

Dear Friends & Colleagues,

As per that well known, tear jerking song, it is now, "Time To Say Goodbye", as I reluctantly 'sign off' from my role as Chairman of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Advisory Board.

I am conscious I do so at a time when we as a nation are facing the biggest disruption ever seen to society globally since the last World War and I wish you and your families well at this difficult and challenging time for us all.

Many of you hold key positions within 'Fire Pensions' and, in spite of this situation, Scheme Members will still be retiring, have queries, become ill, and unfortunately, some will die, all of which will require your ongoing support and assistance to provide a 'business as usual' service.

We are fortunate that over the last four years, with your assistance, we have developed and I believe improved the efficiency, standing and professionalism of Fire Pensions which has enabled you to deliver a first class service to Scheme Members across the board.

I am personally extremely grateful to you all, and especially those of you, too many to mention by name, who have worked with me on the SAB, our Sub Groups, the Technical & Communications committees, Regional FPOG's, and Local Pensions Boards, all of whom have done so much to develop and build the efficiency and standing of Fire Pensions overall.

With your support I believe we have achieved a great deal and developed a firm foundation which I am confident will be built on over the coming years, which I know, given the future agenda for pensions and pension schemes, will be both 'interesting' and challenging and which I would urge you to continue to take on board in a positive way.

I know you can do this as, over the last four years, I have seen many of you rise to the challenges we have faced and make being involved with Fire Pensions roles to be proud of.

With your assistance, we have significantly improved the regard and standing of 'Fire Pensions' across regulatory bodies and agencies such as, The Pensions Ombudsman (TPO), the Department of Works & Pensions (DWP), Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT), The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), HMRC, and in particular, The Pensions Regulator (TPR), with whom we have developed an excellent and welcome working rapport and understanding.

It is essential you continue to work closely with all the above bodies and keep TPR in particular on board, as they will assist and guide you through some of the ongoing & future Agenda items you will be called upon to deal with, and especially in sustaining the required levels of Data compliance and Governance by FRA's, etc.

Your SAB is currently deeply involved in drafting a response to HMT with regards to 'Remedy' following the outcome of the McCloud / Sargent judgements; as you are aware, this is 'work in progress' and something that I believe will take some while to bring to conclusion. On this, I urge you to be patient, avoid rumour and speculation and await guidance from the SAB via the Bulletins or the LGA Fire Pensions team.

I don't know for certain what the future holds for Public Service Pensions, I do know that HM Government have stated there will be a revue of Pensions overall, when this will take place given the current crisis is anyone's guess but I would encourage you to prepare yourselves for this exercise,

which has the potential to have a significant impact on pensions across the board, and in particular for Public Service Pension Schemes...

Many of you have heard me refer to you as, "My Fire Pensions Family", a term I have used frequently and fondly as, throughout my tenure as Chairman of the SAB, you have supported me, made me very welcome when I have visited or met with you, risen to the challenges and requests I have made of you - and even laughed at my jokes! - whilst I will certainly miss my contact with you, I will remember you all and all we have achieved together...

As you know, the SAB would not have been as successful as it has been had it not been for two people who have become very special to me personally, I refer of course to "The Clair(e)s", Clair Alcock and Clair Hey, without whom we would not be as far forward and effective as we are.

The drive, knowledge, enthusiasm and unstinting commitment of Clair Alcock is commendable, and it was through Clair that I developed my passion towards Fire Pensions and pensions issues overall as she introduced me to you, and steered me through pension waters far too deep for the likes of me to comprehensively understand on my own...

Likewise, when Claire Hey was appointed by the LGA to support Clair, I quickly realised what a tremendous asset she is; Claire is extremely diligent, hard-working and knowledgeable. She has been instrumental in developing and maintaining the Websites and producing the monthly Bulletins we all access frequently and rely on for up to date information and guidance, working tirelessly to support the SAB, Pensions Practitioners and the Scheme overall.

I would have dearly loved to continue in my role, but my Doctors, (and Sylvia, my wife!), indicated a while ago it was time for me to slow things down a bit and enjoy my own Fire Pension and some quality time where I live on the South Coast so, reluctantly I will be 'signing off' from all the voluntary work I undertake on the 31st of March...

The process to replace me had started but was delayed by the recent elections when the rules of 'purdah' had to be observed; the sift of the applicants has now taken place with a shortlist being selected and placed before the Minister for his approval, once this is received, Interviews will take place and a successor appointed as soon as possible.

Whoever that person is, they will be very fortunate to have a great team in place to work with, guide and support them, and I would ask you to afford them the welcome you so very kindly gave me.

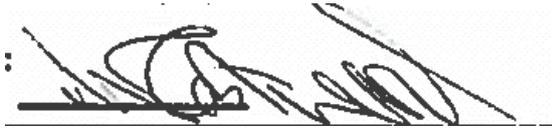
As for me, whilst I will be well & truly retired - according to Sylvia and my family! I will watch your progress with interest, from a distance.

I close by again saying a sincere, "Thank You", to you all for all the support and above all friendship I have received from you in whatever capacity I have worked / linked with you; it has been a great pleasure and a privilege, and I can honestly say I have enjoyed working with and alongside you all.

I hope with all my heart that you will stay well and come through this terrible situation we are all currently going through; undoubtedly some of us will contract Covid-19 and I hope that those of you who do will come through it even stronger and ready to return to "The Fire Pensions Family", I am so proud of and hold in such high regard...

Good Luck, and my very best wishes to you all for the future....

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Malcolm Eastwood', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Malcolm.

Malcolm Eastwood, CBE, CStJ, QFSM, FIFireE.

Chairman, English Firefighters' Pension Scheme Advisory Board.