

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

LOCAL PENSION BOARD

19 JANUARY 2023

PRESENT: J Weston (Chair)

Members: S Sansome (Rotherham MBC), S Smith (SY Fire Brigades' Union), S Smith (SY Fire Brigades' Union), DCFO T Carlin (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue),

Advisors: C Davies (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service), A Kilner (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service) S Kelsey (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service) L Stones (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service)

In Attendance Virtually: M Nicholls (SY Fire Brigades' Union), P Bragger (Fire Officers Association), S Slater (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service) and H Scargill (West Yorkshire Pension Fund)

Officers: D Thorpe and L Belli (Barnsley MBC)

Guest: J McGinnity (Chair of Northern Ireland Pension Board)

Apologies for absence were received from: A Bosmans, M Mott and S Kaur

20 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

J Weston welcomed everyone to the January 2023 meeting of the Board.

J McGinnity, Chair of the Northern Ireland Pensions Board was welcomed to the meeting who was observing virtually.

21 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

23 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2022**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Local Pension Board held on 6th October 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

a) Matters Arising / Actions

Following the Pensions Conference attended by Councillor Sansome and A Bosmans, concerns were raised as to how pensions meetings were formatted and whether there was anything to take on board with regards to best practice. It was requested that Mark Rowe, FBU National Officer, be invited to a future meeting for education purposes as to whether the Pensions Board were giving the best service possible and dealt with matters in the best way. M Nicholls agreed to contact Mark Rowe and invite him to a future meeting.

In relation to item 006 on the Risk Register 'Communications - Failure to ensure there are timely and accurate communication arrangements in place' M Nicholls queried whether it had been communicated to members who were part of the retained pension scheme that they have the ability to buy back due to a legal ruling. In response C Davies informed the Board that as it was in the early stages, they were working with West Yorkshire and the LGA as to what communication would go out. M Nicholls requested that any communication, even in the early stages, would be a help. C Davies confirmed they would take this away and look for a way forward.

24 THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISIONS

S Kelsey recognised changes in board membership and wanted to ensure that members were aware that the Chief Fire Officer had received delegated responsibility with regards to the Pension Scheme in 2016. S Kelsey addressed concerns surrounding this and informed members that the Chief Fire Officer had passed on his reassurance to the Board that should there be any issues of significance then he would liaise with the Fire Authority and not act in isolation.

Members queried as to whether there was an appeals process for any members or retired members that felt the system had failed in the decision made. In response S Kelsey informed members that most decisions were legislative rather than policy but that there was a discretions policy to be adhered to by the Chief Fire Officer. However there was an IDRP process for appeals and issues raised.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

25 IMMEDIATE DETRIMENT: UPDATE

S Slater updated members on immediate detriment. There was nothing to report on Category 1 claims and Category 2 had around 20 applications. In order to manage expectations a communication was sent out before Christmas explaining the timeframe in MOU of around 90 days, the significant delays were due to the number of applicants.

M Nicholls gave his thanks to S Slater and the Team as they were working under significant pressure.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

26 RISK REGISTER

The Chair raised concerns following a recent survey that reported 61% of active members did not understand the complexity of pension benefits and requested this be reflected in the risk register under communications.

In response S Kelsey reported that a discussion had taken place as to the best way to communicate to the operational workforce and it was felt the best way going forward would be via podcast. A number of people would be invited to take part including representatives from the Brigade Union and, Fire Officers Association. The Podcast would be broadcast on TV screens throughout all buildings. Members were informed that everything was geared up with the communications team to go ahead once slides had been provided from the LGA in order to create a script. This was the recommended approach as it could catch a significant number of employees rather than a face to face approach which would take longer.

Members queried whether there would be an opportunity to ask questions. In response they were informed that as it was a podcast this would not be available, but that a follow up exercise to invite questions direct or through a representative body would be created and the FAQ's and responses would be published.

It was agreed to leave risk 006 'Failure to ensure there are timely and accurate communication arrangements in place' amber with an updated mitigation to include the podcast and for it to turn green when it had been completed and felt a successful exercise.

DCFO Carlin proposed that a follow up survey be sent to staff in 6 months' time to check if people had absorbed the information and whether it had improved knowledge following the podcast.

S Sansome raised concerns around Risk 010 – 'Failure to ensure employers pay the correct contributions to the scheme, and that their employees are contributing appropriately' and whether there were any mitigating circumstances as to why it remained red.

S Slater informed the Board that it had remained red due to a pension legal case that was ongoing and had been for 2 years.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the Risk Register.

27 UPDATE FROM WEST YORKSHIRE PENSIONS FUND (SEE ISSUES BELOW)

H Scargill provided Members with an update from WYPF, which included the Monthly Client reports for October, November and December 2022, together with the Fire Client Minutes of 19th October, 2022.

Members noted the following key points:

- Point 5 in the October update, included work being done and changes being made to the IT systems. A full disaster recovery test had taken place

on new technology which was successful and would be tested twice more in the next 12 months.

- A Pension Dashboard programme of implementation had been established and regular updates would be provided as things progress, the staging deadline had been updated to 30 September, 2024.
- All West Yorkshire updates were focused on cyber security, the document had previously been circulated to members.
- An update was provided on monthly postings and how there had been delays due to a number of reasons, but they had caught up. A document had been created to provide information for successful completion of the monthly postings spreadsheet from April 2022 onwards.
- Month 12 gave update changes of how to report KPI numbers.

J Weston congratulated WYPF for the comprehensive report on cyber security which had proven reassuring.

J Weston queried the Outstanding Work Graph in the monthly updates and how the majority of reasons were under the 'Miscellaneous' section and what that included.

In response H Scargill informed members that this would include things such as telephone queries waiting call backs and items received in the post awaiting assignment to the correct department for processing or a response.

J McGinnity complimented WYPF on the comprehensive updates and the level of information contained within the reports. He enquired as to how many Fire Authority's they provided this service for and whether that work included common issues which spanned across all of those authorities resulting in inter working between FRA Boards.

In response, H Scargill informed him it was 23 and each Fire Authority received a report specific to them and enabled issues to be raised between boards.

It was reported that the Fire Clients meeting involved Pension Board and salaried staff representatives from all 23 Fire Authorities and was an opportunity to raise issues across the Board.

S Sansome referred to the Fire Client Minutes and the mention of overpayments and how this can happen.

In response members were informed that these instances can occur in the death of a member and also if someone claims benefits from DWP for an injury. Those benefits are then deducted from gross injury pension so the fire pension scheme pays a lower amount. It is the individual's responsibility to notify of changes to benefits but there is a process in place to make checks every 3 years to ensure people are being paid correctly.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

S Kelsey posed a question to the Board as to whether going forward the Pensions Dashboard update remained incorporated within the West Yorkshire Pension Fund update or whether it should be a standing item on the agenda.

The Chair requested that it be a standing item on the agenda.

RESOLVED – That the Pensions Dashboard be a standing item on future agendas.

29 BREACHES/FRAUD - UPDATE

Members noted that no breaches had been received.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

30 INTERNAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE (IDRP) - UPDATE

L Stones confirmed that there had not been any new IDRP's received since the last Board meeting.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

31 PENSIONS ISSUES/WORKLOADS

C Davies informed members that retirement forms continued to be processed and a lead time of 3 months was required. However, they continued to receive a number for forms last minute which had resulted in delays in the process for the lump sum to be paid. M Nicholls agreed to send out a joint statement to reiterate this information to members.

Members were informed that there had been difficulties recruiting to a number of posts in the pensions & payroll team but that there would be potential interviews coming up and hopefully a positive update could be provided at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

32 TPR RETURN SCHEMES

C Davies informed members that T Weaver had completed the Pension Fund Annual Scheme returns and had submitted them well in advance of the 18th November, 2022 deadline.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

33 COMMUNICATIONS - UPDATE

Members noted that no further communications updates had been received.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

34 NATIONAL SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD – UPDATES

Members noted that there were no further updates.

RESOLVED – That Members noted update.

35 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: UPDATE / EVENTS

Members were encouraged to look at the website and complete their own learning and development but if necessary the Local Pension Board had a budget in order for members to book on courses.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

36 SELF ASSESSMENT UPDATE

J Weston emphasised the importance for new members of the Board to complete some training which they would find beneficial. It was requested that the Training Plan be updated and training be provided by people from South Yorkshire and H Scargill if available.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

37 ACTIONS FROM THE LGA FIREFIGHTERS' PENSIONS BULLETINS

D Thorpe presented the item which captured actions arising from the LGA pension bulletins in October and November 2022. The December update will be included in the next meeting. It was noted that all actions were completed or ongoing.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

38 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

D Thorpe presented the Board's Annual Work Programme, which was reviewed on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the Annual Work Programme.

39 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

40 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the future meeting schedule (all meetings to commence at 1.00pm and to be held at Barnsley Town Hall)

Thursday 13 April 2023 – To be held in a hybrid format.

41 AGREED ACTIONS

	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/Update
1	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>To weave cyber security into one of the existing risks which related to information and governance.</p> <p>To liaise with S Slater regarding the deep dives into risk numbers 004 and 006.</p> <p>To liaise with S Slater regarding the dashboard, and to seek clarification on some of the issues around the current legislation.</p>	<p>Next Board meeting on 19.01.23</p> <p>Next Board meeting on 19.01.23</p> <p>Next Board meeting on 19.01.23</p>	<p>S Slater</p> <p>D Thorpe/ S Slater</p> <p>D Thorpe/ S Slater</p>	<p><u>Update 06.10.22</u></p> <p>An update would be provided to the next Board meeting.</p> <p>ACTIONS DISCHARGED</p>
1.	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>To update the mitigation in Risk 006 to create a podcast to ensure all members have knowledge around pension benefits.</p> <p>To send out an internal survey to all members following the above mitigation to ensure understanding</p>	<p>Next Board meeting on 13.04.23</p> <p>July 2023</p>	<p>S Kelsey/ S Slater</p> <p>S Kelsey / S Slater</p>	
2	<p>Communications - Update</p> <p>To ensure that there was continuous</p>	<p>Update to the next</p>	<p>S Slater/ C Davies</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p>

	adequate communication to the Members regarding the pensions benefit illustrations for the transition Members and the move into the 2015 Scheme.	Board meeting on 13.04.23		- - - - - - -
	A document to be created to contain the actions from the LGA Firefighters' Pensions Bulletins, to ascertain whether the actions were underway or complete.	Next Board meeting on 19.01.23	D Thorpe	<u>Update 06.10.22</u> The document to become a standard agenda item from the next Board meeting. ACTION DISCHARGED <u>Update 19.01.23</u> - Action updated as above.
	To consider holding a communication meeting for members to explain the complexity of the different pensions. Liaison to be made with the FBU to ascertain the level of clarity required by the members.	In due course	S Slater/ C Davies/ S Kelsey/ L Stones	
3	Update from West Yorkshire Pensions Fund To provide the Board with the confidential cyber security document.	ASAP	C Davies/ D Thorpe	ACTION DISCHARGED
4	Administration Strategy For an	April 2023	S Slater/	

	Administration Strategy to be developed in April 2023.		C Davies/ S Kelsey/ L Stones	
5	IDRP To request an update from S Slater on an IDRP. An update to be provided to the next Board meeting.	Next Board meeting on 19.01.23	L Stones/ S Slater	ACTION DISCHARGED
6	Annual Work Programme To update the Annual Work Programme. To be presented to the next Board meeting.	Next Board meeting on 19.01.23	D Thorpe	ACTION DISCHARGED
7	Self-Assessment To revisit the Self-Assessment at the next Board meeting.	Next Board meeting on 19.01.23	D Thorpe	ACTION DISCHARGED
8	Recruitment Process To look into the recruitment process for Independent Members on the Board.	In due course	D Thorpe	
9	Matters Arising To invite Mark Rowe to a future Board Meeting to discuss and review the best practice of the Pensions Board	In due course	M Nicholls	

CHAIR

