

AT A MEETING of the HFRA Hampshire Firefighters' Pension Board held at the Fire and Police Headquarters, Eastleigh on Monday, 17th July, 2017

Chairman:
p Stew Adamson

p Malcolm Eastwood
p Richard North
p Councillor Roger Price
p Alex Rhodes
p Tom Simms

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Clerk called for nominations for a Chairman, noting the requirements of the Terms of Reference. Stew Adamson was nominated, seconded and in the absence of any further nominations duly appointed Chairman of the Pension Board until the first meeting of the Board following the Annual meeting of the Fire Authority in 2018.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Clerk called for nominations for a Vice-Chairman, noting the requirements of the Terms of Reference. Richard North was nominated, seconded and in the absence of any further nominations duly appointed Vice-Chairman of the Pension Board until the first meeting of the Board following the Annual meeting of the Fire Authority in 2018.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were mindful of their duty to disclose at the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interest they had in any matter on the agenda for the meeting, where that interest was not already entered in the Authority's register of interests, and their ability to disclose any other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in any such matter that they might have wished to disclose.

In relation to Item 9, Richard North declared a non-pecuniary interest for the training allowances update.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the meeting on the 27 February 2017 were received and noted. In relation to Minute 54, it was noted that Richard North had sent apologies for the meeting. With this amendment, the minutes were agreed.

6. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman wished to record his thanks to the previous Chairman, Steve Foye for his contribution to the Pension Board, and welcomed Tom Simms to his first meeting as a newly elected Member of the Board.

8. PENSIONS ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

The Pension Board received a report from the Chief Financial Officer which updated the Board on administrative performance for October 2016 to March 2017 (Item 8 in the Minute Book). The report was introduced by the Chief Financial Officer who introduced the report, and the background to the administration of the fire pension schemes was set out. Members' attention was drawn to the tables showing performance for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 as set out in paragraph 5, and the high achievement of targets during these periods was highlighted.

A discussion ensued about the forthcoming launch of the new Employer Pension webpages, and the importance of communicating this launch to members of the fire pension schemes was stressed. It was heard that clear signposting within the site would help to eliminate confusion as to who to contact for pension related enquiries. It was also agreed that it would be useful for Central Services reception to have relevant contact information relating to pension queries.

In relation to cases of death in service, it was heard that a new process map had been implemented to work through a number of urgent actions, and it was anticipated that this would be completed within 24 hours of being notified of an individual case. Signposting for support and advice relating to this on the new website was also highlighted.

Members received an update setting out the latest position with Civica, and it was noted that Civica were currently working through a programme to deliver the necessary functionality to administer all the Fire pension schemes.

RESOLVED:

That the Board note the information contained within the report.

9. FIRE PENSION BOARD STATUS REPORT

The Pension Board received a report from the Chief Financial Officer regarding ongoing issues (Item 9 in the Minute Book).

The report was introduced and the position regarding The Pension Regulator online portal was set out. Board Members were invited to log-in and complete the online training in order to receive a certificate for their individual training record. The importance of Board Members completing these on-line training topics was highlighted and it was noted that Alex Rhodes would be able to offer assistance if required.

The Board received an update on a number of key issues raised in the log, including Unauthorised Payments, 30 Year Pension Contribution Holiday and Training Allowances as set out in Sections 5,6 and 7 of the report. The position regarding Training Allowances was set out in light of the recommendation at the Standards and Governance Committee on the 23 March 2017 to make the 10% training allowance pensionable. It was heard that a number of Fire Fighters had been identified who had received the 10% training allowance and work was currently underway to determine whether these allowances had been applied correctly. It was also heard that the payment of other allowances would be examined and the Board would be provided with a future progress update.

Section 8 of the report provided an update on Voluntary Scheme Pays (VSP), and the background to this was explained to Members. Members were supportive of the recommendation as set out in paragraph 8.10 of the report and noted that a report on VSP would be taken to a future HFRA Standards and Governance Committee for consideration.

Section 9 of the report updated Board Members on the number of opt outs from the Fire Pension Scheme during the period 1 July to 31 December 2016 and these figures were detailed in the table as set out in paragraph 9.1. Members discussed these figures and highlighted that the figure of 19 whole-time new joiners could become a temporary figure and a future update as to how many of these would remain in the pension scheme would be useful. Members queried how this compared with other national comparators and Officers would investigate this further. The importance of reaffirming the pension scheme to scheme members was discussed as well as the possibility of joint publicity with the Fire Brigades Union. In relation to the recommendation at paragraph 9.5, Members were supportive of providing Members that were currently not in the Pension Scheme with details of the benefits of the Pension Scheme, ideally signposting to information on the Pension Scheme website.

Members discussed details of other public sector schemes contribution rates as highlighted in Section 10 and set out in Appendix B, and requested that details of police scheme contribution rates be circulated to Members to provide a clearer picture of these rates. Other key areas were highlighted such as the Employer Pension Groups and Members wished to record their thanks to Claire Neale who had been making excellent progress in her new role as Employer Pension Manager. The Employer Pension Manager provided an update to the Board on pension training delivered to new recruits as well as pension presentations which

would be delivered as part of pre-retirement courses, the first of these courses would commence on the 24 July 2017.

Officers drew Members attention to Appendix D which set out the Risk Register and the risk scores before and after mitigation were explained. With this explanation, Members were content to approve the Risk Register.

Members were taken through the new Employer Pension web pages which had been redeveloped but still to be launched, and noted and supported the new format. It was heard that testing of the new format web pages would take place shortly by a few fire fighters/union representatives and feedback welcomed. Board Members were also encouraged to feedback views before the go live launch. Officers also highlighted the importance of communication upon the launch of the web pages.

RESOLVED:

That the Board note the content of the report and recommends:

- (a) That Voluntary Scheme Pays (VSP) is allowed for any affected HFRS employee;
- (b) That members that are not in a pension scheme, are contacted to provide them with details of the benefits of the pension scheme;
- (c) That the Risk Register be approved.

Chairman,