

Oxfordshire County Council

## **Fire Pension Board Terms of Reference**

### **Function and Responsibilities**

The function of the Local Pension Board is to assist the Scheme Manager (Oxfordshire County Council) in administering the various firefighter pension schemes. This will be achieved by providing governance and by scrutiny of policies, pension documentation, decisions and outcomes.

The Local Pension Board will also assist the Scheme Manager to:

- secure compliance with the Regulations, any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Schemes, and requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator in relation to the Schemes
- ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Schemes

### **Duties of the Board**

The Board should always act in a reasonable manner in the conduct of its purpose. In support of these duties Board members:

- should act always in the interests of the Scheme and not seek to promote the interests of any stakeholder group above another
- should be subject to and abide by the Local Pension Board approved code of conduct

### **Frequency of meetings**

The Pension Board will meet quarterly, to review / report on previous actions, standing items and determine work streams and priorities for the future.

The Chair of the Board, with the consent of the Board membership, may call additional meetings. Urgent business of the Board between meetings may, in exceptional circumstances, be conducted via communications between members of the Board including online conferencing and e-mails.

### **Local Pension Board membership**

To comply with the regulations the Board must have a **minimum** of four members (two Scheme Member representatives and two Scheme Manager representatives). A Local Pension Board membership of four is the most straight forward and cost-effective way of providing the Local Pension Board and complying with the Regulations.

Membership of the Oxfordshire County Council Local Pension Board will be:

- 3 X Scheme Member representatives (including 1 x FBU representative)

- 3 X Scheme Manager representatives (2 x elected Members, 1 x Officer representative)
- Non-voting Officer Advisor(s) as appropriate

The Scheme Manager (elected Member) representation on the Board will be determined by the Pensions Committee at its Annual Meeting (or as otherwise required).

The Officer representative will be nominated by the Chief Fire Officer.

The Officer Advisor will be a specific officer who is to assist the Board in gathering/analysing information and writing reports. The Board will also be able to request assistance from any officer who has specific knowledge of a subject matter they are investigating.

### **Scheme Member representatives**

2 x Scheme Member representatives will be active, deferred or retired members of one of the firefighter pension schemes administered by Oxfordshire County Council.

1 x Scheme Member representative will be nominated by the Fire Brigades' Union.

Scheme Member representatives should be able to demonstrate;

- their capacity to represent pension scheme members
- capacity to attend and complete the necessary preparation for meetings, and
- capacity to participate in training as required

### **Scheme Manager representatives**

At least 1 x elected Member Scheme Manager representatives shall be at the Annual Meeting of the Cabinet (or as otherwise required)

1 x Officer Scheme Manager representative shall be appointed.

Scheme Manager representatives should be able to demonstrate;

- their capacity to represent the Scheme Manager
- capacity to attend and complete the necessary preparation for meetings, and
- capacity to participate in training as required

### **Appointment of Chair and Vice chair**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer will assume the role of Chair of the Fire Pension Board and a Vice- chair appointed on an annual, rotational basis.

### **Objectives:**

The Fire Pension Board should consider the following:

- Are pension statements timely and accurate?

- How long does it take between retirement and receipt of pension?
- The number of errors made by the pension administrator.
- Are relevant policies in place and of a sufficient standard?
- Are pension estimates accurate and timely?
- Is the pension information on the Oxfordshire County Council website accurate and user friendly?
- Ensure that annual CARE scheme calculations are being carried out.
- Scrutinise data quality.
- Ensure pension rules and regulations are being complied with when officers are making decisions on pension matters.
- If complaints/appeals are being dealt with correctly and the correct procedures being followed.
- Review internal audit reports

This list is not exhaustive. The Local Pension Board will have the power to investigate anything it wishes in relation to the firefighters' pension schemes within Oxfordshire County Council.

### **Conduct and Conflict of interest**

Members of the Board are responsible for ensuring that their board membership does not result in any conflict of interest with any other posts they hold. A separate conflict of interest policy is available.

All members of the Board must declare, on appointment and at any such time as their circumstances change any potential conflict of interest arising as a result of their position on the Board. On appointment to the Board and following any subsequent declaration of potential conflict shall ensure that any potential conflict is effectively managed in line with both Conflict of Interest Policy and the requirements of the Pensions Regulator's codes of practice on conflict of interest for Board members.

Members of the Board must not use their membership for personal gain.

Members of the Fire Pension Board should maintain confidentiality when discharging their duties.

### **Knowledge and understanding (including Training)**

Knowledge and understanding must be considered in light of the role of the Board to assist Oxfordshire County Council as detailed above. The Board should establish and maintain a policy and framework to address the knowledge and understanding requirements that apply to Board members. That policy and framework shall set out the degree of knowledge and understanding required as well as how knowledge and understanding is acquired, reviewed and updated.

Board members shall attend and participate in training arranged to meet and maintain the requirements set out in the Board's knowledge and understanding. Board members shall participate in such personal training needs analysis or other

processes that are put in place to ensure that they maintain the required level of knowledge and understanding to carry out their role on the Board.

### **Reporting**

The Board will review the quarterly which will highlight areas of concern and identify good practice.

The report will also contain information on the number of retirements (natural and ill health), new starters, membership and opt-out numbers.

The Board will report to the Pensions Committee.

### **Resourcing and funding**

The Board will not have a dedicated budget. Requests for finance to purchase technical assistance, Board member training and anything else the Board may require to effectively discharge its duties will be made through the Pension Services Manager.

### **Quorum**

A meeting is only quorate when three Board members are present (including either the Chair or Vice chair). This must be a minimum of one Officer and one FBU Rep (two FBU Reps preferred).

### **Voting**

The Chair shall determine when consensus has been reached. There will be no casting vote.

Where consensus is not achieved this should be recorded by the Chair.

### **Definitions**

The undernoted terms shall have the following meaning when used in this document:

**“Pension Board”** Means the local Pension Board for Oxfordshire County Council as or “Board” administering authority for the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme.

**“Scheme Manager”** Means Oxfordshire County Council as administering authority of the Firefighters Pension Scheme

**“Scheme”** Means the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme