

Falkirk Council

Pension Fund

**Local Government Pension Scheme**

# Communications Policy

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 **27 June 2024**

**Version Control**

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| **Version** | **Date of Change** | **Last Committee/Board****Approval Date** | **Comment**  |
| 1.0 | 27 June 2024  |  | Communications policy created.  |
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## Introduction

1.1 This Policy sets out the communications arrangements that apply to Falkirk Council Pension Fund (‘the Fund’) with effect from 27 June 2024.

## Administering Authority and Regulatory Framework

2.1 Falkirk Council is the Administering Authority of the Falkirk Council Pension Fund (the Fund) covering local government employees and elected members in the geographical area comprising Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling Councils. In addition, employees of certain other scheduled and admission bodies that provide public services or charitable functions have been admitted to membership of the Pension Fund.

2.2 The Fund is part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and the LGPS Regulations require us to prepare, maintain and publish a statement setting out our policies on communications and this document has been prepared in line with these requirements. It covers our communications with:

* pension fund members
* representatives of members
* prospective pension fund members
* our employers and prospective employers

2.3 The matters to be addressed in the Fund’s Communication Policy are:

2.3.1 The provision of information and publicity about the Scheme to members, representatives of members and employing authorities.

2.3.2 The format, frequency and method of distributing such information or publicity.

2.3.3 The promotion of the Scheme to prospective members and their employers.

2.4 This policy will be revised and re-published whenever there is a material change to the way we communicate or engage with any of these groups or three years if sooner.

2.5 The Fund is also a Data Controller under the Data Protection Regulations. This means we store, hold and manage personal data in line with statutory requirements to enable us to provide members with pension administration services. To enable us to carry out our statutory duty, we are required to share information with certain bodies, but will only do so in limited circumstances. Information about how we meet data protection legislation is set out on our website in our privacy notice at <https://www.falkirkpensionfund.org/resources/pensions-privacy-notice-1/>

2.6 Any enquiries in relation to this Communication Policy Statement should be sent to:

 Pensions Section

Falkirk Council

 The Foundry

 4 Central Park Avenue

 Central Boulevard

 Larbert

 FK5 4RU

 Email: pensions@falkirk.gov.uk

 Telephone: 01324 506 329

## Key objectives

3.1. To improve the understanding of the Local Government Pension Scheme (the Scheme) and the Fund, we will communicate with our members in a variety of different ways but the overarching objectives relating to how we communicate with our stakeholders are:

3.1.1 Communicate in a clear, concise manner in plain English

3.1.2 Promote the Scheme as a valuable benefit and provide information so members can make informed decisions about their benefits.

3.1.3 Provide a service that is valued by all members, responding to their personal circumstances and supporting them in their decision-making process.

3.1.4 Look for efficiencies in delivering communications through greater use of technology and partnership working including the associated carbon reduction and impact on climate change.

3.1.5 Ensure we use the most responsible and appropriate means of communication, taking into account the different needs of different stakeholders.

3.1.6 Review the effectiveness of communications and shape future communications appropriately, taking account of stakeholder feedback.

3.2 We are committed to providing a website that is accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of technology or ability, and:

3.2.1 We aim for our main website [www.falkirkpensionfund.org](http://www.falkirkpensionfund.org) to conform to the World Wide Web Consortium, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0 at A level.

3.2.2 Our member self-service portal, My Pension Online, is fully compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.1 AA standard.

## Pension Fund members

4.1 General information about the Fund and about being a member of the LGPS is held on the Fund’s website at [www.falkirkpensionfund.org](http://www.falkirkpensionfund.org)

4.2 All literature, such as the Guide for Members, the Fund’s annual report and accounts, and all statements and policies are also held on the website on the ‘Resources’ page. Information about how to raise a formal dispute can also be found on this page which includes contact details for the Money and Pensions Service and the Pensions Ombudsman.

4.3 Members can also access information about their own pension through the Member self-service portal on the Fund’s website. This links members to a secure area, called My Pension Online, that allows members to see the personal details we hold for them, update information such as their death grant nomination and do their own pension estimates. It is also the area where contributing and deferred members will be able to see their annual pension statements going forward and where pensioner members can view their pension payment information.

4.4 All members who have registered for My Pension Online will be able to send questions and queries to us using the online forms and we will respond to them by e-mail or other method as requested.

4.5 We provide a helpline service for all our members to use if they need to contact us by telephone or e-mail. There are two helpline numbers for members; one for pensioner members to call being 01324 506325, and one for all other members to call being 01324 506329. The Fund can be contacted by email at pensions@falkirk.gov.uk

4.6 Whenever we are dealing with a specific request or processing a pension benefit, it is likely that we will communicate either by letter, telephone call or email, depending on which method of making contact is the most appropriate. However, we will never cold call any of our members about any aspect of their pension. Consequently, any member who receives an unexpected call from someone claiming to be from the Fund’s Pensions Section should hang up and call the helpline number to check if the call was genuine.

4.7 Members are welcome to visit our offices should they prefer to speak to us face-to-face. Ideally, an appointment should be made in advance to ensure someone is available. Private interview rooms are used to enable matters to be discussed confidentially. In addition, members can return documents or make general enquiries at our reception at any time during office hours. Our contact details can be found in section 2.7 of this policy or on the ‘Contact Us’ page on our website.

4.8. If any member needs us to provide information or communicate with them in a specific way (for example, they may need written correspondence to be in large print) then they should contact us and we can make arrangements for this.

4.9 If a member wishes to opt-out of receiving electronic communications and wishes to receive paper copies instead then we ask that they put this request in writing to us. If we are unable to track down a pension record, we will contact the member to confirm personal details to help us with identifying the correct pension record and make the necessary arrangements.

## Representatives of members

## 5.1. All general information and literature is available to the representatives of pension fund members on the Fund’s website. Representatives of members can also find our contact details in section 2.7 of this policy or on the Contact Us page of the website.

5.2 Employee representatives on the Fund’s Pension Board will receive information presented face-to-face at the relevant meetings and be provided with written reports for agenda items through SharePoint - a secure Microsoft file exchange application.

5.3 Members’ interests are represented on the:

5.3.1 Pensions Committee by a Pensioner Representative who is selected from the retired former employees in the Fund and a Member Representative appointed by Unison.

5.3.2 Pension Board through four Member Representatives appointed by Unison, Unite and GMB.

## Prospective Pension Fund members

## 6.1 All general information and literature is available to prospective pension fund members on the Fund’s website. Prospective members can also find our contact details in section 2.7 of this policy or on the Contact Us page of the website.

## 6.2 Opt in forms to enable prospective members to join the Scheme are also available on the Fund’s website and can be found in the ‘Resources’ section by selecting ‘Form’ under the filter ‘Type’.

## 6.3 The Fund also requires all of its employers to provide prospective members with a link to a copy of the Scheme’s member guide which highlights the benefits and costs of joining the LGPS. This link should be provided as part of the employee’s letter of appointment.

## Scheme employers

7.1 Prospective employers wishing to become an employer in the Fund should contact us for details of the process and our requirements.

7.2 Scheme employers can access a secure area of the website known as ‘i-Connect’. This area enables employers to securely pass monthly pension information to us. It also allows employers to obtain strain on the fund calculations that arise in certain circumstances.

7.3 Each year we will provide our employers with a link to our audited annual report and accounts which include a link to the Fund’s valuation report. A link to the Valuation report will be issued after the completion of each triennial valuation.

7.4 We provide a helpline service for all our employers to use if they need to contact us by telephone. The number is 01324 590557.

Chief Finance Officer

Falkirk Council

27 June 2024