

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

### PENSION FUND

# COMMUNICATION POLICY STATEMENT (LGPS) 2013



# **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 (Administration) Regulations 2008.

## **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:

- Contributing Scheme Members – active members
- Deferred Scheme Members
- Pensioner Scheme Members and Dependants
- Prospective Scheme Members
- Admitted and Scheduled Scheme Employers participating in the Fund
- Elected Members (Trustees)
- Other Bodies

## **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 paper-based communication as our main means of communicating however we compliment this by use of electronic means such as our website: <http://hackney.xpmemberservices.com> and the secure portal 'Sharefile'.

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, Xafinity Paymaster (XP), 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 - <http://hackney.pensions@xafinitypaymaster.com>

For Administration staff – <http://hackney.employers@xafinitypaymaster.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 <http://hackney.xpmemberservices.com>. The website contains copies of scheme guides, copies of newsletters and other relevant information pertaining to the LGPS
- **Policy Documents** – These are available for all stakeholders to access either on the website at <http://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.

## **Branding**

As the pension fund is administered by Xafinity Paymaster (XP), all literature and communications will include the branding of the London Borough of Hackney and XP.

## **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 also form part of the Pension Fund website <http://hackney.xpmemberservices.com> which is available for any member to access.
- **Member Self-Service** – Via the Funds 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 normal retirement date (65). These are issued annually and would normally be issued

within 8 months of the financial year end (31<sup>st</sup> March), but ultimately by the end of the following financial year end. These contain vital information for scheme members and enable individuals to make informed choices about their retirement options.

- **Pension Surgeries** – Located at Keltan House, the Pension Liaison Officer is easily contactable by email, telephone, or letter. It is also possible to arrange a one-to-one meeting to discuss the benefits and options available to members.
- **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 HR, 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.
- **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 scheme members

## **Policy on Communicating with Prospective Scheme Members**

We will make information available to all prospective scheme members, new employees and prospective employees. We will also provide information to those employees who may choose not to join the scheme at the start of their employment or who choose to opt out of the scheme during employment, thereby ensuring that individuals are making an informed decision before opting out of the scheme

- **Initial Contact** - All permanent new members of staff are automatically enrolled to the LGPS. 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.
- **Pension Liaison Officer** – Located at Keltan House, the Pension Liaison Officer is easily contactable by email, telephone, 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 to new employees and prospective members of the scheme and at other times on request. The scheme guides also form part of the Pension Fund website <http://hackney.xpmemberservices.com> which is available for any member to access.

## **Policy on Communicating with Admitted and Scheduled Scheme 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 Council.

- **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, Xafinity Paymaster
- **Website** – The website has a section for Scheme Employers and is used to distribute detailed information o 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 <http://hackney.xpmemberservices.com>.
- **Pensions Administration Strategy** – 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: <http://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 <http://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 Sub-Committee** – The Pensions Sub-Committee is the Committee which has delegated power to review, administer and monitor the Pension Fund. The Committee meets 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 Sub-Committee and to other Committees as necessary, for example Regulatory Committee and Cabinet, 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 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.
- **Trade Unions** – we will work with relevant trade unions to ensure the Scheme is understood by all interest 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 view 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 Actuary to discuss funding levels, employer contributions and valuation of the assets and liabilities of the Fund
- **Pension Fund Custodian** – The Funds Custodian is State Street, 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 tax free lump sum, 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 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 – September/October	Active, Deferred
Annual Newsletter				Annually – September/ October	ALL
Pension Updates				When details available	Active, Prospective, Employers
Newsletters				As required	ALL
2014 Scheme Changes				When details available	ALL
Scheme Guides				When requested	ALL
Induction Sessions				Weekly	Prospective
Pre-Retirement Seminars				As required	Active

Employer Forum				Annually - November	Employers
Pensions Administration Strategy				Annually – February/March	Employers
Communications Policy Statement				Annually - February/March	ALL
Full Report & Accounts				Annually - November	ALL
Summary Report & Accounts				Annually - November	Active, Deferred, Pensioner
Statement of Investment Principles				Annually - February/March	ALL
Ad-Hoc Queries				Within set timescales	ALL
Auto-Enrolment (AE)/ Workplace Pensions				September 2012 onwards	Actives, Employers

## **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. 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  
Xafinity Paymaster  
Russell Way  
Crawley  
West Sussex  
RH10 1UH

Tel No.: 01293 603085

Email:

For members of the scheme - <http://hackney.pensions@xafinitypaymaster.com>

For Administration staff – <http://hackney.employers@xafinitypaymaster.com>

For other queries and feedback issues:

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

Email: [pensions@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:pensions@hackney.gov.uk)

### **Review Process**

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