

Pension Board

Minutes of the Pension Board held on 22 March 2023 in Horizon House, Bristol and via MS Teams.

Pensions Committee

Robert Gould
Caroline Mason
Lilli Matson
Colin Chiverton
Will Lidbetter
Peter Smith
Hywel Tudor
Greg Black

Officers

Craig Martin
Marion Maloney

Apologies

Karen McWilliam
John Lelliott
Rachael Cunningham
Robert Bell

Secretariat

Madeleine Hughes
Alex Hole

1.0 Chair's introduction and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Robert Bell, Rachael Cunningham, Karen McWilliam and John Lelliott.

2.0 Declarations of interest

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were given.

3.0 Minutes of the Pension Board held on 16 March 2022

- 3.1 The minutes of the 16 March 2022 Pensions Board meeting were noted after having been previously approved by correspondence.

4.0 Review of Pensions Committee meetings in 2022/2023

- 4.1 Marion Maloney provided an overview of the Committee's strategic priorities and the progress they'd made on them over the last year.
- 4.2 Marion reflected on the Committee's governance, advising there were areas in which their governance was strong, such as the high level of attendance to meetings and the recruitment of new member representatives, but also remarked that there were areas in which improvement was needed, such as the diversity of the Committee.
- 4.3 Regarding the strategic priority to review the Fund's investment approach, Marion noted that while Brunel still has its challenges, the relationship is at a much better position than it was last year. She noted that the Strategic Asset Allocation is market leading but highlighted how the Principles of Responsible Investment (PRI) reporting was producing little value and that they were considering scrapping it.

- 4.4 In terms of the EAPF's working environment, Marion advised that the team had a strong culture and ethos, but that they needed to recruit new members and aim to partake in environmental leave days as other teams do.
- 4.5 Lilli Matson advised the Committee that it is at times unclear what the role and accountability of Committee members is, in relation to issues the Fund experiences with suppliers. Lilli suggested a strategic overview of the key risks for the year and what actions Committee members could take to maximise their value would be beneficial. Robert Gould supported this, advising that clarifying accountability to help the Committee focus on strategic decisions would be beneficial.

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- 4.6 Caroline Mason expressed her view that the Committee could do more to improve its diversity and that a difficult conversation on this may need to be had. Colin Chiverton queried how the Fund would look to engage the 1200 new starters, a large proportion of whom may be ethnically diverse and of varying ages. Marion advised that the new member representative, Alice Davies, had agreed to be the diversity lead for the Committee and stressed the importance of building links with ethnic minority networks.
- 4.7 Colin Chiverton suggested the possibility of inviting observers to the Committee and asking them for feedback on how meetings could be improved, which Marion Maloney supported.
- 4.8 Caroline Mason asked why the team were considering discontinuing PRI reporting. Marion advised that the reporting is very resource intensive and doesn't always yield useful results. She also advised that Brunel are recognised by PRI as the Fund's asset owners and submit PRI reports themselves, therefore the team would be duplicating efforts if they continue to submit their own PRI reports.
- 4.9 On Capita's performance, Hywel Tudor remarked he was not convinced by their reassurances and was not confident their data quality was sufficient. He advised it may be useful to have a conversation about the options and risks if the Fund were to consider changing to a different provider.
- 4.10 Alex Hole advised that some Committees have annual reviews and B.A.M.E member representatives, something the Committee could explore. She also advised that some Committees don't allow update papers, and instead include a paper at the start of the pack detailing all necessary updates. Craig Martin agreed it would be beneficial to find a balance between updating and decision-making at meetings and suggested the benefit working group could be better utilised.

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- 4.11 Hywel Tudor acknowledged the need to have enough detail in the papers to make decisions but advised that some papers are lengthy and could be cut down.
- 4.12 Laura Caudwell advised the Board they should be aware of the introduction of a new code of practice expected to be published in April. They will be looking at whether the Fund is compliant with the new code, but advised it would be wise to review this at the next Pensions Board meeting next year.

5.0 Any other business

- 5.1 No other business was raised.

6.0 Date and time of next meeting

- 6.1 The date of the next annual meeting would be in March 2024, at a date to be agreed in due course.

The meeting closed at 15:00.