

HSBC Bank UK Pensioners' Association

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2009 AT CANARY WHARF

Before the meeting started, Rodney advised Council that Jean Marshall had received the MBE in the New Years Honours. It was a well deserved award for her charity work and Council acknowledged the honour with a round of applause.

APOLOGIES

Vernon Badmington – South Wales. David Harris deputised.
Richard Hunt – London. Peter Mitchell deputised.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Eight new representatives were joining Council and each in turn was welcomed by the Chairman.

MINUTES

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 July 2008 were approved and signed.

MATTERS ARISING

None that would not be covered in reports elsewhere.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

MATTERS REFERRED BY EXECUTIVE

Sir Keith Whitson had decided to stand down as President as he was planning to domicile aboard.. Rodney had thanked him for his support to the Association whilst in office.

Dyfrig John, currently Deputy Chairman of the Bank, retires in the spring and had been approached by Rodney to become the next President. He had indicated his willingness to do so. Therefore the Executive recommended to Council that he be invited to become President. This was proposed by Geoff Rutland and seconded by John Richardson. All agreed. His name would go forward to the AGM for ratification.

2.

REPORTS

Chairman – The Chairman had recently attended three lunches in Wessex, Scarborough and Sheffield.

With so many concerned at the effect that the credit crunch is having on peoples everyday lives, Paul Thurston, CEO, had agreed to write an article on the matter to appear in the next edition of the magazine.

Rodney went on to say that HSBC was the strongest capitalised bank in the world (8.9% Tier 1 ratio) and its philosophy of not lending money it does not have had proved a wise and prudent course. It was again emphasised that the Bank was fully committed to maintaining a fully funded pension for its members.

In the last issue of the magazine, a letter was published from the Chairman concerning the forthcoming election for a Pensioner Nominated Director to the Pension Trust Board. It was understood that between 4 -6 candidates were standing of which the Deputy Chairman, Phil Hargreaves was one. Each candidate was required to pass an appropriate test on pension law in order to stand.

The editor had since received a number of letters objecting on the grounds of bias. Although the letter was considered to be fair to other candidates and only mildly suggesting that, in the absence of a preferred candidate, members might consider voting for the Deputy Chairman, it was decided not to enter into a debate with the correspondents. It was also decided that Rodney should write an article for the magazine on how the Association came into being, its aims and how it functioned.

The Chairman had had an initial meeting with Paul Thurston, CEO, with Dyfrig John, the outgoing CEO, in attendance to bring Paul up to speed on Association issues that currently were being discussed with the Bank. Another meeting would take place in the spring.

At the meeting it was discussed that annual pension rises – RPI or 5% whichever was the lesser - was a legal requirement on the Bank which could not be altered. It was decided to seek confirmation of that position in writing from Keith Brown, Chief Executive of the Pension Trust Board.

Ken Moss, Thames Valley, asked what might happen if RPI went negative. Would the Bank seek to reclaim part of an earlier annual increase? That would not be the case. In effect the rise would be 0% for that particular year.

Finally, the possibility of creating a website was mentioned. The current view of the Executive was to seek the Bank's support by attaching the Association website to the Banks Intranet site thereby having help in keeping such a website up to date. The matter would be taken up again with Paul Thurston emphasising the importance of good communication with the pensioner population.

3.

General Secretary – Owen advised Council that the publication of products booklet was no closer to fruition. It was decided by the Executive to take the matter to the top by putting it on the agenda for the next meeting with Paul Thurston.

Information recently collated for inclusion in the booklet had been passed on to the Bank, since when there has been no response.

Treasurer – The credit balances of the Association totalled £60,981 as at 31 December last.

The final cost of the 2008 lunch at the Café Royal was £30,960. The Bank had paid half the cost. In 2007 the cost of the lunch at Sheffield was £15,809.

Re-imburement rates, mileage etc had been reviewed. It was decided that there would be no change at present.

The rates charged for magazine adverts had been reviewed. A slight increase was made to counter the recent reduction in VAT such that overall the rates remained unchanged.

Peter Hagger had received his book token for his work on VAT returns and through David had sent his grateful thanks to the Association.

Membership Secretary – Membership numbers continued to show a steady net rise and now stood at 15200. There were several pensioners not joining because they were undertaking alternative work and could not spare the time to be actively involved. It was hoped that they would take up membership at a later date, although the Association would not send out a future invitation.

Alan had encountered some teething problems with the new pension administrators concerning non advice of retirees for December or January. They would be contacted in due course. From February, Watson Wyatt would send out the invitation to join the Association. Also, advice of when a member dies leaving a widow/widower was not being received. These pensioners would normally be invited to become associate members. The matter would be taken up with Keith Brown.

Social Secretary – The annual lunch at the Café Royal last October was another very successful event.

The arrangements for this year's lunch at National Motor Cycle Museum, Solihull, were proceeding satisfactorily. Jean was confident of a minimum attendance of 500 hopefully rising to 700. Members were advised to book early.

With regard to the annual lunch for 2010 in London and 2011 in the Provinces, appropriate venues were being considered and a further report would follow.

Editor – The January issue was sent out recently and again has been well received although disappointment expressed at the absence of the 'smiles'.

4.

The Bank continued to meet the cost of publishing the obituaries and retirement information. The standard of information received was getting worse.

The occupational health article was being discontinued. The May issue would include an article from the Archives dept. outlining the progress of the Association over the last 60 years.

Also there would be an article from Paul Thurston, CEO of the Bank, concerning the effect of the credit crunch on the Bank and its ability to give continued support to its pensioners.

Pensioner Visiting Officer – HR Connect had informed Barbara that because of the Data Protection Act, it would no longer supply the names of visitors. After much discussion, HR Connect changed their minds and had agreed to proceed as before.

However, there was uncertainty as to whether pensioner visitor meetings would go ahead due to need to save costs wherever possible.

The Bank's top management had always expressed the importance of the Pensioner Visitor scheme and therefore, if necessary, the Association would seek their support to ensure the scheme's objectives were not diluted in any way.

Chairman – Benevolent Fund – Towards the end of last year, the BF had received a legacy of £89,910.76 from the estate of late Mrs Gwyneth Rider. This had been invested and increased the capital value of the Fund by some 64% to £200k. Phil had written to relatives to express the Association's thanks.

In respect of ongoing commitments, all regular payments had now been transferred to BBF. The only remaining outgoings were the continued cheque payments sent to widows at Christmas. Last December 66 cheques were issued of £125 each.

In respect of the future of the BF, it would continue as at present until the Public Benefit issues had been fully addressed. Should the BF fail the Public Benefit test, then the likely course, with Councils approval, would be to merge with the BBF.

Should the Fund pass the test, then the claims experience would be the likely determinant as to whether the Fund remained independent or to seek a merger with the BBF. At present, no new applications for assistance had been received since December 2005 when new arrangements were made for BBF to deal with all claims in the first instance.

In the past local centre collections, usually taken at Christmas time, had been directed to the BF. It was suggested that in future such collections should be given to a local charity or the BBF.

5.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Brian Molloy, Merseyside, mentioned that some pensioners who had received an ex-gratia payment from the Bank were being penalised on their pension credit as these were means tested.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 22 April 2009 at 2pm at Canary Wharf