

# **CUMBRIA FIRE LOCAL PENSION BOARD**

**Meeting date: 22 October 2020**

**From: Chief Fire Officer**

## **FIRE LOCAL PENSION BOARD TRAINING POLICY AND PLAN**

### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 *It is a legal requirement (per The Pensions Act 2004) that every individual who is a member of a Local Pension Board must meet specific knowledge and understanding obligations, therefore appropriate training should be provided to Fire Local Pension Board (FLPB) members to assist them in undertaking their role and to support members in carrying out that training.***
- 1.2 *The training obligations and requirements of Board members (along with those of Officers) are reflected in the Cumbria FLPB training policy. In line with good practice the policy has been subject to an annual review and updated. As in previous years, the policy is designed to be dynamic and aligned to the work programme and changes to national policy.***
- 1.3 *This report sets out the areas that have been identified as requiring additional training for Board Members and is informed by the responses received to the Board's annual training needs assessment questionnaire. These training needs may be addressed either through training sessions, briefing notes, attendance at conferences or other appropriate means.***
- 1.4 *Furthermore, Board Members are encouraged to undertake their own personal training for example through the Pensions Regulator's Public Sector Pension Scheme Trustee Toolkit.***
- 1.5 *This paper recommends that the Board agrees to consider and approve the revised training policy (shown at Appendix 1) and approve the detailed training plan specific to the Board (shown in section 4.10 to 4.14 below).***

## **2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

**2.1 *The Scheme Manager must maintain and publish Scheme Policies. Good governance and risk management arrangements help to ensure good management of the Schemes and will aid the Scheme to control costs which will have a direct impact on revenue budgets.***

**2.2 *There are no direct equality implications arising out of the recommendations of this report.***

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**3.1 *The Board is asked to consider and approve the updated Cumbria Fire Local Pension Board Training Policy.***

**3.2 *Members are asked to approve the specific training plan for the Board for 2020/21.***

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

4.1 It is a legal requirement (per The Pensions Act 2004) that every individual who is a member of a Local Pension Board meets specific knowledge and understanding obligations. As Board Members are aware, these legal responsibilities are on an ***individual*** level and begin from the date they are appointed to their role on the Board.

4.2 To facilitate compliance with this, the Scheme Manager must make appropriate training available to Board members to assist them in undertaking their role and must support all Board members in carrying out that training. Knowledge and understanding must be considered in light of the role of the Fire Local Pension Board (the Board) in assisting the Scheme Manager. Board members need to understand the duties and obligations of the Scheme Manager in order to be able to assist it.

4.3 This paper sets out the requirements placed on each individual and the approach proposed to ensure compliance with the requirements.

### **Requirements:**

4.4 In accordance with Section 248A of the 2004 Pension Act every individual who is a member of a Local Pension Board must:

be conversant with:

- the rules of the Schemes, in other words the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 regulations (as amended), the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 regulations (as amended) and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 regulations (as amended); and
- any document recording policy about the administration of the Schemes, and

have knowledge and understanding of:

- the law relating to pensions; and
- such other matters as may be prescribed.

- 4.5 The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 introduced the framework for the governance and administration of the Public Sector Pensions Schemes and provided a new regulatory oversight by the Pensions Regulator. The Regulator issued a code of practice no. 14 – Governance and administration of public service pension schemes (the “code”) in April 2015. The code provides scheme managers and pension board members with a summary of their key governance and administration duties, standards of conduct and practice expected in relation to those duties.
- 4.6 The code contains practical guidance in four core areas of scheme governance and administration: governing your scheme; managing risks; administration and resolving issues. The Training Policy, at Appendix 1 complies with the Regulators’ Code of Practice. To ensure good governance this is formally reviewed by the Board at least annually to ensure it remains accurate and relevant.
- 4.7 Where a new member (or substitute) joins the Board, the appointee is provided with relevant scheme documents including the documented policies and the most recent quarterly Board paper pack. To ensure a minimum level of training is achieved, an induction meeting is held with the new Member to provide an oversight of the Schemes, details of the Fire Local Pension Board and outline the key governance arrangements for the schemes including the responsibilities of Board members.
- 4.8 Ongoing training is required to enable each Board Member to continue to meet the legislative individual knowledge and skills requirement placed upon them. Board Members are encouraged to attend training sessions scheduled where appropriate; and are notified of other relevant training events (internal and external) as and when they arise.
- 4.9 During the period from March to September 2020, at the height of the reaction and response to the COVID 19 Pandemic the formal meetings of Cumbria FLPB were ‘stood down’. Officers have advised Board Members of on-line training opportunities to ensure appropriate opportunities continue to be available for Board Members to maintain their skills and knowledge.

#### **Training Policy:**

- 4.10 The policy documents key matters including:
- The objectives of the policy, e.g. the Pension Schemes are managed and the services are delivered by people who have the appropriate knowledge and expertise, and that the knowledge and expertise is maintained in a changing environment.
  - The application of the policy, e.g. that it applies to all Board members representatives with a role on the Cumbria Fire Local Pension Board,

and Officers equal to and above the level of Technical Finance Officer regardless of experience. (Officers below this level will have their own sectional and personal training plans and career development objectives).

- Review and maintenance, e.g. the policy will be reviewed at least annually and the training plan will be formally updated annually.
- CIPFA requirements, e.g. the Knowledge & Skills Framework.
- Measurement and assessment, e.g. the annual training needs evaluation exercise.
- Methods of delivery of training, e.g. internal / external etc.
- The 2020/21 training plan – as detailed below.

**Training Plan 2020/21:**

- 4.11 The December 2019 training needs assessment questionnaire was sent to all members and substitute members of the Board. The completed responses were collated and assessed and, in recognition of the impact of COVID-19 on planned training events and formal FLPB meetings during the year, the resulting training plan focusses on the core training needs identified by the evaluation questionnaires.
- 4.12 As members will be aware, since the initial impact of the pandemic on planned events, the use of electronic means for enabling meetings and the delivery of online training has evolved considerably. It is therefore anticipated that, as in previous years, the 2021/22 plan will reflect both core and wider training requirements identified by the 2020 training needs assessment questionnaire (due to be undertaken in December).
- 4.13 In addition to addressing core knowledge gaps identified from the training needs assessment questionnaires, the plan takes account of up and coming national legislative / policy changes, ongoing work specific to Firefighters' Pension Schemes.
- 4.14 The below table of training topics below provides a summary of the proposed training plan for 2020/21.

Training Topic
Maintaining an up to date knowledge of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme regulations.
An understanding of the Sargeant resolution & proposed changes to the transitional arrangements to the 2015 schemes.
An understanding of the required and adopted policies and procedures for the Firefighters' pension schemes relating to internal dispute resolutions (IDRP), member data and contributions

- 4.15 The summary above is not an exhaustive list. In addition there will be other items on topical or emerging issues will be included as appropriate, and the

proposed training topics will therefore change depending upon emerging issues.

- 4.16 Where possible the Scheme will endeavour to timetable internal training by officers or external presenters to coincide with scheduled meetings of the Board which are detailed on the schedule below for 2020/21.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting Title and Venue</b>
30 <sup>th</sup> July 2020	Cumbria Fire Local Pension Board Update Regulatory update, on Sargeant by LGA
22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2020	Cumbria Fire Local Pension Board Regulatory update, including Sargeant by LGA
December 2020	Annual Training Needs Evaluation
3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021	Cumbria Fire Local Pension Board
21 <sup>st</sup> April 2021	Cumbria Fire Local Pension Board <i>Possible topics: Valuation Process and Public Sector cost cap mechanism.</i>

- 4.16.1 Board Members are notified of other relevant training events (internal and external) as and when they arise and are encouraged to attend.

- 4.16.2 In addition to the above, Members of the Fire Local Pension Board and officers that support this function have access to a dedicated SharePoint site, containing reference material pertaining to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes. The site contains an archive library of the Fire Board report packs, all of the FPS Bulletins, guidance documents and training materials from training events attended together with an action log of how updates and requests for information or surveys are being dealt with and responded to.

## **5.0 OPTIONS**

- 5.1 To adopt the Fire Local Pension Board's Training Policy and Plan

OR,

- 5.2 To review and propose amendments to the Fire Local Pension Board's Training Policy Plan.

## **6.0 RESOURCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Achieving value for money should be and is an objective considered for the Firefighters' Pension Schemes as part of all policy reviews. Delivering

training locally helps to achieve this. Clearer, less bureaucratic policies and procedures also aid in reducing administration costs. Additionally, adherence to regulatory and legislative requirements avoids potential expensive investigatory procedures and fines.

## 7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Scheme Manager (i.e. the County Council) has a legal responsibility to make appropriate training available to Fire Local Pension Board members to assist them in undertaking their role and support all members in carrying out that training.
- 7.2 The Board must have a policy and framework to meet the knowledge and understanding requirements of section 248A of the Pensions Act 2004.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Effective and up to date Scheme Policies demonstrate the good governance of the scheme and helps members, employers, the administration providers (YPS), the Scheme Manager and the Fire Local Pension Board to work together to fulfil their joint responsibilities in administering the Scheme. An effective and 'value for money' training policy and plan helps to deliver this.

**Steve Healey**  
**Chief Fire officer**

**22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020**

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Cumbria Fire Local Pension Board – Training Policy & Plan October 2020**

Electoral Division(s): All

Executive Decision 

	No*
--	-----

Key Decision 

	No*
--	-----

If a Key Decision, is the proposal published in the current Forward Plan? 

		N/A*
--	--	------

Is the decision exempt from call-in on grounds of urgency? 

	No*
--	-----

If exempt from call-in, has the agreement of the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee been sought or obtained? 

		N/A*
--	--	------

Has this matter been considered by Overview and Scrutiny? 

	No*
--	-----

If so, give details below.

Has an environmental or sustainability impact assessment been undertaken?

		N/A*
--	--	------

Has an equality impact assessment been undertaken?

		N/A*
--	--	------

### **PREVIOUS RELEVANT COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

*None.*

### **REPORT AUTHOR**

Contact:

Lucy Taylor: Finance Manager - Pensions, Investment & Governance

Tel: 07881 007836

[lucy.taylor@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.taylor@cumbria.gov.uk)