Metropolitan Police Pension Board

Minutes of the Board's Meeting

Details

Date: 1st December 2021

Place: Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Present	Role	From
Pension Board Members		
Ian Pollitt (IPo)	Chair	Independent
Paul Oliffe (PO)	Employer Representative	Finance
Mark Pomroy (MP)	Employer Representative	Human Resources
Catherine Roper (CR)	Employer Representative	Operational Policing/Professionalism
Don Ratcliffe (DR)	Member Representative	NARPO
Duncan Slade (DS)	Member Representative	Superintendents' Association
Paul Turpin (PT)	Member Representative	Police Federation
In Attendance		
Ken Anthony (KA)	Pensions SME	Metropolitan Police
Clare Alcock (CA)	Head of Police Pensions	NPCC
Richard Vince (RV)	Head of Pensions Team	SSCL
John Kakatsos (JK)	Client Director	EQ
Paul Mudd (PM)	Secretarial	XPS Administration
Apologies		
David McLaren (DMc)	Member Representative	CPOSA
Alex Anderson (AE)	Employer Representative	MOPAC
Paul Deller	Member Representative	Police Federation

Minute		Action
	Introduction and apologies for absence	
2021-56	IPo opened the meeting and confirmed as quorate. Gave a brief introduction of the Board's purpose and format.	IPo

Minute		Action
	PT attending his first meeting as a deputy for PD and was welcomed by IPo.	
2021-57	**Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**	Action
	IPo asked Representatives to declare any conflicts of interest, explaining that a conflict would not necessarily preclude participation on the Board, as detailed within the Terms of Reference and the Conflicts Policy. There were no declarations from any member.	All
2021-58	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**	IPo
	IPo asked Members to confirm that they had received, read and agreed with the contents of the minutes from the previous meeting (1st September 2021). These were then confirmed as a true and accurate record.	
	Pension Board Action List	
2021-59	(AL3) – Valuation – IPo and KA confirmed to the Board that there were no further developments to report with the valuation due to the potential, unknown impact of the Legal Challenge. IPo explained the valuation process and cost cap mechanism briefly for the purposes of the new members.	IPo / KA
2021-60	(AL17) Releasing AVCs through Utmost Life – KA confirmed that despite regular prompts, there had been nothing received from the Home Office in respect of this item and it was suspected that this could be on the backburner for the time being, KA will continue to chase for a resolution.	KA
2021-61	(AL18) Communications to promote scheme membership – to be covered in the Update from the Chair later in the meeting.	IPo
2021-62	(AL19) Detailed Opt-Out Information. Information had been received and this showed that generally there were around 91% to 92% of eligible Officers participating within the Police Pension Scheme. IPo remarked that It was positive these numbers were stable but disappointing that the number hadn't increased markedly following the previous auto-enrolment exercises. There was agreement that AL19 can be completed.	IPo
2021-63	(AL20) KA confirmed that he would keep DR updated with any progress that impacts his members.	KA
2021-64	(AL21) Term of Membership. DR's term on the Board was due to expire on the 6th February 2022. Asked whether he would like to remain for a further term DR agreed which IPo and thanked him for, explaining briefly that it is really helpful for the Board to have continuity, and this is particularly so where members contribute and show enthusiasm within the role.	DR / IPo

Minute		Action
2021-65	**Knowledge and Understanding**	IPo / All

IPo reminded the Board that here is a legal responsibility for each representative to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the Scheme and thanked everyone for their continued efforts in this respect.

The Public Service Toolkit has recently been updated with a module on Pension Scams, and it was recommended that Members of the Board complete this module.

http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/public-service-schemes.aspx

2021-66	**Current Issues**	CA / All

CA was introduced to the Board by IPo as the Head of Pensions for the National Police Chiefs Council.

CA thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and provided some background about what she does and what experience she brings to the role.

CA is trying to speak with all Police Pension Boards to ensure the message of progress, issues for consideration and the complexities of the Legal Challenge are communicated consistently and directly to Boards, and gave the opportunity to ask direct questions during an excellent presentation.

CA's slide pack was distributed to members immediately after the meeting and this covered the following items:

Background of the Legal Challenge and what Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) and the Home Office are now trying to achieve.

What is the NPCC's role and what should Pension Boards be considering as part of their role.

CA explained the legislative background and current position in respect of primary legislation, which was having its 3rd and final reading in the House of Lords before moving to the House of Commons by Christmas.

A Home Office consultation is currently underway and this has caused quite a debate with interested parties. CA explained that a lot of work is required by the Home Office, HMT and HMRC due to the taxation complexities that Remedy brings.

There are some claims that proposed legislation would seem to introduce new discrimination into the police pension scheme and this is an area that the Staff Associations are keeping a very keen eye on.

Minute		Action
2021-66	**Current Issues (cont)**	CA / All

Acknowledgement was given to the notion of a 'Pensions Trap' where younger members may find themselves being treated differently to their older counterparts. They could find themselves not able to take their benefits from the 2015 scheme due to the minimum retirement age (age 55) and then see a sliding reduction in the commutation rate they are offered from the 1987 scheme.

The very topical issue of Immediate Detriment (ID) was discussed, and members were aware that the Home Office guidance relating to ID had just been withdrawn. ID allowed for the immediate remedy for certain scheme members who met the specific criteria set out within Force policy.

Throughout the presentation, CA made it clear that the Government seemed committed to putting the Remedy in place, however it is easier said than done with the different legislation and regulations required to be enacted and how these integrate with each other.

At every juncture, more questions seem to be generated than solved and everyone is working extremely hard to get this right. There are a lot of areas of concern and opportunities for things to unwillingly go wrong.

CA continues to hold the regular virtual coffee mornings with police scheme administrators and these have been very popular and useful for Police Forces.

National communications and a GAD produced calculator will be available shortly which will assist in getting consistent and timely information to scheme members about the effect of Remedy and what it means for them.

The Board agreed that nationally, it makes sense for every Police Force to be 'singing from the same hymn-sheet'. IPo called for a unified front so that there can be no issues from one Force to another with the way in which Scheme Members are being treated.

There was a concern that mis-information, or a lack of clear information could lead to a higher rate of opt outs from the scheme which was shared by members of the Board.

IPo and the Board thanked CA for her very timely and insightful presentation.

CA thanked the Board and left the meeting.

Minute		Action
2021-67	**Update from SSCL/Equiniti on service provision**	KA / All

The Board was joined by RV of SSCL, the Strategic Partner to the MPS and JK of EQ, the Scheme Administrator.

IPo thanked RV and JK for advanced sight of their respective update papers and invited these to be talked through.

<u>SSCL</u>

RV explained his role and the close interaction he has with EQ and the management structure around service provision to the MPS. He explained that he was aware of the issues being discussed at the Board and shares concerns around certain aspects of the sub-contractors performance.

RV explained that some senior appointments have been made in EQ and within SSCL to oversee the remediation plan and that these staff members will be afforded every opportunity to learn about the processes and work in hand at the EQ offices. One appointment of note, is the former Head of the Civil Service Pension Scheme Executive at the Cabinet Office, who has wide experience in delivering operational business change/ improvements and the delivery of complex projects and programmes at both the Home Office and Ministry of Justice.

There remains some concern that the reported figures may not include all cases and the team will work hard to ensure there is transparency across all areas of work.

By bringing in this new resource, this will allow RV and other senior SSCL personnel to focus more on the broader projects such as the Legal Challenge.

RV was clear that this is at a very high escalation point and that SSCL and EQ are both working very hard to bring the service back to where it had been previously, and to ensure sustainability.

RV passed the floor to JK to update on behalf of EQ

<u>EQ</u>

JK shared his screen with the Board and talked through the metrics since the last meeting.

He advised that they were over 4,000 items completed outside the SLA during the month of November, but with the additional resources, the benefit of moving telephony to the CEC and some overtime work, this had been reduced by over 25% by the end of the month. It is predicted by EQ that the work in progress outside SLA will be cleared by the time the Board meets in the new year.

Minute	Update from SSCL/Equiniti on service provision (cont)	Action
2021-67	JK advised that 63% of the out of target cases represent general correspondence, where there is no payment due, or itand wouldn't be classed as a traditional high impact piece of work.	KA / All

JK talked through the Automation Enhancement Roadmap which was due to continue through to April 2022, with the improvements to systems, management oversight, scheme governance and training, there is confidence that the improvements required will then be seen.

In the main, statutory annual projects have been completed successfully with regards to the Annual Benefit Statement and Pensions Savings Statement exercises and JK provided the numbers in respect of these. However, it was noted that here were some delays in the issue of a few Pension Savings Statements.

There were some resource issues being caused by bottlenecks at vetting and this seems to be a problem largely due to the uplift programme, as the introduction of new Police Officers are prioritised.

DS said that there were real problems for Scheme members trying to contact the Administrator and JK apologised or this. There were some metrics unavailable for call abandonment rates and call waiting times but JK said their aim is to get at least 80% answered within 20 seconds.

DR reiterated this point and said that there have been a number of cases where relatives dealing with the recent bereavement of scheme members have been unable to get in touch to even notify of the death of the scheme member.

There had been 5 such cases and PT said that it was completely unacceptable. An example was given where escalation had been required for someone who was terminally ill. There doesn't appear to be a defined route where members can complain independent of the normal enquiry route. PT continued that scheme members are often left feeling 'fobbed off' by operators.

JK apologised and said that this would get better with the plans in place and extra resource. There was a point where nearly a third of the workforce was absent due to leave, or sickness (including Covid 19), which had negatively impacted service in the short term and that feedback will be given to the teams.

Questions were asked regarding the accuracy in relation to the Pension Savings Statements, as the history from older statements differs from that on the current statement. JK will meet with PT and DS to obtain examples of this.

Minute	Update from SSCL/Equiniti on service provision (cont)	Action
2021-67	Board Members commented that the forecasting on the Annual Benefit Statement was somewhat confusing for members, which JK will feedback to the team also. IPo thanked RV and JK for their input and continued efforts. In turn, RV and JK thanked the Board for their understanding and for giving the opportunity to speak. RV and JK left the meeting.	KA / All
2021-68	**Report by Senior Pensions Contract Manager** KA had said that much of the operational and actions had already been covered off during the earlier items of the meeting. KA did commit to link in with PT in respect of the operation of immediate detriment, particularly for those where this had already commenced. Statistics had already been covered within JK's presentation and verbal update but KA did speak about a small number of IDRP, and Ombudsman cases that had been progressing over the preceding months, giving a brief description of each.	KA
2021-69	**Opt Outs / Communications** There had been some discussion earlier in the meeting regarding communications in respect of the Legal Challenge. In respect of Opt outs, this has been a topic of interest or concern potentially for the Board for some time. IPo has asked to be invited to a SAB meeting as he would like to ask the SAB what plans they might have for tackling the opt out cases within the scheme. IPo advised that his work with Met Friendly continues with the aim of educating members about the value of the scheme at the earliest opportunity. IPo is awaiting the final version of some educational material that will be given to / presented to new recruits to try and encourage them to retain their PPS scheme benefits. PT asked whether the scheme had any plans to introduce a 50/50 scheme akin to that available within the Local Government Pension Scheme. IPo said that he has been asking the very same thing for some time and will reiterate this in his conversation with the Scheme Advisory Board. IPo, KA and PT agreed to meet to see if they could help each other with this mutual area of concern / interest.	IPo / All

Minute		Action
	Risk Register	
2021-70	IPo and KA had met in advance of the meeting and were comfortable with the Risk Register as it was currently presented. It was noted that the service improvement plan needs to gather pace and if this doesn't happen, the risk may need to be reviewed regarding the scheme administrator	IPo / KA
2021-71	**Other Business** With no further business to discuss, IPo thanked everyone for attending the meeting and reminded Board Members of the scheduled dates for forthcoming meetings	IPo
2021-72	**Date of Next Meeting** 2nd March 2022 –Virtual Meeting The nature of future meetings will be discussed at the March meeting. 1st June 2022 7th September 2022 7th December 2022	All