

Communications Policy Statement

London Borough of Harrow Pension Fund

Approved by Pension Fund Committee
24 March 2021

Introduction

1. The London Borough of Harrow Pension Fund, (the Fund) is required by regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations 2013 to maintain and publish a communications policy statement. The LGPS is also subject to the regulatory oversight of the Pensions Regulator who has provided guidance in Code of Practice 14 on providing good quality communications to Scheme members and other stakeholders.
2. Regulation 61 is reproduced below: -

“Statements of policy concerning communications with members and Scheme employers

61. — (1) An administering authority must prepare, maintain and publish a written statement setting out its policy concerning communications with

- a) Scheme members;
- b) representatives of members;
- c) prospective members; and
- d) Scheme employers.

(2) In particular the statement must set out its policy on –

- a) the provision of information and publicity about the Scheme to members, representatives of members and Scheme employers;
- b) the format, frequency and method of distributing such information or publicity; and
- c) the promotion of the Scheme to prospective members and their employers.

(3) The statement must be revised and published by the administering authority following a material change in their policy on any of the matters referred to in paragraph (2).”

3. Who We Communicate With

- Scheme Members (Current, Deferred, Pensioner, Dependant);
- Representatives of Scheme Members;
- Prospective Scheme Members;
- Human Resources Services (HR) and Service Managers;
- Scheme employers;
- Elected Members of the Pension Fund Committee; and
- Local Pension Board.

The Fund’s pension administration function is undertaken in house, by the Pensions Team. The team is mainly responsible for communicating with the scheme members in line with this Communications Policy Statement together with other responsible senior officers of Harrow Council.

4. Communication with Scheme Members and Prospective Members

(a) Scheme Literature

A link to a Scheme guide is provided to all employees on commencing Scheme membership. Changes in the Scheme regulations are notified to all affected members via newsletters. The Scheme guide is regularly updated to take account of any Scheme changes. The link to the Scheme guide is available on the Harrow Pension Fund website, from the member's HR service or employer and direct from the Pensions Team.

(b) Website/Information Technology

The Harrow Pension Fund website (www.harrowpensionfund.org) contains details of the Scheme together with newsletters, information guides and forms. The Pensions Team can be contacted by email at pension@harrow.gov.uk.

Scheme information is also available online via the Local Government Employers' Organisation's national website at www.lgpsregs.org and www.lgpsmember.org.

Access to the Scheme regulations is available online using the website at www.lgpsregs.org/schemeregs/lgpsregs2013/timeline.php

Newsletters for current members are available on the Harrow Pension Fund website with hard copies available on request.

(c) Member Support

Scheme members can contact the Pensions Team by direct dial telephone 020 8424 1186 between 9:00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

The Pensions Team contributes to the Council's Learning and Development Service by way of participating in the Corporate Induction training giving an overview of the Scheme. The Team also plays a major role in the Planning for Retirement courses. These courses are available through the Council's Learning and Development Service. Seminars are also arranged when requested on an individual basis from time to time.

(d) Alternative Requirements

Members can contact the Pensions Team if they wish to receive information in a non-standard format (for example large print, Braille or on audiotape). The Team has access to transcription, translating and interpreting services if required. Correspondence to members is sent in increased font sizes according to individual members' requests.

(e) Benefit Statements

Active and deferred members are sent annual benefit statements.

(f) Pay advice slips / P60s / Pensions Increase

Pay advice slips are provided to pensioner members in accordance with the agreed Council Payroll arrangements and a form P60 is sent annually.

Pensioner members are sent a letter annually with details of the new amount of pension following the yearly Pensions Increase. Newsletters for pensioner members are available on the Pensions Team website with hard copies available on request.

(g) Report and Accounts

The Pension Fund Annual Report is produced and available to all Scheme members at www.harrowpensionfund.org. The availability of the report is notified via newsletters and the Harrow Pension Fund website. A paper copy can be provided on request. The report includes details of the Pension Fund Accounts, the Pension Fund investment performance, the Fund's policies on Governance, Investment Strategy, Funding Strategy and its Communications Statement.

(h) Performance Monitoring

The Pensions Team is committed to continuous service improvements. It monitors its performance and reports this quarterly. Performance achievements are published in the Pension Fund Annual Report and reported to the Local Pension Board at each meeting

5. Communicating with Representatives of Scheme Members

The range of information and ways of communicating that is available to Scheme members is also available to their representatives (except for any in-house training).

6. Communicating with Prospective Scheme Members

The range of information and ways of communicating that is available to Scheme members is also available to employees who are not currently members of the Scheme but may be considering joining (including any in-house training).

7. Communicating with Human Resources and Scheme Employers

Harrow Council is the main employer in the Fund. Scheme employers are informed of changes to the scheme, policies and procedures by Employers' Newsletters. Training for responsible officers (e.g. School Administrative Officers or Bursars/Finance Officers) can be provided. The full range of Scheme information is provided.

8. Communicating with Elected Members

Scheme information and data is provided to Elected Members of the Pension Fund Committee, so they may effectively perform their duties and responsibilities. In order to maintain their required knowledge and understanding of the Scheme and any other associated legislation or official guidance, elected members have Member training as a regular agenda item at quarterly meetings and confer with Officers on training requirements. Training is provided either internally by officers or by external resources.

9. Communicating with the Local Pension Board

Scheme information and data is provided to members of the Local Pension Board, so they may effectively perform their duties and responsibilities and comply with the governance requirements of the Scheme and the Pension Regulator's Code of Practice 14. To maintain their required knowledge and understanding of the Scheme and any other associated legislation or official guidance, Pension Board members have training as a regular agenda item at their quarterly meetings and confer with Officers on training requirements. Training is provided either internally by officers or by external resources.

Information may also be shared with members electronically outside of the normal cycle of meetings on an ad-hoc basis when needed.

10. Review of the Communications Policy Statement

This Policy Statement will be effective from 1 April 2021.

The Communications Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated where there are significant changes to be made.

Enquiries in relation to this Communications Policy should be addressed to:

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Summary of Communication Material

Communication Document	When made available	To Whom	Format / Method of distribution	When Reviewed
Guide to the LGPS (Scheme Guide)	Before commencing employment / On leaving / When requested	New, Prospective, Active and Deferred Scheme Members	Paper / Harrow Pensions and National Scheme Members' Websites	Annually or when Regulations change
Joining the LGPS – Transfer of Pension Rights from other schemes	Before commencing employment / When requested	Prospective / Active Members	Paper / Harrow Pensions and National Scheme Member's Websites	Annually or when Regulations change
Leaving Pensionable Employment – A Guide to Your Pension Options	On leaving the Scheme before retirement age	Active / Deferred members	Paper / Harrow Pensions and National Scheme Members' Websites	Annually or when Regulations change
Pay Advice Slips	In line with payroll agreements	Pensioner Members	paper	annually
P60s	annually	Pensioner Members	paper	annually
Newsletters	Annually and ad hoc to ensure timely notification of major scheme changes	Separately for active, deferred and pensioner members	Paper, Harrow pensions website	As required
Pension Fund Annual Report and Financial Statements	annually	All Scheme members	Harrow Pensions and National Scheme Members' Websites	annually
Annual Benefits Statements	annually	Active and Deferred members	Paper – posted to home address	annually
Employers Guide	At joining and updated as necessary	Main contact for all employers	Paper based and electronic file	Annually or when Regulations change
Service Level Agreement (Admission Bodies)	Start of admission agreement and revised at Contract renewal	Main contact for all employers	Paper based and electronic file	revised at Contract renewal