

DRAFT Communications Plan – Pensions Board

Purpose

To provide WMFS staff members on the Pensions Board with structured communications, establishing a single source of truth to ensure consistent, accurate and timely information is communicated across all communications platforms – email, letters, social media, phone calls and at the Pension Board.

Aims of Communications Plan

- To ensure regular, consistent, accurate and timely information is communicated within the WMFS staff cohort on the Pensions Board
- To ensure consistent, accurate and timely information is communicated within those receiving a firefighter pension from the West Midlands Firefighter Pension Scheme.
- To ensure this information is accurately communicated to fellow members of the pensions board when queries are raised
- To provide the Pensions Board with Communications support, to ensure all members receive the same information
- To provide agreed rules of communications, allowing members to hold each other to account if it is felt there are either miscommunications or that communication does not come out in a consistent, accurate and timely manner
- Provide background, evidence and assurance of our efforts to communicate with pension scheme members.

Objectives

- Build trust with scheme members of the Pensions Board which may have been affected by the recent transition to Oracle
- Create an environment where content from WMFS is trusted and relied on as the single source of truth for all firefighter pensioners, or at least provides the wider context in which decisions are made.
- Provide support for WMFS staff to stay united in their approach to queries, questions and complaints from lay members of the Pensions Board within newly agreed guidelines.

Target Audience/s

Taking account of stakeholders identified within your Stakeholder Analysis, you may have one or more audiences for whom your messages and channels will need to be tailored, such as:

Internal

- Audit and Risk Committee (the Scheme Manager)
- Employer members of the Pensions Board
- Pensions staff answering queries

External

- Scheme members of the Pensions Board
- Firefighter Pensioners receiving updates from WMFS
- Authority members receiving updates from WMFS.

Key Messages

Key Messages should underpin all communications activity. They should be consistent, regularly reviewed and, if needed, updated.

The messages are likely to have more impact if they are tailored for the audience. For more complex projects you may wish to adopt broad themes, each with their own set of messages.

Internal

Theme/ audience	Key Messages
Audit and Risk Committee (The Scheme Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recognise issues in communication and trust following the switch to Oracle • Systems are being put in place to resolve the issues, including involving the Corporate Communications team • More structured communications methods are being developed.
Employer Members on Pensions Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to members needs to be regular, consistent, accurate and timely • Messages will be agreed and used across all communications channels, along with guidance, to provide a single source of truth across the Board and departments • Support will be offered to staff involved in pensions to ensure messages answer questions and sit within the single source of truth.
Pensions Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to members needs to be regular, consistent, accurate and timely • Messages will be agreed and used across all communications channels, along with guidance, to provide a single source of truth across the Board and departments • Support will be offered to staff involved in pensions to ensure messages answer questions and sit within the single source of truth.

External

Theme/ audience	Key Message
Scheme members of Pensions Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMFS recognises communication needs to be regular, consistent, accurate and timely following issues from the start of the year • We are introducing new communication methods to ensure you and those you represent are fully communicated and engaged with • We need your help to understand the way people want to be communicated and engaged with • We will work with you to create agreed rules communications, allowing members to hold each other to account if it is felt there are either miscommunications or that communication does not come out in a consistent, accurate and timely manner.
WMFS pensioners receiving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current query turnaround time (and other KPIs once finalised) • Governance progression • Updates from Pensions Board

information from WMFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates from Audit and Risk Committee.
Audit & Risk Committee members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recognise issues in communication and trust following the switch to Oracle • Systems are being put in place to resolve the issues, including involving the Corporate Communications team • More structured communications methods are being developed.

Communication Channels

This section describes the communication channels for sharing key messages within WMFS and externally with key partners, etc. Please discuss which channels are appropriate with Corporate Communications.

Communication Channel Matrix

Internal

Channels		FA Members	WMFS Staff	Pensions Staff
Audiences				
Digital	Yammer	N	N	N
	Mesh	N	Y	Y
	Teams	N	Y	Y
	Email	Y	Y	Y
Face-to-face	At Pensions Board	Y	Y	N
	Comms cell meetings	Y	Y	Y

External

Channels		Scheme representatives	Pensioners	A&R Committee
Audiences				
Digital	Twitter	N	N	N
	Facebook	Y	Y	N
	Instagram	N	N	N
	Email	Y	Y	Y
	Website	Y	Y	Y
Non-digital	Letters	Y	Y	N
	Phone calls	N	Y	N

Opportunities

- Establishing agreed rules around communications, allowing members to hold each other to account will move the Pensions Board in line with our policies and procedures around communications, including our social media policy

- Gain a broader understanding of what issues affect our WMFS pensioners and how we can best support them
- Better support for pensions staff, with agreed guidelines of what the best communications channels and methods are to support the WMFS pensioner community
- Better proactivity with resolving issues as communications lines are cemented
- Greater understanding and parity for all pensioners as they see our progress to resolving issues, how we are working for them and how they can contact us.

Risks

- More access to the pensions team may create more queries and questions
- Information may be difficult to boil down to simple communications messages
- Pensioners may just want to ensure they are paid properly, on time and with no fuss
- Scheme members of the Pension Board may feel more empowered by new rules and access to communications channels and create more work
- Alignment of rules to WMFS policies could seem punitive.

Evaluation

This will depend on your communications aims and objectives, timelines, etc and their contribution to the success of the overall project.

Methods should be continually evaluated throughout the project's life cycle.

We will seek to measure:

- Number of queries coming in month on month, expecting to see an increase initially and then a decrease as we build the FAQs into regular communications, monitored quarterly
- Increased confidence among Pension Board members that communications has improved (this may hit peaks and troughs, but we will take the long-term view) in 12 months' time
- Levels of concerns, questions, queries or complaints raised either remains steady or reduces in 12 months' time
- Whether the content issued is relevant to our stakeholders and if they would like to see changes (twice a year).