



Statement of Investment Principles

For the Trustees of the Central Bureau for Educational Visits & Exchanges Pension Scheme

July 2023

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01 Introduction

Purpose

This document constitutes the Statement of Investment Principles (“the SIP”) required under Section 35 of the Pensions Act 1995 for the CBEVE Pension Scheme. It describes the investment policy being pursued by the Trustees of the Scheme and is in accordance with the Government’s voluntary code of conduct for Institutional Investment in the UK (“the Myners Principles”). This SIP also reflects the requirements of the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations 2005

Scheme details

The exclusive purpose of the Scheme is to provide retirement and death benefits to eligible participants and beneficiaries. It qualifies as a registered pension scheme, registered under Chapter 2 of Part 4 of the Finance Act 2004.

Advice and consultation

Before preparing this Statement, the Trustees have sought advice from the Scheme’s Investment Consultant, XPS Investment Limited. The Trustees have previously consulted the Principal Employer on investment strategy. The Trustees will consult the Principal Employer on any future changes in investment policy as set out in this Statement.

Investment powers

The Scheme’s Trust Deed and Rules set out the investment powers of the Trustees. This Statement is consistent with those powers. Neither this Statement nor the Trust Deed and Rules restricts the Trustees’ investment powers by requiring the consent of the Principal Employer.

In accordance with the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, the Trustees set general investment policy but delegate responsibility for the selection of the specific securities and any financial instruments in which the Scheme invests to the Investment Managers.

Review of the Statement

The Trustees will review this Statement and their investment policy at least every three years in conjunction with each triennial valuation or immediately following any significant changes in investment policy.

The Trustees will also review this Statement in response to any material changes to any aspect of the Scheme, its liabilities, finances and attitude to risk of either the Trustees or Principal Employer which it judges to have a bearing on the stated investment policy.

The Trustees will receive confirmation of the continued appropriateness of this Statement annually, or more frequently, if appropriate.

Definitions

Capitalised terms in this document mean the following:

Act - The Pensions Act 1995 (as amended by section 244 of the Pensions Act 2004);

AVCs - Additional Voluntary Contributions;

Investment Manager - An organisation appointed by the Trustees to manage investments on behalf of the Scheme, currently Aviva;

Principal Employer – British Council;

Recovery Plan - The agreement between the Trustees and the Principal Employer to address the funding deficit;

Scheme - The CBEVE Pension Scheme (Defined Benefit section);

Statement - This document, including any appendices, which is the Trustees’ Statement of Investment Principles;

Technical Provisions - The amount required, on an actuarial calculation, to make provision for the Scheme’s liabilities;

Trust Deed and Rules - The Scheme’s Trust Deed and Rules dated 7 July 2015, as subsequently amended;

Trustees - The collective entity responsible for the investment of the Scheme’s assets and managing the administration of the Scheme;

02 Strategic investment policy and objectives

Choosing investments

The Trustees rely on a professional Investment Manager for the day-to-day management of the Scheme's assets. However, the Trustees retain control over some investments.

The Trustees' policy is to regularly review the insurance policy in which they are invested and to obtain written advice when necessary. When deciding whether or not to make any new investments the Trustees will obtain written advice and consider whether future decisions about those investments should be delegated to the Investment Manager. The written advice will consider suitability of the investments, the need for diversification and the principles within this Statement. The adviser will have the knowledge and experience required under Section 36(6) of the Act.

Long-term objectives

The primary investment objective of the Trustees is to seek to ensure the Scheme is able to meet the benefit payments promised as they fall due from a combination of investment returns and contributions.

Having regard to the primary investment objective and subject to the strength of the employer covenant, the Trustees will seek to achieve a level of investment return which mitigates the cost of the Scheme to the employer over the long term.

Expected returns

By undertaking the investment policy described in this Statement, the Trustees expect future investment returns will at least meet the rate of return underlying the Recovery Plan.

Investment Policy

The Trustees have set the investment policy and objectives with regard to the Scheme's liabilities and funding level.

The Trustees intend to achieve these objectives through investing in an insurance policy which invests in a diversified portfolio of return-seeking assets (e.g. equities, property and bonds).

The Trustees recognise that the return on return-seeking assets, whilst expected to be greater over the

long-term than that on simple liability matching assets, could potentially be more volatile. A mixture across asset classes should nevertheless provide the level of returns required by the Scheme to meet its liabilities at an acceptable level of risk (of underperforming the liabilities) for the Trustees, and an acceptable level of cost to the Principal Employer.

The investment policy the Trustees have adopted is detailed in Appendix I. The specific Investment Manager mandates against which performance of the assets will be assessed are specified in Appendix II.

Range of assets

The Trustees consider that the combination of the investment policy detailed in Appendix I and the specific manager mandate detailed in Appendix II will ensure that the assets of the Scheme include suitable investments that are appropriately diversified and provide a reasonable expectation of meeting the objectives.

The Trustees consider the arrangements with the Investment Manager to be aligned with the Scheme's overall strategic objectives. Details of each specific mandate are set out in agreements and pooled fund documentation with each Investment Manager. The amounts allocated to any individual category or security will be influenced by the overall benchmark and objectives, varied through the Investment Manager's tactical asset allocation preferences at any time, within any scope given to them through asset allocation parameters set by the Trustees or governing the pooled funds in which the Scheme is invested.

The Trustees will ensure that the Scheme's assets are predominantly invested in regulated markets to maximise their security.

Investment Managers are incentivised to perform in line with expectations for their specific mandate as their continued involvement as Investment Managers as part of the Scheme's investment strategy – and hence the fees they receive – are dependent upon them doing so. They are therefore subject to performance monitoring and reviews based on a number of factors linked to the Trustees' expectations, including the selection / deselection criteria set out in Section 6.

The Trustees encourage the Investment Manager to make decisions in the long-term interests of the Scheme. The Trustees expect engagement with management of the underlying issuers of debt or equity and the exercising of voting rights, on the basis that such engagement can be expected to help Investment Managers to mitigate risk and improve long term returns. As covered in more detail in Section 3, the Trustees also require the Investment Manager to take environmental, social and corporate governance ("ESG") factors and climate change risks into consideration within their decision-making as the Trustees believe these factors could have a material financial impact in the long-term. The Trustees therefore make decisions about the retention of the Investment Manager, accordingly.

In order to ensure sufficient oversight of the engagement and voting practices of their managers, the Trustees may periodically meet with their investment managers to discuss engagement which has taken place. The Trustees will also expect their investment adviser to engage with the managers from time to time as needed and report back to the Trustees on the stewardship credentials of their managers. The Trustees will then discuss the findings with the investment adviser, in the context of their own preferences, where relevant. This will include considering whether the manager is a signatory to the UK Stewardship Code. The Trustees recognise the Code as an indication of a manager's compliance with best practice stewardship standards

03 Responsible investment

The Trustees have considered their approach to ESG factors for the long term time horizon of the Scheme and believe there can be financially material risks relating to them. The Trustees have delegated the ongoing monitoring and management of ESG risks and those related to climate change to the Scheme's Investment Manager. The Trustees require the Scheme's Investment Manager to take ESG and climate change risks into consideration within their decision-making, in relation to the selection, retention or realisation of investments, recognising that how they do this will be dependent on factors including the characteristics of the asset classes in which they invest.

The Trustees will seek advice from the Investment Consultant on the extent to which its views on ESG and climate change risks may be taken into account in any future Investment Manager selection exercises. Furthermore, the Trustees, with the assistance of the Investment Consultant, will monitor the processes and operational behaviour of the Investment Managers from time to time, to ensure they remain appropriate and in line with the Trustees' requirements as set out in this Statement.

As the Scheme invests in a pooled unitised with profit fund, the Trustees acknowledge that they cannot directly influence the policies and practices of the companies in which the pooled funds invest. They have therefore delegated responsibility for the exercise of rights (including voting rights) attached to the Scheme's investments to the Investment Manager. The Trustees encourage them to engage with investee companies and vote whenever it is practical to do so on financially material matters such as strategy, capital structure, conflicts of interest policies, risks, social and environmental impact and corporate governance as part of their decision-making processes.

The Trustees do not currently have a policy in respect of non-financial matters (as defined in the Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment) Regulations 2005).

When considering the selection, retention or realisation of an investment, the Trustees have a fiduciary responsibility to act in the best interests of the beneficiaries of the Scheme, although they have neither sought, nor taken into account, the beneficiaries' views on matters including (but not limited to) ethical issues and social and environmental impact. The Trustees will review this policy if any beneficiary views are raised in future.

04 Risk measurement and management

The Trustees recognise a number of risks involved in the investment of the assets of the Scheme. The Trustees measure and manage these risks as follows:

Solvency risk and mismatching risk - The risk that the assets do not respond to market changes in the same way as the liabilities, resulting in volatility in the funding position, is addressed through the strategic asset allocation and through ongoing triennial actuarial valuations.

Strategy risk - The risk that the Investment Managers' asset allocation deviates from the Trustees' investment policy is addressed through regular review of the asset allocation. In reviewing the investment strategy on a periodic basis, the Trustees will consider the current economic factors affecting the asset classes in which they have invested and the short to medium term outlook for performance by reference to e.g. current and historic yields, GDP growth forecasts and other relevant factors.

Liquidity risk - The risk that assets cannot be sold quickly enough to enable benefits to be paid or that the Trustees cannot exit a particular investment is addressed through the process by which the administrator estimates the benefit outgo and ensures that sufficient cash balances are available, and through the Trustees' policy on realisation of assets (see below).

Inappropriate investments - The risk that an Investment Manager invests in assets or instruments that are not considered to be appropriate by the Trustees is addressed through the Trustees' policy on the range of assets in which the Scheme can invest (see section 2).

Counterparty risk - The risk that a third party fails to deliver cash or other assets owed to the Scheme is addressed through the Investment Managers' guidelines with respect to cash and counterparty management.

Political risk - The risk of an adverse influence on investment values from political intervention is reduced by diversification of the assets across many countries.

Custodian risk - The risk that the custodian fails to provide the services expected is addressed through the agreement with the third party custodian and ongoing monitoring of the custodial arrangements. In pooled arrangements this is invariably delegated to the Investment Managers.

Manager risk - The risk that an Investment Manager fails to meet their stated objective is addressed through the performance objectives set out in Appendix II and through the monitoring of the Investment Managers as set out in section 6. In monitoring the performance of the Investment Managers, the Trustees measure the returns relative to the benchmark, objective and the volatility of returns. In addition, the Trustees will regularly review each Investment Manager's approach to risk within each fund in order to highlight any unintended risk being taken.

Fraud/Dishonesty risk - The risk that the Scheme assets are reduced by illegal actions is addressed through restrictions applied as to who can authorise transfer of cash and the account to which transfers can be made.

Currency risk - the risk of losses through depreciation of non-sterling currencies is measured by reference to the exposure of the Scheme to pooled funds with unhedged currency risk and is managed by investing predominantly in sterling assets and only taking currency risk where it increases the level of diversification.

05 Realisation of assets and investment restrictions

Realisation of investments

In recognition of the fact that funds may need to be realised for a number of unanticipated reasons at any time, and the desirability of retaining as high a degree of flexibility as possible to cater for unexpected changes in circumstances, the Trustees will monitor closely the extent to which any assets not readily realisable are held by the Investment Managers and will limit such assets to a level where they are not expected to prejudice the proper operation of the Scheme.

The Trustees have considered how easily investments can be realised for the types of assets in which the Scheme is currently invested. As such, the Trustees believe that the Scheme currently holds an acceptable level of readily realisable assets. The Trustees will also take into account how easily investments can be realised for any new investment classes it considers investing in, to ensure that this position is maintained in the future.

The Trustees will hold cash to the extent that it considers necessary to meet impending anticipated liability outflows. A bank account is used to facilitate the holding of cash awaiting investment or payment.

Investment restrictions

The trustees have established the following investment restrictions:

- > The Trustees or the investment managers may not hold in excess of 5% of the Scheme's assets in investments related to the Principal Employer;
- > Whilst the Trustees recognise that borrowing on a temporary basis is permitted, this option will only be utilised where it is deemed absolutely necessary or where the Trustees have received advice from the Investment Consultant that the Scheme's overall exposure to risk can be reduced through temporary borrowing, e.g. during an asset transfer;
- > Investment in derivative instruments may be made only insofar as they contribute to the reduction in risk or facilitate efficient portfolio management.

The Investment Manager imposes internal restrictions that are consistent with their house style. In some instances, the Trustees may impose additional restrictions and any such restrictions are specified in Appendix II.

06 Investment Manager Arrangements and fee structure

Delegation to Investment Manager

In accordance with the Act, the Trustees have appointed one Investment Manager and delegated to them the responsibility for investing the Scheme's assets in a manner consistent with this Statement.

The Investment Manager is authorised and regulated to provide investment management services to the Scheme. Within the UK, the authorisation and regulation of the Investment Managers falls under the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Specific products in which the Scheme invests may also be regulated by the Prudential Regulatory Authority (PRA). For non-UK Investment Managers, authorisation and regulation is undertaken by the home state regulator.

Where Investment Manager is delegated discretion under section 34 of the Pensions Act 1995, the Investment Manager will exercise their investment powers with a view to giving effect to the principles contained in this Statement so far as reasonably practicable. In particular, the Investment Manager must have regard to the suitability and diversification of the investments made on behalf of the Scheme.

The Investment Manager will ensure that suitable internal operating procedures are in place to control individuals making investments for the Scheme.

Performance objectives

The individual benchmarks and objectives against which each investment mandate is assessed are given in Appendix II.

Review process

Appointments of Investment Manager is expected to be long-term, but the Trustees will review the appointment of the Investment Manager in accordance with their responsibilities. Such reviews will include analysis of the Investment Manager's performance and processes and an assessment of the diversification of the assets held by the Investment Manager. The review will include consideration of the continued appropriateness of the mandate given to the Investment Manager within the framework of the Trustees' investment policies.

The Trustees receive annual performance monitoring reports from the Investment Manager which consider

performance over one, three and five year periods. If they have any concerns, the Trustees may carry out a more in-depth review of the Investment Manager. The Investment Manager will also attend Trustees meetings as requested.

The Trustees have also carried out a review of how well ESG factors are incorporated into the Investment Manager's processes.

Fund manager remuneration is considered as part of the manager selection process. It is also monitored regularly to ensure it is in line with the Trustees' policies and with fee levels deemed to be appropriate for the particular asset class and fund type.

Selection / Deselection Criteria

The criteria by which the Trustees will select (or deselect) the Investment Managers include:

- > Parent - Ownership of the business;
- > People - Leadership/team managing the strategy and client service;
- > Product - Key features of the investment and the role it performs in a portfolio;
- > Process - Philosophy and approach to selecting underlying investments including operational risk management and systems;
- > Positioning - Current and historical asset allocation of the fund;
- > Performance - Past performance and track record;
- > Pricing - The underlying cost structure of the strategy;
- > ESG - Consistency and extent to which ESG analysis is incorporated into the process of selecting underlying investments.

An Investment Manager may be replaced, for example (but not exclusively), for one or more of the following:

- > The Investment Manager fails to meet the performance objectives set out in Appendix II;
- > The Trustees believe that the Investment Manager is not capable of achieving the performance objectives in the future;
- > The Investment Manager fails to comply with this Statement

Portfolio turnover

The Trustee requires the investment managers to report on actual portfolio turnover periodically, including details of the costs associated with turnover, how turnover compares with the range that the investment manager expects and the reasons for any divergence.

Investment Managers' fee structure

The Investment Managers are remunerated by receiving a percentage of the Scheme's assets under management. Details of the fee arrangements are set out in Appendix II. It is felt that this method of remuneration provides appropriate incentives for the Investment Managers to target the agreed level of outperformance whilst adhering to the level of risk specified by the Trustees.

Investment Consultant's fee structure

Where required, the Investment Consultant is remunerated for work completed on a fixed fee basis, a time-cost basis or via a project fee. It is felt that this method of remuneration is appropriate because it enables the Investment Consultant to provide the necessary advice and information to facilitate the Trustees in undertaking their responsibilities.

07 Additional Voluntary Contribution arrangements

Provision of AVCs

The Scheme provided a facility for members to pay additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) to enhance their benefits at retirement. The Trustees' objective was to provide vehicles that enabled members to generate suitable long-term returns, consistent with their reasonable expectations.

The investment funds were provided by Aviva Life and Pensions UK Limited.

The Trustees selected these vehicles as they were believed to meet the Trustees' objective of providing investment options that enabled AVC members to generate suitable long-term returns, consistent with their reasonable expectations.

Review process

The appointment of the AVC providers and the choice of AVC funds offered to members will be reviewed by the Trustees in accordance with their responsibilities, based on the result of the monitoring of performance and process. The Trustees will review the appointment of the AVC providers periodically in the light of their performance.

Where possible, performance of the AVC providers will be measured relative to the individual benchmarks and objectives for the funds offered and/or to other providers offering similar fund options as measured in industry AVC surveys.

08 Compliance Statement

Confirmation of advice

Before a Statement of Investment Principles, as required by the Pensions Act 1995, is prepared or revised by the trustee of a pension scheme, they must have consulted with the Principal Employer and obtained and considered the written advice of a person who is reasonably believed by it to be qualified by his ability in and practical experience of financial matters and to have the appropriate knowledge and experience of the management of the investments of such Schemes.

The Investment Consultant hereby confirms to the Trustees that they have the appropriate knowledge and experience to give the advice required by the Act.

Trustees' declaration

The Trustees confirm that this Statement of Investment Principles reflects the Investment Strategy they have decided to implement. The Trustees acknowledge that it is their responsibility, with guidance from the Advisers, to ensure the assets of the Scheme are invested in accordance with these Principles.

Appendix I

Investment Strategy & Structure

Overall strategy

The Trustees have agreed a strategy to invest in a single Unitised With-Profits Policy with Aviva Life and Pensions UK limited (Aviva).

The investment objectives of the Trustees are to maximise the overall return from Scheme assets without exposure to high risk. The Aviva With-Profit policy invests in a well-diversified range of underlying assets and guarantees that the unit price will not go down (although a Market Value Adjustment may be applied in exceptional circumstances that may reduce the overall value of the fund at that time).

The Aviva With-Profit policy also provides Guaranteed Annuity Rates (GAR) such that, if the policy is in force when certain members reach Normal Retirement Age, the Trustees will be able to secure some of their benefits on guaranteed terms.

The Guaranteed Annuity rates are fixed on very attractive terms and mean that, in addition to the growth potential and capital protection offered by the policy, the Trustees regard the existing insurance policy as the most suitable investment strategy for the Scheme.

In addition to the With-Profits Policy the Scheme also invests a portion of their assets in annuity policies held with Aviva.



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