

**Minutes of the meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Pension Board**

**held via MS Teams / in the Sycamore Room, Headquarters
on Monday, 10 January 2022 at 3.00 pm**

Present

Members

Employer Representatives

Simon Hardiman	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) (Chair of Board)	ACFO
James Walton	Fire Authority Treasurer	JW

Member Representatives

Matt Lamb	Fire Brigades Union (FBU)	ML
Tony Talbot	Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA)	TT

Officers

Darren Bowe	Senior Pension Officer	SPO
Lisa Vickers	Human Resources Manager (Contracts)	HRM
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Helen Tomkins, Pension Team Leader (PTL), Shropshire Council

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 30 September 2021, 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 HRM reported that the transfer of providers is progressing well, with internal and external meetings, and is on target for transfer in April 2022. There will be an article regarding the transfer to West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) on The Pink each month until the transfer happens. Letters about the transfer will also go out to Scheme members as soon as possible. WYPF are impressed with the quality of data that has been provided to them and no data matching queries have been raised.

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 49 – September 2021

- very light update on this Bulletin due to staff changes at SAB.
- Bulletin includes information on a two pension award case study. There have been no two pension awards in Shropshire yet, but it is useful to know that guidance is available on this

5b FPS Bulletin 50 – October 2021

- Bulletin includes updates on the Immediate Detriment framework and Memorandum of Understanding
- A section on the 2015 Remedy has been added to the FPS Member website
- Workforce and pension statistics for Fire and Rescue Service (England) have been published by the Home Office

5c FPS Bulletin 51 – November 2021

- The Home Office consultation on amendments to the Firefighters Pension Scheme in 2022 is open and will close on 2 January 2022. The amendments being consulted on are to deliver the first set of changes to remove the transitional protections from the 2015 Scheme
- The Home Office has withdrawn its informal and non-statutory guidance on processing certain kinds of immediate detriment payment. The SAB has written to fire and rescue authorities and other stakeholders to inform them of this development.
- Sample letters to inform Scheme Members about Immediate Detriment and the Age Discrimination remedy have been provided to fire authorities for use

- The A to Z of pension terms section on the website has been expanded significantly

5d FPS Bulletin 52 – December 2021

- This Bulletin contained the usual updates on Immediate Detriment and the associated frameworks
- The SAB has sent an open letter to Her Majesty's Treasury in relation to Immediate Detriment, specifically requesting more information on the risks and uncertainties mentioned in HM Treasury's assessment.

ML commented that the SAB was correct to ask HM Treasury about these risks. It is frustrating as SFRS were going to pay until the Home Office guidance was withdrawn. The legal advice provided for clarity is no different to the advice provided originally and this is yet another delay to resolution for those affected which is retirees more than those who are about to retire. There still does not seem to be any further clarity on the Immediate Detriment issue and the SAB is still trying to get further clarification on what the further issues are.

The ACFO added that the Service is also frustrated as it had seemed that a satisfactory resolution had been reached. The same frustration is also felt across fires and rescue services nationally. The current HMT guidance / legal advice is that any immediate detriment payments that are made will not be reimbursed centrally so the monies will have to come from local funds. A paper is being prepared for the Fire Authority to make a decision on payment at its February meeting. The paper will stress that these payments do need to be made.

6 Surveys / Returns

None

7 Update from Pension Administrator

Data Improvement Plan 2021/22

The SPO advised that the Data Improvement Plan has been updated for 2021/22 with a score of 99% on common data and 93% on scheme specific data. These are very good scores, but this does make it hard to find improvements going forward. The PTL and SPO will look to clear as many areas as possible before the transfer to WYPF, however it is not clear what their software will require and/or the methodology used so it may be worth noting this on The Pension Regulator return.

8 Communications to Members

The Mercers webinar was well attended by SFRS with approx. 30 attendees. The session was useful, well-presented and generated discussion

The SPO advised that a reminder will be sent out regarding scheme pays and tax charges on self-assessment forms.

The ACFO advised that internal comms about Immediate Detriment, setting out the Service's current position were included on The Pink last week. This will also probably go out via letter or email to retired members

A Change of Pensions Administrator article was included in The Pink last week, but this will be reissued as it incorrectly stated that the contract was moving to West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, rather than WYPF.

9 Training

Item to be revisited at the next Pension Board meeting.

10 Breaches Register

None

11 Pension Board Risk Register

The Board discussed the Risk Register and noted the following in relation to it:

- Pension Administration contracts have been added to the Risk Register and are being well managed.
- The Pension Officer recruitment advert has gone out but not sure if any applications have been received for it yet. There are long-term options for this, but the Service is also looking at working differently.

12 Register of Internal Disputes

None

13 Date of next meeting(s)

ESO to look at date as soon as possible. WYPF to be invited to attend

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

Chair.....

Date.....