



Meeting	Scottish Firefighters' Pension Board
Meeting date	09 March 2026
Meeting time	14.30 – 16.30
Meeting location	Virtual

Board members	Andy Marchant	Board Chair
	Gus Sproul	Board Member
	Sarah O'Donnell	Board Member
	Scott McCabe	Board Member
	Simon Leroux	Board Member
SPPA attendees		Chief Operating Officer
		Corporate Governance Manager
		Deputy Chief Executive
		Strategic Communications Lead
		Programme Delivery Manager
		Chief Executive
		Head of Strategy and Governance
Apologies	Kenneth Barbour	Board Member
	Nicola Hector	Board Member
Minute taker		Governance Delivery Lead

1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies from Kenneth Barbour and Nicola Hector.
- 1.2 No declarations of interest were raised.

2. Meeting Governance

- 2.1 The Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed electronically and are available on the SPPA website.
- 2.2 The Board agreed to close actions **F0925.01** and **F0925.03**.
- 2.3 It was agreed that action **F0925.02** would remain open so that SPPA can consider an appropriate communications strategy to deal with Remedy complaints raised on social media platforms.

3. Chief Executive Overview

- 3.1 The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) provided an overview update to the Board. The following key points were noted:
 - SPPA appeared in front of the Finance and Public Audit Committee (FPAC) in December 2025 and will appear again at both the Public Audit Committee (PAC) and FPAC meetings on 17 March 2026 to provide further updates.

- Audit Scotland has published a Section 22 report, in the context of SPPA missing the original McCloud Remedy deadlines. SPPA will attend Parliament to explain the findings of the report to the PAC.
- Addressing the reasons why delivery of Annual Benefit Statements-Remediable Service Statements (ABS-RSS) for Firefighters' is currently behind Police, the CEO noted that the Booth legal case has caused significant delays to the provision of data. The creation of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) as a single body also resulted in HR data archived in different places, further delaying the process. SPPA is now in a position however to work through Firefighters' ABS-RSS and delivery is progressing well.
- Challenges across the pension sector were noted, including the civil service pension scheme, which is currently facing difficulties and has no deadline for delivering McCloud Remedy. SPPA is liaising closely with partners, such as NHS England, to work through shared problems.

4. Business as Usual (BAU) Delivery

4.1 The Chief Operating Officer (COO) provided an update on BAU delivery. Key points to note are:

- Service delivery is consistent, but some non-core services are slower as the team works to prepare for Remedy implementation.
- Telephone wait times are beginning to reduce and SPPA is currently trialling call back functionality so members do not need to remain on hold. This has been successfully implemented within the NHS area and will soon be rolled out to Firefighters and Police.
- An Operations Manager has been recruited to improve oversight management and bring resilience to the team. This role will work alongside a new Member Experience Manager that has been recently onboarded.
- Engage has been successfully launched to Firefighters' scheme members with more functionality than was originally offered to other schemes. The feedback received so far has been positive, with over 3,000 Firefighters having currently signed up across Active, Deferred and retired members (20% of overall member count). Plans are in place to write to Deferred members to encourage sign-up for future pension services.
- Plans to close down webforms in the next 3-6 months and move fully to Engage. This will reduce demand on operational services and allow members to maximise self-service.

4.2 The SPPA sought advice from the Pension Board as to how stakeholders can support messaging to members and drive sign-up rates. It was noted that SFRS has included relevant information on Engage in a weekly brief to members, but it will work with SPPA to continue to reach out to scheme members.

4.3 Board member, Gus Sproul, noted technical issues preventing access to the Engage portal. The SPPA will engage with Gus on these technical issues and establish their extent.

F0309.01

SPPA to provide Sarah O'Donnell with appropriate lines and communications materials to help the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) reach out to scheme members and encourage them to sign up on Engage.

5. Technical Working Group (TWG)

5.1 The Technical Working Group (TWG) paper is currently tabled for information only. The Board was asked to consider whether future updates could be by exception only, incorporated into the BAU paper. However, the Board agreed that the paper was a useful addition to the pack and have requested future updates on the group remain as a standalone paper.

6. Annual Events

6.1 The Programme Delivery Manager provided an update on the latest position regarding ABS-RSS, lessons learned for ABS and future ways of working, as well as an update on the number of Annual Allowance (AA) statements that have been issued.

6.2 The Board discussed how members can access their pension details. For Firefighters' this has been through MSS but currently the information is migrating to Engage. At present, Active members are unable to access ABS-RSS on Engage, but plans are in place to publish those that are available this year. For Deferred members, this is an active workstream but again Deferred Benefit Statements (DBS), where available, will be published on the Engage portal.

7. Legislative Projects (Remedy, Booth, Matthews and Pensions Dashboard)

7.1 The Programme Delivery Manager provided an update on recent progress, timelines and next steps on Legislative Projects (which covers Remedy, Booth and Matthews, as well as Pensions Dashboard).

7.2 The Board discussed ill-health retirements, noting that these are among the top priority for SPPA but also one of the more complicated cohorts. Working to unlock the functionality to process these cases is allowing for more straightforward cases to be processed first.

7.3 The team is currently cautious about providing dates and deadlines which cannot be met. Projections are trending well, however, and analysis from the 90% completion of Police Immediate Choice has allowed the team to understand how the process will impact other schemes, such as Firefighters.

7.4 The Board discussed Remedy progress to date and projected delivery throughout 2026. The Chair noted that it would be helpful for the Board to continue to monitor the projected against the actual delivery.

7.5 Regarding Booth and Matthews, SPPA has engaged the Scottish Government's Automation Centre of Excellence (ACoE) to assist the Agency to resolve data issues and progress is being made. Work on Matthews, which had previously been paused, is now progressing at pace due to the development of automation tools. Work is continuing to obtain data from SFRS to identify members who are affected by both Booth and Remedy, so that they can be provided with both choices.

8. Communications and Engagement update

8.1 The Strategic Communications Lead provided an update on communications and engagement. Key points to note are:

- The Communications sub-group meets monthly, and the value of the interaction and collaboration in the sub-group was highlighted.
- A quarterly direct member update on Remedy is in place. Updates are shared with the sub-group first to ensure the messaging is clear and concise.

- Proactive communications around Matthews, again in consultation with the sub-group, will be going out to those who have registered an interest.
- An Automation demo was shown to the sub-group, sharing progress in this area.
- The Communications Team is currently preparing for the upcoming PAC and FPAC appearances.

8.2 The Board asked about communications to Deferred members and what they currently receive. It was noted that the SPPA website is the key source of information for all members, including those that have deferred. The Engage portal will also become an important tool for all members.

9. Update on Scheme Risks

9.1 The Head of Strategy and Governance provided an overview of the top risks affecting SPPA, and how these apply to the Firefighters' scheme.

9.2 The Board focused discussion around the risk on Cyber Security. It was noted that a key priority for the new Head of IT at SPPA was to assess the Agency's cyber preparedness and the actions needed to reduce the risk. The Board felt it would be useful to understand if any attempts on security were made and what lessons were learned from it. The Board also asked whether SPPA thought that staff training on Cyber was adequate. The CEO believes it is but that this would be an area that the new Head of IT would investigate further.

F0309.02

Following the commencement of work to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of SPPA IT, Information, and Cyber Security management, SPPA to outline to Board members the latest position at the next Board meeting in September 2026.

10. Horizon Scanning

10.1 The Board queried how much of an impact dashboard implementation would have on operational processes and capacity, particularly if BAU or ongoing remedy efforts would be affected. The Board requested SPPA provide a view of any potential impact at the next meeting.

F0309.03

SPPA to provide a view of any potential operational impact made by dashboard implementation at the next Board meeting in September 2026.

11. Any other business

11.1 No AOB was raised.

11.2 The Governance Seminar will take place on 21 May 2026, and the Chair encouraged all Board members to attend. The agenda is currently being developed and will be shared with Board members in due course.

Summary of new Actions

F0309.01	SPPA to provide Sarah O'Donnell with appropriate lines and communications materials to help the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) reach out to scheme members and encourage them to sign up on Engage.
F0309.02	Following the commencement of work to enhance the adequacy and effectiveness of SPPA IT, Information, and Cyber Security management, SPPA to outline to Board members the latest position at the next Board meeting in September 2026.
F0309.03	SPPA to provide a view of any potential operational impact made by dashboard implementation at the next Board meeting in September 2026.