

CPF MEMBERS FORUM

www.cpfmembersforum.com

PRESS RELEASE 34 (January 2023)

Our 2022 Review - The headlines were UN sanctions, UK growth, and investment in UK infrastructure. But what happened here ?

1. UKRAINE [CPF investment in Russian Banks](#)

The major news of 2022 was the Russian Invasion of the Ukraine, the consequent UN sanctions against Russia, and ongoing global impacts on security, energy and food.

- Cheshire Pension Fund had a long standing direct investment of £2,258,722 in Sberbank, the state-owned Russian bank, plus other indirect CPF investments.
- In PR29 we questioned why CPF had ever invested in Russia, instead of the communities of Cheshire, Halton, and Warrington, and the families that live here.
- LGPS Central, the Investment Pool owned by CPF with seven other local government funds, also had total investments in Russia of over £100 million.

2. CHESHIRE EAST SMOKING CESSATION but [CPF still invests in Tobacco](#)

In July, Cheshire East proposed a pilot Smoking Cessation programme. We pointed out the hypocrisy while Cheshire Pension Fund keeps its long-standing investments in tobacco.

- Cheshire East replied that CPF “holdings in tobacco companies have already been reducing over time, and currently make up less than 0.1% of the portfolio”.
- The CPF investment portfolio was valued at nearly £7 billion in 2021/2022.
- So “less than 0.1%” meant nearly £7 million is invested in tobacco.

3. 215 HOUSES IN CHELTENHAM [215 Houses, not in Cheshire !](#)

On the same topic, we questioned why CWAC and CPF will use our pension fund to build houses in Cheltenham, and not here in Cheshire where we need housing ?

- Press coverage from Gloucestershire showed that CWAC had applied for planning permission to build 215 houses in Cheltenham on land that CPF owns there.
- But if CPF built here, those new homes for Cheshire families would also generate long term growth and income for Cheshire companies and councils, as well as Cheshire communities and future generations.
- We repeated that NONE of the Cheshire Pension Fund property investment portfolio is in Cheshire, Warrington or Halton, but favours the South-East.

4. NET ZERO, COP26, COP27 [Funds that failed to act ahead of COP26](#)

Research conducted by **Make My Money Matter**, showed how Cheshire Pension Fund was one of the major schemes yet to “make robust net zero commitments”.

- In the article in Actuarial Post, they listed CPF as one of many large UK pension schemes that had failed to act on climate before the 2021 COP26 in Glasgow.
- Reports in 2022 from the UN IPCC, and the UK CCC, both stressed the need to reduce emissions and our dependency on fossil fuels
- Real action by CPF would mean divestment from fossil fuel investments, and investments in green energy and insulation, not just a “carbon footprint” statement.

5. LEVELLING UP [White Paper on Levelling Up](#)

The White Paper on Levelling Up urged LGPS funds such as our Cheshire CPF to invest here in UK infrastructure “to boost Britains long-term growth”.

- The White Paper suggested LGPS funds “setting an ambition of up to 5% of assets invested in projects which support local areas.”
- In PR28 we asked why CPF does not invest in the Cheshire area and companies.

6. ELLESMORE PORT named as [Investment Zone](#)

In September 2022 Ellesmere Port was named in the Growth Plan by the government as an Investment Zone.

- Again we showed that Cheshire Pension Fund through its Property Portfolio does not invest locally, and owns no property in any of the 4 Cheshire councils.
- As with the White Paper on Levelling Up, we hope that Cheshire Pension Fund will examine its investment policy, to concentrate on the UK and locally and invest in UK and Cheshire infrastructure, for future generations.

7. CPF COMMUNICATIONS [CPF Newsletter 2022](#)

Improved communications have been a constant background to our past Members Forum campaign, and we have welcomed the appointment by CPF of a Communications Manager

- In March CPF produced a four page Pensioner Newsletter with pictures, a wordsearch, and little other detail. There have been no further editions.
- In July CPF produced a new Communications Strategy which contained a long description of the strategy, but very little detail or timescales for any projects.

In August we had a meeting with CPF to discuss Communications. We identified three ongoing major issues, and provided examples, but we have had little feedback:

- For CPF to hold a members meeting every year.
- For CPF to collect our email addresses, and use them.
- For CPF to provide discussion pages on the CPF website.

8. THE PENSION BOARD [CPF Governance Structure](#)

The current Pension Board should end in 2023 as members serve a three year term. But in 2020 there were no applications, partly because CPF cannot directly contact members

- In 2020, CPF just continued the same Pension Board for another three years.
- As CPF does not hold email addresses, in 2023 it cannot contact 100,000 members.
- In 2023, councils and other organisations use email, but not CPF !

9. LGPS CENTRAL & CPF POOLING [LGC Uneven pattern of asset transfers](#)

The Local Government Chronicle published 2021 DLUHC data on transfer levels between LGPS funds and the investment pool they jointly own. Pools were set up in 2015 to manage investments, reduce costs, and invest in UK infrastructure.

- The data showed that some LGPS funds had transitioned 100% to their pool, and the average held by all pools was over 50%. But LGPS Central, which is owned by CPF and seven other funds, had the lowest level of transfers nationally.
- We have asked why CPF had transferred just 25% of investments to LGPS Central

CPF MEMBERS FORUM – In 2023 we will continue our campaign for a members meeting with the Councillors who run CPF and make the investment decisions.

- Our members campaign for our pensions to be invested to ESG standards for the future, in UK infrastructure, for “Net Zero”, green energy, low-cost housing, insulation, WiFi networks, PPE and Health, and also support and invest locally in Cheshire.
- Our members are disappointed that CPF will not divest current investments in areas such as fossil fuels and the banks that fund them, short term financial companies, tobacco, gambling, gaming, armaments, social media, companies on UNHR lists, and tax avoiders who use “offshore profit shifting”.

To give us a stronger voice with the Cheshire Pension Fund, we encourage all pensioners, current employees and members of CPF to join our Members Forum. It is free, confidential, and has no commitment. CPF will not recognise our Forum.

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