

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

**held via MS Teams / in the Sycamore Room, Headquarters
on Thursday, 16 March 2023 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Employer Representatives

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

Member Representatives

Matt Lamb	Fire Brigades Union (FBU)	ML
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Officers

Helen Scargill	Client Relationship Manager, West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF)	HS
Wendy Edwards	Human Resources Manager	WE
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Appointment of Chair

It was proposed by Matt Lamb, seconded by James Walton, and with no other nominations, it was

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

2 Apologies for Absence

Steve Morris, Tony Talbot

3 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.

None were declared.

4 Minutes and Action List

4a Minutes

Action: Sergeant discussion notes to be moved from Actions / Decisions List to Minutes to ensure clear audit trail - ESO

Resolved that the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 25 November 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

4b 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.

5 Contract Management Update and Issues

There are no issues identified from the Service's end.

The contract is progressing well at the moment and there is currently nothing to raise on this item.

6 Pension Board Work Plan

Action: Training sessions to be added to Work Plan – ESO

Resolved that the Pension Board agree the Annual Work Plan, subject to the amendment outlined above.

7 Update from Pension Administrator

HS gave an update on behalf of WYPF, including a summary of the monthly client report for December 2022, January and February 2023, highlighting the following points

7a December 2022

ML asked what miscellaneous activity consisted of. HS explained that this is any work that does not have a specific process when it comes into WYPF, for example email, post, phone queries etc. The correct process type is then applied when looked the query is looked in to further.

JCo asked if membership numbers can be used for a Finance return. JCo to send a copy of the template to HS for her to check.

The Five-Year Audit Plan is reported to the client meeting with any relevant areas being reported to the Board as necessary.

If any of the Overriding Disclosure Time Limits, as set out at section 11 of the report, are breached, this would be reported to the Board for a decision as to whether it is a material breach or not.

7b January 2023

Performance against targets for processes is good with the exception of Life Certificates.

Member Web Registrations for the Service are currently at 133. The Board felt that it would be useful to do some comms about this to encourage increased registration especially as Annual Benefit Statements (ABS) will be issued online.

7c February 2023

The target for Death on Deferred process was not met in the reporting period. This was due to a delay in receiving a completed form. WYPF were not able to progress the work until this was received.

Referring to the various charts and numbers that are included in the report, JWa asked for an indication of what good looks like, for example what would be a good level of member web registrations. More internal comms are needed to encourage web registrations and the onus for encouraging this is on the employer / scheme manager. It would be preferable for web registrations to be completed before the ABS are published to avoid a rush of people trying to register at the same time.

Action: HS to provide comms about 'Going Online' for use in comms with Scheme Members

Section 6 of the report refers to the latest Hot Topics, which included guidance and a waiver form related to WYPF providing estimates for those retiring on or after 1 October 2023. Authorities are asked to sign and return the disclaimer to confirm that they are happy for WYPF to do this. There has so far been no return from Shropshire. HS explained that the calculation is a little bit off, but it is of sufficient level and quality to allow individuals to make a decision.

Action: Waiver form to be signed and returned to WYPF ASAP

Resolved that the Pension Board note the updates from the Pensions Administrator

8 Pension Board Risk Register

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

ID 3 – Poor Record Keeping (i.e. the receipt and management of correct data)

The Board were happy to maintain the overall risk score for this as medium.

ID 8 – Recruitment and retention of staff and knowledge

The Board agreed to leave the overall risk score as medium for the foreseeable future, even taking into account the Pension Officer secondment from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

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

The Board agreed to maintain the overall risk score as medium for now.

ID 16 Covid-19 Pandemic

The Board queried if this risk was still relevant. HS advised that other Fire and Rescue Authority Pension Boards have kept the risk on their Registers but with reference to a pandemic rather than the Covid-19 pandemic.

ID 14 – Cyber Risk (i.e. the risk of loss, disruption or damage to a scheme or its members as a result of the failure of its IT systems and processes)

The Board felt that it would be useful for it to see the WYPF's cybersecurity policies to provide assurance that this risk is being managed. HS said that WYPF cybersecurity is covered in Client Report 11 (November 2022). The best person to contact about this is Matt Mott, Governance and Business Development Manager, WYPF. The Board also said there are two aspects to this risk: WYPF and the Service's own cybersecurity.

Action: SE to be sighted on this issue and to provide an update on the arrangements between the Service and WYPF.

Action: ACFO to contact Matt Mott and Payroll at Telford & Wrekin Council to obtain information on cybersecurity in connection to pensions.

ID 15 - Administrator issues (expense, performance etc)

The Board asked if there should be a similar risk recorded for Payroll. This highlighted that a Payroll report should also be brought to this meeting.

Action: ACFO to look at a Payroll report being provided and to contact Payroll at Telford & Wrekin Council in relation to this.

JWa suggested that the Risk Register be linked to the Pension Board workplan, so that issues such as cyber risk and payroll reporting are picked up.

It was suggested by GW and agreed by the Board that a risk relating to Web Member Registrations be added to the Risk Register. This reflects the risk that there is currently a low percentage of members registered which reduces the number of members that have access to their pensions data

9 Breaches Register

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

10 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.

11a Training

The LGA Data Conference is on 17 May 2023 and attendance at this can be counted as Training.

Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS) Coffee mornings cover many useful topics, for example, there is one on Tuesday this week which will look at consultation and which might be useful for Board members to attend. These can also be counted as training for Board Members.

HS recommended that Board Members register to receive WYPF's Hot Topic and gave the relevant details for registering.

11b Matthews Case

The Board noted the short briefing session on the Matthews Case, given by HS.

12 Any Other Business

ML raised an issue relating an On Call ill health retirement before 2006. Prior to 2006 there was no pension scheme so pension is in two parts: payable under injury scheme at rate equivalent to a wholetime firefighter but will not receive a survivor pension as was paid out of compensation scheme. As they were not able to join the Pension Scheme are seen to be being discriminated against.

13 Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, 7 June 2023, 10.00 am in the Sycamore Room, Headquarters

The meeting closed at 4.05 pm

Chair.....

Date.....