

**TEESSIDE PENSION BOARD**

A meeting of the Teesside Pension Board was held on Monday 9 February 2026.

**PRESENT:** Councillors C Massey (Chair), N Walker, Mr J Bell and Mr P Thompson

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** H Chambers, P McCann (Tyne and Wear Pension Fund)

**OFFICERS:** W Brown, C Jones, A Lister and T Frankland

25/56 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Building Evacuation Procedure.

25/57 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item/Nature of Interest
J Bell	Non pecuniary	Member of Teesside Pension Fund
Councillor C Massey	Non pecuniary	Deferred Member of Teesside Pension Fund

25/58 **MINUTES - TEESSIDE PENSION BOARD - 17 NOVEMBER 2025**

The minutes of the meeting of the Teesside Pension Board held on 17 November 2025 were taken as read and approved as a correct record

25/59 **DRAFT MINUTES - TEESSIDE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE - 24 SEPTEMBER 2025**

A copy of the draft minutes of the meetings of the Teesside Pension Fund Committee held on 24 September 2025 were submitted for information.

25/60 **TEESSIDE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE - 10 DECEMBER 2025 (INQUORATE) & 3 FEBRUARY 2026**

The Head of Pensions, Governance and Investments advised that the meeting of the Teesside Pension Fund Committee held on 10 December 2025 was inquorate and agenda items deferred to the rescheduled meeting held on 3 February 2026.

Members heard that this was due to several last-minute apologies and some Members had arrived late which meant that they could not be counted towards the quorum. The Board was assured that expected attendance was always taken into account, ahead of each meeting and appropriate actions taken to assist with quoracy

A verbal update was provided on agenda items considered at the meeting of the Teesside Pension Fund Committee held on 3 February 2026.

Items included:

- Investment Advisors' Reports
- Border to Coast Presentation (Responsible Investment)
- Border to Coast Responsible Investment Policy, Corporate Governance & Voting Guidelines and Climate Change Policy
- Actuarial Valuation Update and Draft Funding Strategy Statement
- Investment Activity Report (incl. TM Report, Valuation & Forward Investment Programme)
- Border to Coast Presentation - Investment Performance
- Governance Policies Review
- Pooling Update
- Government Consultation - LGPS: Scheme Improvements (access and protections)
- Government Consultation - LGPS: Fit for the Future - technical consultation
- Risk Register

- Exempt Item - Fund Actuary - 31 March 2025 Valuation - Initial Whole of Fund Results Presentation

A Member raised concern that in regard to the Risk Register agenda item, there was insufficient recognition of political change in the country.

The Head of Pensions Governance and Investments advised that Committee Members had also requested some changes to the way the Risk Register was presented so those comments and those raised today would be taken on board when the Risk Register was brought back to the Committee next quarter.

**AGREED** that the information provided was received and noted

25/61

## **BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

The Head of Pensions Governance and Investments presented a report of the Corporate Director of Finance, the purpose of which was: to ask the Chair to appoint a new Chair from the employer representatives, update the Members of the Teesside Pension Board (the Board) on progress and proposals to fill vacancies on the Board, remind the Board Members of their terms of office and that that the Deputy Chair will become the Chair (by rotation).

The new Chair had indicated that he had taken on the role of Deputy Chair by default because he was the only Employer Representative present at the meeting in which the appointment was made two years ago. Due to work commitments he would struggle to fulfil the role of Chair on a consistent basis and had asked for the Board to consider finding an alternative Chair.

There were two vacancies on the Local Pension Board following the last meeting. A vacancy for a scheme member Board representative drawn from the recognised trade unions representing employees who were scheme members of the Fund following the retirement of June Stubbs and a vacancy for an employer member Board representative drawn from an employer other than the four main Councils (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton Councils). The Board expressed its appreciation for all of the input into the work of the Board made by June Stubbs since her appointment in November 2022.

A request was made to the trade unions to nominate a scheme member representative to the Board with a closing date for nominations of 19th January 2026. No nominations were received and so a further request for nominations had been made. The trade unions that could nominate employer representatives were GMB, UNISON and UNITE. Previous scheme member representatives were able to apply.

A scheme member representative updated the Board that after internal discussion, a potential candidate for the vacancy had been identified. They were likely to proceed with the application shortly.

To fill the vacancy of employer representative from employers, a request had been made to the employers of the Fund to nominate a scheme employer representative with a closing date of 27th February 2026. This request had already generated some interest.

**AGREED** as follows that:

1. The information provided was received and noted.
2. Councillor N Walker appointed Chair of the Teesside Pension Board for a two-year term of office from the date of this meeting.

25/62

## **GOVERNMENT PENSION CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

The Head of Pensions Governance and Investment presented a report of the Corporate Director of Finance, the purpose of which was to inform Members of the of the Teesside Pension Board (the Board) of recent Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) consultation responses.

The Fit for the Future consultation launched on 14 November 2024 and brought about sweeping reforms to how the LGPS in England and Wales invested assets and were governed. A number of these were in the process of being put into primary legislation through the Pension Schemes

Bill, which also covered a much wider range of reforms which covered the full spectrum of pension schemes in the UK. MHCLG were also working on regulations and guidance specific to the LGPS to implement these reforms. It was expected that there would be a number of consultations launched before the 1 April 2026 deadline for these reforms to come into effect (subject to passage of the pensions Scheme Bill through Parliament).

On 13 October 2025, MHCLG launched a consultation on changes to the LGPS in England and Wales. The proposals related to access to the Scheme and its benefits and covered four main areas:

- normal minimum pension age (NMPA)
- pension access for mayors and councillors
- academies in the LGPS
- new Fair Deal.

The Government published draft regulations for comment covering new Fair Deal and pension access for mayors and councillors alongside the consultation. Links to the separate documents were contained within the reports pack.

The consultation ran until 22 December 2025. Officers consulted with pooling partners and considered responses from LGA, advisory firms and Trade Unions before agreeing the response with the Chairs and Vice Chair of Pensions Committee.

On 20 November, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) opened a technical consultation that related to two “draft statutory instruments” relating to Fit for the Future reforms for the LGPS in England and Wales. They asked for feedback across 29 questions on two new sets of draft regulations, with a 6-week deadline of 2 January 2026.

This consultation was on two sets of draft regulations implementing the LGPS Fit for the Future reforms. MHCLG asked for feedback on these, focussed on whether they’re fit for purpose and do the job that government want. There were a range of different types of questions across the 29 asked, ranging in scope from strictly whether the wording of the regulations was sufficient to meet the government’s aims, through to open questions asking for any comments respondents may have. While the consultation itself provided a summary of the key points they were asking questions on, the devil was in the detail within the draft regulations, which could be difficult to follow and were open to interpretation.

The consultation was split into two sections. The first covered 23 questions regarding the draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Pooling, Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2026, which would replace the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016 and give legal effect to the proposals set out in the Pooling and Local Investment chapters of the ‘Fit for the Future’ consultation. The second section asked six questions tackling the draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2026, which tackled the governance section of Fit for the Future. On 20 November 2025, MHCLG launched a consultation on changes to the LGPS in England and Wales. The proposals related to two draft statutory instruments relating to Fit for the Future reforms for the LGPS England and Wales.

The Government published draft regulations for comment covering Pooling, Management and Investment of Funds and governance arrangements for administering the LGPS.

The consultation ran until 2 January 2026. Officers consulted with pooling partners and considered responses from LGA, advisory firms and Trade Unions before agreeing the response with the Chairs and Vice Chair of Pensions Committee.

A Member sought clarification on whether the regulations meant that Committees would have fewer decision-making rights than they currently did.

The Head of Pensions Governance and Investments confirmed that the Committee would maintain strategic oversight but not be involved in the performance and asset management. This responsibility would lie with Border to Coast.

The Member responded that a contributing factor as to why the Committee had been inoperative on occasion could be that the agenda was large and most items were for noting rather than

decision therefore this provided less incentive for Members to attend. It was queried whether the agenda could be modified, for example shorter reports.

Another Member advised that large agendas were not uncommon and background information was always included in reports.

The Head of Pensions Governance and Investments concluded by advising that he had been considering ways in which to modify the Committee agendas and would update the Board on any developments.

**AGREED** that the information provided was received and noted.

25/63

#### **THE PENSIONS REGULATOR GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION SURVEY**

The Head of Pensions Governance and Investments presented a report of the Corporate Director of Finance, the purpose of which was to inform Members of the Teesside Pension Board (the Board) of the Pensions Regulator - PSPS Governance and Administration Survey 2025-26. The report would outline some key points from the survey to generate feedback for incorporation into the response.

The Pensions Regulator (tPR) issued a survey to the scheme through an email on 19th January 2026. The survey was to be completed by the scheme manager working with the Pension Board Chair and completed online by Friday 13th February 2026. The tPR email stated “the survey will help TPR determine how schemes are progressing on meeting the expected standards so it can focus on areas where they may need more support. When the survey was last conducted in 2023, 94% of all public service pension schemes completed it and this helped TPR build a comprehensive picture of governance and administration standards. TPR is hoping that all public service pension schemes participate in this year’s research.”

A meeting had been arranged with the Funds pensions administrator, Tyne and Wear Pension Fund to assist in the completion of the survey. Tyne and Wear Pension Fund would also be completing a survey in relation to their own Fund.

**AGREED** that the information provided was received and noted.

25/64

#### **UPDATE ON WORK PLAN ITEMS**

A report of the Corporate Director of Finance was presented by the Head of Pensions Governance and Investments, the purpose of which was to present Members of the Teesside Pension Board (the Board) with information on items scheduled in the work plan for consideration at the current meeting.

At its meeting on 19 July 2021 the Board agreed an updated work plan for the coming months and years which set out areas for the Board to discuss or consider at subsequent meetings. These were typically areas that the Pensions Regulator and/or the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) had identified as important for Local Pension Boards to consider. This work plan had been reviewed and updated periodically by the Board, with the last updated version approved at its 25 November 2024 meeting.

The items scheduled for consideration in the work plan for this meeting were review standard employer and scheme member communications and review procurements carried out by Fund. The current work plan was contained as an appendix within the reports pack.

To encourage efficiency, most communications between TWPF and employers and members were made through secure portals. This allowed the use of workflows to ensure processes were monitored. There were some regular email communications made with employers to the registered contacts identified by the employers through the admission process and regularly updated. TWPF had supplied email examples which were included as appendices in the reports pack and further examples of communications such as a welcome letter for new members and a newsletter were also included.

A Member queried whether communications would be purely digital and it was confirmed by representatives from Tyne & Wear Pension Fund that this was the case unless paper copies had been requested.

Concerns around older generations being digitally excluded were raised and the Board heard that Members of the Pension Fund had been contacted on several occasions by post with the opportunity to opt-in to paper communications. This could be done via various avenues such as calling the helpline.

The Head of Pensions Governance and Investments continued the update by highlighting the table at 6.1 of the report that set out the procurements carried out by the Fund and the timeframes.

The investment advice contract was due for procurement and procurement for this service had been delayed whilst awaiting clarity as to the requirements for this role which was the subject of legislation through the Pensions Bill and the regulations and guidance which would follow. It was anticipated that the coverage of advice provided by this role would encompass administration as well as investment advice. There would be a limited number of people with the knowledge, skills and qualifications to fit this new role.

Members sought some clarification around the requirements for the investment advisor role going forward and it was confirmed that there would still be a requirement for Funds to have an independent person on the committee but one person would cover the full spectrum and provide support on investment, governance and administration. Full guidelines would be available soon and the Board would be kept updated.

**AGREED** that the information provided was received and noted.

25/65

## **PENSION ADMINISTRATION REPORT**

Representatives from the Tyne & Wear Pension Fund presented the Pensions Administration Report to Board Members. Responsibility for the administration of the Teesside Pension Fund had been successfully transferred from XPS Group to the Tyne and Wear Pension Fund (TWPF) as part of a shared service agreement. This transition, as previously reported, was not without its difficulties. A range of challenges emerged during the handover, notably several data-related issues that TWPF was actively working to resolve. It was acknowledged and accepted that some errors could take several months to resolve. Despite these initial hurdles, the transition had reached a stable phase. All new cases were currently being processed under standard business procedures, indicating a return to normal operations.

TWPF measured the performance of the service against the Occupational and Personal Pension Scheme (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2013 (“the Disclosure Regulations”), the national LGPS Scheme Advisory Board’s (SAB) Performance Indicators and additional internal performance indicators. In respect of performance against disclosure, these were measured against 100%. Compliance with this was not always achievable, as there was reliance on employers to provide information and cases could be complex.

It was important to consider the overall circumstances of the transfer of responsibilities and the progress achieved since the start of the contract on 1 June 2025. It expected that performance would improve as issues that arose during the transition were resolved.

As mentioned at an earlier point in the meeting, TWPF’s default method of communication was digital, meaning that members would receive documents and updates electronically unless they specifically requested to continue receiving paper correspondence. This brought significant efficiencies and cost savings.

Teesside Pension Fund members had been notified of this transition through various communications over the past year, ensuring that everyone was aware of the new approach. Pensioner engagement was actually on par with current members in terms of digital engagement.

In terms of service delivery, the situation had improved considerably, with 79% of calls being answered as of December 2025 and the current average wait time sitting at under two minutes. This improvement demonstrated TWPF's ongoing efforts to respond effectively to member needs. Nevertheless, TWPF recognised the importance of providing a consistently high standard of service and remained committed to increasing this figure further. The goal was to

ensure that all members received excellent support and assistance whenever they contacted the Pensions Helpline.

A Member queried whether an automated message advising callers of estimated wait times and position in the queue could be added to the phone system.

The Board heard that TWPF currently used South Tyneside Council's telephony service and did not currently have a sophisticated functionality that could automate waiting timescales etc. TWPF were working with South Tyneside Council to improve their telephony service and expected to have more advanced options soon.

There was a statutory duty placed on employers to provide information regarding their members and TWPF relied heavily on this data to maintain accurate member records, calculate and pay benefits, and provide annual benefit statements. As a result, TWPF closely monitored the overall performance of employers and kept track of any outstanding queries.

The Employer Services Team continued to review employers who reached trigger levels. It was acknowledged that there was a period of adjustment whilst employers familiarised themselves with new working practices but it was noted that in future any employers that reached trigger levels could be highlighted to the Board if necessary. TWPF were monitoring the situation whilst supporting employers. This support included a dedicated employer helpline, training webinars and meetings where necessary.

A Board Member raised that there had been issues with terminally ill Members having timely access to their pensions and it was confirmed that TWPF prioritised Members with terminal illness and were able to fast track their payout. The importance of educating employers around this issue was highlighted as TWPF required certain information from employers to establish a robust process for this scenario and enable fast tracking. TWPF were aware there had been some issues and had been working with the relevant employers to resolve these issues as soon as possible.

A Member queried how the Teesside Pension Fund performed against the statutory KPIs in comparison with TWPF. It was confirmed that each KPI was RAG rated and Teesside Pension Fund currently had more red ratings but the Fund had been prioritised since the transfer last year to ensure a smooth transition and significant improvements were expected in 2026/2027.

**AGREED** that the information provided was received and noted.

25/66

**ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED**

None.