



Investment Strategy Statement

February 2017

Introduction and background

This is the Investment Strategy Statement (“ISS”) of the East Sussex Pension Fund (“the Fund”), which is administered by East Sussex County Council, (“the Administering Authority”). The ISS is made in accordance with Regulation 7 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016 (“the Regulations”).

The ISS has been prepared by the Pension Committee (“the Committee”) having taken advice from the Fund’s investment adviser, Hymans Robertson LLP. The Committee acts on the delegated authority of the Administering Authority.

The ISS, which was approved by the Committee on 27 February 2017, is subject to periodic review at least every three years and without delay after any significant change in investment policy. The Committee has consulted on the contents of the Fund’s investment strategy with such persons it considers appropriate.

The Committee seeks to invest in accordance with the ISS, any Fund money that is not needed immediately to make payments from the Fund. The ISS should be read in conjunction with the Fund’s Funding Strategy Statement (dated 01 April 2017).

The suitability of particular investments and types of investments

The primary objective of the Fund is to provide pension and lump sum benefits for members on their retirement and/or benefits on death, before or after retirement, for their dependants, on a defined benefits basis. This funding position will be reviewed at each triennial actuarial valuation, or more frequently as required.

The Committee aims to fund the Fund in such a manner that, in normal market conditions, all accrued benefits are fully covered by the value of the Fund’s assets and that an appropriate level of contributions is agreed by the employer to meet the cost of future benefits accruing. For employee members, benefits will be based on service completed but will take account of future salary and/or inflation increases.

The Committee has translated its objectives into a suitable strategic asset allocation benchmark for the Fund. This benchmark is consistent with the Committee’s views on the appropriate balance between generating a satisfactory long-term return on investments whilst taking account of market volatility and risk and the nature of the Fund’s liabilities.

The Fund carries out an asset liability modelling exercise in conjunction with each actuarial valuation. A number of different contribution and investment strategies are modelled and the future evolution of the Fund considered under a wide range of different scenarios. The Committee consider the chances of achieving their long term funding target and also consider the level of downside risk in the various strategies by identifying the low funding levels which might emerge in the event of poor outcomes.

This approach helps to ensure that the investment strategy takes due account of the maturity profile of the Fund (in terms of the relative proportions of liabilities in respect of pensioners, deferred and active members), together with the level of disclosed surplus or deficit (relative to the funding bases used).

In addition, the Committee monitors investment strategy on an ongoing basis, focusing on factors including, but not limited to:

- Suitability given the Fund’s level of funding and liability profile
- The level of expected risk

- Outlook for asset returns

The Committee also monitors the Fund’s actual allocation on a regular basis to ensure it does not notably deviate from the target allocation and has implemented a rebalancing policy Appendix B.

To help clearly define the strategic approach adopted by the Committee it has set out its investment beliefs Appendix C

Investment of money in a wide variety of investments

Asset classes

The Fund may invest in quoted and unquoted securities of UK and overseas markets including equities and fixed interest and index linked bonds, cash, property and commodities either directly or through pooled funds. The Fund may also make use of contracts for differences and other derivatives either directly or in pooled funds investing in these products for the purpose of efficient portfolio management or to hedge specific risks.

The Committee reviews the nature of Fund investments on a regular basis, with particular reference to suitability and diversification. The Committee seeks and considers written advice from a suitably qualified person in undertaking such a review. If, at any time, investment in a security or product not previously known to the Committee is proposed, appropriate advice is sought and considered to ensure its suitability and diversification.

The Fund’s target investment strategy is set out below. The table also includes the maximum percentage of total Fund value that it will invest in these asset classes. In line with the Regulations, the authority’s investment strategy does not permit more than 5% of the total value of all investments of fund money to be invested in entities which are connected with that authority within the meaning of section 212 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007”.

Table 1: Fund allocation

Asset class	Target allocation %	Maximum invested* %	Role within the Strategy
Listed equities	50.0	55.0	Growth Assets
Absolute Return	20.0	23.0	Growth Assets
Private Equity	5.5	7.5	Growth Assets
Property	10.0	13.0	Income Assets
Infrastructure	2.0	4.0	Income Assets
UK Financing Fund	1.0	2.0	Income Assets
Index-Linked Gilts	5.0	6.0	Protection Assets
Fixed Interest Bonds	3.5	4.5	Protection Assets
Absolute Return Bonds	3.0	4.0	Protection Assets
Cash	0.0	2.0	Protection Assets
Total	100.0		

*The maximum invested figures are based on the rebalancing ranges agreed by the East Sussex Pension Committee within its rebalancing policy.

Restrictions on investment

The Regulations have removed the previous restrictions that applied under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2009. The Committee’s approach to setting its investment strategy and assessing the suitability of different types of investment takes account of the various

risks involved and a rebalancing policy is applied to maintain the asset split close to the agreed asset allocation target. Therefore it is not felt necessary to set additional restrictions on investments.

Managers

The Committee has appointed a number of investment managers all of whom are authorised under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 to undertake investment business.

The Committee, after seeking appropriate investment advice, has agreed specific benchmarks with each manager so that, in aggregate, they are consistent with the overall asset allocation for the Fund. The Fund's investment managers will hold a mix of investments which reflects their views relative to their respective benchmarks. Within each major market and asset class, the managers will maintain diversified portfolios through direct investment or pooled vehicles. The manager of the passive funds in which the Fund invests holds a mix of investments within each pooled fund that reflects that of their respective benchmark indices.

The approach to risk, including the ways in which risks are to be measured and managed

The Committee is aware that the Fund has a need to take risk (e.g. investing in growth assets) to help it achieve its funding objectives. It has an active risk management programme in place that aims to help it identify the risks being taken and put in place processes to manage, measure, monitor and (where possible) mitigate the risks being taken. One of the Committee's overarching beliefs is to only to take as much investment risk as is necessary.

The principal risks affecting the Fund are set out below. We also discuss the Fund's approach to managing these risks and the contingency plans that are in place:

Funding risks

- Financial mismatch – The risk that Fund assets fail to grow in line with the developing cost of meeting the liabilities.
- Changing demographics – The risk that longevity improves and other demographic factors change, increasing the cost of Fund benefits.
- Systemic risk - The possibility of an interlinked and simultaneous failure of several asset classes and/or investment managers, possibly compounded by financial 'contagion', resulting in an increase in the cost of meeting the Fund's liabilities.

The Committee measures and manages financial mismatch in two ways. As indicated above, the Committee has set a strategic asset allocation benchmark for the Fund. This benchmark was set taking into account asset liability modelling which focused on probability of success and level of downside risk. The results from the 2016 analysis highlighted that the Fund - utilising its current stabilisation parameters for contributions – has a sufficiently high probability of success without being too prudent (71%). The downside risk measure (31% average funding level in the 5% of worst outcomes) highlights the wide range of future outcomes under the current stabilisation parameters. The Committee assesses risk relative to the strategic benchmark by monitoring the Fund's asset allocation and investment returns relative to the benchmark. The Committee also assesses risk relative to liabilities by monitoring the delivery of benchmark returns relative to liabilities.

The Committee also seeks to understand the assumptions used in any analysis and modelling so they can be compared to their own views and the level of risks associated with these assumptions to be assessed.

The Committee seeks to mitigate systemic risk through a diversified portfolio but it is not possible to make specific provision for all possible eventualities that may arise under this heading.

Asset risks

- Concentration - The risk that a significant allocation to any single asset category and its underperformance relative to expectation would result in difficulties in achieving funding objectives.
- Illiquidity - The risk that the Fund cannot meet its immediate liabilities because it has insufficient liquid assets.
- Currency risk – The risk that the currency of the Fund’s assets underperforms relative to Sterling (i.e. the currency of the liabilities).
- Environmental, social and governance (“ESG”) – The risk that ESG related factors reduce the Fund’s ability to generate the long-term returns.
- Manager underperformance - The failure by the fund managers to achieve the rate of investment return assumed in setting their mandates.

The Committee measure and manage asset risks as follows.

The Fund’s strategic asset allocation benchmark invests in a diversified range of asset classes. The Committee has put in place rebalancing arrangements to ensure the Fund’s “actual allocation” does not deviate substantially from its target. The Fund invests in a range of investment mandates each of which has a defined objective, performance benchmark and manager process which, taken in aggregate, help reduce the Fund’s asset concentration risk. By investing across a range of assets, including liquid quoted equities and bonds, as well as property, the Committee has recognised the need for access to liquidity in the short term.

The Fund invests in a range of overseas markets which provides a diversified approach to currency markets; the Committee also assess the Fund’s currency risk during their risk analysis. Details of the Fund’s approach to managing ESG risks is set out later in this document.

The Committee has considered the risk of underperformance by any single investment manager and have attempted to reduce this risk by appointing more than one manager and having a large proportion of the Scheme’s assets managed on a passive basis. The Committee assess the Fund’s managers’ performance on a regular basis, and will take steps, including potentially replacing one or more of their managers, if underperformance persists.

Other provider risk

- Transition risk - The risk of incurring unexpected costs in relation to the transition of assets among managers. When carrying out significant transitions, the Committee seeks suitable professional advice.
- Custody risk - The risk of losing economic rights to Fund assets, when held in custody or when being traded.
- Credit default - The possibility of default of a counterparty in meeting its obligations.
- Stock-lending – The possibility of default and loss of economic rights to Fund assets.

The Committee monitors and manages risks in these areas through a process of regular scrutiny of its providers, and audit of the operations it conducts for the Fund, or has delegated such monitoring and

management of risk to the appointed investment managers as appropriate (e.g. custody risk in relation to pooled funds). The Committee has the power to replace a provider should serious concerns exist.

A separate schedule of risks that the Fund monitors is set out in the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement.

The approach to pooling investments, including the use of collective investment vehicles and shared services

The Fund is a participating scheme in the ACCESS Pool. The proposed structure and basis on which the ACCESS Pool will operate was set out in the July 2016 submission to Government.

Assets to be invested in the Pool

The Fund's intention is to invest its assets through the ACCESS Pool as and when suitable Pool investment solutions become available. An indicative timetable for investing through the Pool was set out in the July 2016 submission to Government. The key criteria for assessment of Pool solutions will be as follows:

1. That the Pool enables access to an appropriate solution that meets the objectives and benchmark criteria set by the Fund
2. That there is a clear financial benefit to the Fund in investing in the solution offered by the Pool, should a change of provider be necessary.

At the time of preparing this statement the Fund has elected not to invest the following assets via the ACCESS Pool:

Table 2 – Assets held outside the pool

Asset class	Manager	% of Fund assets	Benchmark	Reason for not investing via the ACCESS Pool
Private Equity	Harbourvest Partners / Adam Street Partners	5.5%	MSCI All Countries World	Existing illiquid asset programmes will run off at normal lifecycle to avoid crystallising exit costs and loss of illiquidity premium earned.
Infrastructure	M & G Infracapital / UBS Infrastructure	2.0%	GBP 3 Month LIBOR	Existing illiquid asset programmes will run off at normal lifecycle to avoid crystallising exit costs and loss of illiquidity premium earned.
Operational cash	East Sussex County Council	0.0%	N/A	East Sussex Pension Fund needs to manage its cash flow to meet statutory liabilities, including monthly pension payroll payments, therefore, a reasonable level of operational cash will be required to maintain efficient administration of schemes and would be held outside the Pool.

Any assets not currently invested in the Pool will be reviewed at least every three years to determine whether the rationale remains appropriate, and whether it continues to demonstrate value for money. The next such review will take place no later than 2018.

Structure and governance of the ACCESS Pool

East Sussex is a member of the ACCESS pool along with the following 10 other pension funds:

Cambridgeshire	Kent
Essex	Norfolk
Hampshire	Northamptonshire
Hertfordshire	Suffolk
Isle of Wight	West Sussex

All eleven funds are committed to collaboratively working together to meet the criteria for pooling and have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to underpin their partnership. ACCESS is working to a project plan in order to create the appropriate means to pool investments. The first investments to be pooled in 2017 will be passively managed investments.

The ACCESS Funds have set out how they meet the pooling criteria, the pool's structure, governance arrangements and services to be shared in the submission made to the Government in July 2016, which is available on ACCESS's website <http://www.accesspool.org/>

How social, environmental or corporate governance considerations are taken into account in the selection, non-selection, retention and realisation of investments

It is recognised that ESG factors can influence long term investment performance and the ability to achieve long term sustainable returns. The Committee consider the Fund's approach to responsible investment in two key areas:

- **Sustainable investment / ESG factors** – considering the financial impact of environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors on its investments.
- **Stewardship and governance** – acting as responsible and active investors/owners, through considered voting of shares, and engaging with investee company management as part of the investment process.

The Committee takes ESG matters very seriously and conducts a review of its policies in this area and its investment managers' approach to ESG.

At the present time the Committee does not take into account non-financial factors when selecting, retaining, or realising its investments.

The Committee understand the Fund is not able to exclude investments in order to pursue boycotts, divestment and sanctions against foreign nations and UK defence industries, other than where formal legal sanctions, embargoes and restrictions have been put in place by the Government.

To date, the Fund's approach to Social investments has largely been to delegate this to their underlying investment managers as part of their overall ESG duties.

The Fund does not hold any assets which it deems to be social investments.

The exercise of rights (including voting rights) attaching to investments

Voting rights

The Committee has delegated the exercise of voting rights to the investment manager(s) on the basis that voting power will be exercised by them with the objective of preserving and enhancing long term shareholder value. Accordingly, the Fund’s managers have produced written guidelines of their process and practice in this regard, which is considered as part of the appointment of an investment manager process. The managers are strongly encouraged to vote in line with their guidelines in respect of all resolutions at annual and extraordinary general meetings of companies under Regulation 7(2)(f).

Stewardship

The Committee understands that stewardship aims to promote the long term success of companies in such a way that the ultimate providers of capital also prosper. The Committee encourages its investment managers to formally agree to adhere to the Stewardship Code as published by the Financial Reporting Council. Asset manager signatories have been categorised in three tiers.

- **Tier 1** – Signatories provide a good quality and transparent description of their approach to stewardship and explanations of an alternative approach where necessary.
- **Tier 2** – Signatories meet many of the reporting expectations but report less transparently on their approach to stewardship or do not provide explanations where they depart from provisions of the Code.
- **Tier 3** – Significant reporting improvements need to be made to ensure the approach is more transparent. Signatories have not engaged with the process of improving their statements and their statements continue to be generic and provide no, or poor, explanations where they depart from provisions of the Code.

Investment Managers Stewardship Rating

Tier 1

- Legal and General Investment Managers
- State Street Global Advisors
- Newton Investment Management
- Ruffer LLP
- Schroder Investment Management Limited
- M & G Investment Management
- Longview Partners
- UBS Asset Management
- Northern Trust Global Investments

Tier 2

- None

Tier 3

- None

The Committee expects both the ACCESS Pool and any directly appointed fund managers to also comply with the Stewardship Code. In addition to the Fund’s views on the Stewardship Code, the Fund believes in collective engagement and is a member of the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF), through which it collectively exercises a voice across a range of corporate governance issues.

Appendices

Appendix A – Rebalancing Policy

Appendix B – Investment Beliefs

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Appendix A



Rebalancing Policy

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Rebalancing Ranges

The following ranges have been agreed by the committee to set as points as to which rebalancing should take place.

Asset class	Strategic target (%)	Range
Listed Equities	50.0	+/-5
Private Equity	5.5	+/-2
Absolute Return	20.0	+/-3
Property	10.0	+/-3
Infrastructure	2.0	+/-2
Growth Assets	87.5	+/- 5
Absolute Return Bonds	3.0	+/-1
Fixed Interest Bonds	3.5	+/-1
Index-Linked Gilts	5.0	+/-1
UK Financing Fund	1.0	+/-1
Cash	0.0	+/-2
Matching Assets	12.5	+/-5
Total	100.0	

Rebalancing for the Fund – General Rules

The following general rules will determine how a rebalancing process for the Fund will operate.

- **Rebalancing would apply only to equities, absolute return funds and bonds** - Due to the transaction costs and illiquidity associated with the other investments such as property, rebalancing for those asset classes will be considered on an annual/ad hoc basis;
- **Rebalancing would be monitored on a quarterly basis**
- **Each benchmark allocation would have a weighted tolerance range** – A tolerance range will be defined for growth and matching assets and each underlying mandate; these tolerance ranges will be used in determining when rebalancing will occur;
- **Cash holdings to be used for rebalancing.** Where possible any net investments or disinvestments should be used to manage allocations, for example, by investing any surplus cash into the most underweight asset class.

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- **Rebalancing will occur at two levels; at the growth vs matching level, and at the mandate level –** The rebalancing process will determine if rebalancing is required between growth and matching assets, and separately if rebalancing is required between asset classes. However, it is more important to be willing to incur transaction costs if necessary to rebalance between bonds and equities, for example, than switching between managers with similar mandates (eg. Longview and L&G global equities).
- **Rebalancing transactions will aim to rebalance allocations outwith their tolerance ranges to the midpoint (at least) of the tolerance range –** The mid-point of the tolerance range is the mid-point between a benchmark allocation and its upper or lower tolerance limit. Assuming an asset class with a 60% allocation and a 54%-66% tolerance range, the upper mid-point would be the halfway point between 60-66% (i.e. 63%). The lower mid-point would be the halfway point between 54% and 60% (i.e. 57%). Analysis suggests that this is the best way of balancing the impact of transaction costs against returns.

The allocations to private equity and infrastructure (and to a lesser extent property) will vary with general market movements and are not easily altered, due to the illiquid nature of the asset classes. Therefore we do not anticipate any rebalancing being carried out in relation to the Fund's private equity or infrastructure investments.

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Investment Beliefs

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Fund specific investment beliefs

The Pension Committee have prepared a set of investment beliefs based on their experience of the workings of the Fund and the nature of the underlying investments held. These are set out below:

Belief: Clear and well defined objectives are essential to achieve future success

The Committee is aware that there is a need to generate a sufficient level of return from the Fund's assets, while at the same time having a clear understanding of the potential risks and ensuring there is sufficient liquidity available to pay members' benefits as they fall due.

Belief: Strategic asset allocation is a key determinant of risk and return, and thus is typically more important than manager or stock selection

The Committee understands that having the appropriate strategy in place is a key driver of the Fund's future success. As a result, priority is given to more strategic investment matters.

Belief: Funding and investment strategy are linked

The Committee understands that a number of funding related aspects feed into investment strategy decisions, including maturity, sponsor covenant and level of required return. Given this, actuarial and investment matters, most notably setting investment strategy, are looked at in tandem by the Committee.

Belief: Long term investing provides opportunities for enhancing returns

The Committee believes that investors with long term time horizons are typically less constrained by liquidity requirements and able to better withstand periods of price volatility. As a long term investor, the Fund may choose to gain additional compensation by investing in assets that are illiquid (e.g. property, infrastructure and private equity) or may be subject to higher levels of volatility (a premium return is required for any such investments). Having this long-term focus also helps the Fund tolerate periods of active manager underperformance when the manager's investment style is out of favour with the market.

Belief: Equities are expected to generate superior long term returns

The Committee believes that, over the longer term, equities are expected to outperform other liquid assets, in particular government bonds. The Committee is therefore comfortable that the Fund maintains a significant allocation to equities in order to support the affordability of contributions..

Belief: Alternative asset class investments provide diversification

The Committee believes that diversification across asset classes can help reduce the volatility of the Fund's overall asset value and improve its risk-return characteristics. The Committee believes that investing across a range of asset classes (including, but not restricted to, equities, bonds, absolute return funds, infrastructure and property) will provide the Fund with diversification benefits.

Belief: Government bonds provide liquidity and a degree of liability matching

Government bonds have characteristics that are similar to the assumptions used in valuing pension liabilities e.g. sensitive to changes in interest rates and (for index-linked) to changes in market-implied inflation. This makes them a suitable asset for reducing the Fund's funding risks. In addition, this asset class has proven to be highly

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liquid at times of market stress, enabling it to be used for rebalancing and to help meet any outflows that may fall due. Given this, the Committee hold a proportion of the Fund's assets in this asset class.

Belief: Fees and costs matter

The Committee recognises that fees and costs reduce the Fund's investment returns. The Committee considers the fees and costs of its investment arrangements to ensure the Fund is getting value for money and to minimise, as far as possible, any cost leakages from its investment process.

Beliefs: Rebalancing can add value

Academic studies show that regular rebalancing can help add value over the long-term. As a result, the Fund has put in place agreed tolerance ranges for their liquid assets, with the intention that assets will be rebalanced, at least towards target, should these ranges be breached.

Belief: Active management can add value but is not guaranteed

The Committee recognises that certain asset classes can only be accessed via active management. The Committee also recognises that active managers may be able to generate higher returns for the Fund (net of fees), or similar returns but at lower volatility, than equivalent passive exposure. The Committee will aim to minimise excessive turnover in its active managers. By carefully selecting and monitoring active managers and recognising that periods of underperformance will arise, the Committee seeks to minimise the additional risk from active management, and continue to monitor active managers to ensure their mandates remain appropriate for the Fund.

Belief: Passive management has a role to play in the Fund's structure

The Committee recognises that passive management allows the Fund to access certain asset classes (e.g. equities) on a low cost basis and when combined with active management can help reduce the relative volatility of the Fund's performance.

Belief: Choice of benchmark index matters

The Committee recognises that, for each asset class, there is a range of benchmark indices that they could use. As a result, the Committee focus on the benchmark's underlying characteristics and consider how they may be appropriate for the Fund. Choice of benchmark is particularly relevant for passive mandates where the manager's job is to track the index as closely as possible.

Belief: Environmental, social and corporate governance ('ESG') issues can have a material impact on the long term performance of its investments

The Committee recognises that ESG issues can impact the Fund's returns and reputation. Given this, the Committee aims to be aware of, and monitor, financially material ESG-related risks and issues through the Fund's investment managers. The Committee commits to an ongoing development of its ESG policy to ensure it reflects latest industry developments and regulations.