

**Minutes of the first meeting of the Local Pension Board held on 20 April 2015 at
Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph Business Park**

PRESENT

Cllr Brian Dunn, Flintshire County Council
Cllr Delyth Macrae, Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr W Tudor Owen, Gwynedd Council
Cllr J Rodney Skelland, Wrexham County Borough Council
Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Julie Brown, Pensions Manager
Mike Hough, Fire Officers' Association
Paul Scott, Fire Officers' Association
Sandra Williams, Fire Brigades Union
Alwen Davies, Members' Liaison Officer

APOLOGIES

Colin Everett, Clerk
Ken Finch, Treasurer
Richard Fairhead, ACFO, Association of Fire Principal Officers
Ruth Simmons, ACFO, Association of Fire Principal Officers

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

2.1 Members were invited to appoint a Chair for the Board. It was noted that the terms of reference stated that the role of chair will be rotated between a member representing employers and those representing scheme members. The Chair will also represent NWFRA at the National Pension Board.

2.2 Cllr Skelland proposed Cllr Tudor Owen and this was seconded by the other members. Cllr B Dunn offered to deputise.

2.3 **RESOLVED to appoint Cllr Tudor Owen as Chair and Cllr B Dunn as Deputy Chair.**

3 DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 The draft terms of reference had been circulated and members were invited to comment on its content. It was noted that the terms of reference had been drafted at a national level and that they could be further adapted to meet the needs of NWFRA.

3.2 Members discussed the membership and it was noted that the Board shall consist of **a minimum** of six members, with equal representation from the employer side and the scheme member side.

- 3.3 It was noted that a national training toolkit had been produced and it was agreed that there would be a training element included in each meeting in order to go through the modules.
- 3.4 The Chairperson of the Board will be rotated **every two years** between a member representing employers and those representing scheme members.
- 3.5 The quorum for a meeting should be four members in total.
- 3.6 **Members agreed to adopt the terms of reference as amended and noted that they will be published on the NWFRAs website and would be reviewed on an annual basis.**

4 CONFIRMATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 The membership of the Board was confirmed as follows:

Employer:

Four members of NWFRAs, namely, Cllr Brian Dunn, Cllr Delyth Macrae, Cllr W Tudor Owen, Cllr J Rodney Skelland.
Clerk to the Authority.
Treasurer of the Authority.

Scheme Manager:

Two representatives from each representative body officially associated with the NWFRAs:
Fire Brigades Union – Shane Price and Sandra Williams
Fire Officers' Association – Mike Hough and Paul Scott
Association of Principal Fire Officers – Richard Fairhead and Ruth Simmons.

- 4.2 Dawn Docx and Julie Brown were both in attendance as advisors.
- 4.3 **The membership of the Board was agreed for the period 2015-2017.**

5 ITEMS OF NOTE

- 5.1 The DCFO asked members to note the following:
- 5.2 The Chair is nominated to sit on the National Firefighters Pension Advisory Board. The Minister for Public Services has appointed Michael Prior to be Chair of that Board.
- 5.3 The LGA has appointed a pension scheme advisor, Clare Alcock, and she has proved to be a valuable source of information to date.
- 5.4 The LGA is holding national forums which Julie Brown attends on behalf of NWFRS.
- 5.5 Authority Members cannot vote on any pension issues in NWFRAs meetings.

6 PRESENTATION: COMPARING THE THREE PENSION SCHEMES

6.1 Julie Brown delivered a presentation giving key information about each of the three pension schemes, namely, Fire Pension Scheme (FPS) 1992, New Fire Pension Scheme (NFPS) 2007 and Fire Fighters' Pension Scheme 2015. The presentation gave an overview of the differences between the schemes in terms of issues such as eligibility, contributions and how the pension benefits were calculated.

6.2 Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and also discussed employment issues that could occur.

6.3 **The information was noted and members were given a copy of the presentation.**

7 EMPLOYER'S DISCRETIONS

7.1 Continued Professional Development (CPD) Payment

7.1.1 The CPD scheme is designed to recognise and reward experienced employees who are able to demonstrate continual professional development over and above that required at 'competent' level under each of the national standards. In order to qualify for the payment, employees must be successful in demonstrating competence and this is determined by a panel of managers. The payment is withdrawn if competence is not demonstrated or if there has been a disciplinary case against the individual. The payment amount differs in each Service; in NWFRS it is approximately £600 per annum.

7.1.2 For both the FPS 1992 and NFPS 2007 CPD payments are pensionable, however, under the 2015 scheme continuation to treat CPD as pensionable is at the discretion of the employing authority, the payment will increase annual pensionable pay. The DCFO advised members that officers' preference would be for the current process to continue; members agreed stating that more employees may be encouraged to apply for CPD should the payment be part of the career average salary for their pension. **It was therefore agreed to recommend to the FRA that the payment continues to be pensionable.**

7.2 The right to pay back employer's contributions

7.2.1 If an employee takes authorised unpaid leave and they want to buy back pensionable service for that period they must pay any missing employee contributions but also, in certain cases, at the discretion of the employing authority, they must pay the employer's contributions due for the period in question.

7.2.2 Members discussed various examples and scenarios where this may occur such as career break, ill-health, industrial action and unpaid maternity leave; they agreed that a discretionary policy is to be drawn up with a list detailing scenarios, stating that the decision made by the employer will be made on a case by case basis. **The discretionary policy is to be referred to the full FRA in June 2015.**