

COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MINUTES OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 03 JULY 2024 IN MEETING ROOM 8 & REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

OFFICERS PRESENT:- T/ACFO Dean Loader (Chair) – Director of Service Delivery, ACO Alison Reed – Director of People Services & Scheme Manager, Mr Chris Williams – Head of ICT, Ms Gabbie Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer & Legal Services Manager, Mr Gareth Tovey – Fire Brigades’ Union, Mr Dave King – Fire & Rescue Service Association, Mr Ian Traylor – Pensions Service Director, RCTCBC, Lee Bunkham, Senior Procurement Officer

1. APOLOGIES

CFO Stuart Millington

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Each Member of the board declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item.

3. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed each board member to their first meeting and introductions were made.

4. APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIR AND REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

The ACO People Services wished to confirm the appointment of a new Chair of the Local Pension Board with immediate effect, namely Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer Dean Loader, Director of Service Delivery.

The ACO People Services also invited board members to review the terms of reference (TOR) for the Local Pension Board as set out in the Members’ Handbook.

Mr Gareth Tovey raised that the Commissioner’s appear to have discharged functions and will not be sitting on this board which he believed was a concern and risk going forward.

The ACO People Services advised that, in line with scheme manager guidance on who should be scheme manager, there was an opportunity to delegate the role of the scheme manager hence why the Commissioner's have approved the ACO People Services into the role.

A discussion arose around the appointment of a Deputy Chair and it was agreed that a flexible approach be taken and a decision made at the time of the Chair's unavailability.

RESOLVED THAT

- 4.1 Members of the board confirmed the appointment of the new Chair, namely Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer Dean Loader, Director of Service Delivery.
- 4.2 Members of the board reviewed the TOR for the Local Pension Board Committee, contained within the Members' Handbook.
- 4.3 The ACO People Services agreed to raise Mr Tovey's concerns with the Commissioners.
- 4.4 The ACO People Services to arrange for the Members' Handbook be uploaded to the intranet to ensure access for all staff.
- 4.5 The Chair to clarify point D under chapter 2 of the Members' Handbook and report back.

5. PUBLIC SECTOR TOOLKIT

The ACO People Services advised it is a requirement for members of local pension boards to undertake training as part of their role. She advised that, following the meeting, she would take members through an online training package to include governance and breaches of the law etc as part of their role which would give board members a good grounding in discharging their duties. She further advised that the training is required to be undertaken prior to the next meeting of the board, ideally within the next 4 weeks. A link to the toolkit will be provided for members of the board.

RESOLVED THAT

Members of the board noted the update.

Mr Dave King joined the meeting at 10:26hrs due to technical issues.

6. REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Pension Service Director reported on the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between South Wales Fire & Rescue Service and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council which sets out the manner in which certain duties and responsibilities are expected to be carried out. A key element of the SLA is the reporting on actual performance activity against the agreed key delivery Service Standards. The report is intended to provide officers with an update on key activity undertaken during the reporting period and shares the performance data for the period December 2023 to March 2024.

Mr Gareth Tovey advised he would see value in a discussion around the meaning of KPIs. He requested clarification on what KPIs mean to those accessing their pensions and for those individuals to be able to scrutinise them.

The ACO People Services agreed to bring the SLA to the next meeting which will assist members in identifying their responsibilities.

A discussion arose around the self-serve statistics at page 53. Mr Gareth Tovey requested a tight timescale in getting the issue rectified for scheme members. Mr Ian Traylor explained the member self-serve figures for the 2015 scheme are low when compared to the 1992 self-serve figures. He agreed to provide this detail at the next meeting. Communication will be sent to encourage sign up.

The ACO People Services wished to report on the relationship between the Service and the pension providers at RCT who work very closely and positively. She further advised that South Wales are the only Service who provide immediate detriment payments.

RESOLVED THAT

- 6.1 Members of the board noted the performance data included at Appendix 1 attached to the report.
- 6.2 Members of the board noted the relevant pension administrative overview and update included at Appendix 2 attached to the report.
- 6.3 More detail to be provided on the self-serve statistics.
- 6.4 Additional communication will be sent on the annual benefit statement to ensure scheme members have a full understanding of its content.

7. PUBLIC SECTOR PENSION SCHEME LEGISLATION – MCCLOUD & O'BRIEN REMEDY EXERCISES AND THE PENSIONS DASHBOARD

The ACO People Services reported on the statutory timelines imposed by the recent changes to Public Sector Pension Scheme legislation and more specifically Firefighter Pension Schemes, more commonly known as the McCloud and O'Brien (Matthews 2) pension remedy exercises.

In addition, the Pensions Dashboard Project, which is being implemented by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is now gathering pace and the connection date for schemes, in the fire sector, is October 2025.

Pensions dashboards are digital services including apps, websites and other tools which savers will be able to use to see their pension information in one place. This includes information on their state pension. A saver will use dashboards to search the records of all pension schemes to confirm whether or not they are a member.

Mr Gareth Tovey raised the HMRC tax issue and queried if the Service anticipates any delays, if so, would there be a risk to the Service if timescales are not adhered to and could members of the board be assured that the Service is not taken to court. The ACO People Services confirmed that she has chased the LGA for an update on the current position.

Mr Gareth Tovey queried if the Service was confident that all 473 scheme members had been written to. The ACO People Services confirmed the Service has reached out to all those at risk, unless they have not informed the Service of change of address, she was relatively confident that all involved in the first exercise have been captured. She further advised that any concerns can be raised at a national level however will continue to monitor the position.

The Head of ICT raised the pension dashboard where public service pension schemes can be viewed via a portal, regular updates can also be viewed here.

RESOLVED THAT

- 7.1 Members of the board noted the content of the report.
- 7.2 Members of the board noted the statutory obligation placed on the Scheme Manager to ensure that these timelines are met for all 3 national projects.

8. PUBLICATIONS, UPDATES, INFORMATION (STANDARD ITEM)

The ACO People Services shared relevant publications, updates and information relating to pension matters with members of the board.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to review the publications which were shared for information and awareness purposes, as attached at Appendix 1.

9. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR LOCAL PENSION BOARD 2024/2025

The ACO People Services presented the Forward work Programme for 2024/2025.

A discussion arose around good communication with scheme members and the implementation of pension schemes. Mr Gareth Tovey suggested 'video style' updates in place of lengthy reports as a way of updating scheme members. He advised if this is done effectively it may reduce the number of queries that the pension team receive.

RESOLVED THAT

9.1 Members of the board noted the content of the Forward Work Programme for 2024/2025 and agreed to the addition of SLA, KPI & Communication Updates.

10. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)

There were no items of business that the Chair deemed urgent.