

Communications Policy Statement



Introduction & Purpose

West Sussex County Council is the Administering Authority for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) on behalf of the employers participating in the LGPS through the West Sussex Pension Fund (WSPF). The LGPS is governed by statutory regulations.

The responsibility for communication material for the Scheme rests with the Administering Authority working in partnership with its Pension Administration provider, Hampshire Pension Services.

This document reflects the LGPS Regulatory requirement for the administering authority to maintain a Statement concerning communications with members, representatives of members, prospective members; and Scheme employers and sets out how the Fund complies with [Disclosure of Information Regulations](#), the [Public Sector Pensions Act](#), the [Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations](#) and the [Pension Regulators Code of Practice](#).

The Communication Policy Statement should be read in conjunction with the Administration Strategy and the Fund's Business Plan

This Statement will be published on the Pension Fund's website. It will be reviewed every three years and updated sooner if the communications arrangements or other matters included within it merit reconsideration. Stakeholders may submit suggestions to improve any aspect of this Policy at any time.

Key Stakeholders

We have varied audience groups with whom we communicate, including:

- Scheme members (active, deferred, pensioner and dependant members) and their representatives;
- Prospective members and members who have opted out;
- Employers and prospective employers;
- West Sussex Pension Fund Committee and West Sussex Pension Advisory Board
- Pension Fund Staff; and
- Other interested groups including, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Pensions Regulator (tPR), the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

Communication Objectives

Through the Fund's Communication it aims to:

- 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 our statutory obligations and relevant guidance.
- Keep stakeholders update on latest developments
- Support informed decision making about investment, administration and governance 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.

Specifically, the table below shows some of the key messages the Fund wishes to deliver.

Stakeholder	Key Message
Active Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your pension is a valuable benefit and your employer pays in to help you save for your retirement. • It is important that you are saving enough for retirement. • It is important that you understand how the LGPS works, other benefits that come with your pension and the impact of any changes in legislation. • It is important that you keep your details up to date.
Potential Scheme Members including Opt Outs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LGPS is a good way to save for your retirement and your employer pays in to help you save for your retirement. • It is important that you understand the impact of any changes in legislation including auto enrolment. • Other benefits come with the pension.
Deferred Scheme Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your pension is a valuable benefit. • It is important that you are saving enough for retirement. • It is important to understand how the LGPS works now, and the impact of any changes in legislation. • You need to understand how your pension worked when you left and the implications of transferring out of the Scheme. • It is important that you keep your details up to date.
Pensioner Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will continue to get your pension. • You have other benefits with your pension. • It is important that you keep your details up to date.
Dependant Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important that you keep your details up to date.
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LGPS is a valuable benefit for members and you need to help educate them to understand the changes and the impact. • You need to understand how the Scheme works and the effect of any changes that happen. • You have a responsibility to provide the Fund with information about any changes to scheme member circumstances and data in respect of your employees and to comply with your LGPS employer responsibilities.

Stakeholder	Key Message
Pensions Committee and Pension Advisory Board members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To be fully informed on pensions matters and to have sufficient knowledge to fulfil members duties and responsibilities.
Pension Fund staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is important to be kept informed about the Fund's aims, achievements and the progression of the Business Plan.• To be knowledgeable about the LGPS and the impact of changes within the Scheme and overall pensions industry.

General Communication

When considering how to communicate with our stakeholders we consider the intended audience to ensure that our messages are delivered in a useful and easy to follow manner. This may involve using more than one method of communication based on the intended audience, albeit the Fund will aim to use digital communications where appropriate to do so given the efficiencies and ease of access it provides, as well as it being more environmentally friendly.

We will continue to develop our digital platforms to encourage greater accessibility to our service for all stakeholders. Scheme members will be able to elect not to receive electronic communications.¹ In such cases, if the Fund is required to provide information, this will be provided in paper form.

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

The Fund also adheres to other legislative requirements, including the [General Data Protection Regulations](#), [Freedom of Information Act](#) and pension disclosure legislation

Accessibility

The Administering Authority is committed to using technology to enhance services, improve accessibility and broaden inclusion.

All public sector websites are required to meet regulatory accessibility standards. [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.

The Administering Authority recognises that individuals may have specific needs in relation to the format or language of our communication. Alternative material will be provided on request.

¹ If a member is interested in opting out of the pension scheme, further details can be found at the following link: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-services/pensions/local-government/about-the-scheme/opting-out>

Types of Communication

The table below sets out how the Fund will communicate with its stakeholders.

Communication	Audience
<p>Key policy documents including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration Strategy (which set out levels of performance expected). • 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
<p>Annual Report & Accounts which sets out details of the value of the Pension Fund during the financial year, income and expenditure and how the fund is managed.</p>	All Stakeholders
<p>Business Plan which deals with the functions carried out by the Pension Fund as administering authority on the investment side</p>	All Stakeholders
<p>Details of the Pensions Committee (including meeting dates, membership details and meeting papers) and convening meetings in public.</p>	All Stakeholders
<p>Details of the Pension Advisory Board including meeting dates, membership details and meeting papers and convening meetings in public.</p>	All Stakeholders
<p>Website which provides detailed information about the Schemes, including who can join, how much it costs, the benefits of the Schemes (including 50/50) and how to increase the value of benefits.</p>	All Stakeholders
<p>Member's Guide which 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.</p>	All members
<p>Member and Employer Portal to provide access to information about membership and current and projected benefits</p>	All members Employers
<p>Annual newsletter for pensioners which 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>	Pensioner members
<p>Annual Benefit Statements which includes details about the current value of benefits, the associated death benefits and projected retirement benefits. Annual Benefit Statements will be made available to all members through the Member Portal by 31 August each year (and as hard copy on request).</p>	Active members Deferred members
<p>Pensions Savings Statements provide members with a summary of their pension savings and must be provided by 6 October each year to those members who have breached the limit or are close to breaching it.</p>	Active members
<p>Payslips are provided where a member's pension varies by at least £5. Members payslips are also available monthly on the member portal.</p>	Pensioner members

Communication	Audience
Latest news updates covering specific topics, changes to the regulations or guidance.	All members Employers
Providing and advertising the Pre-Retirement course	Active members
Employer workshop sessions to discuss issues and regulation changes as are required or requested.	Employers
Providing calculations and costings of early retirement scenarios as requested following receipt of an authorised Employer Initiated Retirement Form (EIRA).	Active members Deferred members
Employer newsletters (Employer Matters) to provide an update to employers of pension matters, which require noting or action to be taken.	Employers
Stop Press publications to update employers of urgent pension matters which require noting or action to be taken.	Employers
Annual General Meeting	Employers
Training for small groups to employers to improve understanding of pension administration, legislation, the principles of the Scheme, or Scheme changes	Employers
Focus group meetings with all employers to discuss key issues as necessary.	Employers
Actuarial Valuation meetings 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.	Employers
Training on provision of end of year member data, including the completion of the appropriate data capture spreadsheet.	Employers
Requesting feedback from customers (via inclusion in email signatures, training surveys and complaints / compliments reporting) as part of the Customer Services Excellence accreditation.	All Stakeholders
Responding to enquiries within reasonable timescales, in the format requested by the member. Timescales are included within the Administration Strategy .	All members