

# TEESSIDE PENSION FUND

Administered by Middlesbrough Council

AGENDA ITEM 10

## TEESSIDE PENSION BOARD REPORT

24 JULY 2017

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, GOVERNANCE & SUPPORT – JAMES BROMILEY

### CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Teesside Pension Board (the Board) of the progress to date, and intended future action, to measure and improve, where necessary, customer service.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Members note the progress made to date and future plans, and pass any comment.

#### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The exact financial implications are not known at this time since only high level proposals have been produced. It is known that there will be costs:
  - To develop member and employer websites
  - Plan, host and present any member forums

#### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Following issues raised at Middlesbrough Council's Lead Management Team meeting regarding perceived delays in the retirement process, a review was undertaken into the retirement process in place within both Middlesbrough Council, who are a scheme employer within the Teesside Pension Fund and Kier Business Services, who provide pension administration services to the Teesside Pension Fund.
- 4.2 The review looked at the length of time taken to process a scheme member's retirement. The process was measured from the time the member first informed their manager that they wished to retire to when the member received any lump sum payment from the scheme. The study highlighted the length of time between each stage of the process split between employer, payroll/HR, Kier Business Services, and the member.

4.3 Further evidence was gathered about the retirement process by surveying both scheme members and other scheme employers regarding their satisfaction levels about the service they received.

## **5. PROGRESS TO DATE – SCHEME EMPLOYERS**

5.1 During December 2016 a questionnaire was issued to fourteen employers (the four Borough Councils, five scheduled bodies, and five admitted bodies). Results of this questionnaire are shown in Appendix A.

## **6. PROGRESS TO DATE – SCHEME MEMBERS**

6.1 During December 2016 a questionnaire was drafted and is now issued to all retirees with their retirement options. An overview of the questionnaire, plus responses received to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017, are shown in Appendix B.

## **7. PROPOSAL – SCHEME EMPLOYERS**

7.1 Review the questionnaire issued to employers and determine if it is providing relevant information to determine customer satisfaction. Once review is complete, expected by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017, issue questionnaire to all employer contacts for completion.

7.2 Seek feedback from all employers on the performance of the pension function. Initial responses, followed by yearly comparisons, will then be reported to the Teesside Pension Board for consideration of any issues they may highlight along with any trends. Kier welcomes feedback on the structure of the current questionnaire from the Pension Board members.

7.3 Review the communication strategy and consider re-introducing Employer Forums. These used to be held bi-annually but were discontinued because:

- with the introduction of the new 2013 LGPS pension scheme, resources were deemed to be put to better use elsewhere
- Attendees at the meeting were not the right people to attend. Most people were simply interested parties rather than those who would have a useful input both at the meeting and back at their employer.

7.4 It is proposed that these will be held annually. A decision is expected by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

7.5 Consider introducing briefings to Section 151 Finance Officers, and possibly equivalent officers at non-council employers, in order to ensure that financial implications of being a scheme employer were transmitted to the right people.

7.6 Consider introducing briefings to Tees Valley HR Group meetings on an annual basis. Briefings to cover upcoming changes to the pension landscape and areas of importance in provision of pension administration. Suitability of attending meetings to be determined by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017 with, if necessary, confirmation of date to attend first meeting.

## **8. PROPOSAL - MEMBERS**

- 8.1 Since 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017 the member questionnaire has been refined to ensure that the Pension Fund can understand and respond effectively to any perceived problems raised by scheme members.
- 8.2 This will allow us to review results for trends and particular recurring issues that need addressing in order that we can continue to provide excellent customer services to members.
- 8.3 Kier are willing to look at collating responses from non-retiring members of the Teesside Pension Fund. Further discussions will be required on the most effective way of undertaking of this process (e.g. whether a general annual survey will suffice or if it should be online or paper based). A decision on next steps on the best way to proceed with non-retiring members will be made by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 with roll out by January 2018.
- 8.4 Investigate whether it would be useful to introduce surveys for website users. This depends on what facilities are available for undertaking such surveys within the website itself.

## **9. TEESSIDE PENSION FUND WEBSITE**

- 9.1 The Heywood pension administration unit, altair, is due an update which will allow greater interaction via the Employer and Member Self Service platforms. This update is expected by the end of 2017 with development of the site expected to be under discussion in 2018.
- 9.2 Due to the potential of linking the information of the website to the member/employer functionality of the self-service platform, it is hoped that this new offering will provide an improved experience to the member/employer. Obviously, greater understanding of the offering is required prior to determining if this provides the correct the solution.
- 9.3 Rather than invest money in updating the current site, or developing a new one, it is proposed that details of the new Heywood platform is investigated and a decision is then made on whether the best use of funding would be to develop this platform or a separate stand-alone site. A decision will be determined by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 Kier Business Services will work with Middlesbrough Council to continuously review customer experience, to both members and employers of the Teesside Pension Fund, to ensure that administration services remain fit for purpose and provide value for money.
- 10.2 Appendix C provides an overview of timeframes.

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## APPENDIX A

### Employer Questionnaire:

Question	Options	Response
How frequently do you contact the Pensions Unit	A Lot	2
	Quite often	5
	Occasionally	5
	Never	2
Which methods do you use to contact the Pensions Unit	Telephone	8
	Fax	1
	Face-to-face	4
	Letter	1
	E-mail	10
	Instant Message	1
Is there another way you would like to contact the Pensions Unit	Email is fine but lacking background as to who are the right people to contact	
Has the Pensions Unit contacted you in the past 12 months	Yes	12
	No	1
With regards to the frequency of contact with the Pensions Unit, would you say you receive	Too much	1
	About what I expect	10
	There could be a bit more	1
	Nowhere near enough	1
Do you think the Pensions Unit should have made an effort to contact you in the last 6 months	Yes	3
	No	9
	Given the importance to our organisation of the 2016 actuarial valuation I feel very much in the dark on the subject despite having enquired several times. As per my previous comment this could be connected to me	

Question	Options	Response
		contacting the wrong people. That said I don't feel that the Unit has been proactive in contacting me.
Do you use the Pension Fund's website	Yes	3
	No	9
		I think the site is quite basic and feels a bit old fashioned though I can usually find the answer to any questions I might have so it can't be that bad! I think the interactive section could be improved with some modelling tools or videos on key topics such as managing early retirement options. The fact that you have to move from page to page rather than scrolling down is unusual and a bit cumbersome as you can only see a proportion of the information at a time. Also, would it be appropriate to have a forum for members to share food practice and discuss issues?
Do you receive the Technical Bulletin	Yes	11
	No	1
		Very informative, nice tone, frequency is good As a general update it is fine
Have you ever attended a training session provided by the Pensions Unit	Yes	8
	No	4
		Good Always good – info is usually quite detailed but delivered well and there is always an opportunity to ask questions
Do you receive your Financial reporting data in a timely fashion	Yes	12
	No	0
		Reports are expensive. If we have questions about the content we have not found it difficult to get this from the Fund. I do now, previously it was last minute papers with little time to brief Council members
	Yes	4

<b>Question</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Response</b>
Is there anything else you wish to raise on the service	No	8
	Kier provide an excellent service and are always available for any assistance needed	
	Over the last three years we have called on the Pension Unit staff to assist us with briefings for our Board of Trustees, particularly around our FRS102 liability. The staff, and particularly Paul Mudd, have provided exceptional support and enabled us to effectively engage our Board and Senior Management in pensions.	

## APPENDIX B

### Member Questionnaire

#### Retirement Process Survey

We would like to understand your experience of the retirement process; where we do things well and where things could be improved. Therefore, we would like you to complete the following questionnaire and return it with the necessary documents to bring your pension into payment. We look forward to your response.

Please provide answers to all questions and, if possible, provide any comments on why you gave the response you did.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
It was easy to see what benefits were available to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information provided was clear and easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, the Pensions Unit provides a good service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The retirement process is straight forward	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The next two questions relate to whether you have contacted the Pensions Unit either via a telephone call, email, or in person.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
My query was answered promptly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The response I received was easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We would also like you to provide as much information as you can for the following questions:

7. Do you feel you know enough about your employer's retirement process? Yes / No
8. What one thing could improve our service?

The following questions were added from 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017:

9. Please provide any reasons for your scores
10. Did you know about the [www.teespen.org.uk](http://www.teespen.org.uk) website? Yes / No
11. Did you use the website to research the retirement process? Yes / No

### Average Scores

	Average Score	
Q1	4.30	
Q2	4.24	
Q3	4.31	
Q4	4.10	
Q5	4.45	
Q6	4.43	
Q7	80.35%	Positive response
Q10	60.71%	Positive response
Q11	28.57%	Positive response

### Individual question response rates

	Score 5 (%)	Score 4 (%)	Score 3 (%)	Score 2 (%)	Score 1 (%)
Q1	42.70%	49.44%	4.78%	1.40%	1.69%
Q2	39.78%	48.74%	8.12%	2.24%	1.12%
Q3	45.79%	42.98%	9.27%	0.56%	1.40%
Q4	36.52%	44.10%	13.76%	4.49%	1.12%
Q5	57.89%	33.33%	5.26%	2.46%	1.05%
Q6	54.93%	36.97%	5.99%	0.70%	1.41%
	<b>45.54%</b>	<b>43.13%</b>	<b>8.02%</b>	<b>2.01%</b>	<b>1.30%</b>



## APPENDIX C

### Timetable Overview

<b>Task</b>	<b>By</b>
Review employer questionnaire	31/08/2017
Issue employer questionnaire to all employers of the Fund	30/09/2017
Decision on how to collate information from non-retirees	30/09/2017
Consider suitability on attending Tees Valley HR Group meetings	31/10/2017
Decision on introduction of annual Employer Forums	31/12/2017
Decision on Pension Fund website	31/12/2017
Roll out non-retiree questionnaire	31/01/2018
Development of Fund website	30/09/2018