



Meeting	Scottish Firefighters' Pension Board
Meeting date	29 February 2024
Meeting time	14:00 - 17:00
Meeting location	Virtual

Board members	William Littleboy (WL)	Chair
	Andy Marchant (AM)	Vice Chair
	Nicola Hector (NH)	Board Member
	Simon Leroux (SL)	Board Member
	Gus Sproul (GS)	Board Member
	Stephen Wright (SW)	Board Member
SPPA attendees	David Robb (DR)	SPPA Chief Executive
	David Gunner (DG)	SPPA Programme Director
	Clare Moffat (CM)	SPPA Corporate Governance Manager
	Christopher Nairns (CN)	SPPA Head of Organisational Service Delivery
	Laura Pacey (LP)	SPPA Head of Strategy & Communications
	Alan Paterson (AP)	SPPA Risk & Control Officer
	Jonathan Sharp (JS)	SPPA Data Protection and Information Governance Manager
Apologies	Liz Barnes (LB)	Board Member
	Scott McCabe (SM)	Board Member
	Frances Graham (FG)	SPPA Chief Operating Officer
Minute taker	Lisa Cossar	SPPA Governance Delivery Lead

1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chair welcomed all attendees.

Apologies were noted from LB, SM and FG. There were no declarations of interest noted.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 The Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.

3. Performance, Risk and Projects

3.1 Chief Executive Overview

The Board were provided with an update covering the following areas of interest:

- Recruitment for the CEO post is currently underway internally, to allow a managed transition for someone with public sector experience.
- SPPA have been allocated a challenging cost budget for the year alongside many other government bodies. Operating within the budget will require rigorous prioritisation of the use of resources but the CEO believed that member services could still be effectively delivered within that cost constraint. That will require constant monitoring during the year with any concerns escalated to Ministers in a timely fashion.

- Budget considerations on how to generate income are also being considered, potentially opening the Tweedbank building as a Scottish Government Hub. The SPPA are also moving to a 35hr working week, so focus on how to sustain services and workforce projections.
- Prioritisation for the SPPA are core services, including a focus on delivery, remedy obligations and investment in data quality and digital transformation.

The group discussed how the SPPA can deliver what it needs whilst maintaining a high level of service.

3.2 Operations

The SPPA provided an overview of Operations, noting:

- All payments were delivered accurately and on time.
- Future Remedy work - waiting for statutory instrument for Matthews. Once that is in place, will tie Booth and Matthews remedy work together (*correct definition of Booth and Matthews given post-meeting and noted at the end of the Minutes)
- A new Capacity Manager is in post, as well as a Customer Journey Manager.
- Technical working group to see draft proposal for Employer Charter and its associated delivery plan. Also working on annual business plan, which will feed into these delivery plans.

The group discussed the positives around focusing on the customer experience and welcomed the recruitment of a Customer Journey Manager.

3.3 Strategy and Communications

3.4 External Engagement

- The Employee newsletter has been issued. The Board discussed irregularities with the distribution list and an update was made to action F1223.01 for the SPPA to contact NH to update list.
- The website and content for new navigation to be completed early March. The group discussed the user data and sought clarification on the figures around member self-service and what constitutes an 'active user'.
- Member engagement webinars held every two months. The group noted that these had been well received and beneficial for those looking to retire.

F0229.01	The SPPA to provide the Board with clarification around what constitutes an 'active member' in relation to member self service section of website.
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3.5 Risk

The SPPA confirmed that Risk Champions are now in place across all teams, to ensure risks can flow from team registers up to Executive level. The Risk Assurance Framework is being reviewed for effectiveness.

3.6 Data Protection

The SPPA are working with suppliers to ensure guaranteed technical assurances around the data they are handling. It was noted that there is little access requests or data breaches at present.

3.7 Corporate Governance

The SPPA updated the Board, noting:

- Several Board membership tenures are due for renewal. The SPPA will following up with the relevant Board members in due course.
- The Pensions Regulator's (TPR) new General Code will come into effect on 27 March 2024. A webinar focusing on the new code will take place in March and Board members are encouraged to attend. It was highlighted that SPPA are in a good position to move forward with the new code.
- TPR scheme returns are within deadline.
- Annual Exercise polls have been issued to all Board members and they were encouraged to complete them.
- Annual Business Planning workshop will take place on 5th March 2024.

3.8 Programme and projects

Pension Platform Programme (PPP)

- Data has been successfully migrated.
- Phase 2 will look at benefits for operational staff and members. The new member portal will be demonstrated and shared to wider members once the new functionality is in place.
- Data to be connected to Pension Dashboard by October 2025.
- Digitalisation of whole retirement process.

Remedy

The SPPA provided an update and discussed the three categories of Remedy:

- Deferred choice – for those due to retire. 125 have been processed for Firefighters. This is an interim solution until the platform is ready.
- Immediate choice – for those already retired. The SPPA are working with Scottish Government automation to minimise staff impact and hope this will be ready around April 2024.
- Immediate Detriment – for those retired due to ill health, this will be looked at as a priority.

The group discussed further breakdowns in categories, for those currently in-service and who have a longer timeframe to retirement.

4 Other Board Business

4.1 Horizon Scanning

The SPPA highlighted that the Scottish Government have a series of papers titled 'Building a Better Scotland'. The latest paper to be issued will focus on pensions, with The SPPA contributing to the section on public pensions.

The Chair expressed best wishes to the CEO for his upcoming retirement.

5 Review of Outstanding Actions

5.1 Review of action points

The action points were reviewed, and the following were approved to close during the meeting:

F0323.01 F0907.04 F0907.08 F0323.04 F0907.07

The remaining actions were updated as follows:

- **F1223.01:** The SPPA to liaise with the Board to ensure distribution list for employee newsletter is accurate and up to date.

- **F1223.02:** The Board encourages good practice through having personal email addresses for all active members, to ensure future proofing for when members retire and lose work email address. The SPPA to look into how to obtain personal email addresses for all members and update at next Board meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 29 May 2024, 14.00-17.00.

Summary of new Actions

F0229.01	The SPPA to provide the Board with clarification around what constitutes an 'active member' in relation to member self-service section of website.
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***Clarification on definitions of Booth and Matthews:**

BOOTH: Following legal challenge, it was decided that allowances which should have been treated as pensionable were not. The period affected is 1 July 2015 until 1 July 2021. There are approx. 200 members directly affected. These members are already identified and will need to be given a choice on whether they pay the contributions retrospectively. 3000 members were also affected by an administrative error at SFRS when it was merged as a single employer.

MATTHEWS: Firefighters under the Retained Duty System from July 1, 2000, to April 5, 2006, were granted retroactive access to pension benefits. This decision led the UK government, Scottish, and Welsh ministers to amend the NFPS 2006 in 2014, introducing "special membership" for eligible firefighters to buy pensionable service during that period. Cohort 1 comprises those individuals who were employed as retained firefighters at any date during the period 7 April 2000 and 30 June 2000 inclusive. They may also have uninterrupted service prior to 7 April 2000. Cohort 2 comprises those individuals who were employed as retained firefighters at any date during the period 7 April 2000 and 30 June 2000 inclusive, and between 1 July 2000 and 5 April 2006 inclusive. Cohort 3 comprises those individuals who were employed as retained firefighters at any date during the period 1 July 2000 and 5 April 2006 inclusive and should have been eligible to join as part of the 2014 Options exercise but were not given the opportunity to do so.

Version Control		
		Version number
Date minutes sent to chair	18 March 2024	V1.0
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