

**Minutes of the meeting of the Local Pension Board
held on 12 December 2022 via Zoom**

PRESENT

Employer Representatives:

Cllr John B Hughes
Cllr Bryan Apsley
Dafydd Edwards, Treasurer
Gareth Owens, Clerk

Employee Representatives:

Richard Fairhead, Fire Leaders Association - Prospect, Employee Representative (Chair)
Bob Mason, Fire Officers' Association

Advisors

Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Rebecca Marfleet, Pensions Officer

Minute Taker

Lisa Allington, Executive Assistant

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were offered and accepted from Gareth Owens, Monitoring Clerk, Duncan Stewart-Ball, Fire Brigades Union and Stuart Stanley, Fire Brigades Union.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest to record.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. UPDATE REPORT – SCHEME MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Rebecca Marfleet presented the Firefighters Pension Schemes Update Report which aimed to provide the Local Pension Board with an update on current issues relating to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

4.3 An update was provided on the recent auto re-enrolment exercise, which is a statutory requirement. It was noted that the vast majority of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service's) firefighters were in the pension scheme, including those who were employed as Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters and for whom this was a secondary employment. It was felt to be of vital importance that RDS firefighters were fully informed of their right to access a Service pension scheme and the benefits that this would bring.

4.4 It was clarified that auto-enrolment into a pension scheme was an obligation on the Service and that staff would need to opt-out should they not wish to be a part of the scheme.

4.5 **RESOLVED to:**
i) **note the report.**

5. UPDATE REPORT – ADMINISTRATOR

5.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Service pensions administration report – October 2022, which aimed to provide a progress update on a number of projects being simultaneously undertaken, along with providing information on relevant issues in the administration of scheme benefits.

5.2 It was of note that all documentation in relation to pensions was now electronic and could be accessed online. The Service intended to continue to promote this facility over the next six months in order to enable staff to make full use of it.

5.3 **RESOLVED to:**
i) **note the information provided.**

6. UPDATE ON LEGAL MATTERS

6.1 ACFO MacArthur presented this report, which had been written to provide members of the Local Pension Board (LPB) with an update on legal matters affecting the Firefighters Pension Scheme.

6.2 There were currently two major issues that the Service was currently dealing with: McCloud Age Discrimination and the O'Brien judgement.

6.3 Members of staff who have submitted an intention to retire were now able to ask for two retirement profiles, the preparation of which was quite a time-consuming process as it required legacy benefits to be calculated manually.

6.4 An online tool has been developed by the Government Actuary's Department which will enable pension members to project the value of their pension, and it was hoped that this would be launched in January 2023.

6.5 It was noted that the O'Brien judgement was most applicable to the RDS staff employed by the Service, although the full detail will not be known until the regulations have been issued. A series of pension clinics have been held although the take up has been very low. Further sessions will be planned and a request has been made to the employee representative bodies to provide information of areas to be covered.

6.6 **RESOLVED to**

(i) note the ongoing legal matters relevant to the Firefighters Pension Scheme and the current status;

(ii) note the poor uptake of pension update sessions to support staff in relation to the O'Brien judgment, including agreement to provide further sessions; and

(iii) note the potential impact of both legal challenges on the forthcoming actuarial valuation.

7. RISK REGISTER

7.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Risk Register report, which provided an update on risk management arrangements, and referred Members to the appendix at the back of the report.

7.2 It was noted that a SLA was in place with the Dyfed Pension Fund which was reviewed every four to five years.

7.3 **RESOLVED to:**

i) approve the financial risks associated with the firefighters' pension scheme.

8. TRAINING

8.1 A presentation was given on-screen in order to cover the training basics of: knowledge and understanding of the obligations of LPB members; an overview of The Pensions Regulator's (TPR's) Toolkit; the Code of Practice 14; and local scheme orientation.

8.2 A structured approach to training for all members would now be put in place whereby: Members would need to complete the TPR Toolkit to provide core knowledge of the law; reports to members would support knowledge and understanding of specific matters; training would be provided at each meeting covering key areas identified; and training needs would be circulated.

8.3 It was agreed that, when the training needs analysis was sent out to Members, a list of what areas of training could be covered would be included. All Members were also required to complete the online Pensions Regulator training modules.

8.4 **RESOLVED that:**

- i) these slides would be issued to Members in due course;**
- ii) all Members of the LPB should complete the Pensions Regulator Toolkit (link to be circulated with the slides); and**
- iii) Members should complete the training needs analysis to be circulated with the slides.**

9. SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD

9.1 ACFO MacArthur presented the Scheme Advisory Board report, which gave an update on matters discussed at the Scheme Advisory Board for Wales.

9.2 It was noted that there were two national legal challenges which would impact on the Firefighters Pension Schemes; the McCloud judgment and the O'Brien judgment. Updates on these will be provided to members at every meeting.

9.3 It had been hoped that the valuation process would be concluded by April 2023 but this was now not possible. It was planned therefore for it to be concluded by April 2024.

9.4 It was confirmed that the next Scheme Advisory Board meeting would take place on 30 January 2023.

9.5 **RESOLVED to:**

- (i) note the terms of reference of the Scheme Advisory Board for Wales; and**
- (ii) note the matters discussed at the latest meeting on 22 July 2022.**

10. MATTERS TO BE ESCALATED TO FRA

10.1 It was agreed that no issues needed to be referred to the FRA.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 It was agreed that there was no other business to discuss.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The next meeting would be held on 19 January, 2023 and would be a training event.

Meeting closed 12:50