

REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, FINANCE & CORPORATE RESOURCES

Pension Fund Communications Strategy Statement 2019/21

Pensions Committee
26th March 2019

Classification
PUBLIC

Ward(s) affected

ALL

Enclosures
One

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report introduces the updated draft Communications Strategy Statement for the Pension Fund. It is a regulatory requirement for the Fund to have a Communications Strategy Statement and for the Statement to be kept under review and updated as required. The Pension Fund Business Plan also includes provision for an annual review of the Communications Strategy to ensure that it is reviewed by the Pension Committee on a regular basis.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Pension Committee is recommended to:

- **Approve the Communications Strategy Statement 2019/21**

3. RELATED DECISIONS

- Pension Sub-Committee 6th March 2006 – Approval of first Communications Policy Statement.
- Pension Sub-Committee 23rd June 2010, 27th March 2013, 16th January 2014, then Pensions Committee 31st March 2015, 13th January 2016, 24th January 2017, 4th December 2017, 21st March 2018 – Approval of amended Communications Policy Statement.

4. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, FINANCE & CORPORATE RESOURCES

- 4.1 The approval of a Communications Strategy Statement has no immediate financial impact, however, a good communications strategy for the pension fund helps the Fund to demonstrate good governance and maintain an efficient and cost effective Fund.
- 4.2 The implementation of an effective communications strategy however is not without cost, given the need to keep members and employers informed. Where possible a lot of information is provided electronically with a dedicated Pension Fund website which forms part of the Third Party Administration Contract.

5. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

- 5.1 The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013, Regulation 61, require LGPS Pension Funds to publish and keep under review their Communications

Strategies and Policies. The Regulations further set out the requirements for Administering Authorities to cover in such statements, the types of information to be covered, the frequency and recipients of such communications.

- 5.2 The Committee acting in its capacity as Administering Authority therefore has a responsibility to ensure that such Communications Strategy Statements are kept under review and that they are re-considered as and when necessary. This report ensures that the Committee are meeting their obligations as quasi trustees in respect of the Communications Strategy.

6. THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY STATEMENT

- 6.1 The requirement for LGPS Pension Funds to have a Communications Strategy Statement was introduced in 2005, with the then Pensions Sub-Committee approving its first Communications Statement at its meeting in March 2006. The Statement was subsequently updated in June 2010, March 2013 and annually thereafter.
- 6.2 The Strategy was previously updated to reflect the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from 25th May 2018 and approved by Pensions Committee on 4th December 2017 for publication on the Pension Fund website.
- 6.3 The Strategy has been further updated to incorporate the use of customer satisfaction surveys, in conjunction with our 3rd party pension administrators Equiniti, launched during 2018/19. The additions to the Policy are noted on page 12 & 13, 'Communications Material, Feedback' and detail how the Fund will undertake the surveys and report results to the Pensions Committee and Pension Board as appropriate.
- 6.4 The surveys will be undertaken at least on an annual basis, and will be aimed at both members and employers in the Fund. They will be used to assess the member experience when interacting with the administrators, either by phone or when they have used any of the on-line facilities. Quick and easy questions will be put to the user or 'customer', and responses will be analysed and reported back to the Fund by Equiniti.
- 6.5 The feedback from the surveys will help the Fund, and the administrators, formulate better engagement strategies, make changes to administration practices that will result in improvements to service, and increase efficiency and add value.
- 6.6 Below is the relevant extract from the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013, Regulation 61, which sets out the requirements of the communications strategy for LGPS Funds:

61. (1) An administering authority must prepare, maintain and publish a written statement setting out its policy concerning communications with—

- (a) members;
- (b) representatives of members;
- (c) prospective members; and
- (d) Scheme employers.

(2) In particular the statement must set out its 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.

(3) The statement must be revised and published by the administering authority following a material change in their policy on any of the matters referred to in paragraph (2).

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Pension Fund Communications Strategy Statement (LGPS) 2019/21