

FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEMES MINUTES OF MEETING 3 AUGUST 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. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Local Pension Board Meeting on 18 May be confirmed.

3. SCHEME MANAGER'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

The Board considered the Scheme Manager's report which included the following updates:

- Annual Work Programme 2021/22 – no updates
- Discretions Applied - none
- Ill Health - none
- Appeals - one on-going appeal to the Board of Medical Referees relating to the reduction in benefits following an ill health review – awaiting an appeal hearing date.
- IDPR – one on-going Stage 2 dispute relating to membership of the retained modified scheme.

3. SCHEME MANAGER'S REPORT TO THE BOARD CONT.

- Membership and Movement - currently 355 active Members of the schemes at 30 June 2021. 95% of those Members are in the 2015 Scheme with all outstanding Members of 1992 and 2006 Schemes being transferred to the 2015 scheme on 1 April 2022.
- Pensioners – total number as at 30 June 2021 was 844 with 96% of payments being from 1992 scheme.
- Breaches of the Law – none were reported
- Cyber Security – no issues were reported. XPS have been working with an independent organisation to audit their cyber security infrastructure and have achieved the highest standard of Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation.
- Risk Register – no issues were raised
- Training and Development – this is provided as part of the FPS update at each meeting.
- FPS Administration Management and Governance Strategy – Members agreed to adopt the Strategy at Appendix 6 into the Board's administration and procedures.

FPS Update – Immediate Detriment

The Board received a presentation by the SM, which had been delivered to scheme members, addressing the Authority's current position in relation to immediate detriment.

He reported that Home Office 'informal guidance' had been produced to deal with cases where benefits are not yet in place. This covered:

- Immediate detriment cases before 1 April 2022
- Moving protected members into 2015 scheme
- Retrospective remedy

The SM noted that Cleveland Fire Authority (CFA) will seek to offer reformed scheme members, who retire before October 2023, a choice of legacy or reformed scheme benefits for the relevant period at retirement, where possible.

Dave Howe raised the issue of scheme members owing money if they are moved into the 2015 scheme. The SM stated that this would be covered by tax relief from the 2015 scheme. He also added that CFA supports the immediate cessation of compulsory transfer into the 2015 Scheme at the expiry date of individual members tapered protection.

The SM confirmed that the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill provided a legal framework for removing discrimination in the future. In the meantime, his role was to identify those members affected by immediate detriment and for XPS to provide an automated software tool to allow them to respond to Members within the 80 day time frame.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

4. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

4.1 Complaints

There were no complaints to report for the first quarter of 2021/22.

4.2 Internal Audit Report

CFA Pensions were audited in line with the 2020/21 internal audit plan and satisfactory assurance was achieved.

4.3 Self-Assessment Survey

This survey was completed and returned within the deadline.

4.4 Contract Performance

Michelle Richardson provided the Board with an update from the Contract Management Meetings between XPS and HR. She reported that figures for the first quarter of 2021/22 show that all cases were completed within the target timeframe with 100% compliance in line with the specification. Three issues were raised in relation to: XPS responding to contact made by CFA; identifying roles at XPS to field queries; numbers utilising self-serve. These were all addressed and actioned accordingly by XPS.

The Chair asked whether XPS have sufficient software in place to meet the 80 day deadline for producing pension figures for scheme members. Paul Mudd confirmed that these were currently being produced by hand as software provider Haywood was reluctant to develop a product until it was clear what the remedy would look like.

RESOLVED - that the Contract Performance update be noted.

5. XPS BUSINESS SERVICES UPDATE

Mr Mudd confirmed that the Annual Benefit Statements were on track for completion by the 31 August deadline and that Member Self-Serve uptake was at 49.2% with 153 members registered for online services and 180 not registered. Mr Howe agreed to encourage members to register for self-serve via a FBU whatsapp group.

Mr Mudd reported a Common Data score of 99.51% and 100% of completed cases within target for April – June 2021 with no fails across the service level agreement, no complaints and no breaches. He agreed to circulate a copy of the Assurance and Audit Facilities report to the Board, which confirms that XPS have all the required processes in place.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the XPS Business Services update be noted.**
- (ii) that the Board receives details of the Assurance and Audit Facilities Report from Paul Mudd for information.**

6. SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

The Board noted the Scheme Advisory Board Minutes from 24 June 2021.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Scheme Advisory Board meeting on 24 June 2021 be noted.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND BULLETINS

7.1 FPS Bulletins

Members considered the following bulletins:

- Bulletin 44
- Bulletin 45
- Bulletin 46

MR confirmed that the bulletins had been circulated to the Board and all actions would be implemented and monitored via the Contract Management meetings.

7.2 Pension Position Statement

The SM presented the CFA pension position statement on immediate detriment.

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

8. Any Other Business

Mr Howe raised a query regarding whether a scheme member is protected by the commutation factor if he retires at 60. The SM agreed to forward advice from Clair Alcock to Mr Howe to address the issue.

**COUNCILLOR TERESA HIGGINS
CHAIR**