

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Local Pension Board of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme

Tuesday 21 July 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Chair:

Keith Bray (Chair)

Barnaby Briggs

Tony Morgan, Fire and Rescue Services Association

Officers:

Helen Barnsley, Democratic Services Officer

Neil Buxton, Technical Specialist - Pension Fund Policy and Governance

Liz Firmstone, Service Manager (Transformation)

Victoria Jenks, Pensions Admin Delivery Lead

Caroline Jones, Finance Portfolio Lead (Communities & Resources)

Andrew Marson, Head of Pensions Administration

Deborah Moseley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Jane Pollard, Legal Services Manager

1. General

The Chair recorded his personal thanks and those of the Board to the Fire Service for their actions during the pandemic.

(1) Board Members' Disclosures of Interests

None.

2. Apologies

The Board noted apologies from Paul Morley.

3. Minutes of the Meeting 26 February 2020

Subject to amending the attendance to reflect the new title for the Retained Fire Fighters representative to Fire and Rescue Service Association Representative and also removing the

plural from Assistant Chief Fire Officers in the attendance details, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 26 February 2020.

4. Fire Pension - Current Pension Issues

Victoria Jenks, Pensions Admin Delivery Lead advised the Board that the FPS England 2020 valuation was due in the current year although the timescale had been extended from September to December so that administrators could supply the information to the Government Actuaries Department (GAD) by December. Warwickshire would run reports to provide the required information to GAD on behalf of the Fire Service. Aquila Heywood, the software supplier for pension administration, had developed a tool to more easily extract all the information required for uploading to the GAD portal.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been a call for retired members to return to work which had resulted in some potential tax implications and the relaxation of the Protected Pension Age tax rules had, therefore, been extended until 1 November 2020.

The administration team were working on local government annual benefit statements and would also be working hard to process statements on behalf of the Fire Service for the 31 August 2020 deadline.

The importance of communicating potential tax issues had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Fire Communications Working Group (FCWG) and standard wording had now been provided for inclusion in job advertisements. The wording was set out in Appendix 1 to the report. Barnaby Briggs asked for this information to be provided to Sarah McClusky (Team Lead – HR Advisory) to cascade through the HROD chain.

The Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) had made a recommendation following the administration and management review conducted by AON, to develop and implement a pension administration strategy. A key proposal of the strategy was that it should include key performance indicators and expected timescales for completion of certain processes. A draft administration strategy had been created by the FCWG and circulated to stakeholders for comment by 31 August 2020.

It was noted that following the Court of Appeal's determination that the transitional provisions in the Firefighters' pension schemes resulted in direct age discrimination, a consultation document had been released in week commencing 13 July 2020 which would be reviewed in conjunction with the Fire Service to consider the implications. The Board recognised the need to keep Members informed.

There was no further update on the pensionable pay challenge for on-call Fire Fighters.

It was noted that Warwickshire had been seeking to outsource Fire Pensions administration and a pre-tender supplier engagement exercise had commenced by sending a questionnaire to Fire Administrators regarding expressions of interest for undertaking the Firefighter Pension Schemes administration and pensioner payroll. The project plan for the outsourcing arrangement expected the tender document to be produced in August with a view to awarding the contract in October 2020.

The Chair referred to the background to his appointment and noted that as he felt he did not have enough technical knowledge to fulfil the role beyond his chairing skills, he would like to step down as Chair. He was content to continue in the role until a replacement could be found. It was noted that a formal selection process would be required in due course but in the meantime talks were ongoing with appropriate existing contacts to highlight the position's availability and assess potential interest. It was hoped that a decision could be made by the next meeting.

5. Pension Administration Update

Having received a full update in the previous item on the agenda, no further comments were made for this item.

6. Next Steps

Noting the absence of one of the Employee Representatives, the Board discussed the importance of regular and consistent attendance at meetings to ensure that all sectors of the Service were represented. The Chair agreed to discuss the most appropriate way to secure reliable representation at meetings with the Administration Team.

7. Next Meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting was due to take place on 26 November 2020 at 2.00pm.

The meeting rose at 2.30pm

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Chair