

**The Highland Council
Pensions Committee and Pension Board**

Minutes of special Meeting of the **Pensions Committee and Pension Board** held remotely on **Friday 6 December 2024 at 2pm.**

Present:

Pensions Committee

Mr R Gale
Ms L Kraft
Mr D Louden
Mr A MacKintosh
Mr T MacLennan
Mr P Oldham
Mrs M Paterson

Pension Board

Mr G MacKenzie, Highland Council
Mr R Fea, representative for the other Employers
Ms E Johnston, GMB

Non Members present:

Mrs J Hendry

Officials in attendance:

Mr B Porter, Chief Officer Corporate Finance, Corporate Service
Ms C Strachan, Pension Fund Manager, Corporate Service
Mr J Thurlbeck, Corporate Audit Manager, Corporate Service
Ms A Scott, Technical & Communications Officer, Corporate Service
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Service
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Also in attendance:

Ms L McInroy, Hymans Robertson, Fund Actuary
Mr M Oliphant, Audit Scotland
Ms C Abernethy, Audit Scotland

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr D Louden in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Committee: Mr C Ballance, Mr B Lobban, Mrs T Robertson.

Board: Mr C Munro, Highland Council, Mr N MacDonald, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Mr D MacSween, Unison, Mr D Main, Unite/Ucatt.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were none.

3. **External Annual Audit** **Sgrùdadh Bliadhnaile on Taobh A-muigh**

3a Audited Accounts 2023/24 **Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte 2023/24**

The Audited Statement of Accounts (Report No. PC/17/24) for the financial year 2023/24 were available at the link below:-

[Pension fund accounts | Audited Accounts April 2023 to March 2024](#)

There were no material changes in the Audited Statement of Accounts compared to the Unaudited Statement of Accounts which had been presented to the Accounts presented to The Highland Council meeting on 27 June 2024.

The Chief Officer - Corporate Finance summarised the report and the Committee **APPROVED** the accounts for signature.

3b Letter of Representation 2023/24 **Litir Riochdachaidh 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/18/24 a copy of the annual audit letter of representation 2023/24.

The Committee **AGREED** that the letter be signed on behalf of the Highland Council by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

3c External Annual Audit Report to Members of the Pensions Committee and the Controller of Audit **Aithisg In-sgrùdaidh Bhlìadhnaile on Taobh A-muigh do Bhuill de Chomataidh nam Peinnsean agus Rianadair an Sgrùdaidh**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/19/24 by the External Auditor, Audit Scotland.

During discussion, Members welcomed the timeliness of the report, thanked all involved for their work, and made reference to the highlighted staffing challenges. It was suggested that ten rather than five year performance benchmarking would have been helpful, and the reasons for this were explained.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

4. **Mansion House Reforms** **Ath-leasachaidhean Thaighean Mòra**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/20/24 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, clarity was sought and provided on two consultations that were underway on the UK Government's plans for reform of the Local Government Pension Schemes in England and Wales, these being 'workplace defined contribution', and 'LGPS schemes', both of which would close on 16 January 2025.

While acknowledging that this only affected England and Wales, concern was expressed in relation to plans for pooling funds, and how the term 'local' would be defined in relation to this if similar plans were introduced in Scotland.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**5. Revision to Highland Council Pension Fund Internal Audit Annual Plan 2024/25
Plana Bliadhnail In-Sgrùdadh Maoin Peinnsein Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd
2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/21/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit).

The Committee **APPROVED** the substitution of an audit on the 2024/25 Plan as detailed in section 5.1.

**6. Membership of Investment Sub-Committee
Ballrachd na Fo-Chomataidh Tasgaidh**

As a result of the By-Elections the political make-up of the Investment Sub Committee was now as follows:-

SNP – 2/ Highland Independent – 2/ Scottish Liberal Democrats – 2/ Highland Alliance – 1

On that basis, the Committee **APPROVED** the revised Investment Sub Committee membership as follows:-

2 – SNP – Mr P Oldham; Mr C Balance (Scottish Green Party)
2 – Highland Independent – Mr B Lobban; Mrs M Paterson
2 – Liberal Democrat – Mr R Gale; Mrs T Robertson
1 – Highland Alliance – Mr A Mackintosh (Scottish Labour Party)

- One representative Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, (non-voting); and
- One representative for the trade unions (non-voting).

7. Exclusion of the Public

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion on the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of schedule 7A of the Act.

8. Partial Cessation

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. PC/22/24 by the Chief Officer, Corporate Finance.

Following discussion, the Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 3pm.