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## **COMMUNICATION POLICY REVIEW**

**Report by Service Director HR and Communications**

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### **JOINT MEETING OF PENSION FUND COMMITTEE AND PENSION BOARD**

**16 September 2021**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 **This report provides a review on the Communication Policy and provides an update on the review of forms and communication, including annual benefit statements. In line with the Pension Fund business plan the Policy should be reviewed on an annual basis. This report discharges that requirement.**
- 1.2 **Appendix 1** contains the revised Communication policy which has a number of amendments made to the previously approved version, these are all within section 5 to update the improved communication methods that are deployed by the Fund.
- 1.3 The Pension Fund website continues to prove to be a useful resource and has been visited on a regular basis. This continues to be updated to reflect the current Regulations and any relevant documents or news stories are published accordingly.
- 1.4 The Pensions Administration team have carried out a review of the supporting information provided along with the Annual Benefit Statements for deferred members this year and look to encourage members to sign up to the new Members Self Service portal. Work continues to review processes and associated Forms making use of emerging digital technologies wherever possible.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Pension Fund Committee:**
- (a) Approves the Communication Strategy as set out in Appendix 1;**
  - (b) Notes the website performance;**
  - (c) Notes that work has continued on the review of Forms and the Annual Benefit statement documentation has been reviewed**

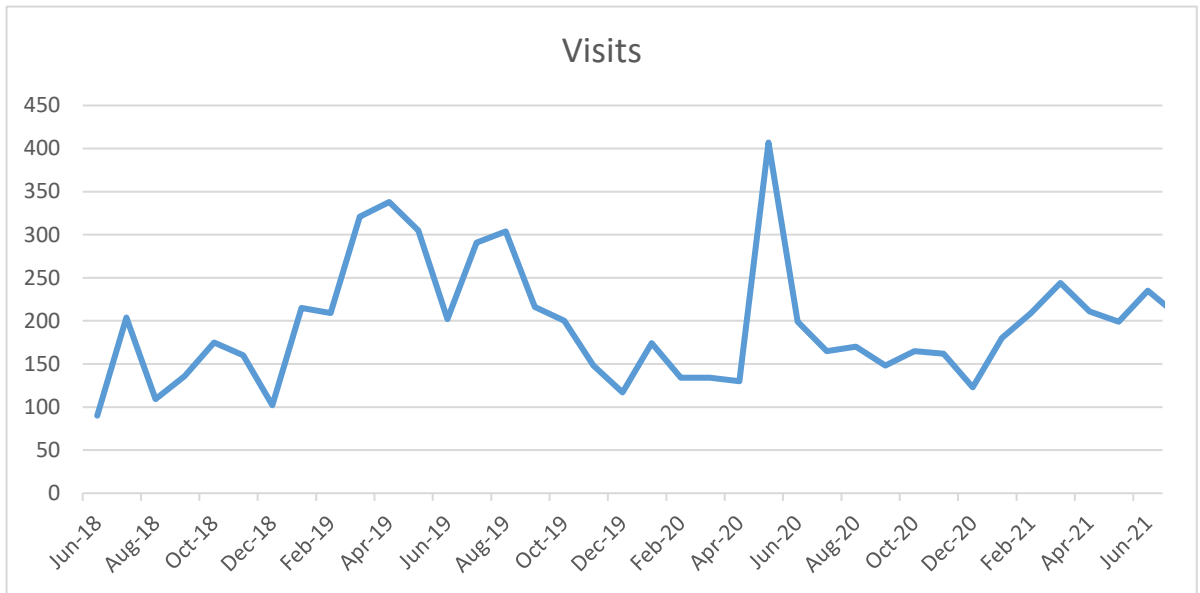
### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Regulation 59 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2018 advises that an administering authority should have a Communications Policy. This should then be published by the administering authority.
- 3.2 In accordance with the Regulations the statement must be revised and published by the administering authority following a material change in their policy on any of the matters listed within Regulation 59.
- 3.3 The Pension Fund Business Plan also outlined a requirement to review the Communication Policy and Action plan, including all forms and communication material, on an annual basis, making sure that this is in line with best practice and technological advancements.

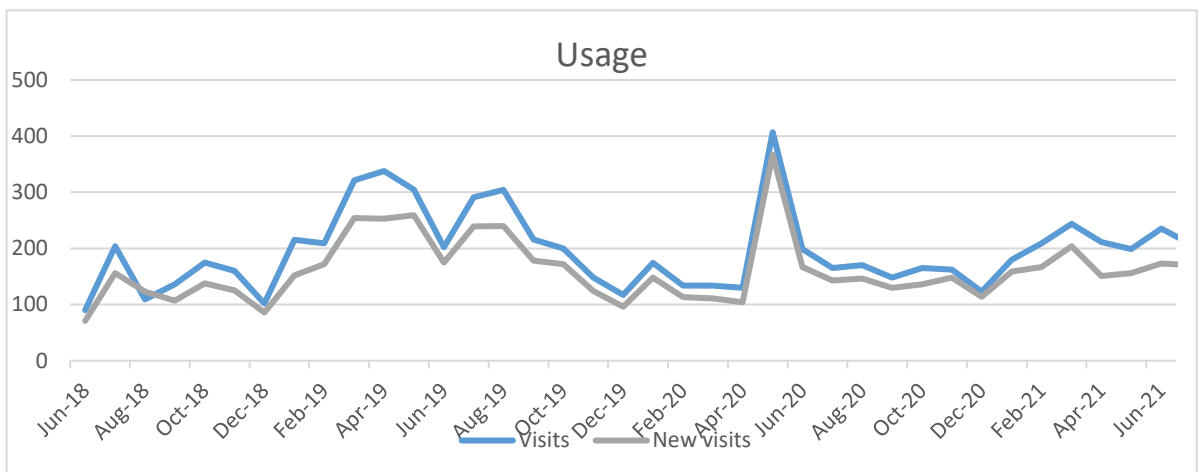
### 4 PENSIONS COMMUNICATION POLICY REVIEW

- 4.1 **Appendix 1** contains the updated Communication Policy.
- 4.2 The changes made within the Policy are to ensure that this is reflective of the technologies available have been reflected. The updates were made in the following sections: -
  - Section 5 - the addition of Members Self Service – online portal
  - Section 5 – the addition of Intranet and Yammer for members who are employed by Scottish Borders Council
- 4.3 During 2018 the Pension Fund implemented a website ([www.scottishborderscouncilpensionfund.org](http://www.scottishborderscouncilpensionfund.org)). The website is managed and maintained by Hymans Robertson, with Officers able to upload documents and news stories as required.

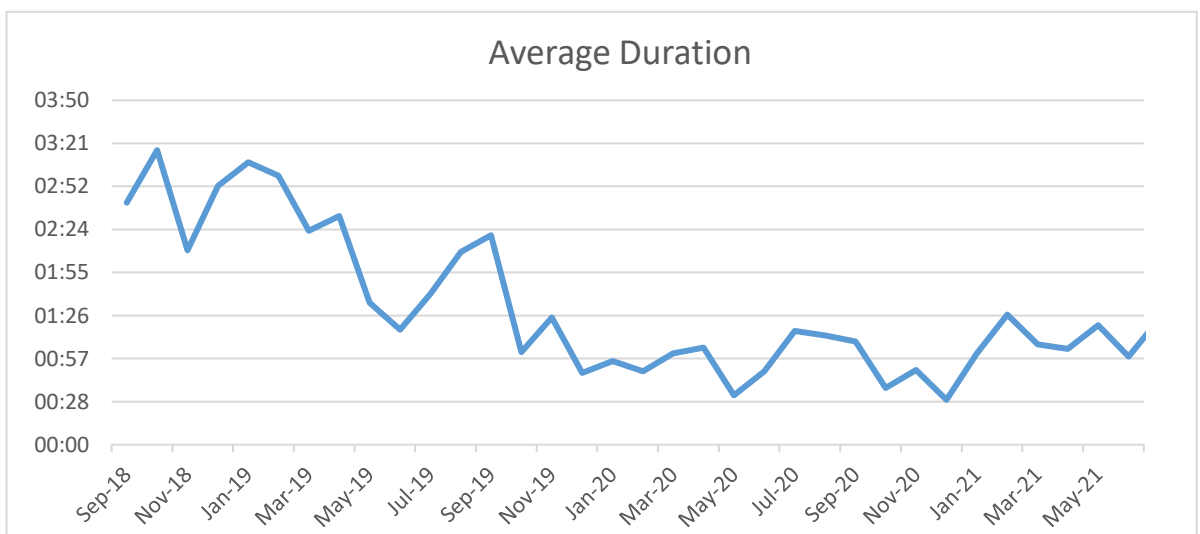
A new version of the website is currently being deployed by Hymans Robertson. This will see all information from the current website migrated to what is a new look and feel for the site, which is due to be deployed in September. Additionally, more officers have been upskilled in the use of the website and it is now easier to control what is loaded to the site. As soon as the new version is live links to the new Members Self Service portal will be added to the website, which will aid sign up and increase the visits to the website.
- 4.4 Officers have obtained statistical information from the Website from June 2018 through until July 2021. The following graphic details the number of visits that there have been to the Fund Website.



The following graphic shows the usage of the website and if the visitor was a first time visitor, with the gap being repeat visitors.



The final graphic shows the duration of each visit.



- 4.5 Prior to the issuing of the Annual Benefit Statements for deferred members the content was reviewed and updated to take account of current Regulations and to encourage members to sign up to the Member Self Service online portal. Annual Benefit statements for all active members have been published on the Member Self Service online portal, an email or letter has been issued to all active members to make them aware, with further follow up messages issued through Yammer for Scottish Borders Council employees.
- 4.6 Officers within HR Shared Services continue to review processes in light of the continued home working to make sure that they remain fit for purpose. Further review of the communication policy will be carried out in line with the business plan and this will reflect any changes to process that have an impact on the way in which we communicate with all stakeholders.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

This report is part of the governance reporting framework to manage the operation of the Pension Fund and reflects the compliance with the best practice recommendations. Risks regarding the admission of any new employer organisation have been identified and form part of the considerations for admission to the Fund.

### **5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

There is no impact or relevance to Equality Duty or the Fairer Scotland Duty for this report. This is routine good governance required under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Governance) (Scotland) Regulations 2014. Nevertheless, a light touch assessment has been conducted and this will be published on SBC's Equality and Diversity Pages of the website demonstrates that equality, diversity and socio-economic factors have duly been considered when preparing this report.

### **5.4 Sustainable Development Goals**

There are no direct economic, social or environmental issues with this report which could affect the Council's sustainability.

### **5.5 Climate Change**

There are no direct climate change impacts as a result of this report.

### **5.6 Rural Proofing**

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

### **5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

### **5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of this report.

## 6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

### Approved by

**Clair Hepburn**  
**Service Director HR and Communications**

**Signature .....**

### Author(s)

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### Background Papers:

**Previous Minute Reference: 24 September 2020**

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Ian Angus can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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