

## Issues Raised with Clair Alcock at the LGA

### National and Regional Boards

It would be useful to get an update from you on where we are on the various national and regional Boards / networks that were mentioned at the training that many of us attended. We heeded your wise words that we don't want to be replicating work across the Country and that we should aim for using national resources for things such as communication (see below). My Board were asking about this last time as we are keen to get going on some things but don't want to be duplicating work that could be better done at a national or regional level.

*Answer : The Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) has taken longer than expected to create and the membership is now in place. The work of the SAB is still developing and is obviously focussed on national issues and seeking some technical issues to some of the bigger problems, but no doubt we will be able to get a comprehensive update at the next meeting.*

*There is no facility to have regional boards but the aim was to use existing networks which often centre around technical issues to ensure that there is a more co-ordinated approach to some of the work of pension boards across the region. A review of some of the regional groups may be beneficial as there is often confusion as to whether these are administrator or employer based (or both).*

### Communications Strategy

The Board has noted that we do tend to be slightly further ahead of the game than some Pension Boards and are keen to start communicating with Members, but as mentioned above we did not want to do this alone and want to put together a communications strategy that dovetails with national and regional activity.

On a related note, Board members made reference to a video that had been put together in Scotland, which I think succinctly put forward the virtues of being in the FF pension scheme and its features and wondered if the LGA might be able to do something similar for England. I assume you will be aware of what was done (I haven't seen it myself) but if you need any more information, please come back to me.

*Answer : Communication at a national level is clearly one of the issues that is near the top of the list for the SAB and it may be useful to invite Clair to the next meeting of the Board to discuss communication as a topic and how the SAB and local Pension Boards can better work together.*

*The LGA are aware of the video that was produced in Scotland, but at the end of the day do not have the capacity and resources to produce something similar at this stage. This might be something that needs to be explored in terms of the resources that are available nationally at the LGA to support the SAB, Fire Authorities and Pension Boards.*

## Pensions Advice to Firefighters

At the session I attended, you may recall that I asked a question about personal pensions advice for Firefighters and the fact that there seems to be a big gap in this area for individuals seeking specific advice. Is anything happening on this nationally or alternatively are you aware of any local providers (or any at all) that specialise in the Firefighters pension scheme?

This is an issue that keeps coming up and one that needs to be addressed and whilst I have said in the past that the FBU should perhaps be looking at something, the Board made the point to me that not everyone is in the Union.

*Answer : This is a problem, but with no easy solution. Neither the LGA or FBU want to be seen to be publicly endorsing any advice service and in reality, there are very few financial advisors (if any) that specialise in the Fire Fighter's Pension Scheme and all of those people that do have a good understanding of the scheme work in the public sector and are not allowed to provide advice.*

*Would suggest that this is a high priority for the SAB to address, but at this moment in time there is no solution. Clearly increased communication and fact giving to Fire Fighter's (along the lines of our planned sessions following the issue of Annual Benefit Statements) will help matters but not where an individual Fire Fighter needs advice on their particular circumstances.*