

ACCESS Joint Committee

Date: 9 March 2020

Report by: Officer Working Group

Subject:	Communications
Purpose of the Report:	To submit to the Joint Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an outline for implementing ACCESS' approach to communications and public relations• an update on initial planning for the Annual Report
Recommendations:	The Committee is asked to note the report.
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Joint Committee identified the need to have a Communications Plan to ensure that key stakeholders are identified, and key messages are directed to the appropriate audience.
- 1.2 A communications workshop was held in September 2018, led by Hymans Robertson which ascertained the current perceptions of the ACCESS Pool and identified a number of measures to be implemented to shape future communications and to influence the perceptions.
- 1.3 The Communications Plan and Key Messages document were approved at the Joint Committee meetings on 10 December 2018 and 19 March 2019 respectively. Since the agreement of the Communications Plan the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee has changed, and ACCESS has appointed an ASU Director. All three will have key roles in ACCESS' communications but will require support, and it is how this support is delivered which is the next key concern for ACCESS.
- 1.4 The 2020-21 Business Plan, as agreed by the Committee at its December 2019 meeting includes a communications review.

2. Stakeholder summary

- 2.1 The ACCESS' stakeholders can be summarised as follows:
 - Individual ACCESS authorities, scheme members and employers – it is expected that what can be characterised as 'local' communications on pooling will still be managed by individual authorities, but ACCESS can assist in providing common messages and materials.
 - Within the industry; to fellow authorities and pools, and suppliers such as investment managers and consultants.
 - National and regulatory; Central Government and MPs, SAB, LGA and trade unions etc.
- 2.2 Within the three broad groups above there will be clearly different requirements. The agreed Communications Plan identifies public relations activities, which will be more significant for the second and third groups above. This could even extend to lobbying activities where this is required for key messages at particular times.
- 2.3 To a greater or lesser extent each group of stakeholders, along with ACCESS itself have ongoing engagement with the media in local, national or specialist (i.e. pension industry) form.

3. Implementation

- 3.1 In order to implement and develop communications, ACCESS will require specialist resource to undertake this work. This can come from any of the following:
 - ASU – adding resources to the ASU with either additional staff or technical leads from the group of pension fund officers.
 - Individual authorities' internal communication teams – could be commissioned to provide a service to ACCESS, in the same way that ACCESS has made use of its authorities' specialist procurement resources.
 - Specialist external resources.

- 3.2. It is probable that ACCESS would want to make use of more than one of these resources, which will have different characteristics in terms of cost, skills and control etc.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 The ASU and OWG, with support from authorities' internal communications teams will develop a resource and implementation plan for ACCESS to be presented at the JC's next meeting in June 2020.

5. Annual Report

- 5.1. LGPS Authorities have a regulatory requirement to publish an Annual Report. The Regulations refer to information to be contained in the report which should be published with regard to guidance given by the Secretary of State (in this case via CIPFA) but the overall objective for authorities will be to promote awareness of the scheme and provide members and stakeholders with relevant information in an accessible and consistent manner.
- 5.2. Certain tables in the CIPFA Annual Report guidance have been specifically developed to promote consistency of disclosure to assist the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Scheme Advisory Board in reporting on the progress and outcomes delivered by each of the asset pools.
- 5.3. Whilst ACCESS does not have a regulatory requirement to produce and publish an Annual Report on its activities in the same way - by doing so, the report could be used by each LGPS Authority in their local publications and could be used to promote the progress that has been made in establishing and transferring assets into the Pool. ACCESS produced its first Annual Report for 2018/19.
- 5.4. Initial planning has been undertaken for the production of the 2019/20 ACCESS Annual Report including having a draft version ready in the early Summer to fit within the statutory reporting requirements of the LGPS Authorities.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. The Committee is asked to note the report.

7. Consultation with Key Advisers

- 7.1. Hymans Robertson supported ACCESS in drafting the Communications Plan and draft Key Messages documents.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. Joint Committee paper 18 March 2019 agenda item 11.
- 8.2. Web link to 2018-19 ACCESS Annual Report
<https://www.accesspool.org/access-programme/>