



Minutes – Scottish Firefighters’ Pension Board – 6 May 2021 (No. 26)

Attendees:

William Littleboy (WL)	Chair
Andy Marchant (AM)	Vice Chair
John McKenzie (JMcK)	Board Member
Alan Duncan (AD)	Board Member
Alexander Miller (AM)	Board Member
Rachel Miller (RM)	SPPA Interim Head of Operational Excellence
Dev Dey (DD)	SPPA Head of Customer Services
Jennifer Love (JL)	SPPA Customer Service Manager
Phil Heywood (PH)	SPPA Interim Head of Pension Platform Procurement
Hannah Grout (HG)	SPPA Risk and Assurance Manager
Stuart MacArthur (SMacA)	SPPA Governance Manager
Jonathan Sharp (JS)	SPPA Head of Security
Molly Wyllie	SPPA Governance Minutes

Apologies:

Ross Haggart	Board Member
Stephen Wright	Board Member
Denise Christie	Board Member

1. Welcome and introductions (including declaration of conflict of interest)

1.1 WL opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. WL advised that with the apologies received as noted above, the Board would not be quorate and that any relevant agreements would be reached by consensus. WL noted that discussion was underway regarding a possible change to the quorum going forward.

1.2 No conflicts of interest noted.

2.1 Draft minutes from previous meeting

The minutes from the meeting of 15 February 2021 were adopted without amendment.

2.2 Actions outstanding

The outstanding actions were reviewed and the following noted:

- F23.02 7/7/20 – new Risk Governance Group is now in place – action closed
- F23.03 7/7/20 - details of return to office provided within Customer Service update – action closed
- F23.05 7/7/20 - verbal update provided – action closed

- F1120.01 5/11/20 – measurement of first time resolution provided in Customer Service update – action closed
- F1120.04 5/11/20 – verbal update provided – action closed
- F0221.01 15/2/21 – Risk Breach Log now provided quarterly – action closed
- F0221.02 15/2/21 – customer feedback will be included in the Customer Service update – action closed

2.3 Additional agenda item – Update on Chief Executive

WL advised the Board that Pension Board Chairs and Vice Chairs had attended a meeting with the interim Chief Executive and asked AM to provide a short update to the Board.

AM advised that concerns had been raised regarding the number of changes to senior managers and the use of interim managers over recent months. RM provided an update regarding the recent changes to the Chief Executive (CE) post. This post had been filled on an interim basis following the permanent CEs secondment. The post was filled by Matt Valente (MV), on an interim basis, from November 2020. To accommodate this, MV had introduced a new organisational structure which included Operational Excellence and Colleague Experience. Following a period of absence by MV, a new interim CE was appointed from 26 April 2014, David Robb. During this period, support had been and continued to be provided by SG. AM stated that there was concern over the level of stability at a senior level particularly during the IT transformation programme and the impact on this. RM agreed and confirmed that the senior team were aware of the potential risk impacts, however, recruitment for a permanent CE would be underway soon. RM confirmed that any changes to the senior team would be notified to the Board. AD asked if a copy of the current organisational structure could be provided.

0521.01	SPPA to provide a copy of the current organisational structure to the Board
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3. Operational Excellence

RM started by providing a comprehensive overview of the work undertaken by the team. This included all projects, programmes and annual events, other than Pension Platform Procurement (PPP). RM advised that the development of a Programme Management Office was underway, to include the recruitment of a PMO Manager. A Planning and Performance team was also in development, with the recruitment of Business Analysts underway. A review of the strategic and departmental key performance indicators was ongoing with the senior team. The Operational Excellence team would be expanded to include three data scientists to support this work. A further Data Analyst was now working with the team. Their role was to work with business areas, look for areas of improvement and review processes.

RM explained that the role of the team is to provide SPPA with the information to identify how we are performing and the opportunities and areas for improvement. Where changes are identified, these would go through the Change Management Process and where appropriate taken forward as a project.

RM advised that the priority at the moment was to work with the senior team to complete the Annual Report and Accounts. Also to identify aims, objectives and performance for the next 12 months. At a team level this would include a full review and rewrite of the Project Manager Framework to ensure effective control and the consistency of management over projects. Also improving the Change Management process to make it easier for colleagues to raise a change and to pass this through a Change Board to ensure this is tracked throughout.

WL commented that he welcomed the improvements proposed and recognised the complexity of undertaking this in the current circumstances. WL asked what was meant about data analysis, whether this related to a fundamental problem with data, or data quality. RM explained the role of data scientists and analysts and how they work with the wider teams within Customer Services. WL asked how the necessary communication and collaboration would work across the teams involved and the impact on other projects, in particular the PPP. RM advised that a status report meeting was now held weekly, where all project managers provided an update on progress and status. This ensures that any impact is taken into account and also provides management information for the senior team.

3.1 Annual Pension Increase (API)

RM confirmed that the API exercise had been completed successfully this year. No significant issues were raised.

3.2 Member Self Service (MSS)

In the process of trying to re-launch MSS. The proposal is to issue all Annual Benefit Statements (ABS) via MSS. Work has been started to engage members in this. This is included in the project managers work stream for ABS delivery this year which will also look for improvements to MSS registration and create a communications plan to increase the uptake rate. AM asked that the board be provided with information regarding the use of MSS and to what extent people are engaging with it. RM confirmed that work still continued to improve MSS. AM asked if a demonstration could be provided to the Board. AD asked if the system included additional function to allow members to make changes, an example being change of address. RM confirmed that there were low level changes that members can make. JMcK commented that the experience of the last year would encourage members to use the online platform more readily. He stated that the FBU would be happy to be involved in any future engagement sessions.

0521.02	SPPA to provide a breakdown of the number of members using MSS and the extent of that use
0521.03	SPPA to provide a demonstration of MSS to the Vice Chair

3.3 ABS and Annual Allowance (AA)

RM advised that a different approach would be taken this year, in that these exercises would be run as projects with a dedicated project manager. Data issued and lessons learned from the past 3 years had been taken into account and changes implemented. Customer Services were supporting this in the provision of

3 staff members. RM stated that the projects were on track and she was confident that they would be delivered successfully by 31 August.

3.4 2015 Remedy

RM stated that the team were working with the Class Group on automated solutions and cost sharing. Feedback and suggestions had been shared with Heywood. The team were working with Customer Services to review immediate detriment cases and the impact on resourcing. Work was underway to separate members into cohorts and an external provider had been engaged to review and analyse data. Also planning for the migration of protected members to the CARE scheme in April 2022. A factsheet setting out the legislative timescales had been developed and would be shared with the Board.

0521.04	RM to share factsheet setting out legislative timescales with the Board
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WL asked if the automated solution was transferable to other schemes. RM confirmed that the differences between the Altair scheme systems would not allow for that. Other contingencies were in place for NHS and Teachers'.

4. Customer Services

4a. Return to Work

DD advised that SPPA had been following current SG and UK guidelines in relation to Covid 19 and working from home. An internal survey had been undertaken to have a clearer view of how staff see their working environment going forward. At present, working from home would continue until end June when the circumstances would be reviewed in line with SG guidance. Details would be shared with the Board when known.

0521.05	DD to share details of return to work when known with the Board
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4b. Telephony

DD advised that the telephone lines had been opened to all calls from 26 April 2021 which had been a great success. JL confirmed that the lines are open between 9 am to 1.00 pm for all enquiries. From 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm a reduced service for critical calls including, death notifications, ill health is in place. Work had been undertaken to provide more information on calls and also training provided for call handlers. Within the first week operating the new system, 1,500 calls had been recorded; an increase x 3 over the previous week. This had also reduced the number of emails received. All calls from members of the Firefighters scheme were resolved at first contact. A review of all service level agreements (SLA) was underway including data around this. This would assist in setting new SLAs which would be shared with the Board. Review of the enquiries received showed no real trends. AM commented that the performance indicator for calls may need to be reduced. More detailed and relevant management information would be provided at the next meeting. WL commented that quality of responses was also very important. JL advised that additional evaluations had already been put in place to monitor the quality of responses.

4b. Recruitment

JL advised that 150 interviews had taken place and offers had been issued to those who had been successful. It is hoped that the new staff will join SPPA in June and July. The intention is to stagger the intake to allow for training and induction. Work had been undertaken to review induction material and this would be provided over a four week period. Recent experience with inducting and training temporary staff had proven valuable for the coming intake. An update would be provided at the next Board.

0521.06	JL to provide a progress update on staff recruitment and training at next meeting
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4.1 Dashboard

WL commented that email responses had missed the target. JL advised that the number of emails would reduce as the telephone lines opened up and this would show an improved performance. AM how first time resolution was measured. JL advised that for telephone enquiries, member records were checked to see if a 'call back' had been required. For emails, this was whether a task had to be created. New performance information would be provided at the next meeting.

0521.07	JL to provide information: time taken to respond to emails, was enquiry resolved and if this was resolved at first contact
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JL thanked Andy, John and Denise who had taken part in discussion about customer feedback. The report provided to the Board detailed the feedback analysis for the end of the year. JL noted that the survey had been put on hold during the pandemic, but this had now been resumed. The intention is to build on the discussions had and to report to the Board in quarter 2.

0521.08	JL to include information regarding customer feedback for next meeting
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JMcK welcomed the update on recruitment and also the opportunity to take part in discussion regarding customer feedback.

5. Pension Platform Programme Update

PH explained that the programme had been noted as amber moving to red. This was due to the absence of the Senior Responsible Owner. The impact of this period had resulted in a delay in approval of the business case and mandatory assurance reviews. Ministerial approval had now been moved to October 2021. In terms of the overall programme, the contract award would now be August/September 2021. However, the extension contract had been signed with Aquilla Heywood up to March 2026 with the option of a 12 month extension to March 2027. AM asked if there was a significant field for prospective bids. PH advised that the field was limited, however, in this procurement process, was to encourage a more componentised approach whereby one main supplier would partner with other vendor/s to provide the totality of the system, which in particular involved

calculations. AM commented that overall this was good to hear, however, it was important that for stability, a new CE be in place as soon as possible. WL also noted that SPPA would need to find a way to mitigate the risk of having interim leadership. PH explained the history of action and steps taken and confirmed that despite the issues with continuity, from SG perspective there was a level of continuity which the new interim CE would pick up.

6. Risk Update

HG advised that she understood she had provided a large amount of information, but as this was still in its infancy, it was important that the Board have a broad view across SPPA. Work was underway to review what strategic risks would be for the 2021-22 year.

6.1 Strategic Risk Register

HG advised that the Strategic Risk Register showed key areas where targets had been met. Decisions had still to be made as to what elements are reasonable to keep as well as what are the actions that can be seen moving forward. WL commented that working virtually and moving toward a hybrid way of working would require the Board to understand how these would be managed. WL also noted the absence of risk associated with the political and constitutional environment, particularly any progression towards a referendum. HG stated that this would fall to SG core and policy and regulation. RM noted that at present this was hypothetical and it would be difficult to forecast the impact on SPPA. HG advised that anything related would be picked up under horizon scanning. WL asked for clarification whether there was an expectation on the Board to ensure there is a formal risk assessment for this. SMacA advised that the Board has a responsibility to understand how risk is managed in relation to scheme and it is a legitimate question for the Board to raise. It was agreed that this be raised as an action for clarification.

0521.09	HG to clarify how SPPA are considering the risks related to a possible 2 nd independence referendum
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6.2 Scheme Risk Register

HG noted that the register was still in development.

6.3 Breach Log

HG noted that the log had not been added to since the last report. AM stated that it was important for the Board to be aware of any breaches and receive the report on a quarterly basis. AM asked for some form of objectivity to help guide and know where RAG status goes on the breach log.

0521.10	HG to update the breach log to reflect the meaning and status of the RAG
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6.4 Overpayments

HG noted that the only thing to note was that length of days for recovery had risen slightly.

Following a short discussion, it was agreed to present an executive summary along with the risk register and breach log.

7. Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure

No comments raised.

8. Governance Update

SMacA advised that Pension Regulator was currently consulting on a consolidation of their Codes of Practice. This involved combining 10 of the current 15 codes into a singular modular code. The consultation runs through to 26 May and Board members had the option to take part. The team were mapping what the proposed new code looks like. Public Service Schemes are more heavily impacted by the code and there are a number of new modules that would apply to public service schemes. We would respond to the consultation and would share the response with the Board and would also welcome any comments to include in the response. The new code would not come into effect until the end of 2021. The intention would be to provide the Board with a regular tracker of how SPPA are placed against the requirements set out in the new code.

0521.11	SMacA to share consultation response with the Board
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AM asked how significant the impact of the new code would be for SPPA. SMacA advised that there are a number of new sections and language which needs to be fully understood. AM asked if an impact assessment would be undertaken when the new code was introduced. SMacA confirmed that this would be done but noted that the focus at this time was on understanding what the response to the consultation would be. It was agreed that the Board did not need to see the response before it was issued.

8.1 Training Webinars

SMacA advised that Government Actuaries Department would be providing a webinar on the scheme revaluation process.

9. Data Protection and Information Assurance Update

JS advised that cyber security was a continuing risk and keeping colleagues informed was part of business as usual. WL asked if the dependency on using the 'cloud' for information storage and retrieval. There did not appear to be a comprehensive evaluation of how SPPA controlled the risks associated. A status report would be useful for the next Board.

0521.12	JS to provide further information connected to the risks associated with the use of cloud services and how these were controlled
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10. Any other competent business

No other business raised.

11. Date of next meeting

Next meeting scheduled for 7 August 2021.

WL advised that discussion had taken place with the Governance team regarding the Pension Board Annual Report 2020-21. This would include the Chair's report and forward look. Also included would be change of working environment, return to work, customer service changes to telephony and the 2015 Remedy. AM asked that changes to the senior team and stability of leadership should be included. WL added that thanks to both SPPA and SFRS for maintaining the service throughout the pandemic would be included.

Summary of new actions:

No	Para	Action	Due date
0521.01	2.3	SPPA to provide a copy of the current organisational structure to the Board	Asap
0521.02	3.2	SPPA to provide a breakdown of the number of members using MSS and the extent of that use	Next meeting
0521.03	3.2	SPPA to provide a demonstration of MSS to the Vice Chair	When available
0521.04	3.4	RM to share factsheet setting out legislative timescales with the Board	When available
0521.05	4a	DD to share details of return to work when known with the Board	When available
0521.06	4b	JL to provide a progress update on staff recruitment and training at next meeting	Next meeting
0521.07	4.1	JL to provide information: time taken to respond to emails, was enquiry resolved and if this was resolved at first contact	Next meeting
0521.08	4.1	JL to include information regarding customer feedback for next meeting	Next meeting
0521.09	6.1	HG to clarify how SPPA are considering the risks related to a possible 2 nd independence referendum	When available
0521.10	6.3	HG to update the breach log to reflect the meaning and status of the RAG	Next meeting
0521.11	8	SMacA to share consultation response with the Board	When available
0521.12	9	JS to provide further information connected to the risks associated with the use of cloud services and how these were controlled	Next meeting