

Questions submitted for Public Participation Period and answered by the Chairman of Pension Fund Committee

Questions submitted by Irene Stratham, Extinction Rebellion

Irene Statham addressed the meeting on behalf of Extinction Rebellion. Four questions were put to the Committee which the Chairman answered as set out below:

Question 1 - Will Dorset make a policy commitment to move to zero investment in fossil fuel companies ASAP?

We are currently in the process of reviewing the investment strategy for the pension fund. We have appointed an independent advisor, Mercer, who will make a series of recommendations for the full Committee to debate and agree at our June meeting.

We are aware that both Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council have declared a Climate Emergency and we have asked that our advisor should take this into account when making their recommendations. This should include options to allow us to move to a low carbon future including an assessment of whether it is possible, practical and legal to move to a policy of zero investment in companies whose main activity is the extraction and supply of fossil fuels and, if so, how long this would take to enact.

The £141M baseline suggested previously by others is not one the Committee recognises, and therefore I have asked officers to review the current level of investment in fossil fuel companies. The pension fund now has very little direct exposure to any such companies, but it does hold units in pooled funds that may have some exposure to these companies.

Question 2 - Will the Dorset Pensions Committee commit to lobbying MPs in relation to the 2020 Pensions Bill?

I will propose today that the Committee will commit to lobby MPs for clear alignment between the Paris Climate Agreement and any proposed legislation affecting the administration and investments of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Question 3 - Will the Dorset Pensions Committee instruct the Independent Advisors to consider 'divesting from the fossil fuel industry' in their report?

We are instructing our independent advisor to come forward with options concerning how we can move towards a low carbon future. We would expect one of these options to include divesting from the fossil fuel industry and how far we can go that is consistent with our statutory and non-statutory duties and responsibilities.

Question 4 - Will the Dorset Pensions Committee work with the Brunel Pension Partnership to provide clear definitions, timelines and targets for divestment?

We are moving forward rapidly to a position where nearly all of Dorset's pension fund investments will be managed through the Brunel Pension Partnership. Any policy commitments made by Dorset will therefore have to be enacted by Brunel. This inevitably means that we will work very closely with Brunel and other authorities in the partnership to make a reality of our climate change policy and objectives.

Brunel have recently launched their own Climate Change Policy, which can be viewed by following the link below.

<https://www.brunelpensionpartnership.org/climate-change/>

The current value of investments in fossil fuel companies would be confirmed by officers at the next meeting of the Committee at the latest.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their attendance at the meeting and for their interest in the pension fund.

Resolved

1. That officers confirm the current value of investments in fossil fuel companies at the next meeting of the Committee at the latest.
2. That the Committee will commit to lobby MPs for clear alignment between the Paris Climate Agreement and any proposed legislation affecting the administration and investments of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).