

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON PENSION FUND

COMMUNICATION POLICY

1. The Merton Pension Fund (the Fund) is required by regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (the 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. 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) Members and their representatives
 - b) Elected members
 - c) Scheme Employers.
- (2) 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).”

2. 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
- Local Pension Board (LPB)
- External bodies:
 - Her Majesty’s Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
 - Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC)
 - Trades Unions
 - Pension Fund Investment Managers, Advisers and Actuaries
 - Pension Fund Custodian

- The Pensions Regulator (TPR)
- The Scheme Advisory Board (SAB)
- The Local Government Association (LGA)
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
- Pension administration software platform provider

The Fund's pension administration function is undertaken by the **Pensions Shared Service (PSS)** which is managed by London Borough of Wandsworth. PSS is primarily responsible for communicating with the scheme members in line with this Communications Policy together with other responsible senior officers of London Borough of Merton.

Key objectives

To ensure the Fund delivers clear, timely and accessible communication with a broad range of stakeholders. To achieve this, the Fund will:

- Communicate information about the Scheme's rules and regulations in an effective, friendly, and timely manner to the different groups of stakeholders.
- Inform customers and stake holders to enable them to make the decisions regarding pension matters.
- Inform customers and stakeholders about the management and administration of the Fund.
- Consult with key stakeholders on changes to policies and procedures that affect the Fund and its stakeholders.
- Support employers to enable them to fulfil their responsibility to communicate and share information with members in relation to the scheme.
- Seek continuous improvement in the way the Fund communicates.

Accessibility

The Fund is committed to ensuring communications are accessible to all stakeholders and is committed to develop further use of electronic means of communicating through e-mail and our websites (including Member Self Service). Wherever possible, responses are sent to stakeholders by electronic means. However, more traditional methods of communications will continue to be offered as required.

3. Methods of Communication – Scheme Members and Prospective Members

(a) Website

The PSS website (www.pensionssharedservice.org.uk) contains details of the Scheme together with newsletters, information guides and forms to download and print. Scheme information is also available online via the LGA's national website at www.lgpsregs.org/ and www.lgpsmember.org/ A Guide to the LGPS and Newsletters are available on the PSS website with hard copies available on request.

(b) Member Self Service (MSS)

This is a secure portal that allows members to see the personal details we hold about them. They can also update information such as their death grant expression of wish and use a calculator to estimate their retirement benefits. Contributing and deferred members can view their annual pension statements. Members can send questions and queries to us using MSS, and we will respond to them by email or another method as requested.

(c) Member Support

Scheme members can contact the PSS by telephone between 9:00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday or by email pensions@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk Individual meetings are arranged to meet the member specific needs

The PSS also arranges webinars for members in conjunction with employers to promote understanding of the scheme.

(d) Alternative Requirements

Members can contact the PSS if they wish to receive information in a non-standard format (for example large print, Braille or on audiotape). The PSS 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

Annual benefit statements for active and deferred members are published on their Member Self Service accounts.

(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 PSS 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.Merton.gov.uk/pensions. 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 PSS 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 LPB at each meeting.

Communicating with Human Resources and Scheme Employers

Scheme employers are informed of changes to the scheme, policies, and procedures by Employers' Newsletters. In addition, information is available to employers on dedicated "employer pages" on the PSS website. We arrange training events for employers to attend. These may be large scale events providing general training on the LGPS or smaller events or webinars to provide training on a specific area or task

Communicating with Elected Members

Scheme information and training are provided to Elected Members of the Merton Pension 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 such as the online training facility provided by Hymans Robertson.

Communicating with the Local Pension Board

Scheme information and data is provided to members of the LPB, 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, LPB members have training as a regular agenda item at their biannual 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 the normal cycle of meetings on an ad-hoc basis when needed.

Communicating with External Bodies

Any requests for information or data will be responded to as and when required.

Review of the Communications Policy

This Communications Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or as necessitated by a material change in circumstances and updated where there are significant changes to be made.