



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD - FIREFIGHTERS PENSION SCHEME held on Wednesday, 9 November 2016 at FSHQ at 10.00 am

PRESENT:

Board Members: Councillors D Marren(Chair), M Cashin (DCFO), G Peers (FBU) and N McElroy(FOA)

Officers: A Harvey, J Nixon and J Swift

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies received.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests.

3 NOTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes from the previous meeting held on 17th May 2016 were presented to the Pension Board.

Action Agreed:

[1] That the notes be approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Training Update

The Head of People and Development provided a brief update on training at this point in the meeting. She referred Members to a presentation from the Local Government Association which provided details of the Scheme Advisory Board and the Governance Framework in which the Scheme Manager (and the local pension boards) operated. Copies of the slides are attached as an appendix to the notes.

The Head of People and Development added that the annual refresher training for Pension Board members would be arranged for April/May 2017 and requested that any outstanding development records be sent through to her as soon as possible.

Actions Agreed:

[1] all outstanding development records to be forwarded to the Head of People and Development by 30th November 2016.

4 **FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEME UPDATE**

The HR Business Support Manager presented her report which provided an update on current issues relating to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

The Board discussed the information provided and a number of comments/queries were raised:

Membership Statistics – The DCFO noted that the percentage of opted out members was almost 10% and queried if there was anything else that officers or Trade Union representatives could do to encourage members that had opted out to join the scheme. The HR Business Support Manager explained that the main reason why members had opted out appeared to be financial and informed the board that members that had been re-enrolled as part of the current process had immediately opted back out.

The Chair asked if Members were made aware of the benefits of the scheme and the comparisons with private sector schemes and the Board discussed what activities could be undertaken to promote the benefits of the scheme. The FBU representative commented that the union would be able to advocate the benefits of the scheme to its Members and it was suggested that a joint publication should be developed to promote the scheme. The Service's solicitor advised that officers would need to ensure that the publication would only provide information on the scheme and not specific pension advice.

Pension Administrator Performance – Kier's Service Delivery Report was presented to the Board and provided information on performance for quarter one and two (2016/17). It outlined key pieces of work completed and also Kier's performance against service level agreements. The Board noted that the overall performance against the contract was good.

The Chair queried why Kier had responded to a consultation on death on duty survivors and whether the Service had responded. The HR Business Support Manager explained that it is not a requirement of the contract that Kier respond to consultations on behalf of the Service, but they will respond where changes impact on their work as administrators of the scheme. However, the Service also receives firefighter pension consultations and reviews and responds to them, where applicable.

Firefighter Pensions Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) – The Head of People and Development drew the Board's attention to the SAB's governance and advice framework and informed them that the HR Business Support Manager was on the regional pension officer group and that Penny Wright, GMFRS sat on the technical group.

Annual Benefits Statement (ABS) – The Board discussed the format and content of the ABS provided by Kier. The Union representatives commented that they had received feedback from their members that the statements were confusing and it would be useful if there was further work carried out to try to simplify the statement. The Head of People and Development explained that Kier were

upgrading their current system and the Service could provide feedback on the reconfiguration and also on how to improve the guidance/explanatory notes that accompany the statements. She stated that no queries had been received and requested that the Union representatives encourage members to send any queries/feedback to the HR Pensions team to enable the Service to provide relevant feedback to Kier.

Milne vs the Government Actuaries Department – The HR Business Support Manager informed the Board that all outstanding payments in relation to this issue had been paid and that the total amount paid to all members affected was £1,608,047.

AGM 2016 – The Service's Solicitor provided a brief summary of the content of the Annual Fire Pensions Conference which included an update on the Milne case, guidance to be issued to assist FRAs dealing with pension contribution holiday cases and an update on the pension scheme valuation which could lead to a review of the level of employer's contributions. Information regarding the importance of the governance role of the scheme manager and local pension boards in ensuring accurate record keeping, internal controls and communications was also presented.

Actions Agreed:

- [1] the pensions update be noted;**
- [2] a joint publication be developed by the HR Pensions team and Union representatives to promote the benefits of the scheme, for information; and**
- [3] Union representative inform their Members to ensure any queries or feedback on the complexity of the Annual Benefits Statement is sent through to the HR Pensions team.**

5 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Pension Board would be held in early May 2017.