

System Review: Discovery phase and workshop review

Scope

The Pension Service will undergo a full digital transformation which will include implementing digital platforms in support of automation, improved operational efficiency and position the service for continued growth.

The contract for the pension administration system, Altair, provided by Heywood, ends in April 2021 and we are required to explore the options available on the market to ensure the pension administration used by the Pension Service is fit for current and future service requirements.

Discovery phase

At this stage, internal and external stakeholders were consulted via a series of workshops, with both the administration teams and the funds, with the view to get an understanding of their system requirements, including what the current system is doing and not doing well and the future needs.

An initial market research has been conducted to get an overview of current market options, which included engaging with leading suppliers in pension administration systems for technical demonstrations. These engagement sessions provided a clear understanding of the viable options available in the market.

Workshop Outcomes

Throughout May and June workshops were held with the pension funds and admin teams to identify and outline the desired technical and practical system requirements for the pension administration system. These sets of workshops proved to be beneficial as they gave a clear and comprehensive overview of where the current system is working well, not meeting service requirements, and outlined the requirements of the future pension system. Highlighted in these workshops were the below requirements:

LGPS Calculations

- These must be correct. Historically Heywood have provided the best system in terms of calculation accuracy, however in recent years alternative system providers have improved their calculations and caught up with Heywood in this area.
- Altair does not calculate interest on pension arrears and this is a process done manually. The admin teams outlined the desire for the system to do this, to reduce manual intervention on calculations.

Report Writing

- Throughout all sessions with the administrations teams, it was highlighted that Altair's report functionality is complicated. The future system should have an improved and user friendly reporting functionality, including simple built in reports.

- The system should allow more than one report to be run concurrently, as currently only one report can be run at a time which is not efficient.

Employer portal

- The system should have a functional employer portal, in which employers can upload monthly returns, starters and leaver information, which would automatically update the system, and have the ability to run redundancy calculations. This would support the digital transformation of the service and reduce paper processes.

Members Self-Service

- As part of the vision for digital transformation, members will be encouraged to self-serve. The current member self-service portal allows for basic functionality, and to meet our digital service requirements there needs to be an improved members self-service with the future system.
- The member self-service portal should mirror the functionality of the employer portal, allowing members to upload documents such as birth or marriage certificates, update their own personal details, and run their own calculations.

Administration

- Auto task allocation
- Audit trails of changes made to member records
- Auto document generator
- User friendly
- Undo option
- RTI – Real time information to HMRC
- Ability to do the Pensions increase and the option to roll back the pensions increase, to allow for any errors in this process to be undone and resolved if necessary

The general consensus from these workshops was that the current system, while proficient in some aspects such as calculations, is also failing to meet a number of digital needs and as such the system requires development and improvement.