

Communications Policy Statement

Various means are employed to communicate with the Fund's stakeholders. These are described in respect of each interested group as shown below:

Members of the Scheme

An Annual Meeting is held each December and provides the main opportunity for the Fund to explain its performance and accounts to members of the Fund and employers.

The Fund's Annual Report is also placed on the pension pages of the County Council's website. This Report includes the Fund's policy statements covering Funding Strategy, Governance, Communication and Administration. In addition, each policy statement is listed separately on the website.

All pensioner members receive a pension newsletter each May that covers matters of interest.

An annual Benefit Statement is sent to all active and deferred members of the Fund showing their accrued benefits up to the end of the previous financial year. At this time the opportunity is also taken to include information on current matters of interest to scheme members.

Information on the scheme and changes to it are posted on the pension pages of the County Council's web site and where appropriate these are also posted onto the "news" section of the staff intranet.

The Authority continues to send payslips to pensioners every April, May and October. The October pensioner pay slips include an invitation to the Fund's Annual Meeting and details on how to access the annual report and accounts. Pay slips are also sent where the difference in the net pension payment is £10 or more from the previous month.

All active scheme members are sent an invitation to attend the Fund's Annual Meeting, via their employer and are given the link to the County Council's web site to access a copy of the Fund's annual report and accounts. They are also given details on how to request a paper copy of the annual report and accounts.

Prospective Members of the Scheme

All employers are provided with a link to the employers' pages of the Fund's pension web site, together with instructions on how to supply all prospective members of the scheme with a pensions pack. This pack informs individuals of the benefits of the scheme as well as details about where they can obtain further information.

Advice and guidance is provided by Pensions staff to all employers within the Fund on an on-going basis.

Scheme Employers

An online employers' guide to the scheme is made available to all new and prospective employers via the County Council's website.

Employers are also consulted on key revisions to the Funds strategy and policy documents - the Investment Strategy Statement, the Governance Policy and Compliance Statements, the Administration Strategy, the Communication Policy and the Funding Strategy Statement.

Employer forums are held with the administering authority at least twice yearly to help improve understanding of: the pension scheme; the employers' role and ways of improving the accuracy and timeliness of scheme administration. All employers are invited to attend. Minutes of the meetings and copies of any presentations are sent to all employers, including those unable to attend.

Copies of all relevant communications received centrally (i.e. from MHCLG, Treasury, HMRC, LGA, etc.) are circulated to employers to ensure they are kept informed. These documents are often discussed in detail at the Employers Forums. In addition, communications relating to operational requirements and changes are circulated to employers where required.

Where we are informed of a transfer, direct dialogue takes place between the administering authority and employers being affected by business transfers to ensure trades unions and prospective employers understand the pension scheme.

Every three years when the triennial valuation takes place meetings are arranged with the actuary to discuss the outcome of the valuation, contribution rates and e.g. options around phasing in any increase in contribution required.

Meetings are held with the Chief Financial Officers of District Councils where there is an opportunity for current developments and issues to be presented and discussed.

Employee Representation

The Pension Committee includes an employee representative nominated by the trades unions, as one of its members. The employee representative also represents pensioners and deferred members.

Employee representatives are involved in consultation where business transfers are proposed.

Pension Board

The Gloucestershire Pension Board meets at least twice a year and includes two employer representatives and two employee representatives. Members of the public are able to attend as observers.