

Report to: Pension Board

Date: 30 May 2023

By: Chief Finance Officer

Title: Communications Report

Purpose: To inform the Board of communication activity delivered since the previous meeting

RECOMMENDATION

The Pension Board is recommended to note the report.

1. Background

1.1 This report is brought to the Pension Board to provide an update on communication tasks that directly affect the East Sussex Pension Fund (the Fund).

1.2 The Fund has a Communications Strategy which defines the main means of communication we provide for our key stakeholders. This includes making the best use of technology where appropriate, to provide quicker and more efficient communications for the Fund's stakeholders. The Fund will ensure that communication methods are accessible to all.

2. Newsletters

2.1 All newsletters now sit on the respective pages of the website and are promoted through page banners. They are also available through the Forms and Publications menu of the website.

2.2 An employer newsletter was issued in February 2023 with all relevant employers emailed. [Employer newsletter - February 2023 | East Sussex Pension Fund](#).

A separate newsletter communication was issued by email in early May containing some important updates on pension transfers and divorce, HR and Payroll guides, reminder of deadline for consultation on changing policies, employer training and backdated pay awards guidance.

2.3 The active and pensioner newsletters due to be issued in Q1 2023 were replaced by a posted Member update booklet.

3. Member update booklet 2023 – issued to all members by post

3.1 Every member of the Fund (active, deferred, pensioner, dependants) received a 16 page A5 booklet with key information about the LGPS in April or May by post, following a request by the Pension Board for the production of a summary of accounts. The content of the booklet was discussed by the Communications Working Group to ensure key messages were included to support members in understanding their LGPS pensions and update them on key activity of the Fund.

Overriding objectives of the member update were to

- Make members aware of the benefits of being in the LGPS.
- Understanding the difference between CARE and Final Salary

- Promote member self-service.
- Summarise the annual reports and accounts.
- Provide commonly asked for information – pensioner pay dates, tax queries, cost of contributions.
- Remind members to update their expression of wish nomination form.
- Promote members to update personal information.

A link to the booklet can be found - [esp-16pp-a5-booklet web.pdf \(eastsussexpensionfund.org\)](https://eastsussexpensionfund.org/esp-16pp-a5-booklet-web.pdf)

4. Website

4.1 Work continues to ensure the Funds website is relevant and engaging. Recent changes include:

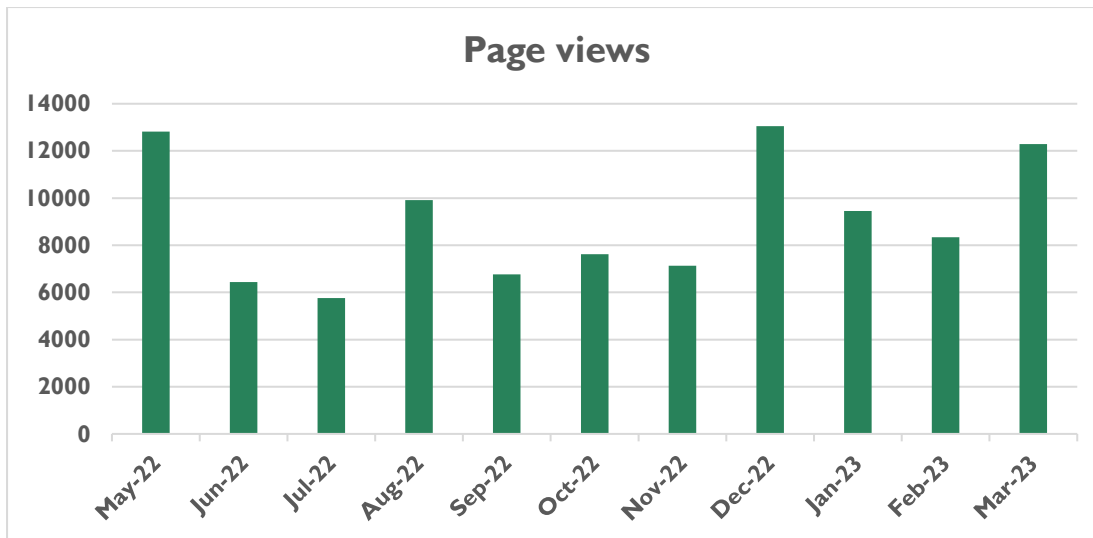
- Homepage – recent additions to the homepage include Important information about pension transfers & divorce as there is a requirement to suspend the calculation of certain transfer calculations due to changes being made by the Government.
- Promotion of the East Sussex Pension Fund becoming signatory to the UK Stewardship Code 2020.

4.2 The Fund continues to work with the software provider to make better use of website analytics which provides collection, reporting, and analysis of website usage. Better data will allow the Fund to determine the success or failure of activity and to drive strategy while improving the user's experience.

Visitor numbers to the Funds website continue to be healthy and includes a number of new visitors, with peaks tending to be where the Fund issue communications driving people to the site.



Page views are also strong.



5. Pensioner survey

5.1 The 2023 Pensioner survey ran from 28 March 2023 to 14 April 2023 with a 20.6% response rate. The Fund have published a report detailing results and future actions to show the pensioner members that the surveys are influencing action. Key highlights are:

- Some fantastic results on the service front. Around 60% of pensioners marked service as very positive with a further 22% citing somewhat positive.
- Over 91% of those who had called, either strongly agreed or agreed that the helpdesk team were supporting and friendly.
- Around 57% of pensioners were aware of member self-service (MSS), up 20% on last year's figures. There were some negative comments on MSS primarily linked to registration and lost passwords. The Fund are looking to implement an updated version of the portal in liaison with the software company later this year.
- Although pensions is a complicated subject, 40% of pensioners find the Funds correspondence 'extremely easy'. 96% if you include somewhat easy as well.
- Nearly 75% of pensioners believe we get the frequency of communication about right.
- A noted concern is that around half of pensioners have no awareness of the Fund website, however awareness has increased 26% on last year.
- Only 43% of pensioners have an interest in how the Fund invest, with 57% having no interest.

6 Supporting other Fund communications work

6.1 Ongoing work across the Fund continues in implementing the Funds brand ensuring consistency in messaging from the Fund, simplifying content available to members and employers and ensuring accessibility guidelines are adhered to. Accessibility scoring for the Fund website is now 90 (excellent) for content following the focus on this area.

6.2 A Standard Financial Reporting Guide has been produced for Fund officers on standardised reporting and branding. This document is for all pension team members who are required to prepare or contribute to reports and briefings to senior officers and elected members.

6.3 There has been a refinement of the LGPS 31 process, which provides the information to the Fund on contributions paid from scheme employers, through a set of

standard templates to be issued to employers who do not correctly complete their returns. This will coincide with the ongoing implementation of Internal audit findings to ensure employers are submitting their contribution information by an authorised officer.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Pension Board are recommended to note this report.

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