

Pensions Committee

22 March 2023

Report title	Budget Monitoring and Quarterly Accounts to 31 December 2022	
Originating service	Pension Services	
Accountable employee	Christopher Manning Email	Head of Finance christopher.manning@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Rachel Brothwood Email	Executive Director of Pensions rachel.brothwood@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Recommendations for action:

The Pensions Committee is asked to note:

1. The value of the net assets of the West Midlands Pension Fund at the end of quarter ended 31 December 2022 was £19.3 billion (£19.1 billion net investment assets).
2. As at the 31 December 2022, West Midlands Pension Fund forecasts an underspend of £5.4m at year end attributable to £4.5m forecast underspend on investment management expenses and £0.9m forecast underspend on operational costs, primarily related to lower employee costs.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Pensions Committee on the year end forecast at the end of the quarter (nine months) ended 31 December 2022 and to provide an update on the value of the net assets of the West Midlands Pension Fund at the end of the same quarter.
- 1.2 The operating budget for the year to 31 March 2023 was approved by Committee on 30 March 2022.

2.0 Forecast Out-Turn Against Operating Budget 2022/23

- 2.1 The following table sets out the year end forecast as at the end of the third quarter, 31 December 2022, compared with the Fund's full year operating budget:

	Actual 2021/22	Budget 2022/23	Forecast 2022/23	Variance Out-Turn
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Employees	7,859	10,426	9,398	(1,028)
Premises	474	698	842	144
Transport	2	25	22	(3)
Other Supplies and Services	366	411	425	14
Service Development	423	1,412	1,379	(33)
Professional Fees	1,170	1,764	1,772	8
Communications and Computing	561	780	830	50
Support Services	697	773	685	(88)
Miscellaneous Income	(557)	(600)	(616)	(16)
Net Expenditure	10,995	15,689	14,737	(952)
External Investment Management Costs	102,402	95,397	90,672	(4,725)
LGPS Central Charges	4,356	4,768	5,023	255
Total External Investment Costs	106,758	100,165	95,695	(4,470)
Total	117,753	115,854	110,432	(5,422)

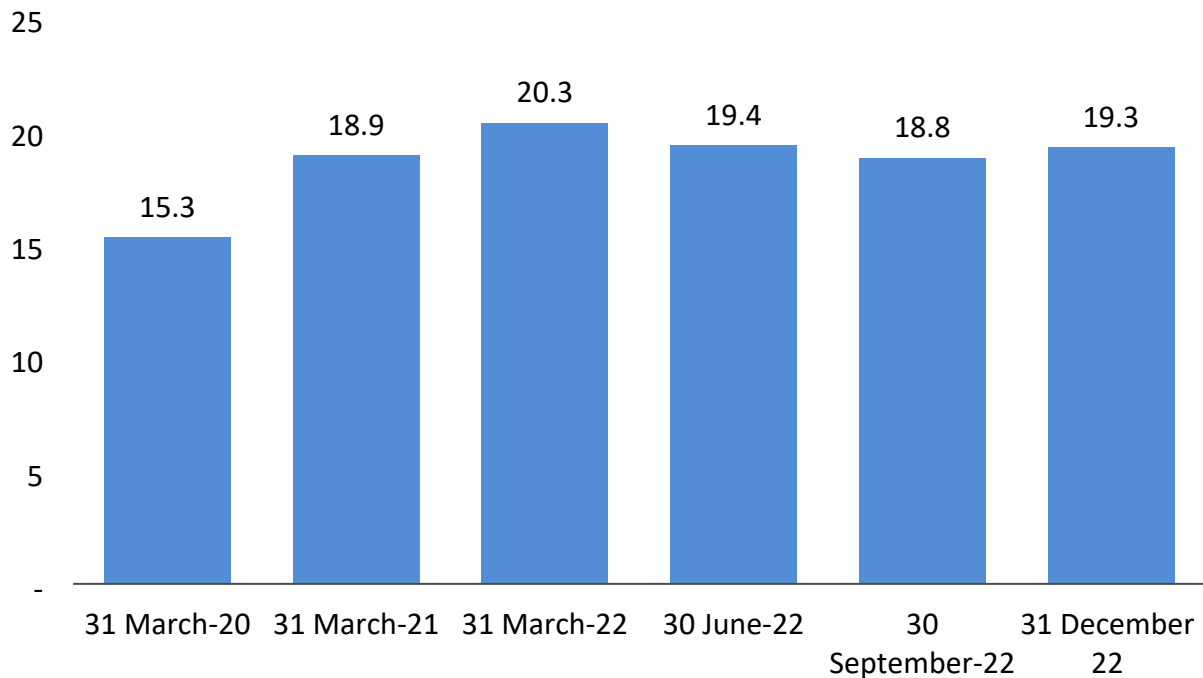
- 2.2 Forecasts have been made using a combination of reviewing spend to date and taking into account plans for the remainder of the financial year. At this stage, it is anticipated there will be an underspend on employees (£1,028,000) as the recruitment to the new positions are ongoing but taking longer than usual due to low level of unemployment across the country and the specialist nature of many of the roles within the Fund. These external factors are affecting the Fund's ability to recruit as part of the normal turnover of employees, creating further in year vacancies, which are also contributing to the underspend.

- 2.3 The overall underspend is partially offset by increases in premises costs. These relate to some uncertainty over the costs of the new premises at the time of setting the budget, alongside the increased utility costs in line with general trend for all organisations in year. There is also a provision within the forecast for final costs relating to the relocation of the Fund operations. The premises forecast is presented as a worst-case value at this time and improvements are anticipated by the end of the year.
- 2.4 The forecast for investment management expenses is anticipated to be an underspend of £4.4m. Investment management costs are heavily influenced by market movements and investment performance and are therefore expected to fluctuate during the year. The Fund continues to take a transparent approach to reporting investment management costs, including recognition of previously 'hidden' charges and recording of transaction costs associated with turnover within individual portfolios but now captured in the cost transparency initiatives and being reviewed through an external benchmarking company, with results appointed to Committee each year. Costs are analysed in depth on an annual basis with in-year forecasts being revised in light of the changes in value, and nature of Assets under Management and new information as it is received.
- 2.5 Following each year end, the Fund obtains, scrutinises and reconciles cost transparency reports from managers as part of its annual Statement of Accounts preparation and audit processes to be able to present the final position to Committee more accurately in its Out-Turn 2022/23 reporting. This information will in turn be used to refine the forecasting mechanisms during the 2023/24 year.
- 2.6 Investment costs remain a key consideration throughout the Fund's investment decision making and the Fund continues to review and seek opportunities for cost reduction where these can be achieved on implementation without impacting risk or expected return.

3.0 Net Assets – West Midlands Pension Fund

- 3.1 The chart below provides a summary of the Net Assets Statement.
- 3.2 The Net Assets Statement estimates a value of £19.3 billion for the Fund at 31 December 2022 (£20.3 billion at 31 March 2022). This represents a 4.9% decrease since 31 March 2022 and is largely attributable to the falls in global equity and bonds markets during the same period, with some recovery over the most recent quarter.

West Midlands Pension Fund - Total Fund Value



4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The financial implications are discussed in the body of the report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 This report contains no direct legal implications for the authority.

6.0 Equalities Implications

6.1 This report has no equalities implications.

7.0 Other Implications

7.1 There are no other implications.

8.0 Schedule of Background Papers

8.1 [Budget 2022/23 and Financial Plan to 2026/27, Report to Pensions Committee, 30 March 2022](#)

9.0 Schedule of Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – West Midlands Pension Fund Quarterly Accounts 31 December 2022