

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland CFA - Local Pension Board held at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters on Thursday, 16 November 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC (in the Chair)

Councillor M March
Darren Weston

Adam Taylor

In attendance

Callum Faint, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Judi Beresford, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Colin Sharpe, Pension Scheme Manager, Leicester City Council
Helen Scargill, West Yorkshire Pension Fund
Gemma Duckworth, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Aqil Sarang, Democratic Services Officer

1. Appointment of Chairman.

At the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority meeting held on 21 June 2023, Mr. N. Bannister CC was nominated as Chairman Elect of the CFA's Local Pension Board.

It was moved and seconded that Mr. N. Bannister CC be elected Chairman of the CFA Local Pension Board for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the Combined Fire Authority in 2024.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. N. Bannister CC be elected Chairman of the CFA Local Pension Board for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the Combined Fire Authority in 2024.

Mr. N. Bannister CC – in the Chair

2. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Councillor S Barton and Graham Vaux.

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the Local Pension Board held on 25 January 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Conflicts of Interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare conflicts of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

5. Scheme Manager's Update.

The Board received a report of the Pension Scheme Manager which provided an update on the local management and administration of the Firefighters Pension Scheme. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 4' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that no breaches had been identified. The risk register had been reviewed, with no significant changes proposed.

It was noted that there was a high volume of work to complete by March 2025, albeit with limited skilled staff resources. The national calculator tools and pension statement formats were still being developed and challenges remained in accessing historical data. It was anticipated that locally, Leicestershire would be in a position to deliver, but the uncertainties and risks both locally and nationally were recognised.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) In response to a question around whether legal advice had been obtained on injury to feelings compensation, it was noted that this was a national issue and a level of compensation had already been agreed. It had now been confirmed that HM Treasury had accepted responsibility for funding, and therefore any compensation would not be at a cost to the FRA. Despite this, there was a resource issue to identify claimants (some of whom were not union members) and make any payments. Agreements between the FBU and the Home Office would determine the level of compensation which might be paid via the FRA's, with the money being provided by the Home Office.
- ii) There was some concern that those who were not members of a relevant union when the claims were submitted could consider the fact that they had been unable to make a claim via that route discriminatory. It was noted that the LGA might provide a suitable route to enable these individuals to make a claim, should they wish.
- iii) Following a query of what was anticipated by March 2025, it was noted that there would still be a degree of uncertainty. It was felt that there could be further challenges and much related to the individual circumstances.
- iv) The Scheme Manager reported that the Matthews second options exercise was complicated and could present further future challenges. There was a requirement of March 2025 for this to be completed.
- v) Members of the Board drew attention to paragraph 37, which referenced a specific case which was subject to specific legal proceedings. The Scheme Manager and the Monitoring Officer provided assurances that steps were being taken to bring this to a satisfactory conclusion as soon as possible.
- vi) The workload and capacity to enact all the changes and meet statutory deadlines were steep, but the small team was focussed on the short turnarounds. Thanks were given to the team for the work undertaken so far.

RESOLVED:

It was moved by Mr N Bannister CC and seconded by Councillor March that the update be noted.

6. Scheme Administrator's Update.

The Board received an update from West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) as the Pension Scheme Administrator on the administration of the Firefighter Pension Scheme since the last meeting. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 5' is filed with these minutes. Along with the information provided in the report, members were informed of the following:

- Confirmation had been received from the Home Office in relation to the CARE revaluation rate, with HM Treasury advising that the published rates for 2021/22 were incorrect. The Home Office had issued a statement of intent to say that administrators could recalculate to include the correct rates, which were expected to be formally issued in due course. It was noted that lots of work would need to be undertaken to ensure everyone's pensions records were correct and that this was not to the detriment of scheme members.
- A high percentage of inaccurate and/or incomplete ill health claims had been reported in November across all of WYPF's clients, although it was thought that this would be a small sample and it was unknown whether any were from Leicestershire. Assurance was given that there would have been correspondence around individual cases and the Scheme Administrator reminded the Board that the responsibility for the ill health process, up to the point of the pension being paid, lay with the FRA. The Scheme Manager assured the Board that processes within Leicestershire were being checked.

RESOLVED:

It was moved by N Bannister CC and seconded by Councillor March that the update provided on the administration of the firefighter pension scheme be noted.

7. Employee Representative's input.

There was nothing further to report.

8. Date of next meeting.

The date of the next meeting would be confirmed.

10.00 - 11.04 am
16 November 2023

CHAIRMAN

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