

## **Pension Board**

09 December 2020 at 10.30 hrs by digital Meeting

Attendance: Alan Tranter, Employee Representative & Chair  
Wendy Browning Sampson, Employer Representative  
Julie Felton, Employer Representative  
Kal Shoker, Employer Representative  
Paul Gwynn, Pensions Adviser  
Observer: Clair Alcock and Claire Hey (LGA)

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Neil Chamberlain (Chair of Pension Board), Karen Gowreesunker (Clerk to WMFRA), Adam Harper (Employee Representative) and Councillor Catherine Miks (Chair of Audit and Risk Committee).

Neil Chamberlain withdrew on the day of the meeting due to urgent professional business. The Board unanimously agreed Alan Tranter be substitute Chair on the rotation between employer and employee representatives in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Board.

### **2. LGA Update Training session**

The Board received a regulatory update presented by Clair Alcock of the Local Government Association (LGA), who was accompanied by colleague Claire Hey as an Observer to proceedings.

The presentation encompassed an overview of four items, namely:

1. Age Discrimination/Immediate Detriment
2. Matthews (Special Members Second Options Exercise)
3. Pensionable Pay
4. Ill-Health

Regarding item 1, Wendy Browning-Sampson enquired if administrative requirements would substantially increase to manage the process. Clair Alcock confirmed there would be significant cost incurred to both Pension Scheme administrators and Scheme Managers (Fire and Rescue Authority); these will include systems and infrastructure development to support implementation. The Chair enquired if West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) Payroll and Pensions Team were prepared for the additional work and associated costs. Paul Gwynn confirmed budgetary provision for both staff and software.

Regarding item 3, Wendy Browning-Sampson enquired if Covid-19 activity was outside of role for pensionable pay. Clair Alcock stated that scheme rules would have to be consulted to ascertain if an extraordinary event applied and how conducted to determine if covered. However, the additional activities identified within the Tripartite Agreement are subject to pensionable pay.

The presentation is appended to the minutes.

Upon conclusion of the presentation, Clair Alcock and Claire Hey remained in attendance of the meeting.

### 3. **Minutes of Pension Board 11 September 2020**

The Board resolved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2020 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

The Chair requested it be noted the Board meeting today was the alternative date sourced to enable the LGA Update Training session and replaced the original scheduled date of 11 December 2020. This was seconded by Kal Shoker.

4. **McCloud Sargeant consultation (Fire)(July 2020)**

Paul Gwynn provided an update on actions undertaken since the recent release of the consultation document. He confirmed a consultation response had been submitted, having been approved by the Scheme Manager at its Audit and Risk Committee on 07 December 2020. The response from Government is anticipated during January 2021.

The Chair thanked Paul Gwynn and the WMFS Payroll and Pensions Team for their work on developing a response to the consultation and their advice to pension scheme members on Remedy.

Paul Gwynn also reported that in addition to Remedy, a further two reports had been discussed by the Scheme Manager at its Audit and Risk Committee in recent months. These related to Fire Safety Officer Pensionable Pay for which approval was agreed and Reinstatement of a Widows Pension which was declined. All reports and the associated minutes are available on the WMFS Committee Management Information System via the WMFS website.

The Chair requested the role and support of the Scheme Manager to the Pension Board and its business be acknowledged in the minutes of this meeting.

The Chair enquired of the numbers of age related and ill health retirements by pension scheme. Paul Gwynn responded that numbers of the former were in line with the forecasted profile of the Service, whilst the latter numbered one since the last Board meeting.

5. **Risk Register**

The Chair thanked Wendy Browning-Sampson for her presentational update of the register since the last meeting. He suggested it provided a structure upon which to review the content of the register and subsequently develop a format that enabled more active response to current items

and the inclusion of emerging items. The Board agreed Alan Tranter, Wendy Browning-Sampson, Julie Felton and Kal Shoker liaise prior to the next meeting to discuss process and format for a revised risk register.

6. **Recruitment of Board Members 2021**

Wendy Browning-Sampson reaffirmed details of discussion reported in minutes. The recruitment process and its timeline would be confirmed in early 2021. The Chair sought guidance from Clair Alcock on the opportunity to extend the period of all current Members; based upon the knowledge gained and performance in role during the past year and the preference for consistency in both membership and debate given the extended period that Remedy will progress. Clair Alcock stated it should be feasible to cover the Remedy, however it would need approval of the Scheme Manager.

The Board unanimously agreed the value to progressing discussion on the option of maintaining existing Board membership, providing the Scheme Manager and Pension Scheme members were agreeable. Wendy Browning-Sampson was requested to develop a proposal for further discussion with all stakeholders.

7. **Meeting schedule 2021**

The Board agreed the schedule for meetings remain quarterly. During 2021 it will meet in March, June, September and November. The Chair requested Strategic Hub progress dates upon the availability of Neil Chamberlain and Adam Harper.

The Terms of Reference for the Board determine the first meeting of each year includes a review of the process for managing its business. The Board agreed this will be included to the agenda for the March 2021 meeting.

8. **FPS Bulletin 37 & 38**

Paul Gwynn reported the items for specific note for Members. These were the Home Office Immediate Detriment note (Bulletin 37) and covered in this meeting;

Restrictions of Exit Payments in Public Sector (Bulletin 38), which should be monitored but is not an issue for WMFS and; Pensions Dashboard, which is not presently used or endorsed by WMFS (Bulletin 38).

Bulletin 39 had been received since the agenda for the meeting had been released. The Chair requested any items to note also be covered. Paul Gwynn referenced Medical Appeals, where a change of provider had occurred; Qualified Injury Covid-19, which has been turned down nationally, and; The Pension Regulator Annual Report, for which return submission deadline was itemised.

9. **Any other Business**

There were no items of any other business raised.

The Chair thanked Clair Alcock and Claire Hey for their contribution to meeting and Board Members for their commitment and contribution across the year. It was acknowledged the relationship between the LGA and WMFS was positive and based upon mutual respect.

The Board meeting ended at 13.20 hrs.

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