

City of Westminster Pension Fund

Funding update report as at 31 December 2018

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Assets	3
Changes in market conditions – market yields and discount rates	4
Results	5
Westminster City Council	5
SCAPE basis.....	6
Final comments.....	6
Looking forward to 2019	6
Appendix 1 Financial position since previous valuation.....	7
Appendix 2 Data, method and assumptions.....	8
Data	8
Method.....	8
Assumptions.....	8
Appendix 3 Projected financial position	10

Introduction

Westminster City Council, as administering authority for the City of Westminster Pension Fund (the Fund) has asked that we carry out a quarterly monitoring assessment of the Fund as at 31 December 2018. The purpose of this assessment is to provide an update on the funding position.

We have shown the funding position as at 31 December 2018 using assumptions consistent with the triennial valuation as at 31 March 2016 (the ongoing basis) and also on a "SCAPE basis" where we have used the SCAPE discount rate of CPI plus 2.4%. The SCAPE discount rate is the discount rate that will be used in the unfunded public service schemes valuations and this rate may have an influence on the assumptions that we adopt at the forthcoming 2019 triennial valuation.

The Fund participates in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The LGPS is a defined benefit statutory scheme administered in accordance with Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (the Regulations).

The information in this report is addressed to and is provided for use by Westminster City Council as the administering authority to the Fund. This report may be shared with other interested parties but it does not constitute advice to them.

This report complies with Technical Actuarial Standard 100: Principles for Technical Actuarial Work (TAS 100) and Technical Actuarial Standard 300: Pensions (TAS 300) as issued by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC).

We assess the funding position on a smoothed basis which is an estimate of the average position over a six month period spanning the reporting date. As the smoothing adjustment reflects average market conditions spanning a six month period straddling the reporting date, the smoothed figures are projected numbers and likely to change up until three months after the reporting date. The smoothed results are indicative of the underlying trend.

This is version 2 of the report which supersedes the initial report. This version contains additional information about the projected financial position of Westminster City Council up until 31 March 2020. This projection can be found in Appendix 3.

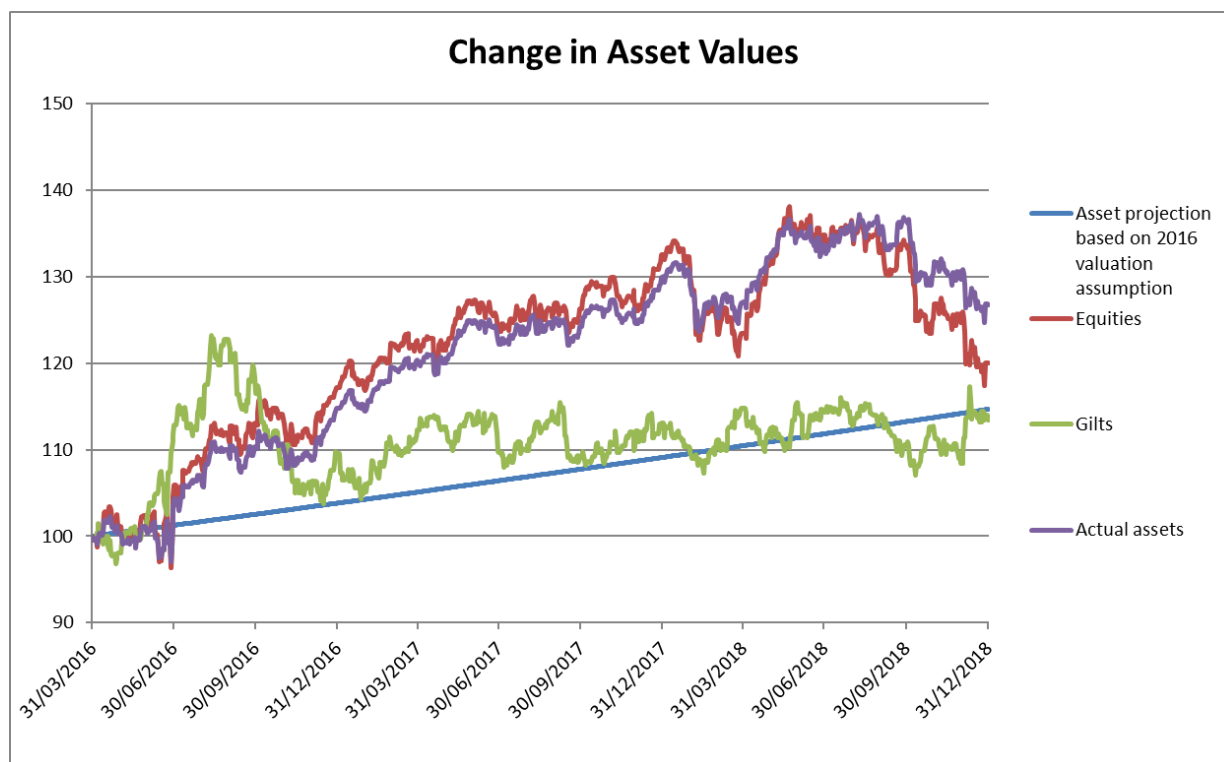
Assets

The estimated (unsmoothed) asset allocation of the City of Westminster Pension Fund as at 31 December 2018, based on data received from Westminster City Council, is as follows:

Assets (market value)	31 Dec 2018		30 Sep 2018		31 Mar 2016	
	£000s	%	£000s	%	£000s	%
UK and overseas equities	908,047	68.1%	1,103,033	76.8%	790,289	74.1%
Bonds	281,358	21.1%	191,031	13.3%	130,390	12.2%
Property	127,148	9.5%	125,928	8.8%	105,811	9.9%
Gilts	0	-	0	-	26,733	2.5%
Cash and accruals	16,780	1.3%	16,250	1.1%	13,120	1.2%
Total assets	1,333,332	100%	1,436,242	100%	1,066,343	100%

The investment return achieved by the Fund's assets in market value terms for the quarter to 31 December 2018 is estimated to be -7.2%. The return achieved since the previous valuation is estimated to be 26.8% (which is equivalent to 9.0% p.a.).

The following chart shows the changes in equity and bond markets since the previous actuarial valuation and compares them with the estimated actual fund returns and the expected fund returns assumed at the previous valuation:



As we can see the asset value as at 31 December 2018 in market value terms is more than where it was projected to be at the previous valuation.

Changes in market conditions – market yields and discount rates

The actual investment returns earned by the Fund will affect the value of the Fund's assets. The value of the Fund's liabilities, however, is dependent on the assumptions used to value the future benefits payable.

For the purpose of this exercise it is appropriate to use the method and assumptions consistent with those set by the Fund actuary for the purpose of the 31 March 2016 actuarial valuation, updated where necessary to reflect market conditions. Further details of the derivation of the financial and demographic assumptions can be found in the relevant actuarial valuation report.

The following table show how these assumptions have changed since the last triennial valuation:

Assumptions (smoothed)	31 Dec 2018		30 Sep 2018		31 Mar 2016	
	Nominal	Real	Nominal	Real	Nominal	Real
	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.	% p.a.
Pension increases (CPI)	2.76%	-	2.68%	-	2.39%	-
Salary increases	4.26%	1.50%	4.18%	1.50%	3.89%	1.50%
Discount rate	5.52%	2.75%	5.29%	2.61%	5.10%	2.71%

In addition to that, it is assumed that salaries increase in line with CPI until 31 March 2020.

The ongoing discount rate assumption is set with reference to the Fund's long term investment strategy and therefore reflects the long term expected return on assets for the Fund. Consistent with the method adopted for the 31 March 2016 valuation, we have included in the discount rate assumption an explicit prudence allowance of 1.1%.

As noted in the Introduction, the discount rate on the SCAPE basis is CPI plus 2.4% p.a.

The key assumption which has the greatest impact on the valuation of liabilities is the real discount rate (the discount rate relative to CPI inflation) – the higher the real discount rate the lower the value of liabilities. As we see the real discount rate is broadly similar as at the 31 March 2016 valuation, maintaining the value of liabilities used for funding purposes.

The real discount rate on the SCAPE basis is lower than on the ongoing basis and therefore would place a higher value on the liabilities.

Results

The funding position for each month has been rolled forward from the formal valuation and is shown in Appendix 1. It should be borne in mind that the nature of the calculations is approximate and so the results are only indicative of the underlying position.

The results of our assessment indicate that:

- The current projection of the smoothed funding level as at 31 December 2018 is 94.5% and the average required employer contribution would be 20.6% of payroll assuming the deficit is to be paid by 2038.
- This compares with the reported (smoothed) funding level of 80.0% and average required employer contribution of 29.1% of payroll at the 31 March 2016 funding valuation.

The ongoing discount rate underlying the smoothed funding level as at 31 December 2018 is 5.5% p.a. The investment return required to restore the funding level to 100% by 2038, without the employers paying deficit contributions, would be 5.8% p.a.

Westminster City Council

We have also estimated the funding position of Westminster City Council. The development since 31 December 2017 can be found in the table below.

Smoothed					
	Assets £000s	Liabilities £000s	Surplus / Deficit £000s	Funding level %	CARE ongoing cost (% of payroll)
31 Dec 2017	842,147	1,043,061	(200,914)	81%	17.3%
31 Mar 2018	858,830	1,044,850	(186,020)	82%	17.1%
30 Jun 2018	874,734	1,051,143	(176,410)	83%	17.1%
30 Sep 2018	883,354	1,032,151	(148,796)	86%	16.3%
31 Dec 2018	857,312	1,014,836	(157,524)	84%	15.5%

SCAPE basis

The results summarised above and in the Appendix are based on the ongoing basis. On the SCAPE basis, as at 31 December 2018, we estimate the comparable funding level for the Fund to be 89% and the average required employer contribution rate would be 27.3% of payroll assuming the deficit is to be paid by 2038. This contribution includes 18.8% of payroll towards the cost of future benefits and 8.5% of payroll towards deficit recovery.

On the SCAPE basis, as at 31 December 2018, we estimate the comparable funding level of Westminster City Council to be 79% and the average required employer contribution rate would be 33.1% of payroll assuming that the deficit is to be paid by 2038. The contribution includes 17.5% of payroll towards the cost of future benefits and 15.6% of payroll towards deficit recovery.

Although the SCAPE discount rate is used for the purpose of the valuations of the unfunded public service pension schemes rather than the LGPS, it is likely that this will be used as a guide for the purpose of the Section 13 assessments applied to the local LGPS valuations and therefore may influence the assumptions to be adopted for the Fund's 2019 valuation.

Final comments

There are many factors that affect the Fund's funding position and could lead to the Fund's funding objectives not being met within the timescales expected. Some of the key risks that could have a material impact on the Fund include longevity risk and financial risks (including inflation and investment risk). There is more detail on this contained within the Fund's Funding Strategy Statement and the 31 March 2016 actuarial valuation report.

Note that the funding position at a future date will be dependent on the investment performance of the Fund as well as future market conditions which determine the financial assumptions.

Looking forward to 2019

Since the last valuation at 31 March 2016, assets have performed well and deficits have reduced (using assumptions consistent with the 2016 valuation), reducing the deficit recovery rate (the secondary rate).

Overall, on a basis consistent with the 2016 valuation, the total required contribution rate is estimated to have reduced since 31 March 2016. The next triennial valuation will be taking place as at 31 March 2019, with revised contribution rates payable from 1 April 2020. As part of the 2019 valuation, the Fund and Fund Actuary will work together in setting the assumptions for the valuation.

Given the improvement in funding position over the period and the level of uncertainty in the markets going forward, it may be appropriate to increase the level of prudence underlying the valuation funding assumptions.

We would be pleased to answer any questions arising from this report.



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Actuary
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Appendix 1 Financial position since previous valuation

Below we show the financial position on a smoothed basis for each month since the previous full valuation. As the smoothing adjustment reflects average market conditions spanning a six month period straddling the reporting date, the smoothed figures for the previous three months are projected numbers and likely to change up until three months after the reporting date.

The results shown below are calculated on the ongoing basis.

Please note that the results shown below are sensitive to the underlying assumptions. For example, increasing the discount rate assumption by 0.5% will increase the funding level by about 9%, and increasing the CPI inflation assumption by 0.5% will reduce the funding level by about 8%.

Valuation date	Assets £000s	Liabilities £000s	Surplus / Deficit £000s	Funding level %	CARE ongoing cost (% of payroll)	Past service ctbn	Total ctbn (% of payroll)	Discount rate	Return required to restore funding level (p.a.)
31 Mar 2016	1,056,747	1,320,797	(264,050)	80%	16.9%	12.2%	29.1%	5.1%	6.1%
30 Apr 2016	1,069,289	1,336,329	(267,040)	80%	17.2%	12.6%	29.8%	5.0%	6.0%
31 May 2016	1,088,792	1,362,238	(273,446)	80%	17.8%	12.8%	30.6%	4.9%	5.9%
30 Jun 2016	1,103,684	1,384,191	(280,507)	80%	18.2%	13.0%	31.2%	4.8%	5.9%
31 Jul 2016	1,121,960	1,404,739	(282,779)	80%	18.6%	13.1%	31.7%	4.8%	5.8%
31 Aug 2016	1,133,402	1,421,201	(287,799)	80%	18.9%	13.3%	32.2%	4.8%	5.9%
30 Sep 2016	1,150,014	1,437,793	(287,779)	80%	19.3%	13.3%	32.6%	4.9%	5.9%
31 Oct 2016	1,172,816	1,449,639	(276,823)	81%	19.5%	12.7%	32.2%	4.9%	5.9%
30 Nov 2016	1,185,339	1,456,544	(271,205)	81%	19.5%	12.5%	32.0%	5.0%	6.0%
31 Dec 2016	1,206,192	1,462,515	(256,323)	82%	19.6%	11.8%	31.4%	5.1%	6.0%
31 Jan 2017	1,217,761	1,466,703	(248,942)	83%	19.5%	11.5%	31.0%	5.1%	6.0%
28 Feb 2017	1,237,696	1,476,212	(238,516)	84%	19.7%	11.1%	30.8%	5.1%	5.9%
31 Mar 2017	1,261,355	1,485,068	(223,713)	85%	19.8%	10.4%	30.2%	5.0%	5.8%
30 Apr 2017	1,272,195	1,484,924	(212,729)	86%	19.7%	9.6%	29.3%	5.0%	5.8%
31 May 2017	1,291,739	1,484,738	(192,999)	87%	19.6%	8.7%	28.3%	5.0%	5.7%
30 Jun 2017	1,297,593	1,481,802	(184,209)	88%	19.4%	8.4%	27.8%	5.0%	5.7%
31 Jul 2017	1,305,713	1,480,613	(174,900)	88%	19.2%	8.0%	27.2%	5.0%	5.7%
31 Aug 2017	1,309,876	1,477,979	(168,103)	89%	19.1%	7.7%	26.8%	5.1%	5.7%
30 Sep 2017	1,313,109	1,477,681	(164,572)	89%	19.0%	7.6%	26.6%	5.1%	5.7%
31 Oct 2017	1,328,003	1,482,309	(154,306)	90%	19.0%	7.1%	26.1%	5.1%	5.6%
30 Nov 2017	1,325,817	1,479,561	(153,744)	90%	18.8%	7.2%	26.0%	5.1%	5.7%
31 Dec 2017	1,330,352	1,476,578	(146,226)	90%	18.6%	6.8%	25.4%	5.1%	5.7%
31 Jan 2018	1,341,968	1,475,210	(133,242)	91%	18.5%	6.3%	24.8%	5.1%	5.6%
28 Feb 2018	1,358,573	1,478,129	(119,556)	92%	18.5%	5.6%	24.1%	5.1%	5.6%
31 Mar 2018	1,379,889	1,481,363	(101,474)	93%	18.5%	4.8%	23.3%	5.1%	5.5%
30 Apr 2018	1,383,869	1,481,851	(97,982)	93%	18.4%	4.6%	23.0%	5.1%	5.4%
31 May 2018	1,392,524	1,488,835	(96,311)	94%	18.4%	4.6%	23.0%	5.1%	5.4%
30 Jun 2018	1,394,788	1,493,108	(98,320)	93%	18.4%	4.7%	23.1%	5.1%	5.4%
31 Jul 2018	1,409,340	1,489,981	(80,641)	95%	18.2%	3.9%	22.1%	5.1%	5.4%
31 Aug 2018	1,406,781	1,480,121	(73,340)	95%	17.9%	3.5%	21.4%	5.2%	5.5%
30 Sep 2018	1,407,799	1,468,021	(60,222)	96%	17.5%	2.9%	20.4%	5.3%	5.5%
31 Oct 2018	1,391,799	1,460,566	(68,767)	95%	17.2%	3.4%	20.6%	5.4%	5.6%
30 Nov 2018	1,383,503	1,452,101	(68,598)	95%	17.0%	3.4%	20.4%	5.4%	5.7%
31 Dec 2018	1,365,927	1,445,343	(79,416)	95%	16.7%	3.9%	20.6%	5.5%	5.8%

Appendix 2 Data, method and assumptions

Data

In completing our calculations we have used the following items of data, which we received from Westminster City Council:

- The results of the valuation as at 31 March 2016 which was carried out for funding purposes;
- Estimated whole Fund income and expenditure items for the period to 31 December 2018; and
- Estimated Fund returns based on Fund asset statements provided to 31 December 2018, and Fund income and expenditure as noted above.

The data has been checked for reasonableness and we are happy that the data is sufficient for the purpose of this report.

Full details of the benefits being valued are as set out in the Regulations as amended and summarised on the LGPS [website](#) and the Fund's membership booklet. We have made no allowance for discretionary benefits.

Method

To assess the value of the Fund's liabilities as at 31 December 2018, we have rolled forward the value of the liabilities calculated for the funding valuation as at 31 March 2016 using the financial assumptions below and estimated cashflows paid to and from the Fund.

It is not possible to assess the accuracy of the estimated value of the liabilities as at 31 December 2018 without completing a full valuation. However, we are satisfied that the approach of rolling forward the previous valuation data to 31 December 2018 should not introduce any material assumptions in the results provided that the actual experience of the Fund is broadly in line with the underlying assumptions and that the structure of the liabilities is substantially the same as at the latest formal valuation. From the information we have received there appears to be no evidence that this approach is inappropriate.

We have been provided with the Fund assets at various dates but for dates that these are not available, we calculate the Fund assets by rolling forward the previous assets provided allowing for investment returns (estimated where necessary), and estimated cashflows paid to and from the Fund. The latest date that we have been provided with the Fund assets is 31 December 2018.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this exercise it is appropriate to use the method and assumptions consistent with those set by the Fund actuary for the purpose of the 31 March 2016 actuarial valuation, updated where necessary to reflect market conditions.

A summary of the main financial assumptions adopted is set out in the main body of this report.

The main demographic assumptions are:

- The post retirement mortality tables adopted are the S2PA tables with a multiplier of 80% for males and 85% for females. These base tables are then projected using the CMI 2015 Model, allowing for a long term rate of improvement of 1.5% p.a;
- The dependant post retirement mortality tables adopted are the S2PMA tables with a multiplier of 95% for males and the S2DFA tables with a multiplier of 100% for females. These base tables are then projected using the CMI 2015 Model, allowing for a long term rate of improvement of 1.5% p.a;
- Members retire at a single age, based on the average age at which they can take each tranche of their pension; and
- It is assumed that members will exchange 50% of their commutable pension for cash at retirement.

Further details of the derivation of the financial and demographic assumptions can be found in the relevant actuarial valuation report.

Appendix 3 Projected financial position

Below we show the projected financial position on a smoothed basis for each following quarter up to 31 March 2020. We assume that the assets increase in line with the ongoing discount rate as at 31 December 2018, i.e. 5.5%. For the liabilities we show the results on both an ongoing basis and the SCAPE basis. The relevant cashflows are estimated based on the Fund accounts for the period from 31 March 2017 to 31 March 2018 and the revised contribution rates from 1 April 2017. Please note that the following projections make no allowance for the review of employer contribution rates and the funding basis of the Fund that will take place during the 2019 valuation.

Smoothed		Ongoing Basis			SCAPE basis		
Valuation date	Assets £000s	Liabilities £000s	Surplus / Deficit £000s	Funding level %	Liabilities £000s	Surplus / Deficit £000s	Funding level %
31 Mar 2019	867,548	1,022,892	(155,345)	85%	1,089,093	(221,546)	80%
30 Jun 2019	877,922	1,031,058	(153,136)	85%	1,097,235	(219,313)	80%
30 Sep 2019	888,437	1,039,335	(150,898)	85%	1,105,480	(217,043)	80%
31 Dec 2019	899,094	1,047,724	(148,630)	86%	1,113,830	(214,737)	81%
31 Mar 2020	909,895	1,056,227	(146,333)	86%	1,122,287	(212,393)	81%

Any changes to the discount rate or inflation assumption will affect the funding level at all times in the same way as described in Appendix 1.