

Minutes

PENSION FUND BOARD

MINUTES OF THE PENSION FUND BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH 2018, IN MEZZANINE ROOM 3, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.06 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.47 AM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr P Dearden, Ms R Ellis (Vice-Chairman), Mr S Mason (Chairman), Mr J McGovern, Mr I Thompson and Ms L Wheaton

OFFICERS PRESENT

Ms J Edwards, Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Ms C Platts, Mr M Preston and Ms S Price

1 APOLOGIES/DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/MINUTES

Apologies had been received from Bev Black.

It was noted that Maddy Cheeseman and James Robinson who were currently undertaking an Improvement Review in the Pensions Service were observing the meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that an update on a possible reconciliation problem highlighted at the last meeting would be circulated after the meeting.

ACTION: Julie Edwards

It was noted that Claire Lewis-Smith had circulated a questionnaire to Members of the Board which had informed the content of the training day which would be held next week.

Members were also advised that Item 5 – Update on I-Connect and Pensions Online would be deferred to the next meeting.

It was agreed that a draft of the Annual Report would be circulated to the Board for comment ahead of the next meeting, to allow for comments, before it was signed off by Pension Fund Committee in July.

ACTION: Julie Edwards

2 MINUTES OF PENSION FUND COMMITTEE

In response to a question regarding the new Risk Register Tool, Pentana, it was agreed that the Risk Register would be brought to the next meeting.

ACTION: Julie Edwards

It was noted that there had been a discussion at Pension Fund Committee, as to whether it was helpful to include implications of Brexit on the Risk Register as this was essentially something which was beyond the control of the Committee and indeed the local authority. The Chairman commented that it was still important for the Committee to be sighted on the possible impacts of issues even if they were beyond their control.

3 BCC PENSION FUND EMPLOYER NEWSLETTERS - DECEMBER 2017

Members agreed to consider items 3 and 4 together and Cheryl Platts presented her report and took questions accordingly. The following main points were noted:

- The Scheme Advisory Board had established a Working Group to consider the Ill Health process.
- Registration levels for My Pension Online had not increased despite reminders to employers to promote this tool to staff. It was noted that Thames Valley Police had particularly high sign up rates – they had run a series of weekly emails encouraging staff to sign up.
- Board Members felt it was important to increase the take up of My Pension Online, particularly as Annual Benefits Statements would be distributed electronically this year.
- Cheryl Platts commented that this was not unique to our fund and so far, the trend had been for younger and older employees to sign up, but people in the middle age bracket had not.
- It was suggested that a small communications piece could be provided to employers to assist them in promoting My Pension Online. Cheryl Platts confirmed that she had prepared a piece which she hoped to include in the March newsletter.
- 2018 newsletter would be distributed hard copy after Easter. The presentation of the newsletter had been revised and included more content, including Health and Wellbeing advice. Members commended the new format.
- It was noted that the employer training event held on 1st March had been adversely affected by the snow, with only 9 attendees representing 6 employers. However the 6th March session was attended by 31 people, representing 26 employers and feedback forms indicated good feedback.
- It was noted that there were 17,000 deferred members – there was an awareness that more needed to be done to actively track down deferred members.

The Chairman thanked Cheryl Platts for attending the meeting.

4 SCHEME MEMBER AND EMPLOYER COMMUNICATIONS

This item was considered under Item 3.

5 I-CONNECT/PENSIONS 'ONLINE' UPDATE

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

6 ANNUAL REVIEW OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE PENSION BOARD

The Board considered the draft Annual Review of the Pension Board report. The Chairman advised that this needed to be finalised for presentation to the Pension Fund Committee on 25th July. It was agreed that Board Members would provide their feedback on the draft to Julie Edwards and Claire Lewis-Smith by the end of April and the Chairman would then meet with the officers to redraft the report. This would then be circulated for any further comments.

ACTION: All Board Members

7 ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE STATISTICS

The Chairman welcomed Sam Price, Principle Pensions Officer who presented the report on Administration Performance Statistics.

It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of retirees in the last quarter of 2017, although reasons for this remained unclear. The Board were pleased to hear that the backlog of leaver checking had been cleared and asked for their thanks to be passed on to the staff. It was suggested that it might be useful to introduce a customer satisfaction survey in future.

The Chairman asked if it was possible to break down further the 'Other' category in the telephone statistics provided. It was agreed that this would be reviewed to try and provide more detail in the next report.

ACTION: Sam Price

8 CIPFA PENSIONS ADMINISTRATION BENCHMARKING

The Board received a report which provided information on the Council's costs for administering the LGPS fund over the past three years, alongside data from CIPFA Pensions Administration Benchmarking Club. In response to Member's questions and during subsequent discussions the following main points were noted:

- It was noted that it was difficult to assess the comparator information as it was impossible to know whether other local authorities had administrative backlogs as BCC had.
- Staff costs at BCC were above other authorities but this was because staff numbers had been increased in order to address the backlog, which had now been cleared. These temporary staff costs would be seen in the 2017/18 figures but might reduce in the coming year. Mark Preston commented that he would like to improve customer satisfaction so he was not rushing to decrease staff numbers.

- A Member suggested that a customer satisfaction survey could help to demonstrate value for money. It was important to consider the performance and customer experience alongside the costs.
- It was noted that indirect costs were higher than comparators and IT costs, but this could be attributed to the development of the online tools for Members like i-connect.
- The Chairman commented that it would be more beneficial to compare against LAs with similar funds. It was agreed that a more targeted comparator report would be developed and circulated to the Board.

ACTION: Sam Price

- It was noted that there had been sickness issues in the pension administration team, with a couple of staff on long term sickness. This was being managed under the Council's attendance policy but was likely to also impact the 2017/18 figures.
- A member queried figures on p18 of the CIPFA report which showed that Bucks had 442 deaths in service and 20 pensioner deaths, which seemed erroneous. It was confirmed that these figures must have been transposed in error – so it should read 20 deaths in service and 442 pensioner deaths.

9 FORWARD PLAN

The Board noted the updated Forward Plan.

10 ANNUAL BENEFITS STATEMENTS - ADMINISTRATION YEAR END UPDATE

Claire Lewis-Smith introduced the report on Annual Benefits Statements – Administration Year End Update. A steady improvement was noted with just over 1,000 active members not receiving the Annual Benefits Statement. 88% had received their statement by August which was an increase of 13.5% on the previous years' figures.

11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

12 ANNUAL BENEFITS STATEMENTS - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX

The Board considered the data contained in the Annual Benefits Statements appendix.

13 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE PENSION FUND BOARD

The Confidential Minutes of the Pension Fund Board held on 18th October 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

14 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE

The Confidential Minutes of the Pension Fund Committee held on 30 November 2017 were noted.

15 BRUNEL PENSION PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Board noted the Brunel Pension Partnership Update.

16 LOCAL PENSION BOARD INSURANCE

The Board considered the pros and cons of taking out an insurance policy.

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING / AOB

18th July 2018 at 10am in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

It was noted that the Board would soon have been running for three years and therefore Members terms of office would expire in June. The Chairmen asked if all Members could contact Julie Edwards or Claire Lewis-Smith to confirm if they would like to continue as Members of the Board and if they wish to, the term could be extended for a further three years.

ACTION: All Members

In addition, the next meeting would need Election of Chairman and appointment of Vice-Chairman on the agenda.

It was noted that a new Member, ***** Pearce from Chiltern District Council would be joining the Board from the next meeting.

Updates on GNP reconciliations, Cyber Security and GDPR were requested for the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN