

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

01 June

2020

Conducted as a virtual meeting

Present: Councillor Catherine Miks (Chair), Councillors Barrie, Edwards, Miller, Spence and Mr Ager

Apologies: Councillor Gill (Vice Chair), Richard Percival (Grant Thornton) Neil Chamberlain (Chair, WMFS Pension Board)

The following officers attended: Karen Gowreesunker, Mike Griffiths, Paul Gwynn, Kal Shoker and Gary Taylor

01 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Edwards declared receipt of a Fire Service Pension. As substitute for the Vice Chair of the Committee, he considered further participation would be inappropriate regarding discussion of item 2 on the agenda. The Chair agreed that Councillor Edwards should leave the meeting and the decision process would be unaffected as the meeting was quorate.

02 **Review of Ill Health Retirement Pensions Decision**

Resolved that the Committee, as Scheme Manager, agree with the approach proposed that the frequency of a review will be a matter for the Independent Qualified Medical Practitioner (IQMP) at the time they consider the Ill Health request and; approve the service to review the nine Ill Health Pensions currently in payment under the rules of the 1992 Pension Scheme.

The Committee discussed the recommended approach the service should take to the review of Ill Health Pensions. The Chair invited Paul Gwynn (Pensions and Payroll Manager) to summarise the content and context of the report.

It was explained that West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, are responsible to manage the requirements of three Firefighter Pensions Schemes legislated in 1992, 2006 and 2015. There are variances between each, specific to the review of Ill Health

Pensions. There is a requirement to review those paid under the 2006 or 2015 schemes, whilst there is no requirement to review those paid under the 1992.

It is proposed that the service should align reviews across the three schemes to ensure equity. Additionally, the frequency of the review be a matter for the IQMP at the time they consider the Ill Health request. Should the application for Ill Health Retirement be supported by the IQMP, they be asked to confirm a suitable review time.

Councillor Barrie considered it equitable to review all three schemes in a consistent manner, enabling a discharge of duties in a proper manner. The Chair supported this position and emphasised the importance of the service being guided by the IQMP in case management.

Councillor Spence enquired how inflation affected the duration of a review process. Mike Griffiths (Strategic Enabler for Finance and Resources) assured the Committee that adjustments are made to Pension payments reflecting acknowledged percentage levels of inflation within the economy.

The Chair sought clarification on the context of Section 7.0 Legal Implications. Mike Griffiths informed Members that reviews may lead to changes in pension payment amount, hence their awareness of the appeals process against decisions made by the IQMP and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chair requested that the nine persons affected by the review be advised of the decision of the Committee.

Mike Griffiths thanked the Committee for its decision and assured them that a process to enact it would be promptly progressed.

03 **Minutes of the Pension Board held on the 16 December 2019**

The Committee noted the minutes of the Pension Board held on 16 December 2019.

The minutes were presented for information to the Audit and Risk Committee in their role as Scheme Manager.

04 **Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 13 January 2020**

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 13 January 2020 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

05 **Audit and Risk Committee Work Programme**

The Committee noted its Work Programme.

The Chair requested that all reports outstanding from the postponed Committee meeting of 23 March 2020, be brought forward to the next meeting of 27 July 2020. Karen Gowreesunker (Clerk to the Fire Authority) confirmed this intention.

The meeting closed at 14.00 hours.

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