

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Pension Board

Minutes of the meeting of the Pension Board held on Monday 30 January 2017 at 10.30 am at North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Thurston Road, Northallerton.

Present:-

Employer Representatives:- Group Manager Jonathan Foster, Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer Jez Rushworth and Group Manager Stuart Simpson.

Member Representatives:- Carl Boasman (FOA), Steve Howley (FBU) and Simon Wall (FBU).

Advisors in attendance:-

Josie O'Dowd (assisting the Secretary to North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (NYFRA)), Barry Khan (Legal Adviser, Monitoring Officer and Secretary to NYFRA) and Jan Sams (Head of Human Resources).

All documents considered are on NYFRS's website

22. Appointment of Chair

Considered -

The Board was advised that North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority had decided that the Chair of the Pension Board would be an Employer Representative.

Resolved -

That Jez Rushworth be elected as Chair to serve until the first meeting of the Board following the Authority meeting in June 2017, subject to ratification by the Authority on 17 February 2017.

Jez Rushworth in the Chair

23. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the Board's meeting held on 30 June be noted.

24. Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interests

No conflicts of interest were declared.

25. Pensions Update

Considered –

The report of the Head of Human Resources providing information on scheme membership and progress on implementation of scheme changes.

Jan Sams, Head of Human Resources, took Members' through the report and particularly highlighted a complaint received regarding the internal dispute resolution procedure outlined at paragraph 3.4. She described a unique set of circumstances involving a seriously ill pension credit member. Attention was drawn to the fact that this is a very different scenario to that of deferred members who can access their pension earlier than 60 if they prove they are unable to work. For a pension credit member the Authority has no discretion to allow access to the pension before 60. This case was highlighted as the application of the rules seems unfair compared to deferred members who have serious ill health issues and who are able to access their pensions. The Pension Board were asked to consider the learning points for the future and it was recommended that the Pension Board write to the Scheme Advisory Board to seek their views on this scenario. It was reiterated that the circumstances are very rare and unusual, however it was recommended that the application of the procedure in such circumstances be reviewed in case such a situation arises in future. The Chair asked if members were happy that a letter be sent from him on behalf of the Pension Board highlighting the the situation and with a view to lobbying for appropriate provision in exceptional circumstances for the future. All recognised that there was no easy solution in the present case given the absence of powers to exercise any discretion in the matter. On the basis that the aim is to flag the issue with the Advisory Board for the benefit of future learning, it was agreed that Chairman to send a letter on behalf of the Pension Board.

Regarding training: attendance at the session held on 4 October with Claire Alcock was noted, also the Pension Conference held on 11 October was also felt to be beneficial as it indicated the future direction of travel. Pension Board members were asked to update their training needs analysis as a result of attending the latest training. The Chairman sought a replacement for Carl Boasman regarding the training brief and it was suggested that Alan Bell could pick up this role and work alongside the new Pension Manager.

It was reported that the auto-enrolment return had been despatched two weeks ago and it was noted that the statistics cover all Pension Schemes. Regarding the contributions holiday, it was noted that this work is now complete - 23 refunds are to be made for current and future employees, and two are to be implemented for January and March. It was noted that there is no financial impact for the Fire Authority. There was discussion of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund contract which has been replaced with a service level agreement, reducing the costs for administration by £10,500. It was noted that in future the Pension Board may wish to consider what role it will need to play in scrutinising proposed arrangements. The absence of performance reports to date was acknowledged and it was confirmed that these would be developed for the future, enabling Pension Board Members to exercise due diligence on behalf of members of the Pension Fund. On the question of pension statements not going out on time, it was advised that the West Yorkshire Pension Fund have reported themselves to the Pension Regulator. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will address such issues, the Pensions Technical Group nationally are working on the development of these KPIs presently. Where issues of poor performance are identified the comments of the Pension Board will be noted. It was acknowledged that there have been a large number of errors to date regarding the membership, with 21 cases flagged so far. Jan Sams confirmed that she will go back to the West Yorkshire Pension Fund

and ask how many members have come back identifying problems with their recent pension statements. Regarding future arrangements she stated that two years preparation if will be necessary if changing the Pensions Administrator. It was also reported that this year's Government Actuaries Department return has to be submitted by 10 March 2017, a month earlier than has been the case previously. Finally regarding the HMRC Annual Report it was noted that the data was not yet available, an anonymised breakdown can be provided later.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the issue relating to the inability to bring into payment the pension, before age 60, for a pension credit member, on serious medical grounds be referred to the Scheme Advisory Board.
- (c) That a review and revision of training needs analysis be agreed.

26. Chairman's Report

Considered –

The report of the Chairman updating on the Local Pensions Board and making a number of proposals.

The Chairman commented upon his attendance the Pensions Conference 11 October 2016, and reflected that the Pension Board had now been established for two years. He noted that the guidance from the Scheme Advisory Board was still awaited to set out Pension Boards. Regarding the appointment of a new Pension Scheme Adviser it was noted that seven applications had been received to date, the closing date was the next day, 31 January 2017 and it is planned to fill the post by March. It was reported that the self-assessment toolkit produced by the Pensions Regulator will enable gap analysis. Initial consideration by the Chairman and the Head of HR suggest that the Pension Board may need to meet more frequently, it was noted that many Pension Boards choose to meet informally first to facilitate a more wide-ranging discussion. The Chairman proposed a meeting of this nature with the new Pension Adviser at which time the issue of self-assessment could be considered more fully, along with the risk register - suggesting a half day workshop format for this. News from the Scheme Advisory Board was anticipated by the summer and it was suggested that discussions about the role of the Board could perhaps involve SAB Ian Pollitt who is also very knowledgeable on tax issues.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That a half day informal workshop be held to discuss the matters in section 3 of the report on the same day as the formal meeting of the LPB.

Concluding the meeting the Chairman recorded formal thanks to Jan Sams for all her hard work establishing the Pension Board and supporting it during its formation, and he wished her all the very best for the future.

There being no other business, the Chairman declared meeting closed at 11.20 am.

JO'D/JR