

Dorset and Wiltshire Firefighters' Local Pension Board

Draft minutes of meeting held at Wiltshire and Dorset Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters
at 10 am at Five Rivers, Salisbury on Friday 18th November 2016

1. Present:

Mr Mike Byatt (employer representative and FA member, and Chair to the Board)
Mr Ronald Coatsworth (employer representative and FA member)
Mr Peter Edge (employer representative and FA member)
Mr Graham Payne (employer representative and FA member)

Mr Cyril Moseley (employee/retiree representative, and Vice Chair to the Board)
Mr Andrew Corben (employee/retiree representative*)
Mr Scott Blandford (employee/retiree representative*)
Mr Mike Gannaway (employee/retiree representative)

Ms Jane Staffiere (to provide officer advice).
Ms Karen Gibson, DCC, Pensions Team
Mr Craig Payne, Wiltshire Council, Pensions Team
Mr David Mooney, Wiltshire Council, Pensions Team
Ms Sue Lewis, HR Consultant
Mr Phil Chow, Director of Finances

2. Apologies

Mrs Karen Adams (employee/retiree representative*)
Mr Hamish Daya (employee/retiree representative*)

*In order to comply with the pension board regulations, there is a requirement for an equal number of employer and employee representatives on the Board. A combination of any of the above 4 employee/retiree representatives will rotate to take 2 of the employee/retiree representative seats in future. This will ensure adequate cover due to operational work/shift requirements.

3. Election of Chairman – it was agreed that Mr Mike Byatt would take the role of chair, and Mr Cyril Moseley was elected as **Vice Chair**.

4. Main Purpose of the Meeting

It was noted that the Board was a legal requirement, and the main role of the Pension Board is to help ensure the scheme manager¹ complies with its governance

¹ This is the Fire Authority, delegated to the Chief Fire Officer

and administration requirements, being:

1. Managing risks and ensuring there are adequate internal controls
2. Keeping records and ensuring the quality of member data
3. Ensuring the correct contributions are paid to the scheme
4. Managing conflicts of interest
5. Publishing information about the Board
6. Communicating information to members
7. Resolving disputes and reporting certain breaches of the law.

5. **Terms of Reference and Conflicts of Interest**

The Board considered a draft Terms of Reference. Particular points agreed were:

- Quorum – a minimum of 2 Member representatives and 2 employee/retiree representatives would need to be present to form a quorum for meetings.
- Apart from substitute criteria* set out above, no other substitutes would be accepted as Board members (this was to ensure continuity of knowledge and issues discussed).
- Period of office - members would usually hold a seat for a period of 4 years, although it was noted that FA members are appointed every year and changes may be required for FA members for political or administrative reasons.
- Number of meetings – there would be a minimum of two meetings a year, but other meetings to be arranged as necessary.
- A report would be provided to the Fire Authority in the Spring of each year, to report on progress.

Action: Jane Staffiere to update the draft Terms of Reference to include the recommendations set out above and circulate to members for comment.

Action: Jane Staffiere to liaise with the Director of Finance to ascertain a budget for member training.

6. **Position Statement on Baseline Information**

Karen Gibson, Craig Payne and David Mooney attended the meeting and provided a presentation on baseline numbers, recent communications to staff, and current issues facing both pensions' administrators. A copy of the presentation and two sets of staff communication are attached to the minutes.

Particular points to note from the presentation:

Number of active members – 942 (577 Dorset, 365 Wiltshire)

Number of deferred members – 404 (185 Dorset, 219 Wiltshire)

Number of retired members – 780 (511 Dorset, 269 Wiltshire)

Providing a total of 2,126 members.

There had been a huge rise in the number of changes and regulations introduced over recent years which caused a considerable workload to both the pension administrators and the HR Department. (Such changes include the introduction of the modified pension scheme and associated payments relating to those buying into the scheme, the introduction of the 2015 scheme, GMP reconciliation, 18-20 contributions holiday, contracted out NI implications, tax changes to annual allowance and lifetime allowance). It was recognised that there is a legal requirement to inform members of regulation changes within 3 months of them occurring.

Introducing some of the above had been difficult, due to staffing capacity and expertise required, along with other legal requirements such as the need to publish ABIs (annual benefit illustrations) by 31st August of each year.

It was noted that there had been difficulties for WC Pension Team as there is no contract set up directly between Devon Payroll and themselves.

It was suggested by the Pensions Administrators that they could provide a regular update on progress of workflow tasks and associated deadlines.

Action: Jane Staffiere to invite the Pensions Administrators to future meetings to provide an update on workflow tasks and associated deadlines.

Action: Jane Staffiere to consider what risks need to be entered onto the risk register.

7. Future Plans regarding Pensions Provision

Sue Lewis provided an update on future plans regarding the administration of the firefighter pension schemes.

It was noted that procurement options were being considered, in conjunction with other partners, e.g. Devon and Somerset with a planned go-live date of April 2018. It may be that an interim solution will be introduced.

Action: The Board felt that it was only right that it should be able to comment on a proposed specification, to ensure that it could then benchmark progress against any contract. It was agreed that this would be circulated, and a meeting arranged if necessary to discuss.

8. Reportable Breaches

Phil Chow reported that under the pensions regulations there was guidance set out on what constitutes a reportable breach – i.e. a significant breach. It is not possible to report breaches in advance.

A reportable breach was made at the beginning of September. This was Annual Benefit Illustrations were not distributed to members by 31st August for Wiltshire staff. Phil Chow explained the reason for this – a number of reasons associated with this including loss of expertise of staff, pension administrator liaison complications with the Service and the payroll provider, software systems, etc. It was confirmed that the requirement was met by the end of September, and no action has been taken by the Pensions Regulator.

The Board noted the breach and asked for any arising issues of such kind to be brought to its attention.

9. Links to other Firefighter Local Pension Boards

Jane Staffiere reported that Malcolm Eastwood, Chair of the Hampshire Firefighters Local Pension Board, had offered for anyone to attend their next meeting to meet with other board members and see the workings of another Board.

It was agreed that the Chair, Vice Chair and Head of HR should attend the next meeting of Hampshire's Firefighters Local Pension Board.

Action: Jane Staffiere to liaise with Malcom Eastwood and circulate the date of the next meeting to the Chair and Vice Chair.

It was also noted that Jane Staffiere should link with the Sub Committee re Local Pension Board effectiveness set out with Clair Alcock in order to ascertain points and actions that the Dorset & Wiltshire Local Pension Board can learn from.

10. Further Training Needs/Agenda Items for Future Meetings

The Board had been provided with a link to the Local Pension Board on-line Forum. If any other training requirements were required, members were asked to notify Jane Staffiere. Jane Staffiere would also circulate any suggestions that were identified from regional/national sources.

The following items have been suggested for a future meeting:

Pension tender specification and progress

New wholetime starters and sign up to the pension scheme

Numbers of firefighters not in a pension, together with information about auto enrolment.

Update from DCC/WC on workflow progress and associated deadlines.

Pension Contributions Holiday 18-20 progress and associated costs.
Risk Register
Budget allocation for training requirements

11. AOB/Date of Next Meeting

Jane Staffiere confirmed that it was planned to set up an information site on the dwfire website for firefighter pension members to access information. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

Action: Jane Staffiere was asked to confirm how we report on confidential items for future meetings.

Action: Jane Staffiere to continue with progress to set up a pension information site on dwfire.

Action: Jane Staffiere to set up the next meeting as per the Terms of Reference.