

At a meeting of the HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY PENSION BOARD held at Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Eastleigh on 21 November 2016.

PRESENT:

p	Stewart Adamson	p	Richard North
p	Malcolm Eastwood	p	Cllr Roger Price
p	Steve Foye	p	Alex Rhodes

45 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

46 UPDATED TERMS OF REFERENCE AND ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Board received a report of the Clerk which presented the updated terms of Reference for the Firefighters' Pension Board (Item 2 in the Minute Book).

The report was introduced and it was heard that following the last meeting of the Firefighters Pension Board, and to allow greater flexibility for Members in appointing the most appropriate Chairman/Vice-Chairman for the Board, proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference were considered and agreed at a meeting of the Standards and Governance Committee. Members noted that the Terms of Reference were amended to remove the requirement for the alternation between employer and scheme representatives on an annual basis (appendix 1 to the report).

On this basis, the Clerk called for nominations for a Chairman. Steve Foye was nominated, seconded and in the absence of any further nominations duly appointed Chairman of the Pension Board until the first meeting of the Board following the Annual meeting of the Fire Authority in 2017.

[Steve Foye in the Chair]

The Chairman called for nominations for a Vice-Chairman. Alex Rhodes was nominated, seconded and in the absence of any further nominations duly appointed Vice Chairman of the Pension Board until the first meeting of the Board following the Annual meeting of the Fire Authority in 2017.

In relation to the Terms of Reference for the Board, Members discussed whether future meetings of the Board should continue to be held in public or to investigate the possibility of holding these in private. With regard to the need for transparency of the Board's activities, it was agreed that meetings of the Board should continue to be held in public, unless a matter is considered to be confidential or exempt in accordance with Local Government legislation.

RESOLVED:

That the Firefighters Pension Board receive and note the updated Terms of Reference.

47 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

Members were mindful of their duty to disclose at the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interest they had in any matter on the agenda for the meeting, where that interest was not already entered in the Authority's register of interests, and their ability to disclose any other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in any such matter that they might have wished to disclose.

48 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting on the 18 August 2016 were received and noted. In relation to Minute 42, it was noted that the fourth bullet point should read "except in exceptional circumstances driven by *operational* need" instead of "business need". With this amendment, the minutes were agreed.

Following the deferring of the acceptance of the 14 April 2016 Minutes, until Members who had been present at that meeting were in attendance, the 14 April Minutes were considered and duly agreed.

49 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Richard North, to his first meeting since his appointment as Pension Board Scheme Member.

The Chairman also wished to record the Board's gratitude to Officers for organising a recent training event which had been well attended by Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Surrey and Buckinghamshire Pension Board Members, and highlighted Alex Rhode's on-going work as the Hampshire Board's Lead Member for training.

50 DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

51 PENSION BOARD MEMBER TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

The Board received a report from the Chief Finance Officer regarding training for all members to adequately fulfil their responsibilities as Board Members (Item 7 in the Minute Book).

The report was introduced and it was explained that a Training Needs Analysis (TNA), which had been completed by Members, would be recirculated to the Board following a recent Training Session for Members of the Board. The original completed TNA would be used as a benchmark for future training. Members also discussed the benefits of incorporating a short training session immediately prior to or after future Pension Board meetings, and officers agreed to factor this in.

RESOLVED:

- That the Board notes the self-assessment summary of knowledge and experience appended to the Report as Appendix 1.
- That the Board endorses the intention of the HFRA to identify suitable training opportunities so that Board Members have the requisite skills required to lay a full and effective past as a Board Member.

52 PENSION ISSUES LOG

The Board received a report from the Chief Finance Officer regarding ongoing issues (Item 8 in the Minute Book).

The report was introduced and Members noted that subject to the HFRA HR Committee consideration of the issue of the Impact on pension tax liability of temporary promotions on the 22 November 2016, the Red status would then become Amber. Members discussed whether the delay in issuing Annual Benefits Statements (ABS) to employees should be reported to the Pensions Regulator as a technical breach, and it was felt that this should be self-reported as a material breach. Members noted that communications had been issued highlighting that ABS would be issued mid to late December 2016. The Board also discussed Software issues in relation to ABS.

With regard to Issue no 4, it was noted that work was ongoing to investigate whether Training Allowances and Additional Responsibility Allowances should be pensionable, and discussions had taken place with other Fire and Rescue Services in examining this. It was noted that this would be considered at a future meeting of HFRA Standards and Governance Committee. Members noted that in relation to Issue 8, a full Discretionary Policy would also be considered at a future meeting of HFRA Standards and Governance Committee. In relation to HFRS Discretionary Powers, it was felt that extra training on this issue could be useful to Board Members, and this would be factored into a future training session.

Members of the Board discussed whether Temporary Promotions should be treated as pensionable under the 2015 (CARE) scheme. It was noted that clarity around the Regulation wording was needed, and that Officers would write formally to the Scheme Advisory Board for guidance as this was a national issue. Communication with the duty system and HR work streams was also highlighted.

Members noted the progress made regarding the refund of pension contributions set out in 9a and 9b of the log. A discussion ensued around stretched officer resources, and it was agreed that this would be highlighted in the Pension Board Annual Report which would be considered at the next HFRA Standards and Governance Committee.

The process for managing RDS buy-back on retirement was raised. It was heard that there were concerns at a national level about effective communication to affected RDS Firefighters, and Officers highlighted that there would be some flexibility with deadlines for eligible Firefighters who hadn't been written to. It was agreed to keep this issue on the Pensions Issues Log for monitoring and review, with a formal report to be brought to a future meeting of the Pension Board. It was noted that the Pension Ombudsman relied on the personal responsibility of Firefighters to contact them if they were unsure of any details in the communications they had received. Officers would also liaise closely with Retained Firefighters Union on this matter.

Members acknowledged the completion of Pension Issue Number one and six. Other pension issues were highlighted including Communication to Members, Record Keeping Requirements, Transitional Protections and Protected Pension Age and Unauthorised Payments, and the Board noted the actions relating to these.

RESOLVED:

- That the contents of the report are noted and that delay in issuing the Annual Benefits Statements to regular firefighters should be reported to the Pensions Regulator as a material breach.

53 TEMPORARY PROMOTIONS

Steve Foye, Richard North, Alex Rhodes and Stew Adamson declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in relation to this Item.

The Board received a report from the Chief Financial officer regarding the retrospective treatment of temporary promotions for serving and retired Firefighters (Item 9 in the Minute Book).

Officers outlined the background of the report to Members, and provided an explanation of each of the three cohorts. The Board noted that the report would be considered by the HFRA HR Committee on the 22 November 2016, with the financial costs to be considered for approval at the Full Authority meeting on the 8 December 2016.

Members discussed various issues including the Annual Benefits Statement, and the importance of self responsibility to check the accuracy was stressed. It was highlighted that because of timing, some of the Statements sent out at the end of the year would not be accurate, but a revised Statement would be

re-issued. Officers reinforced the importance of Firefighters querying any concerns, relating to Statements, and it was noted that communication including the use of “Talking Head” briefing material should help to assist Firefighters with some queries.

The issue of whether some Firefighters may be financially disadvantaged in terms of substantive tax liabilities was raised and discussed, and Officers would look into this as a matter of urgency.

The Board thanked Officers for their hard work to resolve this matter, and for the comprehensive report. Members of the Board who did not have a conflicting interest were content with the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

- That the Board notes the recommendations contained within the HR Committee report, which, subject to approval or modification, will be presented to the Full Authority for consideration on the 8 December 2016.