

Meeting: LPB Effectiveness Committee

Date: 20 October 2026

Agenda item 5: LPB Chairs Forum update

Introduction

1. This paper provides an update to the Local Pension Board (LPB) Effectiveness Committee on the discussions held at the most recent LPB Chair Forum and seeks the Committee's views on any actions that may assist LPBs in addressing the issues and opportunities identified. The forum continues to provide a valuable mechanism for LPB Chairs to share experiences, discuss emerging challenges, and identify areas where greater national consistency may be beneficial.
2. The most recent forum took place on **6 October 2026** and was the first forum to be held in person. Attendance was positive, with representatives from **13 fire and rescue authorities** participating. The forum was also attended by the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) Chair and Secretariat, who provided attendees with an update on the key discussions and decisions arising from the recent SAB meeting.

Forum Structure

3. The LPB Chair Forum was established to provide a collaborative environment for LPB Chairs to discuss local and national pension issues, share good practice and identify areas where support may be required. The forum continues to operate as an informal discussion group without a formal agenda, allowing participants to raise matters of significance and emerging concern.

Key Issues Discussed

SCAPE Rate and Commutation Factors

4. A significant proportion of the discussion focused on the impact of the recent SCAPE rate review and the consequential changes to commutation factors for members of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992.
5. Forum participants were informed that analysis undertaken following a recent SAB data request had identified considerable variation in retirement processes across the sector. In particular, responses highlighted inconsistent approaches to the timing and content of retirement information provided to members, which had contributed to differing experiences for individuals affected by the change in commutation factors.
6. The forum was advised that the SAB intends to work with administrators to develop and promote best practice guidance in relation to the retirement journey, with the aim of improving consistency across the sector and ensuring members receive timely information to support retirement planning.

7. Chairs welcomed this work and generally agreed that a reasonable expectation would be for members to receive their retirement information and benefit options approximately **four weeks prior to retirement**, whilst acknowledging that individual circumstances may require earlier engagement.
8. Chairs were also advised that SAB would continue to engage with MHCLG to explore opportunities to improve transparency around future SCAPE rate changes, enabling members to better understand and prepare for any impact on their pension benefits.
9. In discussing potential approaches for future changes, participants suggested that consideration could be given to:
 - providing earlier confirmation of implementation dates to allow members and administrators to prepare appropriately;
 - improving communication to members where changes are anticipated;
 - exploring whether commutation factors in force at the point a member makes their retirement election should be honoured regardless of whether factors subsequently increase or decrease.
10. The forum was supportive of SAB's ongoing work in this area and recognised the importance of improving consistency and transparency for members.

LPB Chair Records

11. The forum discussed whether current records accurately identify the serving Chair of each LPB. It was noted that some individuals recorded as LPB Chairs are no longer in post, creating a risk that communications may not always reach the appropriate individual.
12. It was agreed that a periodic review of LPB Chair contact details would be beneficial. The proposed approach is for Scheme Managers to be asked periodically to confirm whether the individual currently recorded as LPB Chair remains correct.

Attendance at Future Forums

13. Members discussed opportunities to broaden participation within the forum. Whilst recognising that the forum was originally established for LPB Chairs, attendees considered there would be merit in involving other LPB representatives where appropriate.
14. The group agreed that, where a formal Vice-Chair position exists, Vice-Chairs should also be invited to future meetings. This would support succession planning, improve organisational resilience and ensure wider engagement with the discussions taking place.

Awareness of LPB Resources

15. Discussion highlighted that some Chairs were not aware of the resources currently available to support LPBs, including template agendas, training materials and other governance resources.
16. It was therefore agreed that, following the review and confirmation of LPB Chair contact details, the Secretariat should recirculate information on the support and resources available to LPBs to ensure all boards are able to make full use of the

materials already developed.

Maintaining Effective Local Pension Boards

17. The forum considered what proactive steps LPBs could take to gain assurance that they continue to operate effectively.
18. Several Chairs shared examples of arrangements adopted within their own authorities, including:
 - undertaking self-assessments against the requirements of The Pensions Regulator's General Code;
 - commissioning independent reviews or assurance exercises from suitably qualified third parties;
 - periodic reviews of board effectiveness and governance arrangements.
19. Attendees considered these approaches useful mechanisms for identifying areas for improvement and strengthening governance arrangements.

Future Development of the Forum

20. The forum reflected positively on the value of the discussions and agreed that the sessions continue to provide an important opportunity for networking, shared learning and escalation of common issues.
21. Given the increasing alignment between forum discussions and the work programme of the Scheme Advisory Board, attendees agreed that the frequency of meetings should be revised from **bi-monthly to quarterly**, aligning the forum cycle with the SAB meeting schedule.
22. The group also reflected on the benefits of meeting in person and agreed that one face-to-face forum should be retained annually. This session will continue to be aligned with the first day of the annual Firefighters' Pensions Conference.

Committee Actions

23. Committee members are asked to:
 - note the discussions and outcomes arising from the LPB Chair Forum held on 6 October 2026;
 - support the proposal to review and refresh LPB Chair contact details periodically;
 - support the recirculation of LPB resources and training materials following completion of that exercise;
 - note the proposed move from bi-monthly to quarterly meetings;
 - provide any views on additional support that may assist LPBs in strengthening governance effectiveness and promoting consistency across the sector.