



Meeting:	Pension Board
Date:	24/09/2019
Title:	Pension Administration
Author:	Meirion Jones, Pensions Manager
Purpose:	For information only

Introduction

This report provides a general overview of pension administration over the last 6 months. It contains information on the work that has been accomplished over the period, an update on various projects that has previously been mentioned, changes in the regulations and also lists the challenges that the department faces from day to day.

Staffing

Following the approval of the new staffing structure at the Pension Committee in January 2019, work has been ongoing to appoint new members of staff to join the team.

Since April we have successfully recruited 4 new Pension Assistants, a Systems Officer and a Systems Technician. Each member of staff have settled well into their roles and are currently undertaking relevant training.

Nicholas Hopkins, the current Manager is currently on a period of flexible retirement and will be retiring completely from the Council at the end of November 2019. We are grateful to Nick for all his hard work and friendship over the last 37 years and wish him all the best for the future. Merion Jones has been appointed as Nick's successor.

Valuation

One of the major project for 2019 has been the valuation.

Over the last few months works has been ongoing to update record members and to clear as many errors as possibly.

Hymans Robertson have signed off the data early September 2019 and are currently busy calculating the contribution rates. Draft employer results and contribution rates will be released to the Fund on 27/09/2019, with an employer meeting arranged for 24/10/2019, where the actuary will presenting the 2019 results to the employers. Board members are welcome to attend this meeting.

Annual Benefit Statements

An Annual Benefit Statement must be produced for each scheme member by the end of August each year. This statement gives members details of the benefits accrued up to the end of the previous financial year and forecasts the benefits payable at their Normal Pension Age. The statement also contains pay details and explanatory notes as to how the benefits are calculated.

Since 2018 these statements are available electronically on the Member Self Service section of our website. The 2019 statements were loaded onto the system for active and deferred members on 16/08/2019.

1,050 members have written in to confirm they wish to continue to receive a paper copy of their statements. These statements were sent out on 17/08/2019.

Training

Three members of staff have recently successfully completed the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP)'s Certificate in Pensions Administration course. This course involved the completion of six assignments and one examination.

A further four members of staff have recently started studying towards a Foundation Degree in Pensions Administration and Management. The foundation degree is a mixture of assignments and exams and will take 2 years to complete.

A full day training session on Understanding Aggregation has been arranged for all pension section staff on the 29th September 2019. Mr Karl White from the LGA will be delivering this training session in Caernarfon.

Pension Increase 2019

The Consumer Price Index for September 2018 was 2.4%. This was the figure used in April 2019 to increase pension payments for our Pensioners and deferred benefits.

A letter was sent in April to all our pensioners to inform them of their increased pension amount and payment dates for 2019/20.

Member Self Service website

It was hoped that the new Member Self Service (MSS) website would be up and running by now. Unfortunately, due to the resignation of the Systems Officer earlier this year, work on this process was halted for the time being.

I am however pleased to report that the contract to install the new MSS website has recently been signed and the website will be introduced as soon as possible. A demonstration of the new system will be provided at a future Board meeting.

The new website should give our members an improved online experience, with an easier to use and more attractive looking interface. The MSS system allows members to:

- View and update personal details and changes of address
- Find out how much they will receive on retirement
- Calculate the amount of additional lump sum they can take on retirement
- View their service history, including any service which has been transferred
- View and update their nominated beneficiaries

- View their Annual Benefit Statements

i-Connect

Work has been ongoing to encourage employers to use the i-Connect system.

I-Connect ensures that members' records are updated monthly, rather than once a year as at present. The system also automates a number of procedures within the department and thus release staff to address other duties within the department.

85% of the employers are currently using the i-Connect system on a monthly basis, with work continuing to move the 5 major employers over to the system in 2019/20 - Meetings have taken place recently to discuss the way forward.

It is hoped that the member matching process with Gwynedd Council will commence shortly.

End of Year Returns

Due to moving over to the i-Connect system not many employers were required to submit end of year details this year via an excel spreadsheet.

A submission date of 30th April 2019 was set for the submission of the data. Overall, the employers were able to meet this deadline, with one employer being granted a week's extension.

The quality of the data this year was very high, with a small number of queries being sent back to certain employers for clarification.

We are grateful to the employers for their assistance in supplying timely an accurate data in order to meet the various deadlines in respect of providing details for the valuation and issuing the annual benefit statements.