

West Sussex Pension Fund - Summary of significant accounting policies

As of February 2024, we are not aware of any significant changes to the accounting policies since last year. We have however taken the opportunity to review the wording of this document for clarity. As in previous years the Pension Fund Accounts are produced in line with, and fully adhering to, guidance from the Chartered institute for Public Finance Accounting (CIPFA).

Fund Account – revenue recognition

a. Contribution income

Normal contributions, both from members and employers, are accounted for on an accruals basis. Member contributions are accrued at the percentage rate in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations 2013. Employer contributions are accrued at the percentage rate certified by the Fund Actuary in the payroll period to which they relate.

Employers' augmentation contributions and pensions strain contributions are accounted for when received. Any amount due in year but unpaid will be classed as a current financial asset.

b. Transfers to and from other Schemes

Transfer values represent the amounts received and paid during the year for members who have either joined or left the Pension Fund during the reporting period and are calculated in accordance with the LGPS Regulations.

Individual transfers in/out are accounted for when received/paid which is normally when the member liability is accepted or discharged.

Transfers in from members wishing to use the proceeds of their Additional Voluntary Contributions to purchase LGPS benefits are accounted for on a receipts basis and are included in transfers in.

Bulk (group) transfers, where relevant, are accounted for on an accruals basis in accordance with the terms of the transfer agreement.

c. Investment income

Investment income is received in both GBP and foreign currency. Income in foreign currency is recorded at the spot exchange rate and translated into sterling on the date of the transaction with any difference between that and the actual transaction value recorded as a realised gain/loss. Any change in the value of investments (including investment properties) are recognised as income or expense and reported as a realised gain/loss.

Investment Income Classes

i. Private Equity

Private Equity income is recognised on the date paid.

ii. Property-related income

Property income consists of rental income and is accounted for on an accruals basis.

iii. Private Debt

Private Debt income is recognised on the date paid.

iv. Infrastructure

Infrastructure income is recognised on the date paid.

v. Pooled fund

Pooled Fund income is recognised on the date paid.

Fund Account - Expense items

d. Benefits payable

Pensions and lump sum benefits payable include all amounts known to be due at the end of the reporting period. Any amounts due but unpaid are accrued for and disclosed in the Net Asset Statement as current liabilities.

e. Taxation

The Fund is a registered public service scheme under section 1(1) of Schedule 36 of the Finance Act 2004 and as such is exempt from UK income tax on interest received and from capital gains tax on the proceeds of investments sold. Income from overseas investments suffers withholding tax in the country of origin unless an exemption is permitted. Irrecoverable tax is accounted for as an expense as it arises.

f. Management expenses

The Fund discloses its Pension Fund management expenses in accordance with CIPFA's Accounting for Local Government Pension Scheme Management Expenses (2016) as set out below;

Administrative expenses

All administrative expenses are accounted for on an accruals basis representing the annual charge relating to the pensions administration and relevant staff costs. Associated management, accommodation and other overheads are also apportioned to this activity.

Oversight and governance costs

All oversight and governance expenses are accounted for on an accruals basis representing the Pension Fund's external advisors, audit and actuary fees and relevant staff costs. Associated management, accommodation and other overheads are also apportioned to this activity.

Investment management expenses

All management expenses are accounted for on an accruals basis. Fees of the external managers and custodian are agreed in the respective mandates governing their appointment and are mainly based on the market value of the investments under management.

The cost of the County Council's in-house treasury management team is charged to the Fund based on a proportion of time spent by officers on treasury management. This is included in investment management costs.

Net Asset Statement

g. Financial assets

Investments are shown at market value at the reporting date and recognised in the Net Asset Statement on the date the Pension Fund becomes party to the contractual acquisition of the asset. From this date any gains or losses arising from changes in the fair value of assets are recognised. The values of investments have been determined at fair value in accordance with the requirements of the Code and IFRS13. For the purposes of disclosing levels of fair value hierarchy, the Pension Fund has adopted the classification guidelines recommended in Practical Guidance on Investment Disclosures (PRAG/Investment Association, 2016).

h. Freehold and leasehold properties

Properties have been valued at the reporting date by independent external valuers, on the basis of fair value as required by the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

i. Foreign currency balances

End of year spot market exchange rates are used to convert foreign currency cash balances, market values of overseas investments and purchases and sales outstanding at the end of the reporting period to GBP.

j. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash comprises of cash in hand and instant access deposits. Cash equivalents are short term highly liquid investments that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and that are subject to minimal risk of change in value.

k. Investment income due

Investment income due is made up of tax reclaims and interest on cash balances accrued at the end of the reporting period. Tax reclaims relate to withholding tax suffered on income received on investments.

l. Financial liabilities

The Pension Fund recognises financial liabilities at fair value as at the reporting date. A financial liability is recognised in the Net Asset Statement on the date the Fund becomes party to the liability. From this date any gains or losses arising from changes in fair value of the liabilities are recognised by the Pension Fund.

m. Actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits

The actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits is assessed on a triennial basis by the Fund Actuary in accordance with the requirements of IAS19 and relevant actuarial standards. The Pension Fund has opted to disclose the actuarial present value of promised retirement benefits by way of a note to the Net Asset Statement.

n. Contingent assets and contingent liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place prior to the year-end giving rise to a possible financial obligation whose existence will only be confirmed or otherwise by the occurrence of future events.

Contingent liabilities can also arise in circumstances where a provision would be made, except that it is not possible at the balance sheet date to measure the value of the financial obligation reliably.

A contingent asset arises where an event has taken place giving rise to a possible asset whose existence will only be confirmed or otherwise by the occurrence of future events.

Contingent assets and liabilities are not recognised in the Net Asset Statement but are disclosed by way of narrative in the notes to the accounts.