

# Minutes

## *PENSION FUND BOARD*

**MINUTES OF THE PENSION FUND BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 14 MARCH 2019, IN MEZZ 2, NCO AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.50 AM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

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

### **1 APOLOGIES/DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/MINUTES**

Apologies were received from, Ms B Black, Mr S Lugg and Mr J Chilver.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE PENSION FUND BOARD**

Ms A Kenward, Committee Assistant, noted several grammatical changes to be made to the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2018.

Regarding comments on page 5 of the agenda pack Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Principal Pensions Officer, confirmed that only one employer had requested employee take up data recently.

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2018 were AGREED subject to the above amendments.**

### **3 MINUTES OF PENSION FUND COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED: The minutes from the Pension Fund Committee meeting 26 November 2018 were NOTED by the Board.**

### **4 BCC PENSION FUND EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2018**

Ms C Platts, Pensions Communications Officer, invited comments on the December 2018 newsletter. Ms Platts then gave an overview of the contents of the March 2019 newsletter, a draft copy of which was circulated with the agenda.

Ms Platts highlighted the following:

- The annual template had been circulated on 27 February for return by 30 April.
- Due to the Fund valuation, the year-end data cleanse exercise needed to be completed by end of June 2019. This was acknowledged to be a tight deadline.
- A ban on pension cold calling had come into effect as of 9 January 2019.
- The March newsletter would also include the House of Commons statement on Public Service Pension Schemes.

### ***McCloud and Sargent legal challenges***

Following a question from a member of the Board Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Principal Pensions Officer, confirmed the Fund had received communication from the Local Government Association asking whether or not central guidance for the 2019 valuation would be preferred. To date, most Funds had opted for central guidance to ensure consistency of approach.

## **5 SCHEME MEMBER AND EMPLOYER COMMUNICATIONS**

Ms C Platts, Pensions Communications Officer, gave an overview of the report circulated with the agenda.

Ms Platts highlighted:

- The report appendix, which outlined business as usual Communication materials. The report covered Communications that had been completed in addition to those listed within the appendix.
- All BCC website content editors had been tasked with reducing the reading age of webpages. This was more difficult when pages needed to include legislation/policy based information; however, most of the Fund's webpages were now at a 13 year old reading age. Reading ages were calculated via the Hemingway app system <http://www.hemingwayapp.com/>.
- In comparison with previous years, in 2018 only 1,000 newsletters had been printed to be sent to employees who had opted out of "My Pension Online", as part of their Annual Benefit Statement mailing. The 1,000 print run was split 50/50 between active and deferred scheme members. Active and deferred members were able to view the relevant Fund newsletter via the "my pension online" member portal as well as on the Fund's website.
- The newsletter was a joint project in collaboration with a number of other Pension Funds. It included standard wording to ensure consistency of message for Scheme members in different Funds, but included some space for Fund specific content.
- The 2019 In Touch pensioner newsletter was about to go to print and would include a mixture of statutory information and general interest articles e.g. volunteering, Active Bucks, University of the Third Age, etc. A copy of the 2018 In Touch newsletter was tabled at the meeting for reference.
- 19 Employers were represented at the March Year-end training sessions, which took place on 5 and 13 March. The sessions were aimed at employers who did not use i-Connect to return information to the Fund and therefore were required to complete an

annual return template for 2018/19. The training method had been changed to include an explanation by the main presenter of various data requirements, interspersed by group workshops, where Employers completed manual calculations to aid their understanding of our data requirements. Each group was facilitated by an Employer Liaison Officer. This method was very labour intensive for officers but they had received very positive feedback, which was tabled at the meeting. In future officers would review whether it may be better to hold training at different locations and look at showing the correlation between attendance and subsequent data quality and reporting issues.

There was a discussion around the best way to target communications. Ms Platts confirmed she was looking at different ways of communication and shared with the Board a short video she had been working on to familiarise Employers with the information available from the Fund's webpages. There were three videos which would be added to the Fund's website, embedded within the most appropriate content pages. The topics of the videos were:

- The LGPS retirement process
- Your LGPS annual benefit statement
- LGPS Employer web tour

The group briefly discussed the videos project. The Chairman thanked Ms Platts for showcasing the video. Ms Platts left the meeting.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

## **6 I-CONNECT / PENSIONS "ONLINE" UPDATE**

Ms J Edwards, Pensions & Investments Manager, gave an overview of the report circulated with the agenda.

Ms Edwards confirmed it was now standard practice for new employers to join iConnect however this was not always happening, for example with district councils who wanted to wait for further information regarding unitary.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

## **7 ANNUAL REVIEW OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE PENSION BOARD**

Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Principal Pensions Officer, gave an overview of the draft report circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman noted the lower attendance rate for this meeting compared to the previous year. He felt there was still good reasons when people were unable to attend.

Ms Pearce asked for it to be noted she was only to attend days 1-2 of the recent training.

The Chairman confirmed he would provide comments for the report prior to the deadline required for inclusion in the Pension Fund Annual Report & Accounts.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

## **8 ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE STATISTICS**

Ms S Price, Principal Pensions Officer, gave an overview of the report circulated with the agenda.

Ms Price highlighted the following:

- Previously the board had asked to see a breakdown of the “other” calls category. This was being monitored from January 2019 and would appear in reports from March/April onwards.
- The team was up to date with daily priorities and had a 97% daily completion rate for on priority tasks.
- Under current scheme regulations from 1 April 2014, refunds should be paid within 5 years of the Scheme member leaving. However this is not always possible due to not being kept up to date with address changes and not being provided with bank account details to make payment when requested. The team are attempting to contact all members who were nearing the 5 year deadline. Where interest is due this is paid over a year after leaving at the Bank of England base rate plus 1% is payable.
- It was hoped the Pensions Dashboard would help reunite people with their money and reduce costs where amounts were only small. The team was working on reviewing same sex marriage and co-habituating partner’s pension benefits. Given that same cases went back to 2008 it may be necessary to relax the evidence required on a case by case basis.

Members of the board asked for confirmation of the following acronyms.

- NoK = Next of Kin
- SCAPE = Superannuation Contributions Adjusted for Past Experience.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

## **9 PENSION ADMINISTRATION STRATEGY**

Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Principal Pensions Officer, gave an overview of the report circulated with the agenda.

Mrs Lewis-Smith highlighted that the strategy was not due for renewal until 2020 but one of the action points from the Pension Improvement Review was to revise the strategy this year. This included reviewing charges as the work involved could vary dependant on the nature of the issue(s) and the time spent to resolve it/them. There would still be a review in 2020 and the tri-annual review requirement would continue.

The following points were discussed:

- A member of the board requested to see track changes in future so they can see what had been changed. Mrs Lewis-Smith agreed to include this.

**ACTION: Mrs Lewis-Smith**

- Whether training could be made mandatory. Ms Lewis-Smith would review this.

**ACTION: Mrs Lewis-Smith**

- How to address non-compliance including repeat offenders and the possible introduction of a flat rate starting cost for support with additional fees if extra time was needed.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

## **10 FORWARD PLAN**

Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Principal Pensions Officer, confirmed the plan had been updated to increase the number of meetings from three to four meetings a year. As previously discussed the December meeting would have fewer agenda items to allow for training opportunities.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

## **11 ANNUAL BENEFITS STATEMENTS- ADMINISTRATION YEAR END UPDATE**

Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Principal Pensions Officer, gave an overview of the report circulated with the agenda.

Mrs Lewis-Smith highlighted that many of the cases left outstanding were more complex and often historical ones. She confirmed the team were working with the employers involved. The Chairman noted the hard work from the team.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

## **12 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED**

**That the press and public be excluded for the following item which is exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)**

## **13 ANNUAL BENEFIT STATEMENTS - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX**

Mrs C Lewis-Smith, Principal Pensions Officer, gave an overview of the report's confidential appendix which was circulated with the agenda.

Mrs Lewis-Smith stated that historical queries from Milton Keynes Council had been reduced considerably using a partnership working approach. This had also resulted in lower costs compared to going down a sanctions route.

The following points were discussed:

- Pension scams - Ms S Price, Principal Pensions Officer, confirmed that BCC were aware of one scamming case. A request for transfer information had been received but the team had prevented progression when they queried the consent form used. Details had been recorded and would be reported to the appropriate authorities. Ms Price confirmed that BCC did not receive a high number of transfer requests but for any transfer over £30k members were required to sign a declaration confirming they had had taken suitable advice.
- Impact of the Lloyd bank pension's equalisation decision - Mrs Lewis-Smith confirmed that the judgement had specifically stated this would have no impact on local government schemes.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

#### **14 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES PENSION FUND BOARD**

**RESOLVED: The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2018 were AGREED as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.**

#### **15 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED: The confidential minutes from the Pension Fund Committee meeting 26 November 2018 were NOTED by the Board.**

#### **16 BRUNEL PENSION PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

Ms J Edwards, Pensions & Investments Manager, gave an overview of the report circulated with the agenda. The report included the minutes of their last oversight board and informal notes from the meeting.

The Board confirmed they were happy with the level and style of information from Brunel.

**RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.**

#### **17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING/AOB**

18 July 2019, 10am  
Mezzanine Room 2, New County Offices.

**CHAIRMAN**