



Powys

**CRONFA BENSIWN
POWYS
PENSION FUND**

**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
STATEMENT**

September 2022

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 (LGPS).
- 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 LGPS 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, however it is reviewed periodically as a matter of course.
- 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 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 Wherever 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 and internet-based delivery methods.
- 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, three Scheme employer representatives and three Scheme member representatives) receive information, primarily in the form of written reports and email correspondence, that cover governance, investment, actuarial, accounting/financial 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 is essential and is a mandatory requirement for local Pension Board Members. Ongoing knowledge development and training is to be provided via Pension Fund Officers and advisers, together with many opportunities provided by industry professional events. Full details are set out in the Knowledge & Skills Framework Policy.

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 Annual Benefit Statements – issued annually to all active and deferred members (including members of the LGPS for Councillors) electronically and posted to those scheme members (where a current home address is held) who have opted out of electronic communications.
- 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 provided on the Fund's website and 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 electronically (and posted to those who have requested paper correspondence) in April each year.
- 4.7 Correspondence – the Pension Fund utilises both surface mail, email and online delivery via the member portal to send and receive correspondence with Scheme members.
- 4.8 Telephone/Online – much of the Pension Fund's communication with individual Scheme members is conducted by telephone. This includes face to face calls via Microsoft Teams.
- 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 or digitally via Microsoft Teams.
- 4.10 Welsh Language – wherever possible the Pension Fund provides access to Scheme documents in the medium of Welsh.
- 4.11 [Website](http://www.powypensionfund.org) - 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 read electronic communications; interact with their pension records; log changes to basic data (eg changes to address etc.); and perform pension benefit forecasts.

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.powypensionfund.org.
- 5.3 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 in person, or online via Microsoft Teams.

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. These will be delivered face to face, where possible, or online via Microsoft Teams to better enable those Employers who are unable to attend on the day to dial in electronically.

In addition, the Fund makes available the Pension Fund's Annual Report & Accounts, Investment Strategy Statement, Funding Strategy Statement, Governance Policy & Compliance Statement, Employer Policy and many other documents via the Fund's website.

- 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](http://www.powyspensionfund.org) - 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 Technical updates for employers are provided in the form of a quarterly communication, which 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.

7. Pension Fund Officers and Staff

- 7.1 Team Meetings – The Pensions Section meets quarterly where 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. During extended periods of homeworking, team catch up meetings take place every 10 days.
- 7.2 Technical Information – Bulletins and Circulars issued by the Local Government Association together with guidance and consultation documents from the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) 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 Senior Management – The Senior management within the Pensions Section maintain an “open-door” policy and attempt to be available to all staff at all times.

8. Other Stakeholders

- 8.1 All Wales Pension Officer 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 Wales Pension Partnership – Pension Officers and the Investment Committee Chairs of the 8 administering authorities in Wales meet regularly in connection with pooling investments within Wales. Pension Boards are kept up to date on developments and engage bi-annually via the Chairs of the Pension Boards.

In addition, there are several sub-groups made up of officers from each administering authority that provide information to the Officer Working Group

- 8.4 CLASS Group – As a user of the Aquila Heywood 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.
- 8.5 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.
- 8.6 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 or governance of the Powys Pension Fund, should be addressed to:

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Email: chris.hurst@powys.gov.uk

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

Mrs M Price
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Tel: 01597 827642

Email: megan.price@powys.gov.uk

- 9.3 All other enquiries should be addressed to:

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Email: pensions@powys.gov.uk