

Communications Strategy

Introduction and Regulatory Framework

This is the communications strategy for the Local Government Pension Fund administered by Southwark Council.

As at 31 March 2018, the pension fund has 24,180 scheme members (10,269 deferred, 6,291 active and 7,620 pension members) and also has 43 admitted and scheduled bodies.

This document provides an overview of how Southwark Council communicates to these and other interested parties.

A written statement of the strategy is a requirement of the provisions of Regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 which require Southwark Council to prepare and maintain a written statement setting out the policy of communicating with members, representatives of members, prospective members and scheme employers.

The statement must also set out the Fund's policy on the provision of information and publicity to scheme members and their representatives, and scheme employers of member, on the format, frequency and method of distributing that information, and on the promotion of the scheme to prospective members and their employers.

Responsibilities and Resources

Within the pension administration section the Pensions Manager has responsibility for preparing communication material and organising communication events with the support of key personnel in the team.

Communication material is produced within the section, supported by Aon Hewitt, Southwark Council pension fund's actuaries, as required.

The communications strategy is approved by the Strategic Director of Finance and Governance, on the advice of the pensions advisory panel (PAP) and following review by the local pensions board.

Communication with Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders that we communicate with and who form part of this communications strategy are:

- Active members
- Deferred members
- Pensioner members
- Prospective members
- Scheme employers (admitted and scheduled bodies plus schools)
- Senior Managers
- Union Representatives

- Elected members, PAP and Local Pension Board

We seek to utilise an electronic form of communication wherever possible. However, there will always be examples where that is not appropriate, including such factors as member demographic, the need for face-to-face communication and training, and regulatory factors. We will also aim to meet any requests to improve the accessibility of information such as larger font or information in another language.

As Southwark Council administers the pension fund, all communication conforms to the council's branding.

Active, Deferred and Pensioner Members

We aim to ensure that as far as reasonable, members understand their benefits and rights under the pension scheme. We also aim to ensure that members receive timely and accurate information.

Key approaches are outlined in the table below.

Information type	Method of Communication	Frequency of Issue	Distribution	Stakeholder
Scheme booklet	Electronic and paper based on intranet	At joining and at major scheme changes	Emailed or posted to employees by employer	Active members
Retirement Presentations	Face-to-face	Regularly as required	Advertised on intranet and invitations via HR team	Active members
Pension Roadshows and drop in sessions	Face-to-face	On request and at major scheme changes	Advertised on intranet	Active members
Pension Fund Annual Report	Southwark Council website	Annual	On request	All members
Benefit Statements	Via email to active members. Via post to deferred members	Annual	Employee email address for active members, home addresses for deferred	Active and Deferred members
Website information and links, including Member Self Service (MSS)	Electronic	Continuously available	Advertised on communication	All members
Newsletters	Electronic, via email or by post, as appropriate	Periodically – at least annually	Electronic, via email or by post, as appropriate	All members

Prospective Members and their Employers

The objective is to increase take up of the pension and also to use as a means of attracting potential new employees. We support Southwark Council's Human Resources team and scheme employers to meet these objectives, as we do not have direct access to prospective members.

We support these objectives by making available the LGPS leaflet which is distributed to potential or new employees via the employers.

Scheme employers plus Southwark Schools

The objective is to ensure that they understand their responsibilities and benefits under the LGPS scheme, particularly the importance of timely and accurate information.

Key approaches are outlined in the table below:

Information Type	Method of Communication	Frequency of Issue	Distribution
Administration Strategy	Southwark Council website and electronic	Continuously available and reissued if major change	Initially via email and advertised on other communications
Employer Guide	Southwark Council website and electronic		Initially via email and advertised on other communication
System Guide	Southwark Council website and electronic		Initially via email and advertised on other communications
Training Sessions	Face-to-face	As required	Email to employer contacts with personal invitations
Newsletters/ updates	Email	As required	Email to employers' named contact officers

Senior Managers

The objective is to ensure that senior managers are aware of the benefits of the pension scheme, to enable them to support their staff and, in addition, to help them understand the cost and funding implications so that they can make informed employer decisions.

Over and above the various member communication approaches already outlined above, the team also runs regular senior manager briefings.

Union Representatives

The objective is to provide union member representatives with pension scheme information to support their members. It is also to ensure that they are aware of the pension fund policy.

The union representatives are involved in the pension briefing sessions, and ad-hoc face-to-face meetings are held as required.

Elected Member, PAP and Local Pension Board

The objective is to ensure that these stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the scheme, to seek their view on discretionary policies and responses to government consultations.

These objectives are achieved via a training programme for new and existing panel and board members. In addition regular briefing papers will be presented to the panel and the board on key areas related to the pension scheme.

Performance Measurement and Review

We measure our performance in how effectively we communicate with each of the stakeholder groups. We use a combination of qualitative feedback and measurable targets in order to assess both the effectiveness of the communications strategy and also to measure our performance in meeting the requirements of the strategy.

The strategy is reviewed annually to ensure that it meets stakeholders' needs and regulatory requirements.

As part of that review, we consider any qualitative feedback from stakeholders to identify if revisions are required to either the strategy itself or communication approaches or material.

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Further information: Approved by Strategic Director of Finance and Governance following recommendation by Pensions Advisory Panel 13 November 2018