

Foreword by the Chairman of the Pension Advisory Board

The Pension Advisory Board, established in 2015, assists the Scheme Manager in ensuring compliance with regulations; the application of guidance and legislation; implementing requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator; and securing effective and efficient governance and administration. The Board meets four times during each financial year.

The Board is required to have a minimum of four members with equal representation of employers and scheme members – six members are appointed currently. I act as the independent Chairman and do not have voting rights. Each member has demonstrated their commitment to meeting their responsibilities, by maintaining a suitable level of knowledge and understanding of the issues, by preparing for each meeting and by participating effectively in the Board's discussions.

The Board has continued to operate well and continues to allow virtual access where necessary, although members usually attend in person. The business for each meeting has been planned by reference to the business plan agreed for 2023/24 and is based on the responsibilities of the Board and regulatory guidance on key issues to be covered. The plan has been comprehensively addressed during the year and there have been no disputes in the decisions reached. Key items covered include administration performance, communications, policy statements, cyber security, new regulations and guidance, the investment pooling arrangements with ACCESS, and knowledge and skills requirements. However, there continues to be a delay by the Government and the Pensions Regulator in progressing new governance initiatives. Progress is anticipated in 2024/25.

The Board uses the Local Government Pensions Committee (LGPC), the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) and The Pensions Regulator (tPR) websites as points of reference for the Scheme regulations and guidance, and to track any changes being introduced. The regular updates issued by the SAB are particularly useful and are reported to each meeting.

The Board has formulated its training plan, in conjunction with the Pensions Committee, to cover the individual requirements of each member based on guidance issued by CIPFA, using the suggested framework to ensure coverage of all items over a reasonable period. Training is concentrated on the use of the Hymans Robertson Online Learning Academy (LOLA), introduced in 2021 for Board and Committee members. Progress on training is monitored and discussed at each meeting and reviewed annually in the year-end performance reviews. The modules in LOLA have been updated during 2023 and members are in the process of reviewing each module. A training log is maintained.

The Board is satisfied that the West Sussex Pension Fund is operated in compliance with statutory regulations and other legislation, and with guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUHC). The requirements imposed by tPR are being met and their proposed new General Code of practice was issued in January 2024 to come into force at the end of March. The Board continues to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the governance and administration arrangements.

Peter Scales, Chairman of the Pension Advisory Board