

Devon County Council Pension Fund Communications Policy

**Approved by the Investment and Pension Fund Committee
16 November 2018**

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Review

The accuracy and relevance of this policy document is checked annually, and it is revised whenever there are significant changes to the LGPS or to the Authority's procedures and responsibilities.

Data Protection

The Devon Pension Fund Administering Authority is a Data Controller under the General Data Protection Regulations. This means we store, hold and manage your personal data in line with statutory requirements to enable us to provide you with pension administration services.

To enable us to carry out our statutory duty, we are required to share your information with certain bodies, but only do so in limited circumstances.

For more information about how we hold your data, who we share it with and what rights you have, please see our privacy notice: https://www.peninsulapensions.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GDPR_PNS-Devon-2.docx

Rights to Information

This document outlines the Fund's policy for communications with our members, participating employer organisations and the wider LGPS world. It sets out our methods and principles for managing interaction, and includes a summary of the key strands of communications.

Increasingly we are using electronic forms of communication, but we will always offer members the opportunity to receive paper copies by post. Face-to-face and telephone communications will continue to be important channels for members to interact with the Fund and vice-versa.

Our print and electronic communications are designed with consideration for those with additional needs and we can arrange large print, audio or Braille versions of all printed literature.

There is nothing in this policy statement that affects your rights to access or receive information under the Freedom of Information Act or the Disclosure requirements of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) You are entitled to see the information we hold about you and can request a copy by using this link <https://new.devon.gov.uk/accesstoinformation/data-protection/accessing-your-personal-data>.

Why we Communicate

We have a large and broad range of member organisations for whom we need to offer specialist advice in order that they fully understand their obligations as employers in the Devon Pension Fund.

Our scheme members, whether current employees and actively contributing toward pension benefits, former employees with deferred pension rights, or retired and in receipt of a pension, number in their tens of thousands. All are entitled to expert support and information.



Our Communication Standards

We aspire to supply a high-quality pension administration service providing value for money and to meet the highest possible standards in our dealings with all our customers.

These aims are set out in our [Customer Charter](#) which has been drawn up specifically with employee members in mind, whether active, deferred or of pensioner status. It describes how individuals who contact us will be treated by our Pensions Services staff. It sets out core standards of service which are measurable and encourages members to provide us with feedback on how we are doing as well as what to do if unhappy with the service they have received.

How We Connect

We have a range of communication channels and when deciding which to use we consider the message, our customer, and the cost to the Fund. Each time, the aim is to use the most appropriate and efficient means for connecting with scheme members and employers, whilst delivering concise, clear and above all accurate information.

To contain administration costs and embrace the use of technology, the fund aims to communicate as much as possible via electronic methods. In accordance with The Occupational and Personal Pensions Schemes (Disclosure of Information) Regulations 2013, members have been given the option to elect to continue to receive all communications via the postal service. Members who have not made such an election should sign up for Member Self-Service.

Here are some of the common communication channels we use:

Internet

Peninsula Pensions is a shared admin service run by Devon County Council on behalf of the Devon and Somerset Pension Funds.



The service web site is an extensive information resource with dedicated sections for anyone who may be thinking of joining, is already a member, or may be a previous member or a pensioner member

<https://www.peninsulapensions.org.uk/> Using the navigable menu the reader can access electronic copies of scheme literature and advice such as on methods of increasing future retirement benefits through options like Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) and Additional Pension Contributions (APCs) - although members should note that we are unable to counsel on whether any scheme suits an

individual's personal circumstances and strongly advise that anyone considering an AVC arrangement or any such product takes independent advice before making a final decision.

There is also a section for employers where they can obtain the latest news and advice, or search the Employers Guide and source forms.

Member Contact

Members are welcome to call 01392 383000 and ask for 'Pensions' to speak directly with one of the team. Telephones are manned during office hours Monday to Friday. For email queries a form found on the 'Contact us' pages of the Peninsula Pensions website should be completed and submitted. The query will then be automatically routed to the team best placed to answer the query.

Newsletters

Employer organisations of the Devon Pension Fund receive a quarterly newsletter via the Peninsula Pensions shared service in the form of an electronic magazine informing them of the latest news and developments affecting the LGPS. This is intended to be helpful and informative.



We encourage employers to circulate the newsletter within their organisation and make available direct emailing to those members of staff who would like it. Special bulletins of this newsletter are also sent from time to time when the occasion or need arises.

Similarly, Peninsula Pensions publishes the newsletter Pensions Post, through which we keep our Fund members up to date with pensions legislation and changes, and this is made available on the website and member self-service for those who have not elected for postal communications.

Member Self-Service

Members can now access their own pension records online, via the Altair Member Self Service portal incorporated into our website. Using simple and easy to navigate screens accessed through a fully auditable security system a member or pensioner is able to:

- update personal details
- view payslips, P60s and annual benefits statements
- model their own benefit calculations
- view newsletters
- request benefit statements
- notify the pensions department of any amendments required
- print nomination and other forms for completion

Scheme Literature

A range of scheme literature is produced by the Fund and made available to employer organisations and employees through our website.

The Fund has produced an Employer Guide. This is a key product for employers as it is a comprehensive reference source which helps them to understand and fulfill their responsibilities. An electronic version is maintained on Devon Pension Fund's website within the dedicated employer section. Copies of leaflets and forms are also available to employers from the website or on request.

Training & Liaison

We offer specialist training and advice to all Fund employers and this covers the full range of administrative activities and tasks. We will also deliver training that is tailored to the specific needs of an employer in-situ.

The Fund also holds an annual meeting at a technical level for all employers. This meeting, known as the Pension Liaison Officers Group (PLOG) provides an outstanding opportunity for all parties to exchange views and news as well as addressing technical issues. Additional PLOGs will be organised periodically if needs arise.

Dedicated liaison officers provide communications and support to employers on various aspects of pension management and administration.

Annual Employers Meeting

Employer organisations have the opportunity to meet senior Investment and Pension Fund managers once a year at the Annual Employers Meeting. Pitched at a high-level target audience of decision makers, the meeting provides formal and informal opportunities to exchange information and ask questions about fund performance, actuarial issues, changes to workplace pension's law, and developments in the reform of public pensions and LGPS specifically. Post event feedback and improvement opportunities are sought from everyone attending this annual event.

Annual Consultative Meeting

An Annual Consultative Meeting (ACM) with fund members is held early in the calendar year. This is organised with the trade unions (Unison and GMB).

The Chair of the Committee, the County Treasurer, the Assistant County Treasurer – Investments and Treasury Management, and the Head of Peninsula Pensions attend the ACM to make presentations and answer any questions.

Benefit Statements, Pay Advices, and P60s

Every year, we issue an annual benefit statement to all current contributing members. This shows the current and prospective value of the member's benefits.

Deferred members will also receive a statement where a current address is held for them or through Member Self Service.

We send pay advices to pensioners in April and May each year. These show the effect of the annual pension increase and will include a P60 tax document summarising pay and the tax deducted from it for the previous year.

A payslip is also issued to pensioners if there has been a change of more than £1 to their net monthly income.

Annual Report

The Devon Pension Fund's current Annual Report and Accounts is made available at the Peninsula Pensions website <https://www.peninsulapensions.org.uk/pension-fund-investments/devon-county-council-investments/devon-fund-key-documents/> Hardcopy of the full report can be provided upon request. Employee members are informed of the web link via pay slips and all retired members receive a leaflet by post or through Member Self Service.

Archived annual reports and accounts can also be accessed via the website, as can a range of Fund publications, including among others our Investment Strategy Statement, Funding Strategy Statement, and the most recent Actuarial Valuation Report.



Fund Governance

Pensions governance is all about monitoring pension schemes to make sure they are run in their members' interests. There are several aspects to pensions governance, and Devon County Council, as administering authority, has a range of established systems, practices and procedures through which it delivers and fulfils these responsibilities:

- the hiring of fund managers and advisors
- deciding how money is invested between asset classes – in shares, bonds, property, cash or as venture capital
- ensuring that the pension fund runs efficiently, making sure the costs and charges are known and reduced
- agreeing the principles that govern the way the money is invested – and making sure those principles are adhered to
- making sure there's always enough money in the pension fund to pay pensions
- ensuring members have a voice in the running of their pension scheme and investment of their contributions

The Investment and Pension Fund Committee

The Investment and Pension Fund Committee fulfils the duties of Devon County Council as the Administering Authority of the Pension Fund.

The committee is made up of representatives from Devon County Council, Unitary and District Councils, other non-council employers, Trade Union and retired Members.

Its main powers and duties are based on the provisions of Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government Pension Fund (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016, and accompanying guidance, and are designed to ensure that the Fund is properly and effectively managed. Its purpose is to make sure the Council performs its duties as Administering Authority of the Devon Pension Fund, reviewing and approving the Fund's annual statement of accounts, and making sure that appropriate accounting policies are followed. It also brings to the attention of the Council any concerns arising from financial statements or any audit.

Investment and Pension Fund Committee Meetings are held at least quarterly and are open to the public as observers, other than where information is exempt from public disclosure under the Local Government Act 1972. Committee agendas, reports and minutes are made available via the Devon County Council web site

http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/cma/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/cma/index_inv.htm

The Devon Pension Board

The Public Services Pension Act 2013 required all Funds to establish a local Pension Board to assist with governance and compliance from 1st April 2015. Devon Pension Board meetings are formal recorded occasions, where the status of the scheme and associated issues are reviewed, and recommendations made concerning the standards of scheme governance and administration.

The Board will meet four times a year, with meetings falling in between the meetings of the Investment and Pension Fund Committee.

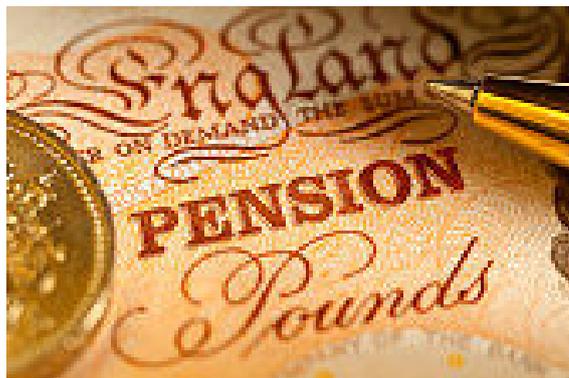
More information on the Pension Board along with terms of reference and meeting minutes can be found on the Peninsula Pensions website at <https://www.peninsulapensions.org.uk/pension-fund-investments/devon-county-council-investments/pension-board/>

Peninsula Pensions

Peninsula Pensions is a shared administration service run by Devon County Council on behalf of the Devon and Somerset Pension Funds. It provides an expert administration service to employers and members of public service pension schemes. This skilled team currently provides its expertise to members and employer organisations of:

- Both the Devon County Council LGPS Scheme and the Somerset County Council LGPS Scheme, as well as
- The Avon and Somerset Police Pension Scheme, and
- The Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service Pension Scheme

Visit <https://www.peninsulapensions.org.uk/>



The County Treasury Team

Devon County Council has a small Treasury and Investments Team headed up by the County Treasurer and Assistant County Treasurer for Treasury Management & Investments. It is accountable for securing safe, successful arrangements for treasury management both for County Council funds and the Devon Pension Fund; for making sure that effective processes are in place for the management of the investments and assets of the Devon Pension Fund.

The Treasury Team provides all governance parties with the accurate data and unambiguous clarity of message they need to help them shape opinions and make informed decisions in their duties to the Fund.

You can discover more about the governance of the Devon Pension Fund by reading our [Governance Policy and Compliance Statement](#) [here](#)



Professional Know How

The Devon Pension Fund employs the services of a range of actuarial and investment specialists in order for it to achieve its purpose and fulfil its pensions promise

Actuarial Services

The Fund Actuary performs a three-yearly Actuarial Valuation of the Devon Pension Fund as required by LGPS Regulations. Assets and liabilities are measured and valued and employer contribution rates are calculated that will achieve the long-term Fund Strategy.

The Fund maintains communications with the Actuary and Employers throughout this exercise. All employers get the opportunity to meet the Actuary when preliminary results are known.

The Actuary also provides us with information and advice on a range of issues affecting the Fund, especially when an employer organisation is seeking to join or, more rarely, exit the Fund.

Actuarial Services to the Fund are currently provided by <https://www.barnett-waddingham.co.uk/>

Investment Fund Managers & Independent Advisors

Investment performance is consistently monitored and evaluated against portfolio objectives and benchmarks. This is undertaken by the County Treasurer's Investment Team which has regular performance review meetings with the professional external Fund Managers who are appointed to invest the monies belonging to the Fund.

The County Treasurer reports to the Investment and Pension Fund Committee on investment performance and each active external Fund Manager will attend a briefing meeting with the Committee on an annual basis.

Investment constraints are set by the Committee whose professional knowledge is supplemented by the advice of the County Treasurer's Investment Team and an experienced independent investment adviser.

The Brunel Pension Partnership Ltd.

In the 2015 Autumn Statement, the Government published criteria for the pooling of Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) investments. This followed on from the policy statement made in the July budget that the Government was looking for LGPS funds to pool their investments into larger funds to achieve savings through economies of scale and increased bargaining power. Investment costs will be reduced along with other costs for all types of investment used in the pool.

Devon County Council is a shareholder of the Brunel Pension Partnership Ltd. (Brunel) which is one of eight national Local Government Pensions Scheme LGPS Pools. The Devon Fund will continue to be responsible for its own investment strategy, and for deciding the strategic asset allocation between different asset classes to meet local investment objectives. However, Brunel will be responsible for selection and monitoring of the external investment managers who will manage the investments.

Brunel will manage the investments for the pension funds of Avon, Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Environment Agency, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, and Wiltshire; bringing together approximately £30 billion investments of the 10 likeminded funds.

It is expected that Devon Pension Fund investment assets will be fully transitioned across to Brunel during the period between April 2018 and mid-2021.

The Q&A for Fund members on this official investment reform can be found [here](#).

The Q&A for Fund employers can be found [here](#)

And further news and information can be found at: www.brunelpensionpartnership.org

Brunel Oversight Board

The Chairman of the Devon Pension Fund and the chairs of the nine other Brunel clients meet on a quarterly basis to review the performance of Brunel and discuss other policy areas in relation to the operation of Brunel. This is a crucial body to ensure effective scrutiny of the operation of Brunel, and to act as a conduit of information between Brunel and the pension committees of the ten participating LGPS funds.

Brunel Client Group

The investment managers of the ten LGPS funds that participate in the Brunel pool meet with each other and with Brunel on a monthly basis. The channel of communication between Brunel and the Client Group is vital to the effective management of the relationship between Brunel and the client funds, the effective management of the pooled investments and the transition of assets to Brunel. Communication within the Brunel Client Group is also crucial to the sharing of best practice and seeking further opportunities for collaboration to reduce costs and improve performance.



Legal Advice

Legal advice to the Fund is provided by the Devon County Council Solicitor, but may involve the appointment of specialist legal advisors for aspects of fund management.

Wider Audiences

There are other groups and associations the Devon Pension Fund engages with in delivering a professional and competent service for its members. Each has its own needs in terms of message and media which the Fund will deploy to make sure that the meaning and significance is delivered strongly and securely. Here are some of them:

Press and Media

The Devon Pension Fund will actively engage with the press and other media organisations to ensure clarity of fact and fair representation. Enquiries from these bodies are handled by Devon County Council's Press and PR Office.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

MHCLG (<https://www.gov.uk/>) is responsible for government policy on some public sector pensions including the LGPS. The Devon Pension Fund responds to consultation proposals for scheme changes.

LGPS Scheme Advisory Board

The Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board (<http://www.lgpsboard.org/>) is a body set up under Section 7 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The purpose of the Board is to encourage best practice, increase transparency and coordinate technical and standards issues, and provide recommendations to the Secretary of State.

It will consider items passed to it from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ("MHCLG"), the Board's sub-committees and other stakeholders as well as items formulated within the Board. Recommendations may be passed to the MHCLG or other bodies. It is also likely that it will have a liaison role with the Pensions Regulator. Guidance and standards may be formulated for local scheme managers and pension boards.

The Devon Fund will need to respond to initiatives undertaken by the Scheme Advisory Board, providing information where required, and feeding into the Board's working groups.

Local Government Association (LGA)

The LGA (<http://www.local.gov.uk/workforce>) represents the interests of 375 local authorities in England and Wales to central government and other bodies; specifically in this instance with regard to local government pensions' policy. The Workforce Team provide technical advice, a suite of guides, booklets and publications and a full programme of pensions training. The Fund obtains clarification and advice from LGA specialists from time to time.

The Pensions Regulator

The Public Service Pensions Act 2013 gave additional responsibility to the Pensions Regulator (<http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/>) to oversee the LGPS. The Regulator has issued a code of practice for LGPS funds to follow. The Devon Fund is required to report any significant breaches of the code of practice or regulatory requirements to the Pensions Regulator.

The Pension and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA)

PLSA (<http://www.plsa.co.uk/>) speaks collectively for workplace pension schemes with the aim of influencing the direction of retirement provision. It has deep working relationships in Westminster and Whitehall. The Devon Pension Fund is a member of this organisation and this helps us to be part of the national pension debate both in our own right and as a group with other local authority pension funds.

The Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF)

LAPFF (<http://www.lapfforum.org/>) seeks to optimise the influence of local authority pension funds as shareholders to advance high standards of Corporate Governance and Corporate Social Responsibility. The Forum has a number of business meetings and an annual conference or AGM each year which is usually attended by the Assistant County Treasurer – Investments and Treasury Management.

The Society of County Treasurers (SCT)

This is a forum of all Shire and Unitary Council Treasurers meeting regularly for the sharing of information and best practice on all financial matters including pension fund management (<http://www.sctnet.org.uk/>).

The South West Area Pension Officers Group (SWAPOG)

This liaison network is set up to promote consistent and uniform interpretation of LGPS rules and regulations among administering authorities in the region. They meet quarterly to discuss pension administration issues and share best practice.

Summary of Information Needs: What all prospective and existing members can expect

Expectation	Product	Frequency
Information and news about the scheme; contact details	Internet Website	Available online and within 3 months of any material changes
	Pensions Post Newsletter	Available through member self service
Scheme and Transfer credit information for prospective and new members	Promo Leaflet and Pension Pack	Leaflet distributed through Employers. Pension Pack issued to new members upon joining
Knowledge of Fund Finances, investment performance, and investment principles	Annual Report & Accounts (Summary leaflet)	Online & uploaded to Member Self Service. Employee members are advised of web link via pay slips. Posted each year to home address of retired members
	Annual Consultative Meeting (ACM)	Annual
Knowledge of benefits (Active and Deferred Members)	Benefits Statements	By 31 st August annually to home address or via employer, and upon leaving employment
Ways to improve future pensions benefits	AVC and APC product information	Constantly available online
Information about Benefits in Payment	Pensioner Newsletter	Annual or within one month of any change
	Pay advices	April & May incl. P60 for previous year
Representation on the Investment & Pension Fund Committee	Trade Union Reps with observer status	At least 4/5 occasions per year
Access to Investment & Pension Fund Committee papers and minutes	Administering Authority archive	Constantly available online
Representation on the Pension Board	Proportionate representation	At least twice per year

Summary of Information Needs: What all employers can expect

Expectation	Product	Frequency
Scheme literature, guides and forms; Fund Policies and Reports	Internet Website	Constantly available online
Information about changes in legislation and revisions to scheme requirements. Latest news and investment performance updates.	E-Zine newsletter	Quarterly plus special bulletins
Knowledge of Fund Finances	Annual Report & Accounts (Full Report)	Annual and archived reports via the website
Knowledge of the Fund's progress, the pension landscape, developments, news, and information exchange.	Employers Meeting / Forum	Annual plus special events according to need
Understanding of actuarial matters including funding levels and employer contribution rates.	'Meet the Actuary' Employers Meeting Liaison and support	Three-yearly upon the Actuarial Valuation of the Devon Fund Ongoing
Technical knowledge and understanding of administrative activities and tasks	Specialist Training Pension Liaison Officer Group (PLOG)	On demand Annual and as needs arise
Scheme information and promotional materials for prospective members	Welcome Pack	Constantly available online
Enrolment of Employees - advice for employers on complying with auto-enrolment reforms under workplace pension legislation.	Information, template letters, forms and flowcharts Project guidance	Online Dedicated specialist support
Representation on the Investment & Pension Fund Committee	Proportionate representation	At least 4/5 occasions per year
Access to Investment & Pension Fund Committee papers and minutes	Administering Authority Archive	Constantly available online
Representation on the Pension Board	Proportionate representation	At least twice per year