

WEST MIDLANDS PENSION FUND

EMPLOYEE TRAVEL POLICY

The West Midlands Pension Fund is one of the largest Local Government Pension Funds in the UK. It manages a proportion of its investments in-house and has a number of portfolio managers responsible for both active and passive investments.

As the Fund becomes more active in its investment capabilities it has appointed in-house specialists which in turn has created the need for overseas travel.

Pension Committee each year approve the budget for employee travel (as part of the operating budget) and this is managed by the Head of Finance.

Travelling on business for the Fund

As an employer, Wolverhampton City Council (WCC) has a responsibility to its officers to ensure their safety and well-being while undertaking work on behalf of the Fund, whether that work is undertaken at the office, at another location or abroad.

WCC has a duty of care for its officers and must ensure reasonable controls are in place to minimise risk. The individual employee also has a duty to adhere to this policy regarding any travel on the Fund's behalf and should take their own reasonable steps to avoid any potential risks.

No travel will be permitted by employees unless approval has been given in the appropriate form.

In all cases employees will travel by public transport as a first option unless it is unviable or better value for private (employee's own) transport to be permitted. Groups of employees need to consider best value in determining whether individual travel on public transport is more or less beneficial to the fund than travelling in a group in one private vehicle. Two or more employees travelling to the same location will generally not be permitted to travel in individual private vehicles, unless a case for doing so can be made (i.e. individuals travelling live too far a distance from each other to make car sharing viable).

Employees are required to notify their manager of arrival at their destination where travel is outside the UK and must text at the end of each day where the travel is for a period of 2 days or longer. Failure to meet this requirement may result in action being taken to find/locate the employee; any cost incurred in doing so as a result of this failure may result in costs being recovered from the employee.

Who is authorised to travel

Any employee of the Fund is authorised to travel within the UK in order to perform their duties or engage in conferences or undertake training. Approval to travel in the UK must be given by the relevant Senior Manager once details of the purpose for travel and the cost has been provided.

Travel outside the UK may only be authorised for the following roles within the Fund

- Strategic Director of Pensions
- Assistant Director Investments
- Active Investment Portfolio Managers

Authority to travel outside the UK may only be given by the Strategic Director of Pensions, whose own travel must be approved by the relevant line manager.

Standard of Travel/Accommodation

All travel will be funded at economy class level. Should an employee secure travel at a higher class for the same cost, this may be approved by the Senior Manager for UK travel or the Strategic Director for travel outside the UK.

Should an employee wish to subsidise the cost of travel in upgrading class, this may be approved by the Senior Manager for UK travel or the Strategic Director for travel outside the UK.

Where it is necessary to book accommodation, executive or superior rooms will only be approved where health and safety may be issue. Such circumstances to be discussed and agreed with the Strategic Director.

Where an employee wishes to subsidise the cost of accommodation in upgrading class, this may be approved by the Senior Manager for UK travel or the Strategic Director for travel outside the UK.

All travel and accommodation must be booked through the Fund's Events Co-ordinator (detailed below **Travel Booking**).

Where authorised to travel

Employees are only authorised to travel to locations required to perform their duties. Approval will not be given for extended periods of stay for personal reasons.

Before travel arrangements are confirmed employees must refer to the Travel Advice section of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) website at the following link:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/>

The website categorises according the level of risk:

1	FCO advises against ALL travel to a country
2	FCO advises against ALL travel to parts of a country
3	FCO advises against ALL BUT ESSENTIAL travel to a country
4	FCO advises against ALL BUT ESSENTIAL travel to parts of a country

Please note that employees will NOT be insured for travel to a destination listed under categories (1) or (2) and the Fund will not permit travel under these circumstances.

Travel to a destination listed under categories (3) or (4) may be covered under Employer insurance but checks but first be made with WCC to confirm this, if WCC do not confirm the insurance cover the employee will not be permitted to travel. Should permission be given, the Fund requires that the individual registers with the British Embassy or Consular Office on arrival.

It is also advised that travellers refer to the European Union's banned airline list which can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/transport/air-ban/list_en.htm

Risk Assessment

The Fund requires all staff travelling outside the UK on Fund business to complete a Risk Assessment (form attached) which details any potential risks identified and the mitigation required to reduce such risk.

The risk assessment form must be completed, signed by the Strategic Director and a copy provided to the Fund's Compliance and Risk Manager. A copy must be retained by the employee when travelling.

A detailed itinerary must be completed as part of the risk assessment with a copy provided to the Compliance and Risk Manager.

Contact details for the employee while travelling must also be provided detailing both personal contact information and contact information for the destination of travel (hotel, persons being visited).

The completion of a risk assessment form ensures that the authoriser and the traveller have fully considered the risk on whether travel to a higher risk area is appropriate, and what action can be taken in the event of an incident or emergency.

In addition, the Fund requires a copy of the employee's passport to be kept with the risk assessment. If a passport is lost or stolen while travelling, the Fund can provide this copy to the British Embassy to provide assistance.

Vaccines, Visas and Medical Cover

- 1) Visas and Passports – it is advised to check on visa requirements for the proposed country of travel well in advance. Some countries will also dictate that passports must be valid for a period of at least six months after travel. It is the employee's responsibility when arranging travel outside the UK to check these arrangements and provide confirmation of their compliance to the Compliance and Risk Manager.
- 2) Pre-existing medical conditions – please note that there is currently no requirement to disclose pre-existing medical conditions prior to travel. However, you should also be aware that travelling against medical advice will invalidate your insurance.
- 3) Contact details – the Fund requires that where possible important contact details / insurance details are saved to your mobile phone and/or a paper copy carried with you. In the event of an incident these details will be much easier to retrieve.

Other useful websites

Visa Requirements

<http://www.uk.cibt.com/>

Health

http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/healthy_living/travel_health/

<http://www.masta-travel-health.com/>

<http://www.who.int/en/>

General

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Foreigntravel/index.htm>

Insurance

Insurance for employees travelling outside the UK will only be provided through prior arrangement with the City Council.

On notifying the Events Co-Ordinator of the need to make travel arrangements the employee is required to notify WCC Insurance and Claims Manager of their travel and confirm insurance is in place. Only the individual employee can make these arrangements due to the need to provide personal information.

Confirmation of the insurance will need to be provided with the Risk Assessment before approval will be given.

Expenses

While undertaking travel, employees may recover their expenses from the fund in line with the Employee Expenses Policy relating to subsistence and travel. Receipts will be required for all such expenses detailing what was purchased and for what purpose before any reimbursement is made. Receipts must be provided within 2 weeks of return of travel.

The cost of any vaccinations will be reimbursed on production of a valid receipt.

The Fund has approval to exempt certain employees from the City Council's expenses policy depending on specific job roles. These include the Member Relationship Officers and the Event's Co-Ordinator from the reduced 25p per mile fuel reimbursement where their own car has been used. These roles are entitled to 45p per mile fuel reimbursement as agreed with WCC.

Foreign Currency and Use of Corporate Credit Cards Abroad

In limited circumstances it may be necessary for employees to use a Corporate Credit Card while travelling outside the UK; whether that use is for the purchase of goods or for the withdrawal of monies, approval must be sought from the Head of Finance at least 3 weeks before travel is undertaken and such use is made. Corporate credit cards require international activation and will not be permitted for use if this notice is not given.

Authorisation to use the corporate credit card for the withdrawal of money will only be given where it is considered to be of best value and not prohibitively onerous in terms of cost.

Cash will only be used as a last resort when no other payment options are available.

Employees wishing to take foreign currency on travel outside the UK must apply at least 3 weeks in advance of the date of travel detailing how much foreign currency is required and what it will be used for. Any currency not used must be returned to the Head of Finance on the day the employee returns to the office.

All cash transactions must be accounted for in full on the individual's return to work, supported by receipts and authorised by the line manager (as for credit card expenditure). The Fund will seek to recover from the employee any expenditure not supported by an appropriate receipt, or which, in the judgement of the Strategic Director, represents poor value for money

Travel Booking

All required travel outside the UK must be arranged by the Fund's Events Co-ordinator. Employees needing to travel outside the UK must inform the Events Co-ordinator at least one month in advance of the travel date confirming where they are travelling, their itinerary for travel, duration of travel and any airport transfer arrangements.

The Event's Co-ordinator will be responsible for making booking arrangements and providing details to the employee at least 2 weeks in advance of the travel date.

IT requirements when travelling, including telephone use

Employees needing to travel outside the UK must inform the Communications Officer of any data roaming requirements for iPads or iPhones at least one month in advance of travel to enable adequate time for arrangements to be made with WCC ICTS.

When travelling abroad employees remain bound by the reasonable use policy for IT equipment, personal calls may be permitted to confirm arrival and departure, any further calls must be kept to a minimum. Local calls connected to work are permitted.

Travel with Spouse/Dependents/Non-employees

Under no circumstances will travel with spouse or dependents or persons not employed by the Fund be permitted when employees are travelling for Fund business.

PROCESS FOR APPROVAL

1. Employee identifies that travel is required
2. Travel is discussed with the line manager. Where travel is inside the UK, this is authorised by email by the Senior Manager.
3. Where travel is outside the UK, the employee must provide an overview of the purpose for travel and estimated cost to the Strategic Director of Pensions before any further steps are taken such approval must be sought at least 4 weeks in advance of the travel date.
4. The Strategic Director will give an “in-principle” approval to the travel subject to the completion of the following steps.
5. Following the “in-principle” approval the employee must alert the Events Co-ordinator to the proposed travel and date of travel giving at least 4 weeks’ notice of the intended travel. The Events Co-Ordinator will source travel arrangements and accommodation as required and inform the employee of the options for travel. The Events Co-Ordinator will not book any travel until the employee has agreed with the proposed arrangements.
6. The Employee must contact the City Council’s Insurance and Claims Manager to arrange appropriate travel insurance 4 weeks in advance of the intended date of travel. Confirmation of the insurance must be supplied with the Risk Assessment form.
7. The employee must complete the attached Risk Assessment form and undertake research as to any Visa/Passport/Vaccination requirements confirming these (or not) on the form.
8. The Head of Finance must be alerted to the proposed travel and any requests for foreign currency/use of credit card made at the earliest opportunity but at least 3 weeks in advance of the travel.
9. The Communications Officer must be alerted to any requirements for data roaming IT at least 4 weeks in advance of the travel.
10. Once all information is collected, the employee must submit the following documentation to the Strategic Director for approval. No travel is permitted without such approval being given.
 - Risk Assessment Form, to include vaccine details, a photocopy of the employee’s passport, confirmation of insurance
 - Detailed Itinerary confirming contact details for each location
 - Contact details for employee while travelling and of next of kin/emergency contact details in the UK
11. On returning from the travel the employee must give to the Head of Finance any unused currency on the day they return to the office together with all receipts.

12. The employee must also complete the Post trip report form detailing whether the travel achieved its objectives and whether any unknown/unforeseeable circumstances arose.
13. Any expense claims must be submitted to the Head of Finance within 2 weeks of return from travel and include all receipts for expenses claimed.