

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Pension Board

**You are summoned to attend the meeting of Pension Board to be held on
Thursday, 11 January 2024 at 11:00**

at Digital via Teams,

for the purpose of transacting the following business:

Agenda – Public

- 1 To receive apologies for absence (if any)
- 2 Declarations of interests
- 3 Minutes of the Previous Pension Board held on the 2nd November 2023 **3 - 10**
- 4 Matters Arising [Verbal Report]
To discuss any matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting - all matters to be discussed to be raised in advance with the Chair.
- 5 WMFPS PB Action Plan - January 2024 **11 - 18**
- 6 WMFS Risk Register. Updated 20.11.2023 **19 - 22**
- 7 Risk Register – Proposed Changes [Verbal Report and Presentation]
- 8 Pension Administration Update Report [To Follow]
- 9 Pension Administration – Business Case Withdrawal [Verbal Report]
- 10 IDRP Update January 2024 **23 - 26**

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|----|---|----------------|
| 11 | Communications Update Jan 2024 | 27 - 28 |
| 12 | Pension Update Record January 2024 | 29 - 30 |
| 13 | Any other business
Discussion of any other business not on the agenda. | |
| 14 | Date of next meeting | |

Distribution:

Independent Chair - Vacancy, Julie Felton - Employer Representative, Adam Harper - Scheme Member Representative, Kal Shoker – Employer Representative, Alan Tranter – Scheme Member Representative, Kamla Devi-Ahir - Employer Representative, Paul Bennett - Scheme Member Representative.

Clerk Name:	Tom Embury
Clerk Telephone:	
Clerk Email:	tom.embury@wmfs.net

Agenda prepared by Chandni Patel

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This agenda and supporting documents are also available electronically on the West Midlands Fire Service website at www.wmfs.net

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
Item 3
PENSION BOARD

02 November 20203 at 11:00 hrs

Conducted at Headquarters and digitally via Microsoft Teams

Attendance:

Chair: Sofia Mahmood – Employer Representative

Employer Representatives:

Julie Felton

Sofia Mahmood

Paul Gwynn

Employee Representatives:

Alan Tranter

Paul Bennett

Alex Daw

Officers and advisors in attendance:

Kelly Harding – Head of People Support, Tom Embury – Policy Advisor,
Chandni Patel – Democratic Services Officer, Paul Gwynn- Employee
Representative

1. To receive apologies for absence

- Richard Stanton
- Kamla Devi-Ahir

2. Declarations of Interests

No declarations of interest were submitted.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Pension Board held on 07 September
2023**

Resolved.

That the minutes of the Pension Board held on 07 September 2023 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

4. Matters Arising

None were submitted in advance.

5. Action Plan- November 2023

Tom Embury provided an overview/update on the action plan. There are a few areas that are over the deadline, however, these items have been discussed with the pension regulator. We have also had a recent handover to a new representative. Sarah Dove is the new representative replacing Barry Croxon.

Reference	Update
E2	Comfortable with Progress being made
J-M	Annual TPR data return received. Data scores will be shared as part of the annual return to TPR.
Q2	Update to be provided at the next Pensions Board Meeting.
4	To communicate via the webpage to ensure records are accurate and up to date.
8	IDRPs will go through their own separate reports.

Regarding Action L, Paul Gwynn advised this will be completed once the outcomes are shared. The aim is to complete in May 2024 for the automatic features to go live such as online access.

The items arising from Previous Pension Board meetings will be updated accordingly.

There is still a plan to communicate to non-active Scheme members around those individuals who have opted out of the scheme. The number of people who are non-members has dropped in the last quarter.

Alan Tranter reiterated the importance of the accuracy of the database on retired personnel, raising concerns over continuing

issues and lack of clarification on whether we can communicate with the relevant people or not.

Paul Gwynn advised that in terms of communicating with the pensioners, we have to provide HMRC their home address as we hold it. If that address with us is inaccurate, it will be the same with HMRC. It is the member's responsibility to ensure their data is accurate with HMRC and therefore with WMFS.

Kelly Harding advised that it is difficult to communicate with individuals if contact details are not accurate or available. An alternative may be to communicate via the Facebook page.

Alan Tranter advised that communication via the webpage may be more beneficial as social media has limited interaction.

Resolved.

1. Kelly Harding and Paul Gwynn to determine how we communicate with members via the webpage to ensure their details are accurate.

Paul Gwynn advised that we may not reach elderly pensioners via the webpage and that is a concern.

As we are about to roll out access to Altair online, through filtering, we will be able to find those who may not have received it.

Following concerns, Sofia Mahmood advised that we will be looking to deliver other forms of communication if possible.

Alan Tranter informed the board there is various information from different outlets. We need to ensure that the organisation is capturing this information, being actioned and then reporting back to the board.

Paul Gwynn stated that all board members should have an understanding of the scheme and have an understanding of technical elements of the bulletin. If there is an action required from the bulletin, the board should advise accordingly. The member and employee representatives should understand what we need to deliver and when it needs to be delivered by.

Resolved

2. To track and highlight actions required from the bulletin and communicate this to the board. This may be a similar approach as the Risk Register
3. To include 'Actions Required' as a standing item.

A discussion will be had outside the room to confirm who will be completing the above actions.

1. **Risk Register**

Tom Embury advised that the Risk Register will be moving to a new Platform. The content itself won't change but it'll be more about the presentation and tracking progress of risks. This should be ready by the next meeting.

Resolved

4. Update PB Risk Management Approach to reflect the service's corporate risk approach.

There are two Red Risks, application of remedy (Risk 16) and Pension Board Resourcing/Succession Planning (Risk 20).

Tom Embury and Kelly Harding suggested changing Risk 20 from Red to Amber.

We now have a full six members. On the employer side, it is less of a challenge to fill those positions.

Kelly Harding informed the board that Julie Felton will be retiring at the end of March which will have some impact. We will need to start recruiting as soon as possible.

The scheme manager will be appointing employer representatives; therefore, it will be up to them to do so.

Paul Gwynn advised it may be appropriate to leave Risk 20 at RED (Score: 12) as the handover process will be as equally important as finding a replacement.

Kelly advised that the likelihood would be better as a 3 rather than a 4.

Sofia Mahmood advised that with the plans that we have in place, it doesn't seem like a RED risk, therefore happy for it to be changed

to AMBER. The Risk should be updated to reflect the change.

Resolved

5. Update Risk 20 re: resourcing and succession planning

2. Recruitment Update- Active Scheme Member Representative

Tom Embury advised the board that previously we had concluded that we were to do fewer verbal updates. The report presented informs Board members of Alex Daw's appointment to the board following the advertisement for Active Scheme members.

3. Pension Section Supporting Information

Paul Gwynn presented the report and advised that the numbers in brackets are from the report from the previous quarter. 9.9% are non-scheme members (Section 1)

Paul confirmed that we promote the scheme at induction, but that often new firefighters come in having earned more externally. They do opt out initially, however have joined later down the line.

Paul Gwynn provided further information on Section 2 of the report regarding KPI's. Some of the figures around transfers are not an issue. We would like to consider how we measure that KPI. There is a concern that they are moving downwards. Paul Gwynn explained that these requests are reported based on the statutory requirements. The figures are a combination of staff leave and priority work that has caused that drop.

Tom Embury advised that there was an action in the last meeting regarding this and was agreed that the measure is faulty as it is measuring something you have no control over. It is within the action plan to review that.

Once the online system is updated, members will run quotes through this system which will reduce the amount of manual work the team have to do.

Regarding the System update, there are currently two systems. They are in the process of rolling out access for all scheme members. This will allow members to view the current rate of their

pension. It will enable them to update their details themselves via the system. We will need to ensure that this is also updated to Payroll.

In terms of Oracle Fusion we are still waiting for confirmation on how we going to deliver payslips. Oracle International have a certain license that provides the relevant access. This is not available on the current Oracle system WMFS have access to. Conversations are being had to see if this license can be moved to Oracle Europe for WMFS to have access to. Alternatively, an option may be to give members employee access to the system but with restricted access if possible.

Sofia Mahmood advised for awareness that if May 2024 is not achievable, this will need to be brought back into this board.

4. IDRP Update

Tom Embury advised that there are no active IDRPs. All updates are within the report provided.

Paul Gwynn attended the AGM Pensions Ombudsman in September and made the board aware that there are discussions on how decisions at IDRP are made. There needs to be evidence and is fair and applied evenly to all cases. There is possibly no oversight on how those decisions are being made and therefore ensuring we have a process is very important.

We will need to look at how we can note decision ahead of the stage 1 letter so it is a similar standard to stage 2.

Resolved

6. Kelly Harding to understand how we capture the decision-making part of the process of Stage 1 appeals and to provide to the board.

5. System and Processes Update [Verbal Update]

An update was provided on Item 8 Pension Action Supporting Information.

6. Any Other Business

To note: To bring attention to the Board we have received letters of notice from two individuals from the Pension Team.

We will need to update to Risk Register to reflect this update as it will have an impact on the workload.

7. Date of next meeting

To agree on the date of the next Pension Board Meeting
Thursday 11 January 2024.

8. Pension Administration Consultation – Pension Board Discussion

[Informal consultation session – officers not present]

WMFPS Pension Board – Action Plan

Completed	Recently Updated	Missed completion date
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Ref	Date	Subject	Action	Responsible	Completion date / Suggested timeframe	Status [Ongoing / Completed]
Actions arising from The Pensions Regulator Supervisory Report 2020/21 on the West Midlands Firefighter Pension Scheme						
A1	11/11	Skills and Training	Pension Board (PB) and Scheme Manager (SM) to undertake Training Needs Analysis to set a baseline for development of future training plans. Previous templates exist that can be used.	Pension Board Chair and Scheme Manager	Undertaken by March 2023	TNAs completed as of May 2023
A2	11/11	Pension Board Training and skills	PB to formalise their training plan, to be reviewed at least yearly, which will cover emerging themes, such as cyber security. This will be published on a joint Pension Board filing system/Teams site (see Recommendation D1) to ensure all PB member can review as required and bring forward suggestions for training and development.	Pension Board Chair	Implemented by July 2023	Agreed at July Pension Board
B1	11/11	Pension Board Succession	Clerk and PSS to develop a succession plan for both Scheme Member and Employer representatives, including undertaking a revision of role descriptions. This will include a proposal for hand-over between departing representatives and their replacements.	Clerk and PSS supported by Pension Board	Implemented by March 2023	Ongoing
B2	11/11	Pension Board Succession	PB and SM to review Terms of Reference with regards to representative tenures to ensure these are staggered and include a suitable handover period.	Pension Board Chair and Scheme Manager	Implemented by July 2023	Revised Terms of Reference drafted and agreed, staggered member

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						replacement process agreed.
C	11/11	Pension Board Composition	Review appointment/election communications for Pension Board representatives to ensure they encourage diversity amongst the Pension Board membership and encourage the widest possible number and range of candidates to apply. TPR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion guidance to be utilised.	PSS/Pension Board/Portfolio Team	Implemented by January 2023	Completed – Election communications sent
D1	11/11	Pension Board Information Sharing	Review communications to Pensions Board and Scheme manager and ensure updates are provided when required.	Portfolio and Pensions Administration Teams	Implemented by March 2023	Complete
D2	11/11	Pension Board Information Sharing	Pension Board members to review information sharing arrangements and PB representatives' views on information sharing, knowledge and skills, with input from Scheme Manager.	Pension Board and Scheme Manager		Completed
E1	11/11	Business Continuity Planning	Pensions Board to receive a report on current BCP arrangements and testing and review their effectiveness with a view to making recommendations to Scheme Manager on whether a bespoke BCP outside existing WMFS arrangements is necessary.	Pensions Board Chair and Pensions Manager	To be approved in July 2023 .	Pension Board BCP agreed with minor additions at July 2023 PB meeting.
E2	11/11	Business Continuity Planning	Pension Administration Team to develop and share with the Scheme Manager and Pension Board a set of procedural notes for key pensions administration tasks. Content may be impacted by implementation of remedy.	Pensions Administration Team	Update to March 2023 Audit and Risk Committee Meeting – subject to Remedy roll out.	Partial set of notes created for some tasks, and work continues but not expected until mid 2024.

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					Report expected to November Pensions Board	
F	11/11	Information Sharing between SM, PB and Pension Administration Team	Written (rather than verbal) reports to be provided by the Pension Team on key issues to both the Pension Board and Scheme Manager as a standing item for all meetings.	Pensions Administration Team	To begin from March 2023 Audit and Risk Committee	Completed
G	11/11	Conflicts of Interest	Conflict of Interest Register, based on the TPR template, to be created and stored on system where all PB members have access. Will be a standing item for all PB meetings. This document to be shared with The Pension Regulator.	Portfolio Team and Pensions Board	To begin from implementation of new system as of February 2023	Completed
H1	11/11	Risk Management	<p>PB Risk Register Sub Group to consider TPR recommended changes or improvement in formatting of the Risk Register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilising a cover sheet to provide a snapshot of the current risks, helping to clearly identify the current major risk(s) to the Scheme. The Scheme may wish to identify emerging risks in this location as well. • ensuring all risks have mitigating actions and owners • documenting closed risks <p>Incorporate relevant WMFS Corporate Risks within the PB Risk Register, to include Cyber Security (CR 7.3).</p>	Pensions Board RR sub group	Completed by January 2023	Complete – PB agreed to maintain current RR approach.
H2	11/11	Risk Management	PB Risk Register to be incorporated into Audit and Risk Committee risk updates.	Scheme Manager	To begin from March 2023 A&R Meeting	Completed

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I	11/11	Digitisation of records	All records to be digitised and accessible to support data collection.	Pensions Manager supported by Data and Governance Team	Completed	Completed
J	11/11	Data Improvement policy	Pensions Team to work with Data and Governance team on ensuring a Data Improvement Policy is in place for Pensions Data, either drawing on existing policy or developing a new policy if required. To be taken forward following roll out of ALTAIR update.	Pensions Administration Team & Data and Governance Team	Completed following implementation of new Altair system March 2023 November 2023	Ongoing. Altair update now complete and data improvement policy and data review to now be progressed
K	11/11	Data Improvement Plan	Pensions Team, drawing on the Annual Data Review (Action L) to develop a Data Improvement Plan for any areas where data scores are not complete. This to be reported to both Scheme Manager and Pension Board, and shared with TPR. To be taken forward following roll out of ALTAIR update.	Pensions Administration Team	Following completion of Annual Data Review	Ongoing. Altair update now complete and data improvement policy and data review to now be progressed
L	11/11	Annual data review	Pensions Team to undertake a pension data review, to assess the accuracy and completeness of member data, to be reported to the Pension Board and Scheme Manager.	Pensions Administration Team	Completed by June 2023 Completed by October 2023 Scores to be shared as part of annual return to TPR	Ongoing – date reviewed Updated planned for future PB meeting
M	11/11	Recording data scores	Pensions administration team to record common and scheme specific data scores gathered as part of the Annual Data review (Action L) in Exchange as part of annual return to The Pension Regulator.	Pensions Administration Team	Completed by June 2023 -Scores to be shared as part of annual return to TPR	Ongoing – date reviewed Updated planned for future PB meeting

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N1	11/11	Review of KPIs	Scheme Manager to inform Pensions Board which KPIs it wishes to have developed and to receive regular updates on. PB to develop and agree with Pensions Team, and utilise a traffic light system (RAG).	Scheme Manager, Pensions Board Chair and Pensions Administration Team	Completed by March 2023	Completed
N2	11/11	Supporting narrative to KPs	All Key Performance Indicators (provided with RAG rating) to be accompanied by appropriately detailed written narrative (which may be provided alongside a verbal update). This narrative to be provided to both the Scheme Manager and the Pension Board	Pensions Administration Team	Completed by June 2023	Complete – delivered to July PB . Further improvements to be made for future reports.
O	11/11	Documentation of Data validation procedures	Implementation of ORACLE upgrade is intended to allow retired Scheme Members to update their own contact details. All members to be contacted by post to inform them of new system, with further investigation of failed deliveries.	Pensions Administration Team	Reviewed September 2023 - Oracle Trial now working, next steps being determined.	Options being reviewed as to how to grant all pensioners access to Oracle (or otherwise invest in Altair).
P	11/11	Pension Process Automation	Pensions Team to provide a report to the Scheme Manager on automation and systems improvements achieved by implementation of ALTAIR and ORACLE systems system once in place.	Pensions administration team	Full implementation expected by May 2024	Update expected at January 2024 meeting– partial completion of automation so far – only for active scheme members.

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Q1	11/11	Administrative Task Timescales	Pensions Team to provide a report to the Scheme Manager setting out the expected task timescales (e.g., responses to queries), which will also be shared with Pension Board.	Pensions administration team	Completed by March 2023	Completed
Q2	11/11	Firefighter Pensions SAB Pensions Administration Strategy	Pensions Board to utilise FPS Administration, Management, and Governance Strategy template to create single documentation of roles and services standards. Document to be agreed by Scheme Manager and published on the WMFRA CMIS site.	Scheme Manager, Pension Board, Pension Team, Portfolio Team	Agreed September 2023	Information from FPSAB to be included on new webpage on WMFS.net
Actions arising from previous Pension Board meetings						
2	08/12	Members opt-out	Information to be circulated to employees to encourage them to remain in the scheme	Deputy Clerk / Pensions Manager	Completed by March 2023 March 2024	Ongoing - refreshed communication approach will allow for this to occur Q4 2023/24
4	08/12	Actively updating data records	Pensions Manager to go back to all relevant individuals to ask them to update their records, with assistance from Julie Felton, to actively promote them to update their records.	Pensions Manager/ Admin Manager	Completed by March 2023 Ongoing	MSS now in place for Active Scheme Members
1	07/09	Training and Development	Members to put forward suggestions for training and development to be added to Pension Board training plan	Pension Board Members	Complete January 2024	
2	07/09	Deferred statements	Paul Gwynn and Julie Felton to discuss approach to mailing/contacting pensioners	Paul Gwynn and Julie Felton	Complete November 2023	Delayed
3	07/09	Administration	Transfer workplan to Planner, ensuring access for all Pensions Board members	Julie Felton, Chandni Patel	Complete November 2023	Access to Planner not possible, so intended to continue to improve existing workplan in interim.

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4	07/09	Review of Audit Process	Kelly Harding and Paul Gwynn to provide assurance that no further payment errors have been missed by our audit process.	Kelly Harding, Paul Gwynn	Complete November 2023	
5	07/09	Administration	Update PB Risk Management Approach to reflect service corporate risk approach	Policy Advisor and Portfolio Team	January 2024	Update coming to January 2024 meeting for Board approval
6	07/09	Terms of Reference	Scheme Manager to review the terms of reference to ensure that role of scheme manager, pension board and pensions administration are clear.	Scheme Manager and Policy Advisor	January 2024	Deferred
7	07/09	Performance Metrics	Consider update to pension administration KPI relating to transfers – realistic timescales to take account of potentially long delays between inquiries.	Policy Advisor and Pensions Admin team	January 2024	Deferred
8	07/09	Pension Section Supporting Information report update	Pension Section Supporting Information report for 07/09 to be updated to reflect IDRs. In future IDRs to be reported separately.	Chandni Patel	November 2023	IDRs now reported separately
9	07/09	KPIs	Review KPIs to see which cases are not currently covered by KPIs.	Board	March 2024	
10	07/09	LGA/Blue Light Pensions Updates	Process for assuring Pension Board that all such emails are being managed to be agreed at next pension board meeting	Pensions Administration	November 2023	First report being brought to January 2024 Board Meeting
1	02/11	Communications	To determine how we communicate with members via the webpage to ensure their details are accurate.	Kelly Harding Paul Gwynn	January 2024	Website news section launched – Communications plan to be brought to January 2024 meeting
2	02/11	LGA/Blue Light Pensions Updates	To track and highlight actions required from the bulletin and communicate this to the board. This may be a similar approach as the Risk Register	Tom Embury Pension Board Members	January 2024	First report being brought to January 2024 Board Meeting

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3	02/11	Action required	To include actions required as a standing item	Chandni Patel Tom Embury	January 2024	First report being brought to January 2024 Board Meeting
4	02/11	Corporate Risk Process	The corporate risk process is to be shared.	Julie Felton Tom Embury	January 2024	Presentation to January 2024 Meeting
5	02/11	IDRP Process	IDRP - To understand how we capture the decision-making part of the process of Stage 1 appeals and to provide to the board.	Kelly Harding	January 2024	

Last update: 03/01/2024

West Midlands Fire Service Pension Board Risk Register**Updated 20.11.2023**

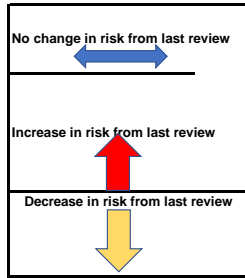
Reviewed 20.11.2023 to inform the Local Pension Board feedback under consultation on Joint Consultative Committee Business Case 'Pensions Administration Review'.

Risk Area - OPERATIONS			Likelihood	Impact	Score	Change from previous review	Control	Owner	Assigned to	Test/Review	Mitigation	Comments
1. Operational disaster (i.e. flood/fire)	1	4	4			↔	Pension records stored electronically/via a server and not yet on the cloud. Data backed up regularly	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Annual		2/2/2023. For Pension Board consideration/discussion:- Recommendation for risk to be included in bespoke Pensions BCP as suggested by The Pension Regulator (TPR) and agreed by Pensions Board at meeting on 8th December 2022, or, as risk is specifically around 'flood/fire' and paper records are no longer held - is this still considered a risk? P. Bd 29/3/2023. Minutes refer. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed risk would be included in bespoke Pensions BCP. 7/9/2023 Pension Board - Pension Board BCP agreed.
2. Member data incomplete or inaccurate	4	4	16			↑	Annual reconciliation of member data to ensure accuracy and resolve any gaps	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Annual	Data to be checked as part of the annual ToR return. Results will be reported to the Pension Board	02/02/2023. Part of The Pension Regulator 6 Key Processes and to remain in register. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed with proposal. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 3 x 3 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
							Address data cleanse completed annually	Pension Provider	Pensions Manager	Annual	Incorrect addresses investigated using a tracing agency	
							Robust payroll processes in place	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Annual	To ensure accuracy of data sent to pension section	
3a. Administration Failure/Maladministration	4	4	16			↑	All staff in Payroll and Pensions section are managed through organisational policies and process	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Quarterly	Internal procedures are reviewed and audited annually as part of the normal audit cycle.	2/2/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- Recommendation that when the Audit Report is completed, it comes to the attention of Pension Board via the Pension Manager update. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. To be reported into Pension Board on 7.9.2023 via Pensions Manager. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 3 x 2 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
3b.							Authority levels, financial controls and process within Oracle Fusion.	Scheme Manager/Provider		Annual	Forms part of the annual review of the Pay Policy statement.	
3c.							Review audit reports	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Annual	Normal monthly payroll processing arrangements cover this issue.	
4. Computer system failure at pay date	4	4	16			↑	Pay the previous month pension from the file with adjustments for death or part period payments. If notification that system will not be available or when upgrade is going through at compliance date. Trial pay run can be used as 'actual' if testing fails	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Annual	Covered within the services Business Continuity Plan	2/2/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- Should this risk be included in the bespoke Pensions BCP as suggested by TPR and agreed by Pension Board at meeting on 8th December 2022. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - if this item is to remain mention should also be made of issues that may be experienced due to the system and wider I.T not being available due to hacking/malware of the I.T infrastructure. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Risk to be mirrored in BCP and progressed by Tom Embury. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 1 x 4 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
5. Failure to process BACS	4	4	16			↑	Internal process for ensuring that BACS has been sent.	Pension Provider	Pensions Manager	Annual	Controlled by the normal processing procedures and reviewed annually by Internal Audit	2/2/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- Recommendation to remove risk. Process now completed in-house with no reliance on third party. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Risk remains - to remain as is. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 2 x 4 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
6. Payment made to ineligible pensioner	4	4	16			↑	Annual certificate of identity process in place.	Pension Provider	Pensions Manager	Annual	Risk has been raised with SET, Finance and Resources and new procedure to be implemented from October 2021	2/2/2023 and 6/3/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- Recommendation to reduce risk due to work that has taken place, or change risk score to - Likelihood 1 Impact 3. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed with recommendation to reduce risk. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 1 x 3 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under
8. Insufficient resource to enable function to meet requirements of Pension Regulator	4	4	16			↑	Structure and staffing of function under review	Head of Finance and Procurement (S151)	Pensions Manager	As and when regulator requirements change	Issues reviewed by SET Finance and Resources as part of monthly meeting with Payroll and Pensions Manager and internal KPI's	2/2/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- Recruitment has taken place, which reduces likelihood. Recommendation to reduce risk score to - Likelihood 1 Impact 2/3. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - Is this reduction appropriate with Paul Gwyn's appointment as UNISON rep and subsequent reduction in time spent within the department. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed no changes should be made at present. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 2 x 2 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
9. Failure to produce Annual Benefit Statement	1	3	3			↔	Report to TPR. Keep scheme members and pension board informed of issue.	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	May - annually	Progress reported by Payroll and Pensions Manager to Employer Rep and monitored by board at regular intervals as agreed at first meeting of each year.	2/2/2023. Online delivery via Portal awaited. 'Go Live' via Member Self Serve with provider agreed as 1/3/2023. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Portal 'live' with active members having access to Annual Benefit Statements and able to update contact details. Roll out to other members and pensioners being considered. Agreed risk would remain as is, until access to Annual Benefit Statements was more widely available.

11. Application of remedy (McLoud)	4	4	16	↑	Data, Governance, People and Systems	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Ongoing	Ensure requisite numbers of skilled staff are available and that IT systems have been updated.	2/2/2023 and 6/3/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- risk score to remain same until complete. Those impacted historically have been managed, with application of McLoud Business as Usual. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed risk to Service remains.
14. Costs incurred due to failure to apply scheme/tax rules correctly or in a timely manner	4	4	16	↑	Keep up to date with changes. Attend regional meetings. Subscribe to knowledge hub. Subscribe to HMRC pension tax updates. pension board involvement. Access professional advice before proceeding.	Head of Finance and Procurement (S151)	Pensions Manager	Annual	Annual Audit	02/02/2023. Risk remains as is until there are no longer any members in the 1992 Firefighters Pension Scheme. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed risk to Service remains. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 1 x 3 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
17. Failure to manage FPS fund correctly i.e. injury pension accounting	4	4	16	↑	Training – Guidance Fire Finance network links	Head of Finance and Procurement (S151)	Finance	Annual	Annual Audit	02/02/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- Recommendation to increase risk score to - Likelihood 3 Impact 3. This is due to the recruitment of a Senior Accountant and retirement of the Section 151 Officer at end of March 2023. Changes in personnel and responsibilities to be considered. Structural review to support succession planning being discussed. KPI's to be implemented, picking up disclosure regulations. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Discussion re where risk sat - Organisational/Reputational or Pension Board. Wording to be re-visited. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 1 x 2 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
18. Failure to interpret rules or legislation correctly	4	4	16	↑	Central LGA resource and regional/national groups to assist with interpretation of rules and possible provision of legal opinion where this has been sought – with the caveat that each FRA should take own legal advice. Technical team of pension provider. Access to knowledge hub and HMRC pension tax updates. Training. Access professional legal/tax advice where necessary	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Ongoing	Monthly management meeting between Payroll and Pensions Manager and Head of Human Resources. Annual Audit	2/2/2023 and 6/3/2023. No further legislation released. October 2023 release should confirm what is already known. Central resource (Clare Hey) at LGA leaving. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Reliance on Pensions Manager interpreting complex information received. Relationships being rebuilt. Agreed risk remains as is. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 3 x 2 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
19. Failure to comply with disclosure requirements or communicate with staff	4	4	16	↑	Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) Communications with staff Annual Benefit Statements (ABS) HR processes in place for auto-enrolment and annual pension band changes mail merges	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Ongoing	Reports to Pension Board. Risk	2/2/2023 and 6/3/2023. For Pension Board consideration:- Recommendation to reduce risk score on adoption of KPI's and data behind these. Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed reduction of risk to - Likelihood 2 Impact 2. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 2 x 2 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.
20. Pension Board Resourcing/Succession Planning.	3	3	9	↔	Discussion point at meeting on 2nd November 2023. Employer (JF) position to be filled.	Scheme Manager	Scheme Manager	As and when identified	Recruitment process clarified for all positions	2/2/2023 and 6/3/2023. Pension Board Ballot 2 for employee rep commenced 30/1/2023 closing at 17:00 hours 22nd February 2023. Paper to be presented to Scheme Manager to re-appoint Alan Tranter and Adam Harper for a further 3 year term. Chair position remains vacant. 30.5.2023 Employee Rep return dated 5.5.2023 - agree with recommendation. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed remains a risk. Minutes will cover wider discussion and suggestions re future approach. 02/11/22 - Vacant Employer and Active Scheme Member Positions Filled. Recommend reducing risk in future. 2/11/2023. Further to Julie Felton giving notice to retire from WMFS effective 31.3.2024 and subsequently the role of employer rep, it was agreed a recruitment process should commence. Agreed reduction of risk to - Likelihood 3 Impact 3
21. Application of remedy (O'Brien). Added 14/3/2022	4	4	16	↑	Discussion point at meeting on 28th March 2022	Scheme Manager	Pensions Manager	Ongoing	Ensure requisite numbers of skilled staff are available and that IT systems have been updated.	2/2/2023 and 6/3/2023. No change due to waiting further instruction, which is not expected until at least October 2023. 4/7/2023 Pension Board. Agreed risk remains as is. 20.11.2023. Likelihood and Impact raised from 4 x 2 to 4 x 4 to reflect impact of Pensions Administration Review and support submission of feedback under consultation.

Legend

Risk Score 1 - 4
Risk Score 5 - 9
Risk Score 10 - 16



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**PENSION BOARD**

Item 10

11 January 2024**IDRP UPDATE****1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. If a scheme member, prospective member, dependant, or other person with an interest in the firefighter pension scheme, is dissatisfied with a decision made by the Scheme Manager, or the failure to make a decision, they have the right to appeal through the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP).

2. ACTIVE IDRPs

- 2.1. There are currently no active IDRPs being considered by the Scheme Manager at Stage 1 or by the Fire Authority Appeals Committee at Stage 2.

3. IDRP STAGE ONE PROCESS

At the meeting of the Pension Board on 2 November 2023, the Board requested more detail on the IDRP Stage One decision process:

- 3.1. Any eligible person may make a complaint through the IDRP as a means of formally raising, and hopefully resolving, grievances about the way in which their pension rights have been managed specifically. Complaints about other matters – such as concerns about wider service policy or medical matters, may be better handled through another process. There are a range of exemptions where IDRP cannot be used, including where the matter is already being considered by the Ombudsman or in court, or it is handled under other complaints processes.
- 3.2. Amendments made in 2008 allowed for a single stage procedure, although WMFRA maintains a two-stage process, in line with recommendations from the Scheme

Advisory Board (SAB).

- 3.3. The scheme rules do not prescribe what the dispute resolution arrangements should look like or the process to be followed, other than that applications should be made within 28 days of receipt of the determination which gives rise to the dispute, although TPR guidance recommends a period of six months with discretion applied.
- 3.4. An IDRP Stage One application form is provided on the WMFS website and must be submitted to the Scheme Manager. In line with SAB guidance this will be considered by the Chief Fire Officer as Scheme Manager or a senior officer that he delegates the matter to. The IDRP should be acknowledged as soon as practicably possible – WMFS aims to respond within one working week. The decision should then be made within two months, unless there is a case to delay in which case, they must write within two months to explain the delay and give a revised timeline for response.
- 3.5. In reaching their decision, the officer needs to undertake such investigation as is necessary to determine the facts of the grievance, then determine whether there has been a breach of either pension regulations or service policy, as well as taking account of the specific circumstances of the case.
- 3.6. In their written response to the complainant, the officer should give their decision and refer to any legislation (including the relevant pension or compensation scheme orders) relied upon for the decision and also including, if a discretion has been exercised under the scheme, a reference to the provisions of the scheme under which the discretion is conferred.
- 3.7. The complainant will also be informed that if they are not satisfied with the decision, they can apply for reconsideration at Stage 2 in writing to the address. Again, a timeline of six months for doing so is given by guidance, but discretion may be exercised.
- 3.8. Stage 2 complaints are heard by the Fire Authority Appeals Committee, which will be convened for the

Ref.

purpose, and the same timeline for acknowledgement and response as Stage 1.

- 3.9. As with Stage 1, in providing their response to the complainant, the Authority must give an explanation as to whether, and if so to what extent, that decision either confirms or replaces the decision made by the Chief Fire Officer/person specified by them. It will refer to any legislation relied upon for the decision and also including, if a discretion has been exercised under the Scheme, a reference to the provisions of the Scheme under which the discretion is conferred.
- 3.10. If a complainant is still not satisfied, their next recourse is through the Pension Ombudsman. At all stages, the Scheme Manager/Authority must provide a complainant with information on external sources of information or recourse, including the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) at Stage 1 and the Ombudsman at Stage 2.

Tom Embury
Governance Advisor

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**PENSION BOARD**

Item 11

11 January 2024**COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE****1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. It is recognised that regular communications to scheme members, both active and retired/deferred is important. With the current challenges facing the scheme administration, including the implementation of McCloud Remedy, openness in communications will be important in allaying concerns and ensuring members are reassured of progress.
- 1.2. Communication to some members is more difficult where they have either not provided an email address and/or have limited access to the internet to view updates online. Although communications will primarily be on MESH (internal service intranet) and by email for active scheme members, where possible communications will be provided by post to retired/deferred members where an email address is not available. However, given the cost and logistical implications of this approach, it is anticipated that fewer updates will be provided via this means.

2. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN – Q3 and Q4 2023/24

- 2.1. The below plan does not preclude responsive communications as required or include individual communications to pensioners in response to queries etc.
- 2.2. The following communications have occurred or are planned between December 2023 and April 2024:

Date	Topic	Media
18 December 2023	General Pension Administration Update	MESH and online
20 December 2023	Explanation of McCloud Remedy process (including direct communication with	Email, post, MESH and online

Ref.

	impacted members)	
15 January 2024	Outcome of Pension Administration Outsourcing Business Case and Consultation Process	MESH and online
February 2024	Further details of McCloud Remedy process – highlighting complexity and explaining reasons for long timetables.	MESH, online, email
March 2024	Introduction to Pensions Administration Team	MESH and online

Tom Embury
Governance Advisor

Pension Board – Updates Received Register

Topic	Date	Link	Action	Status
Immediate Choice Remediable Service Statement (IC RSS)	22/12/2023	https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Bulletins/Bulletin-76-December-2023/FPS-Bulletin-76-December-2023-updated.pdf	<p>Scheme Managers are encouraged to discuss the timetabling of the RSS with their administrators.</p> <p>Administrators are asked to commence testing the use of the IC RSS and provide any feedback to bluelighpensions@local.gov.uk</p>	
LGA Contact Update	22/12/2023	https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=7uRi4U8FPEuNOXVSTKjy6ZcpftUGZPNEIngDIqvldyBUOVA1NIYzS0ZSQVJIRE1PN0tBVkEwRUkyWi4u	<p>“Please can we ask you to complete the online form linked below and either complete on behalf of your fire authority and/or local authority or pass to anyone else who we may need their contact details. This will be our new contact information for anything being sent out in 2024, therefore even if we have your current details, we will need you to complete this by 20 January 2024.”</p>	
Matthews GAD Calculator	20/11/2023	https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Bulletins/Bulletin-75-November-2023/FPS-Bulletin-75-November-2023.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the user guide. • Ensure that they have the most up to date version of the calculator when they update the spreadsheet at the beginning of the month to allow for the latest interest rates. • Share this information with anyone who is carrying out the Matthews second options exercise. 	
Matthews – Deceased members	20/11/2023	https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Bulletins/Bulletin-75-November-2023/FPS-Bulletin-75-November-2023.pdf	<p>FRA to stockpile any cases which are currently not covered by the regulations until an amendment is in place.</p> <p>FRA are encouraged to use the Individual Statement of Details documents to send an individual with information on their options.</p>	

Matthews Data Collection	20/11/2023	https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Bulletins/Bulletin-75-November-2023/FPS-Bulletin-75-November-2023.pdf	FRAs to maintain robust record keeping ensuring that the data required by the Home Office and GAD is easily accessible.	
2022/23 Event Reporting - Annual Allowance Statements & Lifetime allowance	08/11/2023	https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Bulletins/Bulletin-75-November-2023/FPS-Bulletin-75-November-2023.pdf	Scheme Managers need to submit data by 31 January 2024 Any administrator who needs to submit these details to HMRC, can submit them on a password protected spreadsheet and send the password in a separate email.	
Age Discrimination Remedy - Contingent Decisions guidance	01/11/2023	https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Bulletins/Bulletin-74-October-2023/FPS-Bulletin-74-October2023.pdf	Scheme managers to read the guidance and mutually agree any setting of target dates with their administrator before sharing the claim process with members. https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Age-discrimination/Age-discrimination-remedy-Contingent-Decisions-guidance1.pdf	
Error in the Treasury Revaluation Orders for 2021 and 2022	01/11/2023	https://www.fpsregs.org/images/Home-Office/HO-notification-to-FRAs.pdf	Scheme Managers are to ensure that this error is corrected retrospectively.	