

DEVON AND SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Local Pension Board Annual Report 2023-24

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this Annual Report is to provide information about the status of the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (DSFRA) Local Pension Board for Scheme Members (employees and pensioners) and for the Scheme Manager (the Authority) together with a summary of issues considered in the relevant period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024).
- 1.2. In accordance with Section 5 and s.30 (1) of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and Regulation 4A of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015, the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority Local Pension Board was established in February 2015 to provide advice on the effective and efficient administration and management of the various firefighter pension schemes.
- 1.3. The Report includes commentary on the following:
 - A summary of the work undertaken by the Local Pension Board during 2023-24;
 - Detail of areas investigated and how these areas were dealt with;
 - Any conflicts of interest and how these were managed;
 - Any identified risks and other areas of potential concern;
 - Any expenses and costs incurred by the Board;
 - Gifts and hospitality received by members of the Board; and
 - Training for Board members.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

- 2.1. During 2023-24, the Local Pension Board comprised of eight members as follows:

Scheme Manager Representatives:

- Shayne Scott (Director of Finance & Corporate Services)
- Maria Phillips (Assistant Director of Corporate Services)
- Councillor Jeff Trail (June 2023 meeting)
- Satnam Singh Rai (Independent Co-opted Member)

Scheme Member Representatives:

- Phill Gillbard
- Greg Webb
- James Leslie
- Ben Redwood

2.2. In addition to the above, the following officers supported the Board and regularly attend Board meetings:

- Zoe Smyth (HR Reward & Benefits Manager and Delegated Scheme Manager)
- Mareena Anderson-Thorne (HR Pensions Officer)

2.3. In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Board met on two occasions during 2023-24, which took place on:

- 21 June 2023
- 06 December 2023

3. WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD

3.1. During 2023-24 the following matters were undertaken/considered:

- Review of actions log;
- Management of Risk Register;
- Reviewed and updated the Self-Assessment using the Pension Regulator Tool;
- Individual training using the Pension Regulator e-learning modules;
- KPI Performance Measures (data collection and reporting) ;
- Received regular updates from the Scheme Manager, Scheme Administrator, and the Scheme Advisory Board;
- Attendance at the LGA Fire Pensions Conference in September 2023; and
- Reviewed arrangements for reporting potential breaches of the law

4. IDENTIFIED RISKS AND BOARD ACTIONS

4.1. DSFRS undertook regular review of the Risk register and kept an accurate action log to ensure risks were managed throughout the year. Main areas of concern are detailed below.

| Description | Action |
|---|--|
| Court of Appeal ruling – McCloud/Sargeant (Age discrimination remedy) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme manager attended regular LGA coffee mornings and scheme updates. • GAD calculator and contributions mandate process established internally for all retirements with a deferred choice option to ensure that employee contributions are adjusted correctly and in line with government directions with regard to tax and interest payments. |
| Court of Appeal ruling – O’Brien/Matthews (On-call second options exercise) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme manager attended regular LGA coffee mornings and scheme updates. • Scheme manager ensured regular contact with WYPF to ensure data quality exercise can be undertaken prior to the second options exercise commencing. • Additional resource (2.0 FTE) secured to support the administrative processes required. |
| Cyber Attack | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSFRS Business continuity plan reviewed • Cyber security training completed • WYPF asked to provide assurances of their business continuity and cyber-attack plans. |

4.2. Further details of risks identified, and the action log can be found below.

4.3. Risks identified can be found within the papers published for each Board meeting, these are available publicly on the Service website.

4.4. Review of open actions can be found within the papers published for each Board meeting, these are available publicly on the Service website.

5. STATUTORY BREACHES

5.1. No statutory breaches were reported to the Regulator during the period April 2023 – March 2024.

6. DEVON AND SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE WEBSITE

6.1. Further information regarding the Local Pension Board can be found on the Service website.

6.2. The website is discussed at each Board meeting to ensure content remains updated and accurate.

7. SCHEME MEMBERSHIP

7.1. The scheme membership numbers are now included in the monthly reports from the Scheme Administrator. Membership numbers as of 31 March 2024 were as follows:

| Scheme Name | Active Members | Deferred Members | Pensioners | Beneficiaries | Preserved Refund | Leavers Options Pending |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Devon & Somerset Fire (1992 Scheme) | 0 | 49 | 898 | 160 | 1 | 0 |
| Devon & Somerset Fire (2006 Scheme) | 1 | 400 | 145 | 20 | 9 | 1 |
| Devon & Somerset Fire (2006/RDS Scheme) | 0 | 65 | 213 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| Devon & Somerset Fire (2015 Scheme) | 1576 | 719 | 89 | 14 | 7 | 58 |
| Devon & Somerset Fire (2015/RDS Scheme) | 54 | 8 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

7.2. The Delegated Scheme Manager reports at each Board meeting details of FPS retirements and processing times. The WYPF Monthly report circulated monthly to the board details membership numbers.

8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

8.1. Members of the Local Pension Board are required to declare any personal, prejudicial, or conflicts of interest. Board members are asked at each meeting to declare any conflicts that may have arisen.

8.2. There have been no declarations made by any Board members, advisor, or attendee at any meeting of the Board during the relevant period.

9. EXPENSES AND COSTS

- 9.1. Total Local Pension Board expenditure for 2023-24 was limited to the “co-optees” allowance of £573 per annum paid to the Independent Employer Representative in accordance with Regulation 9 of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and the Authority’s Approved Scheme of Members Allowances made under those Regulations.

10. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

- 10.1. No declarations of gifts or hospitality were made by members of the Board during the relevant period.

11. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- 11.1. Board members have completed e-learning modules on the Pension Regulator’s website. Details of each Board member’s training is published on the Service website.
- 11.2. Monthly updates from the scheme administrator, the West Yorkshire Pension Fund, and the LGA’s monthly Firefighters Pensions Schemes Bulletin are shared with Board members.
- 11.3. Completion of individual training needs analysis records are used to identify common topics of interest, which is now included on each meeting of the Board. Additional training sessions on subjects similarly derived from the training needs analysis records are also provided.

12. LEGISLATIVE AND ADVISORY UPDATES

- 12.1. In accordance with statutory requirements, members of the Board have been provided with regular legislative updates together with updates from the Pension Regulator and the Scheme Advisory Board. The following have been provided during 2023-24:
- Firefighters Pensions Schemes Bulletins No. 68 to 79 inclusive, setting out updates and news on a range of issues relating to Firefighters Pensions Schemes.