

# Pensioner survey 2023...the results

This paper details the results of the 2023 survey issued to pensioners of the East Sussex Pension Fund. The annual survey offers pensioners the opportunity to provide direct feedback on whether the Fund is providing you with the right level of support. We use the results to analyse where we are getting things right and where we can improve.

Thank you to everyone who completed the survey. The response rate of just over 20% was excellent.



**Note:** We had some comments left by members asking for individual support but without any contact details. If you still need our support, please call 0300 200 1022 or email [pensions@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:pensions@eastsussex.gov.uk). If you had a query and provided contact details, you should hear from us soon (if not already). Please contact us if you have any feedback for the Fund but never had a chance to participate in the survey.

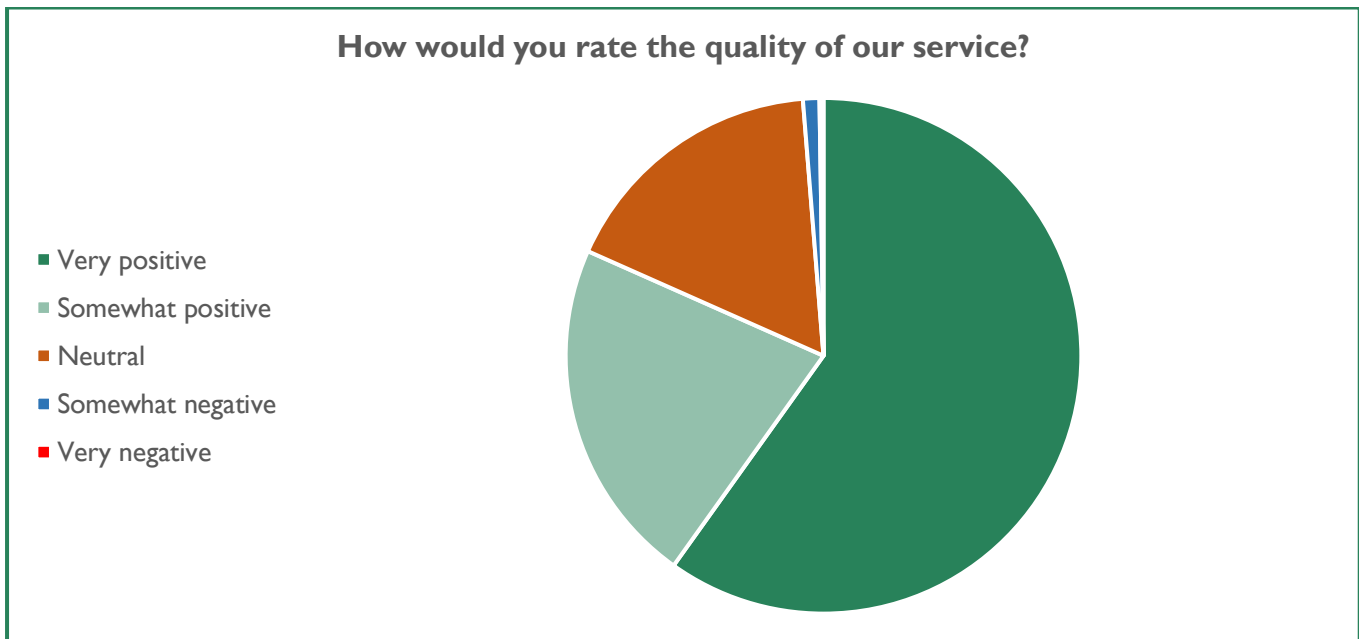
We also received some queries from pensioners who are currently receiving a small pension who were asking if this could be paid as a lump sum instead. This could be possible (less a tax charge) but the circumstances where this may happen are restrictive, particularly if you have any other pension benefits. We suggest you contact us if you wish to investigate this further.

# Servicing

Providing excellent customer support is crucial.

## We asked how you rated the quality of the customer service provided by the Fund.

Around 60% of pensioners who responded were very positive about the support we provide. A further 22% were somewhat positive. Thank you. We will continue to look for ways to further improve the service we provide.



## Helpdesk

The Fund operates a UK based helpdesk where members can call or email for support.

The Helpdesk has been set challenging targets to ensure that queries from members are dealt with efficiently. If you email us, you should expect a reply within three working days. We aim to answer the phone within 20 seconds and try to answer queries at the first time of asking. We have performed very well against these targets. We conduct regular helpdesk surveys and the feedback we receive is incredibly positive. In 2022 our Helpdesk managed 9,463 calls with 85.41% of queries answered in full during the initial customer conversation. They also managed nearly 15,000 emails from pensioners in the year.

We asked you “If you have called us about your pension were the people you spoke to supportive and friendly during these conversations?” Over 53% strongly agreed that we were, with a further 38% agreeing that we provide a good phone service.

Our administration team also set tough key performance targets so that you receive the information you need quickly. In the year from April 2022 to March 2023 they completed 11,039 tasks (where targets are set). The average performance across tasks with associated measures was 96.31%. These tasks have demanding targets of either 90% or 95%.

Do not forget that our website ([Homepage | East Sussex Pension Fund](#)) has a wealth of information to support those in receipt of a pension from the Fund. These pages may be of particular interest:

- 1 [Pensioners](#)
- 2 [Forms and publications](#)

We are also beginning to build a chatbot to provide answers to your frequently asked questions. A chatbot is a computer program that talks to an internet user in real-time. A great advantage of this tool is that you can receive immediate answers to commonly asked questions 24-hours a day. We will let you know when this feature is ready.

## Contacting us

A reminder of our contact details is shown below.

**Call** 0300 200 1022 (general support)

0300 200 1027 (member self-service support)

**Email** [pensions@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:pensions@eastsussex.gov.uk)

**Write** Pension Services, East Block, Floor F, East Sussex County Council, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1UE



## We asked for your preferred method of providing or receiving information.

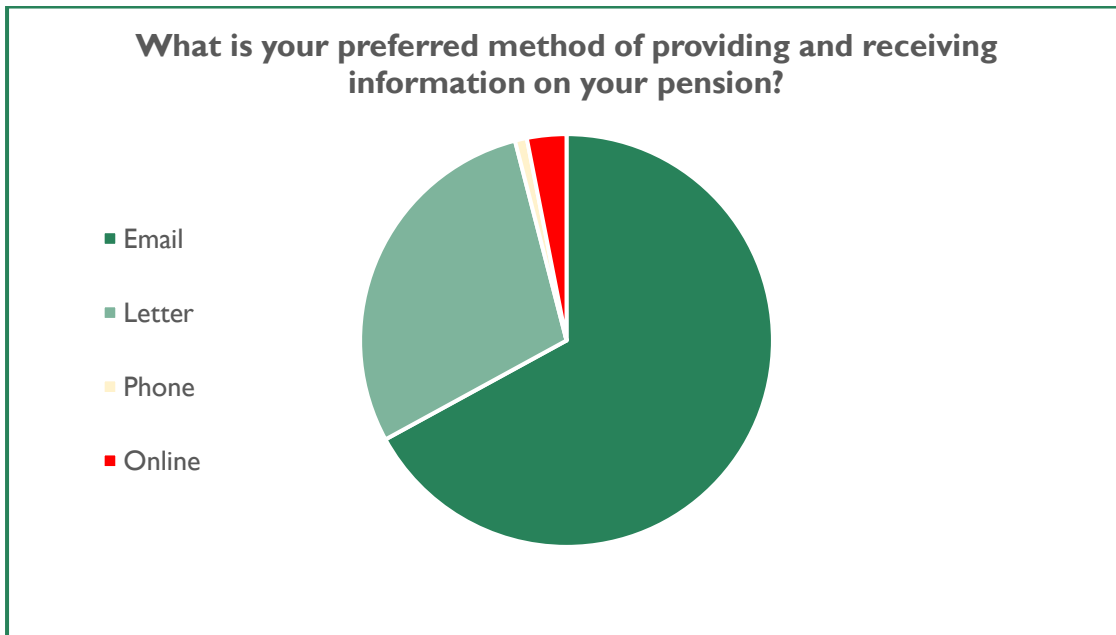
Just over two thirds of members selected email as their preferred method of communication. Unsurprising as this method ensures immediate communication when compared to traditional post. Around 30% of members want us to send their pension information in the post.

We post most requests for information currently but are investigating:

- how to increase usage and functionality of the member self-service facility, and
- how we can use email more frequently.

The Fund are also looking into modernising the software we use to send emails to our members.

We will be in touch when this work has progressed.



Whatever method you prefer it is vital that you keep us updated with your contact details.

You can do this in one of two ways:

1. By completing a [‘Change of personal details form’](#) and sending this to us either via email or post.
2. Via [‘My Pension’](#) our member self-service Portal by editing the ‘your details’ section. If you have not registered for the portal and want to do so [please follow these instructions](#).

# 'My pension' - member self-service portal

'My Pension' was introduced to Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) members to provide them with online access to their pension information.



## We asked if you were aware that you can access details of your pension (including viewing payslips and P60s) through our member self-service portal?

57% of you were aware of the system which is called 'My Pension'. But only two thirds of the 57% had gone on to register. 42% had used the system within the last 6 months, 63% within the last year. But a considerable proportion of registered users had not logged on and used the system for over a year.

So here is a reminder of the benefits. With 'My Pension' you can:

- **View or amend personal details** – home address, email address, phone number.
- **Pension benefits** – view a summary of your pension payments.
- **View your payslips and P60s** – view (you cannot download or print) payslips and P60s.
- **Nominations** – check or amend who you have nominated to receive benefits on your death.
- **Benefit projectors** – Calculate what would happen to your pension when you pass away.

A lot of valuable information is available at your fingertips – 24 hours a day.

All the features available are used by registered members to varying degrees.

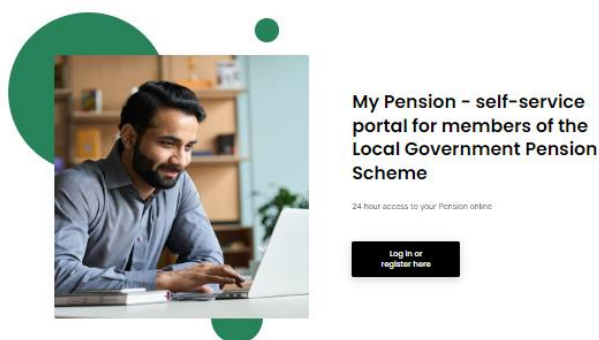
We did receive critical feedback on issues such as registration, logging on and passwords. The Fund are aware that the journey for members is not as seamless as we would like it to be. We apologise if you have encountered issues.

We do have a webpage which provides details of:

1. How to register
2. How to retrieve a forgotten username
3. What to do if you have forgotten your password
4. Frequently asked questions and answer relating to 'My Pension.'

Access webpage here - [Member Self-Service Portal | East Sussex Pension Fund](#) or Ctrl + Click on the image below to view the page. Please call our member self-service helpline on 0300 200 1027 if you still need support after reading the instructions provided.

#### My Pension - member self-service



|                                   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Register</b>                   | <a href="#">New user - register for 'My Pension'</a>                | + |
| <b>Forgotten user name</b>        | <a href="#">How to retrieve a forgotten username - 'My Pension'</a> | + |
| <b>How to reset your password</b> | <a href="#">Forgotten password - My Pension Portal</a>              | + |

We made several changes to the portal in late 2022 to make the user experience as simple as possible. This included removal of unrequired menus and extra descriptive text of what the different elements of the portal do.

#### **Fund action**

- We have been working hard with our software supplier to look at enhancements to the portal. We are committed to making the user journey and functionality as useful and seamless as possible.
- We are delighted to say that we will be introducing a new modernised, streamlined, visually engaging, accessible version of the self-service facility in late 2023. This includes a different approach to initial registrations. We are very excited and feel that this will transform your experience. We will be in touch nearer the official launch date.

# Payslips

Your payslips are important documents detailing your pension payments and tax deductions. These are only issued in March, April and May\* because payment amounts do not normally change after the May payment. If you [register for the self-service portal](#), you can view your monthly pension payments online.

\*Please note that a payslip is sent out if your net payments change by more than £5 per month.



We asked a question about whether the letter we send that details the increase that will be applied to your pension payments was understandable. 70% of you felt that it was very clear.

The timing of the survey in conjunction with this question was not ideal as several people queried why they had not yet received the letter detailing new pension payment amounts from April 2023. These are traditionally issued at the end of April each year with your payslip and P60.

We received feedback that it would be beneficial to understand what increase would apply earlier.

Your LGPS pension is adjusted in line with the cost of living every year throughout your retirement. As the cost-of-living changes, so will your pension (either up or down). The revaluation uses the rate of the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for the previous September. So payments (for eligible pensioners) will increase by 10.1% from April 2023 (reflecting the 10.1% increase in CPI in the 12 months to September 2022).

We will make some changes to our process from next year so that we share the CPI figure that will apply as soon as we know it – see Fund action below.

## Fund action

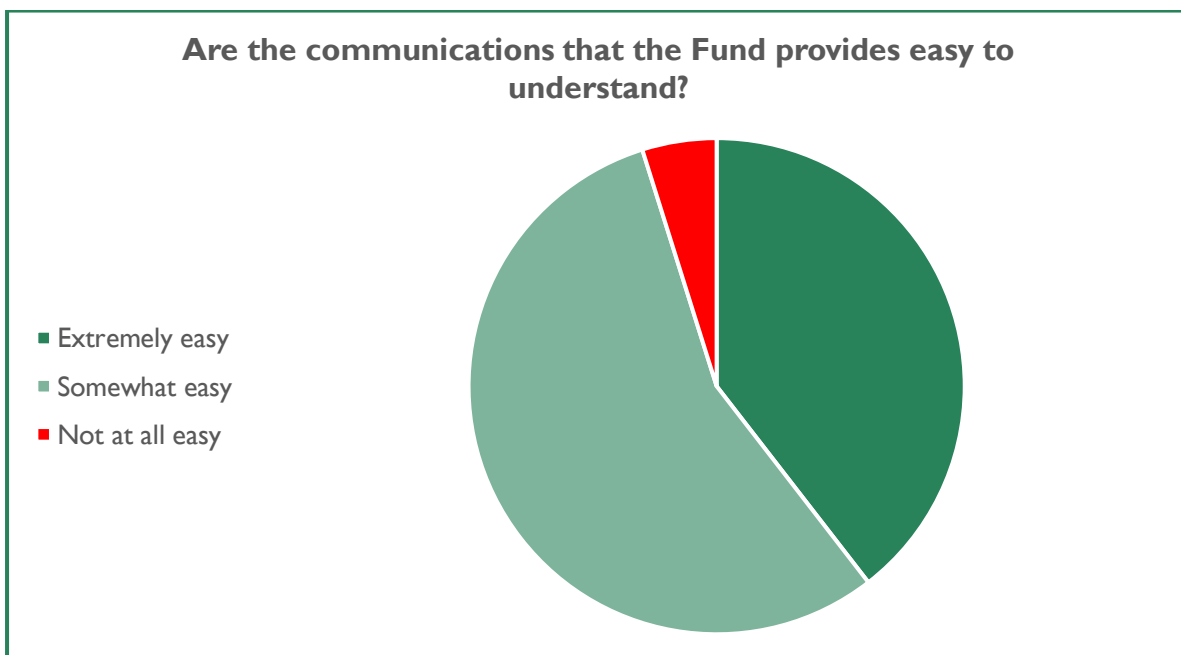
- From 2024 we will notify all pensioners of the CPI rate that will determine the next scheme years payments (and make clear eligibility for the increase) as soon as we are notified by the Office of National Statistics. This notification will be added to the Pensioner page on our website.
- Official notification by letter with your April payslip and end of tax year P60 will continue to be issued towards the end of April each year.
- The Fund are currently considering making payslips and P60s available online via 'My Pension' – the member self-service system. This will allow pensioners to view, download and print them online. We hope this will speed up the process. We will keep you informed as this work progresses.

# Communication

Excellent communication helps encourage members to engage more with their retirement savings. We work hard to ensure that the content we produce is simple to understand using a range of different communication methods – guides, videos, email, website, letters.



Pensions is a complicated subject, so it is good to know that around 40% of pensioners find our correspondence 'extremely easy'. 95% rated our communications within the 'extremely easy' or 'somewhat easy' to understand. 5% of pensioners find our communications difficult. So, there is still plenty of work for the Fund to do to make messaging simpler.





Just over three quarters of pensioners feel that the frequency in which we communicate is about right. Approximately 16% of you feel we should be doing more.

The Fund produces regular an annual newsletter for pensioners of the scheme. Around a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of people thought this frequency is about right, but there is an appetite from just over 60% of pensioners to receive newsletters more frequently.

Historically we have provided newsletters via email so it is particularly important that we hold an up-to-date email address on our records to ensure you do not miss out. You can update your email address via the member self-service portal '[My Pension](#)' or by [completing this form](#).

That said, we will shortly be issuing a member update by post in May 2023 (rather than via email) to all members which will detail some of the pertinent information you need to understand about the Local Government Pension Scheme.

### **Fund action**

- Over the next year we will be reviewing many of our administration processes - this includes letter templates, forms, and checklists. As documents are reviewed, we will implement a consistent design and brand to make correspondence more engaging for members.
- We comply with accessibility guidelines to ensure that what we provide is usable by all.
- We have introduced new member forms in editable (where you can complete most of the information online) and non-editable formats. These are available via the '[Forms and Publications](#)' area of our website.
- We will look to make more use of video and other digital forms of content.

Many pensioners have asked for 'back to basics' pension information to be provided by the Fund. The Fund already produce support material for pensioners in the scheme.

Examples below:

[Brief guide to the Local Government Pension Scheme](#)

[Pensioner newsletter](#)

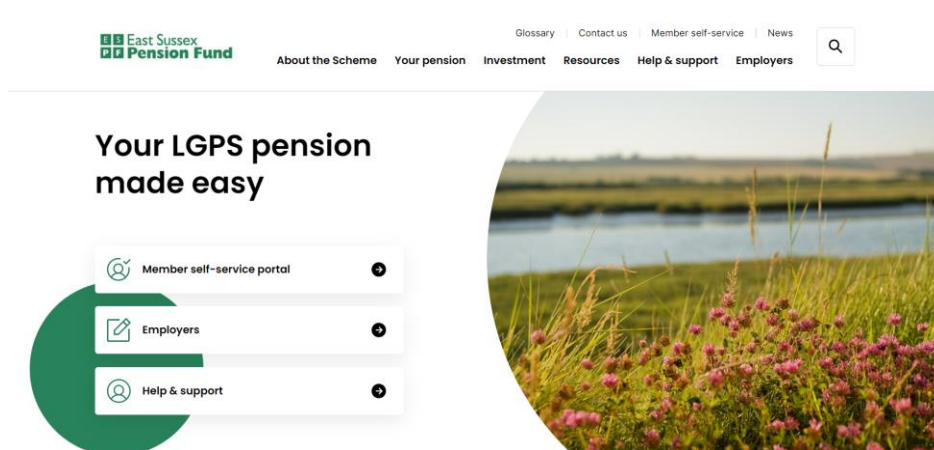
[Pension Terminology explained](#)

# Website

The East Sussex Pension Fund website is a great first port-of-call for pensioners. Around half of pensioners are aware of our website, but of the 50% who are aware, only half have actively used the site. The website holds a comprehensive range of information to support you in your retirement.

You can access the website by either:

- Clicking on this link - [Homepage | East Sussex Pension Fund](#) or
- Pressing ctrl + click on the picture below.



The Fund has implemented a range of changes to the website over the last year to try and make the journey as simplistic as possible. 94% of members who use the site cited understanding information as 'somewhat' or 'extremely' easy. 91% found looking for information 'easy' or 'somewhat easy'. We will look to continuously improve the website to aid navigation.

The following website pages which will be useful for active members of the Fund:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <a href="#">Homepage</a>               | From this page you can access/register/get help with 'My Pension' - the member self-service portal (and help if required), link to pension scam information, access the glossary and much more.   |
| <a href="#">Pensioners</a>             | A page dedicated to pensioners of the scheme with information on pension payments, death in retirement and frequently asked questions and answers. This page will also include our latest pensioner newsletter. The <a href="#">newsletter</a> is now produced digitally via the website so the most up to date information is always at your fingertips. |
| <a href="#">Forms and publications</a> | Here you will find forms, guides, policies and more.  |
| <a href="#">Help and support</a>       | Questions and answers, useful links, understanding pensions.  |

## Fund action

- We will look at all communication touchpoints to ensure that the East Sussex Pension Fund website is being actively promoted.
- We will continue to refine and simplify content (ensuring accessibility guidelines are followed).
- We will continue to apply more engaging design principles across the site.

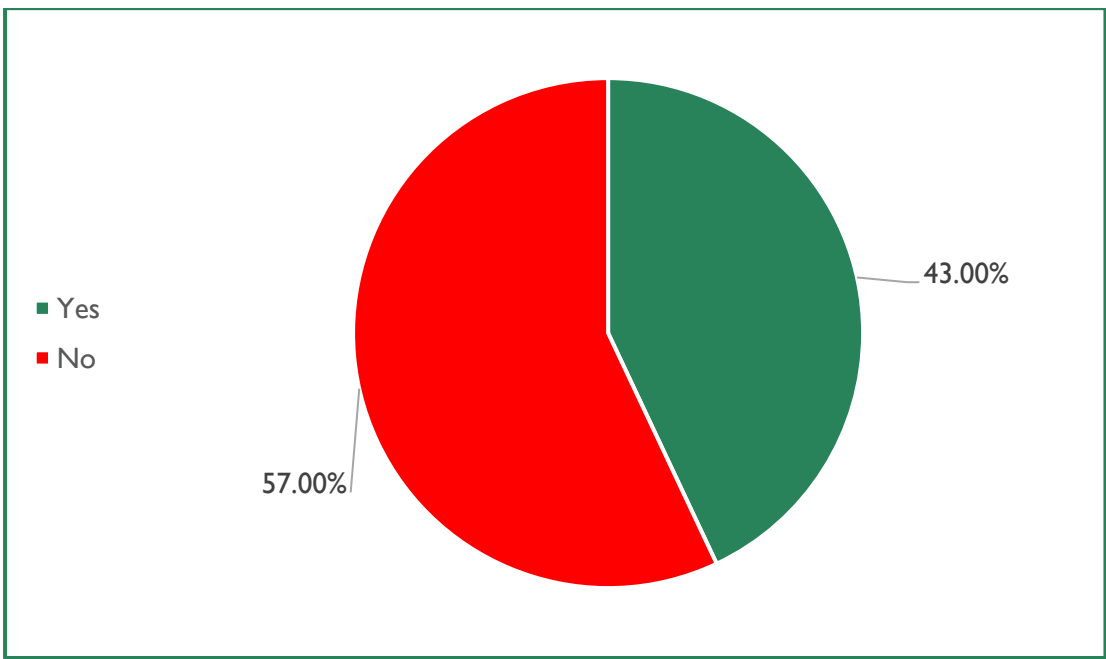
# Investment

Generating sustainable long-term investment returns is the Fund’s primary objective. It does so by investing across a range of asset classes such as equities, bonds, cash, and infrastructure using both active and passive management styles. Asset allocation is expected to be the Fund’s main driver of returns and risk over the long term. The ESPF Investment Strategy Statement describes the high-level principles governing the investment decision-making and management of the Fund. The statement explains how much we invest in each type of investment, together with the performance targets which we expect those investments to achieve.



We wanted to understand the interest pensioners had in our investment strategy. Around 57% were not interested, but 43% were.

## We asked if you were interested in finding out about the investment strategy of the Fund?



We received some feedback about responsible investment and request for more information to be available to those interested.

The Fund has a legal responsibility to pay pensions in line with the LGPS regulations and must make investment decisions for investment purposes to generate a return. The Fund takes responsible investment seriously and takes climate risk and other environmental, social and governance factors into account when investing with an Investment Manager and through its ongoing monitoring of investments.

The Fund has a wide range of documents published on the website, including the Investment Strategy, Statement on Responsible Investment Principles, Quarterly Engagement and Voting report, Stewardship Code report and Annual Report which includes the Funds Taskforce for Climate Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) report.

The Fund invests in impact funds that generate positive social or environmental impacts such as leading the transition by investing in renewable energy, electric vehicles, sustainable materials, pollution control or other growth sectors. In addition, the Fund invests in renewable energy projects through its infrastructure and private equity investments.

### **Support for pensioners**

We've done a lot of recent work in helping to bring the investment side of our work to life for members via this webpage - [Investment | East Sussex Pension Fund](#).

This page includes:

- The importance of investment
- How we invest – with a link to our detailed investment strategy.
- Access Pool - the Government introduced statutory guidance which required Local Government Pension Scheme Funds to work together to “pool investments to significantly reduce costs, while maintaining investment performance.”
- Responsible investment – our approach.
- Stewardship code report - stewardship is the responsible allocation, management, and oversight of capital to create long-term value for clients and beneficiaries. The Fund produces a quarterly report which explores our engagement activity through fund managers.
- Asset allocation and performance – where we invest money and how these assets perform.

### **Fund action**

- We will continue the work we have done on responsible investment and ensure that members are kept up to date with investment developments by reviewing and amending content on the dedicated [investment webpage](#).

## Thank you for your feedback!

A final note to say thank you for completing the survey and for the comments left about the Fund – whether positive or negative.



Every bit of feedback we receive is a chance for the Fund to revisit how we support members and investigate alternative ways of doing things. Your feedback really does matter.



[www.eastsussexpensionfund.org](http://www.eastsussexpensionfund.org)