

Cambridgeshire Pension Fund

Pension Fund Committee

30 March 2023

Report by: Head of Pensions

Subject:	Communications strategy
Purpose of the report:	To seek approval for the communications strategy, communications plan and website project.
Recommendations:	<p>The Pension Fund Committee are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) approve the Communication Strategy (see section 3.1)2) approve the Communication Plan (see section 3.2)3) note the work being undertaken on the website development review (see section 3.3)
Enquiries to:	Sharon Grimshaw, Communications Officer sharon.grimshaw@westnorthants.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 Regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 state that an administering authority must prepare, maintain and publish a written statement setting out its policy concerning communications with members and scheme employers.
- 1.2 Our communications strategy has been updated for 2023 and outlines our strategic approach to communications. It can be found in appendix 1. Our communications plan for 2023/24 details the communications activities to be undertaken within the scheme year and can be found in appendix 2.
- 1.3 The Committee previously approved a review of the Fund's website. Officers have worked with the West Northamptonshire Council Digital team to carry out a user led review of the website. An update on the project and final recommendations for improvement are provided within this report.
- 1.4 This report was reviewed by the Local Pension Board, and they identified no substantive changes.

2. Executive summary

- 2.1 This report is asking for approval for the communications strategy, communications plan, and website project for 2023.
- 2.2 Our communications strategy has been updated to reflect current membership and employer numbers, to include a new section on lifestyle communications, and to reflect technological updates on our methods of communication.

- 2.3 Our communications plan will focus on our key projects like McCloud, the pensions dashboard and our website review in addition to statutory communications and promotion of the online pension account for members.
- 2.4 From the research we conducted in our website review we've agreed to focus on restructuring the content of the website.
- Testing a personalised approach with different search and navigation options.
 - Creating prototypes and testing with members, employers, and the Pensions team.

3. Communication updates

3.1 Communication Strategy

- 3.1.1 We've made the following changes to our communications strategy for 2023 in appendix 1:
- 3.1.2 Introduction – the number of employers has been updated from 358 to 352 and members from over 78,000 to over 92,000. The reason for the increase in members is because we have included those members that are classed as 'undecided leavers' in the deferred member category to be consistent with the annual report and accounts, whereas in the previous strategy these members were left out.
- 3.1.3 The members per category were updated as follows:

Category	Previous strategy	2023 communications strategy
Active members	27,396	28,911
Deferred members	30,830	42,384
Pensioner members	20,381	21,340

- 3.1.4 We added a new section on lifestyle communications to reflect how we're trying to make our communications more engaging by linking them around different life events, like getting married, moving in with a partner, starting a family, buying their first home, or getting a promotion.
- 3.1.5 We added a new section on performance indicators which we plan to benchmark against other Funds once this information becomes available. The key information that we are monitoring is the proportion of members that have registered for their online pension account and the proportion of members that have opted out of electronic communications.
- 3.1.6 Under methods of communication we removed references to Skype as this is no longer used and added in videos and MS Teams.

3.2 Communication Plan

- 3.2.1 Our communications plan included as appendix 2 outlines our planned communication activities for 2023/24, on a monthly basis, for each of our stakeholders.

3.2.2 The communications plan shows the completion of our valuation activities, communication for key projects like McCloud and the pensions dashboard and our focus around increasing engagement about pensions in general by supporting activities like Pensions Awareness Week and the Pension Attention campaign.

3.2.3 It also includes the implementation phase of our website project.

3.2.4 The plan also includes timings for issuing statutory communications and cyclical newsletters, surveys, and employer training.

3.3 Website review project

3.3.1 Our website review project (see appendix 3 for more detail) aims to determine whether our member and employer websites still meet the best user needs and will give recommendations on how to improve, move or replace both sites. We've held detailed interviews with members and employers to highlight any issues with the websites' navigation and surveyed over 1,700 people to find out what members and employers most wanted to know about pensions.

3.3.2 From the findings we've agreed to focus on restructuring the content of the website.

- Testing a personalised approach with different search and navigation options.
- Creating prototypes and testing with members, employers, and the Pensions team.

4. Relevant Pension Fund objectives

To promote the scheme as a valuable benefit.

To deliver consistent plain English communications to stakeholders.

To provide scheme members with up to date information about the scheme in order that they can make informed decisions about their benefits.

To seek and review regular feedback from all stakeholders and use the feedback appropriately to shape the administration of the Fund.

5. Risk management

5.1 We are required by legislation to prepare, maintain and publish a written statement setting out our policy concerning communications with members and scheme employers.

5.2 The mitigated risks associated with this report has been captured in the Fund's risk register as detailed below –

Risk	Residual risk rating
Information may not be provided to stakeholders as required.	Green
Failure to administer the scheme in line with regulations and guidance.	Green

5.3 The Fund's full risk register can be found on the Fund's website at the following link:
<https://pensions.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/governance/key-documents/cambridgeshire/>

6. Communication implications

Direct communications: The communications strategy and communications plan will be published on the Fund's website. The Committee will be updated on the website development at key stages of the project.

7. Finance & resources implications

7.1.1 There are no direct finance and resourcing implications of the communications plan in general. Ongoing communication costs are picked up in the administration budget. The cost of any communications activities connected with the business plan activities will be included with the costings in the business plan.

7.1.2 Our drive to increase electronic communications should save costs in the long term.

7.1.3 A £60k budget has been requested in the business plan to replace both member and employer websites, with £30k to be financed by Cambridgeshire Pension Fund.

8. Legal implications

8.1 Not applicable

9. Consultation with key advisers

9.1 Consultation with the Fund's advisers was not required for this report.

10. Alternative options considered

10.1 Not applicable.

11. Background papers

11.1 Please see the Business Plan and Medium Term Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25 on the Fund's website for background to the website review project.

<https://pensions.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/governance/key-documents/cambridgeshire/>

12. Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1 Communications strategy.

12.2 Appendix 2 Communications plan.

12.3 Appendix 3 Website review update.

Checklist of key approvals

Has this report been cleared by Section 151 Officer? Sarah Heywood – 8/3/2023

Has this report been cleared by Head of Pensions? Mark Whitby – 23/2/2023

Has the Chair of the Pension Committee been consulted? Councillor Whelan – 15/3/2023

Has this report been cleared by Legal Services? Linda Walker – 9/3/2023