

Staff and Pensions Committee

Monday 13 December 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Bill Gifford (Vice-Chair)
Councillor John Horner
Councillor Christopher Kettle
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince

Officers

Neil Buxton, Technical Specialist - Pension Fund Policy and Governance
John Cole, Democratic Services Officer
Jan Cumming, Senior Solicitor and Team Leader (Commercial and Contracts)
Andrew Felton, Assistant Director - Finance
Victoria Jenks, Pensions Admin Delivery Lead
Chris Norton, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Treasury, Pension, Audit & Risk)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Andy Jenns and Councillor Sarah Millar.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Councillor Simpson-Vince advised that she was a Director of Rugby First Ltd, which had left Warwickshire Pension Fund as it had no active members left in the scheme (see agenda item 5).

(3) Minutes of Previous Meetings

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 13 September 2021 and 2 November 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

2. Proposal to Adopt E-Payslips for LGPS Pensioners

Victoria Jenks (Pensions Admin Delivery Lead) introduced the report which outlined current practices followed by the Pensions Administration Service to issue monthly paper payslips to members of the Warwickshire Pension Fund. She advised that since January 2018, newly retired members of the Fund have received payslips electronically unless they had indicated a preference to receive a paper copy. The report presented to the Committee outlined the case for moving to e-payslips as the default arrangement for all pensioners, whilst retaining the option for members to opt out and continue to receive paper payslips.

Victoria Jenks advised that the report set out the annual cost of issuing paper payslips, which equated to approximately £70,000, as well as the associated environmental impacts.

Victoria Jenks stated that the Committee's approval was sought for the proposed changes. She advised that e-payslips had been widely adopted by other pension funds. Funds that made use of this arrangement reported that approximately 10% of retired members had chosen to continue to receive paper payslips.

Victoria Jenks advised that members that had opted-in to the initiative could specify that a paper payslip be issued if there had been a change to the amount being paid or a change to the tax code.

Councillor Gifford (Vice-Chair of the Committee and Chair of the Meeting) stated that the proposal was sound. It provided scope for members to opt out if they wished to continue to receive paper payslips. He stated that, in his experience as a councillor, many retired residents were content to make use of digital resources. It was a legitimate and practicable way to proceed.

In response to Councillor Horner, Neil Buxton (Technical Specialist - Pension Fund Policy and Governance) advised that it was proposed that pensioners would receive a log-in to an online account to access payslips. A paper P60 form would be issued to pensioners in the first year. However, there was no legal requirement for P60s to be issued as a paper document.

In response to the Chair, Victoria Jenks indicated that the Pensions Administration Service was prepared for an increased number of enquiries from members during the first year of transition to the new arrangement.

Resolved:

That the Staff and Pensions Committee approves the adoption of e-payslips as the default position for pensioners who are members of the Warwickshire Pension Fund.

3. Pensions Administration Activity and Performance Update

Victoria Jenks (Pensions Admin Delivery Lead) introduced the report which provided an update on key developments affecting pensions administration and the performance of the Pension Administration Service (PAS).

In response to the Chair, Victoria Jenks advised that, in respect of the response to the McCloud case, the amount of work required to enact a solution was significant but the difference to members' benefits was comparatively slight.

Chris Norton (Strategy and Commissioning Manager – Treasury, Pension, Audit & Risk) advised that at the time of writing of the report, the Fund had no outstanding Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures (IDRP). However, since then, two IDRPs had been instigated. The Committee would be updated of any significant developments.

In response to Councillor Simpson-Vince, Victoria Jenks advised that plans to launch of the Member Self Service (MSS) platform by 1 April 2022 were on track. The build stage had recently been completed; the test phase would begin in early 2022. Consideration would be given to a phased approach to launch the initiative. There would be an initial 'soft rollout' with one employer to test the system which was likely to be operational as early as mid-February 2022.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the report.

4. Regulatory and Policy Update

Neil Buxton (Technical Specialist - Pension Fund Policy and Governance) introduced the report which provided a summary of regulatory developments within the pension arena alongside details of policies reviewed either as part of an annual review or where there had been a requirement for minor amendments.

Neil Buxton advised of developments that had come to attention following publication of the report. He reported that the government review of exit payments for LGPS members would be progressed as a parliamentary Private Members' Bill. Progress would be monitored.

Neil Buxton reported that the national Governance Review had been delayed until summer 2022; the Pensions Regulator Single Code of Practice would also be delayed until summer 2022, or possibly later. He advised that the Pensions Regulator may choose to make a recommendation to pension funds on meeting arrangements. It was likely that a focused approach to meetings would be advocated, increasing the number of meetings held from the quarterly arrangement currently in place.

The Chair stated that, to some extent, this approach was already in place in Warwickshire as part of the regularly held training, development, and discussion sessions.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the report.

5. Employers Entering and Leaving the Warwickshire Pension Fund

In response to the Chair, members of the Committee agreed to approve the delegation of authority to the Strategic Director for Resources as set out within the report.

Resolved:

That the Staff and Pensions Committee:

1. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Resources to approve applications from the listed employers subject to the applications meeting the criteria

1.1 New Academies:

- 1.1.1 Brailes C of E Primary School (Part of The Stour Federation) 01/08/2021
- 1.1.2 Houlton School (Part of Transforming Lives Educational Trust) 01/09/2021
- 1.1.3 The Warwickshire Academy (Part of Thrive Education Partnership)
01/01/2022

1.2 New Employers:

- 1.2.1 Premier Active 01/09/2021
- 1.2.2 Miquill Catering Limited 01/09/2021
- 1.2.3 Prime Facilities Services 06/09/2021
- 1.2.4 NSL – Marston's Holdings 01/11/2021 (new contract)
- 1.2.5 Caterlink 22/07/2021

2. Notes the employers who have left the fund as they have no active members left in the scheme:

- 2.1.1. Rugby First Ltd on 01/08/2021

6. Review of the Minutes of the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Local Pension Board Meeting of 9 June 2021

The minutes of the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Local Pension Board Meeting of 9 June 2021 were noted.

7. Reports Containing Exempt or Confidential Information

Resolved:

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. Exempt Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the meetings held on 13 September 2021 and 2 November 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

The meeting rose at 14:24

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Chair

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