

Minutes of the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Local Pension Board of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Meeting on 28 July 2015

Present:

Members

Keith Bray (Chair), Katie Brown, Liz Firmstone, Marcus Giles, Paul Morley, Tony Morgan, Gary Phillips

Officers

John Betts, Head of Finance
Neil Buxton, Pensions Manager
John Galbraith, Senior Solicitor, Pension Fund Services
Paul Williams, Democratic Services Team Leader.

1. General

(1) Apologies

None

(2) Board Members' Disclosures of Interests

None.

(Paul Williams explained that all Board members will be required to sign declarations of interest form. He asked that this be returned to him when completed.)

2. Introductions

Keith Bray, the Chair, welcomed Board members to the meeting introducing himself and explaining that he is also Chair of the Warwickshire Local Pension Board. He outlined his background in local government finance and set out the role expected of him in supporting the committee. It was stressed that the Board "belongs" to its six voting members. It exists to support them and the interests of those they represent.

The meeting reviewed its terms of reference as agreed by the Fire Authority. A number of points were noted, namely,

- The Board exists to act as 'a critical friend' to the fund and its managers.
- The Chair's role is to ensure that all views are heard and to try to secure consensus on matters under discussion..
- The Board has been provided with two advisers (legal and financial). If advice is required from others these can be brought in.

- The Board has a budget but it is important that no costs are incurred that do not add value to its work. The principal focus for local government expenditure should be front-line services.
- Agenda items for Board meetings will need to be identified by members and managers.

Neil Buxton introduced a briefing note that set out current membership of the Firefighters' pension scheme in Warwickshire. In response to a request from Tony Morgan, Neil Buxton agreed to provide details of the split between full-time and retained firefighters who are registered with the fund.

He informed the Board that running costs for the scheme are negligible with less than one full time equivalent post being committed to it. Board members acknowledged the support they receive and singled out Alistair Wickens (Senior Pensions Officer) for commendation. Regarding the support required by the fund it was noted that the main focus is not on the costs involved but in the level of expertise available.

It was stressed to members that the Pension Regulator's Code of Practice (No 14) requires that any breaches of the law must be brought to the attention of the appropriate officers and the Board and reported to the Regulator. It was agreed that the Code of Practice should be sent to all Board members.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Board for 2015/16 – Work Plan for 2015/16

No pressing issues were raised by the Board. However it agreed that it would wish to consider information on grievances and complaints as well as the material sent to members of the pension fund (performance and promotional material).

It was also agreed that it would be useful to see and understand the material sent to pension fund members by the trades unions.

4. Training Needs of Board Members and Feedback from DCLG Fire Pension Board Training

The Board acknowledged that knowledge and skills are essential to its effective operation. The training currently being delivered nationally and attended recently by some members in London is useful (if occasionally overwhelming) but it may be appropriate to commission further training specifically for the Board. It will take time to develop members' level of knowledge and understanding and it is important that Board members know where they can seek guidance if required.

The Chair agreed to contact Clair Alcock at the Local Government Association and request that she consider delivering more training sessions with at least one in the Midlands.

5. Any other Business.

In response to a question from Tony Morgan the meeting was informed that the pension fund is registered.

The board rose at 5.32p.m

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Chair