

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Pension Board
Held via Microsoft Teams
On Friday, 11 December 2020 at 10.00 am**

Present

Members

Employer Representatives

Dave Myers	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Chair of Board)	DCFO
James Walton	Fire Authority Treasurer	JW

Member Representatives

Matt Lamb	Fire Brigades Union (FBU)	ML
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Officers

Helen Tomkins	Pensions Team Leader, Shropshire Council	PTL
Darren Bowe	Senior Pension Officer, Shropshire Council	SPO
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Tony Talbot, Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA)
Lisa Vickers, Human Resources Manager (Contracts)

2 Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts Register

Board Members were asked to declare any interests or responsibilities which may lead to conflicts of interest in the subject area or any specific agenda items for this meeting.

James Walton, Treasurer, declared a potential conflict of interest in that he is the Pension Administrator of the Shropshire County Pension Fund (SCPF) which the PTL and the SPO work for.

3 Minutes and Action List

3a Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 14 September 2020, be agreed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

3b Pension Board Action List

Progress on the Actions List is recorded on that document.

Resolved that the Board note the progress recorded against the actions on the Action List.

4 Contract Management Update and Issues

The current contract to deliver Fire Pension Schemes is with Shropshire Council and runs until 31/3/22. Shropshire Council have notified the Service that they do not intend to extend their service beyond this date. Currently we are in discussion with them to review all options. Contact has also been made with another FRS who have been out to the marketplace to discuss providers available. The Board will be updated further at the next meeting."

5 Scheme Advisory Board Communications

The Board received the following items from the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) for information and / or discussion. The SPO highlighted the following issues in each Bulletin.

5a FPS Bulletin 37 (September 2020)

- Legal advice is being sought regarding the application of the immediate detriment note issued by the Home Office to both claimants and non-claimants, but fire and rescue authorities are being encouraged to use the note to progress cases. The SAB have drafted an additional information note regarding key issues related to this (note issued in SAB Bulletin 38). The SPO advised that this Authority is not currently the note.
- Data Collection phase is now being undertaken but a key challenge is the issue of access to ResourceLink legacy data
- ML commented that there is disappointment in the FBU that the remedy is not being implemented and this was discussed at the SAB meeting on 10 December 2020.
- Legal action regarding age discrimination is still being considered
- The SPO advised that there are 30-40 SFRS employees who are immediately affected. Of these, there are 9 claimants and the rest are non-claimants.
- The SPO advised that there are potential calculation issues related to data collection for transferees
- The importance of the communication of information to members correctly was highlighted
- The SPO confirmed that the immediate detriment data has been submitted to the SAB.

5b FPS Bulletin 38 (October 2020)

- The SAB have published a factsheet on the expected second special members' options exercise
- In relation to RDS special members, there is a potential risk for the Service around March 2022 – the SPO will provide updates to the Board regarding this as the issue progresses
- ML reported that the SAB is to send a survey to fire and rescue authorities regarding the administration of Matthews / Sergeant case. This was agreed at the SAB meeting on 10 December and will be an extensive survey regarding implementation.
- The SAB have confirmed that scheme sanction charges should be paid by the Fire and Rescue Authority and not the scheme member.
- The SAB have set out guidance regarding medical retirement certificates used by IQMPs
- The only effect for the Fire Authority of the Exit Payments Regulations is on employer initiated early retirements
- DM advised that the new chair of the SAB is Joanne Livingstone

5c FPS Bulletin 39 (November 2020)

- A purchase order number has been provided for the invoicing of the annual statutory levy
- Duradiamond have advised that they are beginning to open regional venues for Medical Appeal Boards. The provision of remote appeals is also being explored
- The Protected Pension Age easement has now ended
- It has been confirmed that individual fire authorities will make decisions regarding Covid-19 as a qualifying injury under the Compensation Scheme. ML commented that a letter regarding this had been sent to each Chief Fire Officer. This had raised many questions as it is correct that decisions be made on a case by case basis. DM said that there are the additional issues of where the virus was contracted and the issue of long covid and the implications for capability.
- HMRC have completed their investigations regarding tax relief claims for special members of the FPS 2006 and no further action is required by fire and rescue authorities.

Resolved that the Board note the SAB Bulletins

6 Surveys / Returns

- TPR Scheme Return – submitted on 3 November 2020
- SAB Immediate Detriment Data Request – submitted on 25 November 2020 and updated on 2 December 2020.

ML advised that the SAB survey, including non-responses, will be published.

DM also advised that there are a lot of Government returns being requested and these are coming via different avenues such as the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Resolved that the Board note the updates given in relation to Surveys / Returns.

7 Update from Pension Administrator

• Data Quality Scores and Work Plan

The PTL reported that the Data Quality Scores have been received from Haywards and show that data has improved. The Common data score has increased from 98.2% to 99.2% and the Scheme Specific data score has increased from 74.4% to 93.6%. The data is very good but can still be improved further. The PLT and SPO have drawn up the Data Improvement Plan which includes priorities, objectives and improvement areas. The SPO advised that the situation is positive and there are several quick and easy fixes that can be undertaken.

DM congratulated the Pensions Team on the improvements and suggested that this be included in the next update to the Fire Authority.

Resolved that the Board note the Update from the Pensions Administrator.

8 Communications Issued or due to be sent to Members

P60s are going online in April 2021 and Pension Scheme Members will be informed of this change in writing.

The PTL also advised that downloadable payslips are available, but individuals need to register on Member Self Service to access these.

9 Training

The Board is considered Pension Board training, including:

- Update training register
- Notice of upcoming events
- Training needs analysis

- The Pensions Regulator (TPR) Training Modules which can be accessed via the following link:
<https://education.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/login/index.php>

Action: TPR training modules to be pushed with new Board members.

10 Breaches Register

There have been no breaches in the period since the last meeting of the Pension Board.

11 Pension Board Risk Register

The Board considered the Risk Register and if there were any areas of potential risk for inclusion. The Board noted the following updates:

Risk ID 4 – Guaranteed Minimum Pension reconciliation

The PTL reported that this work will be completed March 2021.

Risk ID 7 – Lack of resources / time

Issue has of resilience in Admin Team has been addressed so risk score can be reduced to low.

Risk ID 12 – Failure of internal controls

Pension Board is well established now but impact should remain at medium.

Risk ID 16 – Covid-19 Pandemic

Query as to whether probability is medium or high. Agreed that probability should be medium so overall risk score should be low.

Risk ID 18 – Administration Contracts

This is a high risk at present, but this could be mitigated as the issue is worked through.

Action: increase risk rating to high

JW raised Risk ID 14 – Cyber Risk – and suggested that increased working at home raises further issues for the risk therefore recognition of greater cyber risk and the wider spread of the organisation should be included. The Board also queried assurance of the risk being dealt with and the need to show due diligence regarding this risk

Action: DCFO / SPO to seek assurance from respective ICT Teams.

12 Register of Internal Disputes

Resolved that the Board note the update on the Register of Internal Disputes and that there have been none in the period since the last meeting of the Pension Board.

13 Date of Next Meeting

Action: ESO to confirm meeting dates for 2021.

Before formally closing the meeting, DM thanked everyone for help and their work on the Pension Board. He added that the Board has done good things and is beneficial to staff.

ML thanked DM for his time and effort in relation to the Pension Board and wished him well in his retirement.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am.

Chair.....

Date.....