

Governance Compliance Statement

London Borough of Harrow Pension Fund

**For Consideration by Pension Fund
Committee
July 2023**

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Regulatory Framework.....	4
Delegated Functions	5
Pension Fund Committee.....	5
Officer Sub – Group	6
Director of Finance and Assurance	6
Chief Officers	7
Pension Board.....	7
Statement of compliance to guidance	9

Introduction

This is the Governance Compliance Statement of The London Borough of Harrow Pension Fund, administered by Harrow Council, the Administering Authority. The statement provides an overview of Harrow's approach towards the governance of the Pension Fund.

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Regulatory Framework

This Statement is required by Regulation 55 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Scheme) Regulations 2013.

The Regulation requires Harrow Council as the Administering Authority to prepare a written statement setting out:

- “... (a) whether the authority delegates its function, or part of its functions under these Regulations to a committee, a sub-committee or an officer of the authority;*
- (b) if the authority does so—*
- (i) the terms, structure and operational procedures of the delegation,*
 - (ii) the frequency of any committee or sub-committee meetings,*
 - (iii) whether such a committee or sub-committee includes representatives of Scheme employers or members, and, if so, whether those representatives have voting rights;*
- (c) the extent to which a delegation, or the absence of a delegation, complies with guidance given by the Secretary of State and, to the extent it does not so comply, the reasons for not complying, and*
- (d) details of the terms, structure and operational procedures relating to the local pension board established under regulation 53(4) (Scheme managers).”*

This Statement will be revised and republished following any material change in any of the matters set out above. A current version of the Statement will always be available either at the address on page three or on our website at the link below

<https://www.harrowpensionfund.org.uk/harrow-council-pension-fund/about-s/forms-and-publications/>

Delegated Functions

The Council has delegated its functions to the following:

- Pension Fund Committee
- Officer Sub – Group
- Director of Finance and Assurance
- Chief Officers

The Council set up a Local Pension Board as required under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 to assist the Administering Authority in ensuring the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme.

Pension Fund Committee

The Pension Fund Committee comprises four Members representing two different political parties with voting rights, a co-optee, an investment adviser and two independent advisers without voting rights. Council senior officers attend each meeting and trade union representatives of Scheme members (UNISON and GMB) are also invited as observers.

The Committee meets approximately four times a year and has the following responsibilities:

- 1) to exercise on behalf of the Council, all the powers and duties of the Council in relation to its functions as Administering Authority of the LB Harrow Pension Fund (the Fund), save for those matters delegated to other Committees of the Council or to an Officer;
- 2) the determination of applications under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations and the Teachers' Superannuation Regulations;
- 3) to administer all matters concerning the Council's pension investments in accordance with the law and Council policy;
- 4) to establish a strategy for the disposition of the pension investment portfolio;
- 5) to appoint and determine the investment managers' delegation of powers of management of the fund;
- 6) (for Harrow Council employees) to determine cases that satisfy the Early Retirement provision under Regulation 26 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 1997 (as amended), and to

GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

exercise discretion under Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 (as amended, subject to the conditions now agreed in respect of all staff, excluding Chief Officers;

- 7) to apply the arrangements set out in (6) above to Chief Officers where the application has been recommended by the Chief Executive, either on the grounds of redundancy, or in the interests of the efficiency of the service, and where the application was instigated by the Chief Executive in consultation with the leaders of the political groups

Officer Sub – Group

The Officer Sub – Group comprises the Director of Finance and Assurance and the Director of Legal and Governance Services. Other senior officers attend meetings as required.

The Sub-Group meets on an ad-hoc basis and has the responsibility to determine all early retirement applications (from Council employees) in line with Council policy.

Director of Finance and Assurance

Pension Fund Investment

In respect of the discretionary management arrangements the Director of Finance has the following responsibilities:

- In the name of the Mayor and Burgesses of Harrow Council and on behalf of the Pension Fund and in consultation with the Fund's managers, to invest in stocks and shares as authorised by the Trustee Investments Act and Pension Fund Regulations, and to authorise the Council's seal to be affixed to stock transfer forms, rights issues and other investment forms.
- To enter into agreements on the terms and conditions on which these investments are made by the Fund's managers.
- To enter into under-writing agreements.
- To monitor the investment decisions of the Fund managers and under the terms of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016 as amended to ensure the need for diversification and stability of investments

Chief Officers

Chief Officers are specifically authorised to take decisions on behalf of the Council or its non-Executive Committees in cases of urgency, using the procedure for non-executive decisions on minor matters or the procedure for urgent non-executive decisions.

Urgent Non-Executive Decisions and Minor Matters

In relation to matters which are the responsibility of a Council Committee, subject to consultation with the Chair of the relevant committee and the nominated members of the two main political groups or their nominees, Chief Officers shall have the power to act on behalf of the Council in cases of urgency and on minor matters, where the urgent matter is of such a nature that it may be against the Council's interest to delay and where it is not practicable to obtain the approval of the Council Committee. In the event of disagreement between the Members consulted, the matter shall be referred to the Chief Executive who may take the decision after consultation with the Leaders of all political groups or their nominees, and if appropriate, with the statutory officers. The safeguards set out below must be followed.

Safeguards

The procedure must only be used when considered essential to achieving the efficient administration of the service and for urgent matters consideration must be given to whether the matter can wait until the next scheduled meeting or whether the calling of a special meeting can be justified.

All decisions taken by officers under this delegated power must be reported for information to the next meeting of the appropriate committee.

Pension Board

As required under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 the Council has set up a Local Pension Board. Its responsibility under the Act is to assist the Administering Authority in ensuring the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme including:

- Securing compliance with the Scheme regulations and other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the LGPS;
- Securing compliance with requirements imposed in relation to the LGPS by the Pensions Regulator; and
- Such other matters the LGPS regulations may specify.
- Development and Review of new policies before these are adopted by the Pensions Fund Committee

GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

In particular the Board oversees:

- the effectiveness of the decision making process
- the direction of the Fund and its overall objectives
- the level of transparency in the conduct of the Fund's activities
- the administration of benefits and contributions

Under the provisions of the Act the Board must include equal numbers of employer and member representatives and it is made up as follows:

- Employer representative – London Borough of Harrow
- Employer representative – Scheduled and admitted bodies
- Scheme members' representative – Active members
- Scheme members' representative – Pensioners
- Independent member.

Statement of compliance to guidance

Regulation 55(1)(c) requires Scheme administering authorities to measure their governance arrangements against the principles set out in the statutory guidance. Where compliance does not meet the published standard, there is a requirement to give, in their Governance Compliance Statement, the reasons for not complying.

Principle A – Structure

- a) The management of the administration of benefits and strategic management of fund assets clearly rests with the main committee established by the appointing council.
- b) That representatives of participating LGPS employers, admitted bodies and Scheme members (including pensioner and deferred members) are members of either the main or secondary committee established to underpin the work of the main committee.
- c) That where a secondary committee or panel has been established, the structure ensures effective communication across both levels.
- d) That where a secondary committee or panel has been established, at least one seat on the main committee is allocated for a member from the secondary committee or panel.

	Not Compliant*				Fully Compliant
a)					√
b)	√				
c)					NA
d)					NA

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

The Pension Fund Committee comprises representatives of the main employer, London Borough of Harrow (which is also the administering authority and accounts for 82.5% of the Fund’s members), but there is no representation of other employers or scheme members. Two trade unions have observer status. The Pension Board includes one representative from each of non-Council employers, active scheme members and pensioner members and the views of the Board are reported to the Committee.

Principle B – Representation

a) That all key stakeholders are afforded the opportunity to be represented within the main or secondary committee structure. These include: -

- employing authorities (including non-Scheme employers, e.g., admitted bodies,
- Scheme members (including deferred and pensioner Scheme members),
- where appropriate, independent professional observers, and
- expert advisors (on an ad-hoc basis).

b) That where lay members sit on a main or secondary committee, they are treated equally in terms of access to papers and meetings, training and are given full opportunity to contribute to the decision making process, with or without voting rights.

	Not Compliant*			Fully Compliant	
a)				√	
b)					√

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

The Pension Fund Committee comprises representatives of the main employer, London Borough of Harrow, two independent advisers and an expert investment adviser but no representation for other employers or scheme members. Two trade unions have observer status, although one of those seats is currently vacant.

Principle C – Selection and role of lay members

a) That committee or panel members are made fully aware of the status, role and function they are required to perform on either a main or secondary committee.

b) That at the start of any meeting, committee members are invited to declare any financial or pecuniary interest related to specific matters on the agenda.

	Not Compliant*			Fully Compliant	
a)					√
b)					√

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

Principle D – Voting

a) The policy of individual administering authorities on voting rights is clear and transparent, including the justification for not extending voting rights to each body or group represented on main LGPS committees.

	Not Compliant*				Fully Compliant
a)					√

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance

Principle E – Training/Facility time/Expenses

a) That in relation to the way in which statutory and related decisions are taken by the administering authority, there is a clear policy on training, facility time and reimbursement of expenses in respect of members involved in the decision-making process.

b) That where such a policy exists, it applies equally to all members of committees, sub-committees, advisory panels or any other form of secondary forum.

c) That the administering authority considers the adoption of annual training plans for committee members and maintains a log of all such training undertaken

	Not Compliant*				Fully Compliant
a)				√	
b)					√
c)				√	

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

The Council policy is that the Pension Fund Committee are aware of the six areas of knowledge and skills relating to the LGPS which CIPFA has identified as being the core technical requirements for those involved in decision making. They are frequently advised of training opportunities and are advised of facility time and the reimbursement of expenses.

A training log for all elected members is maintained.

Included in the Terms of Reference for the Pension Board is:

Following appointment each member of the Board should be conversant with:

- *The legislation and associated guidance of the LGPS*
- *Any document recording policy about the administration of the LGPS which is for the time being adopted by the Fund*

GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Administering Authority will provide a training programme which all Committee and Board members will be encouraged to attend

Principle F – Meetings (frequency/quorum)

- a) That an administering authority’s main committee or committees meet at least quarterly.
- b) That an administering authority’s secondary committee or panel meet at least twice a year and is synchronised with the dates when the main committee sits.
- c) That an administering authority who does not include lay members in their formal governance arrangements, provide a forum outside of those arrangements by which the interests of key stakeholders can be represented

	Not Compliant*			Fully Compliant
a)				√
b)				NA
c)			√	

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

Key stakeholders including non-Council employers and the trade unions are consulted on an ad hoc basis e.g. actuarial valuation, Investment Strategy Statement, Funding Strategy Statement

Principle G – Access

- a) That subject to any rules in the council’s constitution, all members of main and secondary committees or panels have equal access to committee papers, documents and advice that falls to be considered at meetings of the main committee.

	Not Compliant*			Fully Compliant
a)				√

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

Principle H – Scope

a) That administering authorities have taken steps to bring wider Scheme issues within the scope of their governance arrangements

	Not Compliant*				Fully Compliant
a)					√

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

Principle I – Publicity

a) That administering authorities have published details of their governance arrangements in such a way that stakeholders with an interest in the way in which the Scheme is governed, can express an interest in wanting to be part of those arrangements.

	Not Compliant*				Fully Compliant
a)					√

* Please use this space to explain the reason for non-compliance.

Please use this space if you wish to add anything to explain or expand on the ratings given above