

Fire Pension Advisory Board NOTES

27 June 2024

Attendees

Pete Rickard
James Diston
Lois Downer
David Atkinson
Rachel Wood
Richard Abbot
Gary Ball
Ali Thompson

Apologies

Dave Bray
Giles Sparkes
Andy Lowe
Joe Weir

Notes

1. **Apologies**

Joe Weir gave apologies during the mtg.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

None raised

3. **Part I Minutes of the last meeting (Pages 3 – 7)**

Thanks from the Chair to AT and RW for the preparing the minutes of the previous meeting.

Page 5 – Joe Weir had raised a question and RW confirmed that this is on the Risk Register

Rachel Wood referred to an action on the last page to work with the union to support engagement. She confirmed that members of the board had spoken separately about those with ill health and that they will be discussed further when we get to that agenda item today.

4 **Urgent Matters**

None raised

Chair announced that he will be leaving WSFRS on 4 Aug and that Gary Ball will be taking over as the Chair of the Pensions Board from that point. Chair asked that we record his thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Pensions Board, with special thanks to Rachel Wood and Ali Thompson for their support and help.

5 Risk Register (3-14 of to follow pack)

Report by the Chief Fire Officer and Scheme Manager

Rachel Wood introduced the report.

The end of year has been completed and has been done efficiently by the admin team. They have had heightened pressure around basic submissions this year and it's important to recognise this and their achievements in those conditions.

Chair and Rachel confirmed that the increasing risk around R24 Comms, and R13, 14, 15 is noted.

Chair also asked that all Board members be fully aware of the full Risk Register circulated in the meeting pack.

Recommendations on the report supported by the board.

6 Pension Administration (Pages 15 - 41)

Report by the Chief Fire Officer and Scheme Manager

Rachel Wood introduced the report and handed over to Lois Downer.

We've updated how we're presenting the information to the board in terms of those graphics on Appendix One, which is hopefully helpful, but admin performance in terms of BAU continues to be really strong. Meeting the SLA time scales is a work in progress but nothing particularly of concern. Things are more challenging when you've got to do the remedial statements alongside, but the team is keeping very much on top of that BAU activity and dealing with those other bits of work that coming up in terms of dashboard readiness.

The Hampshire team are really locked into those conversations with the pension dashboard project to make sure that we're doing what we need to do. So then the first appendix has got our stats and figures on. I know that there's always an area of focus for the board in terms of portal registrations and that continues to be strong. And when benefit statements go out in August, you can see the uptick in terms of interest and logins.

McCloud

Question from James Diston - Is this the best access for the retiring members?

It was confirmed that those who are coming up to retirement can log on to the portal where they can access information about their benefits. They can request an estimate through the portal (which goes to the admin team). If it's got a dependency on Matthews, they would be better coming to us in terms of FRS.

Chair asked for clarification of the section Appendix page 31, the McCloud remedy table "Unprotected and tapered". Lois Downer answered that they didn't taper so they either were fully protected through the remedy period or they were completely unprotected and moved straight into the 2015 scheme.

LGA are providing templates for the calculator but they have been delayed, which massively impacts our ability to deliver to the August deadline. This has put pressure on our team. Software development and updates are a national issue not just for WSFRS. If it reaches a critical point, Rachel Wood will raise this with the Chair.

Lois Downer also highlighted the ongoing uncertainty in relation to tax. Elections have caused a bit of a spanner in terms of getting legislation confirmed. So we are dealing with that whilst remaining aware of the guidelines etcetera coming through.

Matthews

Matthew's remedy is the the aspect of the pensions remedy that we are initially dealing with. We give the options to individuals as to whether they want to buy retrospective pension benefits.

We will write in December to individuals and we hope to go out with options papers at the end of March.

We are meeting with Payroll next week to do further testing on the processes. There are 56 different scenarios for the calculator to meet the various needs of members so it recognised as a very complicated situation.

- 7 **Communications (presentation on the day)** (copy attached to the signed minutes)

Draft Annual Report by the Chief Fire Officer and Scheme Manager

Rachel Wood handed out paper copies of the Draft Annual Report and shared it online for those joining virtually. Rachel Wood explained that the intention of the report is to provide a form of visibility about the work of this board.

The content was discussed and feedback from the board was sought.

Chair asked if would be possible to explore holding an open session for members to come and ask questions – **Rachel Wood to action.**

Richard Abbot asked if the WSCC contribution had now gone up to 36%? Rachel Wood confirmed that yes it has, but these figures are for the previous year. It would be helpful to recognise the significant contributions that are needing to be made and also the effects on the pension that the remedies are having. **Rachel Wood to add to the report.**

The report will be finalised in early July so **all comments from the Board to Rachel Wood by 3 July please.**

The recommendation from the board is that the report is finalised for publication.

8 **AOB**

None raised

9 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Pensions Board will be 3pm on 8 October 2024

Meeting closed 1450.