

From:	Chairman Superannuation Fund Committee Corporate Director of Finance
To:	Superannuation Fund Committee – 12 March 2021
Subject:	Pensions Administration
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:

This report provides members with an update of issues concerning the Pension Administration team.

Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to note the report.

Pension Administration update

Staff in the pension administration section continue to work in the main from home with a small team accessing the office twice a week to deal with incoming post and the printing and sending of outgoing mail. For staff working at home, as with most people, there are issues with connectivity with systems, including our pensions administration database, which is hosted remotely, and the slowness of moving from one system to another. This coupled with some staff either having caring responsibilities or having to deal with home schooling has meant that productivity has lessened.

This issue is exacerbated by a considerable increase in the number of deaths in all categories of scheme members, current, deferred and pensioner. These cases obviously need to be dealt with in a sensitive manner with each involving layers of correspondence and the submission of documentation from the family. Each case is individual with regard to dependant's pensions and death grant payments, some of which are needed urgently to help with funeral costs.

The removal of the exit cap and the resultant unwinding of all the processes and communications set up to deal with it has increased workloads. The other addition has been the heightened threat of pension scams when scheme members are persuaded to transfer their pension rights out of the LGPS. The Pensions Regulator requires scheme administrators to take a more proactive role in preventing scams by extending their role in determining whether a scheme is legitimate, again something that adds to workloads.

The contract with ITM continues to progress with a steady completion of tasks and engagement with employers in the Fund regarding missing pension paperwork.

Communications to the section continue to be high via both telephone and email. The Pensions telephone helpline calls are answered by a small team of administrators as not all staff are able to work their normal work hours. This is becoming problematic and so we are looking to extend the answering of calls to other staff by introducing a new targeted telephony system which would help with this issue.

We recruited 6 Pension Assistants in Spring 2020 with their starting date being delayed due to the lockdown however they have subsequently joined the team and have received training and guidance remotely and are now an integral part of the team. Due to internal promotions we now have vacancies for 4 Pension Assistants and will be recruiting to these roles shortly.

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March 2021
