

## **PENSION BOARD OF NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Name**

1. The name of the Board is “NIFRS Pension Board” (“the Pension Board”) and is established by Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board (“the Board”) as the Scheme Manager under the provisions of the Public Service Pensions Act 2014 and The Firefighters’ Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.
2. The Board shall be in place from 2022/23 financial year<sup>1</sup>.

### **Statement of purpose**

3. The purpose of the Pension Board is to assist Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board in its role as a scheme manager of the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme. Such assistance is to:
  - (a) secure compliance with the Regulations, any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Scheme, and requirements imposed by the Pensions Regulator in relation to the Scheme and’;
  - (b) ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme.

### **Duties of the Board**

4. The Pension Board should at all times act in a reasonable manner in the conduct of its purpose. In support of this duty Pension Board members:
  - (a) should act always in the interests of the scheme and not seek to promote the interests of any stakeholder group above another.
  - (b) should be subject to and abide by the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service code of conduct.

A high-level summary of the role of the Pension Board is included at Annex 1 to this document.

### **Membership**

5. The Board will comprise an equal number of employer and member representatives with a minimum requirement of no less than four in total.

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<sup>1</sup> The Pension Board was initially formed in April 2015. Following a review, the Pension Board is being reformed following successful recruitment during the 2022/23 financial year.

6. Substitute members will not be permitted.
7. Each Board member shall endeavour to attend all Board meetings during the year.

### ***Member representatives***

8. Two member representatives shall be appointed to the Board.
9. Member representatives shall either be members of the scheme administered by Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board or have experience of representing pension scheme members in a similar capacity.
10. Member representatives should be able to demonstrate their capacity to attend and complete the necessary preparation for meetings and participate in training as required.
11. Member representatives will be nominated by the Fire Brigade's Union.

### ***Employer representatives***

12. Two employer representatives shall be appointed to the Board.
13. Employer representatives shall be office holders or senior employees of Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service or have experience of representing scheme employers in a similar capacity.
14. Employer representatives should be able to demonstrate their capacity to attend and complete the necessary preparation for meetings and participate in training as required.
15. Representatives shall be appointed by Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board in a manner which it considers best promotes the purpose of the NIFRS Board.

### ***Other attendees***

16. Other attendees shall be invited to the Pension Board.
17. Other attendees will include, but may not be limited to:
  - a. Head of HSC Pensions
  - b. NIFRS Pensions Manager

### ***Appointment of Chair***

18. Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board shall appoint an independent chair.

### **Notification of appointments**

19. On appointment to the Pension Board, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service shall publish the name of the appointees, the process followed in the appointment together with the way in which the appointments support the effective delivery of the purpose of the NIFRS Board.

### **Conflicts of interest**

20. All members of the Pension Board must declare to Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board 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 Pension Board.
21. On appointment to the Pension Board, and following any subsequent declaration of potential conflict, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board shall ensure that any potential conflict is effectively managed in line with both the internal procedures of Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and the requirements of the Pensions Regulator's codes of practice on conflict of interest for Board members.

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

22. Knowledge and understanding must be considered in light of the role of the Pension Board to assist Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board in line with the requirements outlined in the Statement of Purpose above. The Pension Board should establish and maintain a policy and framework to address the knowledge and understanding requirements that apply to Pension 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.
23. Pension Board members shall attend and participate in training arranged in order to meet and maintain the requirements set out in the Pension Board's knowledge and understanding policy and framework.
24. Pension Board members shall participate in such personal training needs analysis or other processes that are put in place in order to ensure that they maintain the required level of knowledge and understanding to carry out their role on the Pension Board.
25. The Pension Board is entitled to one free training session per annum to be delivered in house by the Local Government Association.

### **Term of office**

26. Term of Office shall be longer than 12 months to allow sufficient development of knowledge and understanding, up to a maximum of four years. Re-appointment to the Pension Board for a second term of up to a further 4 years may be considered by the NIFRS Board.

27. Pension Board membership may be terminated prior to the end of the term of office due to:

- (a) A member representative appointed on the basis of their membership of the scheme no longer being a member of the scheme
- (b) A member representative no longer being a member of the body on which their appointment relied
- (c) An employer representative no longer holding the office or employment or being a member of the body on which their appointment relied
- (d) The representative no longer being able to demonstrate their capacity to attend and prepare for meetings or to participate in required training.

## **Meetings**

28. The Pension Board shall as a minimum meet three times per year, considering that quarterly meetings are recommended good practice. Meetings shall normally take place between the hours of 9:00 and 17:00.

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

30. All agendas and papers for Pension Board meetings will be made publicly available on the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service website unless, in the opinion of the Scheme Manager, they are covered by exempt/confidential information procedures under Schedules 2-4 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **Quorum**

31. A meeting is only quorate when at least 50% of both member and employer representatives are present plus the Chair.

## **Voting**

32. The Chair shall determine when consensus has been reached

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

34. In support of its core functions the Pension Board may make a request for information to Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board with regard to any aspect of the scheme manager function. Any such request should be reasonably complied with in both scope and timing.

35. In support of its core functions the Pension Board may make recommendations to Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board which should be considered and a response made to the Pension Board on the outcome within a reasonable period of time.

### **Accountability**

36. The Pension Board will be collectively and individually accountable to the Scheme Manager, which is ultimately Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board.
37. HSC Pensions continue to be responsible for the contractual arrangements, including delivery against the contract and agreed key performance indicators for the pension scheme administration.

### **Reporting**

38. HSC will provide the Pension Board with performance reports in a format agreed with the Pension Board.
39. The Pension Board will prepare reports for the Scheme Manager as required.
40. The Chair of the Pension Board will prepare an annual report to the NIFRS Board, as Scheme Manager, detailing performance of the Pension Board.

### **Data Protection**

41. The Pension Board will adhere to the Data Protection Policies held by the Scheme Manager (Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board).

### **Interpretation**

42. In these terms 'the Scheme' means the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.
43. In these terms Regulations means the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007, as amended, the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007, as amended and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 as amended.
44. In these terms 'regulations' include the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007, as amended, the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2007, as amended, the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 as amended, the Pension Regulators Codes of Practice as they apply to the scheme manager and pension board, and any other relevant legislation applying to the Scheme.

### **Amendment to the Terms of Reference**

45. These terms of reference will be reviewed at the start of each financial year if not reviewed within the previous twelve months.
46. These terms of reference may be amended by regulation or in consultation with the Pension Board by the Scheme Manager.

## **ANNEX 1**

The Pension Board is responsible for assisting the Scheme Manager (NIFRS Board) in:

1. Ensuring effective and efficient administration and governance of the NIFRS Pension Scheme(s) – hereafter referred to as the FPS.
2. Taking cognisance of decisions made by the Responsible Authority (DoH) in respect of pensions issues, including consideration of cases that have been referred to the Pensions Regulator and/or the Pensions Ombudsman, referring issues to the FRA as Scheme Manager, involvement of a Link Member from the FRA on the Local Pension Board to provide an exchange of information, minutes of the Board submitted to the FRA, Local Pension Board Annual report submitted to the FRA.
3. Recommending changes to processes, learning and development and/or guidance where necessary.
4. Monitoring administrative processes and supporting continuous improvements.
5. Ensuring the Scheme Administrator supports the employer to communicate the benefits of the FPS and fully utilise them as part of the Fire Service's total reward offer through effective communication to members.
6. Ensuring the Scheme Administrator supports members with a range of tools to improve their understanding of their pension benefits as part of the total reward offer, and to inform their personal financial and career planning.
7. Compliance with Pensions Regulator Codes of Practice.
8. Fostering good working relationships with the Pensions Regulator.
9. Consideration of the annual report from the Pensions Regulator, including any responses to recommendations.
10. Producing an annual report 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).