

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

Somerset Pension Fund Administration Strategy



April 2020

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1. Introduction

Peninsula Pensions was formed in 2013 as a shared pension administration service, with Devon County Council acting as lead authority, for the provision of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) administration for Devon and Somerset administering authorities.

The Devon and Somerset Pension Funds, Investment and Pension Fund Committees and Pension Boards remain independent from each other with each Administering Authority retaining investment and governance responsibility.

Although not a statutory requirement, a Pension Administration Strategy (PAS) was introduced in April 2015, following approval by the Devon and Somerset Investment and Pension Fund Committees. Although there is a separate PAS in place for each Fund, the content is identical in order to ensure a fair and consistent approach is maintained for all stakeholders.

The legal context for this Strategy is [Regulation 59 of The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013](#) which allows Funds the opportunity to prepare and review a Pensions Administration Strategy. The PAS also has regard to [the Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes \(Disclosure of Information\) Regulations 2013](#) and [The Pension Regulator Public Sector Code of Practice 14](#).

The PAS sets out the performance standards and expectations of the Administering Authority and the employing authorities, defining clear roles and responsibilities, and aims to ensure the delivery of a high quality service for all stakeholders.

The revision to the PAS, effective from April 2020, reflects the growth in membership and demands of Scheme members and employers, changes to LGPS regulations and advances in technology.

The PAS is linked to the following statutory documents of the Fund which are located within the Somerset Pension Fund annual report, available on the SCC website:

- Governance Policy and Compliance Statement
- Communications Strategy
- Funding Strategy Statement
- Investment Strategy Statement

Under no circumstances does the PAS override any provision or requirement of the LGPS regulations nor is it intended to replace the more extensive commentary provided by the Employers' Guide and website for day-to-day operations.

2. Key Administration Strategy focus

This strategy formulates the administrative arrangements between the pension fund and the participating employing authorities. It recognises that fund employers and Peninsula Pensions have a shared role in delivering an efficient and effective pension service to scheme members and that this can only be achieved by co-operation.

The strategy document sets out in detail how we will achieve our key focus points stated below:

- setting out the quality and performance standards required of the Fund and scheme employers
- promoting good working relationships and improving efficiency between the Fund and its scheme employers for the benefit of scheme members
- enhancing the flow of data by having clear channels of communication in place, so that each authority is fully aware of its role and responsibilities within this process
- providing a framework to enable administration costs relating to significant employer underperformance to be met directly by the employer responsible, rather than shared across all the employers in the Fund*

(* [Regulation 70 of the 2013 LGPS Regulations](#) permits the recovery of additional costs from an employer where unsatisfactory performance levels have incurred additional costs to the Fund)

An annual report will be issued by Peninsula Pensions to illustrate the extent to which the performance standards established under this strategy have been achieved and such other matters arising from the strategy as appropriate.

3. Record keeping

Record-keeping is a fundamental part of managing a scheme such as the LGPS. Funds and employers have a legal obligation to collate and maintain accurate data records.

Peninsula Pensions must be able to demonstrate that records are accurate and up to date, within the parameters of data protection legislation, in order to govern and administer the pension scheme efficiently and effectively for scheme members.

Employers (and their delegated payroll providers) are responsible for providing the core data required by the Fund. Employers need to ensure that legal obligations regarding the provision of timely and accurate information to the scheme are met.

The Fund has a legal duty to provide scheme members with accurate and timely information regarding their benefits. The use of electronic processes aides all parties to do this in a timely and efficient manner.

A strong working partnership between the Fund and employers is key in delivering a successful administration service. This document describes how the Fund provides support to employers in meeting their responsibilities.

If employers have concerns about the data required, they should contact Peninsula Pensions without delay. This will allow Peninsula Pensions to work with employers to resolve any issues and enable both parties to meet their requirements for the benefit of scheme members.

Where an employer does not actively engage with the Fund to resolve issues and/or consistently fails to meet its responsibilities under the LGPS Regulations, the Fund (or stakeholders such as the Pension Board) has a statutory duty to report any breach to The Pensions Regulator. If deemed to be materially significant, The Pensions Regulator has the authority to take prompt and effective action to investigate and correct the breach and its causes, and, where appropriate, to notify any members whose benefits have been affected.

More information about the work of The Pensions Regulator can be found via the following link: <https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en>

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The key focus of the strategy set out in Section 2 will be achieved by:

- Clearly defining the respective roles of Scheme Employers and the Administering Authority
- Setting clear and achievable standards of service levels for the functions carried out by Scheme Employers and the Administering Authority
- Setting out clear procedural guidance for the secure and effective exchange of information between Scheme Employers and the Administering Authority
- Monitoring service delivery, identifying poor performance and establishing a platform for the provision of support to improve performance where required
- Continuous development of resources via the use of digital technology and staff training for both the Fund and its employers
- Applying charges where an employer consistently fails to meet deadlines to ensure the resulting additional administrative strain is not a burden on all employers

The Employer's Roles and Responsibilities

The key responsibilities for the Employer are to:

- Communicate the LGPS to eligible staff
- Ensure the correct level of monthly pension contributions are collected and paid by the 7th of the following month, and no later than the 19th
- Report information and data to the Pension Fund as set out in this Strategy
- Keep up to date with Peninsula Pension Communications
- Provide a prompt response to information requests

The Administering Authority's Roles and Responsibilities

The key responsibilities for the Administering Authority are to:

- Administer the LGPS in respect of all scheme members (Active, Deferred and Pensioner members) in accordance with this Strategy
- Maintain and review the Fund's Statements, Policies and Reports and all other matters relating to the Governance of the scheme
- Communicate and engage with employers on LGPS matters
- Provide support/training to scheme employers
- Maintain and develop an effective web presence for the benefit of members and scheme employers

A guide to the roles and responsibilities of employers and the Administering Authority are set out in Appendix A. The guides include a summary of duties, defining the main functions, which enable the Pension Fund to deliver an efficient, accurate and high-quality pension service to scheme members.

Any breaches of duty will be recorded on our breaches register, which will be reviewed by the Pension Board on a quarterly basis. Individual breaches will be reported to The Pensions Regulator as required.

5. Performance Monitoring

The strategy recognises that there is a shared responsibility for ensuring compliance with the LGPS regulations and the PAS. Below we have set out the ways in which performance and compliance will be monitored;

- The Fund and scheme employers must aim to ensure that all functions and tasks are carried out to the agreed quality standards set out in this Strategy
- The Fund will regularly monitor, measure and report on compliance with the agreed service standards outlined in this document
- The Fund will undertake a formal review of performance against this strategy on an annual basis and liaise with employers in relation to any concerns on performance
- The Fund monitors its own performance against internal key performance indicators and the Disclosure Regulations 2013. Formal monitoring is carried out on a monthly basis, and is reported to the Pension Board on a quarterly basis
- The performance of scheme employers against the standards set out in this document will be reported to the Pensions Committee and Pension Board, as appropriate, and will include data quality
- The Fund will also regularly report to employers regarding individual performance, identifying any areas for improvement including outstanding data items

Underperformance Fees

The LGPS regulations provide pension funds with the authority to recover any administration costs incurred as a result of the underperformance of a scheme employer, from the employer responsible for the underperformance. To date the Fund has not recovered these additional costs, and has taken the decision to work with employers to improve service delivery. However, we reserve the right to pass on these costs to the employer.

From April 2020 Peninsula Pensions will monitor any additional costs incurred in the administration of the scheme as a direct result of underperformance, with a view to recovering these costs from the responsible employer.

A breaches report will be presented to the Pension Board on a quarterly basis. This report will include the nature of the breach, the party responsible for the breach and details of any action taken to address the breach. The report will also include a recommendation for the Board to consider whether a breach is significant enough to warrant reporting to The Pensions Regulator.

In the event of a levy being issued to the Fund by The Pensions Regulator, the levy will be passed on to the relevant employer where it can be demonstrated that the employer's action or inaction are responsible for the levy. Any disagreement regarding the amount of the levy will be decided by the Secretary of State who will have regard to:

- the provisions of the pension administration strategy that are relevant to the case, and
- the extent to which the pension fund and the employing authority have complied with those provisions in carrying out their functions under these regulations.

Interest on late payments

In accordance with LGPS regulations, interest will be charged on any outstanding amount overdue from an employing authority by more than one month. Interest will be calculated at 1% above the base rate on a day-to-day basis from the payment due date and will be compounded with three-monthly rests.

The employer will be reported to The Pensions Regulator where contributions are received late in accordance with The Pensions Regulator Code of Practice.

Feedback from Employers

Peninsula Pensions is also accountable for its performance and we welcome feedback from our Employers regarding the performance of the Fund against the standards in this administration strategy, as set out in Appendix A.

Comments should be sent to peninsulaemployers@devon.gov.uk or to the Employer and Communications Manager. Any feedback received will be incorporated into the quarterly reports provided to the Pension Board.

6. Liaison and Communication

The delivery of a high quality, cost-effective administration service is not only the responsibility of the Administering Authority but it also depends on the Administering Authority working with a number of individuals in different organisations to ensure that members and other interested parties receive the appropriate level of service and that statutory requirements are met.

Peninsula Pensions has a dedicated Employer & Communications Team who will work with employers to ensure they are equipped to meet their responsibilities in line with the LGPS Regulations.

Every employer will have access to a dedicated Member Services Team who will assist employers with queries relating to individual members.

Each employing authority will designate a named individual(s) to act as a **Pension Liaison Officer**, who will serve as the primary contact regarding any aspect of administering the LGPS. The Pension Liaison Officer(s) will be provided with a user name and password to access the employer section of the Peninsula Pensions website

Peninsula Pensions will employ a multi-channel approach in liaising and communicating with employing authorities to ensure that all requirements are consistently met.

The various channels of communication employed by the fund include:

1. The **Peninsula Pensions website** is the main communication tool for both employers and scheme members.
 - **Employers** – a dedicated and secure employer section where employers can access procedure guides, information on courses run by the Fund, access back copies of the Pensions Line, access Employer Self Service and Interface information. All employers are required to provide data through the Employer Self Service Portal and/or Interfaces.
 - **Scheme members** – access to up-to-date information about all aspects of the LGPS and the Member Self Service area where members can update personal details, review annual benefit statements, complete their own pensions estimates and access online tutorials.
 - **Contact Details** – Peninsula Pension staff roles and contact information are available on the website, together with contact details for the Investment Team, Pensions Committee and Pension Board.
2. **Scheme members** who have chosen to opt out of the Member Self Service will continue to receive postal communication. They will still be able to access up-to-date information about all aspects of the LGPS via our website.
3. **Periodic newsletters** are issued to scheme members and all employing authorities and published on the Peninsula Pensions website.

4. **Induction and pre-retirement workshops** undertaken upon request to develop both employer and scheme member understanding (minimum of attendees 10 required per workshop)
5. **Pension surgeries** held for scheme members upon employer request to resolve any individual or collective issues that members may have.
6. **Regular E-zine** sent directly to employer representatives to provide notification of any scheme / administrative updates and developments.
7. **Employer seminars and training groups** held at least annually to review scheme developments, and/or to resolve any training needs that employers may have.
8. **Annual Consultative Meeting** held to review investment and administrative performance during the preceding 12 months, and to consider future plans and challenges.
9. **Employer representatives** distribute information supplied by the pension fund to scheme members within their organisation, such as scheme guides and factsheets.

For further information regarding our methods of communication, please see our Communications Policy which is located within the Somerset County Council Pension Fund's annual report, a copy of which can be found on the Somerset County Council website.

Note: Peninsula Pensions are not responsible for verifying the accuracy of any information provided by the employer for the purpose of calculating benefits under the provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme and the Discretionary Payments Regulations. This responsibility rests with the employer.

Payroll providers – for employers who have delegated the responsibility to a payroll provider, for the provision of information direct to Peninsula Pensions, a delegation form will need to be completed confirming the areas for which they are permitted to act on your behalf. If information received from the payroll provider results in incorrect information being issued or incorrect benefits being paid to scheme members, the responsibilities under the Local Government Pension Regulations lie with the Employer.

7. Actuarial work

An actuarial valuation is conducted by the Pension Fund's actuary, as appropriate. The actuary determines the Fund's assets and liabilities in respect of each employer and calculates the appropriate contribution rate to be applied for the subsequent three year period.

The costs associated with the administration of the scheme are charged directly to the pension fund, and the actuary takes these costs into account in assessing the employers' contribution rates.

In the event that an employer elects to outsource a service, the actuary is required to produce a report in respect of those scheme members involved in the outsourcing. The outsourcing employer will be liable for the cost of producing this report.

An employer may also commission the fund actuary to undertake additional work, the costs of which will be charged to the employer. Please note that these costs will also include an element of the cost of any administration work involved in liaising with the actuary.

Somerset Pensions Committee
Somerset County Council

Date.....



Performance Standards

The delivery of an efficient and cost-effective administration is dependent upon a successful joint working partnership between the Pension Fund and key individuals within or representing the scheme employer.

Performance standards are expressed as targets (i.e. the level of performance expected in normal circumstances). It is accepted that there may be occasions where it may not be possible to achieve the target indicated and a pragmatic approach will be adopted, subject to employers using their best endeavours to meet expected standards wherever possible.

1.Communication

Function/Role	Performance Target
Primary contacts - Nominate and keep under review named contacts including main contact and HR and payroll links.	Within 1 month of employer joining fund or change to nominated representative
Stage 1 Appeals (IDRP) Officer - Appoint a person to consider appeals under Stage 1 of the Applications for the Adjudication of Disagreements Procedure (AADP) and provide full, up to date contact details to the Fund.	Within 1 month of becoming a scheme employer or within 1 month of a change in Appeals Officer
Independent Registered Medical Practitioner (IRMP) - Appoint an IRMP qualified in occupational health medicine, or arrange with a third party, and seek approval of the appointment from the Fund, for the consideration of all ill-health retirement applications from active and deferred members.	Within 1 month of becoming a scheme employer or within 1 month of a change in IRMP(s)
Employer Discretions - Formulate and publish policies in relation to all areas where the employer may exercise a discretion within the LGPS (including providing a copy of the policy document to the Fund).	Initial policy and subsequent revisions to be provided within 1 month of publishing
LGPS content in Contracts - Ensure Fund- approved LGPS content is included in all contract / appointment / adjustment communications for LGPS-eligible positions including direction to Peninsula Pensions website .	Review LGPS content annually or within 1 month following receipt of information regarding adjustment to Fund approved wording
Distribute any information provided by the Fund to scheme members/potential scheme members.	Within timeframe set out by Fund
Refer new / prospective scheme members to the Fund's website.	Within 1 month of commencement of employment or change in contractual conditions
Outsourcing - Notify the Fund of contracting out of services which will involve a TUPE transfer of LGPS eligible staff to another organisation to enable LGPS information to be provided to potential contractors.	At the point of deciding to tender a service

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Work with Peninsula Pensions to arrange for the admission of a contractor as a new employer in the Fund.	A minimum of 2 months in advance of the date of contract
Notify Peninsula Pensions of changes / extension / cessation of arrangements with a contractor.	Within 5 working days of decision being made
Assist Peninsula Pensions in ensuring that the terms of the contractor's admission as a scheme employer (Admission Agreement) are complied with.	Notify the Pension Fund if the terms of the Admission Agreement have been breached
Respond to enquiries from Peninsula Pensions and Fund representatives.	Within 2 weeks from receipt of the enquiry
Respond to enquiries from Peninsula Pensions and Fund representatives relating to Breaches of the Law.	Within 1 week of the request

2. Payments to the Fund

Function/Role	Performance Target
The Employer's Rate - Apply the employer contribution rate and deficit sum agreed with the Fund on becoming a scheme employer and adjust as instructed by the Fund from a date determined by the Fund.	Within 5 working days of receipt of information from the Fund effective from a date determined by the Fund following advice from the scheme actuary
The Employee's Rate - Calculate and review the correct employee contribution rate for all members at commencement and on 1st April each year. Also, to be reviewed at intervals during the year at the employer's discretion.	Within 5 working days of commencement, on 1st April each year and as per the employer's discretionary policy on adjusting the employee's contribution rate at intervals during the year
Assumed Pensionable Pay (APP) - Ensure the correct application of APP during periods of reduced/nil pay in accordance with the LGA's HR & Payroll Guides.	Review of eligibility for APP immediately upon a member moving to reduced/nil pay
Monthly Payment to the Fund - Remit Employee, Employer and any Additional contributions and submit the online Contributions Form to the Fund.	By the 19th of the month after deduction from pay or date specified by Fund
Payment of AVCs - Remit Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) to the AVC provider(s).	By the 19th of the month following the deduction from pay

Make strain/shortfall payments to the Fund in respect of early payment of benefits from flexible retirement, redundancy or business efficiency retirement or where a member retires early with employer's consent.	Within 5 working days of receipt of invoice from Peninsula Pensions
Remit recharge payments in respect of pension members – e.g. Discretionary Compensation/Enhancement.	Within 5 working days of receipt of invoice from Peninsula Pensions
Payments in respect of FRS102 and IAS19 work carried out on behalf of Employers by the Fund and the Fund Actuary.	Within 5 working days of receipt of invoice from Peninsula Pensions
Payments in respect of all other work carried out on behalf of the Employer by the Fund's Actuary and connected data quality assurance undertaken by the Fund.	Within 5 working days of receipt of invoice from Peninsula Pensions
Prompt payment of invoices issued by the Fund for specific services provided e.g. admission agreement work.	Within 5 working days of receipt of invoice from Peninsula Pensions
Make payment of additional costs to the Fund associated with non-compliance with performance standards of the scheme employer.	Within 5 working days of receipt of invoice from Peninsula Pensions

3. Year-End Return

Function/Role	Performance Target
Completing the Year-End Return - Provide a fully reconciled and completed Year-End Return to the Fund in the format stipulated in the instructions issued each February.	By 19th April following the year-end unless employers are notified of an alternative date by the Fund
To resolve all queries returned from the Year-End Return.	To respond fully to all queries from the Fund within 3 weeks of receipt of the query. In circumstances where an employer submits a late year-end return limiting the Fund's time to complete its duties, the timescales may be reduced, as advised by the Fund

4. Scheme Members Information

Function/Role	Performance Target
To notify Peninsula Pensions of all new scheme members, changes in personal details, e.g. name, working hours via Interface or Employer Self Service.	1 month
<p>On cessation of membership determine the reason for retirement, final pay for calculating pre 2014 benefits and CARE pay for post 2014 benefits as appropriate.</p> <p>NB Where an employee is suffering from a Terminal Illness and limited life expectancy, employers should contact Peninsula Pensions for guidance without delay.</p>	<p>For members in receipt of regular pay, where the employer can accurately project pay to the date of retirement, up to 1 month prior, or within 1 week following final pay period.</p> <p>Leavers under age 55 within 1 month following final payday</p>
<p>Apply a scheme members election to opt out of the LGPS to the member's payroll record.</p> <p>Notify Peninsula Pensions in line with the process for leavers, as stated above.</p>	<p>Election applies from the 1st of the month for the next available payroll, except where an opt-out is made within 3 months of an employee joining the scheme. In such cases the opt-out is backdated to the joining date and all contributions refunded directly.</p>
Where a member dies in service - determine final pay for calculating pre 2014 benefits and CARE pay for post 2014 benefits as appropriate.	Within 1 week of final pay period
Provide monthly CARE data within required format.	Within 2 weeks of pay run
Ensure members are notified of the option to pay Additional Pension Contributions following absences not covered by APP.	Within 2 weeks of the return to work
Apply/adjust/cease the deduction of Additional Pension Contributions following an APC application from a scheme member and forward information via Interface or ESS to Peninsula Pensions.	In the month following receipt of election from scheme member or notification from the Fund
Notify Peninsula Pensions of periods of unpaid absence not covered by Assumed Pensionable Pay (APP).	Within 1 month
Arrange for the deduction of AVCs from scheme member's pay following election.	Commence deduction of AVCs in month following the month of election, as advised by AVC Provider

Provide end-of-year data within required format.	By date specified by Fund January each year
In line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) an employer will protect information relating to a member contained in any item issued by Peninsula Pensions from improper disclosure. They will only use information supplied or made available by Peninsula Pensions for the LGPS.	Ongoing requirement

5. Peninsula Pensions

To complete cases in-line with the Disclosure Regulations, with at least 90% of cases completed within the internal targets.

Peninsula Pensions Responsibility	Disclosure regulations / Legal Requirement	Internal Targets
To accurately record and update member records on pension administration systems.	Within 3 months of effective date of change	2 weeks
To produce a statutory notification and forward to member's home address, together with information relating to the LGPS including how to request a transfer, inform us of previous service, and complete an expression of wish form.	Within 2 months of joining the scheme or within 2 months of request being made	1 month
To process employer year-end contribution returns and provide consolidated and grouped error reports for action by employers.	n/a	3 months
To produce annual benefit statements for all active members as at the preceding 31 March and notify electronically or by post to member's home address.	31 st August	31 st July
To produce annual benefit statements for all preserved members, as at the preceding 31 March, and notify electronically or by post to member's home address.	31 st August	30 th June
To provide information and quotations to scheme member about additional voluntary contribution (AVC) options.	Within 2 months of request being made	Within 10 working days
To provide information and quotations to a scheme member on the option of making Additional Pension Contributions (APCs).	Within 2 months of request being made	Within 10 working days
To produce retirement estimates for employers, once in receipt of all the necessary information.	Within 2 months of request being made	Within 10 working days

To accurately record and update member records on pension administration systems for those members leaving the scheme, without entitlement to immediate payment of benefits. Provide them with the options available and deferred benefit entitlement.	Within 2 months of receiving notification that pensionable service has ended or within 2 months of a request	Within 1 month
To accurately calculate and inform the member of the options available to them upon retirement.	Within 1 month following date benefit becomes payable (2 months if retiring before normal pension age)	10 working days from receiving all information from employer
Upon receipt of members completed retirement forms finalise pension records and authorise payment of lump sum and set up of payroll record.	n/a	Within 10 working days
Under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 Peninsula Pensions will protect information relating to a member contained on any item issued by them or received by them from improper disclosure.	n/a	Ongoing requirement, online security within databases regularly reviewed
Each Administering Authority is responsible for exercising the discretionary powers given to it by the regulations. The Administering Authority is also responsible for publishing its policy to its members in respect of the key discretions as required by the regulations.		Peninsula Pensions will maintain links to these discretions on their website
Notification of Pension Fund Triennial Valuation results including contribution rates.		Assuming information provided by Actuaries provisional results December following valuation, with final results the following March