**Information to Members and Communications Sub-Committee**

**22 March 2023 (by Teams)**

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| **Present:** |  |  |
| Heather McKenzie | Member Representative – Chair | HM |
| Susan Anyan | Independent Pension Specialist | SA |
| Susan Fielden | Employer Representative | SF |
| John Pratten | Employer Representative | JP |
| Maria Chondrogianni | Member Representative | MC |
| Kerry Tate | TP Head of Marketing and Engagement | KT |
| Dan Maughan | TP Digital Engagement Manager | DM |
| Amy Gibbs | TP Head of Governance and Risk | AG |
| Jo Cole | TP Engagement Manager (Employer) | JC |
| Jennie Connelly | TP Engagement Manager (Member) | JCon |
| Anna-Marie Alderson | DfE Senior Contract Manager  | AA |
| Melanie Phillip | DfE Policy Team Leader Casework, Correspondence & TPSPB  | MP |
| Mark Dutson | DfE Contract Management Team | MD |
| Helen Cowan | DfE TPSPB Secretariat Manager | HC |
| Ruby Kennedy | DfE TPSPB Secretariat | RK |
| Loraine Dodds | DfE TPSPB Secretariat (Minutes) | LD |
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| **Observer** |  |  |
| John McGill | Member Representative | JM |
| Tony Watt | TP Digital Manager | TW |

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|  | **Item** | **Action** |
| Agenda item 1 | **Welcome and Apologies:*** HM welcomed those in attendance. HM introduced herself and invited board members to do the same.
* The minutes from 14 December were ratified.
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| Agenda item 2 | **Actions from the previous meeting:****IM3/141222** **Agree whether any papers or presentations should be shared with the rest of the Board for information.**AA confirmed there was an action for a demonstration of the decision tree once it had gone live and suggested it be planned as a future Forward Work Plan topic for June or September.  |  |
| Agenda Item 3 | **Transitional Protection*** JC provided an update on transitional protection which remained busy.
* Communications were issued in December through social media advising members and employers of news including what has been delivered in the last twelve-month period and what to expect going forward. A reminder was issued to members who had transitioned from final salary to career average on 1st April of the transfer deadline for pension benefits.
* Other projects are ongoing including the decision tree which was launched on 9th March and coincided with delivery of BAU communications for the Member Bulletin.
* There have already been 7500 unique views of the decision tree which is significant given the target audience are younger members who are typically more difficult to engage with on pension issues.
* Contact Centre volumes had been monitored to ascertain whether the decision tree was causing extra calls and feedback. It was confirmed that volumes were in line with previous weeks which suggests there was minimal impact.
* Work is ongoing to provide a banner on members’ My Pension Online (MPO) account which will signpost members to further information about how they may be affected by Transitional Protection. The banner is planned for launch shortly.
* Preparation is underway for the launch of the Pensions Dashboard consultation once Ministerial approval to proceed is obtained. Other public sector schemes have gone live with their consultations. Communications will signpost members to Government pages regarding the consultation.
* Work was continuing on the retirement journey which included a review of the options forms to ensure a simplified option statement can be made available as some members can find the detailed option statement overwhelming.
* The scheme calculator and scheme modeler have also undergone user testing and TP are working through how to further develop those tools.
* HM thanked JC for her comprehensive update and asked when the consultation would launch. JC indicated she expected it would be within the next week.
* JC clarified that further work was needed regarding members with service in the Local Government pension schemes (LGPS) who would be affected by TrP, and confirmed TP are working closely with LGSP to identify and manage any issues.
* In relation to the decision tree viewing statistics, HM asked if there was a gender or age breakdown. JC stated it wasn’t possible to obtain that breakdown, but it was interesting to note that there was a low bounce from the page suggesting viewers were reading the page.
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| Agenda Item 4 | **Executive Summary**MP discussed the Executive Summary – Paper 7. * She reminded the sub-committee that the document is produced at the end of every financial year and it provides an overview of work that has been conducted by the Board throughout that year. It comes to the Information to Members sub-committee in March ahead of going to the main board in April.
* MP confirmed that the paper will be uploaded to the Board's web page on the Teachers’ Pensions website and it provides a helpful summary for ministers and a useful document to share with unions and employers.
* The paper highlights some of the deep dive topics that the Board has conducted this year, including financial governance, the strategic HR challenges, equality and diversity, and assurance,
* Additionally, it highlights key areas of activity and challenge that have been provided and some of those topics the Board regularly see such as transitional protection, MCR, ill health contract and procurement.
* MP asked committee members whether they agree that it's an accurate reflection of the Board's activities over the past 12 months and whether they are content to recommend that the Board accepts this report at their next meeting in April.
* HM agreed it was and the sub-committee was content for it to go to the Board in April.
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| Agenda Item 5 | **Employer Portal and Contact Us****Employer Portal*** JC highlighted the significant work that had gone into the research and design of these tools including working with stakeholders to ensure it met their needs.
* DM provided a demonstration of the existing Employer Portal Dashboard and highlighted some of the user feedback about the limitations in the previous version, before demonstrating the new Dashboard.

**Highlights*** User friendly
* Useful links and user guide videos, terminology, and acronym buster.
* Templates, task manager and search sections.
* Evolving website, promotional.
* Contacts including contact us form.
* JC explained they had also reviewed the Employer Portal Guide in light of feedback received.
* A new employer relationship manager has been tasked with reviewing navigability of the website in terms of finding answers to common questions.
* The employee hub page – which is the public facing part of the website - is also being reviewed. Key points include testing out calculators and clarifying technical wording.

**Contact Us*** The Contact Us page has been reviewed to improve the user experience and accessibility.

**Highlights*** Better directing of queries through to the relevant team – be that in respect of a general query, or a member specific one.
* Ability for conversation history, relevant information, and multiple attachments to be retained on the member’s file.
* JC confirmed the pages will be a soft launch initially, as they were working with a targeted group of employers to provide feedback. Once feedback has been taken on board, the full launch will go ahead.
* HM thanked both JC and DM for their comprehensive presentation.
* MC enquired whether they will still be an opportunity to call someone to discuss issues. JC assured MC that the call function will still be available, and the telephone number will be on the website.
* SF asked for clarification regarding the LEA establishment number and whether the portal was affected if the establishment was an individual or part of a central team within a multi-academy trust.
* DM confirmed the portal works on the basis of a data centre which is the LEA’s establishment number. There will be a central LEA establishment number which is used to log in. The Multi Academy Trust school’s academies have their own login details and LEA’s use their establishment numbers.
* HM queried if it would be possible for the MAT to see multiple threads of communication with TP if more than one exchange was in progress. DM confirmed they would.
* JP asked when this was to be communicated to employers. JC confirmed that it would be tested on a small group of employers first. When the full launch happens, there will be contact details and it will be sign posted from the employer portal.
* JP asked if the response times will be added to an SLA and if that will appear on the dashboard. DM stated that queries will be categorised by case type and the SLA for that case type will be assigned.
* AA offered clarification that it will form part of existing SLA 12C. Part of the QR will include the performance specifically to this.
* HM thanked everyone for their input.
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| Agenda Item 6 | **360-degree feedback*** JCon shared a presentation about the type of feedback that TP collect, the frequencies and what TP then do with that feedback.

**Highlights** * TP are a customer centric organisation and focused on the needs of the member and the employee stakeholders.
* Feedback is collected from a range of focus groups including active, deferred and retired members, member forums, social media and user testing. Some of these are ran by external organisations so there is no bias and clear input from members.
* Website communications and website functionality was tested for accessibility and comprehension of transitional protection information.
* Social media polls and Instagram stories demonstrate good engagement. Facebook has a strong community of retired members which communicate well, and user testing has been applied.
* In depth testing is completed by an external company who provide an understanding of how users engage with the service.
* Customer satisfaction feedback was previously obtained via an external company but collection of that feedback was slower and out of date so daily customer satisfaction feedback is now collected.
* TP take part in the annual benchmarking exercise by the Institute of Customer Services
* Feedback on training is collected.
* HM thanked JCon for the presentation.
* SF asked what the timing of the ICS exercise was. JCon stated this took place in March for internal staff and will be rolled out to member and employers as part of the employer bulletin in April. The members survey can only go to members who have had direct contact with TP within the last 3 months.
* SF recalled employer feedback was low in previous years and offered to add a reminder to the CST bulletin if JCon could provide some wording. JCon agreed she would provide that.
* HM thanked JCon for her presentation and thanked members for their input.
 | IM1/230323 |
| Agenda Item 7 | Review of Papers (Papers 4, 5 and 6)**Dashboard**AG noted that:* There had been an increase in overall casework by 20% when compared to the same period in 2022.
* Good progress was being made on the suspense account issue which includes communication with employers to ensure they are aware of their obligations.
* SLA performance was strong with an expected uptick on SLAs 3A and 3B. There was an impact on the contact centre due to volumes and complexity of calls and TP were working with the Department on how to enhance digital resources and mitigate volumes.
* Outcome Measures were positive, with a minor impact on OM5 & 6, which is linked to the digital contact volumes.
* SLA11d had a temporary issue which meant levels reduced in January but has risen again in February.
* JP indicated that he had heard reports from establishments using the SAGE accounting system that they were struggling to use MCR as the interface was cumbersome and required an excel spreadsheet to be manually populated.
* AG confirmed that MCR onboarding had been paused to focus on mitigating some of the issues including that of lowering the suspense balance. She confirmed TP were working closely with payroll providers to develop solutions.
* SF asked if there was any communication about which software solutions do work well with MCR so employers can check to see if their systems are compliant.
* JC confirmed that a list of approved providers was being produced.

**Quarterly Report**AA noted that:* OM2 is performing well against target outcome. OM3 is not currently on target due to seasonality around major pension events in the scheme calendar but it is expected to recover by year end.
* AA acknowledged that the current method of gathering feedback isn’t delivering the expected results so work is ongoing with TP to address this.
* Social media engagement is going well and TP have significant number of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube followers.
* The Department are working with TP to extend the engagement strategy to include new social media such as TikTok to target younger members who may not otherwise engage.
* JP asked if Tik Tok was a favourable platform given wider security concerns highlighted in the media recently. AA explained that specific approval routes need to be followed as part of the government digital strategy which will ensure compliance with all government standards.
* In respect of scheme valuation, it is expected that the SCAPE rate consultation result will be published imminently which will generate communication about how members may be affected in terms of any contribution increase and transfers in and out of the scheme. At the moment, transfers are paused until the outcome of that consultation is known.
* AA confirmed that whilst MCR itself was paused due to the stabilisation phase, work on communications was ongoing.
* The number of new MPO registrations are increasing month on month, which is positive.
* AA brought attention to the numbers of schools and function providers that are leaving the scheme or have noted an intention to leave. Although withdrawal numbers have plateaued with no further independent schools notifying their intention to leave the scheme, this remained an area of concern. TP have very clear communications about this on the website and a package ready to be sent to members if a school notifies of an intention to withdraw.
* JP highlighted the likelihood of increased activity within the independent sector should the outcome of the next General Election result in changes to VAT on fees and withdrawal of business rates.
* MC asked if TP record details of universities who indicate an intention to leave the scheme. AA confirmed this was being monitored and communications were issued to all members whose provider indicates an intention to leave.
* AA referred to Annex B, which highlights the current projects and programs at the moment. AA confirmed the team are working on the communications to support those projects.

**Issues Log*** AA indicated there were two live issues.
* The first is the ill health contract and outstanding casework. The Department is working actively with TP and Health Management to conclude the stockpile of cases by the end of March.
* The second issue is the issue with MCR and the unallocated contributions in the suspense account. Ongoing work is continuing to refine the wording of the issue which is currently in draft form.
* SA enquired whether the committee had any views around the announcement on changes to the lifetime allowance and annual allowance.
* AA stated that she asked the DfE policy team for clarification, particularly around the timing of head teacher retirements who must give an advanced period of notice of 3-4 months. The policy team have confirmed this has been taken into consideration as part of the Remedial Statement Service (RSS) process being devised which links into transitional protection. In the meantime, members should continue to make retirement decisions as normal before the legislation takes effect. Members can be offered their choice and will be invited to make their deferred choice underpin (DCU) decision as soon as practicable after the legislation comes into effect. Once policy colleagues have confirmed the policy intent, the Department will work with TP to make those changes and develop the communications for members.
* SA queried how the changes to the new maximum level but with a different taper would be communicated. AA indicated that the Scheme Advisory Board (SAB) would likely commence that conversation which would then feed through to the Board.
* SA highlighted that the changes would take effect shortly and should anticipate receiving member questions or employer questions on behalf of members.
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| Agenda Item 8 | **Agree top 3 issues from the meeting/report to highlight to the next TPSPB.*** Monthly Contributions Reconciliation – communications to employers
* Transitional protection
* Communications Strategy – delivery against plan
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| Agenda Item 9 | **Agree whether any papers or presentations should be shared with the rest of the Board for information.*** The Executive Summary – paper 7
* The papers as reviewed – the Dashboard, QR and Issues Log – papers 4, 5 and 6.
* The two additional presentations on Items 5 (Employer Portal and Contact Us) and 6 (360 Feedback) would also be circulated.
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| Agenda item 10 | **AOB:*** None
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| Next meeting | 21 June 2023 at Lingfield Point |   |

Minutes agreed by Chair: Heather Mckenzie Date: 30 March 2023

Circulated to sub-committee members on 30 March 2023

To be ratified at the 21 June 2024 sub-committee meeting.