



Scottish Public
Pensions Agency
Buidheann Peinnseanan
Poblach na h-Alba

Scottish Firefighters' Pension Board

2023-24 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 2023 to 31 March 2024.

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. This has continued in 2024 such that many services are now delivered online through the Members self-service portal. With the impact of Remedy affecting a number of members we are pleased to report that this transition in the way services are provided appears to have been implemented effectively.

Most notable here has been the reduction in telephone calls and the growing importance on online service delivery through the Members Self Service Portal. This has meant members have experienced a fundamental change in how services are provided at the same time as the introduction of major changes such as the McCloud Sargent Remedy.

The Pension Board has been concerned that this extent and pace of change represents an enhanced risk to how members perceive the servicing of their pensions. However, the Pension Board is unaware of any sign of deterioration of Members perception of service levels and would therefore congratulate the Agency on how this transition has been managed.

The Pension 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 Pension Board is confident that a high proportion of members receive the right pension at the right time. For members the data on the portal should be able to confirm this.

William Littleboy
Pension Board Chair

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
Scott McCabe	Fire Brigades Union	1 May 2022
Angus Sproul	Fire Brigades Union	1 May 2022
Simon Leroux	Fire Brigades Union	5 June 2023
Stephen Wright*	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	1 April 2018
Elizabeth Barnes	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	5 June 2023
Nicola Hector	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	1 April 2023

* Stephen Wright resigned from the Board 30 May 2024

Meetings and attendance

During the 2023-2024 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			
	01 June 23	07 Sept 23	07 Dec 23	29 Feb 24
Independent Members				
William Littleboy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Andy Marchant	x	✓	✓	✓
Member Nominated				
Scott McCabe	x	x	✓	x
Angus Sproul	✓	x	✓	✓
Simon Leroux	Observer	x	✓	✓
Employer Nominated				
Stephen Wright	✓	✓	x	✓
Elizabeth Barnes	Observer	✓	x	x
Nicola Hector	✓	✓	✓	✓
Average	75%	62.5%	75%	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. Three were run in 2023-2024 with attendance at each session outlined in the table below. Sessions are now recorded, allowing those unable to attend on the day to view the session at another time.

Member	External Engagement	Risk and Incident Management	TPR General Code
William Littleboy	x	x	x
Andy Marchant	✓	x	✓
Scott McCabe	x	x	✓
Angus Sproul	✓	x	x
Simon Leroux	✓	✓	✓
Stephen Wright	x	✓	✓
Elizabeth Barnes	x	x	x
Nicola Hector	✓	x	x (attended similar event elsewhere)

Costs

The Pension Board has incurred £5,040 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 SPPA with Board support needs to ensure the proper management of the change program.

The Board continues to focus on supporting SPPA in transitioning service to the online portal wherever possible and also on ensuring that all members are engaged in the most effective way possible to understand their pension, what it will provide for them and the options open to them.

6. Looking forward

We have been converting the fund and its records to implement the requirements of the McLeod Sargeant Remedy, whilst enabling a more automated delivery of pension services to members for some time now as it involves considerable complexity. Hopefully we are nearing the end of this part of our journey and must now focus more on the provision of excellent service to all our stakeholders.

In support of this the quality of the Member self-service portal and the quality of source data is key. While we have confidence this is the case, particularly given recent conversion experience, the Board must remain vigilant in its adoption of appropriate management information to ensure standards remain high.

We thank all involved in the Scottish Firefighters' Pension Fund and hope for more successful years of operation.

7. Annex A - Customer Metrics

Scheme Membership

We have a total of 14,889 members of which 38% are pensioners, and 17% deferred members. Total membership is 1.9% higher than 2022/23.

	2022/23	2023/24
Active	5,687	5,726
Deferred	2,354	2,491
Pensioner	5,636	5,706
Widow/Dependant	936	966
Grand Total	14,613	14,889

Customer Contacts

Figures from dedicated Firefighter contact queues.

	2022/23	2023/24
Direct Calls Queued*	2,569	2,795
Abandon Rate	4.2%	1.4%
Ave Answer time	1 minute 8 seconds	21 seconds
Emails queued	4,317	4,301

*Around 50% of calls go through general queues, so call volumes can be assumed to be around 50% higher.

Year-on-Year Key Performance Indicators (2022-23 vs 2023-24)

		2022-23		2023-24	
Key Performance Indicators	Target	Volume	Score	Volume	Score
New Awards (Timeliness)	98%	434	100%	275	100%
New Payments Accuracy	95%	522	98.4%	362	100%