

LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

PENSION FUND

**COMMUNICATION POLICY
STATEMENT
(LGPS)
2015/16**



COMMUNICATIONS POLICY STATEMENT

This document sets out the Communications Policy of the Administering Authority of the London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund as required under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (2013), Regulation 61.

Objectives

The aim of this communications strategy is to make sure that all stakeholders are kept informed of developments within the Pension Fund. We want to ensure transparency and an effective communication process will help to maintain the efficient running of the Scheme. Regulations require each Administering Authority to prepare, maintain and publish a statement setting out their policy on communicating with the following stakeholders and organisations:



Communications Methodology

The administering authority has at its disposal a wide range of options for communicating with the diverse groups that it needs to serve. The method of communication will vary depending on what needs to be communicated and to whom. The methods used by the Administering Authority to communicate with all interested parties are detailed below.

General Communications

We use a range of methods to communicate including a variety of paper-based and electronic means. The Fund has a dedicated Pensions website: hackney.xpmemberservices.com and the use of a secure portal 'Sharefile' for employers to upload confidential information.

We will accept some communications electronically and will respond electronically where possible. For security reasons, we will not use email for communicating sensitive information or where it is necessary to verify the address or identity of the sender

- **Pension Scheme Administrators** – The Fund's administrators, Equiniti Paymaster (EP), will assist with the overall administration of the scheme to ensure the smooth operation of the administrative function.

They can be contacted via the helpline number - 01293 603085 or by email:

For Members of the scheme – hackney.pensions@equinitipaymaster.com

For Administration staff – hackney.employers@equinitipaymaster.com

- **Website** – Communication in the form of a dedicated Pension Fund website is available which contains a wide range of information for not only scheme members but also scheme employers and other interested parties. The website can be accessed via hackney.xpmemberservices.com. The website contains copies of scheme guides, newsletters and other relevant information pertaining to the LGPS
- **Policy Documents** – These are available for all stakeholders to access either on the website at hackney.xpmemberservices.com, in hard copy or electronically on application. Copies of all policy documents are held within the Financial Services Section, Finance and Resources Directorate.
- **Posters** – These will be designed to help those who are both members and non-members of the LGPS, to understand the full range of benefits when participating in the scheme, and providing guidance on how to obtain more information and also how to join the scheme.
- **Council Intranet** – Updates on the scheme and any other relevant news in regards to LGPS is available through communication updates via the Council intranet, which is the Fund's largest employer.

Branding

As the pension fund is administered by Equiniti Paymaster (EP), all literature and communications will include a combination of the branding of the London Borough of Hackney, Hackney Pensions and EP.



Data Protection Statement

To protect any personal information held on computer, the London Borough of Hackney Pension Fund and the pension administrators, Equiniti Paymaster, are registered under the Data Protection Act 1998. This allows members to check that their details held are accurate. The Fund may, if it chooses, pass certain details to a third party, if the third party is carrying out an administrative function of the Fund, for example, the Fund's AVC provider. Members who wish to apply to access their data on Data Protection grounds should contact the pension administrators, Equiniti Paymaster, on 01293 603085 or by email hackney.pensions@equinitipaymaster.com

This authority is under a duty to protect the public fund it administers, and to this end may use information for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies administering public funds solely for these purposes.

Policy on Communicating with Contributing (active) Scheme Members, Deferred and Pensioner Members

All members of the Scheme (active, deferred and pensioner members) will be kept informed about their benefits, developments in the Scheme and any changes to the scheme of a regulatory or operational nature. This includes consultation with representative groups as required.

- **Scheme Guides** – There are scheme guides available for members setting out the conditions of membership and main scheme benefits that apply under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). A copy of these will be provided to new employees of the scheme and at other times on request. The scheme guides can also be found on the Pension Fund website at hackney.xpmemberservices.com which is available for any member to access.
- **Member Self-Service** – Via the Fund's website, all scheme members can securely access their pension details held on the pension administrator's database. This facility allows scheme members to check their personal details and advise the administrators of any changes. It also has the ability for scheme members to produce an estimate of their potential LGPS benefits due to them at retirement.

Pensioner members will be able to view payslips and P60's and their address details.

- **Annual Benefit Statements** – Active and deferred scheme members are entitled to an annual benefit statement detailing the benefits that they might expect at retirement. These are issued annually and would normally be issued within 5 months of the financial year end (31st March). These contain vital information for scheme members and enable individuals to make informed choices about their retirement options.
- **Pension Surgeries** – Located at Keltan House, 89-115 Mare Street, London, E8 4RU. Pension Officers can be contacted by email pensions@hackney.gov.uk or alternatively contact by telephone 020 8356 2507/4266, for members (active, deferred and pensioners) to make an appointment to discuss their benefits, retirement issues and the options available in the Scheme.
- **Pension Roadshows/Presentations** – Roadshows and presentations are used to target specific topics or when major scheme changes occur, enabling all members of the LGPS to have access to information. General meetings and presentations will be held at intervals to communicate the benefits and options available to scheme members and prospective members.
- **Pre-retirement seminars** – Presentations on the scheme and benefit choices at pre-retirement seminars that are facilitated by the London Borough of Hackney Human Resources Department, to help scheme members approaching retirement prepare for the financial and lifestyle changes retirement brings.
- **Newsletters** – These will be sent to scheme members to communicate changes in regulations, developments in the fund and to inform members of changes in policy. The exact timing and nature of these newsletters will vary depending on what developments are taking place. However if there are regulatory changes which are likely to impact on individuals benefits or scheme membership in any significant way, then newsletters will be sent to members in sufficient time for them to be able to act upon that information. An annual accounts newsletter is sent to all scheme members providing information on the state of the fund, performance of the fund and any major changes which have taken place during the year.
- **Pensioner Payslips** – All pensioners receive a payslip each month along with their P60 at the end of the year. Electronic payslips are also available to those registered for self-service.
- **Pension Increase notifications** – The notification of the annual increase to pensioner benefits is sent out to every member in receipt of a pension each April.
- **Certificates of Continued Entitlement to Pensions (Life Certificates)** – The Fund will undertake an annual exercise, conducted through correspondence, in order to establish the continued existence of the following pensioners:
 - All pensioners living abroad (outside the UK).
 - Those over the age of 80
 - Those pensioners receiving pension benefits by cheque
 - Those retired on ill health grounds.

This exercise will also be undertaken every 3 years to establish the continued existence of ALL members in receipt of a pension.

- **Pension Fund Report and Accounts Summary** – This provides a summary of the Pension Fund during the financial year and will be distributed annually to all scheme members

Policy on Communicating with Prospective Scheme Members

We will make information available to all prospective scheme members, new employees and prospective employees. All new employees will be contractually enrolled into the LGPS where their employer is a scheduled body or a contractor has an open admission agreement, the terms of which are to enrol new members and will receive information regarding the scheme. They can still choose to opt-out should they choose to do so.

- **Initial Contact** - All permanent new members of staff are contractually enrolled into the LGPS, where the employer is a scheduled body or open admission agreement contractor. Each new member is sent a welcome letter statutory notice by the pension administrators confirming their membership of the LGPS along with a scheme guide.
- **Induction seminars** – Presentation on the scheme and its benefits at the weekly induction seminars for all new employees of the Council, which are facilitated by HR, providing prospective new members of the scheme information in order for them to make an informed decision in regard to membership of the scheme. Induction seminars are also provided for other employers on request.
- **Pension Liaison Officer** – Located at Keltan House, 89-115 Mare Street, London E8 4RU, the Pension Liaison Officer is easily contactable by email: pensions@hackney.gov.uk telephone 020 8356 2745, or letter. It is also possible to arrange a one-to-one meeting to discuss the benefits and options available to prospective members.
- **Scheme Guides** – There are scheme guides available for prospective members setting out the conditions of membership and main scheme benefits that apply under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). A copy of these will be provided electronically to new employees and prospective members of the scheme, and at other times, on request. The scheme guides can also be found on the Pension Fund website hackney.xpmemberservices.com which is available for any member to access.

Policy on Communicating with Employers participating in the Fund

We will keep employers in the Pension Fund informed about developments in the Scheme and consult on changes to the Scheme as required. Potential scheme employers will also have access to information about the Pension Fund to ensure that they are fully informed in their relationship with the Fund.

- **Employer Guide** – This is a guide for scheme employers outlining the details of the scheme and the administrative arrangements for the scheme. This has been distributed to all employers in the scheme and all new employers will receive copies. Training on procedures in relation to the employer guide is also available upon request.
- **Employer Seminars/Meetings** – Annual employer forums are held to update employers of relevant current issues, policy changes and investment updates. Further seminars/meetings will be held as appropriate to communicate changes in policy within the Scheme or to discuss major issues affecting all employers such as the triennial actuarial review. Individual meetings with separate employers will be held annually or as required. Employers will also be notified in writing of any changes which affect them or the way that the scheme is administered.
- **Secure Portal** – The Fund has a secure portal ‘Sharefile’ which facilitates the transfer of sensitive information and data between the Fund and Employers electronically. Access rights are strictly controlled by the pension administrators, Equiniti Paymaster
- **Website** – The website has a section for Scheme Employers and is used to access detailed information on procedures which must be followed to administer the LGPS and holds a wide range of information in regard to Employer Guides, pension forms, newsletters and policies. The website can be accessed via hackney.xpmemberservices.com.
- **Pensions Administration Strategy (PAS)** – The administration strategy sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Administering Authority (the London Borough of Hackney), the third party administrator and employers in the Pension Fund and can be found on the website at: hackney.xpmemberservices.com. It sets out the service level agreement and targets which all are expected to meet.
- **Employer Training** – The Fund offers all Scheme Employers training on the LGPS and their role in the administration of the scheme. This covers the full range of administrative and regulatory duties under the scheme regulations.
- **Annual Report and Accounts** – This contains details of the Pension Fund during the financial year, income and expenditure as well as other related details. This is a detailed and lengthy document and will therefore not be routinely distributed, except to employers participating in the Fund or on request. The full document will be published on the website at hackney.xpmemberservices.com.

Policy on Communicating with Elected Members

Information will be provided to Council Members in order for them to be able to fulfil their duties under the role of administering authority.

- **Access to Pensions Committee** – The Pensions Committee is the Committee which has delegated power to review, administer and monitor the Pension Fund. The Committee meets a minimum of four times a year or more frequently, as required. Meetings are open to members of the public, although there may be

occasions when members of the public are excluded due to the confidential nature of matters under discussion. The agenda, reports and minutes of the meetings are available on the Council's website at <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/l-mayor-cabinet-councillors.htm>

- **Committee Reports** – Reports to Pensions Committee and to other Committees as necessary, for example Corporate Committee and Council, ensures that Council Members are kept informed of developments in relation to Pension Fund issues and the impact that these can have on overall Council policies and procedures

Policy on Communicating with the Pensions Board

The Pension Board will meet at least twice a year in the ordinary course of business and additional meetings may be arranged as required to facilitate its work.

- **Reports to The Pensions Board** - The Pension Board will be treated in the same way as a Committee of Hackney Council and, as such, members of the public may attend and papers will be made public in the same way as described above for the Pension Committee.

Policy on Communicating with Other Bodies

There are a number of other interested parties with whom we will communicate with as required, this includes:

- **The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)** – regular contact with DCLG as regulator of the scheme, participating and responding to consultations as required.
- **Trade Unions** – we will work with relevant trade unions to ensure the Scheme is understood by all interested parties. Efforts will be made to ensure all pension related issues are communicated effectively with the trade unions.
- **Employer Representatives** - we will work with relevant employer representative bodies to ensure that the Fund's views are represented to employer groups.
- **Pension Fund Investment Managers, Advisers and Actuaries** –
 - Regular meetings with the Fund Managers who invest funds on behalf of the Fund.
 - Regular meetings with Investment Advisers who provide help and advise on the asset allocation and investments of the Fund
 - Regular meetings with the Fund Actuary to discuss funding levels, employer contributions and valuation of the assets and liabilities of the Fund
- **Pension Fund Custodian** – The Fund's Custodian is HSBC, who ensures the safekeeping of the Funds investment transactions and all related share certificates.
- **AVC Provider** – Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC) are a way to top up your pension benefits, and in some instances provide tax free lump sum depending on

the policy, and are held and invested separately from the LGPS. The Funds preferred AVC provider is Prudential

- **National Association of Pension Funds (NAPF)** – The Fund is a member of NAPF, which provides an opportunity for administering authorities to discuss issues of common interest and share best practice.
- **Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF)** – The Fund is a member of LAPFF which was established to help local authority funds share information and ideas about socially responsible investing.
- **London Pension Officers Group (LPOG) & London Pension Officers Forum (LPOF)** – the Fund is a member of these voluntary groups. Meetings are held on a quarterly basis to share information and ensure standardised interpretation of LGPS regulations and best practice.
- **Requests for Information (FOI)** - Requests for information either under the Freedom of Information Act or otherwise, will be dealt with as openly and swiftly as allowed providing that such information does not breach confidentiality.
- **Consultations** – There are occasions when the administering authority will consult with interested parties either as a result of potential changes to the regulations governing the LGPS or specific policy changes relating to the London Borough of Hackney Pension Scheme. In these instances, the most effective way of communicating with interested parties is to hold a period of consultation, during which, they are given the opportunity to respond to specific changes. Interested parties and representative groups will be approached to provide feedback to the policy changes before amendments are enacted.
- **Minority Groups** – It is recognised that there may be occasions when some minority groups may not be able to access all the information available to others. The Pension Fund will try to ensure that information is available to the widest possible audience and as such will try to ensure that minority groups do have access to information. This is however a developing area, but feedback on how to promote better access for all minority groups is welcome.

Communication Material

The table below shows the Fund communications along with their publication frequency and the format in which they are available to their intended audience.

Communication Material	Paper form	Electronic form	Website	Frequency	Intended Audience (active, deferred, pensioner, prospective members, employers or ALL)
Annual Benefit Statements	✓	✓	✗	Annually	Active, Deferred

Annual Newsletter	✓	✓	✓	Annually	ALL
Pension Updates	✓	✓	✓	When details available	Active, Prospective, Employers
Ad hoc Newsletters	✓	✓	✓	As required	ALL
Payslips	✓	✓	✗	Monthly	Pensioners
Notice of Pension Increase (PI)	✓	✗	✓	Annually (April)	Pensioners
Scheme Changes workshops	✓	✓	✓	As required	Active members/Employers (& schools)
Scheme Guides	✓	✓	✓	When requested	ALL
Induction Sessions	✗	✓	✗	Weekly	Prospective
Pre-Retirement Seminars	✗	✓	✗	As required	Active
Employer Forum	✗	✓	✓	Annually	Employers
Pensions Administration Strategy (PAS)	✓	✓	✓	Annually (April)	Employers (& schools)
Committee Meetings	✓	✓	✓	4 to 6 meetings per financial year	ALL
Communications Policy Statement	✓	✓	✓	Annually (April)	ALL
Full Report & Accounts	✓	✓	✓	Annually (November)	ALL
Summary Report & Accounts	✓	✓	✓	Annually	Active, Deferred, Pensioner
Statement of Investment Principles	✓	✓	✓	Annually (April)	ALL

Ad-Hoc Queries	✓	✓	✗	Within set timescales	ALL
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Feedback

The Fund welcomes comments and feedback from scheme members, scheme employers, prospective members and other interested parties. The mechanisms for feedback include consultation periods, direct communication with the scheme administrators and direct communication with the Financial Services Section which oversees all aspects of the Pension Fund. Contact details are provided below for the relevant departments.

General administrative queries relating to pension scheme membership issues should be addressed to:

London Borough of Hackney Pensions
Equiniti Paymaster
Russell Way
Crawley
West Sussex
RH10 1UH

Tel No: 01293 603085

Email:

For members of the scheme - hackney.pensions@equinitipaymaster.com

For Administration staff – hackney.employers@equinitipaymaster.com

For other queries and feedback issues:

Financial Services Section
Finance and Resources Directorate
3rd Floor Keltan House
89-115 Mare Street
London
E8 4RU

Email: pensions@hackney.gov.uk

Review of the Communications Policy

This policy document will be reviewed annually and updated as required when there are significant changes to be made and, if appropriate, will be consulted upon with the relevant stakeholders.

Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013

Below is the relevant extract from the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013, Regulation 61, which sets out the requirements of the Communications Policy for LGPS Funds

Statements of policy concerning communications with members and Scheme employers

61. (1) An administering authority must prepare, maintain and publish a written statement setting out its policy concerning communications with—

- (a) members;
- (b) representatives of members;
- (c) prospective members; and
- (d) Scheme employers.

(2) In particular the statement must set out its policy on—

- (a) the provision of information and publicity about the Scheme to members, representatives of members and Scheme employers;
- (b) the format, frequency and method of distributing such information or publicity; and
- (c) the promotion of the Scheme to prospective members and their employers.

(3) The statement must be revised and published by the administering authority following a material change in their policy on any of the matters referred to in paragraph (2).