

Minutes of the meeting of the
PENSION BOARD held in the Fire
and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Barmston Mere on MONDAY 7
SEPTEMBER 2015 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Councillor Perry in the Chair.

ACO Lowther, G. Markwell, K. Carruthers, R. King and C. Moore.

In Attendance:

Dennis Napier (Sunderland City Council)
Kate Cuthbert (Sunderland City Council)

Apologies for Absence:

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Local Pension Board for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS) 2015: Terms of Reference

The Area Manager of Human Resources Learning and Development submitted a report to inform the Board of the outcome of consultation with the representative bodies regarding the membership of the Local Pension Board (LPB referred to as 'the Board') for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014: S.I. 2848/14 (the Scheme), and other associated pension schemes by the 1st April 2015. The terms of reference were attached at appendix 1 of the report, for consideration by the Board. G Markwell outlined each of the sections in turn, and invited any comments/questions.

Russ King commented that that the FBU had previously suggested that the membership should be raised to provide a wider representation of the workforce by proposing that an additional employee representative be added to the Board membership, to maintain the balance set out in the Regulations. Members were reminded that at the Fire Authority meeting on 20 July 2015, members approved a revised allocation of £7,500 to cover the cost of training and reasonable expenses for the Board.

1. RESOLVED that: -
 - (i) The contents of the report be noted; and
 - (ii) Further reports be received as necessary.

The Firefighters' Pension Scheme – Scheme Manager Obligations and Discretions

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform members of scheme manager obligations and discretions that applied to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Regulations 2014 and to seek agreement on those that required a policy decision.

The Board was advised that The Local Government Association (LGA) had published a document (attached in Appendix A of the report) listing the scheme manager's discretions (including those attached to an obligation) as contained in the 2015 Scheme.

Members were advised that in total there were 52 discretions listed within the LGA document, a number of which the scheme manager would have some time to consider and others with more immediate priority.

The document listed all of the relevant regulations in which there was a scheme manager obligation when making decisions regarding the administration of the scheme. These discretions may need to be determined from time-to-time to allow the Authority to discharge its responsibilities as scheme manager effectively and would be considered where appropriate at that time.

The Board discussed the three specific areas the scheme manager was required to make a policy decision on, namely: Delegation (Regulation 5), Pensionable Pay (Regulation 17) and Contributions during absence from work due to illness, injury, trade dispute or authorised absence (Regulation 111)

The Board was advised that the content of the LGA document was presented to the July meeting of the Fire Authority. Members were referred to a copy of that paper and approved recommendations which were attached.

The Board commented that communication of changes to the scheme was of paramount importance and discussed ways in which this could be achieved, for example information bulletins on the intranet. A discussion also ensued in relation to considering a pension portal, whereby members of the scheme could access their own individual pension projections, to help them make informed future decisions. It was agreed work would be undertaken to consider the implications and practicalities of this pension portal.

2. RESOLVED that: -
 - (i) The contents of the report be noted;
 - (ii) The recommendations detailed at section 3.3 of the report be approved;

- (iii) The Local Pension Board and scheme members be made aware of the decision detailed at 10.1 (b) of the report; and
- (iv) Further reports be received as necessary.

Date, Time and Venue of Future Meetings

The Board was requested to consider and approve the undermentioned dates for meetings of the Pension Board for the Year 2015/2016. Such meetings would normally be held at 10:30am at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Barmston Mere.

The next proposed meeting date was 25 January 2016. The Board was advised that the schedule of meetings for 2016/17 would be considered at the June 2016 Fire Authority meeting.

3. RESOLVED that the next meeting take place on Monday 25 January 2016.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 25 January 2016.

(Signed) J. PERRY
Chairman

