

## GREATER MANCHESTER PENSION FUND - LOCAL PENSIONS BOARD

**Day:** Thursday  
**Date:** 1 October 2020  
**Time:** 3.00 pm  
**Place:** ZOOM

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No						
1	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> To receive an apologies for absence.							
2	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest.							
3	<b>MINUTES</b> To receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Pensions Board held on 30 July 2020.	1 - 12						
4	<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 - EXEMPT ITEMS</b> The Proper Officer is of the opinion that during the consideration of the items set out below, the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public and therefore the reports are excluded in accordance with the provisions of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.							
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Item</th><th>Paragraphs</th><th>Justification</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>6,7,8,9,10,11, 12</td><td>3&amp;10,</td><td>Disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the Fund and/or its agents which could in turn affect the interests of the beneficiaries and/or tax payers.</td></tr> </tbody> </table>			Item	Paragraphs	Justification	6,7,8,9,10,11, 12	3&10,	Disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the Fund and/or its agents which could in turn affect the interests of the beneficiaries and/or tax payers.
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5	<b>GMPF STATEMENTS OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020</b> To consider a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions (Local Investments and Property).	13 - 14						
6	<b>ADMINISTRATION UPDATE</b> To consider a report of the Driector of Pensions / Assistant Director for Pensions (Administration).	15 - 22						

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From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Louis Garrick, Senior Demcratic Services Officer, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>EXIT PAYMENT CAP</b>  To consider a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions (Funding and Business Development).	23 - 38
<b>8</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF GMPF DECISION MAKING</b>  To consider a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions (Funding and Business Development)	39 - 44
<b>9</b>	<b>BUSINESS PLANNING AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>  To consider a report of the Director of Pensions.	45 - 90
<b>10</b>	<b>THE PENSIONS REGULATOR</b>  To consider a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions (Funding and Business Development) / Assistant Director for Pensions (Administration).	91 - 114
<b>11</b>	<b>NEW REGULATIONS ON EMPLOYER FLEXIBILITIES</b>  To consider a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director for Pensions (Funding and Business Development).	115 - 120
<b>12</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT SERVICES APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2020</b>  To consider a report of the Head of Risk Management and Audit Services.	121 - 126
<b>13</b>	<b>POOLING UPDATE</b>  To consider a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions (Funding & Business Development).	127 - 146

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From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Louis Garrick, Senior Democratic Services Officer, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

## GREATER MANCHESTER PENSION FUND - LOCAL PENSIONS BOARD

30 July 2020

Commenced: 15:00

Terminated: 16:50

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Councillor Fairfoull</b>	<b>Employer Representatives</b>
	<b>Jayne Hammond</b>	<b>Employer Representatives</b>
	<b>Paul Taylor</b>	<b>Employer Representatives</b>
	<b>Michael Cullen</b>	<b>Employer Representatives</b>
	<b>David Schofield</b>	<b>Employee Representatives</b>
	<b>Chris Goodwin</b>	<b>Employee Representatives</b>
	<b>Pat Catterall</b>	<b>Employee Representatives</b>
	<b>Catherine Lloyd</b>	<b>Employee Representatives</b>

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors Cooper, Mark Rayner

### 1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Local Pensions Board on the 9 January 2020 were approved as a correct record.

### 3 GMPF STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director for Local Investments and Property, which outlined the governance procedures for approval of GMPF Annual report and accounts due to the Covid 19 crisis. Further, the report detailed operational challenges and there had been concerns over the valuations of illiquid investments caused by acute public market volatility at the year-end date. In addition, the report outlined the draft accounts.

The key decision making body for the Council was the Audit Panel which received accounting policy reports and the report of the external auditor following the audit of the accounts, for both GMPF and the Council. The Council retained overall responsibility for the accounts of both, and the follow-up on the audit reports received for both, but in practice delegated the responsibility for GMPF to GMPF.

The Audit Strategy Memorandum, and Annual Report were appended to the report.

The Assistant Director for Local Investments and Property outlined the key financial movements during the financial year to 31 March 2020 taken from the accounts.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### 4 BUSINESS PLANNING AND RISK MANAGEMENT IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions, which provided an update on business continuity and overarching approach, effects on each area of GMPF's operation and the risk log for this event and the impact on the assessment of risks in the GMPF risk register.

It was explained that the operating arrangements of GMPF had changed significantly in response to the Coronavirus outbreak in order to ensure business continuity. GMPF's Senior Management Team met daily initially by conference call to ensure all necessary tasks were undertaken and risks were being actively managed and monitored. This reduced to thrice weekly and had recently reduced to weekly reflecting business continuity needs.

It was stated that the situation regarding home working was that over 95% of GMPF officers were working from home. The remaining 5% were working from home on some days and from the office on others.

The Senior Management Team had been actively monitoring communications issued by pension industry partners and linked organisations. There had been initiatives across industry partners to provide support and advice, and officers were regularly attending webinars and online meetings to ensure they kept up to date with the latest news and thinking as the situation changes.

Risks were continuing to be regularly and closely monitored. Although the initial peak of the pandemic in the UK had passed, officers were mindful that there was still the risk of a second wave and things were far from returning to the new normal. Therefore, the approach to risk remained broadly the same as it was in April 2020, with new risks or potential risks being considered regularly.

Members were advised as to the effects on each area of GMPF's operations.

With regards to the Administration service, the day to day running of the section and the completion of tasks remained unchanged. Most activities were being carried out as normal and completed within the usual timescales.

It was reported that so far, impacts of the pandemic could be seen in two areas. The number of death notifications received in April 2020 was around double the number normally received in April. However, the total number was not significantly more than was normally received in the month of January. So, the impact had been manageable and turnaround times had not been particularly affected. The second area where there had been an impact is Customer Services, where there had been challenges in dealing with the number of general calls and emails received from members.

Two other areas that had been closely monitored were the number of members choosing to opt out of the Scheme and the number of transfer information requests.

Although not yet apparent from the statistics, anecdotal evidence suggested that there would be an increase in members with benefits on hold electing to take those benefits earlier than planned, in order to supplement their incomes. Therefore, this area would be monitored closely.

There were two key changes to normal procedures to note. Work to move procedures online had progressed and now all new joiners and all leavers with deferred benefits received documents through their My Pension online account. Work had now started on transitioning the next procedures to be moved fully online. Online presentations were also now being offered in place of face-to-face roadshows and are proving very popular. There had been an increase in the number of members registered for My Pension. An additional 24,567 members had registered since January 2020, bringing the total number of members registered to 128,945.

The section's ability to continue to provide the same level of service going forward remained dependent on several key factors. With so many colleagues working from home, IT infrastructure needed to be maintained. There was a dependency on colleagues adhering to the social distancing and self-isolation guidance in order to maintain high attendance levels.

There was also an increased risk of a cyber-security breach, and so colleagues would need to remain vigilant and aware of this risk. A flexible approach to working hours continued to be adopted to support those with childcare and similar responsibilities.

The possibility of a second wave of infection remained a key risk. The government's advice continued to be for people to work from home where they can, and so the risks linked to this also remained. Specific areas of risk being actively managed included:

- Staff resilience,
- Workloads,
- Communication with members and liaison with employers,
- Third party suppliers and partners
- Strategic and business planning objectives

Whilst many GMPF employers were likely being severely impacted by the ongoing economic restrictions, as yet there were no confirmed employer insolvencies. However, it remained likely that some GMPF employers would face insolvency over the next few months. The Board were advised that accordingly a more in-depth review of the covenant of GMPF's higher education employers had been carried out.

GMPF issued a survey to employers to try and assess the usage of the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. The survey received 119 responses and the key findings were discussed.

With regards to operations in Investments, Members received provisional valuation data for periods to 31 May 2020 and actual performance data for the quarter to 31 March 2020.

It was explained that from a risk management perspective that a significant update was provided to Panel since the position set out at the April 2020 meeting of the Management Panel related to cashflow. The Main Fund had a 3.2% strategic allocation to cash.

Several Local Authority employers within GMPF had made advanced payments of some or all of their employer contributions. This had resulted in GMPF having £990m in cash as at 31 May 2020.

At the 17 April 2020 Panel meeting, officers provided an estimate of the total net cash needed over the following 6 months from 31 March 2020

The availability of actual cashflow data had allowed for experience to 31 May 2020 to be analysed. Although covering only a short period, Officers had compared actual cashflow versus that estimated. The April forecast of cashflow was broadly correct. Contributions received and outflows for payroll were in line with projections at around £55m and £75m per month respectively. The main variances to the forecast result from the receipt of an additional £27m from advanced payment of employer contributions and a lower cash outflow than assumed from private market investments of £35m.

As a result of the experience across April and May, and the ongoing heightened uncertainty, Officers did not propose any revisions to the previously provided estimate nor the proposed course of action, no action was proposed in terms of raising additional cash or investing surplus cash and the tactical overweight to internal cash will be retained.

For direct property, rental collections had been severely impacted by both the underlying economic effects of the crisis and government advice effectively suspending recovery action on rents for the current quarter. The effect was that rental payments for the main portfolio were lower compared to the corresponding period last year. In terms of impact on specific sectors of the property market, offices were likely to be impaired going forward whilst logistics could benefit.

For GMPF development properties, construction recommenced during May. Developers were working through revised plans to take into account any increased costs, delays and impact on ultimate values.

GMPF had an emphasis on the debt part of capital structure, which would in some part mitigate the risk, as would the relationship with the GMCA housing fund which was the senior lender in several of the equity exposures.

GMPF's direct infrastructure vehicle, GLIL, was working on specific asset management issues. None of GLIL's operational assets face material risks as a result of COVID-19. Four of GLIL's assets are under various stages of construction and the smallest, a rail deal, was facing significant delays and additional risk arising from COVID 19, albeit it was believed these risks could be managed to a successful conclusion.

GMPF's Impact portfolio would have similar issues as the main private equity portfolio with an emphasis on exposure to SME lending and equity. Officers continued to work with fund managers to resolve these issues as they arise.

It was reported that the key priorities for Accountancy in the short term had been to support the Administration and Investment functions to ensure payments to pensioners and other creditors and collection of all income. This had been done whilst ensuring security of bank accounts and integrity of records.

Both GMPF and many of its employers had 31 March year end dates. The statutory deadlines for accounts had been changed to 30 August for publishing of draft accounts and 30 November for audit of accounts. Despite early musings by CIPFA there will be no simplification of reporting requirements for local authority accounts for this financial year.

It was stated that for legal services, the key focus had been to maintain the ability to give advice and execute any required amendments to contracts arising from the crisis. This had been done successfully. The changes made in recent years to reduce reliance on hard copies of documents as helped enormously in the transition the section has made to working remotely.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Local Pensions Board note the report.**

### **5 SUMMARY OF GMPF DECISION MAKING**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions for Funding and Business Development, which summarised the recommendations made by the GMPF Working Groups over the period from December 2019 to July 2020, which were approved at the Management Panel meetings on 17 April and 17 July 2020. It also summarised the decisions made by the Management Panel at the 17 April and 17 July meetings.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### **6 NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions and Assistant Director for Funding and Business Development, which summarised the findings of the National Knowledge Assessment for GMPF.

It was reported that the National Knowledge Assessment (NKA) opened to responses on the 17 March and closed on the 31 May 2020.

Members of the Management Panel and Local Pensions Board were invited to complete an online knowledge assessment. 18 LGPS Funds participated in the NKA. The GMPF had the highest level of participation and achieved the highest average score out of all participating funds.

Overall Panel and Board members achieved similar average scores per participant in the NKA, but with some variation in areas of knowledge. Management Panel members scored more highly in Procurement and Relationship Management. On the other hand, Local Board members scored higher on Pensions Accounting and Audit Standards.

Management Panel and Local Board scored equally high scores in 'Committee Role and Pensions Legislation', 'Actuarial Methods, Standards and Practices', and 'Financial Markets and Product Knowledge'.

Based on the analysis provided the suggested areas for further development for Management Panel members were 'Procurement' and 'Pensions Accounting'. Whereas the results showed that Local Board may wish to provide further development opportunities in relation to 'Procurement' and 'Pensions Administration'.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Board note the results of the National Knowledge Assessment, GMPF's performance compared to other LGPS funds and further development areas highlighted in the appendix to the report.**

### **7 THE PENSIONS REGULATOR (TPR)**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director for Funding and Business Development / Assistant Director for Pensions Administration, which provided a summary of the current breaches log and decisions made by the Scheme Manager regarding the reporting of these breaches, including details of any late payment of contributions. Further the report provided an update on GMPF's correspondence with TPR and summarised relevant announcements from TPR.

Members received a copy of the current breaches log and the criteria that officers used to assist them in assessing whether a breach would be deemed material was appended to the report.

With regards to late payment of contributions and escalation procedures, Members received a detailed outline of the expected contribution payments, which had not been received by GMPF by the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month following the month to which they related for the period from March 2020 to May 2020.

It was reported that on 27 March 2020 TPR published guidance to help pension schemes navigate the complications arising from Coronavirus pandemic.

On 27 March 2020 (subsequently updated on 16 June 2020) TPR published guidance to help pension schemes navigate the complications arising from the Coronavirus pandemic. Further, the TPR provided additional guidance on how to communicate with members during the coronavirus pandemic.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Local Pensions Board note the relevant developments set out in the report.**

### **8 PENSION SCAMS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions / Head of Pensions Administration, which provided the Local Pensions Board with an update of the regulatory information and other guidance for funds about pensions scams; procedures in place to reduce the risk of a member falling victim to a pensions scams; GMPF's freedom and choice transfer experience to date; and work being carried out at present to try to further strengthen controls to improve awareness.

It was explained that GMPF undertook regular reviews of all processes to ensure that statutory guidance and best practice was followed. When dealing with all requests for non-club transfers, GMPF uses the Pensions Regulator's scheme transfer checklist to highlight whether there was any cause for concern. The process for all requests for non-club transfers was detailed to Board Members. It was further explained that in addition to the usual procedures in place outlined, further measures had been put in place to protect members from scams during the Covid-19 pandemic.

GMPF had produced a leaflet for members looking to transfer out of the Fund, specifically relating to the increased risk of members being targeted at this time.

It was reported that a small number of transfers had been refused following notification from HMRC that the receiving scheme was not a legitimate scheme. Where this had been the case, GMPF had notified the member that the transfer cannot proceed and had provided members with evidence of the HMRC notification. The number of complaints received from members who had been refused a transfer out of GMPF remained low.

There have been several Ombudsman rulings related to cases involving pension scams, including several public sector scheme transfers. When a determination was issued by the Pensions Ombudsman, GMPF reviews the case and current processes to assess whether there were any learning points or changes to processes required.

In August 2019, the Pensions Ombudsman issued a determination regarding a pension liberation fraud case where the appeal was upheld, and the transferring scheme was required to reinstate the members' benefits.

In July 2019, The Pensions Administration Standards Association (PASA) issued guidance for pension schemes on the processes to be followed for 'Standard' or straightforward transfer cases.

It was stated that PASA was intending to release further guidance for funds for 'Non-Standard' cases but has instead released a consultation to cover all DB transfers and had asked funds to provide responses to the consultation before 30 September 2020. GMPF intended to respond to the consultation.

It was explained that along with its software provider and other LGPS funds, GMPF was looking into whether *My Pension* could be used to provide members with transfer quote information. Funds felt there was an opportunity to use the online service to strengthen controls and raise awareness of potential of scams to members. By using the online system, it should be possible to ensure members read the information on scams.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Local Pensions Board Note the information provided within the report and note the intention to respond to the PASA consultation.**

## **9 CYBER SECURITY**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions / Head of Pensions Administration, which provided an update on the Pensions Regulator's guidance regarding cyber security; the provision of cyber security training for trustees and GMPF officers; and the work being undertaken to develop a new cyber security policy.

To help ensure that trustees and GMPF colleagues were well equipped to understand the risks associated with cyber security and to assess whether the provisions in place were adequate, GMPF arranged training sessions for senior officers and trustees. These sessions were well attended and highlighted the different types of cyber security threats.

GMPF were transitioning to a new IT infrastructure and as a result of this and guidance issued by the Pensions Regulator, there was a requirement to develop a new Cyber Security Policy.

The new policy would better reflect cyber security requirements following the move to the new infrastructure and would consider the specific nature of the data sharing relationships that GMPF has with stakeholders.

Several areas were being considered in the development of the new cyber security policy.



The cyber security policy was being drafted, and once finalised, a copy of the new policy would be circulated. It was anticipated that this would be finalised in the next quarter.

Members of the Board discussed the importance of the new cyber security policy reflecting and taking into account the new working from home arrangements in light of Covid-19.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Local Pensions board note the information provided within the report.**

### **10 ADMINISTRATION UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director for Pensions Administration, which provided the Local Pensions Board with a summary of the 2019/2020 business planning objectives set by the Administration section and planning for the 2020/21 objectives. In addition to the strategic and service improvement administration projects being worked on currently, comments on performance and an update on the review of performance indicators taking place. Further the report included comments on complaints and disputes; and wider LGPS issues and items of note.

The six key business plan items for this financial year were detailed to Members of the Board. The objectives where most progress had been made was on Data retention, security and storage; Customer journeys; and information and education about saving for retirement and retirement living standards.

Preliminary work on developing a new data retention plan and policy was underway. This would support the work needed to transfer files to Microsoft OneDrive and SharePoint. Although work on documenting all key customer journeys had not yet begun, work on investigating and implementing new call centre functionality was underway.

Information and guidance developed by the Pension and Lifetime Savings Association on retirement living standards had been incorporated into the new GMPF website. Officers had also been contributing to several discussions, surveys and initiatives linked to the pension dashboard and would continue to do so as this project develops.

With regards to performance levels, performance levels remained relatively consistent across all areas except for deferred benefits being issued to members. There had been a decrease in the number of deferred benefits being processed within the target timescales.

The number of service complaints received since the last meeting was reported. A significant proportion of these related to delays in answering calls to the helpline or difficulties with accessing or using My Pension. The remaining related to a variety of matters, such as delays to receiving information in respect of pension benefits, rejections of ill health retirement applications by employers and rejection of trivial commutation requests.

A total of 82 compliments were submitted through the feedback zone, about several different areas. Many of these were compliments about the quality of the service members received. Words like efficient, sensitive, helpful and patient were used several times when explaining the service and the way in which it was delivered.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Local Pensions Board note the information provided within the report.**

## **11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT SERVICES 2020/21**

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Risk Management and Audit Services, which summarised the work of the Risk Management and Audit Service for the period 1 April to 26 June 2020.

The Head of Risk Management and Audit Services detailed the Final Reports and Draft Reports issued during the period.

It was stated that the results of the draft reports would be reported to the next meeting of the Local Board.

Advice and support continue to be given on request to GMPF officers. During this period advice was given on iConnect, the Target Address Tracing Project and the new website.

### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

## **12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT SERVICES PLANNED WORK 2020/21**

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Risk Management and Audit Services, which presented the planned work for the Risk Management and Audit Services for 2020/21.

It was stated that 320 days would be provided to the Greater Manchester Pension Fund in 2020/21. Members received the Annual Audit Plan for 2020/21 appended to the report. Where appropriate each audit had been linked to a risk in the Greater Manchester Pension Fund Risk Register to ensure that the plan was providing audit coverage in the areas deemed to be of significant risk to the Pension Fund.

The staffing of the internal audit team was outlined to Members of the Board. A Computer Auditor would be procured from Salford MBC Computer Audit Services using the AGMA Collaboration Computer Auditor agreement to help deliver the ICT Computer Audit Plan. The Internal Audit Team had complete organisational independence and is not responsible for any non-audit work.

Members were advised of the internal audit reporting process and received the Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Charter appended to the report.

The Head of Risk Management and Audit Services explained that time was required each year for investigation of frauds and irregularities that were notified to Internal Audit. A control report was provided in response to investigations/advice and support work to ensure that the control environment is improved to try to minimise any future re-occurrence. The Standards Panel would be notified of all cases reported and kept informed of progress on a regular basis and direction/guidance from the Panel was provided where appropriate.

It was stated that the Risk, Insurance and Information Governance Team provided services to the whole Council including schools, and the Greater Manchester Pension Fund. The key priorities for the team during 2020/21 were:

- To work with the Single Leadership Team to review the Corporate Risk Register and link it to the updated Corporate Plan Themes and Priorities.
- To facilitate the continued implementation of the Information Governance Framework, ensuring that the Council was compliant with all Data Protection legislation.
- Following the review of Business Continuity Plans across services, work would be concentrated on producing the Corporate Business Continuity Plan and determining how to introduce a testing regime for both service plans and the corporate plan in response to a major incident.

- To work with our Insurance Brokers to compile all the information needed for the Insurance Tender so that the contract can be awarded by 1 April 2020.
- To review the insurance database used to ensure it is fit for purpose and that the reporting functionality was efficient and effective.
- To continue to support managers to assess their risks as services were redesigned to ensure that changes to systems and procedures remain robust and resilient offering cost effective mitigation and that claims for compensation can be successfully repudiated and defended should litigation occur.
- To attend management team meetings quarterly to provide updates on insurance, information governance, risk management and business continuity.

In accordance with Tameside methodology, the performance of the service would be monitored against targets and performance indicators. The Audit Plan would be continually monitored via monthly progress meetings between the Audit Management Team and regular update meetings with Executive Members, Senior Managers and External Audit and quarterly reports to the Local Board. The target for achievement was 90% of the agreed plan.

## **RESOLVED**

**That Members of the Local Board:**

- (i) note Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 shown at Appendix 1 and note the planned work for the Risk Management and Insurance Team.**
- (ii) note the Audit Strategy for 2020/21 shown at Appendix 2.**
- (iii) note the Audit Charter for 2020/21 shown at Appendix 3.**
- (iv) note the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme for 2020/21 shown at Appendix 4.**

## **13 RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT SERVICES - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Risk Management and Audit Services, which summarised the work performed by the Services Unit and provided assurances as to the adequacy of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund's system of internal control.

Members received a detailed breakdown of the 2019/20 Audit Plan. It was reported that the delivery of the Audit Plan was not affected by Covid-19 in the last two weeks of March, when the Council and the rest of the UK went into lockdown. All members of the team were able to work from home successfully and had continued to do so.

It was explained that the delivery of the plan could be measured in two ways. Either, the Actual Productive Audit Days Delivered against the Plan, which was 289 compared to the revised plan of 311, which represented 93%. Or, the Percentage of Planned Audits Completed, the figure for 2019/20 was 92%, which was comparable with the previous year 2018/19.

With regards to Anti-Fraud Work, Members were advised that there had been 1 case of Pension Overpayment, the investigation was ongoing.

The National Fraud Initiative Findings were outlined to Members, it was reported that the NFI data was closed for the 2018 exercise as preparations were underway for the 2020 exercise which would commence in October 2020 when all data sets were uploaded.

Due to capacity issues caused by vacancies in the Risk Management and Insurance team, work during Quarter 4 had concentrated on:

- Information Governance - work had been prioritised to respond to requests for support and assistance in completing Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA), sharing and processing agreements to enable new projects to commence and the review/investigation of information incidents and near misses.

- Reactive work in dealing with Insurance Claims has continued to ensure all necessary timescale were adhered to.
- Considerable work had been undertaken in finalising the Insurance procurement exercise and all insurance covers were in place by 1 April 2020.
- However, work in relation to the review and development of the risk registers and business continuity planning had not progressed as planned due to the number of vacancies. This work would be prioritised in 2020/21 once the Risk, Insurance and Information Governance Manager is in post.

The key performance indicators for the Internal Audit for 2019/20 were presented to the Board. Four of the five targets had been achieved for 2019/20, the unachieved target related to the percentage of recommendations implemented.

In line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards the Head of Internal Audit had to present an Audit Opinion annually.

The Head of Internal Audit stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had not undermined the controls in place for 2019/20, as it was based on the audit work undertaken and the levels of assurance allocated to completed audits which were almost complete prior to the lockdown commencing. Looking to 2020/21 Internal Audit had been involved in advising on changes to systems and processes and despite the whole workforce working from home, Audit were still able to conduct audits and were keeping in contact with Directors and Assistant Directors to offer support and assistance where required.

As stated in previous years it had to be accepted that the gross risk for the Council had increased in recent years. The finding of our work was that controls were in place to mitigate these risks and where improvements had been highlighted, managers had agreed to implement the suggested recommendations. This would aid the management of risks and support the overall control environment.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the Local Board to note the report and the performance of the Risk Management and Audit Service during 2019/20.**

### **14 ANNUAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions for Funding and Business Development.

The Assistant Director for Funding and Business Development advised Members that the guidance for establishing and operating local pension's boards issued by the LGPS Scheme Advisory Board recommended that it is good practice for local boards to publish an annual report of their activities.

Consideration and support was given to the draft GMPF Local Board annual report for 2019/20.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted.**

### **15 LGPS UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Pensions / Assistant Director of Pensions, which provided an update on the latest developments affecting the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Members were advised on the 11 March 2020 HM Treasury released a consultation on the reform to the Retail Prices Index methodology the consultation was intended to close for responses on 21 August 2020.

On the 29 April 2020, the Supreme Court released its final judgement on LGPS boycotts. The ruling provided clarity on investment activity and would allow LGPS funds to make a conscious decision not to invest in UK defence or a specific foreign country providing the decision complies with the principles of the Law Commission report.

Members of the Board heard that the results of the Covid-19 governance survey were available, from 1 to 15 May 2020 administering authorities undertook a survey to understand how the governance of the LGPS had been affected by Covid-19.

With regards to the Cost Transparency Initiative (CTI), Members were advised that on the 19 June 2020 additional CTI resources were released covering a new Fiduciary Management template, additional reporting fields on Liability Driven Investments template, property investment template guidance, mapping guidance for private equity investments and additional FAQs, guidance, case studies and webinar resources for users.

The Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) had released its 2019 Annual Scheme Report. The key highlights were detailed to the Board.

To carry out the 2020 scheme level valuation, the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) would request data as at 31 March 2020 from administering authorities in September this year. In preparation, GAD reviewed the 2019 valuation data and recently gave individual feedback to administering authorities. GAD planned to provide a central report on LGPS data quality as part of the valuation advice to MHCLG. Despite the revised timetable, GAD planned to request the data as at 31 March 2020 in September this year.

On 8 April 2020 the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) published its Pensions Dashboard Programme Progress Update Report. The MaPS intended to release a progress report every six months. The MaPs published two further papers in April 2020; the Pensions Dashboards Data Definitions Working Paper and Pensions Dashboards Data Scope: Working Paper.

It was stated the Pensions Regulator released initial Covid-19 guidance on 16 June 2020 and the TPR provided additional guidance on how to communicate with members during the pandemic. Further, the Pensions Regulator published its Corporate Plan for 2020-21 on 29 June 2020 and the officers were reflecting on how best to address them.

On January 2019 the Government announced a pause in the cost control mechanism process due to the McCloud decision. It was stated that on the 25 April 2020 four unions filed court proceedings against the Government because they claimed that the pause in the cost control mechanism was unlawful. The legal proceedings between the four unions and the Government was ongoing.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Local Pensions Board note the report.**

## **16 URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

**CHAIR**

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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>LOCAL PENSIONS BOARD</b>
<b>Date:</b>	1 October 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sandra Stewart, Director of Pensions Paddy Dowdall Assistant Director (Local Investments and Property)
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>GMPF STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020</b>
<b>Report Summary</b>	This report is submitted for information and Board Members are asked to note the progress of the governance arrangements for the audit of GMPF Accounts 2019/20.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	Members are asked to note the report
<b>Policy Implications:</b>	None.
<b>Financial Implications:</b> <b>(Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)</b>	As the administering authority, Tameside MBC has important responsibilities in relation to the Greater Manchester Pension Fund. As the largest fund in the Local Government Pension Scheme, the Fund also has significant resources it deploys to meet those responsibilities. This paper sets out where the responsibilities lie.  The assumptions used for valuing assets will have an impact on the value of assets reported in the accounts. In most circumstances the impact is unlikely to be material.
<b>Legal Implications:</b> <b>(Authorised by the Solicitor to the Fund)</b>	The administering authority must produce an annual report and accounts in line with statutory provisions.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	GMPF's accounts are used to provide information to a variety of users and for a variety of purposes. The accuracy of the statements is critical in the determination of employer costs and there are clearly reputational issues relating to the validity of the accounts. The audit process provides reassurance on the integrity of the statements and mitigates against the possibility of material misstatement
<b>ACCESS TO INFORMATION:</b>	<b>NON-CONFIDENTIAL</b>  <b>This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the Press or members of the public.</b>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	For further information please contact Paddy Dowdall, Assistant Director – Local Investments and Property, tel 0161 301 7140, email <a href="mailto:paddy.dowdall@tameside.gov.uk">paddy.dowdall@tameside.gov.uk</a> .

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the last report to the Local Board on 30 July 2020. As reported at that time, there are changes this year to the governance procedures for approval of the GMPF Annual Report and Accounts due to the impact of the Covid 19 crisis. The deadline for the audit of local government accounts was changed to 30 November 2020. For GMPF the main concerns were the valuation of illiquid investments caused by acute public market volatility at the year-end date.
- 1.2 The draft GMPF accounts were presented at the last meeting and the audit is close to completion.

## **2. UPDATE ON PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS**

- 2.1 The auditors have been conducting their work on the GMPF Audit and IAS 19 assurance during July and August. At the present time there are no indications of material concerns.
- 2.2 Letters of Assurance from the management of the Fund and those charged with governance will be provided to the auditors.
- 2.3 At completion of audit a findings report will be agreed with management and will be presented to Tameside MBC Audit Panel ahead of the statutory deadline of 30 November.
- 2.4 Following this the GMPF Annual Report will be published ahead of the statutory deadline of 31 December.

## **3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 As set out at the front of the report.



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