



Communication Policy Statement



Introduction

This is the Communication Policy Statement for the West Sussex Local Government Pension Scheme.

West Sussex County Council is the Administering Authority for maintaining and managing the West Sussex Pension Fund on behalf of its stakeholders (scheme members and employers participating in the Fund) and other interested parties including prospective members / employers, government, and government agencies.

The Fund is required to publish several strategy documents and disclose information about benefits and scheme administration to scheme members and others and it does this along with its Pension Administration partner, Hampshire Pension Services.

The Statement was last reviewed in August 2022. The Statement is published on the Pension Fund's website.

The Fund actively seeks feedback from each of our audiences to continually review, enhance and improve our communication methods.




Communication Objectives

Through the Fund's Communication it aims to:

- Ensure that information is provided which highlight the benefits of the Scheme, improve the understanding of how the Schemes works, the costs / funding relating to benefits and inform scheme members of their pension rights.
- Comply with statutory obligations and relevant guidance.
- Keep stakeholders update on latest developments
- Support informed decision making about all aspects of the Scheme
- Maintain the provision of timely and accurate data and associated reporting
- Reduce the number of queries and complaints received by the Fund.

Communication Methods

Our aim is to provide all communications electronically where possible via the Member Portal, Employer Hub or website.

 <p>Portal</p>	<p>We encourage members to access their pension account through the Member Portal https://upmliveportal.hants.gov.uk. This is a secure area which allows members to see the personal details that we hold. Members can use the Portal to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a secure message, • update personal details such as name, address and marital status, • add or amend an 'expression of wish' for payment of a death grant, • complete a membership option form on joining the LGPS or a retirement declaration form (as appropriate). • view benefits documents eg. an annual benefit statement for active and deferred members, or a P60 or payslip for those in receipt of their pension benefits. • Obtain a retirement estimate
 <p>Hub</p>	<p>We actively encourage employers to register for the Employer Hub https://employerhub.hants.gov.uk/. This is a secure area which allows employers to view or amend details of their own employee's records, submit forms to us or to provide member estimates. Employers can use the Hub to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • view the pension records for all the employees they look after • inform us of 50/50 section membership • update any hour changes/notify us of absences • change of payroll no./job description • change personal details • complete a notification of joiner or leaver • run estimates of pension benefits • run own reports (Member Portal and Death Grant information)
 <p>Website</p>	<p>Our website provides information about scheme governance, the approach taken to managing investments and the Fund's funding objectives.</p> <p>Information about membership of the LGPS is also available with details of how members can manage their pension choices, a news feed and other resources. The website also has a dedicated section for employers. It includes technical information, details of training courses, the latest employer news and an Employer Manual which contains details of procedures and employer responsibilities. ¹</p>

¹ [West Sussex County Council](#) and [Hampshire County Council](#) each have accessibility statements setting out how documents held on their websites on behalf of the Fund meet those standards.

Although electronic communications provide secure access to personal information, we recognise that it is not always the most suitable method of contact and we will share information by other means such as in writing or in an alternative format such as large print or Braille. If a member wishes to opt out of electronic communications and to receive paper copies, then we ask that they put their request to us in writing. This can be done either by post, or email to the Pensions Team, who's contact detail are further on in this policy.

Data Protection

The Pension Fund has a duty to protect personal information and will process personal data in accordance with the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

The Fund may need to share personal data to a third party, including our Partners and contractors, advisors, government bodies, and dispute resolution and law enforcement agencies and insurers. We do this to comply with our obligations under law, and to help us provide services and carry out our duties, rights and discretions in relation to the fund.

The Fund's [Privacy Notice](#) explains:

- How personal data is obtained
- What it is used for
- Who it may be shared with and why
- How long it is kept

Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004 we are obliged to respond to requests for recorded information. The Pension Fund follows the Administering Authority policy for responding to requests. For further information about the policy including how to submit a request can be found [here](#).

Subject Access Request

Under the Data Protection Act you are entitled to access personal information held about you within any West Sussex County Council (WSCC) service including the West Sussex Pension Fund. We treat all requests in confidence. If your records include personal data about other people which is inextricably linked with your data we may need to ask for their consent before deciding which information we can disclose to you. We may contact you before we approach them.

For further information about the policy including how to submit a request can be found [here](#).

Pension Disclosure

The Pension Fund has a duty under the [Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes \(Disclosure of Information\) Act 2013](#) relating to the provision of information.

The Fund is required to provide information at different stages of a Scheme members journey within the Pension Scheme. This will include, but not limited to:

- Pension scheme information upon joining.
- Provision of information on a website.
- Provision to provide electronic communications, with the option to 'opt out'.
- Notification to members of material changes to the pension scheme information.
- Annual benefit statements by the statutory deadline of 31 August.
- Pension benefit entitlement statements when a member leaves.

Types of Communication

The table below sets out how the Fund will communicate with its stakeholders and where it can be found.

Communication	Audience
<p>Key policy documents can be found on the Fund's website including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Policy (which provides details pension fund governance arrangements) • Funding Strategy Statement (which sets out how employer liabilities will be calculated and the strategy for setting contributions) and • Investment Strategy Statement (which outlines the types of investment held, risk and corporate governance). 	All stakeholders
Service Standards are set out in the Administration Strategy	All stakeholders
The Annual Report & Accounts sets out details of the value of the Pension Fund during the financial year, income and expenditure and how the fund is managed.	All stakeholders
The Business Plan deals with the functions carried out by the Pension Fund, and its priorities.	All stakeholders
Details of the Pensions Committee and Pension Advisory Board (including meeting dates, membership details and meeting papers) and convening meetings in public are all made public.	All stakeholders
The Member's Guide is the main reference point for active members. This alongside other scheme literature and forms available on pension webpages. This is regularly updated, usually as changes to the Scheme occurs.	All members
<p>An annual newsletter for pensioners provides updates in relation to changes to the Schemes as well as other related news, such as national changes to pensions, forthcoming seminars, a summary of the accounts for the year, contact details, etc.</p> <p>The newsletter is added to the Member Portal every year in March or April and an expanded version of the newsletter can be viewed on the website.</p> <p>Members can opt to receive a paper copy of the newsletter.</p>	Pensioner members
<p>Annual Benefit Statements are made available through the Member Portal.</p> <p>This Statement includes details about the current value of benefits, the associated death benefits and projected retirement benefits. All statements include some explanatory notes and members are advised where to find a more detailed explanation of their statement on our website.</p> <p>Annual Benefit Statements will be provided by 31 August each year.</p> <p>Members can opt to receive paper statements.</p>	<p>Active members</p> <p>Deferred members</p>

Communication	Audience
<p>Pensions Savings Statements provide members who may be affected by the annual allowance tax limit with a summary of their pension savings.</p> <p>Pension Savings Statements will be provided via the Member Portal by 6 October each year.</p> <p>Members can opt to receive paper statements.</p>	Active members
<p>All payslips are available through the Member Portal.</p> <p>If a member has paid income tax during the preceding year, then a P60 will also be available through the Portal by the end of May.</p> <p>Members can opt to receive paper copies.</p>	Pensioner members
<p>A declaration of pension entitlement is sent to pensioners that live overseas each year to verify a member's continuing entitlement to receive pension payments.</p> <p>A form is also sent whenever a pensioner payment or mail is undelivered.</p>	Pensioner members
<p>Latest news updates covering specific topics, changes to the regulations or guidance are provided via an update to the website.</p>	All members Employers
<p>Pre-Retirement courses are made available to all, through the West Sussex Learning and Development pages.</p>	Active members
<p>The Employer Guide sets out the Fund's policies and procedures for employers including the admission and exit from the Fund.</p>	Employers
<p>Regular employer newsletters (Pension Matters) are emailed to employers to provide an update on pension regulation changes and proposals and any changes in administrative processes.</p> <p>Stop Press email communications are sent to employers to advise of urgent pension matters which require noting or action to be taken.</p> <p>Copies of Pension Matters and Stop Press notifications are also added to the employer news section of the website.</p>	Employers
<p>Annual General Meeting to provide an update on investment, funding and administration performance and highlight relevant developments.</p>	Employers

Communication	Audience
<p>Employer Training is provided on specific topics such as end of year member data.</p> <p>Employer training is also provided to small groups to improve understanding of pension administration, legislation, the principles of the Scheme, or Scheme changes.</p> <p>In addition, Pension Services will work with employers who have individual training needs offering targeted training on request or when a need is identified.</p> <p>Employer focus group meetings are held six times per year with employers to discuss key issues as necessary and the team attend established employer forums such as the Payroll Officers' Group.</p>	Employers
<p>Actuarial Valuation meetings are held to provide employers with opportunity to feedback on the Funding Strategy Statement and its application at the formal valuation and to understand their individual funding position.</p>	Employers
<p>A complaints and appeals process is available to provide a route for members and employers, who are unhappy with a service or the way a members benefits have been calculated.</p> <p>The process is available on the Fund webpages.</p>	All stakeholders
<p>Feedback is requested from customers (via inclusion in email signatures, training surveys and complaints / compliments reporting) as part of the Customer Services Excellence accreditation.</p>	All stakeholders
<p>For administration and employer matters, the Team can be contacted in one of the following ways:</p> <p>Email: pensions@hants.gov.uk</p> <p>Phone 01962 845588</p> <p>Write to them at:</p> <p>Hampshire Pension Services The Castle Winchester Hampshire SO23 8UB</p> <p>For other matters including investments, Scheme funding and other employer matters please contact Pensions.Feedback@westsussex.gov.uk</p>	All stakeholders