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# Merton Council

## Pension Fund Investment Advisory Panel Agenda

### **Councillors:**

Laxmi Attawar (Chair)  
Adam Bush (Vice-Chair)  
Tobin Byers

### **Attendees**

Gwyn Isaac (GMB Rep)  
Tina Pickard (Pensioner Rep)  
Caroline Holland (LBM)  
Roger Kershaw (LBM)  
Nemashe Sivayogan (LBM)

### **Additional Attendees (External)**

Mercer – Investment Consultants  
Ernst & Young – External Auditors  
Northern Trust – Global Custodians  
London CIV

**Date:       Wednesday 10 March 2021**

**Time:       6.00 pm**

**Venue:     Committee Rooms, 1st floor, Merton Civic Centre, London Road,  
Morden, SM4 5DX**

This is a public meeting and attendance by the public is encouraged and welcomed.  
For more information about the agenda please contact

[Merton.PensionFund@merton.gov.uk](mailto:Merton.PensionFund@merton.gov.uk) or telephone [020 8545 3458](tel:02085453458).

All Press contacts: [communications@merton.gov.uk](mailto:communications@merton.gov.uk), 020 8545 3181

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## **Pension Fund Investment Advisory Panel Agenda**

### **10 March 2021**

- |    |  |          |
|----|--|----------|
| 1  | Apologies for absence  |          |
| 2  | Declarations of pecuniary interest   |          |
| 3  | Minutes of the previous meeting  | 1 - 2    |
| 4  | 2020-21 Audit Plan   | 3 - 34   |
| 5  | Quarterly Performance Review   | 35 - 50  |
| 6  | Introduction and update from the Fund Global Custodian - Northern Trust  | 51 - 60  |
| 7  | AOB  |          |
| 8  | Exclusion of the public<br>To RESOLVE that the public are excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following report(s) on the grounds that it is (they are) exempt from disclosure for the reasons stated in the report(s).       |          |
| 9  | Minutes of the previous meeting (exempt)   | 61 - 62  |
| 10 | Quarterly Fund and investment managers performance review (Oct-Dec 2020)   | 63 - 114 |
| 11 | Presentation by London CIV (slides to be circulated separately)  |          |
| 12 | AOB  |          |
| 13 | Future meeting dates<br>Future Meeting Dates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021</li><li>- 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021</li><li>- 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021</li><li>- 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022</li></ul> |          |

#### **Note on declarations of interest**

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. For further advice please speak with the Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership.

## Merton Pension Fund Advisory Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on

25 November 2020 (Virtual Meeting)

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### Attendance:

Cllr. Laxmi Attawar (Chair),  
Cllr Adam Bush (Vice Chair)  
Cllr. Tobin Byers  
Gwyn Isaac (GMB Union Rep)  
Caroline Holland (LBM)  
Roger Kershaw (LBM)  
Nemashe Sivayogan (LBM)

### Additional Attendees

Mercer- Investment Consultant  
Barry Mckay- Barnet Waddingham

### 1.0 MEETING (Part 1)

- 1.1 Introductions made by Chair.
- 1.2 Members Declaration of Interest – None.

### 2. Minutes of Last Meeting Held (Part 1) – 21 July 2020 (Decision making)

- 2.1 The actual minutes were agreed as a true record.

### 3. Quarterly Fund Performance Review (July 2020 to Sept 2020) (For Information)

- 3.1 Over the 3 months to 30 Sept 2020, total Fund assets returned 3.8% compared to the target of 1.2%. This equates to an outperformance of 2.6%.
- 3.2 The Fund's total market value increased by £30m over the quarter, from £785.4m to £815.5m. Over the last 12 months, the Fund performance was 5.3%, and 3 year annualised performance was 6.8%. The annual performance target is 4.8%.
- 3.3 RK said the Fund grew by £30m primarily due to equities, returning 3.8% against a benchmark of 1.2%. The Fund is in a good position.

### 4. Update on Pension Regulations – Fund Actuary Barnett Waddingham (For Information)

- 4.1 Funding level is 103% with a surplus of £20m (more assets than value placed on liabilities).
- 4.2 There are 3 main areas of Gov't concern. McCloud / £95k exit cap / Employer flexibilities. Barry provided an update on all three regulations changes, impact to the fund and the actions needed in the coming months
- 4.3 The Funding Level is broadly unchanged since 31 March 2019.

### 5. AOB

Future Meeting Dates

- 10 March 2021

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## **Committees:**

### **Pension Fund Investment Advisory Panel**

**Date: 10 March 2021**

Wards: All

**Subject: Merton Pension Fund – The 2020-21 Annual External Audit Plan and Preparatory Activity**

Lead officer: Caroline Holland

Lead member: Cllr. Tobin Byers

Contact officer: Nemashe Sivayogan

This is a Public Document

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to note the Merton Pension Fund's 2020-21 Audit planning report from Ernst and Young that relates to the Fund's financial accounts, as set out in Appendix 1.

That PFAP notes the preparatory activity undertaken and underway by Officers, as set out in the main report.

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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents the Merton Pension Fund's 2020-21 audit plan prepared by the Council's external auditors Ernst and Young LLP. This report sets out details of their proposed audit scope for the Merton Pension Scheme for the year ending 31 March 2021.

## **2. DETAIL**

- 2.1 The purpose of the audit planning report is to set out to the PFAP the key considerations of planning for this year's audit with a view to ensuring that the year-end activities can be managed smoothly.
- 2.2 The responsibilities of the auditors are set out in Appendix 1 – Merton Pension Fund Audit Plan- Briefing on Audit Matters. The auditors are asked to treat the Local Government Pension Scheme as a Stand-alone body, with a separate audit plan and report to the PFAP.
- 2.3 The precise details of approach to be adopted by the auditors are laid out in Appendix 1 to this report.

## **Preparatory Activity for 2020-21 Statement of Accounts**

- 2.4 In general, officers have commenced and progressed preparations for financial year-end from a much earlier point in the year. The officers had the initial meeting with the auditors in January 2021. The plan is to build on last year's good work by both parties and have a smooth early audit.
- 2.5 There has been regular engagement between with Pension Shared Services at Wandsworth and the Pension Team at Merton to ensure that planning for year-end is embedded, and therefore laying the groundwork for a trouble-free exercise.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. N/A

## **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. Although the Pension Fund's Statement of Accounts and Annual Report are statutory documents whose formats are dictated by statute and regulation, they are produced by the pension team at Merton by closely working with pension shared services and input from the Fund's investment managers and Fund custodian.

## **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The 2020-21 reporting cycle opens formally with this report, and will be continued with the presentation of the final Pension Fund Statement of Accounts and Annual Report in June/July 2021.

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications in agreeing the recommendations in this report. The annual audit fee of £16,170.00 will be paid by the Pension Fund. Please note the audit plan talks about possible increases to fees following the discussion with the Public Sector Audit appointment. The 2019-20 final audit fee was £32,920.00. This is mainly due the additional work carried out in relation to triennial valuation and the going concern.

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require the Council to maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records, and of its system of internal control in accordance with proper practice.
- 7.2 The Pension Fund accounts are governed by the overall financial framework for local authorities, and in conjunction with the full Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: 2020-21 Accounts ('The Code').

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. N/A.

**9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. N/A.

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. N/A.

**11 APPENDICES**

11.1 EY – Pension Fund audit plan 2020-21.

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. 2020-21 CIPFA Sample accounts and Disclosure checklist.

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# Merton Pension Fund

## Outline audit plan

Year ended 31 March 2021

23 February 2021



23 February 2021



Standards and General Purposes Committee

Dear Committee Members

**Merton Pension Fund - Outline audit plan**

We are pleased to attach our Outline Audit Plan which sets out how we intend to carry out our responsibilities as the auditor of the Merton Pension Fund (the 'Fund'). Its purpose is to provide the Standards and General Purposes (S&GP) Committee with a basis to review our proposed audit approach and scope for the 2020/21 audit in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements. It is also to ensure that our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

This outline plan summarises our initial assessment of the key risks driving an effective audit for the Pension Fund, and outlines our planned audit strategy in response to them. We have yet to complete all our planning procedures and we will update the Committee if we identify any further risks during the year. This report is intended solely for the information and use of the S&GP Committee and management, and is not intended to be, and should not be, used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you on 11 March 2021 and to understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

Suresh Patel

Associate Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

# Contents



In April 2015 Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the via the PSAA website ([www.PSAA.co.uk](http://www.PSAA.co.uk)). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas. The "Terms of Appointment (updated April 2018)" issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements with which auditors must comply, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature. This report is made solely to the S&GP Committee and management of Merton Pension Fund in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we can state to the Standards and General Purposes (S&GP) Committee, and management of Merton Pension Fund, those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the S&GP Committee and management of Merton Pension Fund for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third party without our prior written consent.



01

# Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy



## Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the S&GP Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

### Audit risks

Risk	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Misstatement due to Fraud or Error - Posting of investment journals	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	There is a risk that, due to fraud or error, investment journals posted into the general ledger are incorrect.

In addition to the above risk, there are two areas of audit focus.

Area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Page 11 Going concern disclosure	Inherent	No change in risk or focus	The financial landscape for the Fund's admitted and scheduled bodies remains challenging and as a result, the Fund will need to undertake a going concern assessment covering a period up to 12 months from the expected date of final authorisation. It will also need to make an appropriate disclosure in the financial statements. In addition, the revised auditing standard on going concern requires additional challenge from auditors on the assertions being made by management.
Valuation of private debt and infrastructure investments	Inherent	Potential new area of focus to be kept under ongoing review	The Fund holds a material value of private debt and infrastructure investments which are not publicly quoted, categorised as level 3 in the fair value hierarchy and inherently harder to value. Valuation of these assets may also be made more difficult because of the ongoing impact on markets of Covid-19. We will keep the need to consider this as an area of audit focus under ongoing review.

### Materiality

Planning materiality	Performance materiality	Audit differences
Our planning materiality represents 1% of the prior year's net assets, consistent year on year.	Performance materiality represents 75% of planning materiality and is the top of our range, consistent year on year.	We will report all uncorrected misstatements relating to the primary statements greater than £0.345m. We will communicate other misstatements to the extent that they merit the attention of the Committee.
£6.9m	£5.2m	£0.345m

# Overview of our 2020/21 audit strategy

## Audit scope

This Outline Audit Plan covers the work that we plan to perform to provide you with audit opinion on whether the financial statements of Merton Pension Fund give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2021 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- The quality of systems and processes;
- Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and
- Management's views on all of the above.

This Outline Audit Plan covers the work that we plan to perform to provide you with audit opinion on whether the financial statements of Merton By considering these inputs, our audit is focused on the areas that matter and our feedback is more likely to be relevant to the Pension Fund.

In addition to the above, we also perform procedures in relation to the IAS 19 report for London Borough of Merton. Our work specifically focuses on gaining assurance that the data submitted to the actuary agrees to the Pension Fund's systems.

## Timeline

At the time of drafting this Outline Audit Plan, MHCLG were consulting on changing the date for the Council to publish its draft accounts to 1 August 2021. However, MHCLG has not yet outlined how that change impacts the target date for the Council to publish its approved and audited accounts. In their response to the Redmond Review, MHCLG indicated that for 2020/21 that target date would be 30 September 2021.

In Section 05 we therefore include a provisional timeline for the audit but this will be subject to change depending on MHCLG's communications on target dates for publishing the accounts.

## Fees

We remain in discussion with PSAA about our proposed increase to the scale fee which we consider to be appropriate to deliver a Code compliant audit. We include in Section 07, our current view of the fees required to carry out the 2020/21 audit. We will update the Committee on any determinations by PSAA on fees.



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# 02 Audit risks



## Audit risks

# Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by\*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Misstatement due to Fraud or Error - Posting of investment journals\*

### What is the risk?

As identified in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.

There is a specific risk that, due to fraud or error, investment journals posted into the general ledger are incorrect, which could result in a misstatement of year-end investment value and/or investment income.

### What will we do?

Our approach will focus on testing the appropriateness of manual journal entries recorded in the general ledger related to investments and ensuring that:

- ▶ The amount is consistent with the fund manager/custodian report;
- ▶ Correct authorisations have been obtained;
- ▶ The transactions are in the normal course of business or, if they are outside of the normal course, the business rationale will be requested and assessed for reasonableness.



## Other areas of audit focus (continued)

### What is the risk/area of focus?

#### Going concern disclosure

There is a presumption that the Fund will continue as a going concern for the foreseeable future. However, the Fund is required to carry out a going concern assessment that is proportionate to the risks it faces. In light of the continued impact of Covid-19 on its admitted and scheduled bodies and the continuing volatility in capital markets there is a need for the Fund to ensure its going concern assessment including its cashflow forecast is thorough and appropriately comprehensive.

The Fund is then required to ensure that its going concern disclosure within the statement of accounts adequately reflects its going concern assessment and in particular highlights any uncertainties it has identified.

In addition, the auditing standard in relation to going concern (ISA570) has been revised with effect for the 2020/21 accounts audit.

#### Valuation of private debt and infrastructure investments

The Fund holds a material value of private debt and infrastructure assets (£53.4 million at 31 March 2020) which are categorised and disclosed as Level 3 in the fair value hierarchy. These assets are not publicly quoted and are inherently harder to value. Valuation of these assets may also be made more difficult because of the ongoing impact on markets of Covid-19.

### What will we do?

We will meet the requirements of the revised auditing standard on going concern (ISA 570) and consider the adequacy of the Fund's going concern assessment and its disclosure in the accounts by:

- Challenging management's identification of events or conditions impacting going concern.
- Testing management's resulting assessment of going concern by evaluating supporting evidence (including consideration of the risk of management bias).
- Reviewing the Fund's cashflow forecast covering the foreseeable future, to ensure that it has sufficient liquidity to continue to operate as a going concern.
- Undertaking a 'stand back' review to consider all of the evidence obtained, whether corroborative or contradictory, when we draw our conclusions on going concern.
- Challenging the disclosure made in the accounts in respect of going concern and any material uncertainties.

We will discuss the detailed implications of the revised auditing standard with finance staff shortly and seek to agree with management to receive an early draft of the Fund's going concern assessment in advance of the 2020/21 year-end audit in order to provide management with feedback on the adequacy and sufficiency of the proposed disclosures in relation to going concern.

We will need to consider the valuation approach taken by the Fund, relevant fund managers and the Fund's new custodian, Northern Trust, to gain assurance that investment values have been properly accounted for in the financial statements considering any ongoing impact of Covid-19 on year-end carrying values,

We will keep the need to consider this as an area of audit focus under ongoing review as our understanding of your valuation arrangements and process continues to develop.



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03

# Audit materiality



## Materiality

### Materiality

For planning purposes, we have set planning materiality for 2020/21 at £6.9m. This represents 1% of the Pension Fund's prior year net assets. We will reassess this throughout the audit process. We have provided supplemental information about audit materiality in Appendix C.

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Net assets  
£690m

Planning  
materiality  
£6.9m

Performance  
materiality  
£5.2m

Audit  
differences  
£0.345m

We request that the S&GP Committee confirm their understanding of, and agreement to, these materiality and reporting levels.

### Key definitions

**Planning materiality** - the amount over which we anticipate misstatements would influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements.

**Performance materiality** - the amount we use to determine the extent of our audit procedures. We have set performance materiality at 75% of planning materiality, consistent year on year.

**Audit difference threshold** - we propose that misstatements identified below this threshold are deemed clearly trivial. We will report to you all uncorrected misstatements over this amount relating to the fund account and net asset statement. This was calculated as 5% of planning materiality, which is consistent year on year.

Other uncorrected misstatements, such as reclassifications and misstatements in the disclosures, and corrected misstatements will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the S&GP Committee, or are important from a qualitative perspective.



04

Scope of our audit



# Scope of our audit

## Objective and Scope of our Audit scoping

Under the Code of Audit Practice our principal objectives are to review and report on the Pension Fund's financial statements to the extent required by the relevant legislation and the requirements of the Code. We issue an audit report that covers:

### Financial statement audit

Our objective is to form an opinion on the financial statements under International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). We also perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards, the Code and other regulations. We outline below the procedures we will undertake during the course of our audit.

### Procedures required by standards

- Addressing the risk of fraud and error; Significant disclosures included in the financial statements; Entity-wide controls;
- Reading other information contained in the financial statements and reporting whether it is inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements; and Auditor independence.

### Procedures required by the Code

Reviewing, and reporting on as appropriate, other information published with the financial statements.

## Audit Process Overview

Our audit involves:

- ▶ Identifying and understanding the key processes and internal controls; and
- ▶ Substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts.

For 2020/21 we plan to follow a substantive approach to the audit, as we have concluded this is the most efficient way to obtain the level of audit assurance required to conclude that the financial statements are not materially misstated.

### Analytics:

We will use our analytics tools to enable us to capture whole populations of your financial data, in particular journal entries. These tools:

- ▶ Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be subject to more traditional substantive audit tests; and
- ▶ Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than random sampling techniques.

We will report the findings from our process and analytics work, including any significant weaknesses or inefficiencies identified and recommendations for improvement, to management and the S&GP Committee.

### Internal audit:

We will meet regularly with the Head of Internal Audit, and review internal audit plans and the results of the team's work. We will reflect any findings in our audit plan, where they raise issues that could have an impact on the financial statements.



# 05 Audit timeline





## Indicative Audit timeline

# Indicative timetable of communication and planned deliverables

### Indicative timeline

Below is an indicative timetable showing the key stages of the audit and the planned deliverables we have agreed to provide to you through the audit cycle in 2020/21. Please note that we will communicate any changes to this plan to officers and members as soon as we can. From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the Standards and General Purposes Committee and we will discuss them with the Committee Chair as appropriate. We will also provide updates on corporate governance and regulatory matters as necessary.

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Audit phase	Timetable	Standards and General Purposes Committee Meeting timetable	Deliverables
Initial Planning: Risk assessment and setting of scopes and walkthrough of key systems and processes	March 2021	Standards and General Purposes Committee Meeting	Outline audit plan
Completion of initial planning	March		
Interim audit testing and completion of walkthroughs	March		
Interim audit testing and completion of walkthroughs	April		
	May		
	June		
Year end audit Audit Completion procedures	July	Standards and General Purposes Committee Meeting	Updated Audit Plan
	August		
	September	Standards and General Purposes Committee Meeting	Audit Results Report
	October		



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06

# Independence





# Introduction

The FRC Ethical Standard and ISA (UK) 260 “Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance”, requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

## Required communications

### Planning stage

- ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;
- ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;
- ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;
- ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence.

### Final stage

- ▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;
- ▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;
- ▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;
- ▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner
- ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;
- ▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and
- ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

## Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

### Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of Suresh Patel, your audit engagement partner, and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

### Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in the Council. Examples include where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

When the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4.

There are no other self interest threats at the date of this report.

### Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

### Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of the Council. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

## Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

### Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.

## Other communications

### EY Transparency Report 2020

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year ended 1 July 2020 and can be found here:

<https://www.ey.com/uk/en/about-us/ey-uk-transparency-report-2020>



07

Appendices



## Fees

The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. PSAA has published a scale fee for all relevant bodies. This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the NAO Code, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Fund Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

	Planned fee 2020/21	Final Fee 2019/20
	£	£
Scale Fee - Code work (1)	16,170	16,170
New significant risk relating to US currency hedge (2)	-	2,250
Going concern and PBSE assessments and disclosures including EY consultations (2)	2,000-6,000	5,500
IAS 19 work on the 2019 triennial valuation of the Fund (3)	5,500	9,000
Total indicative Pension Fund fee	TBC	32,920

The agreed fee presented is based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ Our accounts opinion being unqualified;
- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Pension Fund; and
- ▶ The Pension Fund has an effective control environment.

If any of the above assumptions prove to be unfounded, we will seek a variation to the agreed fee. This will be discussed with the Pension Fund in advance.




### All fees exclude VAT

1. We remain in discussion with PSAA about increasing the scale fee to reflect the additional work auditors are required to do to meet regulatory requirements. In our view the scale fee for the Merton PF audit should be increased by £28,290.
2. The 2019/20 additional fees have been agreed with management but are subject to PSAA approval.
3. IAS19 work is annual to provide assurance to the auditor of the LB Merton. These additional fees are not subject to approval from PSAA and for 2019/20 (where there was additional work on the triennial data) we have agreed fees with management.




## Appendix B

# Required communications with the S&GP Committee





We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the Audit Committee.

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	 When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the S&GP Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	Communication of the planned scope and timing of the audit, any limitations and the significant risks identified. When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team	Outline audit plan - February 2021
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Our view of the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures</li> <li>▶ Any significant difficulties encountered during the audit</li> <li>▶ Any significant matters arising from the audit which were discussed with management</li> <li>▶ Written representations we have requested</li> <li>▶ Expected modifications to the audit report</li> <li>▶ Any other matters significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process</li> </ul>	Audit results report - September 2021

## Required communications with the S&GP Committee (continued)





		Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
Page 29	Going concern Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty</li> <li>▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements</li> <li>▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements</li> </ul>	Audit results report - September 2021
	Misstatements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation</li> <li>▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods</li> <li>▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected</li> <li>▶ Corrected misstatements that are significant</li> <li>▶ Material misstatements corrected by management</li> </ul>	Audit results report - September 2021
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Enquiries of the S&amp;GP Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity</li> <li>▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist</li> <li>▶ A discussion of any other matters related to fraud</li> </ul>	Audit results report - September 2021
Related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</li> <li>▶ Non-disclosure by management</li> <li>▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions</li> <li>▶ Disagreement over disclosures, Non-compliance with laws and regulations</li> <li>▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity</li> </ul>	Audit results report - September 2021

## Required communications with the S&GP Committee (continued)

		 Our Reporting to you
<b>Required communications</b>	 <b>What is reported?</b>	  <b>When and where</b>
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, objectivity and independence.</p> <p>Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The principal threats</li> <li>▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness</li> <li>▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards</li> <li>▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence</li> </ul> <p>For public interest entities and listed companies, communication of minimum requirements as detailed in the FRC Revised Ethical Standard 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Relationships between EY, the Council and senior management, its affiliates and its connected parties</li> <li>▶ Services provided by EY that may reasonably bear on the auditors' objectivity and independence and related safeguards</li> <li>▶ Fees charged by EY analysed into appropriate categories such as statutory audit fees, tax advisory fees, other non-audit service fees</li> <li>▶ A statement of compliance with the Ethical Standard, including any non-EY firms or external experts used in the audit</li> <li>▶ Details of any inconsistencies between the Ethical Standard and the Council's policy for the provision of non-audit services, and any apparent breach</li> <li>▶ Details of any contingent fee arrangements for non-audit services</li> <li>▶ Where EY has determined it is appropriate to apply more restrictive rules than permitted under the Ethical Standard</li> <li>▶ The S&amp;GP Committee should also be provided an opportunity to discuss matters affecting auditor independence</li> </ul>	<p>Outline audit plan - February 2021</p> <p>Audit results report - September 2021</p>







## Required communications with the S&GP Committee (continued)

		 Our Reporting to you
<b>Required communications</b>	 <b>What is reported?</b>	  <b>When and where</b>
Public Interest Entities	<p>For the audits of financial statements of public interest entities our written communications to the S&amp;GP Committee include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A declaration of independence</li> <li>▶ The identity of each key audit partner</li> <li>▶ The use of non-member firms or external specialists and confirmation of their independence</li> <li>▶ The nature and frequency of communications</li> <li>▶ A description of the scope and timing of the audit</li> <li>▶ Which categories of the balance sheet have been tested substantively or controls based and explanations for significant changes to the prior year, including first year audits</li> <li>▶ Materiality</li> <li>▶ Any going concern issues identified</li> <li>▶ Any significant deficiencies in internal control identified and whether they have been resolved by management</li> <li>▶ Actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations identified relevant to the S&amp;GP Committee</li> <li>▶ The valuation methods used and any changes to these including first year audits</li> <li>▶ The scope of consolidation and exclusion criteria if any and whether in accordance with the reporting framework</li> <li>▶ The completeness of documentation and explanations received</li> <li>▶ Any significant difficulties encountered in the course of the audit</li> <li>▶ Any significant matters discussed with management</li> <li>▶ Any other matters considered significant</li> </ul>	<p>Outline audit plan - February 2021                      Audit results report - September 2021</p>

## Appendix B

# Required communications with the S&GP Committee (continued)

		 Our Reporting to you
Required communications	 What is reported?	  When and where
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations</li> <li>▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures</li> </ul>	Audit results report to be presented at the September 2021 S&GP Committee.
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Audit findings regarding non-compliance where it is material and believed to be intentional. This communication is subject to compliance with legislation on tipping off</li> <li>▶ Asking the S&amp;GP Committee about possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that they may know about</li> </ul>	Audit results report to be presented at the September 2021 S&GP Committee.
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit</li> </ul>	Audit results report to be presented at the September 2021 S&GP Committee
Representations	Written representations from management and/or those charged with governance	Audit results report to be presented at the September 2021 S&GP Committee.
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	Audit results report to be presented at the September 2021 S&GP Committee.
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Key audit matters which we will include in our auditor's report</li> <li>▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report</li> </ul>	Audit results report to be presented at the September 2021 S&GP Committee.
Fee Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Breakdown of fee information when the audit plan is agreed</li> <li>▶ Breakdown of fee information at the completion of the audit</li> <li>▶ Any non-audit work</li> </ul>	Outline audit plan to be presented at the March 2021 S&GP Committee; and Audit results report to be presented at the September 2021 S&GP Committee.

## Additional audit information

### Other required procedures during the course of the audit

In addition to the key areas of audit focus outlined in section 2, we have to perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards and other regulations. We outline the procedures below that we will undertake during the course of our audit.

**Our responsibilities required by auditing standards**

- ▶ Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.
- ▶ Obtaining an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council’s internal control.
- ▶ Evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- ▶ Concluding on the appropriateness of management’s use of the going concern basis of accounting.
- ▶ Evaluating the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- ▶ Obtaining sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the Council to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. Reading other information contained in the financial statements, including the board’s statement that the annual report is fair, balanced and understandable, the Audit Committee reporting appropriately addresses matters communicated by us to the Committee and reporting whether it is materially inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements; and Maintaining auditor independence.

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### Purpose and evaluation of materiality

For the purposes of determining whether the accounts are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in the aggregate, in light of the surrounding circumstances, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation of it requires professional judgement and necessarily takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implicit in the definition. We would be happy to discuss with you your expectations regarding our detection of misstatements in the financial statements.

Materiality determines the locations at which we conduct audit procedures to support the opinion given on the financial statements; and the level of work performed on individual account balances and financial statement disclosures.

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all of the circumstances that may ultimately influence our judgement about materiality. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the accounts, including the total effect of the audit misstatements we identify, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

## EY | Assurance | Tax | Transactions | Advisory

### About EY

EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. The insights and quality services we deliver help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies the world over. We develop outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, we play a critical role in building a better working world for our people, for our clients and for our communities.

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ED None

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## Committee:

**Pension Fund Advisory Panel**

**Date: 10 March 2021**

**Merton Pension Board**

**Date: 12 March 2021**

Wards: All

**Subject: Merton Pension Fund Performance – December 2020**

Lead officer: Caroline Holland - Director of Corporate Services

Lead member: Councillor. Tobin Byers

Contact officer: Roger Kershaw- AD Resources

This is a Public Document

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to note the content of this report, in particular, the market values and performance of the total Fund and component portfolios for the quarters ending 31 December 2020, attribution of the results and the market environment during the period.

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To report the investment performance at total Fund level, and of the individual fund managers, for the quarter ending 31 December 2020. The report highlights the performance of the total Fund by asset class compared to the customised benchmark.
- 1.2 The report gives the Committee a consistent basis on which to review the performance of the Fund as at 31 December 2020. The report provides information to support future actions including periodic rebalancing and review of investment strategy and investment management arrangement.

### **2.0 FUND PERFORMANCE**

- 2.1 The attached Fund Analysis & Performance Report (**Appendix 1**) produced by the Fund's investment and performance consultants Mercer provides useful analysis and insights of the Pension Fund activities and results for the quarters ending December 2020.

The table below shows the total fund valuation and the movements in investments during the quarter ended December 2020.

# VALUATION SUMMARY

## PERIOD ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2020

Manager / Fund	30 September 2020				31 December 2020	
	Valuation £000s	Weight %	Cashflow £000s	Growth £000s	Valuation £000s	Weight %
UBS Passive Equity	52,177	6.4	-	4,271	56,448	6.4
UBS Alternative Beta	77,283	9.5	-	5,944	83,227	9.4
LCIV RBC Sustainable Equity Fund	93,101	11.4	-	11,119	104,219	11.8
LCIV Global Alpha Growth Fund	96,564	11.8	-	10,738	107,302	12.1
BlackRock World Low Carbon Equity Tracker Fund	84,272	10.3	-	6,549	90,821	10.3
<b>Global Equities</b>	<b>403,396</b>	<b>49.4</b>			<b>442,017</b>	<b>50.0</b>
UBS HALO EM Fund	52,295	6.4	-	8,256	60,551	6.8
LCIV Emerging Market Equity Fund	33,767	4.1	-	5,807	39,574	4.5
<b>Emerging Market Equities</b>	<b>86,062</b>	<b>10.5</b>			<b>100,125</b>	<b>11.3</b>
LCIV Global Total Return Fund	34,381	4.2	-	1,075	35,457	4.0
LCIV Diversified Growth Fund	33,629	4.1	-	2,024	35,653	4.0
<b>Diversified Growth Fund</b>	<b>68,011</b>	<b>8.3</b>			<b>71,110</b>	<b>8.0</b>
UBS Triton Property Unit Trust	16,229	2.0	-	202	16,431	1.9
BlackRock UK Property Fund**	7,403	0.9	-	105	7,508	0.8
<b>Property</b>	<b>23,632</b>	<b>2.9</b>			<b>23,939</b>	<b>2.7</b>
MIRA Infrastructure Global Solution II, L.P.*	8,487	1.0	-861	-	7,626	0.9
Quinbrook Low Carbon Power LP*	11,343	1.4	278	-639	10,982	1.2
JP Morgan Infrastructure Fund**	18,469	2.3	-	-476	17,993	2.0
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>36,410</b>	<b>4.6</b>			<b>36,554</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Permira Credit Solutions IV*	10,619	1.3	1,389	-	12,008	1.4
Churchill Middle Market Senior Loan Fund II*	13,282	1.6	1,269	-753	13,799	1.6
<b>Private Credit</b>	<b>23,901</b>	<b>2.9</b>			<b>25,807</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>Growth Assets</b>	<b>643,302</b>	<b>78.8</b>			<b>699,551</b>	<b>79.1</b>
Wells Fargo – RMF	97,711	12.0	-	9,661	107,371	12.1
<b>Bonds</b>	<b>97,711</b>	<b>12.0</b>		<b>9,661</b>	<b>107,371</b>	<b>12.1</b>
LCIV MAC Fund	69,652	8.5	-	3,680	73,332	8.3
<b>Multi Asset Credit</b>	<b>69,652</b>	<b>8.5</b>		<b>3,680</b>	<b>73,332</b>	<b>8.3</b>
<b>Stabilising Assets</b>	<b>167,362</b>	<b>20.5</b>			<b>180,703</b>	<b>20.4</b>
<b>Cash</b>	<b>6,180</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>-2,414</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>TOTAL MERTON PENSION FUND</b>	<b>816,844</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-339</b>	<b>67,516</b>	<b>884,021</b>	<b>100.0</b>

2.2 The Fund's total market value increased by £67.6 m over the quarter, from £817m to £884m. The increase in asset value was largely attributable to the increase in global equities, emerging market equities and bonds. The other assets classes remained essentially stable over the quarter.

2.2 Over the 3 months to 31 December 2020, total Fund assets returned 8.2% compared to the target of 1.2%. This equates to outperformance by 7%. Over the last 12 months, the Fund performance was 12.2%, and 3 year annualised performance was 8.2%. The annual performance target is 4.8%. The table below shows the total fund valuation and the movements in investments during the respective quarter.

## PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

### 1 OCTOBER 2020 TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

Manager / Fund	3 Months %		12 Months %		3 Years % p.a.	
	Fund	B'mark	Fund	B'mark	Fund	B'mark
UBS Passive Equity Fund*	7.7	n/a	6.4	n/a	6.6	n/a
UBS Alternative Beta	7.9	7.9	6.3	5.8	n/a	n/a
LCIV RBC Sustainable Equity Fund	11.9	7.8	24.7	12.3	n/a	n/a
LCIV Global Alpha Growth Fund	11.1	8.6	32.9	13.5	n/a	n/a
BlackRock World Low Carbon Equity Tracker Fund	7.8	7.6	13.2	12.7	n/a	n/a
<b>Global Equities</b>						
UBS HALO EM Fund	15.4	13.2	19.1	14.6	n/a	n/a
LCIV Emerging Market Equity Fund	17.1	13.2	26.6	14.6	n/a	n/a
<b>Emerging Market Equities</b>						
LCIV Global Total Return Fund	3.1	1.6	2.6	6.3	n/a	n/a
LCIV Diversified Growth Fund	6.1	0.9	2.1	3.7	n/a	n/a
<i>Mercer Universe Median***</i>		6.4		5.4		
<i>Mercer Universe Upper Quartile***</i>		7.2		7.6		
<b>Diversified Growth Fund</b>						
UBS Triton Property Unit Trust	1.6	2.1	-0.3	-1.0	3.4	2.3
BlackRock UK Property Fund**	2.3	2.1	-0.8	-1.0	2.4	2.3
<b>Property</b>						
MIRA Infrastructure Global Solution II, L.P.**	0.0	1.8	6.7	7.3	n/a	n/a
Quinbrook Low Carbon Power LP**	14.9	1.8	27.4	7.3	n/a	n/a
JP Morgan Infrastructure Fund	-2.8	2.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Infrastructure</b>						
Permira Credit Solutions IV**	2.4	1.7	3.2	7.0	n/a	n/a
Churchill Middle Market Senior Loan Fund II	-3.8	1.7	-3.7	7.0	n/a	n/a
<b>Private Credit</b>						
<b>Growth Assets</b>						
Wells Fargo - RMF	9.9	n/a	10.0	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Bonds</b>						
LCIV MAC Fund	5.3	1.0	1.9	4.5	n/a	n/a
<i>Mercer Universe Median****</i>		4.9		4.5		
<i>Mercer Universe Upper Quartile****</i>		5.4		6.4		
<b>Multi-Asset Credit</b>						
<b>Stabilising Assets</b>						
<b>TOTAL MERTON PENSION FUND</b>	<b>8.2</b>		<b>12.2</b>		<b>8.2</b>	
<b>Strategic Target (4.8% p.a.)</b>	<b>1.2</b>		<b>4.8</b>		<b>4.8</b>	

2.3 The Fund is an open fund and long-term investment focused. The Fund will continue to work on this basis with the key focus to ESG and maintain a stable contribution rate.

## STRATEGIC ASSET ALLOCATION 31 DECEMBER 2020

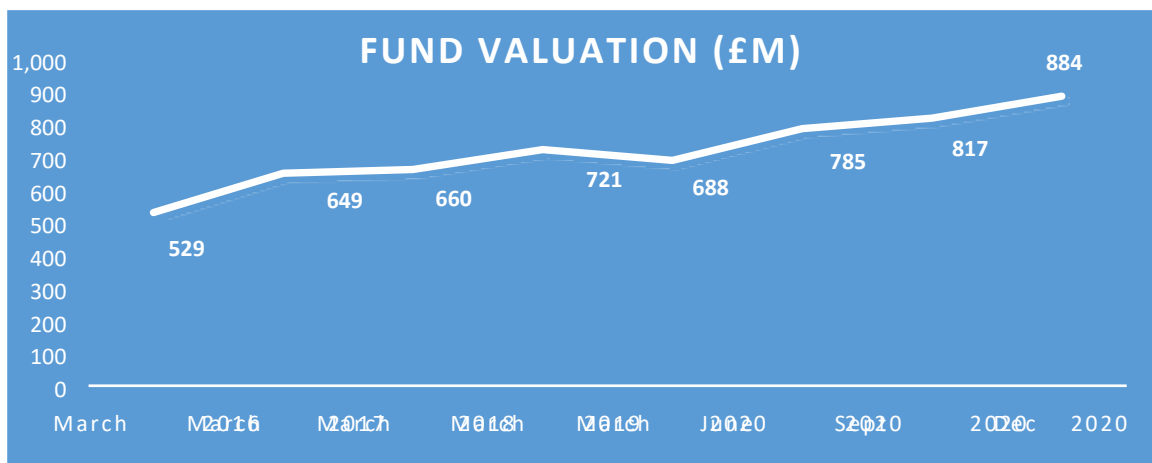
### Allocation by underlying asset class

Asset Class	Market Value £000s	Actual Weight %	Strategic Allocation %	Relative %	Strategic Range %
Global Equities	442,017	50.0	30.0	20.0	15-40
Emerging Market Equities	100,125	11.3	10.0	1.3	0-20
Diversified Growth Fund	71,110	8.0	8.0	0.0	0-15
Property	23,939	2.7	5.0	-2.3	0-10
Private Credit	25,807	2.9	6.5	-3.6	0-10
Infrastructure	36,554	4.1	11.5	-7.4	0-20
RMF – Bonds and Currency	107,371	12.1	15.0	-2.9	0-25
Multi Asset Credit	73,332	8.3	9.0	-0.7	0-15
Cash	3,766	0.4	0.0	0.4	-
Social Impact	-	0.0	5.0	-5.0	0-10
<b>TOTAL MERTON PENSION FUND</b>	<b>884,021</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-</b>	

### Points to note

- The Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) reflects the strategy to be implemented as part of the 2020 Investment Strategy Review; as such, a number of asset classes will be under or overweight for an interim period until the portfolio is fully constructed.
- Total allocation to Global Equities increased by 0.5% to 50.0% over the quarter, being 20.0% overweight relative to its strategic allocation. This allocation will fall over time as the Fund transitions the remaining c. £56.5m from UBS Passive Equity to Private Credit and Infrastructure.

2.4 The following graph illustrates the Fund's market value trend over the past 5 ¾ years and as at 31 December 2020. It shows that in this period the Fund value has appreciated by £355m or 40%.





### **3.0 Market Background/Outlook**

- 3.1 The key events of the fourth quarter of 2020 helped diminish the uncertainties that dominated the year: COVID-19 and politics. Successful vaccine development, the US election results, and the Brexit deal have clarified and brightened the economic outlook heading into 2021, even as a seasonal upturn in COVID-19 cases continues to dampen activity in developed markets in the near term. In 2020, economic damage was driven by the need to flatten the infection curve. The evolving expansion in 2021 is tied to the steepening curve of vaccinations.
- 3.2 Markets ended 2020 on a high note, with a 2.2% rise in global equities in December, in GBP terms. Overall, sentiment was the announcement of multiple successful vaccine candidates and an improving outlook for US fiscal stimulus. That more than offset concerns over rising COVID-19 infections, stricter restrictions in many parts of the world, and the emergence of a new faster-spreading strain of the virus.
- 3.3 More market update on individual asset classes is available on the quarterly performance report – Appendix 1

### **4. OTHER ISSUES AFFECTING THE FUND**

- 4.1 None

### **5. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 All relevant implications are included in the report.

### **6. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 All relevant implications are included in the report.

### **7. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 N/A

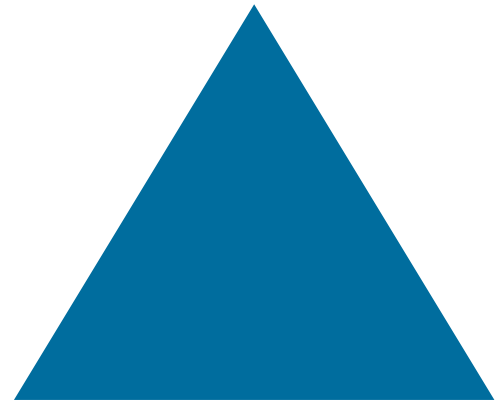
### **8. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Risk management is an integral part of designing the investment portfolio of the fund.

### **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1 Mercer – quarterly performance report.

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**MERTON PENSION FUND**  
**INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW**  
**QUARTER ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2020**

**SHORT REPORT**



# STRATEGIC ASSET ALLOCATION

## 31 DECEMBER 2020

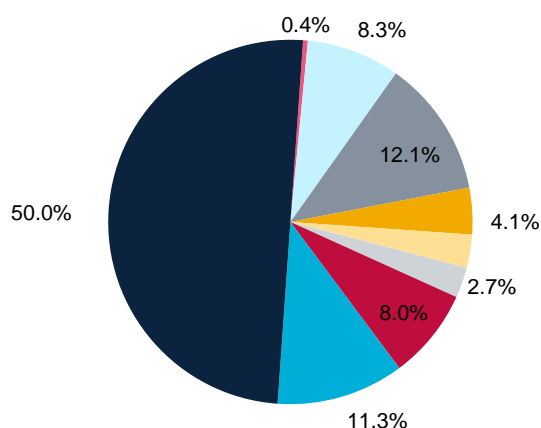
### Allocation by underlying asset class

Asset Class	Market Value £000s	Actual Weight %	Strategic Allocation %	Relative %	Strategic Range %
Global Equities	442,017	50.0	30.0	20.0	15-40
Emerging Market Equities	100,125	11.3	10.0	1.3	0-20
Diversified Growth Fund	71,110	8.0	8.0	0.0	0-15
Property	23,939	2.7	5.0	-2.3	0-10
Private Credit	25,807	2.9	6.5	-3.6	0-10
Infrastructure	36,554	4.1	11.5	-7.4	0-20
RMF – Bonds and Currency	107,371	12.1	15.0	-2.9	0-25
Multi Asset Credit	73,332	8.3	9.0	-0.7	0-15
Cash	3,766	0.4	0.0	0.4	-
Social Impact	-	0.0	5.0	-5.0	0-10
<b>TOTAL MERTON PENSION FUND</b>	<b>884,021</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-</b>	

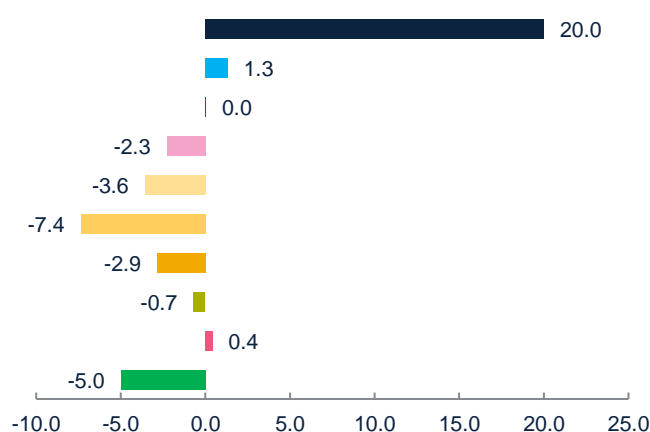
### Points to note

- The Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA) reflects the strategy to be implemented as part of the 2020 Investment Strategy Review; as such, a number of asset classes will be under or overweight for an interim period until the portfolio is fully constructed.
- Total allocation to Global Equities increased by 0.5% to 50.0% over the quarter, being 20.0% overweight relative to its strategic allocation. This allocation will fall over time as the Fund transitions the remaining c. £56.5m from UBS Passive Equity to Private Credit and Infrastructure.

### Actual Asset Allocation as at 31 December 2020 (%)



### Deviation from Strategic Allocation



Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

# VALUATION SUMMARY

## 30 SEPTEMBER TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

Manager / Fund	30 September 2020				31 December 2020	
	Valuation £000s	Weight %	Cashflow £000s	Growth £000s	Valuation £000s	Weight %
UBS Passive Equity	52,177	6.4	-	4,271	56,448	6.4
UBS Alternative Beta	77,283	9.5	-	5,944	83,227	9.4
LCIV RBC Sustainable Equity Fund	93,101	11.4	-	11,119	104,219	11.8
LCIV Global Alpha Growth Fund	96,564	11.8	-	10,738	107,302	12.1
BlackRock World Low Carbon Equity Tracker Fund	84,272	10.3	-	6,549	90,821	10.3
<b>Global Equities</b>	<b>403,396</b>	<b>49.4</b>			<b>442,017</b>	<b>50.0</b>
UBS HALO EM Fund	52,295	6.4	-	8,256	60,551	6.8
LCIV Emerging Market Equity Fund	33,767	4.1	-	5,807	39,574	4.5
<b>Emerging Market Equities</b>	<b>86,062</b>	<b>10.5</b>			<b>100,125</b>	<b>11.3</b>
LCIV Global Total Return Fund	34,381	4.2	-	1,075	35,457	4.0
LCIV Diversified Growth Fund	33,629	4.1	-	2,024	35,653	4.0
<b>Diversified Growth Fund</b>	<b>68,011</b>	<b>8.3</b>			<b>71,110</b>	<b>8.0</b>
UBS Triton Property Unit Trust	16,229	2.0	-	202	16,431	1.9
BlackRock UK Property Fund**	7,403	0.9	-	105	7,508	0.8
<b>Property</b>	<b>23,632</b>	<b>2.9</b>			<b>23,939</b>	<b>2.7</b>
MIRA Infrastructure Global Solution II, L.P.*	8,487	1.0	-861	-	7,626	0.9
Quinbrook Low Carbon Power LP*	11,343	1.4	278	-639	10,982	1.2
JP Morgan Infrastructure Fund**	18,469	2.3	-	-476	17,993	2.0
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>36,410</b>	<b>4.6</b>			<b>36,554</b>	<b>4.1</b>
Permira Credit Solutions IV*	10,619	1.3	1,389	-	12,008	1.4
Churchill Middle Market Senior Loan Fund II*	13,282	1.6	1,269	-753	13,799	1.6
<b>Private Credit</b>	<b>23,901</b>	<b>2.9</b>			<b>25,807</b>	<b>2.9</b>
<b>Growth Assets</b>	<b>643,302</b>	<b>78.8</b>			<b>699,551</b>	<b>79.1</b>
Wells Fargo – RMF	97,711	12.0	-	9,661	107,371	12.1
<b>Bonds</b>	<b>97,711</b>	<b>12.0</b>		<b>9,661</b>	<b>107,371</b>	<b>12.1</b>
LCIV MAC Fund	69,652	8.5	-	3,680	73,332	8.3
<b>Multi Asset Credit</b>	<b>69,652</b>	<b>8.5</b>		<b>3,680</b>	<b>73,332</b>	<b>8.3</b>
<b>Stabilising Assets</b>	<b>167,362</b>	<b>20.5</b>			<b>180,703</b>	<b>20.4</b>
<b>Cash</b>	<b>6,180</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>-2,414</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>TOTAL MERTON PENSION FUND</b>	<b>816,844</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-339</b>	<b>67,516</b>	<b>884,021</b>	<b>100.0</b>

NOTE: ESTIMATED INCOME REINVESTED BY LCIV FUNDS IN THE QUARTER AMOUNTED TO c. £3.59m.

\* Valuation as at 31/12/2020 is based on the 30/09/20 valuation plus cashflows in Q4 2020. Valuation for 31/12/2020 was not available at the time of writing this report.

\*\* Valuation as at 31/12/2020 and cashflows across the quarter are estimated by JP Morgan.

# PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

## PERIOD ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2020

Manager / Fund	3 Months %		12 Months %		3 Years % p.a.	
	Fund	B'mark	Fund	B'mark	Fund	B'mark
UBS Passive Equity Fund*	7.7	n/a	6.4	n/a	6.6	n/a
UBS Alternative Beta	7.9	7.9	6.3	5.8	n/a	n/a
LCIV RBC Sustainable Equity Fund	11.9	7.8	24.7	12.3	n/a	n/a
LCIV Global Alpha Growth Fund	11.1	8.6	32.9	13.5	n/a	n/a
BlackRock World Low Carbon Equity Tracker Fund	7.8	7.6	13.2	12.7	n/a	n/a
<b>Global Equities</b>						
UBS HALO EM Fund	15.4	13.2	19.1	14.6	n/a	n/a
LCIV Emerging Market Equity Fund	17.1	13.2	26.6	14.6	n/a	n/a
<b>Emerging Market Equities</b>						
LCIV Global Total Return Fund	3.1	1.6	2.6	6.3	n/a	n/a
LCIV Diversified Growth Fund	6.1	0.9	2.1	3.7	n/a	n/a
<i>Mercer Universe Median***</i>		6.4		5.4		
<i>Mercer Universe Upper Quartile***</i>		7.2		7.6		
<b>Diversified Growth Fund</b>						
UBS Triton Property Unit Trust	1.6	2.1	-0.3	-1.0	3.4	2.3
BlackRock UK Property Fund**	2.3	2.1	-0.8	-1.0	2.4	2.3
<b>Property</b>						
MIRA Infrastructure Global Solution II, L.P.**	0.0	1.8	6.7	7.3	n/a	n/a
Quinbrook Low Carbon Power LP**	14.9	1.8	27.4	7.3	n/a	n/a
JP Morgan Infrastructure Fund	-2.8	2.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Infrastructure</b>						
Pemira Credit Solutions IV**	2.4	1.7	3.2	7.0	n/a	n/a
Churchill Middle Market Senior Loan Fund II	-3.8	1.7	-3.7	7.0	n/a	n/a
<b>Private Credit</b>						
<b>Growth Assets</b>						
Wells Fargo - RMF	9.9	n/a	10.0	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Bonds</b>						
LCIV MAC Fund	5.3	1.0	1.9	4.5	n/a	n/a
<i>Mercer Universe Median****</i>		4.9		4.5		
<i>Mercer Universe Upper Quartile****</i>		5.4		6.4		
<b>Multi-Asset Credit</b>						
<b>Stabilising Assets</b>						
<b>TOTAL MERTON PENSION FUND</b>						
	<b>8.2</b>		<b>12.2</b>		<b>8.2</b>	
<b>Strategic Target (4.8% p.a.)</b>	<b>1.2</b>		<b>4.8</b>		<b>4.8</b>	

Returns for private market managers are approximate, and may be low initially due to the J-curve effect. Private market investment performance is calculated on an IRR basis. All other manager performance is calculated using time-weighted rate of return.

\* Benchmark suspended in Q2 2018 as a result of transition activity. This impacts 3 year benchmark returns.

\*\* Performance shown to Q3 2020 due to Q4 2020 data unavailability at the time of writing.

\*\*\* Based on the net returns of 48 international Diversified Growth Funds researched by Mercer.

\*\*\*\* Based on the net returns of 16 Multi-Asset Credit Funds researched by Mercer.

# MARKET BACKGROUND

## PERIOD ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2020

### MARKET STATISTICS

Market Returns Growth Assets	3 Mths %	1 Year %	3 Years % p.a.
UK Equities	3.3	0.6	9.0
Overseas Developed	6.7	11.0	14.4
North America	6.8	14.1	15.9
Europe (ex UK)	8.8	8.0	12.8
Japan	2.9	-1.2	10.2
Asia Pacific (ex Japan)	5.9	6.4	12.9
Emerging Markets	3.8	8.3	12.5
Frontier Markets	8.6	4.3	8.0
Hedge Funds**	2.3	2.5	4.3
Commodities**	-2.2	-13.7	-0.2
High Yield**	2.3	6.5	6.1
Emerging Market Debt	8.2	13.1	5.9
Senior Secured Loans**	1.1	2.1	3.4
Cash	0.2	0.7	0.4

Yields as at 31 December 2020	% p.a.
UK Equities	4.13
UK Gilts (>15 yrs)	1.40
Real Yield (>5 yrs ILG)	-1.90
Corporate Bonds (>15 yrs AA)	2.25
Non-Gilts (>15 yrs)	2.78

Market Returns Bond Assets	3 Mths %	1 Year %	3 Years % p.a.
UK Gilts (>15 yrs)	2.0	7.2	3.1
Index-Linked Gilts (>5 yrs)	2.0	9.1	6.0
Corporate Bonds (>15 yrs AA)	2.6	10.7	5.2
Non-Gilts (>15 yrs)	3.1	9.6	5.6

Exchange Rates: Change in Sterling	3 Mths %	1 Year %	3 Years % p.a.
Against US Dollar	-2.3	-3.6	-1.6
Against Euro	-3.7	-1.2	-2.4
Against Yen	-4.9	-6.2	0.0

Inflation Indices	3 Mths %	1 Year %	3 Years % p.a.
Price Inflation – RPI	1.6	2.9	3.3
Price Inflation – CPI	0.9	2.0	2.4
Earnings Inflation*	2.0	3.8	2.9

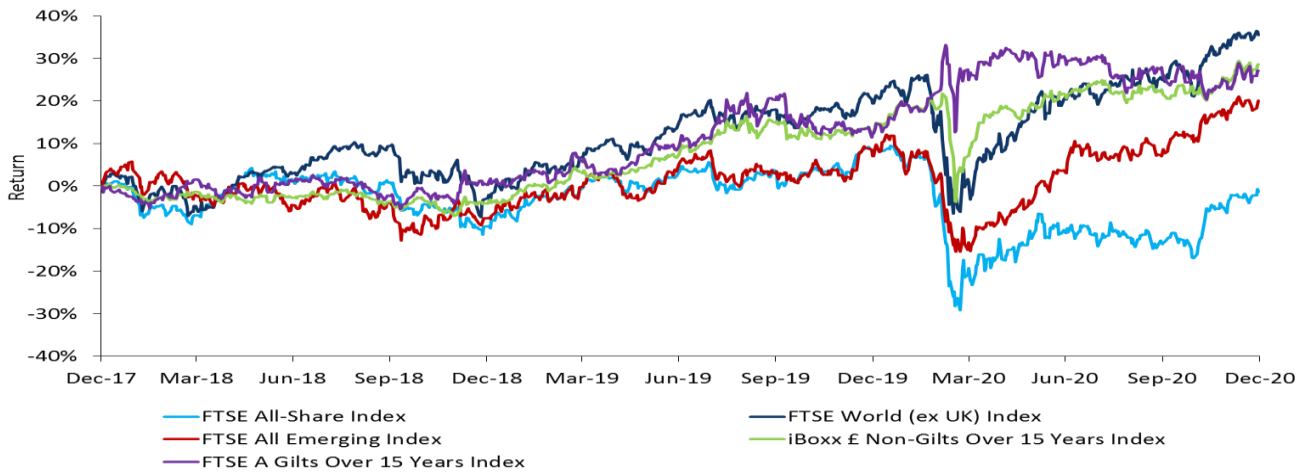
Absolute Change in Yields	3 Mths %	1 Year %	3 Years % p.a.
UK Equities	-0.09	0.49	0.47
UK Gilts (>15 yrs)	-0.08	-0.27	-0.21
Real Yield (>5 yrs ILG)	-0.04	-0.31	-0.51
Corporate Bonds (>15 yrs AA)	-0.11	-0.47	-0.50
Non-Gilts (>15 yrs)	-0.14	-0.38	-0.41

Source: Refinitiv

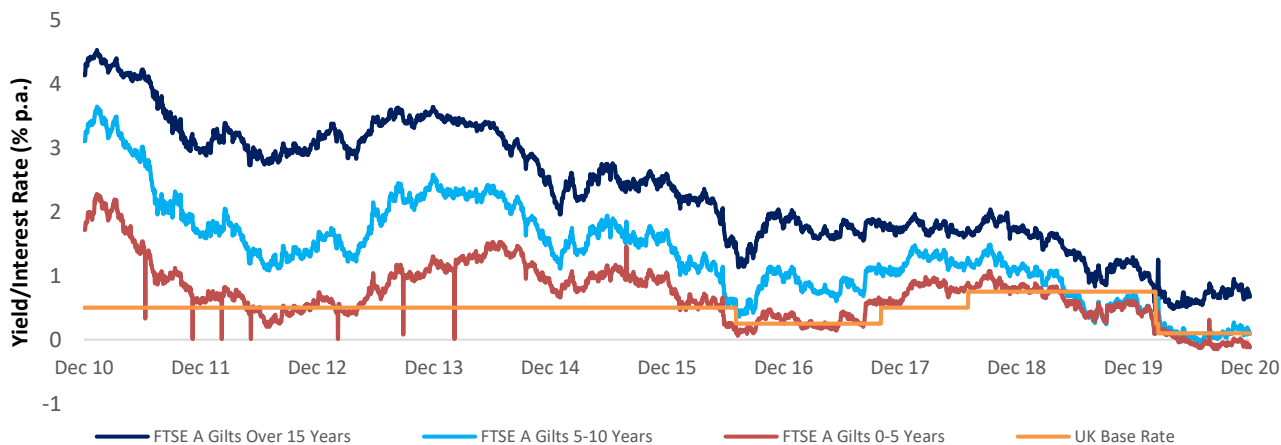
Note: \* Subject to 1 month lag \*\* Local Currency / GBP Hedged

# MARKET SUMMARY CHARTS

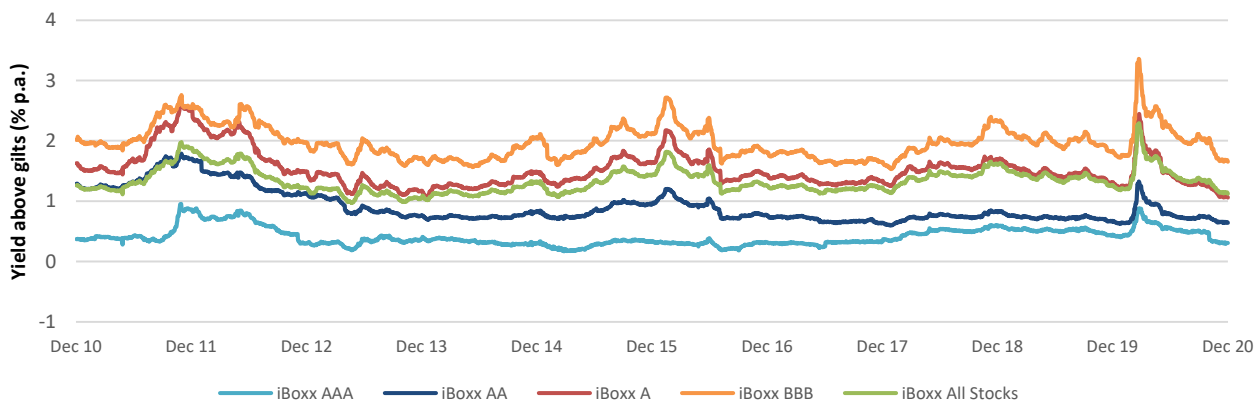
## Market performance – 3 years to 31 December 2020



## UK government bond yields – 10 years to 31 December 2020



## Corporate bond spreads above government bonds – 10 years 31 December 2020



Source: Refinitiv, Datastream



# MARKET EVENTS

What is Happening?		
Asset Class	Positive Factors	Negative Factors
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FTSE 100 posted positive returns over the quarter, with the index outperforming most of its regional peers, as the UK became the first country to approve the COVID-19 vaccine. Agreement on the Brexit trade deal further supported markets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Despite the positive performance posted over Q4 2020, the near-term outlook remains uncertain due to the strict lockdowns imposed across the UK to control the spread of the highly infectious new COVID-19 variant.</li> </ul>
<b>North America</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The S&amp;P 500 rose over the quarter, on the back of positive sentiment around the COVID-19 vaccine coupled with the \$900 billion stimulus package announced in late December.</li> <li>The Federal Reserve reiterated its supportive monetary policy stance, indicating that the current levels of quantitative easing are to continue in the short term.</li> </ul>	
<b>Europe (ex UK)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FTSE Developed Europe (ex UK) Index increased sharply over the quarter due to positive news of an effective vaccine along with approval of the historic €1.8 trillion budget package by the EU, which included the €750 billion recovery fund. Further, the trade deal with the UK was also received positively by markets.</li> </ul>	
<b>Japan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TOPIX index rose over the quarter, driven by similar factors to other markets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Though the TOPIX posted positive returns, Japanese equities overall have not witnessed the same improvement as other markets, given the distinct underperformance of small cap equities over the quarter.</li> </ul>
<b>Asia Pacific (ex Japan)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FTSE Asia Pacific (ex-Japan) Index recorded a positive return over the quarter, continuing a positive trend over recent quarters as the policy response to the virus has generally been more effective than in other regions.</li> </ul>	

## What is Happening?

Asset Class	Positive Factors	Negative Factors
<b>Emerging Markets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerging Equities (EM) equities posted strong returns over Q4 2020. Expected rollout of a vaccine to curb increasing COVID-19 infections, along with a weakened dollar and rise in commodity prices bolstered the market performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of fresh lockdowns in many EM countries, due to the new strain of novel Coronavirus is likely to fuel market volatility in near future.</li> </ul>
<b>Conventional Gilts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Globally, government bond yields were mixed across regions, driven by their respective central bank policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The UK yield curve marginally tilted downwards over the quarter, as positive news around development of a COVID-19 vaccine was hampered due to reinforcement of lockdown measures, following the discovery of a new COVID-19 strain.</li> </ul>
<b>Index-Linked Gilts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UK Index-Linked yields dropped slightly over the quarter, indicating a slight rise in inflation expectations.</li> </ul>	
<b>Corporate Bonds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UK corporate bonds outperformed government bonds over the quarter, as credit spreads contracted due to positive vaccine and political developments.</li> </ul>	
<b>Commodities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Q4, the Bloomberg Commodity Index posted a strong return as positive COVID-19 vaccine news boosted expectations for a global economic rebound. In addition, the combination of a weak dollar and low interest rates is likely to continue to provide the underlying support for commodity prices.</li> </ul>	

## What is Happening?

Asset Class	Positive Factors	Negative Factors
<b>UK Property</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The real estate market continues to cope with the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. The economy improved at a quicker pace during Q4 than expected. As a result, Industrial and commercial properties have seen fundamentals hold steady, and in some cases have even strengthened.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Although activity levels are beginning to pick up, commercial real estate transaction activity remained muted in Q4, with the total volume failing to reach the pre COVID-19 levels.</li></ul>

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- When there is no (or limited) recognised or secondary market, for example, but not limited to property, hedge funds and other derivative based funds or portfolios it may be difficult for you to obtain reliable information about the value of the investments or deal in the investments.
- Where the investment is via a fund of funds the investment manager typically has to rely on the underlying managers for valuations of the interests in their funds.

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# London Borough of Merton Pension Fund

## Asset safety and the role of a Global Custodian

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10<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Paul Webb  
Relationship Manager  
Institutional Investor Group  
Vice President

# A FOCUSED BUSINESS MODEL

Asset servicing, administration, investment, banking and fiduciary trust solutions for sophisticated individual and institutional investors across the globe

## ASSETS:

2,400+

GLOBAL CUSTODY CLIENTS

\$8.5T

UNDER CUSTODY

\$1.2T

UNDER MANAGEMENT

26

LOCATIONS

## MODEL FOCUSED ON THREE CORE BUSINESSES:



## OUR CLIENTS:

- Financial institutions
  - Insurance companies
  - Not-for-profit
  - Pension funds
  - Sovereign entities
- 
- Alternative managers
  - Fiduciary managers
  - Investment managers
- 
- Families
  - Family offices
  - Individuals
  - Private businesses
  - Trusts

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# THE ROLE OF THE CUSTODIAN

*What is a Custodian?*

**A custodian is a financial institution that holds customers' securities for *safekeeping* to prevent them from being stolen or lost. The custodian may hold stocks or other assets in electronic or physical form\***

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Custodians *execute and reflect* the wishes of clients but do not make investment decisions on their behalf

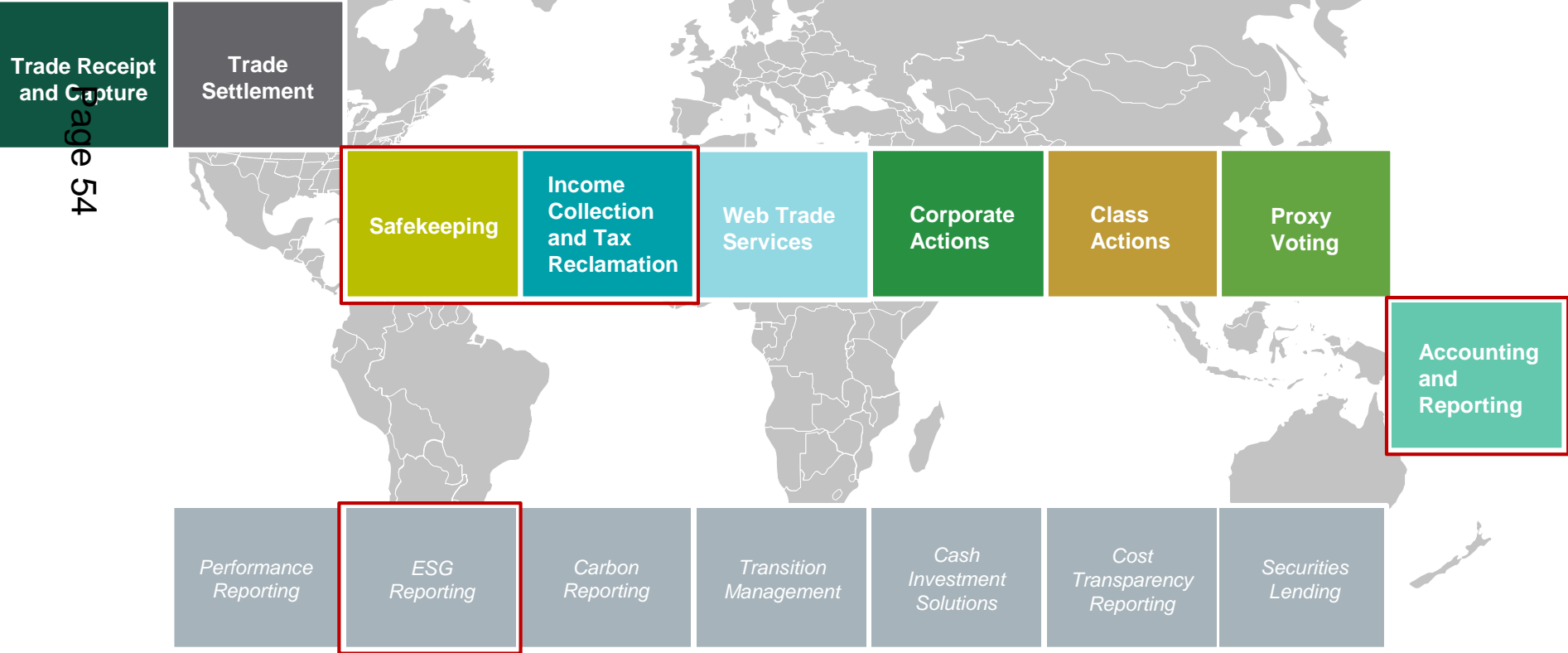
The custodian is the official *record-keeper* responsible for detailing investments held on behalf of the investor. They are best positioned to *report and value* holdings because of their *independence*, infrastructure and internal controls

\* Source: Investopedia

# GLOBAL CUSTODY SERVICES

*Delivering process efficiencies, automation, scale, and flexibility through a comprehensive asset servicing offering.*

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# THE CUSTODY SPECTRUM: SCALE AND SCOPE

*Emphasis on automation, straight-through processing (STP), accuracy and timeliness.*

**25m trades processed annually**

**US\$8.5T under custody**

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**On-line proxy voting in 55 markets**

**Income on payable date in 35 markets**

**103 markets covered**

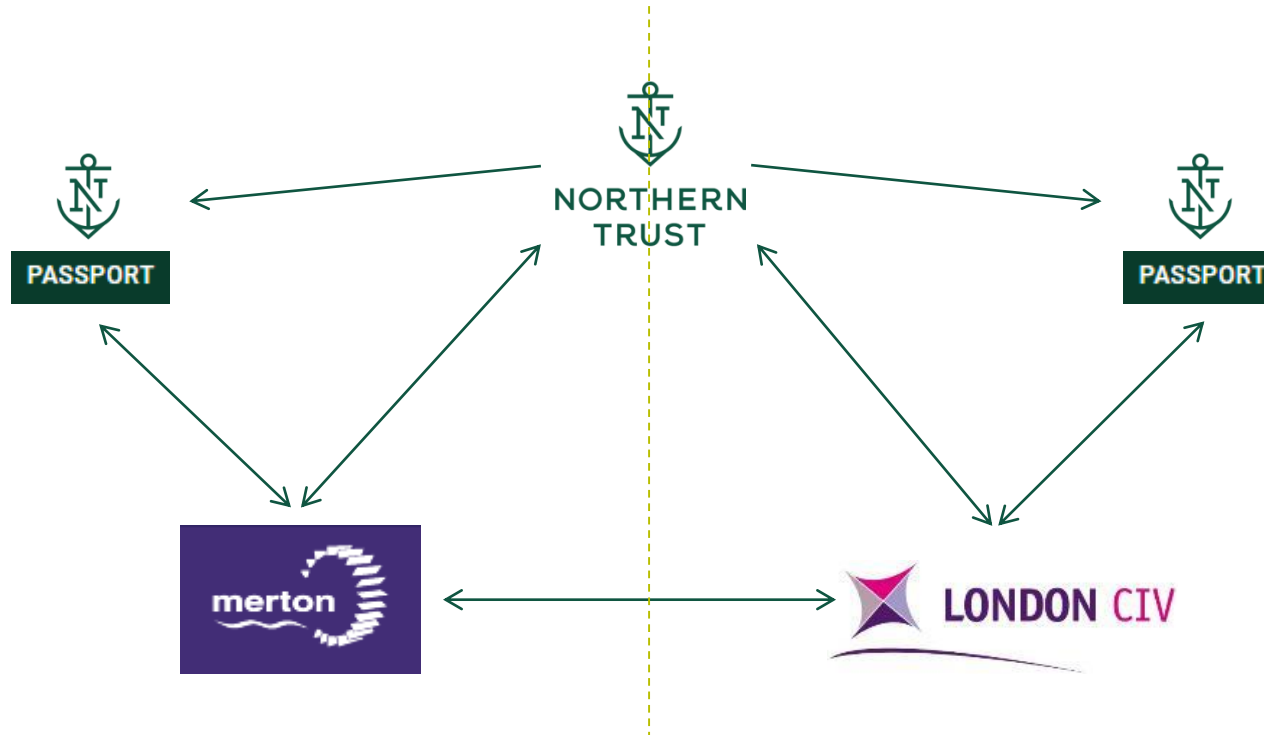
**55,000+ corporate actions every year**

Helping **reduce** risk, **enhancing** efficiency, **minimizing** cost and **ensuring** transparency

# THE CUSTODY RELATIONSHIP

*Northern Trust's unique position as custodian to the London CIV and 21\* London Boroughs allows us to perform a key strategic role in the Pooling initiative whilst remaining independent and maintaining confidentiality*

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*\* As at 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021 Northern Trust has direct custody relationships with 21 of the 32 London Boroughs*

# THE GLOBAL CUSTODIAN: OUR EVOLVING ROLE

*From safe keeping and reporting to governance and oversight, our role continues to evolve.*

## The broader environment:

- Asset pooling (and the LGPS asset pools)
- Investment complexity
- Regulatory demands
- Cost and efficiency pressures
- Technology

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Data aggregation  
and book of record

Governance and control

Regulatory services

Supporting change:  
navigation & partnership

# KEY CLIENT SERVICE PROCESSES

*Focused on solid communication and review processes to make sure that we understand your business and your needs*



## Service level description

**Creation:** During conversion, the client and the Client Service Manager meet to create the service level description

- **Standard:** Provides formal documentation of the client's and Northern Trust's agreed service standards/deliverables
- **Communication:** Details contact names, telephone/fax and emergency numbers



## Relationship reviews

- **Review:** Discuss our performance against the standards detailed in the service level description
- **Response:** Address issues/opportunities as needed and agree upon time frames for execution
- **Result:** Continue the two-way conversation of our service balancing your business needs



## Executive oversight

- **Schedule:** Every client relationship is reviewed at least annually by our senior management
- **Awareness:** Senior management are actively engaged in monitoring service delivery versus expectations
- **Support:** Ensure that relationship between the servicing team and client is working to the optimum level



**NORTHERN  
TRUST**

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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