

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

4 July 2023

Draft Training Plan 2023/24

1. Background

- 1.1. As stated within the [Pension Board Terms of Reference](#), it is for individual Pension Board members to be satisfied that they have the appropriate degree of knowledge and understanding to enable them to properly exercise their functions as a member of the Pension Board.
- 1.2. In line with this requirement Pension Board members are required to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and to refresh and keep their knowledge up to date. Pension Board members will be supported to maintain a written record of relevant training and development.
- 1.3. Pension Board should regularly review their skills, competencies, and knowledge to identify gaps or weaknesses. Pension Board members will be expected to attend training to ensure that their knowledge and skills are maintained.

2. Knowledge and Skills Required

- 2.1. The knowledge and skills required of pension board members are set out in law and described in more detail within The Pension Regulator's [Code of Practice 14: Governance and Administration of Public Service Pension Schemes](#). They state that Pension board members must:
 - be conversant¹ with their scheme rules, which are primarily found in the scheme regulations
 - be conversant with documented administration policies currently in force for their pension scheme (e.g., reporting breaches, IDRP, discretionary functions etc.)
 - have knowledge and understanding of the law relating to pensions (and any other matters prescribed in legislation) to the degree appropriate for them to be able to carry out their role, responsibilities and duties.

¹ Being 'conversant' means having a working knowledge of the scheme regulations and policies, so that pension board members can use them effectively when carrying out their duties.

2.2. Pension board members' breadth of knowledge and understanding should be sufficient to allow them to understand fully and challenge any information or advice they are given. They should understand how that information or advice impacts on any issue or decision relevant to their responsibilities and duties.

3. Training Needs Assessment

3.1. Members undertook a Training Needs Assessment in June 2023, the results of which are recorded in *Appendix A*. It identified two key areas for training, where at least one member rated their understanding as poor:

- Understanding of the law relating to pensions, such as the Pensions Act 2013
- TPR Code of Practice No. 14 Governance and Administration of Public Service Pension Schemes

3.2. It should also be noted that in only one area – the role of the pension board and its members – did a majority of pension board members rate their understanding as better than “average”.

3.3. There was also a specific request for further training on current issues and developments, such as Pension Dashboards and Immediate Detriment.

4. Training Plan

4.1. Given the above requirements the WMFPS Pension Board will agree a plan of training and development across the 2023/24 municipal year. This will include training delivered during pension boards, external training events and online training to be undertaken between meetings. Further training dates than those listed below may be identified as they are announced.

4.2. [The Pension Regulator Pensions Education Portal](#) is an online course specifically designed for public sector schemes. All members of the Pension Board will be expected to complete this training during 2023/24.

Date	Meeting/Event	Action
Tuesday 4 July 2023	Pension Board	Agree Training Plan 2023/24
Thursday 7 September 2023	Pension Board	WMFS Pension Policies – overview provided by Scheme Administrator
19 to 20 September 2023	Firefighter Pensions Annual Conference (London)	2x Attendees
Thursday 2 November 2023	Pension Board	All members to review Code 14: Governance and administration of public service pension schemes
Thursday 18 January 2024	Pension Board	All members to complete Pension Education Portal Toolkit

Thursday 7 March 2024	Pension Board	Annual LGA Training Session
Thursday 2 May 2024	Pension Board	
Thursday 4 July 2024	Pension Board	Agree Training Plan 2024/25

5. Additional resources

- [LGA FPS Bite Size Training Guides](#)
- [LGA FPS Bulletins](#)
- [Pensions Dashboards Programme website](#)

Appendix A – Training Needs Assessment Answers

How would you rate your understanding of the following areas?

	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
The rules of the Firefighter Pension Schemes		1	4		
Firefighter Pension Scheme Regulations and Guidance		1	4		
The law relating to pensions (such as the Pension Act 2013)			4	1	
Scheme approved policies (e.g., reporting breaches, record keeping, Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures)		1	4		
The role of the Pension Board and its members		3	2		
The role of the Scheme Manager		2	3		
TPR Code of Practice No.14 Governance and Administration of Public Service Pension Schemes (PSPS)		1	3	1	