

Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board	PSB 03b
Date: 17 March 2021	

Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board Review of the Fund's Annual Surveys

Report by the Retirement Manager

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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Board with the outcome of the Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board (PAB) Review of the Fund's Annual Surveys carried out by the Task & Finish Group (T&FG).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Board **agree**:

- to move away from the distribution of Annual Employer and Scheme Member Surveys;
- to a more target based, event driven model focusing around a small subset of questions and distributed using a variety of different channels available to the Fund;
- that the composition and design of the Surveys be delegated to Officers to finalise and implement; and
- a further review be carried out in 2022/23 to measure success of the revised approach.

- 2.2 That the Board note the content of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the 23 September 2020 Essex Pension Fund Strategy Board (PSB) meeting, Members discussed the low response rate for the Fund's Annual Surveys, in particular those relating to the Employer Survey and agreed a recommendation to delegate a Review of the current approach taken to the Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board (PAB).
- 3.2 It was agreed that a T&FG be established with the PSB represented by Rachel Hadley (Other Employing Bodies Representative).
- 3.3 At the PAB meeting, held on 23 September 2020, the membership of the T&FG was finalised as:
- Rachel Hadley (PSB Member, Other Employing Bodies Representative);
 - Stuart Roberts (PAB Member, Scheme Member Representative who was also able to represent as an Employer in the Fund);
 - James Sheehy (PAB Member, Scheme Member Representative but who was also able to represent as an Employer in the Fund);
 - Karen McWilliam (Independent Governance & Administration Adviser (IGAA) Aon); and
 - Daniel Chessell (Retirement Manager, Lead Fund Officer).

4. Task & Finish Group

- 4.1 The T&FG met on three occasions: 1 October 2020; 3 November 2020; and 26 November 2020, and reviewed the Fund's current practices regarding the survey process and discussed ways in which the Fund could aim to achieve a better response rate from its Employers and Scheme Members.
- 4.2 A pilot of a targeted event-based survey was held based on the Fund's virtual Pensions Surgery model for Scheme Members. The surgery allowed the membership to book an appointment and discuss their pension enquiries, albeit virtually but face to face using Microsoft Teams. To measure its success all 50 Scheme Members who participated in the day were emailed a short online survey which had been created using Citizen Space. The survey was based on ideas discussed at the T&FG.

- 4.3 31 responses were received from the 50 emails issued (62%). The feedback was very positive and as such the Fund are looking to utilise these Surgeries over the coming months.

5. Outcome of Review

- 5.1 The findings of the Review were reported to the PAB at their 16 December 2020 meeting. The consensus amongst the Group was that the Fund could benefit from a more targeted and event based driven model focusing around a small subset of questions instead of the historic annual survey process which were found to be, general in nature and time consuming for the respondent often involving several individuals to complete.
- 5.2 The PAB agreed with the findings and recommendations made by the T&FG and therefore are now proposing the PSB to consider the recommendations set out in Section 2 of this report.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Upon agreement of the recommended approach:

- Officers will identify subject matters where surveys could be developed to obtain feedback regarding a particular area of work, for example;

Administration Surveys	Employer Surveys
• Annual Benefit Statements	• Onboarding
• General Enquiries	• Employers joining the Fund
• Estimates	• Workshops / Training events
• Retirements	• Use of webinar training
• Retire Online	• PN11 process

- establish the most appropriate medium(s) of communication;
- compose, design and release the Surveys to the target audience;

- develop Roadmaps to set expectations to be issued with relevant paperwork; and
- carry out a further review in 2022/23 to measure success of the revised approach.

7. Link to Essex Pension Fund Objectives

7.1 Fund Surveys assists the Fund in obtaining feedback from Scheme Members and Employers to ensure the achievement of our Communication Objectives, including to:

- communicate in a friendly, expert and direct way to our stakeholders, treating all our stakeholders equally;
- ensure our communications are useful and easy to follow;
- deliver information in a way that suits all types of stakeholders including providing more accessibility through greater use of technology; and
- aim for full appreciation of the pension scheme benefits and changes to the Scheme by all the scheme members, prospective scheme members and employers.

8. Risk Implications

8.1 The risks associated with not achieving of our Communication Objectives include:

- issuing incorrect or inaccurate communications leads to lack of understanding and/or complaints;
- information delivered in a way that is not appropriate for members or employers, e.g. too complex, not relevant or in an unsuitable format;
- communications are not customised to specific needs and/or are overly complicated resulting in lack of understanding by all stakeholders; and
- poor quality or lack of communications can lead to lack of understanding by all stakeholders.

9. Communication Implications

- 9.1 The design and composition of the revised approach will impact on the timeline and delivery of issuing the Fund's Surveys to its Members and Employers.
- 9.2 Other than ongoing reporting to the Board, there are no communications implications.

10. Finance and Resources Implications

- 10.1 None.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 PAB Minutes, 16 December 2020.
- 11.2 PAB Update, PAB 05, 16 December 2020
- 11.3 Update on Pension Fund Activity, PSB 06, 23 September 2020.
- 11.4 PSB Update, PAB 07, 23 September 2020.
- 11.5 PSB Minutes, 23 September 2020.
- 11.6 PAB Minutes, 23 September 2020.