

Meeting: LPB Effectiveness Committee

Date: 20 October 2026

Agenda item 6: LPB Panel Session - The Challenge Before Us Feedback

Introduction

1. This paper provides the Committee with a summary of feedback received from attendees following the Local Pension Board (LPB) panel session held during the Firefighters' Pensions Conference 2026 and highlights the key themes emerging from the audience participation exercises undertaken through Slido during the session.
2. The aim of the session was to provide delegates with an opportunity to hear directly from LPB Chairs regarding their experiences, challenges and perspectives on the future of firefighter pension scheme governance.

Background

3. The LPB panel session, entitled "The Challenge Before Us: Perspectives from Local Pension Board Chairs", formed part of the governance programme at the Firefighters' Pensions Conference. The session included discussion on the role of Local Pension Boards, governance challenges and the future development of pension governance arrangements across the fire sector.
4. Delegates were invited to provide feedback on the session and participate in several interactive Slido questions designed to capture views on governance challenges and future support requirements.

Session Feedback

5. Feedback received to date indicates that the session was very well received by attendees. Of the 15 responses received, 86.7% rated the session as either **Very useful** or **Extremely useful** in relation to their role.
6. The breakdown of responses received to date is shown below:

Rating	Responses	Percentage
Extremely useful	7	46.7%
Very useful	6	40.0%

Moderately useful	1	6.7%
Slightly useful	1	6.7%
Not at all useful	0	0%
Total	15	100%

Slido Responses and Emerging Themes

Audience Questions

8. Attendees raised a number of questions and observations during the session. Whilst the questions varied, several recurring themes emerged.
9. The most common themes related to:
 - Recruitment and retention of LPB members, particularly employee representatives.
 - Maintaining an appropriate balance of experience and representation on boards.
 - Turnover of elected members and the impact on board continuity.
 - The role of the Scheme Manager within governance structures.
 - Whether boards should consider the appointment of independent chairs.
 - The importance of training and support for both board members and pension administration teams.
 - Encouraging greater engagement in pension governance matters.
10. These discussions reflected challenges that many authorities continue to face and reinforced the importance of effective succession planning, member engagement and ongoing training provision.

Future Governance Challenges

11. Delegates were asked what they considered to be the biggest challenge facing firefighter pension scheme governance over the next five years. The responses highlighted concerns centred on organisational resilience, resources and expertise.
12. Key themes included:
 - Loss of pensions expertise across the sector.
 - Difficulties recruiting and retaining suitably skilled individuals.
 - Resource constraints and lack of resilience.

- Reliance on a small number of key individuals creating single points of failure.
- Concerns regarding the future availability of specialist pension administration services.
- Maintaining pace with governance developments occurring in other public service pension schemes.
- The complexity created by multiple Scheme Managers operating across England.

13. Collectively, these responses suggest that delegates view capacity, capability and resilience as the principal strategic risks facing firefighter pension governance in the medium term.

Support Required by Local Pension Boards

14. Delegates were asked what support would help LPBs become more effective. Three clear themes emerged from the responses:

- Greater clarity regarding the role and expectations of LPB members.
- Access to a structured programme of ongoing training and development.
- Practical guidance and examples of effective board structures and governance arrangements.

15. These findings align closely with the work already being undertaken by the Committee to improve governance effectiveness and support LPB members through training, guidance and sharing of good practice.

Challenges for New Board Members

16. Delegates were also asked where new LPB members most commonly struggle following appointment. Responses highlighted several consistent themes.

17. Key areas identified were:

- Acquiring sufficient knowledge and understanding of complex pension arrangements.
- Understanding the Sargeant remedy and wider legislative developments.
- Developing confidence to challenge constructively.
- Knowing what questions to ask and when.
- Building technical knowledge at the outset of their appointment.

18. The responses reinforce the importance of robust induction arrangements, accessible learning materials and opportunities for continued development throughout a member's tenure on the Board.

Next Steps

19. The feedback gathered through both the formal evaluation process and the Slido engagement exercises provides valuable insight into the priorities and concerns of LPB members and governance practitioners across the sector.
20. The findings will be used to inform ongoing work by the Committee, including:
 - Future LPB training and development provision.
 - The development of topic-specific training opportunities.
 - Governance good practice guidance.
 - Support materials for new LPB members and Chairs.
 - Consideration of Board effectiveness and succession planning arrangements.
21. Initial feedback from the panel session has already highlighted appetite for more focused training on areas such as governance effectiveness, cyber security, regulatory compliance and wider governance responsibilities, which the Secretariat is currently exploring with sector partners.

Recommendations

The LPB Effectiveness Committee is asked to:

1. Note the positive feedback received from delegates attending the LPB panel session.
2. Note the key themes identified through the Slido responses.
3. Consider how the findings may inform future LPB effectiveness initiatives, guidance and training provision.
4. Provide any comments on additional actions that should be taken in response to the feedback received.