

**Report to:** Pension Board

**Date:** 11 September 2025

**By:** Chief Finance Officer

**Title:** Employer Engagement and Communications Report

**Purpose:** This report provides an update on activities by the Employer Engagement team and on Fund Communications activities.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Pension Board is recommended to note employer engagement and communications updates detailed in this report.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 This report is presented to the Pension Board to provide an update on employer engagement tasks that directly affect the East Sussex Pension Fund (the Fund) and Communications activity of the Fund.
- 1.2 Scheme Employers (scheduled and admitted bodies) must pay both employee and employer contributions to the Fund monthly, no later than 19 days of the following month in which the contributions were deducted from payroll. The contribution rates for members are set annually by the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and are based on salary bandings. The Employer contribution rate is set at the triennial valuation and recorded in the rates and adjustment certificate issued by the Fund’s actuary or set on admission to the Fund agreed by the Fund’s actuary.
- 1.3 The Fund has a [Communications Strategy](#) (updated in June 2025) which defines the main methods of communication provided for 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. Employer Engagement Activities**

**Employer Contributions**

2.1 Employer contributions - The below table sets out the number of late payments received after 19 days have elapsed following contributions deducted from payroll between August 2024 and June 2025.

	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June
Payments Due	146	151	151	151	152	155	155	154	148	151	151
Late Payment	3	2	5	4	4	1	4	1	0	0	1
Existing employers late	3	2	3	4	4	1	4	1	0	0	1
New employers late	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

- 2.2 From August 2024 until June 2025 there have been just 25 late payments of contributions out of 1,665 expected payments and in the last quarter only one late payment.
- 2.3 Revised LGPS31 forms with updated contribution rates were sent to all employers in April 2025 highlighting the payment due date. Subsequent email reminders have also been sent to employers in the subsequent months.

## **Late payment(s) for June 2025**

2.4 Regarding the late payment in June 2025:

- After querying with the employer, they advised that the person responsible for this task had recently gone onto long term sick leave, they have now delegated it to another colleague to avoid any further late payments.

## **Scheme Member Training**

2.5 The Employer Engagement team will be repeating the 3-part member level training series in October 2025. Each of the 3 sessions will be run twice.

The booking levels are currently (as of 15 August 2025)

1. Introduction to LGPS - 35
2. Your Pension MOT - 50
3. Preparing for Retirement – 84

## **I-Connect support**

2.6 The Employer Engagement team continue to support and assist the I-Connect team with the preparation work required for onboarding new employers onto I-Connect, however, there has been a natural pause of the actual onboarding part as officers wait for the annual benefit statements to be produced, the onboarding of employers will recommence in September 2025.

## **Communications Update**

### **3. Scheme Member training**

3.1 The communications team continue to work closely with the Employer Engagement team in putting together a booking process, promotion via Scheme employers, scripts, YouTube videos and sending out and collating feedback.

3.2 All slide decks used during Scheme Member training sessions have been updated to:

- Reflect 2025/26 limits,
- tweak content based on feedback from earlier sessions in January and May, and
- include new Local Government Association (LGA) presentation content launched in August 2025 (where necessary)

3.3 [Training dates for 2026](#) have been agreed and added to the website.

### **4. East Sussex Pension Assistant (ESPA)**

4.1 The Communications team have been heavily involved in pulling together a knowledge base of over 200 questions and answers to test as part of the new digital assistant (which will sit on designated pages of the website as an automated tool to support members). The next steps in the project include user acceptance testing.

### **5. Employer Forum**

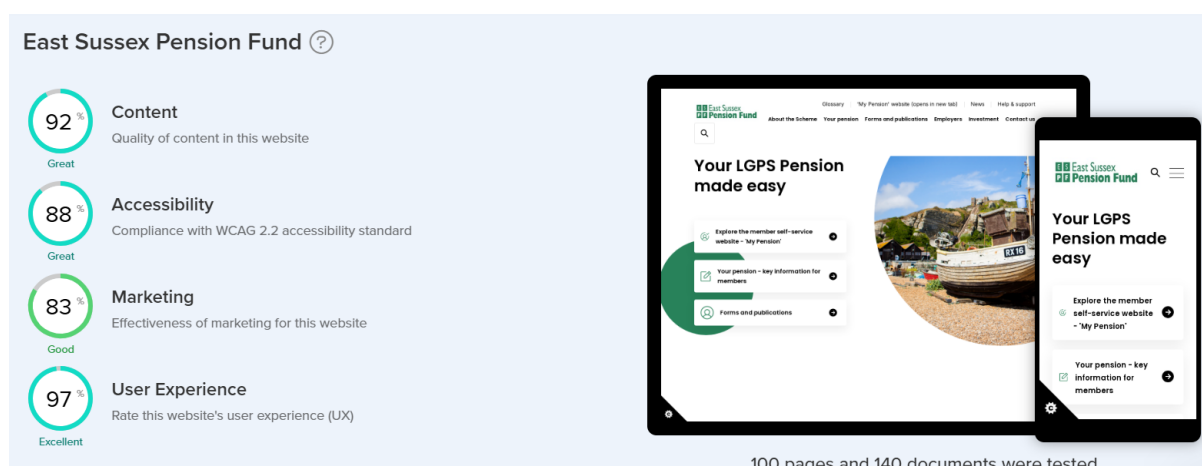
5.1 The agenda for the 2025 Employer Forum (face to face) has been finalised. To date there are approximately 63 registrations (including Fund staff) but have until mid-November to promote further.

## 6. East Sussex Pension Fund main website

6.1 The website continues to be updated with relevant and engaging information for members and employers.

6.2 The following guides have been updated: HR guide, Payroll guide, annual allowance fact sheet, Councillors' guide (all available via the 'Forms and publications' section of the ESPF website).

6.3 The Communications team continue to monitor the website (including all PDF documents) to ensure accessibility guidelines are adhered to. The primary tool used to manage accessibility is 'Silktide' which is a web governance platform that helps improve website quality and user experience by identifying and fixing issues related to accessibility, content, and marketing. It offers a comprehensive suite of tools for automated testing, analytics, and data privacy, including features like accessibility checks against Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards, content quality analysis, and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance monitoring. A snapshot of the Silktide results (as of 15 August 2025) can be shown below:



6.4 Website analytics data are detailed in Appendix 1.

## 7 Border to Coast Pensions Partnership pooling communications

7.1 The Communications team delivered a full internal communications plan to support the 'Border to Coast' pooling preference as indicated by Committee, this included working closely with counterparts in West Sussex. Communications included:

- An internal email to all East Sussex County Council (ESCC) staff
- An email to all employers in the Fund
- Promotional call to actions on the homepage, investment and employer pages of the website
- An [official statement on the website](#) (which the above linked to)

## 8 Annual Benefit Statements 2025

8.1 All communications (letters and/or emails) have been drafted for the 2025 Annual Benefit Statement (ABS) exercise. This year there are 24 individual templates to reflect members' McCloud status (for example if they don't qualify). Where possible officers will point members towards the online version housed on 'My Pension' – the member self-service website. Communications are set to be issued in the last 2 weeks of August to comply with the end of month statutory deadline.

## 9 'My Pension' - member self-service website

9.1 An updated version of the member self-service website, 'My Pension' went live on the 17 July 2024. The launch of this updated functionality is helping transform the way

members access and engage with vital pension information online. The Fund will continue to promote ‘My Pension’ through newsletters, the website and through employers.

9.2 ABS will be issued in the last 2 months of August 2025. A lot of these communications point members to registering for ‘My Pension’, so it is expected the figures shown in the table below to improve.

9.3 Shown below (as of 14 August 2025) are current registration levels (excluding electronic opt outs) compared to :

Type of member	On Engage (number)	% registered for ‘My Pensions’	Old MSS % registered
Contributing	9797	45.8	51
No longer contributing	7476	34.2	46
Pensioners	7978	61.1	50
Widow/dependant	580	36.0	19

**10 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation**

10.1 The Pension Board is recommended to note the updates provided in the report.

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