



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF PENSION BOARD: FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEMES held on 6 August 2015 at FSHQ, at 10am

PRESENT:

Board Members: M Cashin, DCFO (Chair), N McElroy, FOA, G Peers, FBU
Officers: A Harvey, J Nixon, J Swift, P Vaughan

Prior to the meeting the Board expressed their condolences to the family of Councillor Peter Mason who had recently died. Councillor Mason had been appointed as the Pensions Member Champion at the Authority's AGM in June 2015.

1. Membership

The membership of the Board was confirmed as follows:

Employer Representatives:

Pensions Member Champion
Mark Cashin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Pension member Representatives:

Neil McElroy, FOA
George Peers, FBU

Scheme Manager

Andrea Harvey, Head of People and Development

Advisors to the Board:

Jayne Nixon, Solicitor, Legal and Democratic Services
Jill Swift, HR Business Support Manager

It was also noted that P Mobbs, HR Business Partner and P Vaughan, Head of Finance would also attend the meetings in an advisory capacity, as and when required.

The DCFO was appointed as Chair for the meeting although it was noted that the Pensions Member Champion would fulfil this role at future meetings. He requested that an additional item be added to the agenda in respect of Declaration of Interests.

2. Declaration Of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. Apologies

None

4. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Pensions Board had been approved by the Fire Authority and were presented to the Board to note.

The DCFO informed the Board that although the Terms of Reference referred to approximately four meetings being held per year this would be reviewed once the Board was established and it would probably be more appropriate to have bi-annual meetings.

The FBU representative queried the representation on the Board and stated that there was a lot of work involved in training and gaining the knowledge required to sit on the board. He suggested that there should be more than one FBU employee representative to ensure that there was continuity if a member left.

The Scheme Manager commented that a notice period requirement could be added to the terms of reference to allow for a replacement to be trained prior to sitting on the Board. The DCFO explained that there was little clarity on the role of the Board at present and it would be practical to see how the role evolved before reviewing the number of representatives required. The Board should ensure it fulfils the legal requirements initially and then ensure that the ToR was fit for purpose once there was more clarity.

Actions Agreed: That

- [1] the Terms of Reference (attached as appendix 1) be formally adopted by the Board; and**
- [2] the Terms of Reference be reviewed annually to ensure it remained fit for purpose.**

5 Appointment of Liaison Officer

Actions Agreed: That

- [1] J Swift, HR Business Support Manager be appointed as the Liaison Officer to liaise with the LGA/Scheme Advisory Board on behalf of the Authority.**

6 Pensions Update

The HR Business Support Manager provided a comprehensive verbal update on the Authority's position regarding firefighter pensions and the work undertaken to implement the changes and introduction of revised pension schemes since July 2013. A copy of the update provided is attached as Appendix 2 to the notes.

The Board discussed the information provided and a number of comments/queries were raised:

Communications – a number of pension roadshows were held to inform employees about the impact of the pension changes and also pension surgeries for those wanting individual advice. The HR Business Support Manager explained that the feedback from these sessions had been very positive but

attendance was low. HR had also put guidance and advice on the intranet and a number of direct mailings had been sent. The DCFO commented that there was still a lack of understanding on the changes but he was not sure how much more could be done to raise awareness.

The FBU representative queried whether there was a way to communicate the changes in a simple format. The HR Business Support Manager explained that there was a lot of detailed information and the guidance was not simple. However she would look at what could be included on the intranet pages and there would be an additional article in The Green to raise awareness.

Scheme Guidance – A copy of the employees guide to the scheme was provided to all new employees in respect of the 2015 scheme. It was noted that guidance on transitional protection was being developed by CLG and would be made available to employees once it was published.

Pension Discretions - There were fifty-two discretions in the 2015 scheme. Three of these (Delegations of powers to Scheme Manager; Pensionability of CPD and unpaid leave contributions) had already been determined by the Fire Authority and policy statements issued. The remaining discretions were currently being reviewed and a draft policy document would be produced once the review was complete. The Service's solicitor explained that it would be within the board's remit to ensure that where a discretion was required the Fire Authority had made a decision regarding the discretion and had adopted policy statements to reflect any decisions made.

Ongoing Issues - The HR Business Support Manager provided an update on the current case being dealt with by the Pensions Ombudsman regarding commutation and the introduction of the single tier pension in April 2016 which would result in higher NI deductions for both employers and employees. The FOA representative queried if a communications exercise was planned to inform people of these changes. The Scheme Manager advised that, as well as an article in The Green, HR would provide further information and guidance as part of the national payroll week in September and also provide the additional information with the annual pension statements (due in October).

The HR Business Support Manager added that Mouchel had pensions' information and related links on their website (<http://www.myownpension.co.uk/>). An employee portal for the website was also being developed and this would mean that all employees would be able to access their own pension records. She added that the LGA were also in the process of developing web pages with pension's information/guidance. The FOA representative commented that the Pensions Regulators website was also a useful source of information.

Actions Agreed: That

- [1] the Pensions Update be noted; and**
- [2] the Scheme Manager and HR Business Support Manager review and develop the communications plan for the forthcoming changes to contracting out and the introduction of the single tier pension.**

7 Training Plan 2015/16

The Scheme Manager commented that the recent training session that a number of Board members had attended had been useful. She also stated that although there was a level of understanding required to sit on the Board it should be noted that the Scheme Manager and advisors to the Board were also there to assist. She suggested that Board members work through the Pensions Regulations toolkit following which additional training requirements could be assessed by carrying out a training needs analysis exercise.

Toolkit link: <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/public-service-schemes/learn-about-managing-public-service-schemes.aspx>

This exercise could then be reviewed at the next pension board meeting and any additional training requirements identified. HR would also review CIPFA training programmes and speak to other FRS's in the regional group to see if joint training could be arranged where training requirements had been identified.

Actions Agreed: That

- [1] Board members complete the Pensions Regulations toolkit; and**
- [2] the Training Needs Analysis to identify gaps in knowledge/skills be added to the agenda for the next Pension Board meeting.**

8 Meeting Dates 2015/16

2015-16 meetings would be arranged on a quarterly basis with the next meeting being arranged for Oct/Nov. However meeting frequency would be reviewed for 2016/17 once the work programme for the board was established.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the meeting dates for the remainder of 2015/16 be arranged for dates in Oct/Nov; Jan/Feb; Apr/May**

Add Actions Agreed: That

- [1] Data sets with the following information be submitted to the next meeting:
Membership (no of members incl. retired members in each scheme)**
- [2] Board advisors to review publication requirements for agenda and notes of the meetings.**