



Committee report

Committee	ISLE OF WIGHT PENSION FUND COMMITTEE
Date	08 FEBRUARY 2019
Title	COMMUNICATIONS POLICY
Report of	TECHNICAL FINANCE MANAGER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report presents the new communications policy for the Isle of Wight Pension Fund.
2. Members are asked to approve the communications policy.

BACKGROUND

3. Isle of Wight Council is the administering authority for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) on behalf of the employers participating in the LGPS through the Isle of Wight Pension Fund (the fund). The LGPS is governed by statutory regulations.
4. Everyone with an interest in the fund should have ready access to the information they need. Effective communication between the Isle of Wight Council (the council), the scheme members, and the employers within the fund is essential to the proper management of the fund on a transparent and accountable basis.
5. The governance review of the pension fund, carried out in February 2018, identified the need for the fund's communication policy to be updated. The current version, published on the fund's website, is unfit for purpose, having not been updated since 2013.
6. To communicate effectively, different methods are used according to the need and the target audience. The proposed communication policy sets out the methods by which the fund intends to communicate different information to different audiences.
7. The proposed communication policy, included as appendix 1 to this report, has been drafted by the fund's governance consultants, Hymans Robertson LLP, and revised to reflect the specific circumstances of the fund.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

8. Good governance arrangements are essential to the delivery of the council's services. Having appropriate policies in place will improve the standards of governance for the pension schemes for which the council has responsibility.
9. It will also contribute to the first outcome of the latest [Corporate Plan 2017-20](#): a financially balanced and stable council.

CONSULTATION

10. The revised communications policy was drafted by the fund's governance advisers, Hymans Robertson LLP, and has been reviewed by the council's pension administration team and the communications and engagement team.
11. The proposed amendments to the governance policy, as presented within this report, will be discussed by the pension board at an informal meeting to be held on 1 February 2019.
12. The outcome of those discussions will be reported to the committee meeting, and any further proposed amendments to the policy will be presented for consideration.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no direct financial implications in approving the new communications policy.
14. Once approved, work will begin on developing a communications plan, which may have resource implications in terms of printing and postage, if it is determined that newsletters should be distributed in hard copy, rather than published electronically.
15. As the communications plan develops, funds will be allocated from the pension fund's budget, and will have no direct impact on the council's financial position.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. Regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 requires each administering authority (after consultation with interested parties) to prepare, maintain and publish a policy on communicating with members, members' representatives, prospective members and employing authorities. The policy must include details of:
 - the provision of information and publicity about the scheme to members, representatives of members and employing authorities;
 - the format, frequency and method of distributing such information and publicity;
 - the promotion of the scheme to prospective members and employing authorities.
17. The statement must be revised and re-published following any major changes in policy.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

18. The council, as a public body, is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
19. There are no implications on any of the protected characteristics arising from the new communications policy, which includes a statement mirroring that of the council in terms of accessibility of all publications.

RISK MANAGEMENT

20. It is the responsibility of the Isle of Wight Council, as administering authority for the Isle of Wight Pension Fund, to ensure that the fund is properly governed and administered in compliance with relevant regulations and other requirements. The council has delegated this function to the Pension Fund Committee, under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.
21. Adopting the updated communications policy will ensure continued compliance with the requirements of the Pensions Regulator.
22. Should the council fail to ensure appropriate standards of governance and administration of the pension schemes for which it has responsibility, the Pensions Regulator has the powers to issue an improvement notice under section 13 of the Pensions Act 2004. This would have reputational issues for the council.

RECOMMENDATION

23. Subject to any further amendments proposed by the pension board, the committee adopts the communications policy and approves its publication on the fund's website.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

24. [Appendix 1: Isle of Wight Pension Fund Communications Policy 2019.](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

25. [Current Isle of Wight Pension Fund Communications Policy](#)

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