Communications strategy: consultation – results and feedback

Results:
Highlights

Total responders – 35.

No skipped questions (i.e. all responders answered all of the questions available).

16 pieces of anecdotal/observational written feedback.

A mix of member and employer feedback.

Overall feedback to the 'set questions' was extremely positive.

Only three pieces of negative feedback overall.

Results: Highlights

35 Responses

Do you understand the purpose of a communications strategy?

Yes – 89%

No – 11%

Results:
Highlights

35 Responses

What do you think of the communications strategy?

Excellent – 51%

Good – 31%

Neutral – 14%

Bad – nil

Poor – 3%

Results:
Highlights

35 Responses

Do you think the communications strategy will help to better serve members?

Yes – 83%

Unsure – 14%

No – 3%

Anecdotal feedback: Are there any key areas you think we have missed?

- More interactive items for members if you're going to be more digital would be a no brainer. Online tools to work out how to retire and what you'd need etc etc.

- Is robust and looks like a good plan for members of all types.

- How are you going to record the email addresses for all pension fund employees

- Its disappointing that "Roll out to Pensioner members will then be considered,...." . In many ways pensioner members are a lot more engaged than other member types as for the latter groups it's a topic quite low on their priority list until they get nearer to pension age. I understand you want to change that position, but I think you would have more chance of success by starting with pensioner members first and then grow from there.

- I haven't got a clue what it's all about

- The online portal sounds interesting. I hope it'll provide more cover for employers when faced with basic but time-consuming questions.

Anecdotal feedback: Are there any key areas you think we have missed?

- This document needlessly explains a CPF Communications Strategy, but has no detail of projects, items, or events that will be implemented, and particularly when any actions or projects will happen. This document merely repeats much of past years waffle about "communications". In past years, the Communications Strategy in the Annual Report has shown little regard to actual projects or events to genuinely improve communications for members:

    • The 2018/2019 issue listed eight key projects (pp 173-174).

    • The 2019/2020 issue was a total word for word "cut and paste" version of the 2018/2019 version yet published 12 months later none of these eight key projects were even updated or reported on (pp 180-181).

    • The fact that this "cut and paste" version was then accepted by the CPF Committee, CPF Board, and senior CPF managers, and published in the CPF Annual Report is worrying.

    • Since then, the 2020/2021 issue listed no projects at all (pp 200).

    • Now, this 2021/2022 draft also has no actual projects listed. This will be published two-thirds of the way through the new 2022/2023 financial year, so clearly little will happen in 2021/2022, and shows no projects with dates for 2022/2023.

Anecdotal feedback: Are there any key areas you think we have missed?

- We need to make sure there's a regular flow of information to employers as, while the aim is no doubt to push people towards the self-serve portal wherever possible, employers will have regular internal communications going out to staff. This is an ideal opportunity to push out key messages about the pension, particularly around any important deadlines or updates.

- The reliance on admission bodies to inform pension members of developments within the LGPS should be sent directly from the fund. That way if there are any technical questions members can contact the specialist to advise them on any queries.

- I've skimmed rather than read in detail - but couldn't see info on the usability of comms tools provided for employers. We successfully use MI now, but I know our Payroll Manager finds the process of MI uploading a little clunky/cumbersome. Not a huge issue, but good to refine these where possible.

- Employer access to assist employees with pension queries. Pensions 'frighten' some people.

Anecdotal feedback: general

- I like the document, easy to read and follow.
- I have found it very difficult to contact Cheshire Pension Fund in the past so it's good to see you have ambitions to make things easier. I think this seems ambitious though as you have had your phone line switched off for the last 12 months! It would be good to start with the basics and have a phone line running again first. Also from previous experience I have waited weeks for replies to emails.
- Lovely document, well laid out for the layperson to pick up and put down. Tells me your ambitions and how you think you will get there. Look forward to seeing results for my employees.
- More digital content would be better than paper
- The way employers need to report the pension figures is over complicated and has caused major headaches for Parish Councils

Anecdotal feedback: general

- need to report the pension figures is over complicated and has caused major headaches for Parish Councils
- This will be really helpful to engage members in understanding their pension - I particularly like the my pension online option that you are planning to roll out.
- There used to be a magazine for 'Cheshire pensioners'. These days there's nothing and any comments are just ignored or dismissed. It's a lot of money to be responsible for on behalf of a lot of people who have no say (for example how it's invested)
- There is no mention of interaction with members through an Annual General Meeting which seems a surprising omission as that one regular meeting could harvest a lot of constructive feedback in one go. Members would also welcome the personal interaction with the people who actually run the Fund which would make it feel less impersonal. Also, "....Regular focus groups (with all member types, where possible and appropriate)" The qualification here makes it feel a little woolly as if you will only have focus groups if you really have to rather than being proactive and having a schedule of focus groups, at least as an experiment to see if they produce worthwhile feedback.

Anecdotal feedback: general

- This 12 page document is an overlong theoretical description of communications by CPF, a large LGPS with 100,000 members, and valued at nearly £7 billion. It is 2022, and communications is already well understood by all, especially by local government employees. This "description" of a Communications Strategy should be just an Appendix of two pages, not 12 pages of theoretical discussion. It contains no actual plans or projects with dates. Page 4 correctly identifies how members find CPF messages complex, boring and confusing. This is a perfect example of just that. CPF publications and website items have done little to encourage serious involvement of members, by presenting publications with trivial content, simplistic graphics, and even a wordsearch in the 2022 Cheshire Chat. Members already receive quality communications from their banks, shops, funds, clubs, the government, NHS, etc. Members of CPF are well aware of other good communications using emails and a properly functioning website. Other parts of CWAC such as Planning, Electoral Roll, and Committees, already operate proper web based systems and processes by email. Instead this CPF document is a jumbled wish list: • Page 6 identifies that the current website is underused, as unsurprisingly it is written about the fund not for members. • Page 7 identifies that the RI statement is important. CPF do members want to know about how the fund invests for climate change, energy, community, and housing.

Anecdotal feedback: general

• Page 8 is a long list of 14 "delivery vehicles" but without any relative priorities, resources, or dates for implementation in which calendar or financial year. • Widely used modern communication methods are not mentioned, such as an AGM for members, secure webpages for members discussions, or using member emails for speedier communications. • Page 9 incorrectly suggests communication are by emails when CPF has never asked pensioner members for our email addresses • Page 10 states as a key risk without any evidence that "members do not want to engage with their pension". I suggest that members do want to engage, but CPF stifles that by offering no mechanisms such as web-based discussion pages. • Page 11 highlights past surveys. CPF have conducted several, have not published the feedback, and have ignored the results of these surveys (such as support for an AGM). In my opinion, CPF must publish all feedback to this consultation on the Communications Strategy on the CPF website. Also to have any real credibility a Communications Strategy must have far more actual detail on projects and dates, and: • Be far shorter, with the jargon removed, and simply published as an Appendix to the main plan of proper activities and projects. • Publish a list of current projects, and future projects, in date order. • Contains start and end dates for projects, or phases • Publish the reviews and evaluations of every project or phase • Keep all of this up to date on the CPF website

Anecdotal feedback: general

- It's already covered in the strategy, but some of our staff are harder to reach and don't always engage digitally so, while a digital first approach will create many benefits, we need to make sure these staff don't feel excluded and can access the same level of information about their pension.

- We're looking forward to the member portal. I think people will find that so helpful. We've already circulated your first 'warm up' email about that one. Certainly, the plain English aspect is so important too - and really helps members (and helps us to help members.) The strategy looks nicely presented/engaging too...thanks

- The possibility of available and timely one-to-one (by phone) personal communication would be a benefit for many pension holders (and employers) - rather than communicating digitally. Sometimes people have what they might think are 'silly' questions, that a 'database' or website cannot provide answers to.