

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

PENSION BOARD

07 September 2023 at 11:00 hrs

Conducted at Headquarters and digitally via Microsoft Teams

Attendance:

Chair: Alan Tranter – Employee Representative

Employer Representatives:

Julie Felton

Sofia Mahmood

Kamla Devi-Ahir

Employee Representatives:

Alan Tranter

Paul Bennett

Officers and advisors in attendance:

Richard Stanton - Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Kelly Harding – Head of People Support, Tom Embury – Deputy Clerk to the Authority, Christina Jackson - Senior Pensions Practitioner, Sarah Powell – Pension Practitioner, Chandni Patel – Democratic Services Officer

Please note: Christina Jackson and Sarah Powell attended on behalf of Paul Gwynn (Pensions and Payroll Manager)

1. To receive apologies for absence

- Adam Harper
- Paul Gwynn

2. Declarations of Interests

No declarations of interest were submitted.

3. Minutes of the Previous Pension Board held on 04 July 2023

Resolved that the minutes of the Pension Board held on 04 July 2023 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

4. Matters Arising

Items provided prior to the meeting

Paul Bennett advised item 11 needed to be more specific identifying which document is to be removed. He believed it was called the Haywood testing document. All agreed that Item 11 required to be more specific.

It was highlighted that two IDRP's had been received after the publication of the last report and they would be covered in this meeting. This was to form part of the verbal report.

5. Action Plan- September 2023

Tom Embury provided an overview/update on the action plan, as per agenda pack, as follows:

Reference	Update
A2	Add training and development to the Action Plan. To understand how this will fit in with the organisation.
E2	To add procedural notes/checklists to action plan.
L	Update to be provided at the next Pensions Board Meeting.
J-M	Aligned to the implementation of Altair. Action plan to be updated.
O	Options are being reviewed for all to have access Oracle. Action Plan to be updated
Q2	As per agenda item 10
4 – 08/12	Julie Felton and Kamla Devi-Ahir to discuss next steps.
9-15 – 29/03	Completed
16 – 04/07	Risk register changes have been made.
17 – 04/07	Has been approved

22	Annual report approved. Scheme manager to provide update to the FRA in October
23	Has occurred

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Pension Board Action Plan be approved. And that members bring forward suggestions for training and development and to add this to the development plan.

Kelly Harding provided an update regarding the rollout of ALTAIR

Christina Jackson advised that the deferred statements have been issued before the deadline of 31st August.

Following queries Julie Felton advised a conversation to happen outside the meeting regarding Admin support for mailings.

Resolved:

2. Paul Gwynn and Julie Felton to discuss approach to contacting pensioners regarding deferred statements in future.

ACFO Richard Stanton advised that it is difficult to see progress actions are making. A proposal was made to move to an alternative system to track progress. Microsoft Planner was given as a suggestion.

Alan Tranter advised that we need to consider whether those outside the organisation will have access. We will need to ensure that we fulfil the TPR requirements.

Resolved:

3. Julie Felton to work with Chandni Patel & Tom Embury to look at how we could migrate the action plan to Microsoft Planner.

Following concerns raised, it was advised that a potential agenda item at a future meeting could include training for PB members on how to use the new system.

Alan Tranter agreed.

6. Risk Register

Julie Felton, Employer Representative, presented the Risk Register that outlined the key risk areas, categorised and scored against their likelihood to occur and the impact they would have.

Julie Felton advised that Risk 17 required rewording based on the discussions between Kal Shoker and Paul Gwynn. This will be discussed further with Sofia Mahmood.

Paul Bennett referred to Risk 17 and advised that there had been an enquiry submitted to show the pay had been reduced. This information, however, had come from the individual and not the audit process.

Resolved:

4. Kelly Harding and Paul Gwynn are to discuss next steps to ensure there are no others who have been paid more/less.

Richard Stanton noted that it isn't easy to see the journey of these risks and if or when they materialise into an issue. He proposed an alternative option for risk management to ensure greater assurance to the scheme manager.

Resolved:

5. Richard Stanton and Tom Embury to look at alternative options for risk register.

7. Roles of the Scheme Manager, Pension Board and Pension Administration Manager [Discussion Item]

Alan Tranter proposed that the Scheme Manager give specific written updates on relevant matters to ensure we are working together to get the best outcome. We may need to review legislation as there are changes going to be made.

Kamla- Devi-Ahir advised moving forward we need to ensure that the right people are in post to ensure the right information is going into the report and suggested a revised terms of reference.

Resolved:

6. Richard Stanton and Tom Embury to create a new or revised term of reference with roles and expectations which can be circulated across the board.

8. Recruitment - Active Scheme Member Representative [Verbal Report]

As discussed in the last meeting, it had been agreed that Corporate Communications would support advertising the role to all active scheme members, with an appointment to be made before the next board meeting (2 November 2023).

9. Pension Section Supporting Information 7th September 2023

Christina Jackson provided clarification regarding 2.5 'Transfers (Other)' which is if someone wants to transfer out of the private sector scheme, personal scheme or occupational scheme.

Members need time to consider the decision, therefore at time there is a long wait before information is received. A time limit is applied to each one and if that time runs out, there is another 12-month wait or they will have to pay for another transfer value

If someone does operate a 'Transfer' in 12 months they don't have a chance to do it after that period.

In terms of the figures and required target, it may be helpful to look how it is monitored.

Resolved:

7. To review the KPI and understand how it is set and monitored to ensure a more useful/accurate figure.

Sarah Powell suggested having an option that provides a narrative and an option to provide details on KPIs.

No cases are listed on the report regarding Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures.

Following concerns regarding this, Kelly Harding advised there has been possibly four in total, however there is one that hasn't entered the IDRP process.

This report will need to be updated.

Resolved:

8. It was agreed that the report be updated to reflect the current IDRP numbers, and that in future IDRPs will be reported separately.

Regarding 4.2 Oracle Fusion, following concerns Kelly Harding advised members that the ability of pensioners to access Oracle without a cost occurring is under discussion with Oracle's UK management team, as the required functionality is not currently available to UK customers.

Kelly Harding advised Oracle UK doesn't recognise Pensioner as a naming convention. This has been taken to Oracle International to get a better understanding of the system's functionality.

10. Firefighter Pensions SAB Pension Administration Strategy Draft for Approval.

Tom Embury advised that this was brought to the board in March as one of the recommendations to the pension regulator.

The main areas that needed to be customised to make the draft relevant to our scheme have been amended.

This will be on the website as a reference for pensioners to view is approved within this forum.

Following concern Regarding, Appendix A - KPIs, Tom Embury advised members that when targets are set for KPIs, there will be some exceptions that should be taken into account. Those listed at 100% are KPIs which should not be falling outside of our statutory limit.

It may be possible for a case to not fall into any of these KPIs

Resolved:

9. It was agreed to review this further and look at any of the cases that may fall out of the KPIs and to ensure they are added to the report.

Christina advised there is a pensions inbox set up and when an enquiry is received an email is sent with the relevant time frames. Due to the resources available, it was more challenging to track phone calls.

However, we will need to look at how we record that acknowledgement and initial response if that is required. They are recorded on the KPIs listing and responded to the email on the initial enquiry.

No further comments were made.

The draft document was approved for publication.

11. IDRP Update [Verbal Report]

Kelly Harding provided an update regarding the current IDRP's.

There have been two FFPS IDRP's received over the past six months. In addition, one further email was received, however, this was not accepted or addressed as an IDRP case.

A summary of each case is below:

1. Individuals had opted out of the 1992 pension scheme based on external advice that they had received. They were asking to be put back into the pension scheme. IDRP was not founded, and the individual was advised to address the issue with the company/individual that had provided the original advice.
2. The lump sum option form provided outlined two possible alternative options for the members' choice of lump sum. The first option – despite it detailing the correct annual figure – the monthly figure was incorrect. The IDRP was not founded as the correct annual figure was shown and this is what the choice was made on.

Both responses were sent in July and there has been no further action, at this point.

12. System Process Update [Verbal Update]

Major issues around ORACLE and ALTAIR have been discussed. (Item 5)

13. WMFPB Breach Reporting Policy - 2023 Update

Tom advised the original Breach reporting Procedure was brought to the last pension board and it was agreed it would be updated. This has now been updated to reflect the current scheme. A flow chart has also been added as requested.

This document will sit within Pensions Board SharePoint as well as on the wmfs.net website.

14. LGA/Blue light Pensions Updates including FPS Bulletins

Alan Tranter advised that there have been a number of updates currently being provided. We need to look at how we manage these updates as it is not clear how they are being dealt with.

Following concerns Christina advised that each practitioner receives a copy of the bulletins and is up to the individual to make themselves aware of the items on there. Each action is addressed and given to the relevant person, depending on its nature.

Kelly Harding advised that Paul Gwynn can update in the next Pensions Board to provide to ensure that assurance is provided.

Resolved

10. To ensure assurance is provided in the next Pensions Board on how these bulletins are managed.

15. Firefighter Pension Scheme Annual Meeting 19 and 20 September [Verbal Report]

To agree (if any) representative(s) to attend – 19 and 20 September 2023 – London

Richard Stanton advised that Paul Gwynn is attending, and no others have communicated they are attending, however, we can get an Employee and Employer representative to support.

Kelly Harding advised she will be able to attend on the 20th of September.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Pension Board is to be held on the 2 November 2023

17. Any other Business

Richard Stanton thanked Alan Tranter on for undertaking the role of chair for the past six months.

The meeting ended at 12.34pm