

Pensions Board

Minutes - 2 July 2015

Attendance

Members of the Pensions Board

Sharon Campion
Caroline Jones
Annette King
Joe McCormick
Lee Nash
Cllr Sandra Samuels
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Mike Sutton
Adrian Turner
Chris West

Employees

Geik Drever	Strategic Director of Pensions
Dereck Francis	Democratic Support Officer
Rachel Howe	Head of Governance - West Midlands Pension Fund

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Election of Chair**

The Board was invited to elect a Chair for the remainder of the municipal year 2015/16. Dereck Francis, Democratic Support Officer reported that at its meeting on 24 June 2015, the Pensions Committee had asked the Board to consider electing Cllr Sandra Samuels and Stephen Simkins as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively.

Adrian Turner referred to correspondence he had received from Malcolm Cantello (Unison) questioning the make-up of the Board particularly the inclusion of two councillors and who they were representing whilst on the Board. He sought clarity on the matter.

Rachel Howe, Head of Governance advised that a response had been provided to Mr Cantello on the points he had raised at the Pensions Committee. She undertook to circulate a copy of response to the Board members. She explained that the final version of the Regulations provided for Wolverhampton City Council councillors to be appointed onto the Board but that they had to sit as an employer or member representative. The make-up of the Board had also been discussed at the Governance Working Party. The composition of the Board was six employer representatives and six member representatives. Cllr Sandra Samuels was

appointed as an employee representative and Cllr Stephen Simkins as a member representative.

Chris West indicated that he was surprised that the Pensions Committee had made a suggestion regarding the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair.

At the end of the discussion nominations for the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair were sought.

Resolved:

1. That Councillor Sandra Samuels be elected Chair of the Pensions Board for the ensuing municipal year.
2. That Councillor Stephen Simkins be elected Vice-Chair Pensions Board for the remainder of the ensuing municipal year.

2 **Apologies for absence (if any)**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Paul Sheehan (Employer representative) and Paul Sayers (Member representative)

3 **Declarations of interests (if any)**

No declarations of interests were made.

4 **Pensions Board Work Plan 2015/16**

The Board considered an outline workplan for the forthcoming municipal year. The workplan had been designed to ensure that the Board's responsibilities are met. The dates for the proposed actions were tentative at this stage.

Referring to the work area 'data quality', Cllr Stephen Simkins asked whether it would be useful for the Board to have information on its role in terms of encouraging employers to provide the Fund with the necessary good data. In response Geik Drever, Strategic Director of Pensions informed the Board that the Fund worked with employers to improve their understanding of how data quality impacts on contribution rates. She also reported that she had written to the Chief Executives of the seven West Midlands district councils regarding their outstanding data and on what was required from them. Regarding the role of the Board, the Strategic Director of Pensions indicated that the Board members needed to recognise where the Fund was, urge employers to provide the data and think of ways that it could help improve the data quality. She also indicated that there were penalties under Service Level Agreements with the employers and that ultimately the Board could refer a matter to the Pensions Regulator.

Regarding 'customer engagement' Adrian Turner reported that he wanted to try and circulate information as soon as he could especially about the web portal. He asked that when the Fund produced information for circulation to members that the trade union logos be included on the literature. This would help the Trade Unions to promote the Pensions Scheme to potential new members and demonstrate to existing trade union members that their union supported the Scheme. Mr Turner added that trade unions could undertake a piece of work to promote the Scheme to its members.

Councillor Stephen Simkins asked whether a package should be worked up with the trade unions for them to outline the benefits of the Pensions Scheme to low-paid workers. In response Rachel Howe, Head of Governance agreed to take back to the Events Co-ordinator the possibility of trade union workshops.

Chris West added that anything the Board could do to increase the member levels of the LGPS was worth a try subject to there not being any legal risks.

The Strategic Director of Pensions indicated that the leaflets and publicity literature could be placed in appropriate workplaces if the Board so wished.

Resolved:

1. That the proposed work programme for the period 2015/16 be approved.
2. That 'Membership levels' be looked at under the customer engagement' area of work.

5 **Pensions Board Training 2015**

Geik Drever, Strategic Director of Pensions presented a proposed outline training programme for the Board for the forthcoming municipal year. The programme aimed to cover all the topics Pensions Board would be asked to consider during the course of the year.

The Strategic Director of Pensions asked the Board members to complete the 'survey monkey' and agreed that a Board handbook would be prepared.

Resolved:

1. That the training session on 26 January 2015 be approved.
2. That Rachel Howe circulate alternative dates to the all day training sessions on 25 August and 27 October.
3. That a Board handbook be produced.

6 **Publication of Fund Policies 2015**

Geik Drever, Strategic Director of Pensions presented a report which aimed to provide assurance that the Fund had met the legislative duty for publishing policies and strategies. The policies had been provided to the Board within their induction packs prior to the meeting. It was confirmed that the list of policies contained in the report was the full range of policies.

Councillor Stephen Simkins commented that some of the policies were of a technical nature and he asked whether the Fund could make them easier to understand. He also suggested that feedback be sought from attendees at the various Pensions roadshows about the jargon used in its literature.

In response Rachel Howe, Head of Governance reported that the Pension Service was looking at the Plain English Review as part of its Customer Services Strategy.

Resolved:

That the approval and publication of Fund Policies in compliance with the legislative requirements be noted.

7 **Information Governance**

Rachel Howe, Head of Governance presented a report on work being undertaken by the Fund in relation to information governance.

During the ensuing discussion the Head of Governance confirmed that she would be reporting back to the Board on the work of the Information Governance Working Party and the Information Governance Operational Group. In response to a question on open data she informed the Board that the Fund was in favour of this principal. The City of Wolverhampton Council hosted a site for 'frequently asked questions' which the Fund fed into. In terms of Open and Transparency Regulations, the Fund also fed into the City Council register.

Resolved:

That the information governance work being undertaken by the Fund be noted.

8 **Data Quality and the Cessation of Contracting Out - GMP Reconciliation**

Geik Drever, Strategic Director of Pensions presented a report on procedures the Fund was implementing to ensure optimum data quality was embedded with its administration system and associated records.

Resolved:

1. That the importance of holding clean data and steps taken by the Fund to improve data quality be noted.
2. That the activity underway to scope and understand the work involved in the reconciliation of the GMP records held by HMRC and the associated risks of not completing the project.

9 **Chairs announcements**

Cllr Sandra Samuels asked that the Board be kept informed of the position on the pension's deficit. Geik Drever, Strategic Director of Pensions reported that the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) was working on this issue and she undertook to keep the Board updated on the work of the SAB.