



Minutes – Scottish Firefighters’ Pension Board – 20 August 2019 (No. 18)

Attendees:

William Littleboy (WL)	Chair
Catherine Skinner (CS)	Vice Chair
Alan Duncan (AD)	Board Member
Stephen Wright (SW)	Board Member
Brian Cameron (BC)	Board Member
David McGown (DMcG)	Board Member
Denise Christie (DC)	Board Member
Penelope Cooper (PC)	SPPA Chief Executive
Dev Dey (DD)	SPPA Head of Customer Services
Gerry McGarry (GMcG)	SPPA Customer Services Manager
Molly Wyllie (MW)	SPPA Governance - minutes

Apologies:

Alex Miller	Board Member
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1. Welcome and introductions (including declaration of conflict of interest and board changes)

WL welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1a. No declarations of conflict of interest was made.

1b. WL advised that Alex Miller had joined the board as a member representative, but had not been able to attend today’s meeting.

2a. Draft minutes and action points from previous meeting

Draft minutes from the meeting on 19 February 2019 were adopted with one change. Note: There was a meeting of Board Members in May, but as the meeting was not quorate, only notes were taken.

2b. Outstanding Actions

The board discussed the outstanding actions and the following updates noted:

- F12.04 6/3/18 – PC advised that a Communications Manager had been appointed, starting on 12 September. The Communications Strategy will be a priority. DC suggested that SFRS could link in with SPPA to discuss the use of social media to deliver information to members – remains open

- F14.03 28/8/18 – GMcG advised that a demonstration of member portals would be provided at the November meeting which would take place at SPPA
- F15.01 4/12/18 – GMcG advised that the team had confirmed that it was possible to add a single survey link to the Member Self Service Portal but would advise the board when this was done – remains open
- F15.03 4/12/18 and F16.06 19/2/19 – now combined – PC advised that a Governance Manager had been appointed and would join the Agency on 4 November 2019. WL asked board members to consider what training they required and forward any items to the Governance team – remains open
- F16.03 19/2/19 – GMcG advised that a presentation would be delivered at the next meeting in November – remains open
- F16.04 19/2/19 – WL asked if an assessment of the impact could be provided if the GMP exercise did not go as planned

3. SPPA Update

Annual Benefit Statements (ABS)

GMcG provided an update to the paper. Over 6,000 statements had been processed and would be issued by second class post on 23 August 2019. Members would receive their statements prior to the 31 August deadline. GMcG confirmed that the 100% target across all three schemes had been achieved. It was noted that this years' exercise had shown an increase in active members. Following discussion, it was agreed that SPPA would work with SFRS to analyse the reasons for the increase.

AP1	SPPA to work with SFRS to establish the reasons for increase in active members
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Annual Allowance (AA)

GMcG advised that members likely to be affected by AA had been identified and work to meet the 6 October deadline was underway.

Customer Contact Team (CCT)

GMcG advised that training was underway for CCT staff. Initially this involved dealing with emails, which would allow staff to become familiar with the type of enquiries and the terminology used etc. A date for the full handover had yet to be agreed. DMcG asked if the team were working through the backlog of emails. GMcG confirmed that there was not a backlog for Firefighters.

Customer Service Target Operating Model (TOM)

DD advised that he would be looking at the skills and resources required to ensure the TOM delivers the best service for customers and that the CCT was a priority. DC commented that the ABS issue would result in a peak of activity, which would require sufficient resource to handle enquiries. DD stated that the Agency would ensure that the right resource and skilled staff would be in place.

SW noted that SFRS had shared leaver date with the Agency in an effort to assist forward planning. Following discussion, it was agreed that this information would be provided to the Agency on a quarterly basis.

AP2	SFRS to forward leaver data to SPPA quarterly
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Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP)

GMcG advised that a final data cut was expected from HMRC by the end of the year. Work is now moving on to the rectification stage. Letters for members are being drafted and will be shared with Scottish Government Legal Department. When returned, it was agreed that these would be shared with the board prior to issue. A circular would be issued to employers and information added to the SPPA website. Following discussion, it was also agreed that SPPA would agree a timeline for the distribution of member correspondence and share this with the Board.

AP3	SPPA to share draft GMP member correspondence with the board prior to issue
AP4	SPPA to share timeline for distributing correspondence to members with the Board

McCloud/Sargeant

GMcG advised that the case had been returned to the Appeal Tribunal to direct and agreed a remedy and the outcome was awaited. Work had been undertaken to assess the impact on the Firefighters' scheme and also across other schemes. Work was being undertaken by Policy Department who had been in contact with HM Treasury. SW asked if there was a timeline and whether the options available were known. GMcG advised that neither was known at present. DC asked if the impact on the Agency's costs and resources was known. PC advised that this would be reviewed.

Overpayments

GMcG advised that 0.05% of all payments made had resulted in an overpayment, with 'death' being the biggest cause. Following analysis, no pattern to the nature of the 3rd party or official error overpayments could be identified.

Member Self Service (MSS)

GMcG asked if any of the Board members would like to be involved in test the new MSS, to forward their names to him.

AP5	Board members who wanted to be involved in testing the new MSS to forward their names to SPPA
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4. Firefighters' Dashboard

GMcG advised that the numbers involved in the member survey were small. It was hoped that the introduction of MSS and single event surveying would provide more relevant feedback. DD stated that context was not provided eg: why members get in touch. GMcG asked the Board to consider what information they wanted on the dashboard.

AP6	Board members to advise what information they required regarding member contact/surveying
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5. Risk Register

GMcG advised that changes to the Risk Register were noted in red. WL asked if the impact of a 'no deal' Brexit had been considered. PC advised that this had been considered and that it was unlikely that there would be an impact, as there would be no change for overseas pensioners. DC asked if the effect on staff taking account of changes proposed under the Target Operating Model in risk 6, had been considered. DD advised that as the recently appointed Head of Customer Services, he was in the process of understanding the impact of changes to ensure staff were fully involved. DC asked if the Staff Survey, noted in risk 12 had had an impact. PC advised that a number of initiatives had been introduced to assist staff through the proposed changes. This included the assistance from the HMRC Surge Team. The Agency had trialled a new platform, Trickle. This provided an avenue for staff to post ideas and issues, which could be done anonymously if required.

6. Proposed Pensioner Payslip Changes

GMcG advised that to reduce costs, lessen our carbon footprint and standardise the member's payslip template, changes had been proposed. It was also hoped that the introduction of MSS would contribute to reducing the need to issue payslips. Changes will be introduced from November 2019.

7. Any Other Competent Business

7.1 PC advised that she had recently visited the Pension Regulator offices. PC advised that the focus of the Regulator would change in the future, in that they would be introducing thematic reviews. This would involve more contact with the Agency. This may also involve engagement with Pension Boards.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

Next meeting is scheduled for 19 November 2019 at Tweedbank. WL asked that this meeting be focussed on communications.

WL also suggested that the board meet the new staff who had joined and those who would be joining the Agency in November.

No other business was raised. WL thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.