



Wales Pension Partnership Business Plan 2021-2024

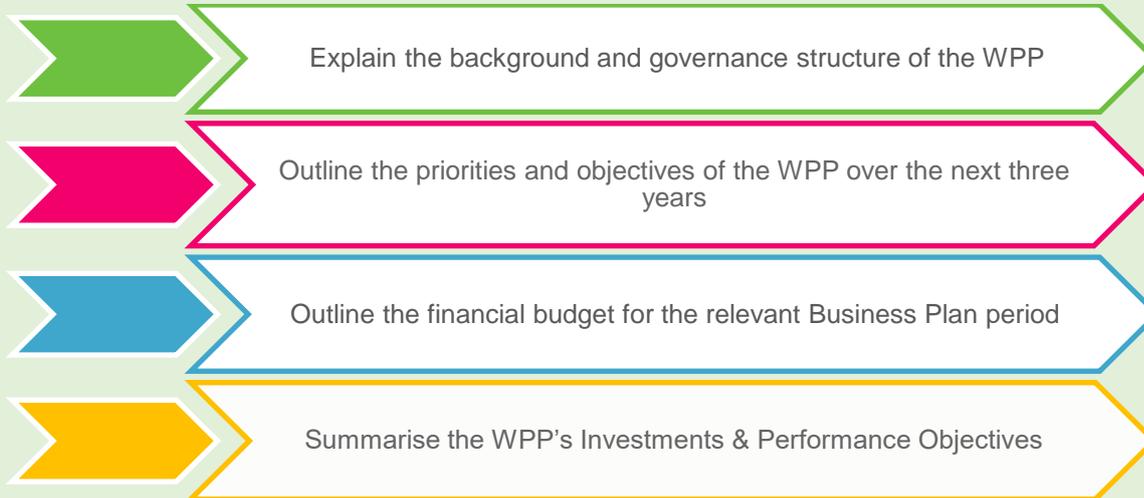


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Introduction

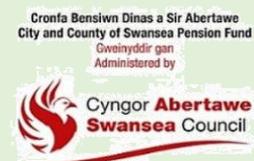
This is the business plan for the Wales Pension Partnership ('WPP'), the business plan details the WPP's priorities and areas of focus for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. The business plan is constantly monitored and will be formally reviewed and agreed every year. The purpose of the business plan is to:



About the Wales Pension Partnership

Established in 2017, the WPP is a collaboration of the eight LGPS funds (Constituent Authorities) covering the whole of Wales and is one of eight national Local Government Pension pools. We have a long, successful history of collaboration, including examples that pre-date the Government's pooling initiative. We are proud of our unique identity as a Pool – our Constituent Authorities represent and span the entirety of Wales. Being democratically accountable means, we provide the best of strong public sector governance and transparency.

Our operating model is designed to be flexible and deliver value for money. We appointed an external fund Operator and make use of external advisers to bring best of breed expertise to support the running of the Pool, this includes Hymans Robertson who have been appointed as the WPP's Oversight Advisor. The Operator is Link Fund Solutions and they have partnered with Russell Investments to deliver effective investment management solutions with the aim of achieving strong net of fee performance for all the Constituent Authorities. We have a shared vision and agreement on the means and pace at which this vision will be achieved. The eight LGPS Funds (Constituent Authorities) of the Wales Pension Partnership are:



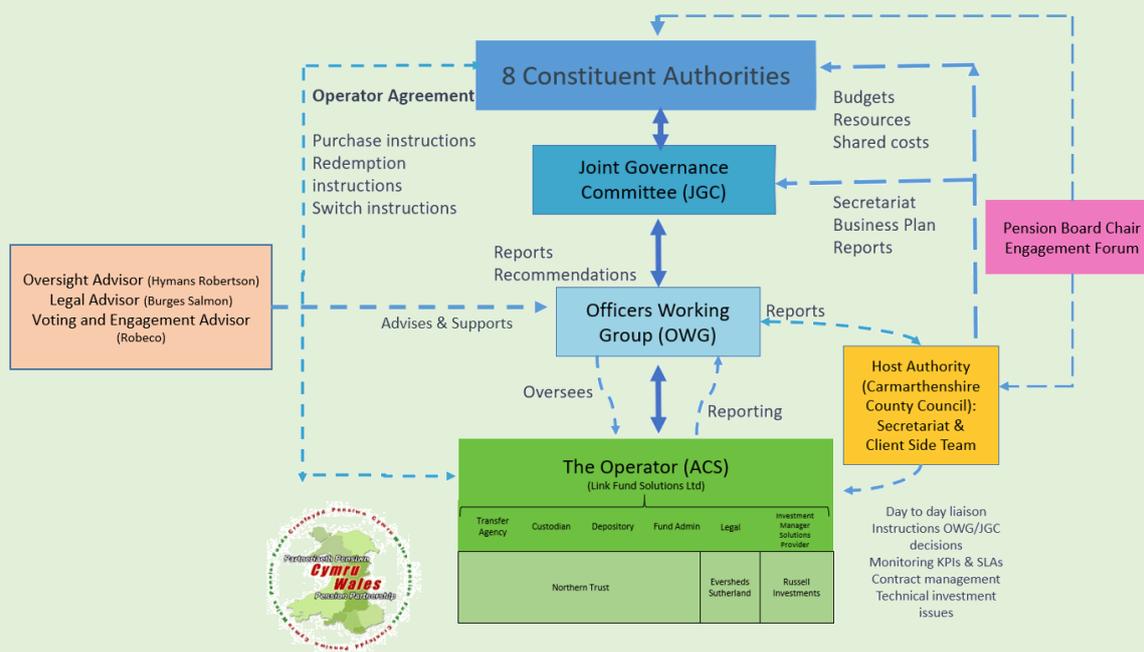
Governance

The WPP is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with regulation and guidance. We must also ensure that: public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, used economically, efficiently and effectively to ensure value for money. We also strive for continuous improvement and to conform with industry best practice.

The WPP details how it deals with all aspects of Governance through its Inter Authority Agreement (IAA), which defines the standards, roles and responsibilities of the Constituent Authorities, its Members, Committees and Officers. The IAA includes a Scheme of Delegation outlining the decision-making process, taking into account the relevant legislation. In line with its belief that good governance should lead to superior outcomes for stakeholders, the WPP has put in place a robust governance structure, which has been designed to:



The diagram below shows WPP's governance structure:



The Constituent Authorities sit at the top of the WPP's governance structure. They retain control of all activity carried out by the WPP and remain responsible for approving this Business Plan, which outlines the WPP's budget and workplan, as well as its beliefs and objectives. The Constituent Authorities are heavily involved in all aspects of the WPP's governance structure, while the WPP's Joint Governance Committee and Officers Working Group are comprised respectively of elected councillor and officer representatives from the Constituent Authorities.

The WPP believes in being open and transparent as well as regularly engaging with its key stakeholders. As such the WPP ensures the meetings of the Joint Governance Committee are accessible to the public via a live webcast stream. Meeting papers are also made publicly available. Local Pension Board engagement days are also held regularly as a means of fostering stakeholder engagement. The WPP recognises the importance of all of its stakeholders to reflect this the WPP has put in place an Engagement Protocol Framework, this is carried out via the following engagement mechanisms:

Engagement mechanisms	Frequency
Strategic Relationship Review meeting	Bi-Annual
JGC Engagement	Quarterly
Manager Performance Meetings/ Calls	Quarterly
Training Events	Quarterly
OWG Engagement	Every 2/3 Months
Bi-Weekly Meetings	Every 2 Weeks
Annual Shareholder Day	Annual
Pension Fund Committees	Annual
Manager Engagement Days	Annual
Member Communications	Annual
Pension Board Engagement	Every 6 Months
Engagement via the website & LinkedIn	Continuous
Constituent Authority Annual Requirements & Ambitions Questionnaire	Annual

Risk Management

The Wales Pension Partnership ('WPP') recognises that it faces numerous risks which, if left unmanaged, can limit the WPP's ability to meet its objectives and to act in the best interest of its stakeholders and beneficiaries. However, the WPP also understands that some risks cannot be fully mitigated and that in these instances' risks need to be embraced through active and effective management.

Risk management is a critical element of WPP's commitment to good governance, the WPP has developed a structured, extensive and robust risk strategy. This strategy will be embedded into the WPP's governance framework to ensure better decision-making, improved outcomes for stakeholders and greater efficiency.

The WPP's risk strategy seeks to identify and measure key risks and ensure that suitable controls and governance procedures are in place to manage these risks. The WPP believes that risks are fluid in nature and that the severity and probability of risks can change rapidly and without warning. To reflect this belief, the WPP's Risk Policy has been developed in such a way that risks can be anticipated and dealt with in a swift, effective manner to minimise potential loss or harm to the WPP and its stakeholders.

To deliver on its objectives, the WPP needs to carry out activities or seize opportunities that subject it to risk. The extent to which the WPP is able to effectively balance risk and return will depend on the success of its Risk Policy. It is critical that prior to making decisions the WPP understands the associated risks and considers the means by which these risks could be managed.

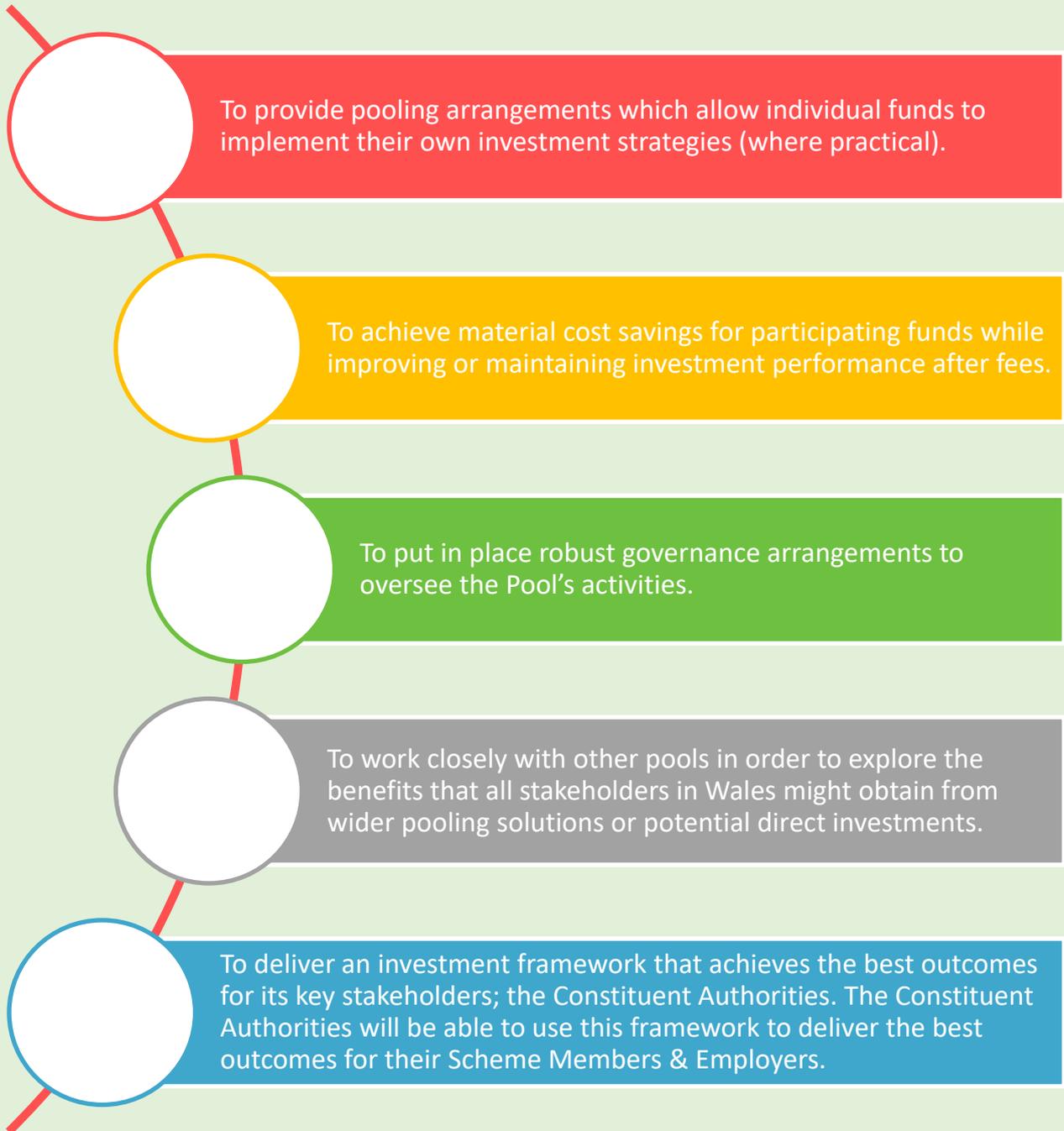
The greatest risk to the WPP's continued operation is its ability to deliver on its primary objectives. The WPP's Business Plan is an additional means through which the WPP will give special recognition to risks that pose a material threat to the delivery of its objectives and the actions required to manage these risks.

During the course of this business plan the WPP will seek to develop mechanisms, frameworks and process for managing the following key risks:



Objectives

The WPP is proud to represent the eight Constituent Authorities and recognises its duty to ensure the needs and requirements of all stakeholders are met. The WPP, through consultation with all eight Constituent Authorities, has formulated a list of primary objectives these can be summarised as follows:



The eight Constituent Authorities recognise that their strength derives from their shared beliefs and their ability to work together to deliver on their unified objectives for the benefit of all WPP stakeholders.

Beliefs

The WPP's Beliefs reflect the collaborative nature and shared values of the Constituent Authorities, they are as follows:

The WPP's role is to facilitate and provide an investment pooling platform through which the interests of the Constituent Authorities can be implemented.

Good governance should lead to superior outcomes for the WPP's stakeholders.

Internal collaboration between the Host and Constituent Authorities is critical to achieving the WPP's objectives. External collaboration may also be beneficial in delivering cost savings and better outcomes for stakeholders.

Responsible Investment and effective Climate Risk mitigation strategies, alongside consideration and evidential management of broader Environmental, Social and Governance issues, should result in better outcomes for the WPP's stakeholders.

Effective internal and external communication is vital to achieving the WPP's objectives.

External suppliers can be a cost-effective means of enhancing the WPP's resources, capabilities and expertise.

Fee and cost transparency will aid decision making and improve stakeholder outcomes.

Continuous learning, innovation and development will help the WPP and its Constituent Authorities to evolve.

A flexible approach to the WPP pool structure and implementation methods will enable the WPP pool to adapt in future and continue to meet the needs of its stakeholders.

The WPP's beliefs are the foundation for WPP's governance framework and have been used to guide all of the WPP's activities and decision making, including its objectives and policies.

Policies

The WPP believes that good governance should lead to superior outcomes for the WPP’s stakeholders. In recognition of this belief, the WPP, in consultation with the Constituent Authorities, has developed a robust governance structure and framework and a set of governing policies. In all instances the WPP’s policies and procedures have been developed to either complement or supplement the existing procedures and policies of the Constituent Authorities. The WPP understands the importance of formulating and codifying its policies and procedures. This process allows the WPP, and the Constituent Authorities, to:



The WPP’s key policies, registers and plans are listed below and can be found on the WPP website.



The WPP’s policies are reviewed on at least an annual basis and the WPP will continually assess whether any additional policies, registers or plans are required. The WPP workplan includes a number of additional governance documents that will be developed, these will be made available on the WPP website once completed. The policies play a vital role in the WPP’s governance arrangements and have been formulated with the sole purpose of providing a codified framework which will ensure that the WPP achieves its objectives in an effective and transparent means.

Work Plan

The tables below show the key priorities and objectives that the WPP aims to complete over the next three years.

Governance

The WPP believes that good governance leads to better outcomes for its stakeholders, as such it will further develop its governance framework by developing additional policies, registers, plans and carrying out ongoing reviews of its existing governance documents and structure.

Work to be completed	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Appoint a Scheme Member Representative to the Joint Governance Committee	✓		
Development of a WPP Rebalancing & Alteration Policy	✓		
Formulate a Responsibilities Matrix for WPP Sub-Funds	✓		
Development of a WPP Whistleblowing Policy	✓	✓	
Development of a WPP Complaints Policy		✓	
Development of a WPP Breach and Errors Policy		✓	
Develop 'Pre-sign-off Checklist Reports' for WPP Sub Funds	✓	✓	
Development of a WPP Business Continuity Plan	✓	✓	
Review of Inter Authority Agreement	✓	✓	✓
Annual review of WPP's policies and plans	✓	✓	✓
Quarterly reviews of the Risk Register	✓	✓	✓

Ongoing Establishment

The WPP is proud of its progress to date in regard to the pooling of assets and will continue to allocate resources to ensure that all suitable assets are pooled. To date the WPP has pooled 62% of its assets and by the end of March 2022 the WPP plans to have pooled c70% of its assets.

Work to be completed	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Launch of Emerging Markets Sub-Fund	✓		
Launch of Private Debt & Infrastructure Sub-Funds	✓		
Formulate the WPP's Property requirements and optimal means of implementation	✓	✓	
Review and develop a mechanism to pool any suitable non-pooled assets		✓	✓
Launch of Private Equity Sub-Fund		✓	✓
Launch of other Private Market sub-funds (TBC)			✓
Consultation with CAs on need for further sub-funds	✓	✓	✓

Operator Services

The Operator, alongside the third parties that it employs on behalf of the WPP, are critical to the ongoing activities of the WPP, therefore service delivery of the Operator and third-party suppliers pose a material risk to the WPP. The WPP will prioritise the development of a framework that will allow it to monitor and evaluate the Operator's service delivery, this framework will be imbedded into the WPP risk monitoring mechanisms.

Work to be completed	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
WPP Operator Oversight Framework	✓		
Review of Operator's contract	✓		
Review of Operator KPI reporting	✓		
Market Review of developments within the Operator market	✓		
Setting up and implementing a framework for monitoring the performance of Russell as investment advisors to Link	✓	✓	

Communication and Training

The WPP wants to ensure that internal stakeholders and external parties are aware of the WPP's progress and will publish numerous report and updates to ensure that it proactively communicates its progress to stakeholders. The WPP is very proud of the work it carries out on behalf of its stakeholders and will provide a summary and detailed report on its endeavours over the past 12 months in the form of the WPP Annual Update and Report. The WPP will also formulate its first WPP's Annual Responsible Investment Progress Report during the course of this year to articulate and provide detail on how the WPP is positioned from a Responsible Investment perspective and what work it has completed over the past year to further the WPP's Responsible Investment credentials.

Work to be completed	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Formulation of the WPP's Annual Responsible Investment Progress Report	✓	✓	✓
Formulation of the WPP's Annual Training Plan	✓	✓	✓
Formulation of the WPP's Annual Update	✓	✓	✓
Formulation of the WPP's Annual Report	✓	✓	✓

Investments and Reporting

The WPP focus is primarily focused on providing investment solutions that are aligned to the requirements of the Constituent Authorities. The WPP will continue to formulate innovative and optimal WPP Sub Funds for Constituent Authority use. The WPP recognises the importance of ensuring that existing investment solutions remain optimal and aligned to Constituent Authority requirements, while also delivering the investment return expectations of the Constituent Authorities.

Responsible Investment continues to be of the utmost important to the WPP and its Constituent Authorities. During this workplan the WPP will allocate resources to ensure that it has market leading level of stewardship. The WPP wishes to demonstrate its stewardship credentials by becoming a signatory to the UK Stewardship Code this year. The WPP will continue to consult with the Constituent Authorities and is hoping that its consultation activities will allow it to put in place minimum Climate Risk and ESG standards within its WPP Sub-Funds within the next year. The WPP will also enhance its ESG and Climate Risk reporting and its oversight and reporting of investment managers.

Work to be completed	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Development of Investment Manager performance reporting, including ESG metrics and climate change risk	✓		
Finalise Voting & Engagement Reporting Requirements	✓		
Become a signatory to the UK Stewardship Code	✓		
Formulate WPP Engagement Priorities and Implementation Framework	✓	✓	
Review the compatibility of WPP Sub-Fund Benchmarks with WPP's Responsible Investment and Climate Risk Beliefs	✓	✓	
Consider additional reporting that demonstrates WPP's commitment to Responsible Investment (e.g. TCFD Reporting)		✓	✓
Annual review of WPP's Cost Transparency Requirements	✓	✓	✓
Annual market benchmarking exercise of WPP Sub-Fund Investment Performance	✓	✓	✓
Consult with Constituent Authorities regarding minimum ESG/ RI standards and their climate ambitions	✓	✓	✓

Resources, budget and fees

The WPP recognises that insufficient resources poses a significant risk to its ability to deliver an investment framework that achieves the best outcomes for its key stakeholders, the WPP will carry out the following pieces of work to guarantee that it has suitable resources to deliver on this commitment.

Work to be completed	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Annual review of resources and capacity	✓	✓	✓
Formulation of Annual WPP Budget	✓	✓	✓
Review and Monitoring of Fees (including Link & Russell)	✓	✓	✓

Training Plan

It is best practice for WPP personnel to have appropriate knowledge and understanding of:

- the regulations and markets relating to pensions;
- the pooling of Local Authority Pension Schemes; and
- relevant investment opportunities.

The WPP's training plan is designed to supplement existing Constituent Authority training plans. Local level training needs will continue to be addressed by Constituent Authorities while the WPP training plan will offer training that is relevant to the WPP's pooling activities.

WPP personnel should obtain a degree of knowledge and understanding that ensures they are able to carry out their duties associated with the WPP. WPP personnel should also be aware of the WPP's framework, beliefs, policies, governance matrix, the decision-making process and decision logging process.

To aid WPP personnel, the Host Authority will arrange quarterly training sessions which will cover major areas such as investments, administration, regulation requirements, government guidance and market developments. The WPP's training events will primarily focus on meeting the training needs of members of the OWG and JGC, however Constituent Authorities are encouraged to invite Pension Committee Members, as well as Pension Board Representatives if they believe that the training would be beneficial to these individuals.

We have set out below a list of training topics which the Host Authority will arrange training for during the 2021/2022 financial year. The topics outlined below are based on the responses received from the 2020/21 WPP training requirements questionnaire/ assessment, which is issued to the Joint Governance Committee ('JGC') and Officers Working Group ('OWG') on an annual basis.

Product Knowledge

- Private Market – Asset Classes & Implementation
- Private Market - Fund Wrappers & Governance

Responsible Investment

- Responsible Investment Indices and Solutions
- Responsible Investment Reporting

Investment Performance and Risk Management

- Performance Reporting & Manager Benchmarking
- Roles & Responsibilities within the ACS

Guidance, Regulatory Requirements and Best Practice

- Good Governance
- Cost transparency

Market Understanding

- Progress of other LGPS pools
- Collaboration Opportunities

Budget

The table below outlines the WPP's budget for the next three years.

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Host Authority *	182	212	217
External Advisors *	680	680	680
TOTAL to be recharged	862	892	897
Operator Services **	28,447	34,614	37,975
TOTAL to be deducted from the NAV	28,447	34,614	37,975

**Host Authority and External Advisor costs are to be funded equally by all eight of the WPP's Constituent Authorities and these will be recharged on an annual basis.*

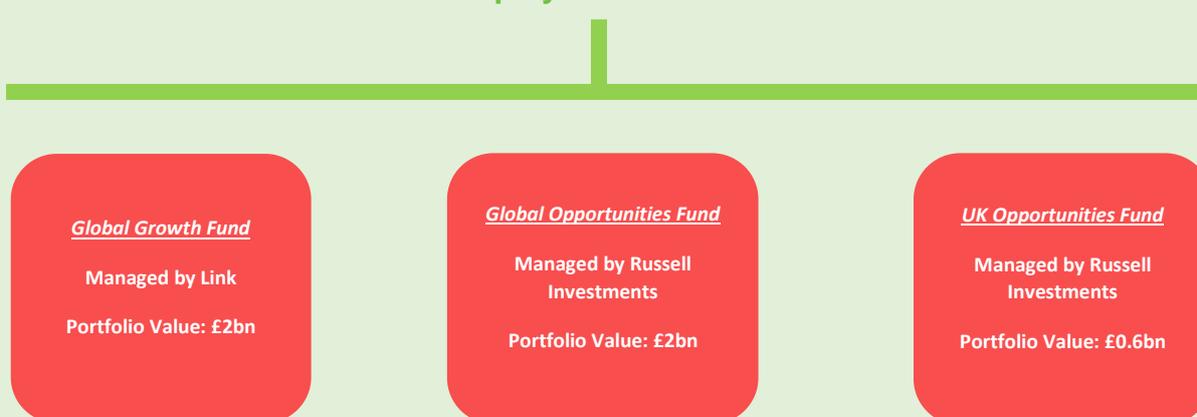
***Operator Services costs are based on each Constituent Authority's percentage share of WPP assets (held with the Operator) and are deducted directly from the Net Asset Value (NAV) of the Constituent Authority's assets (held with the Operator).*

Investments & Performance

The WPP's Constituent Authorities have total assets of circa £17.5bn (as at 31 March 2020). The Constituent Authorities' passive investments are effectively within the Pool but are held by the respective WPP authorities in the form of insurance policies.

The Officers Working Group receives quarterly, six monthly and annual performance reports, the group reviews and challenges the performance of Investment Managers on behalf of the WPP. The WPP hosts annual manager engagement days, which are used to challenge managers and to facilitate engagement with Constituent Authority Pension Committee and Board Members and the WPP's Investment Managers. The Constituent Authorities also carry out their own analysis of WPP's investment performance at local level, this will include manager attendance at Pension Committees. Below we outline the WPP's existing Sub-Funds.

Equity Sub-Funds



* Portfolio Values as at launch date

Sub Fund	Performance Benchmark	Participating Funds	Managers	Launch Date
Global Growth	MSCI ACWI ND	RCT, Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys	Baillie Gifford, Veritas and Pzena	Feb 19
Global Opportunities	MSCI ACWI ND	Swansea, Torfaen, Gwynedd, RCT and Clwyd	Morgan Stanley, Numeric, Sanders, Jacobs Levy, SW Mitchell, NWQ and Oaktree	Feb 19
UK Opportunities	FTSE All Share	Cardiff and Torfaen	Majedie, Lazard, Baillie Gifford, Ninety-One and Liontrust	Sept 19

Fixed Income Sub-Funds



* Portfolio Values as at launch date

Sub Fund	Performance Benchmark	Participating Funds	Managers	Launch Date
Global Credit	Bloomberg Barclays Global Aggregate Credit Index (GBP Hedged)	Cardiff, Dyfed, Powys and Torfaen	Western, Logan Circle, Fidelity and T Rowe Price	July 20
Global Government	FTSE World Government Bond Index (GBP Hedged)	Cardiff and Torfaen	Bluebay and Colchester	July 20
Multi-Asset Credit	ICE BofA SONIA + 4% p.a.	Cardiff, Clwyd, Gwynedd, Powys, and Swansea	ICG, Man GLG, BlueBay, Barings and Voya	July 20
Absolute Return Bond Fund	ICE BofA SONIA + 2% p.a.	Gwynedd, Powys and Swansea	Wellington, Putnam, Aegon and Insight	Sept 20
UK Credit Fund	ICE BofA ML Eur-Stg plus 0.65%	RCT	Fidelity	July 20

Contact Details

If you require further information about anything in or related to this business plan, please contact the Wales Pension Partnership:

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Further information on the WPP and ongoing updates on the WPP's progress can be found on the website and LinkedIn page.

The website can be found here:

<https://www.walespensionpartnership.org/>

