

Local Pension Board

22 March 2024

Communications Review



Report of Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Board Members with details of how different stakeholder groups receive communication from the Pension Fund, and to explain plans to develop the communication strategy.

Executive summary

- 2 This report outlines the requirements of the Pension Fund to publish and maintain a Communications Policy Statement, how this requirement is met, and future developments that will improve communications with members and employers.

Recommendation(s)

- 3 The Board is asked to note the report and provide any comments on the Fund's communications.

Background

- 4 Under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations 2013, a Pension Fund Administering Authority is required to publish a written statement setting out its policy concerning communications with members, representatives of members, prospective members and Scheme employers.
- 5 Specifically, the statement must set out the Administering Authority's policy on:
 - a) the provision of information and publicity about the Scheme to members, representatives of members and Scheme employers;
 - b) the format, frequency and method of distributing such information or publicity; and
 - c) the promotion of the Scheme to prospective members and their employers.

Fund Communications

- 6 The Council's Pension Fund Communications Policy Statement is attached as Appendix 1. This Statement includes the Council's policy on the issues set out in paragraph 5 above. The Statement is published each year as part of the Pension Fund Annual Report and is available on the Council's website.
- 7 Key points to note include the following:
 - Newsletters for all categories of member are currently only produced as required. Typically, for active members this means newsletters are produced whenever there is a change to regulations or legislation that affects the benefits an active member is entitled to, or the choices they have. The provision of online services for members means that information can be shared with members more quickly and efficiently through the Online Portal at <https://www.durham.gov.uk/pensionsonline>.
 - All active members and deferred members receive an annual benefit statement. For actives this is issued by the end of August each year and for deferred members this is issued earlier, shortly after the annual pension increase has been applied. Benefit Statements are now made available to all members online.

- Scheme employers are briefed on key issues and developments in the LGPS by email and are invited to the Fund's Annual Meeting.
- 8 Since the launch of online services for active and deferred members of the Scheme, over 21,500 members have registered to use the service. These members have completed around 47,000 online calculations and have transacted almost 20,000 changes online. Members have also been able to send queries securely through the portal, and over 3,700 responses have been sent to members this way. KPI reported in respect of the online service is reported to the Local Pension Board quarterly.
 - 9 The Pensions Team continues to work closely with Civica, the Fund's pensions administration software provider, to develop its web-based communication platform for scheme employers. The majority of scheme employers currently utilise online services to run benefit estimates, allowing employers to see the cost of allowing an employee to access benefits early on redundancy or business efficiency grounds. The Team has also rolled out secure information exchange for employers, replacing many paper forms.
 - 10 The latest development for employers, is an enhancement to the Fund's Employer Hub, which has undergone live testing with a group of the Fund's employers. The new web-based portal will facilitate more streamlined and efficient workflows and reduce manual tasks with the aim of improving productivity. The Hub seeks to enhance the experience of employer participation in the Fund and provide easier access to important information and services.

Author(s)

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