



# **Devon Pension Fund Statement of Investment Principles**

**Updated June 2015**

**Approved by the Investment and Pension Fund Committee**

**On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

# Statement of Investment Principles

## 1. Introduction

Since July 2000, all pension funds have had to prepare and publish a Statement of Investment Principles (SIP). This document is designed to explain to fund members, employers and any other interested parties how the assets are managed and the factors that are taken into account in so doing. The Statement has been prepared in accordance with **Regulation 12 of The Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009 (SI 2009 No. 3093)**.

The Devon County Council Pension Fund has had an approved Statement of Investment Principles since February 2000. The latest version is made available on the Council's website.

The SIP has been prepared, in line with guidance received from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Pensions Panel publication, '**Principles for Investment Decision Making and Disclosure in the LGPS in the United Kingdom 2009 – A Guide to the Application of the 2008 Myners Principles to the Management of LGPS Funds**'. It is accepted that these six principles form the code of best practice for LGPS Funds; this SIP reports the extent of compliance with each of the six principles.

In July 2010 the Financial Reporting Council issued the UK Stewardship Code, which sets out seven principles around corporate governance, and the engagement of pension funds and their fund managers with the companies that they have invested in. The Devon Pension Fund supports the code, and policies in relation to the seven principles are set out within the SIP.

The SIP also has to indicate the extent to which social, environmental and ethical issues are taken into account in the management process. These requirements do not oblige the Fund to adopt particular management policies. They are simply intended to allow the reader to understand the extent to which they influence the Investment Principles and, where they are not taken into account, why they are considered inappropriate.

Pension funds are not all the same. There are perfectly valid reasons why their Investment Principles may be different. They have to reflect how well funded the pension fund is and its maturity (the balance between contributors and pensioners). They will, inevitably, also reflect the views of those responsible for its management, particularly their attitude to risk. The objective at the end of the day is to ensure that the fund can meet all its future pension liabilities, but there are different ways of achieving this.

This Statement must be revised from time to time by the Administering Authority in accordance with any material change in policy.

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## 2. Decision Takers

**Devon County Council** - is the Administering Authority and is responsible for managing the Fund in accordance with the Regulations.

**Investment & Pension Fund Committee** - this County Council Committee, which includes Unitary and District Council representatives and those of the contributors and the pensioners (non-voting) carries out the role of the Administering Authority. It has full delegated authority to make decisions on Pension Fund matters. In particular it:

- decides the Investment Principles;
- determines the fund management structure;
- reviews investment performance;
- appoints and removes investment managers.

**Pension Board** – while not a decision making body, the Pension Board has been set up to assist the Administering Authority in securing compliance with legislation and regulation and the effective and efficient governance of the Fund. The Board can make recommendations to the Investment and Pension Fund Committee or report serious concerns directly to the Pensions Regulator.

**Independent Investment Advisor** - this person is an experienced investment professional who provides independent advice to the Committee on all aspects of its business.

**Devon County Council County Treasurer** - advises the Committee and ensures that it is informed of regulatory changes and new developments in the investment field and implements the Committee's decisions.

**Investment Managers** - carry out the management brief approved by the Committee, within the agreed risk parameters, to achieve the agreed performance targets.

**The Fund's Actuary** - calculates the solvency of the Fund and fixes the employers' contribution rates at a level that will aim to achieve 100% funding in the long-term. As part of this exercise assumptions will be made about future investment returns.

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## 3. Risk and Reward

Successful investment involves taking considered risks, acknowledging that the returns achieved will to a large extent reflect the risks taken. There are short-term risks of loss arising from default by brokers, banks or custodians but the Fund is careful only to deal with reputable counter-parties to minimise any such risk.

Longer-term investment risk includes the **absolute risk** of reduction in the value of assets through negative returns (which cannot be totally avoided if all major markets fall). It also includes the risk of under-performing the Fund's performance benchmark (**relative risk**).

Different types of investment have different risk characteristics and have historically yielded different rewards (returns). Equities (company shares) have produced better long-term returns than fixed interest stocks but they are more volatile and have at times produced negative returns for long periods.

At Fund level, investment risk is managed through:

- Diversification of types of investment and investment managers.
- Explicit mandates governing the activity of investment managers.
- The appointment of an Independent Investment Advisor.

The external investment managers can control relative risk to a large extent by using statistical techniques to forecast how volatile their performance is likely to be compared to the benchmark. The Fund can monitor this risk and impose limits.

The ultimate risk is that the Fund's assets produce worse returns than assumed by the Actuary, who values the assets and liabilities every three years, and that as a result, the solvency of the Fund deteriorates. To guard against this the Investment Principles seek to control risk but not to eliminate it. It is quite possible to take too little risk and thereby to fail to achieve the required performance.

The investment managers need to be given appropriate levels of discretion to switch between investments to reduce the risk of under-performance.

Operational risk to the Fund is managed through:

- A strong employer covenant.
- The use of a Global Custodian for custody of assets.
- Having formal contractual arrangements with investment managers.
- Comprehensive risk disclosures within the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- Internal and external audit arrangements.

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## 4. Investment Principles

### 1. Risk

Whilst some monies may be invested in high risk investments from time to time, these will only represent a small part of the Fund. Total fund risk will be monitored and controlled (as far as possible) at a level that is considered appropriate for a pension fund.

### 2. Types of Investment

The majority of the Fund's investments will be made in stocks that are quoted on recognised Stock Exchanges and are easily realisable. Where investments are made in other vehicles (e.g. unit trusts or other pooled funds) there must be an effective way of redeeming them. It is recognised, however, that certain stocks may sometimes become illiquid or unrealisable.

Investments should normally be income producing although this income may be automatically reinvested. Non income producing assets, such as gold or works of art will not normally be purchased. The decision whether or not to hold an asset that is considered to be suitable will only be made on investment grounds.

### 3. The balance between different types of Investment

The Fund will at all times hold a widely diversified portfolio of investments to reduce risk.

Following a review in November 2011, and a further update in June 2013, the Fund has adopted the following strategic asset allocation as an overall benchmark:

- Fixed Interest 16%
- Equities 55%
- Diversified Growth Funds 15%
- Alternatives (Property and Infrastructure) 14%

A core portion of the allocation to equities, 40% of the total Fund, will be managed externally on a passive basis. This portfolio will contain a large number of stocks spread over a wide cross section of markets. Within markets, the Fund's holdings will closely track the relevant market indices. 20% of the passive allocation (8% of the total Fund) will track alternative indices based on quality, value and low volatility criteria, rather than the market capitalisation of the shares, with the intention of generating outperformance in comparison with the market capitalisation indices.

The remainder of the assets will be managed (both internally and externally) on a more active basis. The external managers will include both specialist managers, who concentrate on specific sectors of the market and diversified growth fund managers, who have considerable discretion over the choice of types of investment. (A list of current managers and the benchmarks to

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which they operate is set out in Appendix B).

The use of diversified growth funds, which will include both equities and fixed interest assets, within a wider range of assets, will provide a greater level of flexibility for the Fund in enabling a more active asset allocation to take advantage of market trends.

The target allocation for Property is 10% of the Fund.

Asset allocation varies over time through the impact of market movements and cash flows. The overall balance is monitored regularly, and if the allocations move more than 2.5% away from the target consideration is given to rebalancing the assets taking into account market conditions and other relevant factors.

The Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009 impose limits on certain types of investments. The regulations prescribe lower limits which should not be exceeded, unless the Committee decides to adopt a higher limit as provided for by regulation 14 (3). With regard to the limit on investments in any single insurance contract, the Fund has adopted the higher limit of 35% on an open ended basis. This relates to the Life Funds managed by UBS within the passive portfolio, which exceed the lower limit of 25% following the award of a mandate to manage an alternative indexation portfolio within the Life Funds. The decision to invest in the alternative indexation mandate was taken on the basis that it is a separate investment from the longstanding passive mandate with different risk characteristics. Should the fund wish to take further advantage of the higher limits, the Administering Authority has to get specific approval from the Investment & Pension Fund Committee on each occasion, having met certain requirements.

#### 4. The expected return on investments

It is not possible to control the absolute return on investments but over the long-term the Fund seeks to achieve a real return at least as good as that assumed by the Actuary from time to time in his Valuations. In the short term, returns are measured against a bespoke benchmark based on the Fund's strategic asset allocation. As the Fund is not prepared to accept a higher level of overall risk than the average pension fund, it cannot expect to achieve much higher returns. The strategy described above is expected to outperform the benchmark by 0.5% per annum on a consistent basis.

#### 5. The realisation of investments

Only investments that can be realised are considered to be suitable for the Fund. Pension funds are long-term investors and it is not intended that the fund will be very active in the way it manages most of its investments, particularly in the passive portfolio. Historically employer and employee contributions have exceeded pensions in payment. Rising pensions in payment mean that this is no longer the case, but the Fund also receives significant investment income which can also be used to pay pensions as required. Consequently it is unlikely that the Fund

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will need to sell assets to pay pensions in the foreseeable future. Any asset sales will therefore be based on investment considerations, such as perceived over-valuation or a desire to adjust investment risks.

## 6. Stock Lending

The Fund participates in stock lending of its segregated assets, as permitted under Regulation 3 (8) and 3 (9) of the LGPS (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009, and within the limits specified in these regulations.

Stock lending is carried out via the Fund Custodian, who provides security and protection to mitigate risk through an indemnity and the holding of collateral against the stocks lent.

## 7. Changes to Investment Principles

Although the Investment Principles are intended to remain in place over the long-term, there will be occasions when they need to be revised. The Investment and Pension Fund Committee will review them at regular intervals.

## 5. Corporate Governance – Effective Engagement

The Devon Pension Fund is fully supportive of the UK Stewardship Code, published in July 2010, and the Committee accepts the rights and responsibilities that attach to being a shareholder and will play an active role in overseeing the management of the companies in which it invests.

The following section sets out the Fund's policy in relation to the seven principles of the UK Stewardship Code:

1. Institutional investors should publicly disclose their policy on how they will discharge their stewardship responsibilities.

The Devon Pension Fund aims to be a supportive, long term shareholder. The Committee will support the latest widely accepted standards of Best Practice in Corporate Governance and will expect the companies in which it invests to comply therewith. It will use its influence as a shareholder to persuade the Directors of any companies that do not already comply to adopt Best Practice.

The Fund will expect its external investment managers to:

- (a) Seek to develop a long-term relationship and an understanding of mutual objectives and concerns with the companies in which we invest.
- (b) Meet regularly with those companies to discuss corporate strategy and objectives, and to make an assessment of management performance.
- (c) Have in place processes in place to ensure access to accurate information regarding companies in which we invest, including the approach to corporate governance adopted by the company.
- (d) Intervene when a company fails to meet expectations in terms of traditional governance inputs (such as board structures) but also the outputs of governance such as acquisitions and operational performance.

The Fund's external investment managers will judge whether to support a company by subscribing to a rights issue, accepting a take-over bid or other similar events purely on investment grounds.

2. Institutional investors should have a robust policy on managing conflicts of interest in relation to stewardship and this policy should be publicly disclosed.

External investment managers will be expected to act in the Fund's interests when considering matters such as engagement and voting. The Fund will expect its fund managers to:

- (a) Put in place and maintain a policy for managing conflicts of interest.
- (b) Ensure that any significant conflicts of interest are disclosed.



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## 3. Institutional investors should monitor their investee companies.

The Fund will expect its external investment managers to

- (a) Satisfy themselves, to the extent possible, that the investee company's board and committee structures are effective, and that independent directors provide adequate oversight, including by meeting the chairman and, where appropriate, other board members.
- (b) Maintain comprehensive records of governance engagements, votes cast and the reasons for voting against management or abstaining.
- (c) Attend General Meetings selectively when they consider it is of value to our investment to do so.

## 4. Institutional investors should establish clear guidelines on when and how they will escalate their activities as a method of protecting and enhancing shareholder value.

The Fund will expect its external investment managers to escalate activities if a company fails to meet expectations. The most important issues for us are:

- Strategy - including acquisitions and the deployment of capital
- Operational performance
- Quality of the Board
- Succession planning
- Health & Safety
- Risk management
- Remuneration
- Corporate social responsibility

The Fund will expect its external investment managers to engage with the board in order to better understand what is behind such concerns. Engagement should be regularly reviewed and its success assessed.

## 5. Institutional investors should be willing to act collectively with other investors where appropriate.

As a general rule we believe the effectiveness of engagement is considerably increased when we find common ground with other shareholders. The Fund will therefore encourage its fund managers to work with collective bodies or collaborate with other shareholders if they believe this will increase the chance of success.

The Fund is a member of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF), an association of local authority pension funds who act collectively with a view to achieving the highest standard of corporate governance and corporate social responsibility amongst the companies in which they invest.

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6. Institutional investors should have a clear policy on voting and disclosure of voting activity.

The Council will instruct its external investment managers to vote at all meetings of UK companies where they have sufficient information to form a view on the issues involved. Voting will be extended to overseas companies when practicable.

The Council will instruct its external investment managers to vote in favour of all resolutions put forward by the Directors of a company unless they are not in the shareholder's interests (e.g. Long Term Incentive Plans with targets that are not demanding enough or where excessive remuneration is proposed) or expose the company to undue risk or they condone bad practice (e.g. Director's service contracts in excess of one year) in which cases it will instruct them to vote against.

7. Institutional investors should report periodically on their stewardship and voting activities.

The Investment and Pension Fund Committee will monitor the fund managers' engagement with the companies they have invested in, through the regular reporting arrangements in place. In addition the external investment managers will be requested to produce an annual summary of their engagement activity for inclusion within the Devon Pension Fund Annual Report.

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## 6. Corporate Governance – Social, Environmental and Ethical Issues

The Committee has considered the extent to which it wishes to take into account social, environmental or ethical issues in the selection, retention and realisation of investments and has adopted the following principles:-

1. Future investments will not be banned nor existing investments sold solely on social, environmental or ethical grounds.
2. Other than the monies set aside for investment in Ethical Unit Trusts (up to 1% of the Fund), investment will not be made in companies solely because of their good record in social, environmental or ethical issues. Many of the Fund's investments would qualify as ethical, however, even though not chosen for that reason.
3. It is recognised, however, that the interests of investors on social etc. grounds may coincide with those solely on investment grounds in which case there will be no conflict of interest. Indeed, the Committee believes that in the long run, socially responsible and fiduciary investment will tend to come together since adverse performance on social, environmental or ethical issues will ultimately be reflected in share prices.
4. The Fund will encourage its Investment Managers to adopt a policy of engagement with companies to make its view known to their management and to seek to change their behaviour where necessary. This is more likely to be successful if the Fund continues to be a shareholder.
5. Although social, environmental and ethical issues rarely arise on the agendas of company Annual General Meetings, where an issue does arise the Council's external investment managers will only vote if it is in the Fund's interest on investment grounds. Some issues may be incorporated into generally accepted Corporate Governance Best Practice (e.g. the inclusion of an Environmental Statement in the Annual Report and Accounts). In this case the Council will instruct its external investment managers to vote against the adoption of the Annual Report, if no such statement is included.

## 7. Compliance with the Myners Principles

Regulations made by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) require the SIP to comment on the compliance with the Myners principles.

In 2007, the Government asked the National Association of Pension Funds (NAPF) to review the extent to which pension fund trustees are applying the Myners principles. The NAPF made a series of recommendations which included replacing the previous ten Principles with six high level Principles.

The Committee has considered the 6 Myners Principles (set out in Appendix A) and is of the view that the Fund currently complies with the spirit of these recommendations. Further details are given below on each of the 6 principles.

### 1. Effective Decision Making

The County Council has a designated Committee whose terms of reference are to discharge the duties of the Council as the Administering Authority. There is a training programme for Committee members. They also have external and internal advisers and are supported by an experienced in-house team to oversee the day to day running of the Fund. Representatives of the Fund's contributors and pensioners, although not voting members, advise the Committee on the views of their members. The Administering Authority is supported by a Pension Board, whose role is to assist them in securing compliance with legislation and regulation and the effective and efficient governance of the Fund.

### 2. Clear Objectives

This document sets out clear objectives in relation to the split of assets between Equities and Bonds, investment in Diversified Growth Funds, and other assets such as Property.

The Committee is aware of the Fund's current deficit and its investment policy is designed to gradually improve solvency whilst keeping employers' contribution rates as constant as possible. A key objective of the Fund's strategy is to manage the fund to ensure a healthy cash-flow for the foreseeable future.

### 3. Risk and Liabilities

The Committee has considered the mix of assets that it should adopt and the level of risk (volatility of returns) it is prepared to accept. This document sets out current policy, which is designed to improve the Fund's solvency while only accepting moderate risk.

The Committee will regularly review the benefits of using the full range of asset classes.

### 4. Performance Assessment

In the award of mandates to individual investment managers the Investment and Pension Fund Committee has set benchmarks for

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each asset class, as set out in Appendix B. The total fund is measured against a bespoke benchmark based on the Fund's strategic asset allocation.

The Fund engages an investment analytics company to provide an independent measurement of investment returns. These are used for comparison purposes against specific and peer group benchmarks.

The Investment and Pension Fund Committee receive quarterly performance reports and are therefore able to consider the performance of all asset classes and managers on a regular basis. These considerations form the basis of decision making.

## 5. Responsible Ownership

Section 6 of this document, on Corporate Governance – Effective Engagement, sets out the Fund's commitment to responsible ownership. The management agreements with the Fund's investment managers include provision for them to engage with companies in compliance with the terms of the Combined Code and the Council's voting policy as set out in this document. As already noted above the Fund is also a member of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF). The Fund also has investments in specialist pooled funds that are specifically designed to be activist. This document sets out the Council's policy on voting.

## 6. Transparency and Reporting

This Statement of Investment Principles is available to any interested party on request. The latest version is available on the Council's website.

In accordance with LGPS (Administration) Regulations 2008, the Devon Pension Fund has published a Communications Policy Statement, which can be viewed at:

<https://www.peninsulapensions.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Devon-Pension-Fund-Communications-Policy.pdf>, which describes the Fund's policy on:

- Providing information to members, employers and representatives,
- The format, frequency and method of distributing such information,
- The promotion of the Fund to prospective members and their employing bodies.

The Fund will continue to develop its website, which it considers to be its primary communications channel.

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## Appendix A: The 2008 Myners Principles

### **Principle 1: Effective decision-making**

- Administering authorities should ensure that decisions are taken by persons or organisations with the skills, knowledge, advice and resources necessary to take them effectively and monitor their implementation.
- Those persons or organisations should have sufficient expertise to be able to evaluate and challenge the advice they receive, and manage conflicts of interest.

### **Principle 2: Clear objectives**

- Overall investment objectives should be set for the fund that take account of the scheme's liabilities, the potential impact on local council tax payers, the strength of the covenant of the participating employers, and the attitude to risk of both the administering authority and the scheme employers, and these should be clearly communicated to advisers and investment managers.

### **Principle 3: Risk and liabilities**

- In setting and reviewing their investment strategy, administering authorities should take account of the form and structure of liabilities.
- These include the implications for council tax payers, the strength of the covenant of participating employers, the risk of their default and longevity risk.

### **Principle 4: Performance assessment**

- Administering authorities should arrange for the formal measurement of the performance of the investments, investment managers and advisers.
- Administering authorities should also periodically make a formal policy assessment of their own effectiveness as a decision-making body and report on this to scheme members.

### **Principle 5: Responsible ownership**

- Administering authorities should adopt, or ensure their investment managers adopt, the Institutional Shareholders' Committee (ISC) Statement of Principles on the responsibilities of shareholders and agents.
- A statement of the authority's policy on responsible ownership should be included in the Statement of Investment Principles.
- Administering authorities should report periodically to members on the discharge of such responsibilities.

### **Principle 6: Transparency and reporting**

- Administering authorities should act in a transparent manner, communicating with stakeholders on issues relating to their management of investment, its governance and risks, including performance against stated objectives.
- Administering authorities should provide regular communication to members in the form they consider most appropriate.

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## Appendix B: Current Managers and Mandates

Manager	Mandate	Target
Aberdeen Asset Managers Ltd	Global Equity	Outperform FTSE World Index by 3% per annum over rolling 3 and 5 year periods
Aberdeen Asset Managers Ltd	Global Emerging	Outperform MSCI Emerging Markets Index by 2-4% per annum over rolling 3 year periods
State Street Global Advisors Ltd	Passive Equities	Performance in line with FTSE World market specific indices
UBS Global Asset Management (UK) Ltd	Passive Equities	Performance in line with FTSE All Share Index
UBS Global Asset Management (UK) Ltd	Passive Equities (Alternative Indexation)	Performance in line with FTSE RAFI / MSCI World Quality / MSCI World Minimum Volatility Indices
Lazard Asset Management LLC	Global Fixed Interest	Outperform Barclays Capital Global Aggregate Bond Index by 1% per annum
Wellington Management International Ltd	Global Fixed Interest	Outperform Barclays Capital Global Aggregate Bond Index by 1% per annum
Baillie Gifford and Co.	Diversified Growth Fund	Outperform Bank of England Base Rate by 3.5% per annum net of fees
Barings Asset Management Ltd	Diversified Growth Fund	Outperform LIBOR by 4% per annum
Aviva Investors Global Services Ltd	Property	Outperform the IPD UK PPF All Balanced Funds Index
DCC Investment Team	Specialist Funds	Outperform the median return of the local authority peer group