



**CRONFA BENSIWN
POWYS
PENSION FUND**

**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
STATEMENT**

Reviewed March 2017

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme 2013 (as amended) [SI 2013 No. 2356] requires an administering authority to prepare, publish and maintain a statement that sets out strategy for communication and promotion of the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- 1.2 The Statement is required to include details of policy for communicating with Scheme members and their representatives; prospective Scheme members; and Scheme employers.
- 1.3 In particular, the Statement must set out policy on the provision of information and publicity about the Scheme to Scheme members, their representatives and Scheme employers; the format, frequency and method of distributing such information or publicity; and the promotion of the Scheme to prospective members and their employers.
- 1.4 The Statement must be reviewed and published following any material change relevant to the policy.
- 1.5 An effective communications strategy is vital for any organisation that strives to provide a high quality and consistent service to its customers. The complexity of pensions in general and the LGPS in particular, places communications at the heart of a high quality service provision.
- 1.6 There are six distinct groups with whom Powys Pension Fund needs to communicate:
 - Pension Fund Trustees and local Pension Board Members
 - Scheme Members
 - Prospective Scheme Members
 - Scheme Employers
 - Pension Fund Officers and Staff
 - Other Stakeholders
- 1.7 Set out in this Statement are the mechanisms which are used to communicate with each of these groups, together with a strategy for widening and improving communications and to promote the Scheme amongst non-members.

2. Principles Underpinning this Strategy

- 2.1 The drivers for communicating that underpin this strategy are:

- a) to inform and educate stakeholders and interested parties about the Powys Pension Fund and the Local Government Pension Scheme in an open and transparent manner;
 - b) to better facilitate accountability;
 - c) to promote the engagement of scheme members and employers.
- 2.2 Whereever possible the Pension Fund seeks to make its communications as open and as accessible as are needed by stakeholders. This includes:
 - a) the provision of information through the medium of Welsh;
 - b) the provision of information in other languages if required;
 - c) where possible, providing communications in alternative forms for example in large print, via audio etc.
 - d) the increasing use of social media.
- 2.3 In the context of the LGPS, deciding on when to communicate is largely determined by the statutory requirements imposed upon the Pension Fund. The Pension Fund aims to provide communications to stakeholders within statutory timelines and, for non-statutory information, as and when required.

3. Pension Fund Trustees and local Pension Board Members

- 3.1 The Trustees of Powys Pension Fund (the members of the Pensions & Investment Committee - six Powys County Council Elected Members plus two non-voting members representing other participating Scheme employers and Scheme members) and local Pension Board Members (an independent Chair, two Scheme employer representatives and two Scheme member representatives) receive information, primarily in the form of written reports and email correspondence, that cover investment, actuarial and administration issues. Committee and Board members also attend conferences and seminars on the LGPS.
- 3.2 Completion of appropriate training for Pension Fund Trustees and local Pension Board Members is a mandatory requirement. Ongoing knowledge development and training is to be provided via Pension Fund Officers and advisers. Full details are set out in the Knowledge & Skills Framework Policy appended to the Pension Fund's Governance Policy & Compliance Statement.

4. Scheme Members

- 4.1 Newsletters – are sent out to all active and pensioner members covering LGPS and related issues, as and when required.
- 4.2 Benefit Statements – sent to all active and deferred members (where a current home address is held) annually. Statements include State Scheme benefits and are produced in conjunction with the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 4.3 Scheme Literature – A range of Scheme literature and information covering many aspects of the LGPS is produced by Powys Pension Fund and is supplied direct to employers and Scheme members, as required.
- 4.4 Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) – Regular promotional mailshots are sent to active members in partnership with the Fund's AVC providers.
- 4.5 Pay Advices – Powys Pension Fund issues pay advices to all its Fund pensioners twice per year, or more often where pay amounts vary from month-to-month.
- 4.6 Pensions Increases – all Fund pensioners are advised of their annual pension increase via a personalised letter sent in April each year.
- 4.7 Correspondence – the Pension Fund utilises both surface mail and email to send and receive correspondence with Scheme members.
- 4.8 Telephone – much of the Pension Fund's communication with individual Scheme members is conducted by telephone.
- 4.9 Pensions Clinics – The Pension Fund provides a periodic clinic service where Scheme members have the opportunity to discuss their individual pension issues on a face-to-face basis. In addition, clinics focussing on AVCs are also held for the benefit of active members, provided by the Fund's AVC providers.
- 4.10 Welsh Language – wherever possible the Pension Fund provides access to Scheme documents in the medium of Welsh.
- 4.11 Website - a full range of Pension Fund and LGPS information is available via the Pension Fund's dedicated bespoke website at www.powypensionfund.org.
- 4.12 My Powys Pension – an online system that is available to all active and deferred Scheme members. It enables members to interact with their pension records; log changes to basic data (eg changes to address etc.); and perform pension benefit forecasts.

- 4.13 Powys Pension Fund has both facebook and twitter accounts through which it is able to communicate further with Scheme members who prefer to receive information via these media platforms.

5. Prospective Scheme Members

- 5.1 Scheme Guide – All prospective Scheme members are provided with Scheme information on being appointed to their employments.
- 5.2 Website - a full range of Pension Fund and LGPS information is available via the Pension Fund's dedicated bespoke website at www.powyspensionfund.org.
- 5.3 The Pension Fund's intention is to request formal notification of non-joiners from Scheme employers. The information will be used to market the Scheme with dedicated literature. (Targeted for implementation during 2017/18).
- 5.4 Pensions Clinics – The Pension Fund provides a periodic clinic service where prospective Scheme members have the opportunity to discuss their individual pension issues on a face-to-face basis.

6. Scheme Employers

- 6.1 Employers' Guide – An Employers' Guide is issued to each employer to assist them in the administration associated with participation in the Scheme.
- 6.2 Ill Health Retirements – The Pension Fund has made available to all participating employers access to the Pension Fund's approved Occupational Health Physician for the purposes associated with ill health benefits.
- 6.3 Employer Meetings and Reports – Periodic Employer meetings are held at least annually. Typically these are used to communicate a variety of Pension Fund matters of specific interest to employers, such as the results of triennial valuations. In addition, employers receive copies of the Pension Fund's Annual Report & Accounts, Statement Of Investment Principles, Funding Strategy Statement and Governance Policy & Compliance Statement.
- 6.4 Technical Updates – These are sent to employers from time to time to advise them of significant changes to the Scheme and associated legislation.

- 6.5 Website - a full range of Pension Fund and LGPS information is available via the Pension Fund's dedicated bespoke website at www.powyspensionfund.org.
- 6.6 It is envisaged that technical updates for employers will be regularised in the form of a quarterly briefing paper, to include, in addition to Scheme changes, matters of national debate and interest on the future development of pensions in general and the LGPS in particular. (Targeted for implementation during 2017/18).
- 6.7 Powys Pension Fund has both facebook and twitter accounts through which it is able to communicate further with employers who prefer to receive information via these media platforms.

7. Pension Fund Officers and Staff

- 7.1 Team Meetings – Pensions Administration meets quarterly at which team members consider procedural issues; plan work and developments for the coming quarter and beyond; and, at which the team is kept abreast of Scheme developments and changes.
- 7.2 Technical Information – Bulletins and Circulars issued by the Local Government Association together with guidance and consultation documents from the Department for Communities and Local Government are available to all Pension Fund Officers and Staff for information. In addition, periodic in-house procedural guidance, procedure notes and technical explanations are provided, as required.
- 7.3 Intranet and Internet – All staff have been enabled to use the corporate network in order to access both the Powys Intranet and the internet.
- 7.4 E-mails – All staff have access to email facilities.
- 7.5 Pension Fund Manager – The Pension Fund Manager maintains an open-door policy and attempts to make himself available to all staff at all times.

8. Other Stakeholders

- 8.1 All Wales Pension Officers' Group – Pension Officers from the 8 administering authorities in Wales meet regularly in order to ensure uniform interpretation of the LGPS and other associated regulations. The group's views are passed up to the national level via the Local Government Pensions Committee's Technical Group Meetings (an arm of the Local Government Association) that are held quarterly.
- 8.2 All Wales Communications Group – Pensions Officers from the 8 administering authorities in Wales meet periodically in order to devise, develop and promote the use of common Scheme literature.
- 8.3 CLASS Group – As a user of the Altair Pensions Administration System, the Pension Fund is a member of the local authority CLASS Group and attends both regional user groups and national meetings.
- 8.4 National Fraud Initiative – The Pension Fund has participated in the National Fraud Initiative since 1998 and continues to do so. This has helped to avoid the overpayment of pension benefits to both deceased and re-employed pensioners.

- 8.5 Taxpayers and the General Public – all the principal Pension Fund documents including the Annual Report & Accounts, Actuarial Valuation Reports, Statement of Investment Principles, Funding Strategy Statement, Governance Policy & Compliance Statement and this Statement, are available to the public via the Pension Fund’s website at www.powyspensionfund.org or on request.

9. Contacts

- 9.1 Any questions, queries or observations on this Statement; or, on matters relating to the investment of the Powys Pension Fund; or, on the governance of the Pension Fund, should be addressed to:

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- 9.2 Questions or queries concerning membership, benefits or information in respect of the Local Government Pension Scheme, should be directed to:

Mr C Hurst
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Tel: 01597 827640

Email: chris.hurst@powys.gov.uk

- 9.3 All other enquiries should be addressed to:

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Email: pensions@powys.gov.uk