



2019

Pensions Communications Policy Statement

Your Local Government
Pension Scheme Guide

Your Guide to the London Borough of Croydon Communications Policy

As the Administering Authority we have prepared this guide to help you to understand the various Communications policies that Croydon Council (as the Administering Authority) offers to all of its stakeholders

Communications Policy Statement

The Regulations require each administering authority in England and Wales to prepare, maintain and publish a statement setting out its policy on communicating with the following stakeholders and organisations:

- ▶ Contributing Scheme members
- ▶ Prospective Scheme members
- ▶ Pensioner Scheme members and deceased dependents
- ▶ Deferred Scheme members
- ▶ Admitted and scheduled Scheme employers participating in the Pension Fund
- ▶ Elected Members
- ▶ Local Pension Board
- ▶ Other bodies

This document sets out the mechanisms which are used to meet our communication needs. We aim to use the most appropriate methods for the audiences receiving the information. This may involve using more than one medium of communication.

Objectives

The aim of this Communications Policy (the Policy) is to make sure that all stakeholders are kept informed of developments within the Pension Fund (the Fund). We want to ensure transparency and an effective communication process will help maintain the efficient running of the Local Government Pension Scheme (the Scheme).

General Communications

We use a range of methods to communicate including a variety of paper-based and electronic means. The Fund has a dedicated website www.croydonpensionscheme.org/

We will accept 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.

Website

Communication in the form of a dedicated Fund website is available. It 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 the Fund website. The website contains copies of newsletters and other relevant information pertaining to the Scheme.

Policy Documents

These are available for all stakeholders to access on the website.

Risks

The Fund's Risk Register includes various "Governance" risks which are partially mitigated by good communication arrangements. This policy helps to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations with regards to communication with stakeholders.

▶ **Contributing Scheme Members**

Member Self Service

All Members can request their own password to view their record. Amendments can be made to update certain details and calculations can be performed.

Annual Benefit Statement

Members can access their individual information via the member self service facility at their convenience. The Statement details information held on the Pension Section database and provides estimates of the current and future value of the member's benefits.

Pensions Updates

When there are Scheme changes there will be additional communications to Members using a variety of communication methods.

Scheme Guides

Scheme guides are available on the website.

Pensions Helpline

Members can call the Pensions Section on one central helpline number, which is advertised in all our literature. The number is 0208 760 5768 x62892.

► **Prospective Scheme Members**

Initial Contact

All permanent new members of staff are automatically enrolled into the Scheme. Each new member is sent a statutory welcome letter confirming membership of the Scheme signposting members to the Scheme Guide and contact information.

Pensions Helpline

Prospective Scheme members can call the Pensions Section on one central helpline number, which is advertised in all our literature. The number is 0208 760 5768 x62892.

► Pensioner Scheme Members and Dependents

Pensioner's Payslips

All pensioners receive payslips in March, April and May along with their P60 at the end of the year. A payslip will also be received where the amount of net pension changes by more than £20.

Pensioners Newsletter

All pensioners receive an annual newsletter which is sent to their home address in April. This publication includes the pensions increase, and other relevant information advertised in all our literature.

Life Certificates

The Fund will undertake an annual exercise, for overseas pensioners, through correspondence in order to establish the details held are up-to-date.

The Council also participates in the National Fraud Initiative every 2 years.

Pensions Helpline

Members can call the Pensions Section on one central helpline number, which is advertised in all our literature. The number is 0208 760 5768 x62892.

► Deferred Scheme Members

Annual Benefit Statement

Members can access their individual information via the member self service facility at their convenience. The Statement details information held on the Pension Section database and provides estimates of the current and future value of the member's benefits.

Update of Information

If there are any changes to the Scheme Regulations which are relevant to deferred Scheme members correspondence will be sent directly to their latest home address held on the pensions database.

The Council also use a tracing agency to contact members who have lost contact with the Council.

Pensions Helpline

Members can call the Pensions Section on one central helpline number, which is advertised in all our literature. The number is 0208 760 5768 x62892.

► Admitted & Scheduled Scheme Employers participating in the Fund

Employer Forums

Meetings are held quarterly for employers; specifically they have been used as a mechanism for communicating major strategic issues, significant Scheme legislation changes, triennial valuation matters and the Funding Strategy Statement.

Employers are kept informed throughout the process of the triennial valuation which is carried out by the Fund's Actuary. Employers' comments are always encouraged and welcomed and, where appropriate, taken into consideration.

Administration Strategy

The Administration Strategy Statement sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Administering Authority (Croydon Council) and employers in the Fund. It sets out the service level agreements and targets which all are expected to meet. It can be found on the website.

► **Communication with Elected Members**

Information is provided to Council Members in order for them to be able to fulfil their duties under the role of the Administering Authority.

Access to Pension Committee

The Pension Committee is the Committee which has delegated power to review, administer and monitor the 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 they are excluded due to the confidential nature of matters under discussion. The agenda, reports and minutes of the meeting are available on the Council's website <https://secure.croydon.gov.uk/akscroydon/users/public/admin/kabmenu.pl?cmte=PEN>

Committee Reports

Reports are presented to the Pension Committee and to other committees as necessary. Members are kept informed of developments in relation to Fund issues and the impact that these can have on overall Council policies and procedures.

► **Communication with the Pension Board**

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

Reports to the Pension Board

The Board will be treated in the same way as a Committee of the 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.

► **Communication with Other Bodies**

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

Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC) Provider

AVCs are a way to top up your tax free lump sum and pension from the Scheme. The Council's AVC provider is Prudential. Contact details are available from the Council's website.

Trade Unions/Employer Representatives

We will work with the relevant trade unions and employer representatives to ensure the Scheme is understood by all interested parties. Efforts will be made to ensure that all pension related issues are communicated effectively with the trade unions.

Investment Managers, Advisers and Actuary

Regular meetings with fund managers who make investments on behalf of the Fund.

Regular meetings with investment advisers who provide help and advice on asset allocation and investment of the Fund.

Regular meetings with the Fund Actuary to discuss funding levels, employers' contributions and valuation of the assets and liabilities of the Fund.

Custodian

The Fund's Custodian is Bank of New York Mellon, who ensures the safekeeping of the Fund's investment transactions.

Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA)

The Fund is a member of PLSA, 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. LAPFF was established to help local authorities funds to share information and ideas about socially responsible investing.

London Pension Officers Group (LPOG) and 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 Scheme Regulations and best practice.

Requests for Information

Requests for information will be dealt with in accordance with relevant legislation.

Consultations

There are occasions when the Administering Authority will consult with interested parties whether as a result of potential changes to the Regulations governing the Scheme or specific policy changes relating to Croydon. 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.

Accessibility

We are committed to making our information accessible to all and are striving to adhere to accessibility guidelines.

Review of Communication Policy

This policy document will be reviewed annually and updated as required.

Adopted by Pension Committee September 2019

The table below shows the availability of Fund publications along with their publication frequency and review periods.

Communication Material	Paper based	Electronic form	Internet for all to view	When published	When reviewed
Pension Scheme Guide	✓	✓	✓	Constantly available	Annually
Topping up Benefits	✓	✓	✓	Constantly available	Annually
Annual Benefit Statements	✓	✓	✗	Annually	Annually
Statutory Notifications	✓	✓	✗	On joining & Annual Benefit Statement	Annually
Members Self Service	✗	✓	✓	On joining	Continually
Pension Updates	✓	✓	✓	As required	After each publication
Annual Pension Fund Report	✓	✓	✓	Annually	Annually
Early Leaver Information	✓	✓	✗	Sent with Deferred benefits statement	Annually
Early Leaver Guidance	✓	✓	✓	Constantly available	Annually
Retirement Information	✓	✓	✗	Sent with retirement details	Annually
Retirement Guidance	✓	✓	✓	Constantly available	Annually
Pension Increase — incorporated in the Pensioners Newsletter	✓	✓	✓	Annually	Annually
Actuarial Valuation Report	✓	✓	✓	Triennially	Triennially
Pension Fund Committee	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly	Quarterly
Pension Board	✓	✓	✓	Quarterly	Quarterly
Communications Policy	✓	✓	✓	Annually	Annually
Governance Compliance Statement	✓	✓	✓	Annually	Annually

Further Information

This document is available in large sight and Braille upon request.

If you need more information about the Scheme you should contact the following:

Pensions Section

5A, Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk
Croydon
CR0 1EA

Tele: 020 8760 5768 x 62892

Email: pensions@croydon.gov.uk

Website: www.croydonpensionscheme.org



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