

Scheme Advisory Board

4 July 2016

For the attention of Local Pension Board Chairs, Fire Authority Chairs and Chief Fire Officers

Dear colleagues,

Firefighters Pension Scheme (England) Scheme Advisory Board

I am pleased to confirm that the Firefighters Pension Scheme Advisory Board (England) has now been established.

The members of the board are

Chair – Malcolm Eastwood	
Employer Representatives	Employee Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Rebecca Knox• Cllr John Fuller• Cllr Philip Howson• Cllr Thomas Wright• Cllr Darrell Pulk• Cllr Roger Price*• Vacancy *	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sean Starbuck (FBU)• Dave Limer (FBU)• Samantha Rye (FBU)• Francis Bishop (FBU)• Des Prichard (APFO)• Glyn Morgan (FOA)• Tristan Ashby (RFU)

- Cllr Roger Price (once appointed by the Secretary of State) will replace Cllr Jeremy Hilton.
- A change in LGA membership means we currently have a vacancy. The procedure for election to the Board ensures that LGA nominated representatives reflect both political balance and type of fire authority. The Conservative group office has therefore been asked to provide a suitable nomination, and will do so following on from the LGA conference

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself for those who I have not yet had the pleasure to meet.

As a Yorkshireman I joined the West Riding County Fire Service as a Firefighter, and retired in 2004 having served as Chief Fire Officer of Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service for 9 years, since retirement I have continued my work with CFOA and APFO for whom I represent Retired Principal Fire Officers.

As well as having been appointed as the Chairman of the Firefighters Pension Schemes Advisory Board (England), I also sit as a Scheme Member on the Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority Pensions Advisory Board.

Scheme Advisory Board

The Scheme Advisory Board have now met twice and are keen to engage with yourselves as Local Pension Board Chairs, I would be happy along with Clair Alcock the LGA Firefighters Pension Adviser and Adviser to the Scheme Advisory Board, as well as current acting Secretariat to the board to speak to each Chair of the board via a conference call. If you are interested in taking me up on that offer, please contact Clair to arrange.

Clair is also arranging further training sessions for boards at a small fee, please contact Clair if you wish to know more.

Purpose of the Scheme Advisory Board

The purpose of the Scheme Advisory Board as noted in the Terms of Reference is to;

(a) Provide advice in response to a request from the Secretary of State on the desirability of making changes to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes (FPSs).

(b) Provide advice to scheme managers and local pension boards in relation to the effective and efficient administration and management of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes (FPSs)

In order to discharge its statutory functions, and to resource matters that the SAB has been asked to take forward by the Government, the work plan of the Scheme Advisory Board is to;

- Support local pension boards
- Advise local pension boards
- Strategically lead Fire Pension Scheme communications
- Improve scheme administration
- Ensure cost effectiveness of scheme administration
- Advise on how to reduce of costs of scheme administration

Advice to Local Pension Boards

We will shortly contact boards with a survey to understand the constitution of each board, please in the meantime feel free to email Clair with any information regarding your board and any issues that you presently have that you would wish to escalate.

It is strongly recommended that all Local Pension Boards familiarise themselves with the very tight timescales for providing the 31st March 2016 valuation data to GAD (12th August 2016), and issuing the Annual Benefits Statements (31st August 2016), and are provided with assurances that these are on track.

Scheme Advisory Board

I have attached a short presentation that may be used at Local Pension Board meetings to update your members of the boards of some current issues that you will wish to be aware of.

Support Framework

I would urge each board to be familiar with the framework that exists to support boards. Each Fire Authority is invited to attend their regional group, there are 6 regional groups, North East, North West, Midlands, South Eastern, South Western and Eastern who meet quarterly, two members of each regional group attend the Technical group who meet twice a year.

As boards I would urge you to be familiar with your regional representative from your authority to ensure any issues you wish to be presented to the Scheme Advisory Board are represented at the meetings.

The Scheme Advisory Board have agreed a method of escalation for any issue the board or Fire Authority determine in its capacity of assisting the scheme manager.

The item should be tabled at the next regional pension officer group, if the group cannot resolve and agree the issue should be escalated, it is referred to the UK Firefighters technical group.

If the technical group cannot resolve and agree the issue should be escalated, it is escalated to the Scheme Advisory Board.

The Scheme Advisory Board will consider the issue with advice from their technical advisers, and respond appropriately. This may include but not limited to the possible following responses;

- A. The Scheme Advisory Board may determine that there is sufficient existing guidance for Fire Authorities to make a determination, and refer back to the board / authority raising the issue.
- B. The Scheme Advisory Board may determine that a change to legislation is necessary to correct the regulations and request the Home Office to act appropriately.
- C. The Scheme Advisory Board may determine that legal advice on the interpretation of a regulation would be of value to all authorities and take this up appropriately.
- D. The Scheme Advisory Board may agree the issue needs to be dealt with by a guidance note.

Scheme Advisory Board

Budget for the Firefighters Scheme Advisory Board (England) 2016/2017

No doubt you will be aware that Under the Firefighter Pension Scheme 2014 Regulations 4H, the Firefighter Pension Scheme (England) Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) are required to set an annual budget for approval by the Secretary of State to be levied to Scheme Managers.

In setting this budget the objective of the SAB is to look for cost savings to Fire Authorities and an improved service to members by reducing duplication and undertaking guidance and communications centrally.

The board are working with the Home Office to submit this budget to the ministers and will provide further details as soon as we are able.

Dates for your diary

Nationally, there will be a two day event at Local Government House in London on 10th and 11th October as follows:

10th October

1.30 pm – 4.00 pm – Firefighters' Technical Group (all welcome)

4.30 pm – Round Table for LPB Chairs and Scheme Advisory Board followed by a drinks reception.

11th October

Firefighters' Pension Scheme AGM (for Boards and Scheme Administration)

More information will be available nearer the time.

Contacting the Scheme Advisory Board

The SAB welcomes feedback from Fire Authorities and Pension Boards, please contact the SAB Secretariat, (email clair.alcock@local.gov.uk) if you would like to share your views in respect of this matter or to find out more about the work of the Scheme Advisory Board.

The next meeting of the Scheme Advisory Board is 7th September 2016

Yours faithfully,

Malcolm Eastwood

Chair, Scheme Advisory Board