

FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEMES MINUTES OF MEETING 16 MARCH 2021 - MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT: EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Teresa Higgins – Chair
Councillor Ashley Waters

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVES

Dave Howe – Vice Chair
Sidney Walker

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Hayton - Scheme Manager
Beverley Parker - Governance/Training Advisor
Michelle Richardson - Brigade Pensions Advisor
Paul Mudd – XPS Business Services

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed retired firefighter Sidney Walker to the Board as an Employee Representative.

2. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

It was noted no Declarations of Interests were submitted to the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Local Pension Board Meeting on 15 December 2020 be confirmed.

4. MATTERS ARISING**4.1 Guidance for Online Members - update**

Michelle Richardson confirmed that she was currently working with Paul Mudd to develop online guidance to be circulated by the Brigade's Communications Team once completed.

5. SCHEME MANAGER'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

The Board considered the Scheme Manager's (SM) Report which covered:

- Annual Work Programme 2021/22
- TPR Annual Governance and Administration Survey 2020 – this was completed by SM and Chair – copies available via Bev Parker
- TPR – 6 key processes – any actions picked up will be incorporated into an improvement plan for the Board

5. SCHEME MANAGER'S REPORT TO THE BOARD cont.

- Breaches of the Law – none were reported
- Cyber Security – no issues were reported
- Internal Audit of Pensions – Satisfactory Assurance was received
- Risk Register – issue with clarity over Immediate Detriment remaining high risk
- Age Discrimination Remedy
- Retained Duty System (Modified) – Application of O'Brien
- Exit Payments
- Protected Pension Age
- Equalisation of GMP
- Training & Development
- Legal Update – the Board received the following updates:-
 - Age Discrimination Remedy
 - Retained Duty System (Modified) – Application of O'Brien
 - Exit Payments
 - Protected Pension Age
 - Equalisation of GMP
- Training and Development – agreed presentations by specialists on specific issues with opportunities to ask questions was beneficial to increase knowledge and understanding of Board members.

Dave Howe informed the Board that on 12 February 2021 the FBU revisited the courts to seek to enforce the outcome of their case for fire authorities to deal with immediate detriment. He reported that he had received letters from a number of scheme members who were entitled to retire but were too anxious to because of the current uncertainty.

The SM provided the Board with a detailed presentation which covered:

- Terminology and Timeline
- Discrimination Remedy
- Remedy Stages
- Immediate Detriment Challenges / Legal Issues
- Member Waiver
- Converting Care to Final Salary – Data Requirements
- Immediate Detriment Cases – What to Consider

The SM reported that the Home Office was currently updating guidance as a priority and also working on developing policies, direction and legislation. Mr Howe reiterated his view that Government plans to introduce a new firefighters' pension scheme by April 2022 could be too soon and asked for the Board and the Authority to support scheme members by pushing for a solution as soon as possible.

The SM advised that the role of the Board was to support the SM and he was currently awaiting further guidance and would present a report to the Board prior to it going to the Authority for approval.

Paul Mudd thanked the SM for sharing his detailed presentation on this complex and technical issue and acknowledged the difficulties in providing a solution for immediate detriment.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

6. PERFORMANCE

Mr Mudd gave an update on the 2020/21 Service Delivery Report which included complaints, IDRP, common and conditional data scores

RESOLVED - that the XPS Service Delivery 2020/21 update be noted.

7. XPS BUSINESS SERVICES UPDATE

Mr Mudd provided the Board with the following update:-

- Monthly diary run task to contact scheme members approaching 60 years was not recorded on audited system leading to task misquotes. Information still received by Members within target of 10 working days.
- Recruitment of 10 new staff over the last 2 months to support the Legal Challenge Team and increase efficiency on resources and training.

RESOLVED - that the XPS Business Services update be noted.

8. SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

The Board noted the Scheme Advisory Board Minutes from 17 September 2020.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Scheme Advisory Board meeting on 17 September 2021 be noted.

9. COMMUNICATIONS AND BULLETINS

Members considered the following bulletins:

- Bulletin 40
- Bulletin 41
- Bulletin 42

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

**COUNCILLOR TERESA HIGGINS
CHAIR**