

Report for ACTION

Item Number: 9

The Royal Borough



Windsor &
Maidenhead

Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	NO - Part I
Title	Adoption of Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy for the Berkshire Pension Board
Responsible Officer(s)	Kevin Taylor
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Member reporting	n/a
For Consideration By	Berkshire Pension Fund Board
Date to be Considered	26 November 2015
Implementation Date if Not Called In	n/a
Affected Wards	None
Keywords/Index	<i>Insert relevant key words</i>

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to request the Pension Board to adopt the Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy as now amended following discussions at the last Pension Board meeting on 3 August 2015.

If recommendations are adopted, how will residents, fund members and other stakeholders benefit?

Benefits to residents, fund members and other stakeholders and reasons why they will benefit	Dates by which they can expect to notice a difference
1. Better governance and administration of the Pension Fund	Ongoing

1. Details of Recommendations

The Berkshire Pension Board was established in accordance with the requirements of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended) by 1 April 2015. The Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policies were discussed at the first meeting of the Board and have since been amended to reflect the points raised previously by the Board. The Board is now required to formally adopt these policies as attached to this report.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Pension Board adopts the attached Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy.

2. Reason for Recommendation(s) and Options Considered

To enable the Pension Board to operate in line with its agreed Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy.

3. Key Implications

The Pension Board is required to operate in line with The Pensions Regulators Code of Practice and other statutory legislation. Failure to do so could leave the Borough open to challenge.

4. Financial Details

There are no financial implications in agreeing to the Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy as all costs relating to the Pension Board are met by the Pension Fund. The implementation of these policies will however help in mitigating the reputational risk should an issue arise which has not been identified or managed.

5. Legal Implications

There are no material legal implications.

6. Value For Money

Not applicable.

7. Sustainability Impact Appraisal

There are no known implications.

8. Risk Management

The Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy needs to be adopted to ensure the Borough fulfils its statutory obligations.

9. Links to Strategic Objectives

Linked to strategic objectives of the Pension Fund in accordance with overriding pension scheme regulations.

10. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

There are no known implications.

11. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:

None.

12. Property and Assets

None.

13. Any other implications:

None.

14. Consultation

Not applicable.

15. Timetable for Implementation

Must be agreed at this meeting to meet statutory deadline.

16. Appendices

See attached Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy.

17. Background Information

The Public Service Pensions Act 2013, The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (as amended), The Pensions Regulators Code of Practice, Shadow Scheme Advisory Board guidance.

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CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PENSION BOARD MEMBERS

Introduction

The Pension Board for the Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund is established under Section 5 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and in accordance with regulation 106 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 as inserted by The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 2015 No. 57).

This document sets out a code of conduct for members of the Board and applies to all members and any other invited regular attendees at Board meetings from all organisations.

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- 1 Public service values
- 2 The role of the chair
- 3 Statutory responsibilities of Board members
- 4 Delegation
- 5 Responsibilities of individual Board members
- 6 Political activity
- 7 Conflicts of interest
- 8 Personal liability of Board members
- 9 Openness and responsiveness
- 10 Accountability for public funds

Schedule A	The seven principles of public life
Schedule B	Managing conflicts of interest
Schedule C	The register of Board members' interests: declaration form

1 Public Service Values

Members of the Pension Board will at all times:

- Observe the highest standards of propriety involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the stewardship of public funds as held by the Pension Fund and the management of these funds with regard to all of the stakeholders that the Pension Board represents;
- Maximise value for money through ensuring that services are delivered in the most economical, efficient and effective way, within available resources, and with independent validation of performance achieved wherever practicable;
- Be accountable to the administering authority, all Pension Fund stakeholders and Pension Fund staff for the activities undertaken by the Pension Board in its stewardship of public funds and the extent to which its performance and objectives have been met;
- Ensure that the Pension Board is at all times compliant with statutory pension legislation and requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

2 The Role of the Chair

The chair has particular responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership on matters such as:

- Formulating the Board's strategy for discharging its statutory duties;
- Encouraging high standards of propriety and promoting efficient and effective use of resources;
- Ensuring that the Board, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of statutory legislation, guidance issued by the Pensions Regulator and guidance provided by relevant officers for the administering authority;
- Representing the views of the Board to all relevant stakeholders and the wider general public;
- Providing an assessment of the performance of individual Board members, on request, when they are considered for re-appointment to the Board or for the appointment of new Board members upon application.

The chair will ensure that the Board meets at regular intervals throughout the year and that the minutes of meetings accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual board members.

The chair will ensure that all members of the Board are at all times compliant with the responsibilities and duties required of them and will promote training for all members of the Board and encourage attendance of these sessions. Furthermore the chair will ensure an induction programme is organised for all new Board members to attend.

3 Statutory Responsibilities of Board members

Members of the Board have statutory responsibility for assisting the administering authority in securing compliance with the Local Government Pension Scheme regulations, any other legislation relating to governance and administration of the Scheme and any requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator in relation to the Scheme.

Board members must:

- Ensure that high standards of governance and administration are observed and maintained at all times;
- Ensure that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any other conditions laid down by the Pensions Regulator;
- Ensure that, in reaching decisions, the Board has taken into account any guidance issued by the appropriate professional advisor;
- Ensure that all policies and practices upon which the Board advises meet with key strategic objectives of the administering authority.

The chair and other members of the Board should each have copies of, or have easy access to:

- The Pension Board member's Handbook (including this Code of Conduct);
- The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (and associated legislation);
- All Pension Fund governance and administration policies;
- The Pension Fund's current Business Plan;
- The Pension Fund's Business Continuity Plan;
- The latest version of the Pension Fund's Annual Report and Accounts;
- The most recent Actuarial Valuation Report.

4 Delegation

To the extent permitted by the Public Service Pension Act 2013, the Superannuation Act 1972 and current Local Government Pension Scheme regulations, responsibility for the day-to-day management and administration of the Scheme is delegated to officers of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead.

The Royal Borough has a written Constitution as required by section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000. Section D of Part 6 of the Constitution sets out the delegated powers under which the Pension Board may operate with regard to Pension Fund investments and the functions delegated to officers involved in managing the Pension Fund.

Decisions taken by individual members or sub-committees of the Board under delegated powers will be recorded in written minutes available to the Board as a whole.

5 Responsibilities of Individual Board members

Individual Board members should be aware of their wider responsibilities as members of the Board. Like others who serve the public, they should follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and which is replicated in Schedule A to this Code of Conduct. Board members must:

- Ensure that high standards of probity are observed at all times;
- Undertake on appointment to comply at all times with this Code of Conduct and with rules relating to the use of public funds;
- Play a full and active role in the work of the Pension Board and act in good faith and in the best interests of the Pension Board;
- Respect the principle of collective decision-making and statutory responsibility and once the Board has made a decision, members should support that decision;
- Deal with all stakeholders fairly, efficiently, promptly, effectively and sensitively and not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests;
- Not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations;
- Declare to the chair any private interests which may be perceived to conflict with their public duties;
- Not misuse official resources (including facilities, equipment, stationery, telephony and other services) for personal gain or for political purposes;
- Comply with any statutory or administrative requirements relating to membership of the Board;
- Ensure that they comply with the requirements of Confidentiality, Disclosure of Information and Data Protection regulations both whilst a member of the Board of once having left the Board.

6 Political Activity

Whilst there is no restriction placed on members of the Pension Board with regard to political activity members of the Board should:

- Be conscious of their responsibilities and seek to abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life (set out in Schedule A – selflessness; integrity; objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership);
- Exercise a proper discretion in relation to the work of the Pension Board and agree not to make political speeches or engage in other political activities that relate directly to pension policy or pension regulations;

- Remain alert to the possibility of a conflict between their political interests and their role on the Pension Board and declare such conflicts as they may arise.

All Board members are expected to:

- Consult the Chair of the Board if they have any queries or doubts in relation to these requirements;
- Inform the Chair of the Board before undertaking any significant political activity; and
- Understand that their appointment as a Board member may be terminated if, in the view of the Chair of the Board, the positions are incompatible.

7 Conflicts of Interest

Board members are entitled to manage their own affairs in privacy. However, their work for the Board must be carried out in an environment that is free from any suggestion of improper influence. Those providing information must be confident that it will be properly handled and conflicts of interest must be identified immediately they arise and be properly managed.

Board members must take steps to ensure that any conflict of interest which they may be subject to does not affect a decision taken by the Pension Board.

The chair and other Board members are expected to declare any personal or business interests which may conflict with their responsibilities as Board members.

There are two key requirements:

- 1 to declare any potential conflict of interest which arises in the course of their work as a Board member, whenever it becomes relevant;
- 2 to complete a declaration of interests.

Guidance on these requirements is set out in Schedule B with a declaration form for the registration of Board member interests found in Schedule C.

8 Personal Liability of Board members

The Government has indicated that individual members of the boards of public bodies who have acted honestly and in good faith will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in execution or purported execution of their board functions, save where the person has acted recklessly.

9 Openness and Responsiveness

The administering authority is subject to a number of legal requirements in relation to the information it holds including the Public Service Pension Act 2013, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. Subject to these requirements, Board members are expected to conduct all their dealings in an open and responsible way. This should include:

- Making publicly available annual reports;
- Where practical and appropriate, holding open meetings;

- Releasing minutes or summary reports of meetings;
- Following best practice in making available information to all stakeholders and the public in general through the Berkshire Pension Fund website;
- Maintaining well publicised and easy-to-use complaints procedures.

10 *Accountability for Public Funds*

Board members have a duty to ensure the safeguarding of public funds and the proper custody of assets which have been publicly funded. They must carry out their fiduciary responsibilities effectively and at all times conduct its operations as economically and efficiently as possible with full regard the relevant statutory provisions set out by the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013.

The Board should ensure that it can demonstrate that its resources are used to good effect, with propriety, and without grounds for criticism that public funds are being used for private, partisan or political purposes.

SCHEDULE A – The seven principles of public life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merits.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

SCHEDULE B – Managing conflicts of interest

This schedule provides guidance as follows:

- 1 What is a conflict of interest?
- 2 The register of Board members' interests;
- 3 Definition of terms used in this schedule;
- 4 Definition of terms used in the register of interests declaration form.

1 What is a conflict of interest?

A conflict of interest arises when the work carried out on behalf of the Pension Board could be affected by a personal interest or personal association. It becomes significant if an independent third party might reasonably take the view that there is a risk that a Board member's resultant actions (or those of a personal associate) might be affected, whether or not they are affected.

Conflicts of interest may arise for example as a result of:

- A direct or indirect financial interest;
- A direct or indirect financial interest held by a commercial undertaking with which the Board member has connections;
- A significant relationship with those affected or likely to be affected by the matter;
- The interests of a connected person;
- An expectation of future interest (for example, future employment);
- In some cases, a previous association on the matter;
- An interest arising from a common interest grouping, such as a trade association, trades union membership or other private society.

The common law requires:

- That members of public bodies should not participate in the discussion or determination of matters in which they have a direct pecuniary interest; and
- That when an interest is not of a direct pecuniary kind, members should consider whether participation in the discussion or determination of a matter would suggest a real danger of bias. This should be interpreted in the sense that members might either unwittingly or otherwise unfairly regard with favour or disfavour the case of a party to the matter under consideration. In considering whether a real danger of bias exists in relation to a particular decision, members should assess whether they, or connected persons, are likely to be affected more than the generality of those affected by the decision in question.

Where, in accordance with the above, members do not participate in the discussion or determination of a matter, they should withdraw from the meeting, even if held in public,

when requested to do so by the chair of the meeting. This is because the continued presence of someone who has declared an interest might be thought likely to influence the judgement of other members present.

Whether or not Board members are able, in light of the consideration above, to participate in the discussion or determination of a matter, they should declare as soon as practicable after a meeting begins if they have an interest, pecuniary or other, in a matter being considered. They should also disclose any interests in it which they are aware on the part of connected persons and persons living in the same households as the Board member. In addition, Board members should consider whether they need to disclose relevant interests of other persons or organisations which members of the public might reasonably think could influence the member's judgement.

In addition to the disclosures in the register of interests, Board members also have a duty to declare to the chair any potential conflict of interest which arises in the course of their work whenever it becomes relevant.

2 *Personal dealings in shares and related investments*

Board members are expected to observe the highest standards in relation to their personal dealings and should declare any conflicts of interest that they feel may arise as a result of carrying out their work for the Pension Board.

All information relating to these arrangements will be treated as confidential.

3 *The register of board members' interests*

The purpose of this register is to ensure that the administering authority has a record of Board members' declarations of interest. It provides a mechanism whereby possible conflicts of interests can be identified. The existence of the register does not remove the obligation on Board members to declare interests as they arise in the course of the Board's work.

The register will list all interests that stakeholders and members of the public in general might reasonably think could influence Board members' judgement:

- Direct pecuniary interests;
- Indirect pecuniary interests (indirect pecuniary interests arise from connections with bodies which have a direct pecuniary interest or from being a partner of, or being employed by, a person with such interests);
- Non-pecuniary interests that relate closely to the Pension Fund's activities.

The register will be held by the administering authority. A summary of the register will be published and may be disclosed to the internal auditor, the administering authority's complaints adjudicator or the Secretary of State in the event that a complaint is raised concerning the conduct or judgement of a Board member.

Board members are expected to ensure their register of interests declaration is kept up to date.

4 Definitions

4.1 Terms used in Schedule B

Dealings	includes purchase, sales, subscriptions, acceptance of take-over and other offers and all other methods of acquiring or disposing of shares and related investments or any rights or interests in shares and related investments.
Significant relationship	means a relationship which an independent third party might reasonably consider could affect the actions taken or the actions taken by a personal associate (whether or not it does actually affect the actions taken).
Connected persons	means spouses and partners, children and step-children under the age of 18, persons for whom Board members take significant financial decisions and trusts of which a Board member is a 'trustee'.
Share and related investments	there is no requirement to seek permission to deal or to declare an interest in relation to collective investment schemes (such as unit trusts and OEICS including any held in a general PEP or ISA) and other investments where the Board member has no direct influence on the management of the investment.
Relevant organisation	means those companies or any company within the same group of companies, either seeking to be or currently listed in the UK and/or quoted and/or regulated in the UK as appropriate and includes those seeking clearance, or the subject or monitoring, enforcement or any other regulatory intervention by the Pensions Regulator.

4.2 Terms used in the register of interests declaration form

Current employment or office	refers to any post, other employment or fiduciary positions held by a Board member or held by a Board member in the past five years in connection with a relevant organisation.
Directorships	means remunerated directorships of companies, public or private, other remunerated posts and public appointments currently held by a Board member or connected persons and which come within the Pension Fund's sphere of operation.
Non-profit organisation	refers to offices held by a Board member in non-profit making organisations or trade associations or bodies whose activities could come within the Pension Fund's sphere of operations and responsibilities.

Consultancies and sponsorships refers to any current professional clients of a Board member whose business interests could come within the sphere or work of the Pension Fund.

Declarable shareholdings means the names of companies or other bodies in which a Board member has a beneficial interest or shareholding. This does not include shareholdings through collective investment schemes (e.g. unit trusts) or other arrangements where the member has no influence on financial management of the investment.

Occupational pension schemes means the names of any occupational pension scheme of which a Board member or connected person is a scheme member or 'trustee' or in which they hold office.

Personal/stakeholder pensions refers to the names of providers of personal or stakeholder pensions held by a Board member or a connected person.

SCHEDULE C – Register of Board members' interests

Declaration Form

Name	
Education/Professional Qualifications/Decorations	
Trade or Profession	
Current employment or office	
Directorships	
Non-profit organisations with a link to the Berkshire Pension Fund	
Consultancies and sponsorships	
Trades union membership	
Occupational pension schemes	
Personal or stakeholder pensions	

Signed: _____

Date: _____

