

Report to West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Local Pension Board 2023

14 March 2024

Administration Procedures and Performance

Report by Chief Fire Officer (Scheme Manager)

Summary

Pension Administration services have been provided by Hampshire County Council since 4 March 2019. The following are highlighted:

- There were 1,723 members in the West Sussex Firefighters Pension Schemes on 31 January 2024.
- Over the past 12 months, 94 casework items were completed by the team, and all are with the service level timescales. On 31 January 2023, 10 casework items were in progress with the team, West Sussex County Council, members or other third parties.
- 53% of members have registered to use the Member Portal which allows access to Annual Benefit Statement or payslips and the opportunity to update personal details. During the past 12 months, members have logged into the portal 1,779 times.
- On 1 October, changes to the Regulations to facilitate the McCloud remedy became effective. Alongside retirement casework, the focus from January has been to provide the immediate choice (IC) RSS for the first two cohorts of firefighters (ill health and the beneficiaries of deceased members).
- The Fire and Rescue Authority is also required to provide the option to retained Firefighters to join the Firefighters Pension Scheme (Matthews 2).

The Local Government Association (LGA) issue a bulletin at the end of each month which provide information about key events, changes to Regulations and guidance. The bulletins focus on McCloud Remedy and Matthews Second Options Exercise but also refer to the pension accounting data collection, Scheme valuation and pension dashboards. These have been summarised as an Appendix.

Recommendations

- (1) The update is noted.
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1 Background and context

- 1.1 Hampshire County Council provides the Pension Administration Service for West Sussex County Council. The administration team work closely with the West Sussex Pensions Team and West Sussex County Council payroll.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Board is to assist West Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority in its role as a scheme manager of the Fire Fighters' Pension Scheme including to assist with improvements to customer service, monitor performance against indicators and assist with the development of improved administration and governance structures and policies.
- 1.3 The Pensions Board risk register recognises the following:
 - The risk that partnership expectations not met in delivery of administration service.
 - The increased resource associated with Scheme changes (O'Brien/Matthews, McCloud, Cost Cap)
 - The importance of data quality
 - A dependency on West Sussex County Council's payroll team.

2 Dashboard

- 2.1 A dashboard showing key information in relation to the West Sussex Firefighter Pension Schemes has been included in Appendix A.

3 Regulation and Guidance updates

- 3.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) issue a bulletin at the end of each month which provide information about key events, changes to Regulations and guidance. The work of the Fire LGA team provides support to the Fire sector nationally and ensures that, as much as possible, there is a consistent approach for Fire and Rescue Authorities to adopt. A summary of the items included are shown in Appendix B.

4 Project Work: McCloud

- 4.1 Since July 2019 work has been underway to fix the discriminatory protections given to members of the existing schemes (FPS 1992 and FPS 2006) when the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 (FPS 2015) was introduced. This work has been undertaken at a national and local level in advance of 1 October 2023, when the Police and Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations 2023 came into force.
- 4.2 A highlight report has been provided as Appendix C.

5 Project Work: Matthews

- 5.1 A [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) was agreed in March 2022 to provide a remedy to eligible retained firefighters by offering access to the Firefighters Pension Scheme 2006 as special members, backdated to the start date of their employment. The MoU set out the scope and mechanism for the remedy to be implemented by way of a second options exercise.

5.2 A highlight report has been provided as Appendix D.

6 Project Work: Dashboard

6.1 The government led "Dashboard" project is intended to allow individuals to go to a single website and receive details of all the pensions they hold across UK pension providers.

6.2 There is no further update on the project since the Board met in December.

7 Breach Reporting

7.1 There have been no data breaches during the last 12 months and no breaches of the law which affect pension schemes and which should be considered for reporting to the Pensions Regulator.

8 Consultation, engagement and advice

N/A

9 Finance

N/A

10 Risk implications and mitigations

See background

11 Policy alignment and compliance

N/A

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Appendices

Appendix A: Administration Activity

Appendix B: Summary of bulletins and correspondence

Appendix C: McCloud Highlight Report

Appendix D: Matthews Highlight Report

Background papers

N/A