

inT@UCH

Issue 24 | Spring 2012 | For Retired Members of the Shropshire County Pension Fund

We have moved

See our full new address inside
Pg. 6

Pensions Increase 2012

Your pension from us will be going up, but by how much and how is it measured?

More on Pg.07



SHROPSHIRE COUNTY
PENSION FUND

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Future pay dates

Below are the dates when you can expect your money to be in your bank account or building society over the coming months.

27 April 2012

29 May 2012

29 June 2012

27 July 2012

29 August 2012

28 September 2012

29 October 2012

Welcome



From the 1 April this year the team that administer the Shropshire County Pension Fund on your behalf, became part of Shropshire Councils new Shared Services.

Welcome to the Spring 2012 edition of InTouch.

Shared services is a new delivery model that Shropshire Council are using to drive efficiency and innovation and over its first four years will make savings approaching £8 million without reducing service scope or quality. In the longer term, the plan is to develop the shared services model further with the intention of attracting new partners for joint procurement and service-delivery opportunities.

This will not impact on the service that the team provide to you. Hopefully the only change you will notice is that if you wish to make a personal visit to see us we are now based at the Guildhall in Frankwell.

We will be holding our Retired Members meeting in the Summer in the Walker Theatre of Theatre Severn again. Details can be found on page 16 and I look forward to seeing you there.

Debbie Sharp
Pensions Manager
Shropshire County Pension Fund

Ron Talking



Ron Pugh provides you with an update on the fund.

During the last six months I have continued to contribute to debates at Pensions Committee on pension administration and the investment performance of external fund managers. Over the last quarter, to the end of December 2011, global equity markets have recovered from the previous quarter and delivered positive returns.

DURING THE QUARTER

The Fund increased in value by:

£44 million

To be valued at:

£1.019 billion

SINCE THE END OF THE QUARTER

The Fund has continued to increase and is currently valued at:

£1.052 billion

The Fund continues to invest in a range of asset classes so as to diversify risk and provide more stable returns. Over the last 3 months the Fund matched its benchmark of 4.5%. The rolling 3 year performance of the Fund is 1.1% per annum above its benchmark which is pleasing. Equity managers have achieved a return of 11% per annum and Fixed Income managers achieved a return of 11.5% per annum which is significantly ahead of the benchmark.

The Fund's investment consultant, Aon Hewitt, are currently carrying out a review of the structure of the Fund. They believe that the current investment strategy is sufficiently diverse in nature, which is a good position to be in. However, they believe that some relatively modest changes will make the current strategy more efficient. The review should be completed shortly with an update provided at the next Pension Committee in June.

If you have any issues that you would like me to address on your behalf please do not hesitate to contact me via the Pension team

Telephone: 01743 252 130

Email: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

We have moved!

From Monday 13th February 2012 Pension Services have re-located to the Guildhall in Shrewsbury. Our full new address is below if you would like to write to us.

Our pension's helpline number and e-mail addresses will remain unchanged and business will continue as usual with the exception of personal callers now needing to come to the Guildhall and ask for the team at Main Reception, our offices hours remain 8.45am until 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am until 4pm on Fridays.

Shropshire County Pension Fund
Guildhall | Frankwell Quay
Shrewsbury | SY3 8HQ



Pension Increase

We're pleased to tell you that your pension from us will be going up by

5.2%

this April. But did you know that the Government now uses a different measure of inflation to work out the level of increase?

What's the new measure?

Traditionally, increases in all public sector pensions have been based on the change in the Retail Prices Index (RPI), but from April 2011 the increase has been based on changes in the Consumer Prices Index (*the CPI*).

How do RPI & CPI work?

The basic principle is the same with both measures of inflation. The Government puts together an imaginary 'basket of goods' containing hundreds of items, everything from lip gloss to fuel and computer games to DVD players. The Government then looks at the prices of these items up and down the country, and measures how their prices change over time. There are many similarities between the basket of goods used for both RPI and CPI, but there are some differences too.

Here's what the National Statistics' guide has to say:

"The CPI uses essentially the same basic price data as the RPI but differs from it in some important respects as highlighted here:

- *The goods and services covered by the index: For instance, CPI does not include Council Tax and a number of housing costs faced by homeowners. But there are also some services covered by CPI – such as charges for financial services - which are not in RPI"*
- *The people whose expenditure is covered: CPI covers a broader population than RPI"*
- *In practice this means that CPI generally shows a lower inflation rate than RPI for given price data"*
- *The way in which the goods and services are classified: The CPI structure follows international definitions while RPI has its own specific structure".*

RPI/CPI - the judicial review judgment

Various public service unions and interest groups challenged (*by judicial review*) the Government's decision to use the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in place of the Retail Prices Index (RPI) as the index for determining pension increases for public sector schemes. The judgment in this judicial review was handed down on 2 December 2011. In summary, the court rejected the unions' challenge and found that the Government had not acted unlawfully in making this change.

RAF Cosford

The Royal Air Force Museum Cosford houses one of the largest aviation collections in the UK. 70 historic aircraft are displayed in three wartime hangars and within the National Cold War Exhibition.



This landmark building contains 18 aircraft, military transport, missiles, memorabilia and interactive kiosks and hotspots of information. This unique exhibition reflects the social, cultural and political history of the Cold War era, in a fun and innovative way. A major feature of this unique exhibition is Britain's three post-war V-Bombers the Vulcan, Victor and Valiant. A Number of these aircraft are suspended in flying attitudes including a Dakota, Canberra, Meteor, Lightning and Javelin.

As well as the 70 aircraft on display at Cosford which include the TSR2 and the world's oldest Spitfire, the RAF Museum Cosford is home to a number of smaller unique exhibitions such as the Lucky Mascots exhibition and the RAF Boy Entrants permanent exhibition.

RAF Museum Cosford is one day that everyone will enjoy whatever the weather. Children and adults alike will be fascinated by fun 'n' flight. Packed with hands on excitement, it's the easy way to answer all those questions about how planes stay up in the air. The advanced flight simulator is also a great way to get an instant flying experience – soar into the sky with the Red Arrows or ride in a Eurofighter, the most advanced aircraft ever built.

The Visitor Centre is home to the new Refuel Restaurant serving hot and cold meals and snacks. The Checkpoint Charlie Café serving light snacks and drinks and the well stocked Museum Shop are both located within The National Cold War Exhibition.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Throughout the year there is a wide range of exciting events taking place at the Museum. For further information on forthcoming events in 2012, please contact the Museum or visit their website.

OPEN TIMES: Daily 10am - 6pm
(last admission 5pm) including Bank
Holidays. Closed 24-26 December and
1, 9-13 January 2012.
ADMISSION IS FREE!

TEL: 01902 376200
WEB: www.rafmuseum.org

ADDRESS: Royal Air Force Museum
Cosford | Shifnal | Shropshire
TF11 8UP



What are you going to do?

This was the concerned question from one of my colleagues at Telford & Wrekin Council when I announced that I was going to finish working for them and draw my paid employment to an end in 2010. This was after 40 years, all of it in the public sector, and the last 28 years working mostly for Shropshire County Council and then Telford & Wrekin. But what was I going to do? My answer was ***“What do you mean? I haven’t got time to come to work now!”***

My wife Jo and I have been involved in our local church since we first came to Shrewsbury, and through that we have become involved in volunteer work for Christian Aid, Traidcraft and Fairtrade in general. Fairtrade in particular aims to help producers, farmers and workers in the developing world help themselves out of crippling poverty by guaranteeing them a fair price for their labour and decent working conditions. On top of this a Fairtrade premium is paid which is devoted to a local project determined by the workers on the ground, such as community education, health, water or transport initiatives. The Fairtrade movement has grown from stalls at the back of draughty churches onto the shelves of every major supermarket, and into brand leaders such as Cadbury and Tate and Lyle. Fairtrade now has a turnover of over £1 billion in the UK (2010/2011). The familiar Fairtrade logo is not only widely recognised but is widely trusted. Magnificent progress, but millions still suffer from avoidable poverty in the developing world. So the work and the campaigning go on.

I am very pleased to report that Shropshire has been a Fairtrade County since 2007. Shrewsbury have just become a Fairtrade town, the sixth in Shropshire joining Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Oswestry, Whitchurch and Church Stretton in achieving Fairtrade status, awarded by the Fairtrade Foundation. The Fairtrade Towns movement was started in the UK, and is now worldwide, and the UK remain a leader in the overall Fairtrade movement worldwide. The Shropshire Fairtrade Coalition was established in 2005 to support Fairtrade throughout the county, including Telford & Wrekin, and we have always enjoyed the support of Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council. Shrewsbury Fair Trade on St John’s Hill, Shrewsbury, run entirely by volunteers, celebrates 25 years trading next year, and are also founder members of the Coalition. There is always something to do!

For example, we have a website <http://shropshire-fairtrade.org.uk>. When I worked for Shropshire I was the biggest ICT novice going. My dear friend and colleague, the late Jeremy Clarke, latterly a councillor and for many years an Area Education Officer with me, had the office next door to mine in Shirehall and was computer literate before the term was invented. Jeremy, bless him, would be really impressed that I am running a website. However, I could really do with some help, so if you are sympathetic to the Fairtrade cause, and have ICT expertise, do get in touch. Similarly if you are sympathetic and have time to offer for running a stall on sale or return or other Fairtrade work, again please get in touch. You’ll wonder where the time went.

Article Submitted by Ken Pattison, Secretary, Shropshire Fair-trade Coalition

Leek, Bacon & Shropshire Blue Risotto

A classic Italian dish with British flavours.

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 leeks sliced
- 256g risotto rice
- 900ml hot vegetable stock
- 4 rashers streaky bacon
- 50g Shropshire Blue
- Freshly ground black pepper

HOW TO MAKE IT:

1. Heat the oil in a pan and fry the bacon for 3-4 minutes until cooked through. Drain on kitchen paper and slice into thick strips. Wrap in foil and set aside.
2. Add the sliced leeks to the still hot pan and fry for 3 minutes until the leeks are softened.
3. Add the rice and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
4. Begin adding the stock, a ladle at a time, stirring well after each addition.
5. Once all the stock has been added and the rice is soft and creamy add the bacon strips and continue to cook for a further minute.
6. Remove from the heat and stir in the cheese, then season to taste with pepper.
7. Stir in the cheese and bacon, then season to taste with pepper. Serve immediately.



Things to do in Birmingham

by Keith Jenkins

Birmingham is Britain's second-largest city and is located in the West Midlands region northwest of London. In the 1800's, the city was known as the '*Workshop of the World*' as it was here that the Industrial Revolution began. Birmingham attracted merchants and workers from around Britain as industries blossomed. A whole network of canals was dug for the transportation of goods and the city became the focal point of a wealthy region.

In the late-20th century, Birmingham underwent a metamorphosis as manufacturing made way for services. Whole swathes of the city were redeveloped - old factories and warehouses were transformed into stylish apartments, office blocks and centres of art.

The transformation continues till this day. The canals have been rejuvenated and are now a tranquil sight in this bustling city. The gorgeous heritage buildings that line long stretches of the canals now house a wide variety of restaurants, shops and cafés. The city's grand Victorian monuments have been lovingly restored and a massive scheme to redevelop the city's historic core, the Bull Ring, has given the city centre an unmistakable international flair.

Birmingham is absolutely worth a visit for a few days. The city is very compact, making it easy to get around on foot. There are many stunning old and modern architectural gems to admire, museums and markets to wander around in, charming cafés and pubs to stop for a breather, and multi-faceted culinary scene to tease your senses.

If you're visiting Birmingham for the first time, here are a number of things to do to get a good feel of this fascinating city.



- Visit a few of the magnificent museums and art galleries. The Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (*BMAG*) provides interesting insights into the city's rich history. The building's imposing exterior forms a sharp contrast to its bright, colourful interior. The gorgeous staircases, stunning ceilings and fascinating exhibits will keep you occupied for hours. Another great museum is the Barber Institute (*at the University of Birmingham*), one of the city's finest Art Deco buildings, with its collection of Monets, Manets and Renoirs. Or you could visit the beautiful Aston Hall, just outside the city. For something more contemporary, head to the Ikon Gallery and the Custard Factory.
- Have your picture taken with the great, big bull at the front of the Bull Ring shopping centre. The bull is the symbol of Birmingham.
- Walk around the eye-catching Selfridges building. This iconic building is covered with 16,000+ silver-coloured discs. Watch how its shape changes as you circle the building. Then step inside and marvel at the interior, with its breathtaking central atrium. Oh, and don't forget to check out the jelly bean bull on the ground floor!
- Wander around the markets located adjacent to the Bull Ring. My favourite is the Rag Market. It's an intriguing mish-mash of 'rags', cosmetics, hosiery and other merchandise. It's also a wonderful place to watch the colourful vendors and their haggling customers.
- Take a leisurely stroll along the canals in the late-afternoon/early-evening. Let the calm water and charming scenes soothe your senses, say 'hi' to the resident geese or stop for a pint at one of the many canal-side pubs. You can also opt to join a canal cruise on one of the narrow boats. The cruises depart from Brindley Place.
- Birmingham is a haven for shopaholics. There's the Jewellery Quarter with its wide array of jewellers (*the Jewellery Quarter Museum is absolutely worth a stop*), the huge malls at the Bull Ring (*including Selfridges*), New Street with its mainstream fashion stores and the gorgeous MailBox building with its upmarket boutiques.
- Brummies love food. Every two stores is an eatery so it's not difficult to find a place to eat. Choosing one is the hard part. If you love curries, head out to the Balti Triangle. Balti is a spicy dish perfected in Birmingham. There are more than 50 restaurants that serve this must-try dish in the Balti Triangle. It's difficult to choose so just follow your instincts!
- Join the tour of the BBC Studios at the Mailbox building. The tour provides a fascinating glimpse into the world of broadcasting (*both television and radio*). The longest British radio drama series, the Archers, is produced here, as well as other regional radio and television programmes. During the tour, you'll also be invited to present your own BBC News programme; *a really fun experience!*



Free Thinking

Join a recycling revolution and while you're at it declutter your house or bag a bargain or two.

Did you know that in your town today people will be giving things away for free all day? In fact thousands of items are going to change hands completely free and gratis across the UK, thanks to community websites that have taken recycling to a new high.

There are two established sites in the UK - Freecycle and Freegle. They let people give away unwanted items to other group members without charge rather than see them go to waste. On offer can be anything from office chairs, plant pots, roller skates, mobile phone chargers and baby clothes to hammers, books and CDs... even cars, caravans and windsurfers get featured.



Items might have some life left in them, be brand new, or even broken but fixable by the right person. The owner simply posts details to the group, and word is passed on via email to the members that there is a new item up for grabs. Interested people email the owner to ask to be considered as the new owner and, once someone is selected, they come to pick up the item. All for free.

As you peruse the listings, you might be surprised at how many items could be useful in your home, office or charity project or you may be tempted to start a new hobby (pair of ice skates anyone?). Then again, don't be surprised at what people will want. Old towels make great bedding for dogs. Shoe boxes are popular with people selling on eBay. Even VHS video tapes will often find new homes, which is much better than sending them to landfill.

Interested in joining in to get a bargain, or rid yourself of clutter?

Here's how:



Get started

Google 'Freecycle' or 'Freegle' plus your home town to find your local group. When registering it is wise to use a new email account - go to www.googlemail.com for a free Gmail account. Then simply choose how you want to be informed about new items being posted. Either elect for an email as each new item is posted (*gives you first pick of new listings, but many emails each day*), or request a single daily review of the best items (*more manageable, although some items will be gone before you hear about them*). You can also view the website anytime to check on updates.

How to give

All you need do is send an email to the group with a brief description of the item you want to give away. In the header, start with the word **OFFERED** in capitals, plus the item name and the first half of your postcode eg **OFFERED Shrewsbury (SY2)**. Then describe the item in detail and include a picture if possible (*just upload your picture to a free photo hosting site like www.tinypic.com and link to the picture from your listing*). Include anything relevant, eg pickup on Thursday or Friday after 8pm. Send the email to your group and before long you'll start getting emails from interested people.

And get

When you see an item you'd like, send an email to the owner saying you're interested. Get noticed by being polite (*you'd be surprised how many people send curt messages like "I'll have it!"*). Show you are keen by suggesting when you can pick up, and ask for a phone number so you can arrange to call them (*give your number too*). It's a good idea to also explain why you need the item. That might sway a decision in your favour.

Read the rules

Both groups have sensible guidelines on safety - after all you are making contact with strangers. However most of this is just common sense. If you're expecting a caller, have the item ready near the door so they don't have to come into your home to get it. If you're picking up, have someone else with you or let people know where you're going and when you'll be back.



**Tuesday
19th June**
at the
**Walker
Theatre**
Theatre
Severn
Shrewsbury

Retired Members Meeting 2012

If you would like to attend please e-mail or telephone the team or complete and return the form at the bottom of this page. Please note our address has changed!

2-4pm



Telephone:
01743 252 130

Email:
pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

We will have two guest speakers and various organisations with information stands to look round after the meeting.

Refreshments will be served during the afternoon and you will have a chance to catch up with former colleagues and find out about the latest fund updates.

Staff from Pension Services will be on hand to answer any of your pension queries.

So please book your place and put the date of the meeting in your diary. *We look forward to seeing you there!*

I would like to attend the retired members meeting.

Name:

Please return to: Pension Services

Guildhall | Frankwell Quay | Shrewsbury | Shropshire | SY3 8HQ

Payslip Update

You may remember we asked you in Autumn 2010 issue of INTOUCH for you to contact us on how you felt about not receiving a payslip. The majority of the responses we had were positive with most of the replies stating that you felt payslips weren't necessary. We even had quite a few of you requesting that your payslips be stopped.



We have decided to phase out paper payslips and in doing so we will be saving paper and money. We are estimating payslips will be completely stopped by April 2013, if not before. There is also a possibility of only sending a payslip out if the net or gross pay changed in anyway.

As an alternative to paper payslips we are currently looking into making payslips available online for you to be able to log on securely to see your individual payslips and P60s. Once this is possible we will give you further information on how this works. It is worth

noting that Shropshire County Pension Fund takes looking after member information extremely seriously and this method of accessing your payslip online will meet our own strict rules on information security.

In the mean time please let us know by e-mail or in writing if you would like to stop having your payslip. We would also appreciate your feedback and thoughts about how we can improve the way we communicate with you in the future. You can contact us in the normal ways, by phone, letter and e-mail.

DO YOU HAVE A QUERY ON YOUR TAX CODE?

If so, contact HM Revenue & Customs.

The Shropshire County Pension Fund receives many Tax Code queries, unfortunately the Fund cannot help in explaining these matters as it is HM Revenue & Customs Tax Office which determines your Tax Code, not the Pension Fund. If you want to query the Tax Code that has been applied to your pension there are a few ways to do it:

By letter writing to this address:

HM Revenue & Customs
NW Midlands & Shropshire Area
Crown House, Birch Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 4JX

By calling: 0845 3000 627

In person:

You can call into the Guildhall in Frankwell, Shrewsbury to speak to a HMRC Tax Advisor. There are representatives available on Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9am until 3.30pm to book an appointment please call into the Guildhall or call 0845 3000 627.

Quote the Tax Reference 671/S10 when contacting the tax office.



Contact Us

If you can read this but know someone who cannot, please contact us on (01743) 252130 so we can provide this information in a more suitable format. If you wish to contact us on any issue in this magazine or have a query regarding your pension, please contact Pension Services. Office hours are Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5pm and Friday 8.45am to 4pm. If you would prefer to discuss your pension in person, you are welcome to come in and see us at the address below:

Pension Services, Shropshire Council, Guildhall, Frankwell, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

Email: pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 252130 | **Fax:** 01743 281040

Web: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.gov.uk

Other useful contacts

Tax Office Tel: 0845 3000 627

Department for Work and Pensions Tel: 0845 6060 265

Pension Credit Tel: 0800 99 1234

Website: www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/pensioncredit

