



Scottish Public
Pensions Agency
Buidheann Peinnseanan
Poblach na h-Alba

Scottish Firefighters' Pension Board

2022-23 Annual Report

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1. Introduction

This report covers the main work of the Scottish Firefighters' Pension Board (the "Pension Board") from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

More detailed information about the Pension Board, including its Terms of Reference, membership, agendas and minutes of its meetings are available on the [Firefighter's Pension Board section](#) of the SPPA's website.

2. The Pension Board Purpose and Role

The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 required the establishment of Pension Boards to "assist the Scheme Manager" in securing compliance with regulations and other legislation.

The Board is responsible for "assisting the Scheme Manager" with the effective and efficient governance and administration of the scheme. This includes ensuring compliance with Scheme regulations, and any other relevant legislation and requirements imposed by The Pension Regulator in relation to the scheme.

SPPA assumes the day to day role of Responsible Authority and Scheme Manager as delegated by Scottish Ministers via the [Agency Framework Document](#).

3. Update from the Independent Chair

I mentioned last year that there had been some significant changes to the way members receive pension services from the SPPA. Most notable here has been the reduction in telephony and the growing importance on online service delivery through the Members Self Service Portal. This has meant members have undergone a fundamental change in how services are provided at the same time as introducing major changes such as the McCloud Sargent remedy. The Board has been concerned that this extent and pace of change represents an enhanced risk to how members perceive the servicing of their pensions.

The Members perception of service levels has been probed by the Board at every meeting where they also receive a detailed information pack including information on the adoption of the Members Self Service Portal. Suffice it to say that despite acknowledgment of the risk to service levels the Board is unaware of any significant impact to Members satisfaction with the service they receive. This now dates back over a year and I feel it appropriate to acknowledge the record of SPPA in preserving a positive perception of service standards through this challenging period.

The Board hopes that as experience with the self-service portal grows not only will an increasing proportion of service interactions be automated but the digital records will represent a better source of data to inform all parties about how well things are really working. Based upon the observed results the Board is confident that a high proportion of members receive the right pension at the right time. By now the data on the portal should be able to confirm this.

4. The Pension Board

Composition

Member Name	Nominated by	Date Joined the Board
William Littleboy	Independent	20 August 2018
Andy Marchant	Independent	1 August 2020
John McKenzie	Fire Brigades Union	1 March 2021
Scott McCabe	Fire Brigades Union	1 May 2022
Angus Sproul	Fire Brigades Union	1 May 2022
Ross Haggart	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	1 March 2020
Stephen Wright	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	1 April 2018
Alan Duncan	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	1 April 2015

Meetings and attendance

During the 2022-2023 scheme year, the Pension Board met on four occasions. Meetings were held in a hybrid style – with a mix of members attending both on site at Tweedbank and remotely.

Attendance can be noted in the table below.

Pension Board Member	Attendance			
	17-May-22	30-Aug-22	22-Nov-22	2-Mar-23
Independent Members				
William Littleboy	✓	✓	x	x
Andy Marchant	✓	✓	✓	✓
Member Nominated				
John McKenzie	x	✓	✓	✓
Scott McCabe	✓	✓	✓	x
Angus Sproul	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employer Nominated				
Ross Haggart	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stephen Wright	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alan Duncan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Average	87.5%	100%	87.5%	75%

Training and development

Board members undertake an induction programme led by the SPPA, and are required to complete TPR's Trustee Knowledge and Understanding following their appointment.

The SPPA also run a series of webinars to help develop Board members. Four were run in 2022-2023 with attendance at each session outlined in the table below.

Member	TPR COP	Policy	Finance	Procurement
William Littleboy				
Andy Marchant	✓		✓	✓
John McKenzie	✓		✓	
Scott McCabe				
Angus Sproul	✓			
Ross Haggart	✓			
Stephen Wright	✓		✓	
Alan Duncan	✓	✓	✓	✓

Effectiveness

The Board undertook a self-assessment of its effectiveness in quarter 4 of 2022-23. Results were analysed and discussed at the Board meeting in March 2023. Improvements to Board operation are underway, and we expect to see an improvement in the Board's assessment of its effectiveness at the next self-assessment in quarter 4 of 2023-24.

Costs

The Pension Board has incurred £0 of fees and expenses over the course of the year.

5. Work of the Board

The over-riding objective of the Board remains to assist SPPA to pay the right pensions to the right people at the right time. There is a substantial amount of change underway at the moment adding operational complexity to this task and the Board needs to understand ensure the proper management of the change program.

I see the second priority as the full embracement of the new ways of delivering services to members without eroding levels. As I mentioned earlier we can be confident a good start has been made but I'm sure all involved still have much to learn about supporting a fully digital service and that we can prize more value from our portal.

6. Looking forward

I'd like to begin this by looking back as Alan Duncan is stepping down from this Board and will be missed. Alan combines a mature approach to governance with mastery of the finance function and a high sense of responsibility, making him an extremely valuable Member of the Board who will undoubtedly be missed. We welcome Nicola Hector as his replacement.

One area to watch is the extent to which members are taking early retirement as an option, which seems quite high. Whilst not wanting to deny this to members some consideration needs to be given as to whether this impacts the demographics of the SFRS.

7. Annex A - Customer Metrics

Scheme Membership

	March 2022	March 2023
Members	5,770	5,705
Pensioners	5,366	5,628
Deferred	2,169	2,303

Customer Contacts*

* Figures from dedicated Firefighter contact queues

	2021/22	2022/23
Average answer time	6 minutes 5 seconds	1 minute 8 seconds
Call volume	2,637	2,533
Email response within 24h %	41%	81%
Email volume	4,593	4,317
Total website views	17,205	17,809
Calculator views	18,546	16,178

Year-on-Year Key Performance Indicators (2021-22 vs 2022-23)

	Target	Volume	2021/22	Volume	2022/23
New Awards (Timeliness)	98%	324	100%	434	100%
New Payments Accuracy	95%	387	100%	522	98.39%
Death in Service	98%	2	100%	7	100%
Death in Pension/ Retirement	98%	63	95.24%	72	95.83%
Transfer Value In (quote)	100%	47	97.87%	85	94.12%
Transfer Value In (actual)	90%	33	54.55%	59	83.05%
Transfer Value Out (quote)	100%	16	87.50% 100%	21	76.19% 90.48%
Transfer Value Out (actual)	100%	4	100%	8	100%
Estimates	90%	424	95.99%	347	76.37%
Divorce CETV	100%	19	100%	20	100%
Divorce PSOD	100%	9	100%	5	100%
Annual Statements	100%	5881	100%	5801	98.7%
Records Maintenance errors	95%	89	99.42%	16	99.72%
Records Maintenance up to date	97%	6173	99.50%	6127	99.74%