

Pensions Committee

7 December 2016

Report title	Communications policy review	
Originating service	Pension Services	
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Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the Communications Policy for 2016/2017
2. Approve the Customer Engagement Strategy for 2016/17

Recommendations for noting:

The Committee is asked to note:

1. The work of the Fund in improving communications with stakeholders during 2015/2016

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide committee with an update on the work of the Fund in the area of communications during 2015/16 and to present the communications policy for 2016/17.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Fund reviews its Communication Policy Statement annually, ensuring that it reflects and meets the changing needs of the LGPS, its members, employers, and the local government pension environment overall.
- 2.2 The production of a Communications Policy Statement has been a requirement since April 2006 for all pension fund administering authorities.
- 2.3 The document outlines how the Fund will engage and communicate with:
- All scheme members and their representatives (active, deferred, and pensioner)
 - Prospective scheme members
 - Contributing employers
 - Our staff
 - External stakeholders (such as the media, and interest groups)

3.0 Work over the last year

- 3.1 In 2015/2016 the Fund's main objectives were to engage with employers, and stakeholders, to continue keeping members informed about changes to their pension, and to continue engaging with the industry on wider pension and investment issues. The Fund has delivered a wide range of communication resources by electronic means, through face-to-face events, and in print.
- 3.2 In February 2016 the Fund embarked on Customer Journey Mapping workshops for employers, helping to create mutual understanding around the expectations of submitting their annual return. 20 representatives attended across the three workshops, which were able to draw out key improvements and changes that needed to be made in order to make the process more efficient and effective for both employers and the Fund.
- 3.3 In addition to the work the Fund undertakes to ensure our members and employers receive the information they need, the Fund has also been approached on a number of occasions to write bespoke pieces for industry specific publications by submitting articles in a Q&A format on topics of interest. Most recently, the Head of Finance, David Kane was interviewed for a piece with IPE discussing the LGPS costs framework and the work WMPF is doing in this area to reduce external management costs.
- 3.4 Internal communications took a new direction in ensuring staff and Trustees are updated on a regular basis with the creation of a "media roundup" to Trustees (containing a summary of industry news and information), in addition to a monthly "employee catch up" (providing staff with an electronic newsletter, also helping reduce volume of Fund-wide internal emails).

3.5 The Fund continues with its regular communication which includes, our well attended Member Services Roadshows, conducted throughout the year. The table below shows the attendance at our member events throughout 2016.

Location	Attendees
Perry Barr Depot - Birmingham	36
Redfern Road Depot – Birmingham C.C	47
2 x Montague Street Depot – Birmingham C.C.	74
Lifford Lane Depot – Birmingham C.C.	45
Lister Road Depot – Dudley M.B.C.	70
Leys Depot – Dudley M.B.C.	68
Bournville College	23
Dudley College	25
Solihull College	49
City College Coventry	27
Wolverhampton Uni - Wolverhampton Campus	21
Wolverhampton Uni - Walsall Campus	39
Wolverhampton Uni - Telford Campus	15
Henley College	21
South City College Roadshow Event	25
Dudley M.B.C.	37
Birmingham City Council – Woodcock Street	95
Walsall M.B.C.	39
Coventry City Council	106
Solihull M.B.C.	46
Wolverhampton City Council	71
Sandwell M.B.C.	86
Birmingham City Council – Lifford House	115
Totals	1180

A total of 50 Fund presentations were delivered to 1180 attendees, these presentations were held at 41 different employers, including the district councils, universities, schools/academies and other admitted bodies.

The feedback from these presentations was 50.45% of the members rated them as excellent, 40.33% as very good, 8.86% as good and 0.36% as satisfactory.

The Fund works in partnership with Prudential to deliver a joint presentation covering how the Scheme works and tax efficient methods of saving towards the future. During this period 24 of these presentations were delivered across 9 employers, 598 members attended.

Further support has also been provided to members either through drop in sessions or scheduled one to one support sessions. In total, additional support was delivered to 408 members on an individual basis.

- 3.6 For the same period, the Employer Services team hosted 8 employer coaching sessions with over 250 attendees from across the employer base. Throughout July and November, a number of valuation briefing sessions were held for employers in addition to individual employers meetings to discuss specific valuation outcomes. These have been ongoing since May and will continue with the AGM in November and further 1-2-1 meetings in December and January.
- 3.6 To assist the Data Quality project the Fund also engaged in cross-team partnership and delivered a number of monthly return workshops for employers both at Mander House and across the District at Birmingham City University.
- 3.7 The Fund regularly reviews and updates its website content, producing a quarterly newsletter for employers, and engaging with interest groups and individuals about responsible investment and related concerns. With 2016 being a valuation year for the Fund, engagement and consultation with employers has been a key focus together with the move to monthly returns in June 2016 as we seek to improve data quality.

4.0 Communications Policy 2016/2017

- 4.1 At its meeting on 5 July 2016, the Pension Board resolved to include member and employer engagement as one of the focus areas for its work over the next 12 months.
- 4.2 In recognising the key themes developing in the LGPS over the next 12 months, as highlighted in the Fund's 2016/2021 Service Plan, the Fund recognises the importance of keeping our members and employers informed of issues relevant to them.
- 4.3. The key themes highlighted in the policy reflect the legal requirement of the Fund to publish a communications policy and includes
- An annual Customer Engagement Plan, noting the events we hold specifically for our members and employers
 - The communication the Fund is required to produce, benefit statements, disclosure, etc.
 - The methods available to our Customers for engaging directly with the Fund, to include web portal, customer service, 1-2-1's.
 - The methods for keeping our Trustees and Pension Board Members informed
 - Ad-hoc communications, such as website updates, mailings and direct contact.
- 4.4 A copy of the Policy is attached at Appendix 1
- 4.5 In addition, the Fund has set out its annual plan for key engagement with our stakeholders. This assists the Fund to plan specific events, at key times during the year to ensure relevant information is being presented at the right time.
- 4.6 A copy of the engagement Strategy is attached at Appendix 2

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 Communications forms part of the Fund's work and is accounted for in the annual budget.

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 The Fund are required under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations to publish an annual Communications Policy. In addition, the Fund is required to publish certain disclosure documents to our members on matters which may affect their pension benefits.

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 None

8.0 Environmental implications

8.1 None

9.0 Human resources implications

9.1 None

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

10.1 None

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1 West Midlands Pension Fund Service Plan 2016 – 2021
<http://www.wmpfonline.com/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=9302&p=0>

12.0 Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1
Communications Policy 2016 – 2017.

12.2 Appendix 2
Customer Engagement strategy 2016 - 2017