
COMMUNICATION POLICY REVIEW

Report by Director People Performance and Change

JOINT MEETING OF PENSION FUND COMMITTEE AND PENSION BOARD

22 September 2023

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 Communication Policy, there have been no changes made to the policy following review. When the review was carried out last year there was an addition made for the Fund to produce an update newsletter in June and December, this has not been achieved to date and is something that officers will look to address this year.
- 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. Additionally, the link to the Member Self Service portal has been added.
- 1.4 The Pensions Administration team have carried out a review of the supporting information published along with the Annual Benefit Statements. Officers continue to encourage scheme members to sign up to the Members Self Service portal, with wording provided to all Fund Employers to use when advising that the Annual Benefit Statements were published ahead of the deadline date. 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) **Notes 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

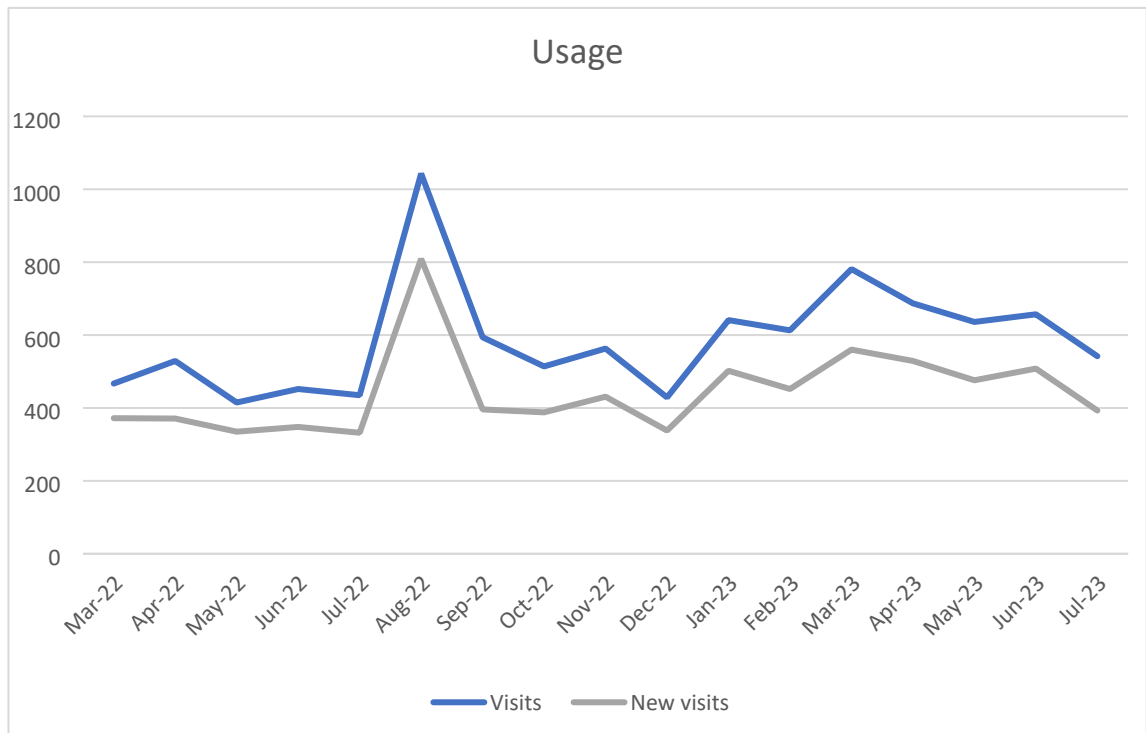
- 3.1 Regulation 59 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2018 advises that an administering authority should have a Communications Policy. This should then be published by the administering authority.
- 3.2 In accordance with the Regulations the statement must be revised and 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 Communication Policy, there have been no changes made to the policy following review.
- 4.2 When the review was carried out last year there was an addition made for the Fund to produce an update newsletter in June and December, this has not been achieved to date and is something that officers will look to address this year.
- 4.3 Officer continue to keep the Pension Fund website (www.scottishborderscouncilpensionfund.org) updated with relevant information and copies of the latest approved documents.
- 4.4 Officers have obtained statistical information from the Website and the following graphic details the number of visits that there have been to the site.



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



4.5 Prior to the issuing of the Annual Benefit Statements for deferred members, where they had not signed up for Member Self Service, 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, messages have been issued through Yammer for Scottish Borders Council employees and content passed to all Fund Employers for sharing with their scheme members.

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 a routine good governance required under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Governance)(Scotland) Regulations 2018. Nevertheless, a light touch assessment has been conducted and this will be published on SBC's Equality and Diversity Pages of the website as in doing so, signifies that equality, diversity and socio-economic factors have duly been considered when preparing this report.

5.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

There are no direct impacts from this report on the sustainable development goals of the Council.

5.5 **Climate Change**

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

5.6 **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report.

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 are required as a result of this report.

6 **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications are being consulted and any comments received will need to be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name **Clair Hepburn** **Director People Performance and Change**

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Ian Angus	HR Shared Services Manager 01835 826696

Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference: 15 September 2022

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.

Contact us at Ian Angus, HR Shared Services Manager, Council Headquarters,
Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA; Tel: 01835 826696; Fax: 01835 825011;
E-mail iangus@scotborders.gov.uk.