



Shropshire
County
Pension Fund

Intouch

Autumn 2022



P6 | Pension Board report

Find out what the Pension Board has been up to.

P12 | Struggling with the cost of living?

Read our advice and tips on how to prepare for the coming winter.

For retired members of the Shropshire County Pension Fund

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Future pay dates

When are pensions paid?

Your pension is normally paid on the 29th of each month unless that falls on a bank holiday or weekend, when it will be paid on the previous working day closest to the 29th.

2022 pay dates

October	2022	Friday 28th
November	2022	Tuesday 29th
December	2022	Wednesday 21st
January	2023	Friday 27th
February	2023	Tuesday 28th
March	2023	Wednesday 29th
April	2023	Friday 28th

Welcome



Welcome to your latest edition of InTouch magazine. I hope you enjoyed the lovely sunshine over the summer.

You may remember that we teamed up with Age UK back in the autumn of 2018 as part of their Winter Warmth campaign. I'm pleased to say that Age UK are back on page 14.

I am sure many of you will be worried about the cost of living. We've included some frequently asked questions on page 12. We've also included some information about Pensions Credit. It's a benefit that many people are missing out on.

I would also like to reassure you that the pensions income you receive from your Local Government Pension is secure and will continue to be revalued each April in line with the consumer price index (CPI). Your April increase is based on CPI as measured in the year up to the previous September. In September 2022, CPI was 10.1%, and this is the increase we expect to apply to your pension next April. But, we can't confirm this until we receive the Pensions Increase Treasury Order in the

new year. Keep an eye on our website or sign up to receive our email alerts to make sure you're kept up to date.

If you have any questions or concerns about your LGPS pension income, please get in contact with the team. Whilst we're still not able to offer drop-in appointments, our helpdesk is available between the hours of 8.45am and 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am and 4pm on Fridays. Contact information can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

2022 is valuation year for the Shropshire County Pension Fund and the team have been very busy with assisting this process. To find out more about valuation and how it affects the pension fund, please turn to page 5. We will report the results in the Spring 2023 edition of InTouch.

That's all from me this issue, but I look forward to writing to you all again in spring. Take care and stay safe over the winter.

Debbie Sharp
Pension Administration Manager
Shropshire County Pension Fund



Jean talking

Welcome to this edition of Intouch. I do hope you are well and have been able to enjoy the summer, despite it being too hot for most of us on occasions. Let's hope everyone's plants are now recovering from the drought and lawns are gradually returning to green.

I have been kept busy attending Pensions Committee meetings and training events this summer and autumn. It's now getting easier to hold meetings with Covid restrictions being eased. Let's hope this continues.

With the continued war in Ukraine, high levels of inflation, rising interest rates, prospects of a global recession and the impact of the cost of living/energy crisis impacting on financial markets globally, the value of the pension fund has fallen by 4.7% in the last quarter. It's still however outperforming its benchmark by 1%. The rolling three-year performance is 5% per annum compared to the benchmark of 3.3%. The fund does invest in a range of asset classes in order to diversify risk and this benefitted the fund during the last quarter. Bond markets have been very volatile but our fund only has 1% in a liability

driven investment (LDI) mandate so has not been badly affected. The main issues are with corporate pension schemes rather than LGPS funds.

During the June quarter, funds were transferred to LGPS Central's Global Sustainable Equity Fund with the new fund launching in May 2022. In March 2022, the fund also transitioned into a low carbon, net zero aligned global equity fund with Legal & General. These recent changes will significantly reduce the fund's carbon emissions and carbon footprint going forward.

In December 2022, the fund will be publishing its third climate risk report which will demonstrate the fund's continued commitment to addressing climate change.

Do take care of yourselves and let's hope this Christmas may be a little more normal.

Regards

Jean Smith
Pensioner Representative
Pensions Committee

Valuation

2022 is our valuation year.



A valuation of the Shropshire County Pension Fund takes place every three years, with this valuation based on the position of the fund as at 31st March 2022.

The valuation looks at scheme membership, works out the fund's financial position, sets assumptions for future liabilities and investment returns and then creates a schedule of contribution rates for every employer in the fund.

The last valuation in 2019 showed that the fund had assets to cover 94% of the fund's liabilities. This was an increase from a funding level of 84% in 2016.

Our actuary, Mercer, carries out the valuation and explains the results in the valuation report. Mercer are currently working on the data for the upcoming 2022 report. Once available, this report will be added to our website alongside the reports from previous valuations.

We will let you know the actuary's findings in the Spring 2023 edition of InTouch.

Pension Board report 2021/2022



It has been another interesting year for the Pension Board.

We are responsible for assisting Shropshire Council and the Scheme Manager, to secure compliance with the rules that enable pensions to be safely and securely created and delivered. The board is made up of six people, three of whom represent employers, and three scheme members. We have welcomed two new employer representatives – Clare Charlesworth-Jones and Helen Woodvine, and Dave Wright as a member representative.

We have started to emerge from Covid, but rather than returning to the old ways, we are getting used to new ways of doing things. Board meetings have been virtual – easier to get to, but sometimes harder to follow and generate discussion. It's pleasing that we have started to meet in person again during 2022. Looking back over the past year, a number of key issues have dominated our discussions: preparation for the valuation of the fund at the end of the year, environmental issues, cyber security and fraud.

The scheme is valued every three years to assess how its assets – equities, bonds and other investments, compare against its liabilities – the cost of paying current and future pensioner benefits. As we know some liabilities will not be due for many years so there is plenty of time to correct a shortfall. In recent years the Pensions Committee has made considerable efforts to ensure the scheme is fully funded through prudent management of its investments. This is important as employer contributions may have to be adjusted if there is a shortfall. Thanks to the excellent work of the Pensions Committee, aided by officers and advisors, the fund has matched or exceeded liabilities over the past year.

The actuarial valuation is of particular importance for employers. Any increase in their contributions can have a significant effect on their overall budgets, especially for smaller employers where changes can have a proportionally greater effect.



Climate change and the fund's carbon footprint and emissions has been an important issue which the fund has been addressing during the last year. Information on company performance on environmental issues are kept under close review, as are their social responsibility and governance. Ethics matter as well as profitability and how the fund approaches these issues has been discussed within our Pensions Board meetings.

We have received regular reports on cyber security, an increasingly concerning threat for all, not just the fund. The fund holds data on behalf of its members as well as information from employers. Breaches of confidentiality could result in fines from the Information Commissioner, and ransomware attacks could disrupt the administration of the scheme. Maintaining cyber-secure systems is essential and constant improvement is pursued by the Pensions Administration Team and Shropshire Council's IT team.

Pension scams are a risk to members, so the team have developed new procedures to protect them – especially the members who may be more vulnerable to scammers. There is an effective protocol in place to ensure that those seeking to move their pension are clear about what they are doing and that who they are dealing with are legitimate operators.

With many important topics ongoing within the LGPS, not least the McCloud remedy and Pensions Dashboards, we are expecting 2022/2023 to continue to be another interesting year for the Pensions Board in supporting the fund.

Annual report

The 2021/2022 annual report has been released and is now available to view on our website.



This report explains the different areas involved in both pensions administration and pensions investment. It's an important document which also covers the annual accounts update.

The annual report includes:

- Review of the year
- Fund accounts
- Investment performance
- Corporate governance
- Statement of consulting actuary
- Statement by fund auditors

Don't forget to read our statement about environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues. This statement gives a good overview of the actions we have taken over the previous year to align the Shropshire County Pension Fund with these values.

Get involved in our Pensions Committee or Pensions Board meetings

If you have any questions about the information included in the annual report, you can ask for a formal question to be raised on your behalf at future Pension Committee and Pension Board meetings during public question time. For more information, or to send a question, visit: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/legal-and-democratic-services/public-question-time/>

The upcoming meetings are on:

Pensions Board:

27th January | 28th April 2023

Pensions Committee:

25th November 2022 | 17th March 2023

If you have a question for either the Pensions Committee or Pensions Board:

Email: pensionsboard@shropshire.gov.uk

Write: Pensions, PO Box 4826, Shrewsbury, SY1 9LJ.

The Pensions Dashboard



The Pensions Dashboard

The Government are currently working on a national 'Pension Dashboard'. The aim of the dashboard is to show users most of their pension information in one place, in a way that's secure and easily accessible.

Whilst work on this project is already underway, it's expected to take a few years to complete, due to its technical complexity and the number of different pension providers involved.

To learn more about the Pensions Dashboard visit: www.pensionsdashboardsprogramme.org.uk/

'My Pension Online' – Are you registered?

The national Pension Dashboard may not be up and running yet but we have had our own pensions portal at Shropshire County Pension Fund for many years.

As more of our services and communications move online, the best way to keep up to date is by signing up to 'My Pension Online'. By registering to view your 'My Pension Online' account, it's easier than ever for you to find the information you need and to view your pension. You can even keep us updated of any changes to your personal information, such as bank details or change of address.

But, don't worry, we will still be on hand if you need any help or information by email, phone or post.

Pensions awareness week

As retired members of the LGPS, you're now receiving the benefits of having paid into a pension before retirement. But do you help your children, grandchildren and the younger generation appreciate the value of having a pension?

Over the past year, we've seen an enormous increase in engagement from members using our online portal and through calls and emails to our helpdesk. It's becoming obvious that more people want to be financially aware and are paying more attention to their savings and future retirement. Knowing where their money is going, keeping a track on their pension and preparing for the future is important but we know that sometimes keeping track of pensions isn't always a priority for some.

This is why the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association (PLSA) and Association of British Insurers (ABI) will be running a three-year campaign to make pensions a talking point and encourage people to appreciate the importance of pensions. To kick start the campaign on 31st October, the Pension Geeks, a team of pension experts, will be turning complex and complicated topics into digestible and non-scary issues. During Pension Awareness week, a buzz of activity is planned with live TV shows, tackling the biggest pension questions, lively Q&As,

handy videos, and articles and helpful resources released on their website.

Grime artist and TV cook, Big Zuu, has produced a new track and accompanying video calling on people to 'Pay Your Pension Some Attention'. The attention-grabbing song directs people to Pensionattention.co.uk for basic information on how pensions work, including how everything you save gets a boost from your employer and the tax man too. His partnership with the Pension Attention campaign comes at a time when it could not be more important for people to understand their finances.



You can browse videos, resources, and articles at:

www.pensionawarenessday.com

Or visit the Pension Attention campaign website:

www.pensionattention.co.uk



National Fraud Initiative



Shropshire County Pension Fund participates in the National Fraud Initiative.

More Information on the National Fraud Initiative can be obtained by visiting the Shropshire Council website:
www.shropshire.gov.uk/privacy

This initiative requires that particular types of data are provided to the Minister for the Cabinet Office for matching for each exercise and this includes payroll and pensions data.

The use of data by the Cabinet Office in a data matching exercise is carried out with statutory authority under Part 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. It does not require the consent of individuals concerned under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data matching by the Cabinet Office is subject to a Code of Practice.

Cost of living crisis help



Where can I find help with rising living costs?

The pandemic and the rising cost of living have left lots of people with new money worries. The MoneyHelper website gives help and guidance about managing your money in uncertain times. This includes practical advice about living on a squeezed income and help if you're struggling with bills and payments. Go to www.moneyhelper.org.uk for advice and support.

You can also get help from Citizens Advice. Their service provides information about what help is available from your local council, the Government and other forms of support. Visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk for more information.

The Government has announced that it will help all households in Great Britain with energy bills over the coming winter. Extra help is also available for households on lower incomes.

Pensions credit – check if you could be entitled

Pension credit provides extra income for people over State Pension Age on lower incomes.

In April 2022, it was estimated that about 850,000 households are missing out on Pension Credit because they think it isn't meant for them. Pension Credit can be worth up to £3,300 a year and you may be eligible even if you have your own home or have savings.

Even if you find out you are only entitled to a small amount of pension credit, it is worth claiming. This is because it may help you qualify for other benefits, such as help with heating bills, housing costs, NHS dental care, council tax, and if you're over 75, a free TV licence.

Take a look at the online calculator to find out what you might get. Claims can be made online at www.gov.uk or by calling the freephone Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234 (textphone 0800 169 0133). If you prefer, you can ask a friend or relative to help or call on your behalf. Paper forms are also available.



Protect yourself from pension scams

Scams are on the rise in the UK and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis unfortunately is another opportunity for scammers to try and take your money. Scams take many forms and could be about insurance policies, pension transfers or high-risk investment opportunities, including investments in crypto assets. The people behind the scams are good at tricking people into handing over their money. It's important that you've an idea of how to spot a scam, even if you think it could never happen to you.



Learn how to spot a pensions scam.

To protect yourself you should:

- reject offers that come out of the blue
- beware of adverts on social media channels and paid for or sponsored adverts online
- use the Financial Services Register and Warning list to check who you're dealing with
- not click links or open emails from senders you don't know
- avoid being rushed or pressured into making a decision
- not give out personal details, bank account details, your address or information about your existing insurance policies, pensions or investments

It's important to know how to spot a scam even if you've already taken your pension, as you may still be targeted by fraudsters. If you become aware of a scam, call Action Fraud right away on: 0300 123 2040

There is more information on the MoneyHelper website: www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/money-troubles/scams/how-to-spot-a-pension-scam



Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin is an independent local charity offering a range of services to support local older people.

Our trained advisors offer free information and advice to older people and their families. We offer home support services to help with cleaning, laundry, gardening and shopping. Our volunteer befrienders visit lonely older people in their homes and our wellbeing team provide a whole host of exercise classes and activities. We have lots of factsheets covering everything from attendance allowance, help with heating costs, getting the best energy deal to pension credit.

If you would like to find out how we can help you please give us a call on 01743 233 123, pop in to see us at our office in Shrewsbury or visit our website:
www.ageukshropshireandtelford.org.uk

Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin
4 Bellstone, Shrewsbury, SY1 1QQ

Reporting the death of a member

As a retired member of the LGPS, it's important to know that benefits may be due to your loved ones when you die.

What benefits could be due?

- A pension to your husband or wife, civil partner, co-habiting partner and eligible children.
- A lump sum death grant.

These benefits only apply if you're a retired member of the LGPS in your own right. If you're paid a survivors' pension linked to your former husband, wife or partner's pension, no further benefits are due.

Survivors' pension

A survivors' pension is due after your death and is paid to your husband or wife, registered civil partner or, eligible cohabiting partner (if you were a member of the LGPS on or after 1st April 2008 and meet certain rules), for the rest of their life. It increases every year in line with the cost of living.

Who qualifies for a survivor's pension?

- A husband or wife from an opposite or same sex marriage,
- A registered civil partner from an opposite or same sex civil partnership.
- An eligible cohabiting partner (if you were a member of the LGPS on or after 1st April 2008 and meet certain rules).
- A child or children who meet certain rules.

Lump sum death grant

A lump death grant may be due when you die. This depends on when you retired and if you're under the age of 75. More information can be found below.

Retired between 1st April 1998 to 31st March 2008?

A death grant was due for deaths within five years of retirement. This five-year period has now passed.

Retired between 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2014?

A lump sum death grant will be paid if you die within ten years of retirement. This death grant would be ten times your pension, less the amount of pension already paid out to you up to your date of death.

Retired on, or after, 1st April 2014?

- If you have post-2014 benefits only, the death grant would be ten times your pension (not including any pension given up to increase a retirement grant), less the amount of pension already paid to you at the date of death and any retirement grant taken.
- If you have benefits from both the 2008 and 2014 schemes, the death grant would be worked out for each period of membership.



**Shropshire
County
Pension Fund**

Contact us

If you want to contact us about this magazine or have a question about your pension, our contact details are below.

Office hours

Monday to Thursday: 8.45am to 5pm

Friday: 8.45am to 4pm.

Contact details

Email: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

Website: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk

Tel: 01743 252130

Write: Pensions, PO Box 4826, Shrewsbury, SY1 9LJ

Other useful contacts

Tax Office

Tel: 0300 200 3300

Outside the UK: +44 135 535 9022

Department for Work and Pensions

Tel: 0800 731 0469

(For State Pension queries.)

Website: www.gov.uk

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