

AT A MEETING of the HFRA Hampshire Firefighters' Pension Board held at the Fire and Police Headquarters, Eastleigh on Monday, 19th February, 2018

Chairman:

* Stew Adamson

- * Malcolm Eastwood
- * Richard North
- * Councillor Roger Price
Alex Rhodes
- * Tom Simms

*Present

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Alex Rhodes.

17. 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 personal interests in any such matter that they might have wished to disclose.

No declarations of interest were received.

18. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed by the Chairman. In relation to a discussion about employer contributions at the previous meeting, Members felt it would be useful to include this as an agenda item at a future meeting.

19. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations received.

20. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman highlighted various areas of interests to Board Members which included the upcoming Home Office Pensions team visit to the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service on the 6 March, which Pension Board Members were invited to attend.

The Chairman also drew attention to the recent tax seminar which had been held on a number of different dates.

Attention was also drawn to the scheme pay form in relation to allowances which is included in the annual benefits statement and the importance of personal responsibility and awareness in regards to multiple pensions such as an additional private pension. The Chairman informed Members that a more detailed discussion about communication and engagement would be covered in Item 7 on the agenda.

21. **SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD**

A verbal update was provided by Malcolm Eastwood to the Board as to the progress of the Scheme Advisory Board, which met four times a year, and held an annual seminar. It was heard that good progress was being made and the work of the three sub-groups of the Advisory Board covered cost-effectiveness, administration and benchmarking and local pension board effectiveness. In relation to the cost sub-group, it was noted that Actuary advice had been sought, which examined valuation figures before these were submitted to the Home Office. The importance of keeping within the cost cap was highlighted.

The work of the administration and benchmarking sub-group was also detailed, and it was heard that the mechanisms for examining the validity of data was a focus of the group as well as the accuracy of data. Malcolm highlighted the remit of the local pension board effectiveness sub-group which focussed on best practice and consistency.

A discussion ensued around how pensions are registered to ensure that pensions were not “lost” when a person moves house. *Malcolm to follow up the link between the national dashboard and the national pension finder service.*

22. **COMMUNICATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

The Chairman provided Board Members with a verbal update on communication and administration. It was heard that the HFRS portal would include a rolling headline feature on the home page which would raise awareness of key pension activity in a timely manner. Members were supportive of this and also discussed how to inform retired/deferred Members of the pension scheme with information and also ways of raising awareness of the pension scheme at Fire Stations.

The importance of personal responsibility for informing Pension Services of changes to personal information such as a new home address was reinforced, as this was imperative in ensuring information kept was current, and information sent out wouldn't be missed.

It was noted that the Claire Neale, the Employer Pension Manager, would link with Sam Hudson, the HFRS Communication Lead, to work closely in ensuring timely communication around key activities such as the issuing of Annual Benefit Statements.

23. **MEMBER SELF SERVICE**

In relation to Item 8 on the agenda, it was noted that this would be covered within Item 9 on the agenda.

24. **FIRE PENSION BOARD STATUS REPORT**

The report was introduced and Officers led Members through the report highlighting the development of key items. The position regarding additional pension benefits and temporary promotions was set out and Members noted that information on additional pension benefits would be provided at the next Pension Board meeting. Members also noted that in relation to ill health and injury pension review work, this was now being undertaken by Human Resources and the Board would be updated in due course.

Members discussed the new training needs analysis form which was set out at Appendix A. It was heard that this was required to be completed to demonstrate that the Board was addressing training needs. It was felt that a short training session would be useful, following on from some future formal meetings of the Board, and this would be factored in.

Members discussed the proposed Annual Allowance Factsheet (at Appendix B) which aimed to provide clarity to Pension Members around Annual Allowance (AA). The Pension Input Period (PIP) was explained and Members of the Board felt some clarification of the Standard AA table on page one of the factsheet was needed. With this clarification, Members were content to endorse the Annual Allowance Factsheet.

The position regarding other key issues such as Presentations, Surveys and Allowances was explained. Members heard that the Allowances and Additional Responsibility Allowances project was progressing and handbooks relating to pay and allowances and additional responsibility allowances were out to consultation with the Unions. New governance processes with more stringent controls would be put into place for Allowances and also Additional Responsibility Allowances, with the Blackburne Principles applied in each case.

The Board was updated on Annual Benefit Statements and Member Self Service and Members were pleased to hear that the registration process for Member Self Service would ensure an easier registration process for users. Communication to advertise the rollout of the new software upgrade and to encourage the use of this service would also take place.

Members were also updated on Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP) Reconciliation and it was noted that HMRC had given all Pension Services until December 2018 to reconcile their membership with HMRC records. Attention was drawn to Appendix C which detailed a timeline of statutory pension activities which was requested by Members at the previous Board meeting, and communications would be timed around these.

Appendix D of the report was highlighted, which set out a draft Opt Out Survey letter, and Members were invited to comment. Officers highlighted that there

was a spike in optant outs for 2016/17 for whole-time firefighters, and the opt out survey letter would be sent to those not in the Fire Pension Scheme and establish why they had chosen not to be a member. The Board raised questions regarding the statistics and the breakdown of these between the different watches, and different employment contracts. It was felt that clarification was needed in relation to the first bullet point in the letter at Appendix D, and Officers also noted that not all surveys sent out would be completed. With the clarification of the first bullet point in the survey letter, Members were content to endorse the opt out survey letter.

Members were also asked to endorse a new letterhead for use by Hampshire Pension Services, and new options for the letterhead were set out at Appendix E, alongside the current letterhead. Officers set out the reasons for the proposed changes to the letterhead and after discussion, Members of the Board were content with Fire Letterhead Option 2, but with the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service logo on the top left hand side. With this change, Members were content to endorse Fire Letterhead Option 2.

RESOLVED:

That the HFRA Hampshire Firefighters' Pension Board recommends:

- (a) That the request for training as set out in paragraphs 5-6 and Appendix A be noted;
- (b) That the Annual Allowance factsheet, as set out in paragraphs 8-9 and Appendix B be endorsed;
- (c) That the timeline for Statutory pension deadlines, as set out in paragraph 30 and Appendix C be noted;
- (d) That with some further clarification, the opt out survey letter, as set out in paragraphs 31-33 and Appendix D be endorsed;
- (e) That with some formatting changes, the Fire Letterhead Option 2 as set out in paragraphs 34-37 and Appendix E be endorsed to be used by Pension Services.

Chairman,