

Pension Fund Committee Minutes



Tuesday 13 May 2025

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Ross Melton (Chair), Florian Chevoppe-Verdier, Laura Janes, Adam Peter Lang and Adrian Pascu-Tulbure

Co-opted members: Michael Adam and Peter Parkin

Officers: Eleanor Dennis (Head of Pensions), David Hughes (Director of Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance) and Liam Oliff (Committee Coordinator)

LPPA:

John Crowhurst

Chris Batts

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the open and exempt minutes of the meetings held on 5th March 2025 were approved

4. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Eleanor Dennis (Head of Pensions) introduced the report which covered the performance of the Council's administration partner Local Pensions Partnership Administration (LPPA) over Q1 for the period January – March 2025. During the Q4 period, 1563 cases were processed by LPPA, compared with 1488 in Q3 and 1582 cases in Q2. The overall quarterly KPI performance in Q4 was 98.7% up from 98.1% in Q3 and continuing the upward trend throughout the year 2024/25 with 97.7% in Q2, and 97.5% in Q1, showing LPPA's continuous improvement throughout the scheme year. Performance above target was achieved in 100% of all case types in Q4 and Q3. There had been an increase in calls received by the LPPA, this was typical for

January as it was the post-holiday period and there were more bereavement cases in the winter. There had been a drop in calls over 12 months of 11%, this was not consistent with other pensions schemes such as Police and Fire. The LPPA had established an internal 'Complaints Board', the results of the initial work of this would be communicated to the Committee in July.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang asked whether there was more the Committee could do to support the LPPA in their work. John Crowhurst (LPPA representative) stated that information flow and accurate data were key from fund employers and that LBHF (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham) had engaged with the monthly returns process. He added that good support was received from Eleanor Dennis and the Pensions Team at LBHF.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang sought more clarity on the complaints board being set up by LPPA and what its remit would be. John Crowhurst explained that the board would do a deep dive into a complaint, would look at why they had received that complaint, how it was resolved and then the board would produce an action plan to see where the response to the complaint could be improved.

The Chair questioned how the current 96% figure of response from employers, compared to previous positions. Eleanor Dennis clarified that this was a much better position, this was due to implementing a financial penalty if employers did not submit data on time as well as there now being a monthly returns process rather than annual.

Peter Parkin (Co-Opted Member) asked what typically slowed the payment process down and what the obstacles were for members to receive timely payments. John Crowhurst mentioned that often if a member did not receive their payment on time, it was because they had not submitted their notification of retirement on time to LPPA. He added that 27% of members had not received their payments on time and that this was being looked into.

RESOLVED

The Pension Fund Committee noted the report.

5. PENSIONS ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Eleanor Dennis (Head of Pensions) introduced the report which covered a summary of activity in key areas of pension administration for the Council's Pension Fund. LPPA had partnered with another organisation to perform data validation checks, 460 in total. In preparation for the Pension dashboard readiness in October 2025, LPPA were implementing more automated processes. Currently processes were often delayed due to missing records and officers would have to go through and check every record, but now this would be done automatically in most cases. He explained the four key stages to the retirement process, the leaver notification, the quotation, member forms and then the payment stage. There were delays at each stage for a number of reasons, this could be a late notification from a member, poor data quality also led to delays. Online retirement forms had been looked at as errors on the forms caused delay. Automation was being tested at the payment stage to

check whether the bank details given linked to a genuine account and matched the name of the member.

Councillor Florian Chevoppe-Verdier thanked officers for their work and commented that the waiting time for members was an important metric. He asked whether there was a preview for Q1 2025 regarding the number of calls. Eleanor Dennis explained that the performance was likely to be challenged due to the continuing heavy legislative agenda on pensions. Which was prompting more members to call and ask questions. It was positive to see LPPA try to implement more automation to try to minimise the impact on resources and make processes more efficient. She added that it would be no surprise if the number of calls to the helpdesk rose.

Councillor Florian Chevoppe-Verdier questioned whether the new dashboard would provide LBHF data that the Committee could see live. John Crowhurst confirmed that this would not be the case but that there would be monthly and quarterly reports.

Councillor Florian Chevoppe-Verdier mentioned that he often asked about the level of support being provided by LBHF to the LPPA and he would be told it was a high level of support, he asked whether the situation was still the same. Eleanor Dennis explained that there was a stabilising in the number of cases but not in the extent of which the LBHF team are involved. She gave examples of retirement and bereavement cases that needed involvement by the LBHF pensions team and that hadn't been dealt with as proactively as they could be. She commented that the number of cases had plateaued but that the level of involvement from the Pensions team was higher than it should be.

Councillor Florian Chevoppe-Verdier asked whether there was data regarding what percentage of members were using the online routes for their pension. Chris Batts (LPPA representative) told the Committee that he did not have that data to hand, but that he would provide it after the meeting. The Chair commented that it would be very interesting for the committee to see this data.

Action: LPPA

Peter Parkin questioned whether members would still be able to speak to a person once the LPPA had completed their automation strategies. Chris Batts clarified that Digital was to be the preference but that it was not the only way. Members still had a phone number and a contact form they could use to get through to a person. He added that some processes couldn't be fully automated.

Peter Parkin queried what would happen if a member was not able to advocate for themselves, could they have designated individual to help. Chris Batts confirmed that there were processes in place for this.

David Hughes, (Director of Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance), wondered how the new dashboard would improve members experience when they had lots

of different pensions. Chris Batts explained that the dashboard would provide contact routes for all different schemes.

RESOLVED

The Pension Fund Committee noted the contents of the report.

6. DISCRETIONS POLICY

Eleanor Dennis introduced the report which detailed why there is a requirement for a discretions policy for the Hammersmith & Fulham Pension Fund and detailed key amendments such as the discretion for members with less than 12 months to live. Appendix 1 detailed the revised policy. The report recommended that the Pension Fund Committee approved the revised discretions policy, as set out in the Appendix 1 to this report, for the Hammersmith & Fulham Pension Fund. Approval and implementation fulfilled the Council's obligations under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013. Once approved, the next steps would be to publish the revised policy and circulate it to the employers.

The Chair commented that the Committee had been supportive of similar changes in the past.

RESOLVED

The Committee approved the revised 2025 discretions policy for the Hammersmith & Fulham Pension Fund.

7. PENSION ADMINISTRATION BUDGET

Eleanor Dennis introduced this report which set out the 2025/2026 budget proposal for the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham pension fund pension administration services provided by LPPA. The Pension Fund Committee was asked to consider the contents of this report and the contents of exempt Appendix 1 and 2 and make a decision, the recommendation was for the Fund to pay the increased budget costs for 25/26.

RESOLVED

The Pension Fund Committee agreed the increased pension administration costs for services provided by LPPA and approved the increased budget as set out in the exempt appendices.

The rest of the discussion of this item took place in exempt session.

8. CYBER SECURITY POLICY

Eleanor Dennis introduced this paper which set out the new cyber security policy for the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, it outlined roles and responsibilities in the event of data breaches by the Funds pension administration provider LPPA. There was a Data breach in October 2024 and the actions following this were not as efficient as they could have been.

Councillor Adam Peter Lang sought reassurance that that new policy had the capacity to deal with any future breaches. Eleanor Dennis reassured the Committee that the new policy had plugged an identified gap in the policy regarding pensions.

Councillor Laura Janes mentioned that the breach was from LPPAs side and questioned whether the new policy was workable for the LPPA. Eleanor Dennis explained that the policy was in line with what was already in place in terms of ICO guidelines, but the defined policy had been created to allow LBHF to hold LPPA to account. She added that the policy had been through approval in multiple teams at LBHF but that they were awaiting feedback from LPPA.

Councillor Laura Janes asked how the changes to the policy would be communicated to the members of the pension fund. Eleanor Dennis told the Committee that these changes would not be circulated but that the website would say that the policy was in line with ICO regulations and would let members know the process if there was a breach.

RESOLVED

That the Pension Fund Committee approved the draft policy and delegated finalising the policy to the Head of Pensions.

9. PENSION OPERATIONS RISK REGISTER

Eleanor Dennis introduced this paper which set out the pension operational risks for the Hammersmith & Fulham Pension Fund. The key risks included the in-house pension team provision and the risk of not having the right infrastructure to put processes in place. Data retention was mentioned as pensions worked on a long-term data set to remain compliant, payment platforms needed to have access to past payroll data, constant changes to payroll data meant a high cost to the pensions team to remain compliant. As well as the absence of a cyber security policy for the Fund, until the draft version discussed in item 8 was put in place.

The Chair commented that the Committee were aware that they needed to support the pensions team where possible.

RESOLVED

That the Pension Fund Committee noted the contents of the report.

10. PENSION FUND CESSATIONS

Eleanor Dennis introduced the report which outlined that one fund employer had ceased in the Fund with a surplus. The Committee were being asked to agree the recommendation to pay a surplus in line with the recommendation.

The Chair commented that this was in line with previous cessations agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED

The Committee approved the recommendation to approve the payment of a surplus to Mitie.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS (IF REQUIRED)

The Committee agreed, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they contain the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the said Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption currently outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Meeting started: 7.04 pm
Meeting ended: 8.49 pm

Chair

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