

Statement of Investment Principles for Defined Benefit Section – John Lewis Partnership Pensions Trust (September 2024)

Introduction

- 1 This Statement of Investment Principles ('SIP') sets out the principles governing investments for the John Lewis Partnership Trust for Pensions (the 'Trust' or the 'Scheme'), made by or for the Board of the John Lewis Partnership Pensions Trust (the 'Trustee'). This SIP is drafted in accordance with the requirements of Section 35 of the Pensions Act 1995, as amended by the Pensions Act 2004 and regulations made under it.
- 2 The Trust is a Registered Pension Scheme for the purposes of the Finance Act 2004.
- 3 The Trustee will review this SIP at least every three years and without delay after any significant change in investment policy. Before finalising this SIP, the Trustee has taken written advice from the Trust's Investment Consultant for the Defined Benefit Section (Mercer), which is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority ("FCA"), and has consulted with the employer, the John Lewis Partnership (the 'Partnership').
- 4 The Trustee is responsible for the Trust's investment strategy and for ensuring that it is recorded in the SIP. The Trustee delegates responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the investment strategy to its Defined Benefit Sub-Committee ('DBC'). The DBC may engage with other investment advisers to assist in the Trust's selection of investment managers.
- 5 This document focuses on the high-level principles of the Trustee and considers matters relating to the Defined Benefit ('DB') section of the Scheme only. A separate document covers the principles for the Defined Contribution section of the Scheme. The details of the asset allocation and the implementation arrangements are matters for the DBC and will vary over time. The DBC will prepare and maintain a separate document, the Investment Policy Implementation Document, which sets out further details on how the principles have been implemented. That document does not form a part of the SIP.

Objectives

- 6 The Trustee aims to invest the assets of the Trust prudently with the objective of ensuring that the benefits promised to members are provided.
- 7 The Trustee will pursue an investment strategy which aims to generate an investment return of gilts + 1.8% p.a., within a reasonable tolerance range, with a risk level commensurate with the strength of the covenant. The target investment return was agreed with the Partnership as part of the 2022 actuarial valuation discussions, with the aim of achieving full funding on a low dependency basis (based on a return above government bonds) by 2034.

In seeking to achieve the performance objective above, the Trustee is mindful of the need to:

- take account of current market conditions when re-positioning the portfolio at any time

- limit the risk of the assets failing to meet the liabilities over the long-term, noting that asset growth is expected to be made up of investment returns plus any future contributions.

Investment Principles

8 The Trustee has taken advice in determining an appropriate investment strategy for the Trust. The Trustee has a desire to diversify its risk exposures and to manage its investments efficiently and has therefore delegated responsibility for implementation of its investment strategy to the DBC.

9 The investment strategy makes use of two key types of investments:

- a diversified range of return-seeking assets, including (but not limited to) equities (public and private), corporate bonds (public and private), property and hedge funds (together, “the Return-Seeking Portfolio”)
- a range of instruments, including (but not limited to) physical bonds, swaps, repos and total return swaps, that provide a better match to changes in liability values (together, “the Liability Matching Portfolio”) caused by the sensitivity to interest rate and inflation.

As well as these investment assets, the Trust has the following additional sources of security over the liabilities:

- It holds an interest in a Pensions Deficit Mitigation Structure (the "Scottish Limited Partnership"), whose purpose is to provide an income and additional security to the Trust. The Trust's interest in these payments is backed by real estate assets of the Partnership and is subject to annual valuation by an appropriately qualified person.
- The Trustee has a formal legal guarantee provided by John Lewis Properties plc, a subsidiary of the principal employer. This gives the Trustee a right to claim against that company in the event of the participating employer (John Lewis plc) failing to pay any amount due.
- The Partnership has provided the Trust with a guarantee from Waitrose Limited to meet any pension contributions that are due in the event of non-payment of the pension contributions by John Lewis plc.

10 The Trustee will monitor the risk profile of the Trust and will regularly review, in conjunction with Mercer and the Scheme Actuary, the appropriateness of its investment strategy. Consequently, the balance within and between the Return-Seeking and Liability Matching portfolios will be determined from time-to-time with regard to maximising the probability of achieving the Trust's investment objective while minimising the risk of the asset portfolio relative to the Trust's liabilities. The overall level of risk will be consistent with the strength of the covenant which is regularly monitored as set out in section 29 under “Sponsor and solvency risk”.

11 The Trust will hold assets in cash and other money market instruments from time-to-time as may be deemed appropriate.

12 The Trustee's policy is that, where possible, there will be sufficient investments in liquid or readily realisable assets to meet cash-flow requirements in foreseeable circumstances so that the realisation of assets will not disrupt the Trust's overall investments. The Trustee will hold sufficient cash to meet benefit and other payment obligations due in the short-term.

13 The Trustee does not intentionally invest in Employer Related Investments (‘ERI’), as set out in the Pensions Act 2004 and in the Occupational Pension Trusts (Investment) Regulations 2005.

There may be rare occasions when the Trust is involved in indirect ERI; for example, where the Sponsor is the tenant in a property owned by the Trust. All such transactions are carried out by the Trust's property manager on the basis of an open market transaction, with the Sponsor treated in the same commercial way as any other tenant. The Trustee monitors the level of ERI exposure quarterly.

Investment Strategy

- 14 The Trustee formally reviewed the investment strategy in June 2024 with advice from Mercer. Further information on the agreed strategy is set out below.
- As set out in Section 9, the Trust allocates to a Return-Seeking Portfolio and a Liability Matching Portfolio. There are no current fixed target allocations (expressed as a percentage of assets) to these two portfolios. The Trust will invest in a range of sub-asset classes and mandates within these portfolios in order to achieve the target investment return. The allocations between the Return-Seeking Portfolio and the Liability Matching Portfolio are liable to change over time based on a variety of factors, including return expectations and market conditions.
 - The most recent strategic review focused on how to achieve the target investment return of gilts +1.8% p.a. over the long term. This resulted in an agreed long term investment strategy that allocates 40% to the Liability Matching Portfolio and 60% to the Return-Seeking Portfolio, noting that this cannot be achieved in the near-term given the liquidity characteristics of the current portfolio. The allocation to different sub-asset classes will ultimately be determined by the most efficient way to achieve the return target of gilts + 1.8% p.a.
 - It is expected to take several years to transition to the long-term investment strategy, over which period the Trust will continue to review the appropriateness of the strategy and consider any refinements as required.
 - The Liability Matching Portfolio aims to approximately hedge 100% of the interest rate and inflation exposure of the Trust's funded Technical Provisions liabilities. The Liability Matching Portfolio is managed with reference to the Trust's liabilities measured on the Trust's Low Dependency basis. The target hedge ratio on the Low Dependency basis is reviewed regularly with a view to ensuring they are consistent with the 100% funded Technical Provisions target set out above.
 - It is recognised that the target investment return will be driven by the Trust's asset allocation (which will move over time) and market conditions. In order to ensure the target return from the investment strategy remains close to the target of Gilts+1.8% p.a., the Trustee has implemented a framework for monitoring the expected return of the Trust's investment strategy. Under the framework, if the Trust's expected return diverges from the target return beyond defined tolerance limits, action may be required. Any action, and the timescales associated, will aim to strike a balance between maintaining the target return and running the portfolio efficiently. The timescales associated with rebalancing actions will also be impacted by the constraints within the portfolio, including collateral constraints within the Liability Matching Portfolio and liquidity within the Return-Seeking Portfolio.

Investment Management

- 15 In accordance with the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, the Trustee will set general investment policy, but will delegate the responsibility for selection of specific investments to its appointed investment managers. The investment managers are expected to possess the skills and expertise necessary to manage the investments of the Trust competently.

- 16 The Trustee is not involved in the investment managers' day-to-day operations and does not directly seek to influence attainment of their return objectives. The Trustee maintains processes to ensure that performance is assessed on a regular basis against measurable objectives for each manager, consistent with the achievement of the Trust's long-term objectives, and an acceptable level of risk.

When deciding whether or not to make any new investments, the Trustee will obtain written advice from a suitable adviser. The Trustee's policy is to review its investments and to obtain written advice about them from Mercer at regular intervals.

- 17 The custody of stocks and shares is handled mostly by the Trust's global custodian (except for direct investments, where there are separate custodians/administrators, and the property assets of the Trust). The global custodian provides safekeeping of the Trust's assets and performs administrative duties.

Title deeds of property assets and the certificates for property pooled vehicles are held for safekeeping by the Trustee's property solicitors.

Responsible Investment ("RI")

- 18 The Trustee formally reviewed its RI beliefs over 2023-4, and as a result of this exercise documented a formal RI policy that covers both the DB and DC Sections of the Trust. The RI policy can be found [here](#). In summary:

- The Trustee's fiduciary duty is to ensure that benefits can be paid when they are due.
- The Trustee invests the assets responsibly to deliver financial performance in a way that considers Environmental, Social and Governance ("ESG") issues. The Trustee considers these factors to represent material financial risks that could impact the value or future performance of an investment over the Trust's investment time horizon. Non-financial factors may also be considered if they represent reputational or other unforeseen risk. The views of the Partnership would be sought and considered in that instance.
- The Trustee believes climate change is a systemic risk to the global economy, and the investments of the Trust. The Trustee has therefore agreed to target 'Net Zero' emissions by no later than 2050 on its investment portfolio. The Trustee will continue to develop its strategy and implementation plan to achieve this objective.
- The Trustee is a signatory to the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI). Being a PRI signatory allows the Trust to publicly demonstrate its commitment to incorporating ESG factors into its investment decision making and ownership practices.

The Trustee's RI policy will be reviewed at least every year, or without delay after any material change to the approach of the Trust's broader investment arrangements.

Investment Manager Monitoring and Engagement

- 19 The policy in relation to the Trustee's arrangements with its investment managers is set out below in sections 20-24.
- 20 Incentivising investment managers to align their investment strategy and decisions with the Trustee's policies:

- The Trust’s investment managers are appointed based on their capabilities and, therefore, their perceived likelihood of achieving the expected return and risk characteristics required for the specific asset class / strategy sought.
- The Trustee looks to its investment advisers for their forward-looking assessment of a manager’s ability to outperform over a full market cycle. This view is based on the advisers’ assessment of the manager’s idea generation, portfolio construction, implementation and business management, in relation to the particular investment fund in which the Trust invests. The advisers’ manager research ratings assist the Trustee with the due diligence and questioning of managers, which are used in decisions around selection, retention and realisation of manager appointments.
- If the investment objective of a particular fund changes, the Trustee will review the fund appointment to ensure it remains appropriate and consistent with the Trustee’s wider investment objectives.
- Some appointments are for active management approaches and those managers are incentivised through remuneration (including some via performance related fees) and performance targets (an appointment will be reviewed following periods of sustained underperformance). The Trustee will review the appropriateness of using actively managed funds and mandates on an ad-hoc basis.
- Some appointments are for segregated mandates. The Trustee has specified criteria in the investment management agreements requiring the respective investment managers to comply with the Trustee’s specific investment requirements.
- As the Trustee also invests in pooled investment vehicles it accepts that it has no ability to specify the risk profile and return targets beyond those applying to the particular investment vehicle, and therefore selects those vehicles on that basis and to align with the overall investment strategy.

21 Incentivising the investment managers to make decisions based on assessments about medium to long-term financial and non-financial performance of an issuer, and to engage with issuers in order to improve their performance in the medium to long-term:

- The Trustee will consider the investment advisers’ assessment of how the investment managers embed ESG into their investment process. In addition, the Trustee will request information about an investment manager’s ESG policies and how the manager’s responsible investment philosophy aligns with the Trustee’s responsible investment policy. This includes the investment manager’s policy on voting and engagement.
- The Trustee may challenge the decisions made by the investment managers on their voting history and engagement activity. In addition, the DBC will meet with the investment managers as and when required at DBC meetings.
 - The Trustee delegates all voting and engagement activities to the investment managers. When required the Trustee will question managers’ voting decisions if it deems them out of line with the investment fund’s objectives or the objectives / policies of the Trust. Further information on the Trustee’s approach to voting and engagement is set out in its RI Policy.
- The investment managers are aware that their continued appointment is based on their success in delivering the mandate for which they have been appointed. If the Trustee is dissatisfied, then they will look to replace the manager.

22 Aligning the evaluation of the investment managers’ performance and the remuneration for investment management services with the Trustee’s policies:

- The Trustee’s focus is on longer-term performance, but shorter-term performance is monitored to ensure any concerns can be identified in a timely manner. The Trustee reviews the absolute performance, relative performance against a suitable benchmark, and against the manager’s stated target performance (over the relevant time period) on a net of fees basis.
- The Trustee has performance-related fees in place with a number of the Trust’s managers which directly link performance with remuneration.

23 Monitoring portfolio turnover costs incurred by the investment managers:

- The Trustee reviews the details of portfolio transaction costs for the Trust’s respective mandates, where appropriate, on an annual basis.
- Furthermore, the Trustee reviews how active investment managers have moved their portfolios’ positions over time. The Trustee will engage with a manager if portfolio turnover is deemed higher than expected, with reference to the manager’s investment style and the specified portfolio turnover range in the investment guidelines or prospectus. Portfolio turnover is also considered by Mercer and forms part of their research meetings with the managers.

24 The duration of the arrangements with the investment managers:

- The Trustee is a long-term investor and is not looking to change the investment arrangements on a frequent basis.
- Some of the Trust’s investments have no set duration for the manager appointments. The Trustee will retain an investment manager unless:
 - There is a strategic change to the overall strategy that no longer requires exposure to that asset class or manager;
 - The manager appointment has been reviewed and the Trustee has decided to terminate.
- Some of the Trustee’s investments are in limited partnerships, particularly for private equity and private credit assets. In these cases, the Trust is normally invested for the stated lifetime of the particular fund, which may be subject to extension.

Risk

- 25 The key risk faced by the Trust is that it is unable to provide in full the benefits as set out in the Trust Deed. The risk arises if the Trust is unable to achieve the investment returns expected (see paragraph 7) and the Partnership is unable to pay sufficient additional contributions to cover this shortfall.
- 26 The Trustee reviews, on a quarterly basis, the funding level of the Trust, both on a technical provisions basis and on a low dependency basis. This analysis utilises Mercer’s asset/liability model to show projected funding levels of the Trust. Various other risk statistics are considered on both actuarial bases, including tracking errors of the assets vs. the liabilities and VaR(95%).
- 27 A full investment strategy review (including asset-liability modelling) is run in conjunction with the triennial actuarial valuation or following significant changes in the benefit structure of the Trust, a significant deterioration in the funding level of the Trust or a material deterioration of the covenant. This enables the Trustee to determine the likelihood of the investment strategy meeting the Trust’s investment objectives and to assess the downside risks to the strategy.

- 28 A Joint Pensions Engagement Group ('JPEG') has been established, comprising representatives of the Trustee and the Partnership. The JPEG is responsible for considering the overall strategic direction of the Trust, encompassing any high-level implications for the investment strategy (i.e. the JPEG does not consider issues regarding the day-to-day management of Trust assets). The JPEG is largely advisory but may make recommendations for the consideration of the DBC.
- 29 Additionally, the Trustee recognises a number of risks involved in the investment of the Trust's assets:
- Deficit risk:
 - is measured through a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the expected development of the liabilities relative to the current and alternative investment policies.
 - is managed through assessing the progress of the actual growth of the liabilities relative to the selected investment policy.
 - Manager and market risk:
 - is measured by the expected deviation of the return relative to the benchmark set.
 - is managed by limiting exposure to any one investment manager, consideration of the appropriate amount of the Trust to allocate to each active portfolio and by monitoring the actual deviation of returns relative to the benchmark and factors supporting the managers' investment process. The Trust diversifies its investments across a range of asset classes, industry sectors and geographical regions.
 - counterparty risk is addressed through the investment manager guidelines with respect to cash management and ongoing monitoring.
 - Liquidity risk:
 - is measured by monitoring the level of cash-flow required by the Trust over a specified period.
 - is managed through holding assets of appropriate liquidity.
 - Currency risk:
 - is measured by the level of exposure to non-sterling denominated assets.
 - is managed by the implementation of a currency hedging overlay, which reduces the impact of exchange rate movements on the Trust's asset value. This is implemented within the Trust's Liability Matching Portfolio. The appropriate level of currency hedging is reviewed regularly by the DBC and considered alongside other key risks set out in this document.
 - Interest rate and inflation risk:
 - is measured by comparing the likely movement in the Trust's liabilities and assets due to movements in inflation and interest rates.
 - is managed by allocating a proportion of the Trust's assets to a Liability Matching Portfolio which is designed to reduce the Trust's exposure to the risk of adverse movements in inflation and interest rates. The Trustee regularly reviews the split of the Trust's portfolio between the Return-Seeking Portfolio and the Liability Matching Portfolio.

- Hedging Risk
 - is measured by monitoring the level of leveraged hedging undertaken, the level of collateral held, the concentration of the hedging risk exposure with individual counterparties and the credit quality of those counterparties.
 - is managed by setting maximum amounts of leveraged hedging, limiting the choice of instruments, setting minimum levels of the amount of collateral that can be held in respect of any hedges and imposing financial limits on the total value that can be held with any one counterparty.
- Longevity risk:
 - the Trust has reduced its longevity risk in the following ways:
 - for service after April 2008 through a risk-sharing mechanism, the Life Expectancy Adjustment Factor ('LEAF'). Actuarial assumptions concerning mortality are reviewed triennially.
 - for service after April 2016, the retirement age is linked to the State Retirement Age.
- Sponsor and solvency risk:
 - the Trustee monitors the Sponsor's covenant by means of a bi-annual internal review and a triennial external review which is timed to coincide with the actuarial valuation. Additional monitoring of the Partnership's trading and other commercial activities takes place on a day-to-day basis.
 - the funding and investment strategies and policies are set by reference to the triennial covenant assessment which measures the strength of the balance sheet and the affordability of the required contributions. The funding level of the Trust is monitored on a daily basis (on a technical provisions basis) and is considered on a formal basis each quarter by the DBC. In addition, the Trustee considers these risks when undertaking triennial or interim strategy reviews.
 - the Trust has a Pension Deficit Mitigation Structure and a Guarantee as described in paragraph 9.
- Political risk:
 - is measured by the level of concentration of any one market leading to the risk of an adverse influence on investment values arising from political intervention.
 - is managed by regular reviews of the actual investments relative to policy and through the level of diversification within the existing policy.
- Reputational risk:
 - the Trustee is aware of the importance that the Sponsor attaches to this risk and works closely with the Sponsor to ensure that the reputational risks associated with the investment portfolio are monitored and managed.
- Operational risk:
 - is addressed through the establishment and maintenance of policies, monitoring and compliance processes and systems. There is a risk register which is reviewed quarterly by the Audit and Risk Committee who report to the Trustee Board.

- Custodian risk:
 - custodian risk is addressed through the custody agreement and regular monitoring of the custodial arrangements. The credit rating of the custodian is also monitored. Restrictions are applied on who can authorise transfers of cash and the accounts to which transfers can be made.

Further Information

- 30 The Annual Report and Accounts for the Trust are published in the third quarter of every year and are available on the Partner intranet. For more information on the Trust's investment strategy please contact Trustee Services team at trustee.services@johnlewis.co.uk.