



# Annual Engagement Policy Implementation Statement to 30 June 2023

Ulster Television Pension and Assurance Scheme ('the Scheme')

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This document provides an assessment of how the Trustee has put its Statement of Investment Principles (SIP) into practice during the year.

It covers three main areas: voting rights and voting behaviour; the engagement and monitoring of investment managers; and how responsible investment (referred to as ESG) has been considered as part of the investment decision-making process.

## What's covered

1. Introduction
2. Investment objectives of the Scheme
3. Trustee policy on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues, including climate change
4. Trustee policy on exercise of rights (including voting rights) attaching to Scheme investments

# 1

## Introduction

This Engagement Policy Implementation Statement (the Statement) sets out the Trustee's assessment of how, and the extent to which, they have followed their engagement policy and their policy with regard to the exercise of rights (including voting rights) attaching to the Scheme's investments during the one-year period to 30 June 2023 (the "Scheme Year"). The Trustee's policies are set out in their Statement of Investment Principles (SIP) dated March 2023. A copy of the current SIP can be found <https://utvpensions.com/docs/UTV-Statement-of-investment-Principles.pdf>.

This Statement has been produced in accordance with the *Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment and Modification) Regulations 2018* and the *Occupational Pension Schemes (Investment and Disclosure) (Amendment) Regulations 2019* along with guidance published by the Department of Work and Pensions.

The Trustee has appointed Mercer Limited ("Mercer") in the UK as the discretionary investment manager for the Scheme's Cashflow Driven Investment ('CDI') strategy. Pursuant to that appointment, scheme monies are invested in Mercer Funds, which are collective investment vehicles, managed by Mercer Global Investments Europe Limited ('MGIE'). As investment manager to the Mercer Funds, MGIE are responsible for the appointment and monitoring of suitably diversified portfolio of specialist third party investment managers for each Mercer Fund's assets.

The publicly available [Sustainability Policy](#) sets out how Mercer addresses sustainability risks and opportunities and considers Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) factors in decision making across the investment process. The Stewardship Policy provides more detail on Mercer's beliefs and implementation on stewardship specifically. Under these arrangements, the Trustee accepts that they do not have the ability to directly determine the engagement or voting policies or arrangements of the managers of the Mercer Funds. The Trustee review regular reports from Mercer with regard to the engagement and voting undertaken on their behalf in order to consider whether the policies are being properly implemented.

Section 2 of this Statement sets out the Scheme's overall objectives. Section 3 of this Statement sets out the Trustee's engagement policy and assesses the extent to which it has been followed over the Scheme Year. Section 4 sets out the Trustee's policy with regard to the exercising of rights (including voting rights) attaching to the Scheme's investments and considers how, and the extent to which, this policy has been followed during the Scheme Year. This Section also provides detail on voting activity undertaken by the Scheme's third party investment managers during the Scheme Year.

**Taking the analysis included in Sections 3 to 4 together, it is the Trustee's belief that their policies with regard to engagement and the exercise of rights attaching to investments has been successfully followed during the Scheme Year.**

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### Investment objectives of the Scheme

The Trustee believes it is important to consider the policies in place in the context of the investment objectives it has set. The objectives of the Scheme included in the SIP are as follows:

- To make sure that we can meet our obligations to the beneficiaries of the Scheme;
- To achieve an asset return above the return from gilts over the long term, whilst recognising the need to balance risk control and return generation;
- To pay due regard to the Principal Employer's interests by considering the impact of the investment strategy on the size and incidence of employers' contribution payments; and
- To ensure consistency between the Scheme's investment strategy and the return assumptions used by the Scheme Actuary.

## 3

### Trustee policy on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues, including climate change

#### Policy Summary

Mercer and the Trustee believe stewardship plays an important role in managing sustainability risks and other ESG factors, and helps the realisation of long-term value by providing investors with an opportunity to enhance the value of companies and markets consistent with long-term investor timeframes. Consequently, an approach that integrates effective stewardship is in the best interests of the Scheme. The Trustee also recognise that long-term sustainability issues, particularly climate change, present risks and opportunities, including non-financial performance that require the explicit consideration of the Trustee.

It is the Trustee's policy that the third party investment managers appointed by Mercer, via Mercer Global Investments Europe (MGIE), report in line with established best practice such as the UK Stewardship Code 2021, to which Mercer is a signatory, including public disclosure of compliance via an external website, when managing the Scheme's assets. Further, in appointing the third party asset managers, the Trustee expects MGIE to select managers where it believes the managers will engage directly with issuers in order to improve their financial and non-financial performances over the medium to long term. To monitor the third party investment managers' compliance with this expectation, the Trustee considers regular reports from Mercer that include an assessment of each third party manager's engagement activity.

Should the Trustee consider that Mercer, MGIE or the third party asset managers, have failed to align their own engagement policies with those of the Trustee, the Trustee will notify Mercer and consider disinvesting some or all of the assets held in the Mercer Funds and/or seek to renegotiate commercial terms with Mercer.

## How the Policy has been implemented over the Scheme Year

The following work was undertaken during the year relating to the Trustee's policy on ESG factors, stewardship and climate change.

### Mercer Policy Updates

The Trustee considers how ESG, climate change and stewardship is integrated within Mercer's, and MGIE's, investment processes and those of the underlying asset managers in the monitoring process. Mercer, and MGIE, provide reporting to the Trustee on a regular basis.

The Mercer [Sustainability Policy](#) is reviewed regularly. In March 2021 there was an update in relation to the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR) implementation. In August 2022 the policy update reflected enhancements to the approach to climate change modelling and transition modelling, additional detail on how the policy is implemented, monitored and governed and, as part of the commitment to promote diversity, finalising MGIE's signatory status to the UK chapter of the 30% Club.

In line with the requirements of the EU Shareholder Rights Directive II, Mercer have implemented a standalone [Stewardship Policy](#) to specifically address the requirements of the directive. This Policy was also updated in August 2022 to reflect enhancements made to Mercer's stewardship approach including an introduction of Engagement Dashboards and Trackers, an enhanced UN Global Compact engagement and escalation process and a Client engagement survey.

UN Principles of Responsible Investing scores for 2021 (based on 2020 activity) were issued over Q3 2022. Mercer were awarded top marks for over-the-arching Investment and Stewardship Policy section, underpinned by strong individual asset class results.

### ESG Rating Review

Where available, ESG ratings assigned by Mercer are included in the investment performance reports produced by Mercer on a quarterly basis and reviewed by the Trustee. ESG ratings are reviewed by MGIE during quarterly monitoring processes, with a more comprehensive review performed annually - which seeks evidence of positive momentum on ESG integration and compares the Mercer funds overall ESG rating with the appropriate universe of strategies in Mercer's Global Investment Manager Database (GIMD). Engagements are prioritised with managers where their strategy's ESG rating is behind that of their peer universe.

As at 31 December 2022, in the Annual Sustainability Report provided by Mercer, the Trustee noted the Mercer Funds in which the Scheme invests all had ESG ratings equal or above their respective asset class universe. At the wider Mercer Fund level, 21% of Mercer's funds have seen an improved ESG rating over the year and the vast majority have a rating ahead of the wider universe. Due to the nature of certain strategies, they do not have an ESG rating (i.e. are N rated) and are therefore excluded from this review.

### Approach to Exclusions

As an overarching principle, Mercer and MGIE prefer an approach of positive engagement rather than negative divestment. However Mercer and MGIE recognises that there are a number of cases in which investors deem it unacceptable to profit from certain areas and therefore exclusions will be appropriate.

Controversial weapons are excluded from active equity and fixed income funds, and passive equity funds. In addition tobacco companies (based on revenue) are excluded from active equity and fixed income funds.

Mercer expanded exclusions to further promote environmental and social characteristics across the majority of the multi-client building block funds over the second half of 2022, in line with EU SFDR Article 8 classification, as well as aligning Mercer's existing active and passive exclusions across their fund range.

In addition, Mercer and MGIE monitors for high-severity breaches of the UN Global Compact (UNGC) Principles that relate to human rights, labour, environmental and corruption issues.

### Diversity

From 31 December 2020, gender diversity statistics have also been included in the quarterly reporting for the Mercer equity funds and this is being built into a broader Mercer Investment Solutions International policy on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, sitting alongside Mercer's established Diversity Charter.

Mercer consider broader forms of diversity in decision-making, but currently report on gender diversity. As at 31 December 2022, 36% of the Key Decision Makers (KDM's) within Mercer IS team are non-male, and Mercer's long term target is 50%.

Within the Fixed Income universe the average fund has 8% non-male KDM's and within the EMEA Active Equity universe the average is 12%. Figures relating to Mercer Fixed Income and Active Equity Funds are currently slightly ahead at 9% and 13%.

In Q3 2022 MGIE was confirmed as a signatory of the UK Chapter of the 30% Club.

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### Trustee policy on exercise of rights (including voting rights) attaching to Scheme investments

#### Policy

The Trustee policy is to delegate responsibility for the exercising of rights (including voting rights) attaching to the Scheme's investments to the third party investment managers appointed by Mercer on behalf of the Trustee.

This is because any voting rights that do apply with respect to the underlying investments attached to the Mercer Funds are, ultimately, delegated to the third party investment managers appointed by MGIE. In delegating these rights, MGIE accepts that managers are typically best placed to exercise voting rights and prioritise particular engagement topics by security, given they are expected to have detailed knowledge of both the governance and the operations of the companies and issuers they invest in. However, Mercer has a pivotal role in monitoring their stewardship activities and promoting more effective stewardship practices, including ensuring attention is given to more strategic themes and topics. As such, proxy voting responsibility is given to listed equity investment managers with an expectation that all shares are to be voted in a timely manner and a manner deemed most likely to protect and enhance long-term value. Mercer and MGIE carefully evaluates each sub-investment manager's capability in ESG engagement and proxy voting, as part of the selection process to ensure it is representing Mercer's commitment to good governance, integration of sustainability considerations. Managers are expected to take account of current best practice such as the UK Stewardship Code 2021, to which Mercer is a signatory. As such the Trustee does not use the direct services of a proxy voter.

**Voting:** As part of the monitoring of managers' approaches to voting, MGIE assesses how managers are voting against management and seeks to obtain the rationale behind voting activities, particularly in cases where split votes may occur (where managers vote in different ways for the same proposal). MGIE portfolio managers will use these results to inform their engagements with managers on their voting activities.

Given the nature of the Scheme's fixed-income oriented CDI strategy, the bulk majority of the underlying assets have no exercisable voting rights to report, although it is noted that a small portion of the Mercer Multi-Asset Credit Fund invests in equity linked securities. Set out below is a summary of voting activity for the year to 31 March 2023 for the Multi-Asset Credit Fund, in which the Scheme is invested. The statistics set out in the table below are drawn from the Glass Lewis voting system (via Mercer's custodian). Typically, votes exercised against management can indicate a thoughtful and active approach. This is particularly visible where votes have been exercised to escalate engagement objectives. The expectation is for all shares to be voted.

Fund Name		Mercer Multi-Asset Credit Fund <sup>(1)</sup>
Total Proposals	Eligible Proposals	11
	Proposals Voted	11
Vote Decision	For	91%
	Against	9%
	Abstain	0%
	No Action	0%
	Other	0%
For/Against Mgmt	For	91%
	Against	9%

<sup>(1)</sup> Voting Activity figures for the Mercer Multi-Asset Credit fund relate to a small number of equity holdings within the fund's underlying segregated mandates. Please note this does not include voting activity from any underlying pooled strategies within the fund over the period

- "Eligible Proposals" reflect all proposals of which managers were eligible to vote on over the period
- "Proposals Voted On" reflect the proposals managers have voted on over the period (including votes For and Against, and any frequency votes encompassed in the "Other" category)"
- "No Action" reflects instances where managers have not actioned a vote. MGIE may follow up with managers to understand the reasoning behind these decisions, and to assess the systems managers have in place to ensure voting rights are being used meaningfully
- "Other" refers to proposals in which the decision is frequency related (e.g. 1 year or 3 year votes regarding the frequency of future say-on-pay).

**Significant Votes:** Mercer has based the definition of significant votes on Mercer's [Beliefs, Materiality and Impact \(BMI\) Framework](#). In order to capture this in the monitoring and reporting of managers voting activities, significant votes focus on proposals covering priority areas identified by the BMI Framework.

None of the votes within the Mercer Multi-Asset Credit Fund related to Engagement Priority topics and thus did not constitute significant votes to be reported.