

**Minutes of the meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Pension Board
held via MS Teams / in the Oak Room, Headquarters
on Monday, 23 May 2022 at 11.00 am**

Present

Members

Employer Representatives

Simon Hardiman	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) (Chair of Board)	ACFO
James Walton	Fire Authority Treasurer	JW
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	JCo

Member Representatives

Matt Lamb	Fire Brigades Union (FBU)	ML
Steve Morris	Fire Brigades Union (FBU)	SM

Officers

Helen Scargill	Client Relationship Manager, WYPF	HS
Sukhjot Kaur	Senior Governance and New Business ???, WPPF	SK
Lisa Vickers	Human Resources Manager (Contracts)	HRM
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Appointment of Chair

It was proposed and seconded that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer be appointed as Chair of the Pension Board. There being no other nominations, it was

Resolved on a unanimous vote that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer be appointed as the Chair of the Pension Board.

2 Introductions and Welcome

All attendees introduced themselves to the meeting and the ACFO welcomed Joanne Coadey and Steve Morris to the Board as new members. The ACFO also welcomed Helen Scargill and Sukhjot Kaur from West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) to the meeting. WYPF are now the pension administrators for the Service.

3 Apologies for Absence

Tony Talbot, Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA)

4 Conflicts of Interest

Board Members were reminded that they should 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, advised that he would usually declare a potential conflict of interest in that he is the Pension Administrator of the Shropshire County Pension Fund (SCPF) which provided the Service's pension administration function. Following the transfer of the Pension Administration Contract to WYPF on 1 April 2022, there is now no risk of this conflict arising.

5 Minutes and Action List

5a Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 10 January 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

5b 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.

6 Contract Management Update and Issues

LV reported that the Pension Administration Contract transferred to West Yorkshire Pension Fund on 1 April 2022. A contract has also been maintained with the Shropshire County Pension Fund for 9-12 months for audit and/or query purposes.

There have been some issues with retirees during the changeover. These have been resolved and a meeting is set for 8 June 2022 to look at the learning outcomes from this.

ML reported that there had been feedback from retirees on this issue and it was good to hear that it has been resolved.

7 Terms of Reference

The Board considered its Terms of Reference and identified the following necessary amendments:

- **Section 9 Meetings**
If requested by a Board member, meeting papers shall be sent via ~~email~~ **post** to the ~~email~~ **home address** specified by them, rather than by ~~post~~ **email** to their ~~home address~~ **the email address specified by them.**
- **Section 10 Quorum**
The total number of members required to be present for a meeting to be quorate is ~~three~~ **four** members, including one employer and one employee representative

ML asked about remuneration for the retired member who has joined the Board as an employee member.

Action: ACFO / ML to discuss outside meeting.

Resolved that the Board agree its Terms of Reference with the amendments set out in the meeting.

8 Conflicts of Interest Policy

Declaration forms to be re-signed following this meeting and new Board members to complete forms

Action: ESO to distribute forms for completion

Resolved that the having considered its Conflicts of Interest Policy, the Board agree it without amendment.

9 Pension Board Work Plan

The Board considered its Work Plan and identified the following necessary amendments:

- Include monthly client report from WYPF – this will cover data and Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) Bulletins.
- Remove updates on membership statistics, performance against Key Performance Indicators and Member Self Service statistics
- Change Shropshire Council to West Yorkshire Pension Fund

Resolved that the Board agree its Work Plan with the amendments set out in the meeting.

10 Update from Pension Administrator

HS explained that this is an example of the monthly reports that are produced by WYPF. The first formal monthly report will be produced in early June. HS then highlighted the following from the report:

- Key Performance Indicator data will only report on those processes that have been completed in that month

- Outstanding Work Pending (page 4 of report) refers to work that has commenced but which is awaiting further information
- Membership numbers (page 6 of report)
Preserved Refund are those members that have left with no entitlement but who have not yet claimed their refund
Leavers Options Pending are those that are not yet in process to be actioned.
- Links are provided to each of Scheme Advisory Board FPS Bulletins with any relevant areas covered in the Bulletin and any actions highlighted in the report:
 - FRAs to confirm with LGA who should receive generic pension information
- Regarding pension scams, fire pension schemes do not allow transfers out to schemes that allow flexible benefits
- There have been changes to the annual allowance rules. These changes do not affect how annual allowance calculations are dealt with but do change the deadlines and/or the time period that is considered in scope
- Links to presentations from the Local Government Association (LGA) coffee morning are included in the report
- The final section of the report covers Administration Issues:
 - ID questionnaire from WYPF
Action: HS to send questionnaire to SFRS
 - Matthews questionnaire to be completed by FRA
 - Copy of the Service's Pension Discretions to be provided to WYPF
Action: Discretions to be shared after June Fire Authority meeting
- Quarterly fire client meetings are held – minutes will follow and can be added to Board agenda.
- HS confirmed that data scores will be provided at the next meeting.

LV commented that the number of people registered to the Portal is quite good and advised that this can be promoted through the Service's internal newsletter

ML asked about indicative calculations and if these are on the horizon regarding pension forecasts. HS advised that it is unlikely that these will be included in the ABS until 2025. There is a possibility that this could happen in April 2024, but this is dependent on what comes out of the LGA and on software updates. ML responded that it is a difficult time for people to get information to make pension decisions.

HS confirmed that WYPF will provide estimates within a 12-month rolling timescale of retirement, but they cannot provide anything other than what the fire and rescue authority are signed up to in the framework and/or the Memorandum of Understanding. HS also advised that once the regulations are in place, WYPF will look at the estimates again. It is likely that the basics will be the same, but the legislation is needed to shape this. ML added that Scheme Members know it is currently a difficult situation due to ongoing changes, but this does add to people's frustration.

11 Scheme Advisory Board Communications

Resolved that this item be taken off future agendas as the monthly client report from WYPF includes a summary of the Scheme Advisory Board bulletins.

12 Surveys / Returns

- Matthews Survey to be submitted by the end of June

13 Communications to Members

A letter explaining the changeover of Pension Administrator was sent out to all Scheme Members. This information was also included on the Service's internal portal and in the Service's weekly internal newsletter. The next communication to Scheme Members will relate to the Matthews case.

14 Training

Action: ESO to email training information to Board Members

15 Pension Board Risk Register

The Board discussed and agreed the following updates to its Risk Register:

ID 7 – Lack of resources / time (e.g. unplanned loss of staff, sickness etc)

LV reported that she is currently talking to local fire and rescue services regarding sourcing Pension Manager support potentially for a year. Narrative also needs to be amended to reflect change to WYPF

ID 9 – Lack of knowledge, effectiveness or leadership among key personnel

This risk is specific to the Board Members. JW suggested that an update on training is needed at next meeting before this risk is assessed further. ML reported that he is no longer on the Scheme Advisory Board

ID 11 – Poor communications between key personnel (board, scheme manager, administrator etc)

Payroll to be added to risk description

Increased risk in terms of Board and administrator but agreed to leave risk score where it is with a view to reducing this as the relationship matures.

Item 12 – Failure of Internal Controls

LV reported that the internal controls for the new contract are being worked through at present. No specific concerns have been identified at the moment, but this will be closely monitored.

Item 13 – Systems failures (IT, Payroll, administration systems, telephony systems etc)

WYPF can provide information on their Business Continuity arrangements to give reassurance on this issue.

Item 14 – Cyber risk

Report on cyber risk to be brought to next Board meeting

Probability score to be increased to medium

Item 15 – Administrator Issues (expense, performance etc)

Risk score to be increased to medium with note in narrative about new administrator relationship

Item 16 – Covid-19 Pandemic

A key element now is the management of long covid cases. The impact of absence has reduced but risk to stay on Register and monitoring maintained

Item 17 – Impacts of significant changes to legislation

A legal challenge related to benefit changes is expected which could potentially change CARE levels backdated to April 2019.

Probability score to be increased to high; most likely impact to be increased to medium and overall score to be increased to medium

16 Breaches Register

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

17 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.

18 Meeting Dates

Early September / December / late February or early March

Any Other Business

HS advised that regarding Board training, she can provide elements of training within Board meetings. It was agreed that this would happen twice a year and that the HR Department could join the meeting for the training session. HS advised that firm dates would be needed for the meetings. JW suggested that those meetings with training sessions should be physical meetings at Headquarters with other meetings being held in a hybrid format.

Action: ESO to confirm date for next meeting

Action: ESO to inform HR Department of dates

Action: Training to be added to Pension Board Work Plan

SK advised that Board Members should let her know if they need any further information

The meeting closed at 12.35 pm

Chair.....

Date.....