

TEESSIDE PENSION FUND & INVESTMENT PANEL

A meeting of the Teesside Pension Fund & Investment Panel was held on 17 June 2015.

PRESENT: Councillors S E Bloundele (Chair), R Brady, D P Coupe, J Culley, D McCabe, P Purvis (Substitute for G Purvis), J Rathmell and A Shan.

Other Local Authority Members:

Councillor J Lindridge - Hartlepool Council
Councillor J Beall - Stockton Council

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: Councillor Lawton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Deloittes - Auditors: A Lince
Investment Advisors: F Green and P Moon
Property Advisor: A Owen - CBRE
Unison: A Watson

OFFICERS: P Campbell, B Carr, D Conyard and G Hall

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor J G Cole, Councillor N Hussain, Councillor G Purvis, Councillor J Rostron, Representative from Redcar and Cleveland Council, P Fleck and A Martin.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
Councillor J Beall	Non-Pecuniary	Member of Teesside Pension Fund
Councillor B Brady	Non-Pecuniary	Member of Teesside Pension Fund
Councillor J Lindridge	Non-Pecuniary	Member of Teesside Pension Fund

1 TRAINING

The Chair advised that those Middlesbrough Council Members who were in attendance at the meeting who had not attended the Mandatory Training would not be allowed to take an active part in the meeting but were welcome to observe.

The Member representative from Stockton Council advised that in his view the training should be Mandatory for all Members of the Panel. The Chair advised that Middlesbrough Council would be unable to insist that Members from other local authorities completed the training as the Council had no jurisdiction over other local authority Members.

The Chair advised that there would be a further opportunity in the near future, to undertake the Mandatory training for those Members who had been unable to attend. Details of further external training opportunities would be made available to the Panel.

NOTED**2 MINUTES - TEESSIDE PENSION FUND AND INVESTMENT PANEL - 11 MARCH 2015**

The minutes of the meeting of the Teesside Pension Fund and Investment Panel held on 11 March 2015 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

3 FUND MANAGER'S REPORT

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report to inform Members with regard to: (i) how the Investment Advisors' recommendations outlined at the meeting held on 11 March 2015, were

being implemented; (ii) to provide information with regard to stock selection strategies, including a detailed report on transactions undertaken (Appendix A); and (iii) to present an independently produced valuation of the Fund's assets (Appendix B).

The report provided a summary of the advice received from the two Investment Advisors at the previous meeting of the Panel held on 11 March 2015.

The Panel was advised that Quantitative Easing (QE) had ended in the West however it was dependant on how the markets behaved whether the Central banks would react. It was highlighted that QE was asset price inflationary. The process had meant that asset prices had decoupled from the Discounting Cash Flow (DCF). This had meant a resurgence in the use of optimistic valuation techniques, such as a reliance on EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization) which amounts to saying you made a profit without counting the costs, EV (assuming your debt is an asset) and peer valuation.

In response to a query, the Panel was advised that caution with regard to the European markets was driven by the uncertainty in relation to the possible exit of Greece from the Eurozone and the possible inflation that this could cause.

In response to a query with regard to whether the investment team were being overly optimistic in respect of the performance of US Equity, the Panel was advised that Fund Managers were cautious with regard to the purchase of all world-wide Bonds. It was anticipated that there was a US rate rise on the horizon. The Fund had continued to invest in Equity rather than Bonds because Equity would continue to provide goods and services regardless of the situation with the markets. Some of the largest companies (50%) were located in the US and they were the drivers of growth.

The Panel was advised that there was net disinvestment of approximately £10m in the period 1 January 2015 to 31 March 2015, compared to net investment of £9m in the previous reporting period. Cash balances had increased from £74m to £93m. The Panel was provided with a summary of each of the Fund's asset classes.

The Fund Valuation, attached at Appendix B to the report, prepared by the Fund's custodian BNP including the total value of all investments including cash was valued as at 31 March 2015 at £3,239 million, compared to the last reported valuation of £3,051 million as at 31 December 2014.

An analysis of the summary valuation provided a comparison between the Fund's weightings in the various asset classes, compared with the Fund's customised benchmark and the average of other funds, and was set out in a table in paragraph 6.2 of the report.

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INVESTMENT ADVISORS REPORT

The Investment Advisors each gave their views on the current global economic, political and market conditions, and reviewed the current position of the Fund. Particular concern was expressed over the current situation in Europe and the possibility of Greece defaulting on their next debt repayment, and the continued rhetoric about Greece possibly exiting the Euro. Both Advisors commented that Greece must and probably would make the structural changes needed to increase tax receipts and reduce benefit payments; an acceptable situation for the rest of Europe and IMF to support. However, any resolution to the current situation would only bring temporary relief.

Elsewhere, concern was also expressed over the conflict in the Ukraine and the ISIS situation. The Advisors also stated that although the UK elections were over without the projected hung-parliament, the spectre of the UK's EU membership and possible further devolution would provide continued volatility in UK markets.

Finally, the Advisors followed up on their previous comments on the possibility of tightening monetary policy in the US and UK and the impact of rising interest rates. Mr Moon considered

there was low economic resilience at present and, therefore, saw any decision to raise interest rates being pushed out. Mr Green's opinion differed and, given the current situation, saw an interest rate rise in the US before the year end.

In discussing the short term asset allocation, both Advisors noted the current allocation against the customised benchmark. Their general view was to carry on with the allocation strategy set at the previous Panel meeting and increase cash levels by reducing the allocation to equity and bonds while prices were at current high levels and where opportunities allow; increased cash holdings would position the Fund more favourably, should there be a market downturn in the future.

Equity markets were again preferred over bonds. It was considered that bond yields at current levels did not meet the Fund's actuarial obligations. The Advisors reiterated previous comments that they would be happy to see a reduction in bonds, even from the current low levels. The Advisors also stated that if equity markets weakened, there would be an opportunity to invest further in equities on a company specific basis. Both Advisors stated that this strategy could lead to cash levels "bouncing around" as cash builds up and/or is invested, depending on market volatility.

The property portfolio should continue to be managed and increased where opportunities allowed, after giving regard to location, the quality of the tenant and a good yield. Finally, in respect of Alternative Investments, the Advisors held the view that this asset class could be attractive to the Fund, particularly Infrastructure, but only where the investment provided the Fund with diversification at a reasonable cost.

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PROPERTY REPORT

The Fund's Property Advisor submitted a report that provided an overview of the current property market and informed Members of individual property transactions relating to the Fund.

The Panel was advised that the total value of the Fund's direct property portfolio as at 31 March 2015 was £169.63m. The indirect property portfolio was valued at c. £39.7m as at 31 December 2014.

The portfolio was made up principally of prime and secondary assets and comprised of 33 mixed-use properties, located throughout the UK. This reflected an overall Net Initial Yield of 5.3%, and a reversionary yield of 6.1%.

The report highlighted that the Fund's direct real estate exposure was significantly underweight, compared with similar pension funds. The Property Advisors aimed to seek to extend the weighted average unexpired lease term (WAULT) of the property portfolio as well as diversifying the lease expiry profile. The Property Advisors were seeking purchases with expiries which would both extend the WAULT and diversify lease expiries. The Advisors also recommended alternative investments that offered good covenants, attractive yields and long expired terms which could include hotels, car showrooms, healthcare, leisure and student housing.

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PROPERTY SOLICITOR - OPTION TO EXTEND CONTRACT

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report to seek approval to exercise the option to extend the Fund's current property solicitor's contract by a further year.

The Fund's property solicitor Freeths LLP, had been appointed from 1 April 2011 following a tendering process. The contract was awarded for a five year period with the option to extend, at the Fund's discretion, for a further year.

Despite a significant increase in property activity, to over £169m (72%) as at 31 March 2015, the service provided by the property solicitor had been very good. The increase in activity was as a result of a combination of sales and purchases.

The Fund's Property Advisors were looking to increase the property portfolio up to £200m, whilst taking advantage of any sales opportunities. Freeths were also actively involved in other property related matters, such as tenancy rent reviews, licences to alter and they were also assisting with legal advice with the rent arrears at Nottingham.

The Panel was advised that the next twelve months would continue to be a period of considerable activity in the property asset class and it would not be in the Fund's interest to be involved in a tendering exercise for this function in the midst of such heightened activity.

AGREED that the Fund Managers be authorised to exercise the option to extend the Fund property solicitors (Freeths LLP) contract for a further twelve months.

7 **DRAFT EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report to inform Members of a planning report for the audit of the Fund's 2014/15 accounts which set out the audit approach and details of the significant areas that the auditor would focus on for this year.

A representative from Deloitte presented the report, which summarised the key developments in the Pension Fund and the more significant matters that the auditor had considered in developing the Audit Plan.

A list of the key developments in the Pension Fund and the key developments in the audit was included within the report.

The Significant Audit Risks that the auditor identified included:

- Contributions;
- Benefits;
- Investments - namely unquoted holdings and quoted property funds; and
- Management override of key controls, as presumed by auditing standards.

The representative from Deloitte confirmed the auditor's independence and advised that the proposed fee for the audit for the current year was in line with the Audit Commission's scale of fees.

Members of the Teesside Pension Fund were asked by the auditor to advise if they were aware of any fraud or suspected fraud which may affect the Teesside Pension Fund. All those Members present, confirmed that they were not aware of any fraud or suspected fraud which may affect the Fund.

AGREED that the Planning Report be noted and that it be noted for the purposes of the Annual Audit that all those Members present at the meeting, confirmed that they were not aware of any fraud or suspected fraud which may affect the Teesside Pension Fund.

8 **PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report on the performance of the Fund.

Members were advised that the performance of the Fund was one of the factors that the Fund Actuary takes into account when setting the Employer's contribution rate. Costs relating to investment management are charged directly to the Fund as a management expense. The way in which the Fund's investments perform is measured by the WM Company, the leading provider of performance services to public and private sector pension schemes.

The total Fund return for 2014 was 3.8% against a benchmark return of 7.4% and the average Fund return of 11.7%, placing the Fund in the 97th percentile of funds in the WM All Funds

Universe, made up of public and private sector funds. However, the most important measurement of Fund performance was over the long term; and the Fund's performance over both 3 and 10 years was very positive (8.8% pa and 7.8% respectively).

Although over the 3 year period, the Fund had underperformed against its benchmark by -2.0% pa and its peers by -1.4% pa (89th percentile ranking), over the longer period of 10 years, the Fund had matched the benchmark and underperformed its peers by 0.1% pa (44th percentile ranking). A table and charts showing the Fund's returns over the last 10 years compared to the benchmark returns and the average returns had been included within the report.

A Member queried whether the Fund's investment strategy needed to be reviewed in light of the recent dip in performance. The Chair advised that the figures shown in the report represented the Fund's performance over a one year period and the Head of Investments and Treasury Management would continue to monitor the situation on a quarter by quarter basis.

The Investment Advisor stated that with the advent of QE and low interest rates and legislative changes, it had been difficult to predict the impact that inflation would have on the Fund's investments. It had driven real yields into negative equity and it was not advisable for the Fund to invest in an asset that had a negative return. Every three years the Fund Managers reviewed the customised benchmark.

It was suggested that the Fund Managers could look at the investment strategy of other Funds that had performed well over the past year. The Panel was advised that the Fund Manager's current investment strategy had assisted in ensuring that the Fund had remained 100% funded.

Reference was made to the Key Performance indicator based on the investment management costs per scheme member. Members were advised that CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) had updated its Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom which was now based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The Fund had previously reported total costs split between administration costs and investment management expenses. However the revised Code split the costs in three ways, and required capitalised costs (transaction costs being the largest) to be included in investment management expenses. Members were advised that the 2014/15 Report and Accounts for Teesside Pension Fund would report costs split by the following three categories:

- Administration Expenses;
- Investment Management Expenses; and
- Oversight and Governance Costs.

A detailed breakdown of each of the above categories was included within the report. Some of the costs which had previously been reported as management expenses were now categorised as Oversight and Governance Costs e.g. Investment Advisor fees, performance monitoring costs and the costs of voting. Similarly, costs that had previously been categorised as administration costs including accountancy services and actuarial costs were now categorised as Oversight and Governance Costs.

The Panel was advised that the biggest change for the Teesside Pension Fund was the inclusion of transaction costs as management expenses. These costs were calculated according to the number of trades carried out and were previously capitalised (i.e. included in the cost of the purchase or sale). Trading was beneficial to the Fund's performance and it was highlighted that Investment Managers should not feel pressurised to limit trades to keep costs low.

The Panel was advised that whilst transaction costs would be reported separately in every LGPS Fund's Annual Report and Accounts, they would not be able to be taken out and reported separately in statistical returns. This would make the comparison of management expenses (ex transaction costs) per scheme member between Funds difficult to collate and

report.

AGREED that the report be noted and that the Key Performance Indicator based on investment management costs per scheme member be withdrawn until more information becomes available following the introduction of the new CIPFA Code of Practice, when a more meaningful, cost-based alternative indicator could be introduced.

9 ETHICAL INVESTMENTS

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report to advise Members on (i) the Fund's agreed position on ethical investments and (ii) the implications of restricting investments after amending the Fund's Statement of Investment Principles (Section 9) - Ethical, Social and Environmental Perspective.

At the Teesside Pension Fund and Investment Panel held on 17 September 2014, the Fund Manager had presented his report which included details of the Fund's transaction activity and holdings. A Member had raised concerns regarding the Fund's policy on ethical investments, particularly in relation to tobacco investments. The issue of investment in tobacco had been raised following the transfer of public health responsibilities to all Local Authorities and a report by the Law Commission (No. 350) - Fiduciary Duties of Investment Intermediaries. It was subsequently agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Teesside Pension Fund and Investment Panel with regard to this issue.

As part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) (Amendment) Regulations 1999, the Fund was required to prepare, publish and maintain a Statement of Investment Principles (SIP). The SIP was required to include a statement with regard to the extent that social, environmental or ethical considerations were taken into account (if at all), in the selection, retention and realisation of investments.

The report contained an extract from the Fund's SIP which outlined the Fund's current position in respect of ethical investments. The Panel was advised that there were three practical ways of implementing an ethical, environmental and socially responsible investment policy which included negative screening; positive screening and active engagement. An explanation of each of the different processes was included within the report.

Reference was made to Law Commission Report 350 which was as a result of a project carried out by the Law Commission to consider how the law of fiduciary duties applied to investment intermediaries. The project was commissioned as a result of the Kay Review, published in 2012, which set out ten principles for the UK equity market. Principle 5 was that *'all participants in the equity investment chain should observe fiduciary standards in their relationships with their clients and customers'*.

The Law Commission was asked to look at the following:

- 1) To investigate how fiduciary duties currently apply to investment intermediaries and those who provide advice and services to them.
- 2) To clarify how far those who invest on behalf of others may take account of factors such as social and environmental impact and ethical standards.
- 3) To consult relevant stakeholders.
- 4) To evaluate whether fiduciary duties (as established in law or as applied in practice) are conducive to investment strategies in the best interests of the ultimate beneficiaries.
- 5) To identify areas where changes are needed.

The final report of the Law Commission recommended that the Government should review the following two aspects of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) (Amendment) Regulations 2009:

1. Whether the Regulations should transpose article 18(1) of the IORP Directive - (Article 18 states that a fund has a 'fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of its members', however this requirement has not been transposed into law for LGPS funds). A full definition of Article 18 (1) was provided within the report.

2. Those aspects of Regulation 9 which require investment managers to be appointed on a short term basis and reviewed at least every three months. (This recommendation was a criticism of funds that reviewed the performance of investment managers quarterly and as part of the performance review, considered re-appointment).

The other part of the report which was relative to LGPS funds was in relation to pension trustees' duties when setting an investment strategy. The report stated that some pension fund trustees had a narrow interpretation when investing; focussing on maximising financial returns over a short period which prevented consideration of long term factors which could impact on company performance such as questions of sustainability or environmental and social impact. The conclusion of the Law Commission was that trustees must always take account of financial factors when making investments, securing the best realistic return over the long term. Trustees could take into account other non-financial factors but only if the following two tests were met:-

1. Trustees should have good reason to think that scheme members would share their concerns; and
2. The decision does not involve a risk of significant financial detriment to the fund.

A definition of Fiduciary Duty was provided within the report. The Panel was advised that Trustees must also exercise their investment powers for a proper purpose, i.e. the purpose for which the Scheme was established. In the case of the Fund, this was ultimately to pay future pensions to members and in doing so to obtain sufficient returns to meet the Fund's actuarially calculated liabilities and achieve full funding. Extracts of notable legal cases which included *Cowan v Scargill* (1984), *Martin v City of Edinburgh District Council* (1988) and *Harries v Church Commissioners* (1992) were included within the report.

Extracts from the following regulations outlining the requirements of fiduciary duties relating to the Pension Fund were included within the report:-

- The Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/3378);
- The Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009 (SI 2009/3093) in relation to social, environmental and ethical considerations within Statement of Investment Principles.

Reference was made to the transfer of Public Health responsibilities to the local authority, and the conflict of interest that this could provide in relation to investment in tobacco companies and in particular to Article 5.3 of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to which the UK was a Contracting Party. The Article related to protecting public health policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry. The article did not prohibit local authorities with public health functions from investing in tobacco companies nor did it include a requirement for public sector pension funds to divest their tobacco interests.

It was highlighted that public health arrangements were governed by the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board which had its own objectives and terms of reference. The Investment Panel was a Committee of the Council with plenary powers to make decisions without reference to the Council to ensure that those decisions made in the best interests of the Fund were protected.

The Panel was advised that the Pension Fund had a duty to consider a full range of investment options available, and securing an appropriate return was the primary objective of the Fund in order to meet future pension commitments. Ethical and other factors were relevant if they were seen to be as a direct financial risk to future returns.

A Member stated that as well as the Law Commission reviewing fiduciary duties, ANEC had also raised the issue of tobacco investment. He stated that many of the cases referred to within the report pre-dated the authority taking on responsibility for the public health function. He noted that other Counsel's opinion (O,Neill) was not included within the report.

A Member referred to Paragraph 6.9 of the report and suggested that the Fund could find ways of consulting stakeholders/contributors and beneficiaries of the Fund with regard to the issue of ethical investments. Reference was made to the increasing use of e-cigarettes and the long term effect in terms of litigation. The Member advised that other Funds such as Greater Manchester and Croydon had divested in tobacco investment. It had never been proposed that the Fund divest in tobacco investments but the investment team could consider not investing any further or selling the current investments over a period of time.

A Member stated that the University of Bath and ASH had also carried out research into the issue of tobacco investment and it would have been useful to see any counter arguments raised as a result of these studies. There did not appear to be any in-depth analysis of the long term impact of divesting from tobacco investments or of failing to make new investments. The Fund could consider moving the stocks to other parts of the market such as alternative sources of energy or housing schemes.

Reference was made to the fact that the representative from Redcar & Cleveland Council was not at the meeting. It was suggested that the Fund could look at setting up a small task and finish group to scrutinise the issue and it was proposed that the issue be deferred for further information.

Another Member stated that although it might be the case at the moment that tobacco investments over-performed in the market, it was dependent on market conditions. He stated that any movement from the notion of active engagement was not necessarily a breach of fiduciary duty. He stated that the decision in respect of the previous 'Scargill' case set strict guidance in respect of fiduciary duty and in his view the Fund Members could consider ethical issues as part of their fiduciary duty to the Fund. The Member referred to an article by Susie Dakin and he stated that if there was lots of evidence that there was opposition to tobacco investment from Members of the LGPS, Panel Members could consider the evidence.

The Fund's Investment Advisor stated that evidence suggested that negative screening was damaging. It was something that the Panel should not be recommending and it was not something that the Advisors would recommend. The outperformance impact to the Fund from tobacco investments was significant at 0.4% per annum. The Advisor stated that in his view, the report presented by the Head of Investments and Treasury Management was very comprehensive and addressed all of the issues of concern. If a further report was to be submitted to the Panel, it would not change his advice with regard to investment in tobacco as the report submitted already addressed the issues raised.

In response to a query whether the Advisor was a voting member of the Panel, he stated that he was not a voting member but he did have over twenty years' experience of advising Funds with regard to ethical investments.

The Chair stated that the report was very comprehensive, it identified that fiduciary duty was the primary responsibility when considering which investments should be pursued and the financial benefits of investing in tobacco had been demonstrated. The Head of Investments and Treasury Management would review the situation if the tobacco investments ceased to outperform the market.

A Member stated that he had read the report which was very comprehensive and listened to the debate and in his view, the decision to invest in tobacco at this time was the correct one.

AGREED that the Fund's agreed position on ethical investment be retained following consideration of the advice from the Head of Investments that any change to the Fund's current policy regarding ethical investments, including an embargo on investments in tobacco companies, would constitute a breach of the Fund's fiduciary duties and could damage the performance of the Fund since there is no certainty that alternative investments would produce equal or superior returns.

10

ASSET CLASS LIMITS

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report to amend the maximum/minimum percentage

limits in the Fund's Statement of Investment Principles (SIP).

The Panel was advised that the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations require that administering authorities should 'have regard to the need for diversification of investments' in order to reduce the risk of over concentration in one asset class of investment, which could perform badly. The Fund's Investment Advisors had repeatedly reported that bond prices were too high and did not offer an adequate return to meet the Fund's actuarial required rate of return. As a consequence, the advice to Fund Managers had been to decrease the amount held in this asset class as a percentage over time.

Every three years, following the Actuarial Valuation, the Fund carried out an Asset Liability Study (ALS) to design the 'customised benchmark' asset mix to best meet the needs of the Fund, and against which actual performance could be measured. The minimum/maximum percentage ranges to be held in any particular asset class were calculated as part of this process.

A table showing the revised customised benchmarks which had been agreed, following the last Actuarial Valuation was included at 5.3 of the report. The revised asset class limits would replace the existing limits in section 5 of the Fund's Statement of Principles.

AGREED as follows:

1. That the minimum limit for protection assets (bonds and cash) be amended in accordance with the table included at paragraph 5.3 of the report.
2. That the Fund's Statement of Investment Principles be updated to reflect the revised asset class limits.

11 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT**

A report by the Chief Finance Officer was submitted, which included detail of the management of the Fund's cash balances, including the methodology used.

The counterparty list and associated limits as at 31 December 2014 was detailed at paragraph 6.1 of the submitted report. As at 31 December 2014, the Fund had £59.1m invested with approved counterparties at an average rate of 0.590%. A graph attached at Appendix A to the report showed the maturity profile of cash invested and the average rate of interest obtained on the investments for each time period. As an example, 25.0% of the Fund's cash investments were repayable in the period 2 weeks to 1 month at an average interest rate of 0.423%.

NOTED

12 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

ORDERED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

13 **PENSION ADMINISTRATION SERVICE - CONTRACT EXTENSION REPORT**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted an exempt report to advise Members on the outcome of the negotiations with regard to the provision of the Pension Administration Service for a five year period.

At the meeting of the Teesside Pension Fund and Investment Panel held on 17 September 2014, Members agreed that delegated authority should be given to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel to approve the finalised contractual arrangements for the Pension Administration

Service, but that a report be submitted to the Panel with regard to the outcome of the negotiations.

The submitted report contained details of the background, cost and performance in relation to the provision of the Pension Administration Service.

AGREED that the report on the finalised contractual arrangements for the Pension Administration Service be noted.