

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Pension Board
Held via Microsoft Teams
On Wednesday, 3 June 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	ML
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Officers

Vicky Jenks	Senior Pension Officer, Shropshire Council	SPO
Helen Tomkins	Pensions Team Leader, Shropshire Council	HT
Lisa Vickers	Human Resources Manager (Contracts)	LV
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Tony Talbot, Fire and Rescue Services Association

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.

3 Minutes and Action List

3a Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 26 March 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

LV reported that pensions work is being undertaken remotely and is going well.

LV also reported that the SPO will be leaving Shropshire Council in July to take up a new role. The SPO role will be covered in the interim by Darren Bow with support from Helen Tomkins, Pensions Team Leader. LV suggested that the Board may wish to highlight this as a temporary risk due to the changeover of staff. The SPO commented that it is hoped that it will be a smooth transition. Fire pension tasks are split over the Pensions Team so there is the knowledge and resilience to maintain service.

The DCFO stated how much the SPO's work was appreciated and wished her well in her new role.

5 Terms of Reference

The Board considered the changes to its Terms of Reference that were suggested at its last meeting. These were as shown in the document with additions in bold italics and deletions struck through.

The DCFO explained that the amendments relate to the number of representatives on the Board and the number of Board meetings held per year. The Treasurer asked if the Terms of Reference should state that a minimum of two representatives were required from both the Member and Employer sides. The DCFO pointed out that this is covered in the first paragraph of the membership section of the document.

Resolved that the Board agree the changes to its Terms of Reference.

6 Pension Board Work Plan

The Board considered the Pension Board Annual Work Plan and discussed any further items that they may wish to include on it.

Resolved that the Board agree the Pension Board Annual Work Plan.

7 Scheme Advisory Board Communications

The Board received the following items from the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) for information and / or discussion.

7a FPS Bulletin 30 (March 2020)

The SPO highlighted the suspension of medical appeal boards for three months from March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The DCFO asked if there was any indication of timescales for this service to return. The SPO explained that presently there is not but the SAB and the LGA are monitoring this.

The SPO also confirmed that the IDRPs data for Scheme had been submitted to the SAB although there are no cases within this Scheme. The SAB are looking for common themes within the data returns, but nothing has been highlighted yet.

7b FPS Bulletin 31 (April 2020 Interim Bulletin)

The SPO highlighted the update provided in the Bulletin on Factor Guidance.

7c FPS Bulletin 32 (April 2020)

The SPO highlighted the Annual Benefits Statement (ABS) issues set out in the Bulletin including there being some leniency from The Pensions Regulator (TPR) regarding Schemes that struggle to produce ABSs by the deadline of 31 August because of remote working. The SPO reassured the Board that processes are in place for this Scheme.

The SPO also drew the Board's attention to the updates provided on the Pensions Ombudsman and the Pension Dashboard Programme.

7d FPS Bulletin 33 (May 2020)

The SPO also talked through this Bulletin which was published after the meeting papers were issued and so was not included on this agenda.

The SPO highlighted the Protected Pension Age tax rules that were temporarily relaxed from 1 March to 1 June 2020. An extension to this relaxation has been requested but further updates are awaited on this issue.

The SPO confirmed that Shropshire has submitted the required information regarding National Insurance Contribution refunds

Resolved that the Board note the SAB Bulletins

8 Surveys / Returns

Resolved that the Board note that the Covid-19 Online survey had been completed and submitted since its last meeting in March 2020.

9 Update from Pension Administrator

9a Membership Statistics

The SPO advised that it is likely that Scheme membership will change as a result of the age discrimination remedy. The main bulk of members are currently in the 2015 Scheme but under the remedy proposals may move back to their original final salary scheme. There will be a choice for Members on this, but they will need a comparison between final salary and career average revalued earnings (CARE) schemes which is why the collection of data is important.

The DCFO asked if the Pensions Team were sighted on this issue. The SPO confirmed that they are as there is a similar situation for the local government scheme. The SPO also confirmed that the Pensions systems, including i-Connect are working well.

10 Communications Issued or due to be sent to Members

P60 and Pensions Increase Information

The SPO advised that paper P60s have been issued this year. Digital copies only will be issued next year and there will be communications from the Pensions Department regarding this.

The DCFO commented that this should lead to an increase in Member Self Service (MSS) use as well as Members will have to use this to access the digital P60s. The SPO explained that the communications will also prompt MSS registration.

The DCFO asked if a hard copy P60 could be provided if needed. HT replied that she thought only electronic copies could be provided but she will check this. The SPO added that care must be taken to avoid duplication of P60s but the documents which are the HMRC authorised template are easier to print.

11 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: ESO to circulate details of Pension Board Wrap Up Training (SAB Bulletin 33)

12 Breaches Register

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

13 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:

Risk ID 8 – Recruitment and Retention of staff or knowledge

Action: Comment to be added regarding changeover within structure of Pensions Team which may lead to short term disruption

Action: Following risks to be added to Risk Register:

- Covid-19 Pandemic
- Age Discrimination Remedy
- Administration Contracts – there have been withdrawals from the market which is leading to fewer providers and a less competitive arena

14 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.

15 Date of Next Meeting

Action: ESO to confirm dates of meetings in September and December 2020.

The meeting closed at 11.00 am.

Chair.....

Date.....