

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE COMMUNICATION STATEMENT

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear and comprehensive statement to provide assurance that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) will communicate in a clear and timely manner with all stakeholders in relation to the Firefighters' Pensions Scheme.

The Service has appointed Carmarthenshire County Council – Dyfed Pension Fund (the Administrator), to administer the Firefighters' Pension Schemes on its behalf. The Administrator is also committed to providing comprehensive information to its stakeholders through the most appropriate communications medium and this document includes those responsibilities. The Administrator's communication policy statement can be found on their website:

<http://www.dyfedpensionfund.org.uk/local-government-pension-scheme/investments-fund-info/comm-policy-statement/>

An effective communication strategy is necessary to ensure that the Service meets its key objectives and stated principles. This document provides an overview of the approach adopted by the Service to ensure that these principles are achieved.

Review

The Service will monitor the effective application of this statement and review its content annually and will report the findings to the Local Pension Board. The statement will be subject to revision in the light of significant changes to the Firefighters' Pensions Scheme, or any procedural changes in the work undertaken by the Service or by the Administrators.

This Communication Statement was approved by the Local Pension Board at its meeting on 10 September 2018. Amendments will continue to be made to ensure communication activity is recorded.

Key Objective

To communicate pension information, entitlement, legislation and policies in a clear informative style, to ensure that key stakeholders are well informed about current and future changes to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes.

Key Stakeholders

There are six distinct stakeholder groups with whom the Service needs to communicate:

- Elected Members
- Scheme Members (and their representatives)
- Prospective Scheme Members
- Fund Administrator
- Advisers (Such as the Fund Actuary, Local Government Association)
- Other bodies (Such as the Fire Brigade Union)

Key Principles

- To consult, where possible, with key stakeholders about any proposed changes in policies and procedures relating to the administration of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes
- To use the most appropriate means of communication to take into account the differing needs of key stakeholders
- To communicate technical pension legislation in plain English, wherever possible
- To engage, where possible, in face-to-face communication
- To evaluate the effectiveness of our communication through the use of:
 - Feedback questionnaires
 - Monitoring compliments and complaints

How do we communicate with Elected Members?

Reports are prepared to communicate performance relating to:

- Administration
- Governance
- Risk analysis

The communication channels used include:

- Local Pension Board meetings
 - Written reports
 - Briefing notes
 - Agenda items
 - Themed Presentations
- Pension's website www.dyfedpensionfund.org.uk
- Authority website
- Annual Report and Accounts

How do we communicate with Scheme Members (and their representatives)?

We communicate with our current and former members through various means and aim to provide a high quality service.

- **Pension Fund Publications**
Information guides and leaflets are available on request covering different aspects of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.
- **Internet**
The Fund has established a website www.dyfedpensionfund.org.uk for members of the Pension Fund. The website contains a full range of information about the Scheme.
- **Pensions Online**
Members of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme can use a benefit calculator on the website to help them with their retirement planning. The facility also allows members to provide Pension Services with updates of changes to their personal details.

- **Employee Weekly Brief Newsletter**
Information is presented within the Weekly Brief, as and when necessary, to inform members of pension issues. The content will cover current pension topics relating to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.
- **Annual Benefit Statements**
An annual benefit statement is sent directly to the home address of all members who are contributing to the Fund at the previous financial year end. Annual Benefit Statements are also issued to deferred members.
- **Correspondence**
The Service uses both mail and e-mail to receive and send correspondence.
- **Retirement Seminars**
The Service stages annual pension seminars, incorporating presentations and surgeries, to facilitate face-to-face contact with its members who are considering retirement within the next 12-18 months. The Pension Fund personnel provide support to the Service when the pension seminars are arranged.
- **Report and Accounts**
The Report and Accounts are produced annually and viewed electronically on the Service's website.

How do we communicate with prospective members?

- **New Starter Pack**
Each time a new employee begins employment with the Service, a New Starter Pack is issued. This pack contains a Scheme guide and explains the rights, benefits and options for the new employee under the Scheme rules.
- **Website**
A wide range of membership information, in relation to the Pension Fund, is widely accessible via the Pension Services website.

How do we communicate with Fund Administrator staff? Pension Services Management Team

The daily administration of the Fund is managed by Dyfed Pension Fund (DPF). Dyfed Pension Fund staff comprises the Pensions Manager, Assistant Pensions Managers and other senior staff.

- **E-mail/ Telephone contacts**
All pension queries are directed to Dyfed Pension Fund via email or direct telephone contact.

How do we communicate with Other Bodies? Such as Trade Unions

The trade unions have membership on both the Scheme Advisory Board and on the Local Pension Board during which they obtain updates on current issues.

- **LGA Communications Working Group**
A representative from the Pension Fund sits on this national group which meets on a regular basis. Personnel from the Service attends the Fire Annual Pension General Meeting

- **Central Government**

The Service and Pension Fund receive bulletins and exchanges information with:

- CIPFA
- HMRC
- GAD
- Welsh Government

Data Protection

- **Confidentiality**

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office as a Data Controller and processes all personal information relating to Scheme members in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

- **Disclosure**

The Fund may, if necessary, pass certain details to a third party, if the third party is carrying out an administrative function of the Fund.

Both North Wales Fire Authority and Carmarthenshire County Council is required by law to protect the public funds it administers. They may share information provided to them with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds, in order to prevent or detect fraud. Both the Service and Fund staff receive training on data protection issues.

- **Rights to Information / Freedom of Information**

Nothing within this policy statement affects Scheme members' rights to access or receive information under the Freedom of Information Act.