 2025 (Exempted by Category 3)

The Committee received the exempt report of the Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager which provided them with monitoring information on investment performance and managers for the quarter period to 31st December 2025 and reported on the technical meetings held with managers since the quarter end.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report of the Pensions Investment and Responsible Investment Manager be approved.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: