Report to:	**Pension Board**
Date:	**5 June 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 the report.

1. Background

1.1 This report is brought 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 Funds actuary or set on admission to the Fund agreed by the Fund's actuary.

1.3 The Fund has a Communications Strategy which defines the main methods of communication we provide 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 May 2024 and March 2025.

	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar*
Payments Due	148	149	148	146	151	151	151	152	156	156	157
Late Payment	2	3	5	3	2	5	4	4	2	5	0
Existing employers late			4	3	2	3	4	4	1	4	0
New employers late			1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0

*Due to the migration to Oracle and not being able access the suspense data, the late payments number for March is not finalised. For the payments which were able to be logged, the dates may not be accurate with migration.

From May 2024 until March 2025 there have been 33 late payments of contributions out of 1,665 expected payments.

The LGPS 31 forms have been edited to highlight the due dates for payment to prevent any confusion for employers.

January, February and March 2025

2.2 Regarding the late payments in January, February and March 2025:

- January – One employer was late due to issues with an external payroll provider. ESPF was already aware of the issues and on that basis the fine was waived.
- February – 4 employers were late, 3 being repeat offenders within a 12-month period and thus incurring a fine. The fourth had the fine waived since they could show that a cheque was posted well in advance of the deadline.

Scheme Member Training

2.3 The Employer Engagement team is currently repeating the 3-part member level training series (twice per session) in May 2025. This includes minor tweaks after the January series.

The booking levels are currently (as of 14 May)

1. Introduction to LGPS - 194
2. Your Pension MOT - 239
3. Preparing for Retirement - 196

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 have been updated (to reflect 2025/26 limits and tweak content based on feedback from earlier sessions in January)

3.3 Once the events are over in May, further promotion via employers will take place for the events in October.

4. Communication Strategy refresh

4.1 The Communication Strategy outlines how the Fund will engage, educate, and fulfil the needs of its stakeholders including members and employers in line with Regulation 61 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations 2013. The strategy must be officially reviewed every 3 years and updated. The updated version can be found in Appendix 1.

4.2 The main means of communication with key stakeholders are outlined in the Strategy. These include making the best use of technology where appropriate, to provide quicker, more efficient, cost-effective, accessible communications.

4.3 The 2025 Strategy makes it clear from the start what the aims and objectives of the Fund are and how those will be measured. The Fund is becoming a more digitally focussed entity, but this journey takes time. The Strategy therefore strikes the right balance between ambition and practicality. Any superfluous content has been removed resulting in 242 fewer lines of text compared to the 2022 version.

5. East Sussex Pension Fund main website

5.1 The website continues to be updated with relevant and engaging information for members and employers. Following the end of the tax year content that includes limits (member contribution rates for example), have been updated.

5.2 Brand new content has been drafted for members who are looking to increase their pension via Additional Pension Contributions or AVCs. This now provides a far more detailed summary of this subject - Increase my pension | East Sussex Pension Fund

5.3 Website analytics data are detailed in Appendix 2.

6. Employer support material

6.1 The communications team have produced new material to support employers and the Fund's own engagement team including:

- Appointing a payroll provider guide
- Employer Fact Card 25/26
- Becoming an employer in the Fund
- A presentation to support employers going through redundancy exercises is now complete together with a fact sheet for employees - Redundancy fact sheet
- Transfer of your job to another employer
- Updated members' guides: 1. A brief guide to the LGPS, 2. Retirement Planning Guide, and 3. AVCs and the LGPS.

6.2 A set of presentations have been drafted covering the main processes and procedures employers have responsibility for under the LGPS. The Communications team will now collaborate with the Employer Engagement Team to refine content and work out a plan for promotion and delivery later in 2025.

7. Supporting end of tax year P60 and pension increase communications

7.1 Emails and letters were sent to support the issuing of the first payslip of the new tax year, pension increase and P60 notifications. Unless a pensioner had opted out of electronic communications, they were directed to the 'My Pension' website to pick up the documents.

8. 'My Pension - member self-service website

8.1 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.

8.2 Since the previous Board paper employers (50+ members) have written to offering personalised support in promoting 'My Pension'. Any employer with a take-up rate less than the average of the top 20 employers (48%) received an email alerting them to this fact and providing avenues of support.

Shown below (as of 30 April 2025) are current registration levels (excluding electronic opt outs):

Type of member	On Engage (number)	% registered for 'My Pensions'	Old MSS % registered
Contributing	9278	43.5	51
No longer contributing	7134	32.6	46
Pensioners	7190	56.8	50
Widow/dependant	521	33.1	19

9. Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

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

IAN GUTSELL
Chief Finance Officer

Contact Officer: Susan Greenwood, Head of Pensions
Email: Susan.Greenwood@eastsussex.gov.uk