

Motion – Divest the Norfolk Pension Fund

Adopted by Norwich City Council Cabinet 9th July 2025

To ask the leader of the Council to write to the Chair of Pension Committee at Norfolk County Council, urging the Pensions Committee to:

Develop a robust, evidence-based ethical investment policy that reflects:

- legal obligations under international and domestic law,
- the views of scheme members, and
- the need to safeguard the long-term financial performance of the fund.

Establish and apply enhanced due diligence and screening procedures to identify and avoid investments in governments, industries or companies demonstrably proved to be involved in serious human rights violations, environmental destruction, or breaches of international humanitarian law.

Define a clear process and timeline for divesting from companies and bonds in breach of the ethical investment policy, with quarterly reporting on progress.

Engage with recognised trade unions representing LGPS members (e.g. UNISON, Unite, GMB) to ensure their voices help shape the fund's ethical investment strategy.

Write to the Joint Committee of the ACCESS Pool to:

- Share Norwich City Council's position;
- Request the development of clear ESG screening aligned with international human rights standards;
- Urge review and, where appropriate, divestment from investments not meeting ethical or fiduciary criteria.

Norwich City Council believes in a long term ethical investment strategy:

- Ethical investing is not at odds with fiduciary responsibility; in fact, investing in stable, rights-respecting environments can support the long-term performance of pension funds.
- An ethical investment strategy must be long-term in nature, ensuring that investments deliver on trustees' fiduciary duty to achieve a prudent balance between the interests of current and future beneficiaries of the pension fund.
- Council recognises that pension fund investments are made for the long-term benefit of scheme members and across generations, and should not be subject to short-term political pressures. Ethical investment policies must therefore be consistent, evidence-based, and balanced.
- Council staff and other scheme members have a right to transparency regarding how their pensions are invested, and to have their ethical concerns taken into account.
- Engagement with companies can sometimes be effective, but in cases of repeated non-compliance or involvement in egregious practices, divestment may be the only effective course of action.

Promote collaborative dialogue with other councils to share Norwich's position and encourage ethical investment alignment.

Actively engage with and seek advice from Councils and Pension Committees that have already implemented ethical investment policies.