



# INVESTMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT MARCH 2021

Appendix B



West Midlands Pension Fund

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

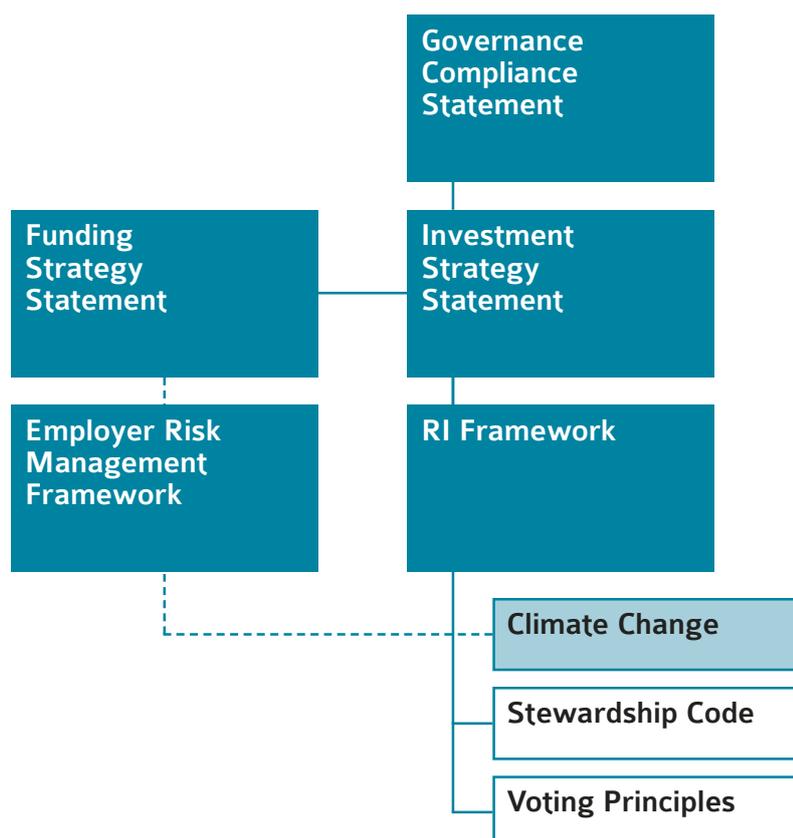
Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) regulations require administering authorities to prepare and maintain an Investment Strategy Statement ('ISS'). This ISS has been prepared by the West Midlands Pension Fund (the Fund) in accordance with regulation 7 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016 (the 'Regulations') and associated guidance. In preparing the ISS, the Pensions Committee has consulted with such persons as it considered appropriate. This statement updates and replaces the March 2020 ISS for both the WMPF main fund and the previously separate West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority Pension Fund (WMITAPF) Investment Strategy Statements. This statement was approved by Pensions Committee on 24 March 2021.

The ISS outlines the Fund's investments objectives and investment beliefs, identifies the risks the Fund faces and outlines how these risks are controlled/mitigated. In defining the implementation of the Fund's investment strategy, the ISS sets out the Strategic Investment Allocation Benchmark (SIAB) including the permitted ranges for different investment asset types.

The ISS also outlines the Fund's views on Responsible Investment (RI) and how RI is integrated into the investment decision making process and the role it plays in the way the Fund selects and stewards its assets.

The ISS is supported by the Funding Strategy Statement (FSS) and the Fund's employer covenant monitoring framework. Together these ensure an integrated approach to funding and investment strategy and risk management supporting the Fund in meeting the regulatory funding requirements.

The statements and framework relate as follows and are supported by a broader framework of policies in investments, most notably those relating to Responsible Investment:



### **Investment Governance Framework**

The City of Wolverhampton Council is the administering authority for the Fund under the regulations. The City of Wolverhampton Council delegates responsibility for the administration and management of the Fund to the Pensions Committee who, in turn, delegates certain responsibilities to the Director of Pensions. The Investment Advisory Panel advises the Director of Pensions on investment issues relating to the Fund.

The Pensions Committee has oversight of the implementation of the management arrangements for the Fund's assets and comprises representatives from the seven district councils and three local trade unions. The Fund has a statutory Local Pensions Board whose role is to assist in the good governance of the scheme by ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory duty.

The Investment Advisory Panel includes two external advisers alongside the Director of Pensions, Assistant Director and Head of Investments. Neither the Local Pensions Board nor the Investment Advisory Panel have any decision-making powers. Roles and responsibilities are set out in more detail in Appendix A.

The Committee's investment objectives are represented by the Strategic Investment Allocation Benchmark (SIAB) included as Appendix B. This reflects the Committee's views on the appropriate balance between generating long-term investment return and taking account of market volatility and the risk and nature of the Fund liabilities.

### **ISS Review**

The ISS is subject to fundamental review at least every three years and from time to time on any material changes to any aspects of the Fund, its liabilities, finances and its attitude to risk which are judged to have a bearing on the stated investment policy. In line with other Fund policies, the ISS is reviewed annually. In preparing the ISS, the Committee has considered advice from the Fund's investment and risk consultants.

Following a process of public consultation undertaken by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Regulations were laid before parliament providing for the merger of the former West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority (WMITA) pension fund into that of the main West Midlands Pension Fund. Those regulations came into force on 8 November 2019 and apply retrospectively to effect merger from 1 April 2019.

In conjunction with the merger, former employers of the WMITA pension fund now participate in the main West Midlands Pension Fund with associated assets and liabilities transferred to two separate admission body funds (ABF). For the purposes of the 2021 Investment Strategy Statement (and thereafter) the associated investment strategy statements for the new separate ABFs are included as appendices to this ISS (appendices D and E).

The Fund has undertaken a consultation process with key stakeholders which have included group consultation meetings on the valuation and high-level investment strategy. Employers have been issued with a copy of the draft ISS and the draft has been published on the Fund's website pending approval by Pensions Committee. The two employers covered by the ABFs have also been consulted on their individual investment strategies, where applicable, which are incorporated in the appendices to the ISS.

## 2 PURPOSE OF THE ISS

The aims and purpose of a pension fund operating within the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) are set out in the LGPS Regulations and the Public Service Pension Act 2013. With regard to funding, they can be summarised as follows.

The aims of the Fund are to:

- manage employers' liabilities effectively and ensure that sufficient resources are available to meet all liabilities as they fall due;
- enable primary and total contribution rates to be kept as nearly constant as possible; and
- seek returns on investment within reasonable risk parameters.

The purpose of the Fund is to:

- receive and invest monies in respect of contributions, transfer values and investment income; and
- pay out monies in respect of Fund benefits, transfer values, costs, charges and expenses, as defined in the GPS regulations and as requirement in the LGPS (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016.

The purpose of the ISS is:

- To set out the governance arrangements for investment
- To set out the Fund's investment objectives
- To define the Fund's investment beliefs
- How the Fund will manage investment-related risks
- How the Fund incorporates responsible investment
- To set out the Fund's strategic investment asset benchmark (SIAB) and ranges allowed to provide flexibility

## 3 INVESTMENT OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the Fund is to ensure that the Fund is able to meet the pension promises (liabilities) made to scheme members as they fall due. To meet this objective the Fund sets the investment strategy so that the target level of return is achieved over the longer-term and that sufficient cashflow is generated so that its liabilities can be met.

The Fund has a range of other objectives which include considering the needs of all key stakeholders which are supplementary to the aims of the Fund.

The funding objectives are set out in the Funding Strategy Statement.

## 4 INVESTMENT BELIEFS

The Fund's Statement of Investment Beliefs are set out in Appendix C which underpin the Fund's approach to investment strategy and how it is implemented. These beliefs underpin the ISS and cover:

- Financial market beliefs – The Fund adopts a long-term approach to investing as its liabilities stretch far into the future but in so doing seeks to also take a proactive approach to the management of assets taking into account the risk/return profile of different investment opportunities over a range of time periods
- Governance beliefs – The Fund believes having effective governance structures and policies will enable rigorous and tested decision making and will add value to the Fund over the longer term. Transparency and cost effectiveness provide key tenets of being a well governed Fund.
- Investment strategy – The Fund's investment strategy will encompass its approach to risk management, risk tolerance, liquidity and levels of return required to meet its strategic objectives. The Fund will set its strategic asset allocation to deliver the long-term returns required to meet its funding needs taking into account diversification, the requirement to remain agile, risk and cost of implementation, recognising that risk should be viewed both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- Responsible investment – As long-term owners of capital (assets), the Fund believes that investing responsibly is key to ensuring the long-term value of the assets in which it invests is protected and where possible, enhanced. Investing responsibly and engaging as long-term owners reduces risk over time and has been proven to positively impact investment returns. The Fund is integrating responsible investment into the way it selects and stewards all assets.
- Climate change – The Fund adopts an evidence-based approach to climate change and believes there is overwhelming evidence to support that climate changes poses both risks and opportunities to the Fund's investments. The Fund will consider the impact of climate change in both its asset allocation and individual investments when making decisions.

## 5 IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF RISKS

Evaluation of risks that may impact on the investment strategy of the fund and expectation of future returns is crucial in determining the appropriate measures to mitigate those risks. The ISS identifies key risks specific to the Fund and the management or controls made to mitigate those risks:

Financial Risks	Management / Control
<p>Investment risk - Assets do not deliver the return required to meet the cost of benefits payable from the Fund; potential drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate asset allocation and risk management</li> <li>• Investment market performance/volatility</li> <li>• Manager underperformance</li> <li>• The possibility that inflation is higher than expected increasing the Fund's liabilities and/or that the assets held deliver a level of return lower than inflation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment strategy considered in context of Fund liabilities and return requirement set within the Funding Strategy Statement</li> <li>• Asset liability modelling and stress testing to set strategic benchmarks within Investment Strategy Statement (ISS), with annual review</li> <li>• Regular monitoring of strategic asset allocation and returns relative to benchmark</li> <li>• Regular monitoring of manager performance</li> <li>• Diversified portfolio with exposure to a wide range of asset classes, portfolio holdings and different management styles</li> <li>• Mitigates inflation risk through holding a diversified portfolio of growth and inflation-linked assets. Inflation risk is considered annually in the review of the SIAB and triennially as part of the actuarial valuation</li> </ul>
<p>Increasing maturity and benefit cashflow requirement; potential drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falling contribution income and increasing total benefit payments as more members start to draw their benefits</li> <li>• Declining active membership due to change in local authority service delivery models</li> <li>• Increasing reliance on income-generating assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment strategy review develop based on future benefit cashflow projection</li> <li>• Modelling of investment strategy and future asset income streams</li> <li>• Regular monitoring of membership movements and liability profile</li> </ul>
<p>Changing scheme regulations and guidance – impacting scheme benefits, funding strategy, actuarial valuations, investment strategy; potential drivers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to scheme benefits from the LGPS cost management process</li> <li>• Changes to the approach for setting actuarial factors (for example on early retirement)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing horizon scanning and consideration on the Fund risk register</li> <li>• Review and response to consultations on changes to the LGPS regulations and guidance which may impact scheme funding</li> <li>• Participation in national review and consideration of emerging issues within the LGPS</li> </ul>

Financial Risks	Management / Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing regulations and guidance for administering authorities within the LGPS</li> </ul>	
<p>Asset risks (the portfolio versus the SIAB)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentration risk that a significant allocation to any single asset category and its underperformance relative to expectation would result in difficulties in achieving funding objectives.</li> <li>• Illiquidity risk that the Fund cannot meet its immediate liabilities because it has insufficient liquid assets.</li> <li>• Currency risk that the currency of the Fund's assets underperforms relative to the SIAB.</li> <li>• Manager underperformance when the Fund managers fail to achieve the rate of investment return assumed in setting their mandates.</li> </ul>	<p>Asset risks at the fund level are mitigated by the setting and review of the SIAB. At the asset class level asset risks are mitigated by risk controls within individual asset mandates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constraining how far Fund investments deviate from the SIAB by setting diversification guidelines and the SIAB strategic ranges;</li> <li>• Investing in a range of investment asset mandates, each of which has a defined objective, performance benchmark, eligibility criteria and permitted ranges for individual securities which, taken in aggregate, constrain risk within the Fund's expected parameters;</li> <li>• Investing across a range of liquid assets, including quoted equities and bonds. This recognises the Fund's need for some access to liquidity in the short term;</li> <li>• Robust financial planning and clear operating procedures for all significant activities including regular review and monitoring manager performance against their mandate and investment process;</li> <li>• Appointing several investment managers. In doing so the Fund has considered the risk of underperformance by any single investment manager</li> </ul>
<p>Responsible investment (RI) risks that are not given due consideration by the Fund or its investment managers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fund actively addresses environmental, social and governance risks through implementation of its Responsible Investment (RI) Framework and its Compliance with the UK Stewardship Code for Institutional Investors. Key elements include selection, stewardship and disclosure.</li> </ul>
<p>Climate change - The Fund adopts an evidence-based approach to climate change and believes there is overwhelming evidence to support that climate changes poses both risks and opportunities to the Fund's investments. The Fund will consider the impact of climate change in both its asset allocation and individual investments when making decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a separate climate change framework and strategy setting out its approach to this risk</li> <li>• Monitoring and measuring the impact of climate change risks</li> </ul>

Operational Risks	Management / Control
Investment pooling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected benefits and cost savings do not emerge over the long-term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment Pool Risk Register</li> <li>• Collaboration on product development – protocol in place</li> <li>• Monitoring and management of costs</li> </ul>
Transactional: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition risks – unexpected costs or losses arising from transition of assets</li> <li>• Custody – risk of losing economic rights to Fund assets when in custody or being traded</li> <li>• Credit or counterparty – potential default of counterparty</li> <li>• Financial recording of assets is inaccurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional advice from specialist transition managers, due diligence and oversight on transitions</li> <li>• Use of global custodian for directly held assets, contractual management and accounting records</li> <li>• Due diligence prior to appointment, review of credit ratings, internal controls reporting and compliance monitoring</li> <li>• Reconciliation of assets, internal and external audit</li> </ul>

## 6 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Committee has translated its objectives into a suitable strategic investment allocation benchmark (SIAB) and structure for the Fund (set out in Appendix B) taking into account both the liability structure and the Fund's objectives. The Fund benchmark is consistent with the Committee's views on the appropriate balance between generating a satisfactory long-term return on investments whilst taking account of market volatility and risk and the nature of the Fund's liabilities. The investment beliefs in Appendix C also help in formulating the investment strategy.

The Committee monitors investment strategy relative to the agreed asset allocation benchmark and strategic ranges.

The Fund will be diversified across multiple asset classes with different risk return expectations and correlations to deliver the targeted return of the Fund. Appendix B shows the Strategic Investment Allocation Benchmark (SIAB) and strategic ranges.

The Fund will use risk attribution provided by independent advisors to assess diversification benefits.

## 7 DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSETS

### Investment Management Structure

The Pensions Committee retains responsibility for the investment strategy of the Fund but has delegated oversight of its implementation to the Director of Pensions, advised by the Investment Advisory Panel.

The day-to-day management of the Fund's investments is led by the Assistant Directors, supported by an internal team, investment consultant and external managers including the pool company, LGPS Central Limited. Further details are set out in Appendix A.

The Internal Investment Committee (IIC) is responsible for the day-to-day management and oversight of the assets including implementation of the strategic asset allocation within the benchmark ranges set out in the SIAB. This is supported by the Investment Advisory Panel and advice from the appointed investment consultants.

### **External Investment Managers**

The Fund has appointed a number of external investment managers all of whom are authorised under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 to undertake investment business.

The investment managers are required to comply with LGPS investment regulations and operate within investment mandates set by the Fund. External managers are also expected to comply with the Fund's requirements on cost transparency.

### **Investment Pooling**

A significant amount of investment is implemented through LGPS Central Limited following the setting up of a local authority shareholder owned FCA-regulated company, alongside seven Partner Funds and launched in April 2018. This comprises a mix of directly managed sub-funds along with a number of advisory mandates which the Fund has in place to assist with the day-to-day management of the assets. Both the individual sub-funds and the advisory portfolios are set a clear investment mandate with an accompanied investment process.

Oversight of performance is the responsibility of the IIC.

### **Expected Return on the Investments**

Over the long-term, it is expected that the investment returns will be at least in line with the assumptions underlying the actuarial valuation (the discount rate). The individual mandates are expected to match or exceed the specific targets set for each portfolio over time.

### **Suitable Investments**

Subject to the LGPS regulations on allowable investments the fund may invest in a wide range of assets and strategies including quoted equity, government and non-government bonds, currencies, money markets, commodities, traded options, financial futures and derivatives, alternative strategies (including insurance linked securities and loans), private equity and debt markets, infrastructure and property. Investment may be made in-house, in segregated mandates, indirectly (via pooled funds or partnership agreements), in physical assets or using derivatives. The Fund will also use external managers to carry out stock lending ensuring suitable controls/risk parameters are put in place to prevent losses.

The Fund may make use of derivatives either directly or in pooled funds when investing in these products, for the purpose of efficient portfolio management or to hedge specific risks.

The Fund, after seeking appropriate investment advice, has agreed specific benchmarks with each manager so that, in aggregate, they are consistent with the overall asset allocation for the Fund. The Fund's investment managers will hold a mix of investments which reflects their views relative to their respective benchmarks. Within each major market and asset class, the managers will maintain diversified portfolios through direct investment or pooled vehicles and a mix of asset types across a range of geographies in order to provide diversification of returns.

### **Additional Assets**

Assets in respect of members' additional voluntary contributions are held separately from the main Fund assets. These assets are held with Utmost Life (from January 1st 2020) and the Prudential Assurance Company Limited. Members have the option to invest in with-profits funds, unit-linked funds and deposit funds.

The Fund monitors, from time to time, the suitability and performance of these vehicles.

### **Realisation of Investments**

The Fund's liquidity characteristics are monitored on a regular basis and the majority of the Fund's investments may be realised quickly, if required. The Fund will ensure that the liquidity of the investments is suitable to meet future cashflow requirements. In general, the Fund's investment managers have discretion in the timing of realisations of individual, underlying investments and in considerations relating to the liquidity of those investments. Private equity, infrastructure and a number of the Fund's alternative investments, may be difficult to realise quickly in certain circumstances.

### **Monitoring the Performance of Fund Investments**

The performance of all assets and investments is independently measured by an external provider. In addition, officers of the Fund meet or engage with all investment managers (both segregated and pooled) regularly to review their arrangements and the investment performance. The Pensions Committee meets regularly and reviews markets and Fund performance at least annually.

## **8 DAY-TO-DAY CUSTODY OF THE ASSETS**

The Fund invests a significant proportion of its assets in third party investments schemes, including through LGPSC Central. Separately, for certain directly invested assets the Fund has appointed a custodian with regard to the safekeeping of the assets in the Fund and other investment administrative requirements.

## **9 SECURITIES LENDING**

Securities lending is undertaken in respect of the Fund's quoted equities holdings through the custodian/asset servicer. There is a formal securities lending agreement and approved collateral management framework to control and mitigate risk. Securities lending may also take place in pooled investment vehicles held by the Fund including those developed with LGPS Central Limited.

## **10 INVESTMENT POOLING**

The Fund is part of the LGPS Central pool with the objective that the pooled investments can expect to benefit from lower investment costs and the opportunity to access alternative investments on a collective basis. As a local authority-owned and FCA-registered investment manager, the pool company, LGPS Central Limited is required to provide governance, transparency and reporting to give the Fund assurance that its investment instructions are being carried out appropriately. The Fund monitors the performance and management of its assets with LGPSC Ltd (either directly in sub-funds or through advisory and other forms of agreements) on a quarterly basis. It undertakes its oversight arrangements both collectively with other Partner Funds but also individually to assess whether the investments are meeting the Fund's longer-term strategic requirements.

The Fund intends to invest the majority of its assets through the LGPS Central Pool, transitioning over time and maintaining operational cash balances within the Fund. The Fund is likely to continue to hold a number of legacy assets and may hold assets outside the pool to meet specific strategic investment requirements not available through the pool or more effectively managed outside. These will continue to be managed by the Fund given liquidity and the potential for significant loss of value should these assets need to be redeemed to meet the requirement to transition assets.

Investment strategy is set by the Pension Committee who also continues to oversee implementation of the investment strategy with the assistance of Fund officers and independent advisors. This includes the transition of assets to the LGPS Central Pool and ongoing monitoring of those arrangements, through the pool's governance framework.

## 11 RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT

The Fund's approach to responsible investment is set out below and further detailed in its Responsible Investment Framework. The Fund believes that effective management of financially material responsible investment (RI) including climate change risks should support the Fund's requirement to protect returns over the long term. The Fund seeks to integrate responsible investment factors (adding corporate governance, environmental and social factors to the existing financial factors) into the investment process across all relevant asset classes. The Fund votes on all investments where possible and engages with companies when engagement will add value to the Fund.

The Fund is a signatory to the Stewardship Code (see [www.wmpfonline.com](http://www.wmpfonline.com)) and the Principles of Responsible Investment. The Fund works with like-minded investors to promote best practice in long-term stewardship of investments. The Fund will not seek to exclude investments that are not barred by UK law.

### **RI Beliefs and Guiding Principles**

The Fund's RI beliefs and guiding principles underpin its RI approach and are set out in detail in the Fund's Responsible Investment Framework.

### **RI Integration**

The Fund believes that effective management of financially material RI risks should support the Fund's requirement to protect and potentially enhance returns over the long term. Investment managers incorporate RI into their investment process. With regard to climate change risk, the Fund recognises that the scale of the potential impact is such that a proactive and precautionary approach is needed in order to address it setting out in more detail the Fund's approach to climate change within its separate Climate Change Framework and Strategy.

The Fund considers RI to be relevant to the performance of the entire Fund across all asset classes. RI investments will be considered where any non-financial benefit is aligned with a positive financial benefit.

There are some investment opportunities arising from environmental and social challenges which can be captured so long as they are aligned with the Fund's investment objectives and strategy.

The Fund recognises the need to operate at a market-wide level to promote improvements that will help it to deliver sustainable long-term growth.

### **Engagement Versus Exclusion**

Investee companies with robust governance structures should be better positioned to handle the effects of shocks and stresses of future events. There is risk but also opportunity in holding companies that have weak governance or financially material RI issues. Thus, the Fund prefers to adopt a policy of risk monitoring and engagement in order to positively influence company behaviour and enhance shareholder value, influence that would be lost through a divestment approach. The Fund extends this principle of 'engagement for positive change' to the due diligence, appointment and monitoring of external fund managers who are at an early stage of developing their RI approach.

The Fund believes that it will improve its effectiveness by acting collectively with other like-minded investors because it increases the likelihood that it will be heard by the company, fund manager or other relevant stakeholder compared with acting alone. The Fund will continue to monitor the success of both its individual but also collective engagement with companies.

### **Voting**

Where practical, the Fund aims to vote in every single market in which it invests in alignment with corporate governance best practice guidelines. In the interests of sending a consistent signal to investee companies, the Fund has decided to use a third-party provider for analysis of governance issues and executing its proxy voting rights across all markets in which it invests. At the present time, the Fund believes that the advantage of a consistent signal outweighs the inherent disadvantages to disconnecting the voting function from the investment and engagement decisions of external fund managers.

## **12 CLIMATE CHANGE**

The Fund takes an evidenced based approach to the risks around climate change and acknowledges the potential financial risks that climate change pose to the Fund's investments. The Fund has developed and published a separate Climate Change Framework and Strategy, setting out how it intends to manage both the risks and opportunities of climate change and how it intends to integrate climate change into its broader strategy and asset management. The Fund has set targets and will monitor and manage delivery of those targets and report back to Pensions Committee on progress. The Climate Change Framework and Strategy is subject to annual review by the Committee.

## **13 COMPLIANCE WITH THIS STATEMENT**

The Fund will monitor compliance with this statement. In particular, it will ensure its investment decisions are exercised with a view to giving effect to the principles contained in the statement, so far as is reasonably practicable.

## **14 COMPLIANCE WITH MYNERS**

Following from the Myners' report of 2000 into institutional investment in the UK, the Government, after consultation, indicated it would take forward all of the report recommendations identifying investment principles to apply to pension schemes.

These principles cover the arrangements for effective investment management decision-making, setting and monitoring clear investment objectives, focus on asset allocation, arrangements to receive appropriate expert advice, explicit manager mandates, shareholder activism, use of appropriate investment benchmarks, measurement of performance, transparency in investment management arrangements and regular reporting.

The Myners' principles have since been updated, and the Fund continues to support and comply with them. Full details of compliance are set out in the Fund's Compliance with Myners' Statement which can be found on the Fund's website.

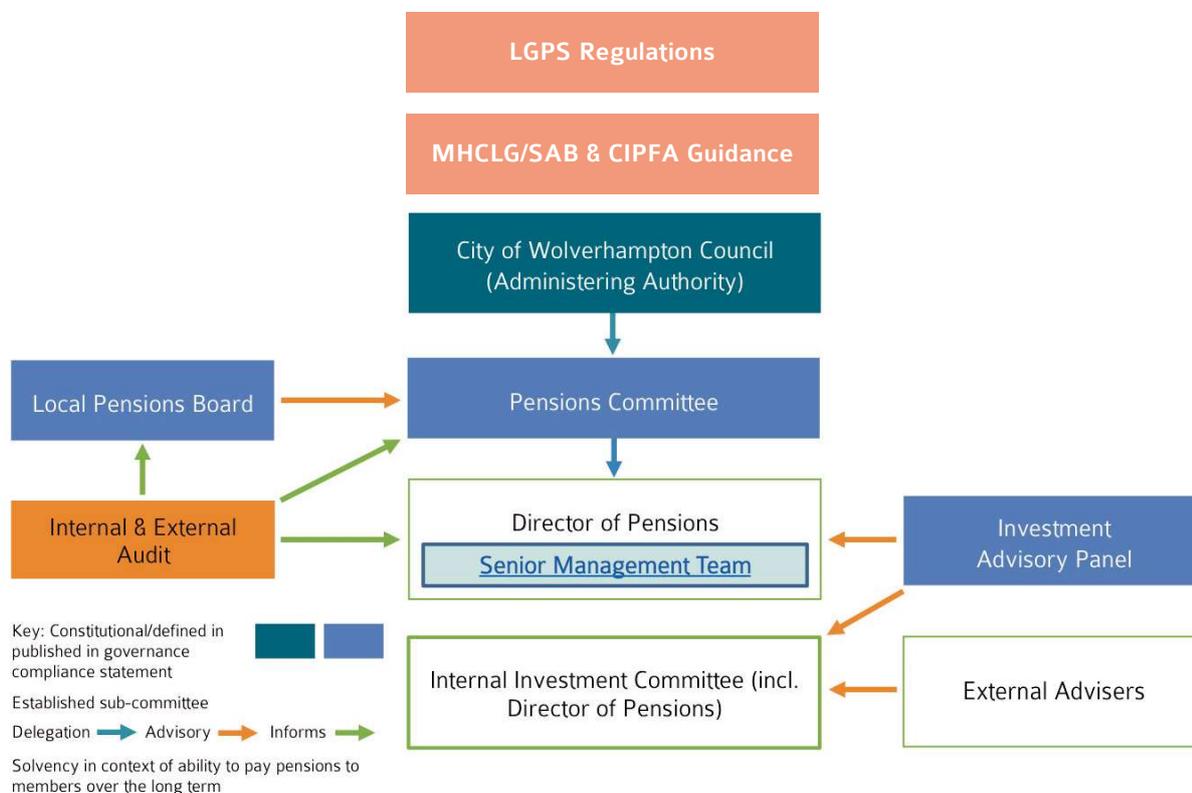
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- **Appendix B** – WMPF Main Fund Strategic Investment Allocation Benchmark (SIAB) and Ranges
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- **Appendix D** – WMPF Separate Admission Fund NX Strategic Asset Allocation
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## APPENDIX A: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The regulatory and governance framework in place to manage investment strategy includes:



The roles and responsibilities of the different bodies in the governance structure are outlined below:

<b>Pensions Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effect decisions on the management and administration of the Fund including investment decisions, annual approval of the Investment Strategy Statement</li> </ul>
<b>Local Pensions Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the process of effective decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>Director of Pensions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delegation for day to day management of Pension Fund including investments and implementation of investment strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Investment Advisory Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports the Director of Pensions and Internal Investment Committee with strategic advice, challenge, market commentary and oversight of portfolio management</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Investment Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Day-to-day asset allocation and investment strategy decision-making and implementation of investment strategy, together with oversight and monitoring of investment management arrangements</li> </ul>
<b>Investment Advisors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of advice on markets, investment strategy, risk management and individual investment ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Internal &amp; External Audit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review process, decisions and implementation and to provide assurance to those charged with governance of the Pension Fund</li> </ul>

The roles of the members and the Committee are as follows:

To exercise all those functions of City of Wolverhampton Council which are required to be performed by its role as Administering Authority for the Local Government Pension Scheme under the Public Services Pensions Act 2013 (and any associated legislation) adhering to the principles required by Statutory Guidance and the Code of Practise issued by The Pensions Regulator.

The key duties in discharging this role are:

- 1 To act as Pension Scheme Manager for the administering authority in the management and administration of the local government pension scheme for the West Midlands.
- 2 To be responsible for compliance with legislation and best practice
- 3 To undertake training as outlined in the Fund's Pensions Committee and Pensions Board Training Policy.
- 4 To review and agree the Investment Strategy Statement, Responsible Investment Statement and Funding Strategy Statement for the Fund.
- 5 To monitor funding and investment activity and the performance of the Fund's investments;
- 6 To produce and maintain an Administering Authority Statement, Pension Administration Strategy, Governance Compliance Statement, Communications Statements and publish a Pension Fund Annual Report;
- 7 To determine employer admission policy and agreements;
- 8 To appoint and monitor an investment pool operator to manage the assets of the Fund;
- 9 To appoint Committee advisors;
- 10 To determine detailed management budgets; and the Fund's Service Plan
- 11 To administer all aspects of the West Midlands Pension Fund on behalf of City of Wolverhampton Council.

Further information about the role of the Pensions Committee is available in the Pensions Committee Terms of Reference which can be found in the City of Wolverhampton Council Constitution.

The Director of Pensions oversees the implementation of Fund policy and the management of the day-to-day operational functions through the Fund's service areas. The Committee are advised and supported by the Chief Executive, Director of Pensions, Assistant Director, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, Heads of Service and Senior Finance and Legal Officers from the City of Wolverhampton Council.

**Local Pensions Board**

The role of the Local Pensions Board is to assist in the good governance of the scheme through the monitoring of Fund performance and adherence to statutory duties.

The Board consists of six employer and six member representatives consisting of five employer and five member representatives together with two City of Wolverhampton councillors, each sitting one as an employer representative and one as a member representative.

The Pensions Board is not a decision-making body, nor does it hold a scrutiny function; its role is to assist in the compliance with statutory duties.

**Investment Advisory Panel**

The Investment Advisory Panel advises the Director of Pensions on investment issues relating to the Fund.

**The Investment Manager**

Appointed Investment Managers carry out the investments for the Fund. Investment managers encompass both LGPS Central Limited and external providers with investment activity governed by investment management agreements (external providers) and the terms of the LGPS Central Limited Authorised Contractual Scheme and other legal entities (eg, limited partnerships).

The Fund also maintains a number of investment advisory agreements with LGPS Central Limited which are subject to review on an ongoing basis.

## APPENDIX B: WMPF MAIN FUND STRATEGIC INVESTMENT ALLOCATION BENCHMARK AND RANGES

Medium-term asset allocation March 2021			
	Target %	Total %	Range %
<b>Growth</b>		<b>50.00</b>	<b>40-60</b>
<b>Liquid growth</b>		<b>42.0</b>	
Developed market equities	30.0		
Emerging market equities	12.0		
<b>Illiquid growth</b>		<b>8.0</b>	
Private equity	6.0		
Special opportunities	2.0		
<b>Income</b>		<b>38.00</b>	<b>30-50</b>
<b>Liquid income</b>		<b>14.0</b>	
Multi-asset credit	5.5		
Corporate bonds	4.0		
Emerging market debt	4.5		
<b>Illiquid income</b>		<b>24.0</b>	
Infrastructure	9.0		
Property	9.0		
Diversified private credit	6.0		
<b>Stabilising and low risk</b>		<b>12.0</b>	<b>5-20</b>
<b>Stabilising</b>		<b>7.0</b>	
Government bonds	2.0		
Index-linked bonds	3.0		
Cash	2.0		
<b>Stabilising low risk</b>		<b>5.0</b>	
Index-linked bonds	1.0		
Corporate bonds	2.0		
Multi-asset credit	1.0		
Private credit (lower risk)	1.0		
<b>Total</b>		<b>100.0</b>	

## APPENDIX C: STATEMENT OF INVESTMENT BELIEFS

The Fund's investment beliefs outline key aspects of how it sets and manages the Fund's exposures to investment risk. They are as follows:

### Headline beliefs

**Objectives beliefs** – As a pension fund the primary objective is to ensure that the Fund is able to meet the pension promises (liabilities) made to scheme members as they fall due. The Fund has a range of other objectives which include considering the needs of all key stakeholders which are supplementary to the primary objective

**Financial market beliefs** – The Fund takes a long-term approach to investing as its liabilities stretch into the future.

The Fund has a proactive approach to the management of assets taking into account the risk/return profile of different investment opportunities over a range of time periods.

**Governance beliefs** – The Fund believes having effective governance structures and policies will enable rigorous and tested decision making and will add value to the Fund over the longer term. Transparency and cost effectiveness provide key tenets of being a well-governed Fund.

**Investment strategy** – The Fund's investment strategy will encompass its approach to risk management, risk tolerance, liquidity and levels of return required to meet its strategic objectives. The Fund will set its strategic asset allocation to deliver the long-term returns required to meet its funding needs taking into account diversification, the requirement to remain agile, risk and cost of implementation, recognising that risk should be viewed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

**Responsible investment** – As long-term owners of capital (assets), the Fund believes that investing responsibly is key to ensuring the long-term value of the assets in which it invests is protected and where possible, enhanced. Investing responsibly and engaging as long-term owners reduces risk over time and has been proven to positively impact investment returns. The Fund is integrating responsible investment into the way it selects and stewards all assets.

**Climate change** – The Fund adopts an evidence-based approach to climate change and believes there is overwhelming evidence to support that climate changes poses both risks and opportunities to the Fund's investments. The Fund will consider the impact of climate change in both its asset allocation and individual investments when making decisions.

### Objectives

**Headline objectives** – As a pension fund the ultimate objective is to ensure that the Fund is able to meet the pension promises (liabilities) made to scheme members as they fall due. The Fund has a range of other objectives which include considering the needs of all key stakeholders which are supplementary to the primary objective.

- Setting clear and well-defined objectives are essential to reflect the Fund's long-term direction of travel
- Use of an integrated risk management framework including interlinking with both employer covenant monitoring and funding work to assist in delivering the sustainability of the Fund

- To meet the changing needs of the Fund's scheme membership and employer base, noting in particular the growing number of both members and employer but also changing workforce patterns and nature of employment and employers in the Fund.
- The Fund's asset allocation will reflect a risk-based assessment of its ability to meet its long-term pension liabilities taking into account funding levels, cash flow and balancing risks to long term sustainability of contributions

### Financial market beliefs

**Headline financial market beliefs** – The Fund takes a long-term approach to investing as its liabilities stretch into the future and in so doing seeks to take a proactive approach to the management of assets taking into account the risk / return profile of different investment opportunities over a range of time periods

- There exists a relationship between the level of investment risk taken and the rate of expected investment return. The Fund monitors the long-term returns (10 years plus) of asset classes and their level of risk through assessing the level of volatility over time
- Markets are dynamic and asset values can become distorted over time providing opportunities for the Fund to benefit from the mispricing of assets
- There are opportunities for the Fund to access a level of illiquidity premium by its ability to invest longer term in illiquid assets where there is evidence that it is beneficial to do so
- Diversification is a key risk management tool for the long-term investment of Pension Fund assets
- Investing for the long-term can enable the Fund to use short term volatility to acquire investments when attractively priced
- The Fund does not need to own an asset class/investment strategy where it is not expected to help in delivering the required risk-adjusted return.
- The Fund recognises that currency management including the use of currency hedging is another risk management tool
- The Fund believes that the use of derivatives e.g. market futures and currency forwards can enable the Fund to implement its investment strategies and make asset allocation changes in a cost effective and efficient way.

### Governance and organisational beliefs

**Headline Governance and Organisational Beliefs** – The Fund believes having effective governance structures and policies will enable rigorous and tested decision making and will add value to the Fund over the longer term. Transparency and cost effectiveness provide key tenets of being a well-governed Fund.

- Effective governance and clear decision-making structures promote clear accountability, audit and transparency in decision making leading to appropriate levels of challenge and improved investment outcomes
- Internal investment management can lead to lower costs, improved transparency and greater responsiveness in meeting the Fund's broader strategic objectives including those aligned with responsible investment.

- The Fund will assess and select the most appropriate benchmarks or absolute return targets for individual asset classes and will use a customised benchmark for the Fund as a whole
- The Fund will assess its performance against its customised benchmark and will assess its longer performance against relevant peer groups both national and international comparatives to assess the value add that the Fund is delivering
- The Fund will assess a range of implementation routes to accessing asset classes and individual investment opportunities, this will include the use of the investment pool company
- Investment costs are a certain cost versus investment performance which provides for an uncertain outcome and the Fund believes that investment costs should be fully transparent and assessed as part of any investment decision.
- Effective cost management will enhance investment returns. Cost should be transparent and assessed within decision making and monitored to ensure investments continue to offer VFM
- Investment costs are an important determinant in assessing investments, but net of fees performance is a more important factor in delivering investment performance
- Effective manager monitoring, and oversight is critical for risk management and enhancing outcomes
- Effective implementation and structuring of investment portfolios should enhance the long-term returns to the Fund

## Investment Strategy Beliefs

**Headline strategy beliefs** – The Fund’s investment strategy will encompass its approach to risk management, risk tolerance, liquidity and levels of return required to meet its strategic objectives. The Fund will set its strategic asset allocation to deliver the long-term returns required to meet its funding needs taking into account diversification, the need for flexibility, risk and cost of implementation.

- Taking a long-term perspective on investment strategy will deliver better outcomes for the Fund
- SAA is a key determinant of risk and return and the Fund believes that this will add greater value than individual manager or stock selection over time
- SAA targets needs to encompass flexibility to be able to take account of market volatility and enable the Fund to manage cashflows
- Alternative asset classes add further diversity to the portfolio and improve its risk-return characteristics
- Active management can add value over time, but it is not guaranteed and can be hard and more expensive to access. Where actives strategies are not considered to add value, a passive approach will be selected
- Managing fees and costs matter especially in low-return environments. Fee arrangements with our Fund managers – as well as the remuneration policies of investee companies – should be aligned with the Fund’s long-term interests

- Strategic asset allocation is the most important driver of the Fund's investment outcome. The asset allocation process balances diversified risks against the expected additional returns for these risks. The main sources of return for the Fund for bearing risk ('risk premia') are equity, credit, and illiquidity.
- Diversification through effective portfolio construction is a key technique available to investors for spreading risk across a range of factors and improving risk-adjusted returns

### Responsible investment beliefs

**Headline responsible investment beliefs** – As long-term owners of capital, the Fund believes that investing responsibly is key to ensuring the long-term value of the assets in which it invests. Investing responsibly and engaging as long-term owners reduces risk over time and positively impacts investment returns. The Fund will integrate responsible investment into the way it manages all assets.

- Effective management of financially material ESG risks including climate change risks should support the Fund's requirement to protect and optimise returns over the long term
- Investee companies with robust governance structures should be better positioned to handle the effects of shocks and stresses of future events
- There are some investment opportunities arising from environmental and social challenges which can be captured so long as they are aligned with the Fund's investment objectives and strategy.
- Responsible Investment should be integrated into the investment process
- The Fund will manage responsible investment factors through engagement rather than exclusions.
- The Fund may take into account non-financial factors when making investment decisions, provided that it is able to demonstrate no significant financial detriment from doing so
- The Fund believes working collaboratively with other investors will deliver improvements to the way in which companies are managed and the provides the opportunity to influence wider policy which could impact on the long term returns to the Fund

### Climate change beliefs

**Headline climate change beliefs** – The Fund adopts an evidence-based approach to climate change and believes there is overwhelming evidence to support that climate changes poses both risks and opportunities to the Fund's investments. The Fund will consider the impact of climate change in both its asset allocation and individual investments when making decisions.

- The Fund believes there is overwhelming evidence to support the fact that climate change is impacting on the environment and that this will have longer term consequences for the Fund's financial returns if not managed.
- Climate change has the potential to impact the funding level of the pension fund through impacts on employer covenant, asset pricing, and longer-term inflation, interest rates and life expectancy

- We believe that a transition to a low carbon economy is essential and that carefully designed and targeted government and company policies can ensure a just transition for workers and communities, with substantial economic and social benefits. In addition, public finance will be important as a cross cutting mechanism to invest in human capital and inclusive growth
- The Fund will collaborate with other investors to campaign for positive changes to policy both nationally and at a company level to bring about change aligned to the Paris accord of 1.5 to 2.0 degrees scenarios
- The Fund will adopt a focused climate change policy which will be monitored and measured to ensure that the Fund is delivering against policy targets set within its climate change policy
- In order to assess progress for the Fund towards a lower carbon economy it is essential for the Fund to measure its climate risk exposure at regular intervals

## APPENDIX D: WMPF SEPARATE FUND WMTL STRATEGIC INVESTMENT ALLOCATION BENCHMARK AND RANGES

WMTL medium term asset allocation March 2021		
	Target %	Range %
Return seeking (equities)	16.0	14-18
Alternative credit	48.0	42-54
Stabilising gilts & bonds (including LDI)	36.0	32-40
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The above excludes the value of the buy-in policy held to support meet a portion of the pensioner liabilities.

WMTL target hedge ratios	
Interest rates	60%
Inflation	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## APPENDIX E: WMPF SEPARATE FUND PBL STRATEGIC INVESTMENT ALLOCATION BENCHMARK AND RANGES

PBL medium term asset allocation March 2021		
	Target %	Range %
Return seeking (equities )	15.0	10-20
Alternative credit	26.0	20-35
Stabilising gilts & bonds (including LDI)	58.5	50-70
Cash	0.5	0-2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

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