

COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MINUTES OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD HELD ON TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 1000 HRS IN MEETING ROOM 8 AT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS, AND REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

PRESENT:-

ACFO Dean Loader (Chair) - Director of Service Delivery, Gabrielle Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer, ACO Alison Reed – Director of People Services, Julia Thompson - Pensions Liaison Officer, Gareth Tovey - FBU, Chris Williams – Head of ICT, ACFO Brian Thompson – Director of Technical Services, Ian Traylor – Pensions Service Director, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Dave King – Fire and Rescue Service Association. ACFO Christian Hadfield – Director of Corporate Support, Kimbely Jeal, - Accountant, People Services, Hannah Clifford – Governance Officer, Kate Owen – Secretariat.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Lee Bunkham, Senior Procurement Officer and Lisa Mullan, Head of Finance, Procurement and Property.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairperson's announcements.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – 24 OCTOBER 2024

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 October 2024 as a correct record.

5. UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

07/24 4.4 The action to upload the Members Handbook to the Intranet remained outstanding – the Director of People Services took to expedite this.

10/24 7.3 Work was ongoing regarding the contractual arrangements for the Service Level Agreement.

The remaining actions from October 2024 had been completed.

6. REVIEW OF FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEMES DISCRETIONS

The Director of People Services presented a report in relation to the requirement on authorities to explain and publish how they will apply discretionary elements for Scheme members.

A Statement of Policy addressing that requirement was set out as an Appendix to the report.

RESOLVED:

- 6.1 To approve the Statements of Policy appended to the report;
- 6.2 to authorise Officers to provide Rhondda Cynon Taf Pension Fund Administrators with the approved policy statements, in accordance with the Schemes Regulations.

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

7. REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Director of Pension Services at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council presented a report setting out performance information against the agreed key delivery service standards, in accordance with the Service Level Agreement between the Fire Services and the Council, as the Scheme Administrators. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the performance in the last quarter and Appendix 2 set out the key issues for the Board to consider.

The Board noted in particular:-

- the volume of work involved in administering such a complex scheme, and the points where delays were caused
- data governance issues arising from the scheme administration
- backdating pensions for recent retirees.

RESOLVED:

- 7.1 to note the report and appendices.

8. PUBLIC SECTOR PENSION SCHEMES LEGISLATION – McCLOUD

AND O'BRIEN REMEDY EXERCISES AND THE PENSIONS DASHBOARD PROJECT

The Firefighters' Pensions Technical Lead for SWFRS/NWFRS presented a report setting out the statutory timelines imposed by the changes to public sector pension scheme legislation, commonly known as the McCloud and O'Brien pension remedy exercises. She noted that this was a very complex area of work and the deadline for full implementation of the McCloud implications of 31 March 2025 was challenging. It was unlikely that this deadline would be met, and the Service would be required to self-report this to the Pensions Regulator. The Board noted that:-

- communication with the affected members would be crucial through this uncertain transition period
- some members would be unable to retire until their cases were resolved
- this was a national problem with other services experiencing similar issues
- there would be a cost to the Service as a result of the delays, but this was as yet unquantified

The report also set out an update on the implementation of the Pensions Dashboard Project by the Department for Work and Pensions (see also Minute 9 below). It was reported that the Fire Services sector had been given a connection date of October 2025.

RESOLVED:

- 8.1 To note the report.
- 8.2 to note the statutory obligation placed on the Scheme Manager to ensure that the project timelines be met, and the likelihood of this not being the case for this Scheme.

9. PENSIONS DASHBOARDS

This item had been covered under the previous minute. A progress report would be brought to the next meeting.

10. PUBLICATIONS, UPDATES, INFORMATION (Standing Item)

The Director of People Services submitted a report containing links to the setting out the Fire Pensions Regulations and Guidance Bulletins 85-88 inclusive.

RESOLVED:

- To note the report.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR LOCAL PENSION BOARD

The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the latest iteration of the Board's Forward Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

10.1 To note the report.

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

No such business was brought forward.

13. ITEMS TO REPORT BACK TO THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The Chair would update Kirsty Williams on outcomes from this meeting and be guided as to whether any matters would be escalated to the Board of Commissioners.