

Jean Talking

"I was pleased to see so many of you at the Retired Members meeting on 30 June. I do hope you enjoyed the interesting talks. Since then I have attended a training day and a pensions committee meeting. Six Fund Managers gave presentations in addition to AON Hewitt, our Pensions Fund investment advisers.

I am sure you will be pleased to hear that the pension fund has increased in value by 2.1% during the last quarter to 30 June 2014 and increased by 11.3% over the last 12 months against a benchmark of 8.8%. Performance over the last 3 years is also very positive with the Fund increasing by 9.3% per annum compared against the benchmark of 7.1%. This good performance is due to the wide range of asset classes which the fund invests in, so as to diversify risk and provide more stable returns.

In conjunction with the Fund's investment advisor, Aon Hewitt, the Pension Committee is currently reviewing the strategic asset allocation of the Fund following the recent asset/liability modelling exercise undertaken following the Actuarial Valuation of the Fund. A further training session on this issue has been arranged for the next Pension Committee meeting in November.

The new combined P60, payslip and details of April's pension increase was successfully issued to you in April and was very well received, with minimal queries to the help desk. It is a much more cost effective way of issuing all the information to you.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the Annual Pensions Meeting on Friday 21 November at 10:00am at the Theatre Severn."

Jean Smith
Pensioner Representative

Accounts Online

Don't forget you can view the Funds full accounts for 2013/14 on our website.

Annual Meeting 10am Friday 21st November 2014 Walker Theatre Theatre Severn Shrewsbury SY3 8FT



Shropshire County Pension Fund is delighted to announce the date for this year's Annual Meeting

This year we will be covering:

- An update on the changes on legislation including the new 2014 scheme
- New tiers of governance and details of how members can get in involved
- How the fund has performed over the last year

We encourage all members to attend the meeting as it will provide an overview of key issues of interest and a chance to ask questions about the fund. Refreshments will be served after the meeting.

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.

Telephone:
01743 252130

Email:
pensions@shropshire.gov.uk

I would like to attend the Annual Meeting.

Name:

**Payroll
Ref No:**

Email:

Please return to: Pension Services

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

New Pensions Board Are you interested?

The government are introducing minimum governance and administration standards in all public sector workplace schemes.



The Shropshire Fund has had a Pensions Committee for many years, including a pensioner representative. In line with the new rules an additional Pension Board will have to be set up in time for the change in rules from April 2015.

The Pension Board is proposed to be made up of 4 representatives, of which 2 will be employer representatives and 2 scheme member representatives. All active, deferred and pensioner scheme members are invited to submit applications to join the Pensions Board. Applications will be subject to a selection process by the appointment panel; Claire Porter (Legal Monitoring Officer at Shropshire Council) and James Walton (Head of Finance, Governance & Assurance at Shropshire Council) or their deputies. As part of this selection process, applicants will need to be able to show that they have relevant experience and capacity, though full training will be provided to successful applicants.

The term of office will be for 4 years, with a possible extension for up to a further 2 years and it will meet a minimum of twice in each calendar year. Further information on the recruitment process and the key principles of the Pension Board and board member's roles will be available on our website in mid December: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk

How to Apply

If you are interested in applying please complete the short application form by 31 January 2015. The form will be available shortly on our website.

We will be asking you the reasons why you are the best person for this role and your relevant knowledge and skills. If you do not have access to the website, you can request this information by contacting the Pensions Team.

Telephone: 01743 252130

Post: Pension Services, Guildhall,
Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ.

Budget Changes

There has been a lot of interest expressed recently about the proposed changes to pensions due in April 2015. George Osborne outlined, in a written ministerial statement in July 2014, a massive overhaul to current pensions regulations. In particular, the new option to take your entire pension pot as a lump sum has raised significant questions.

Do the new rules apply to the LGPS?

In short no. As members of the LGPS scheme these changes will not apply to your pension. This is because the LGPS is a Defined Benefit scheme not a Defined Contribution scheme, such as a personal pension scheme. However, it is always useful to have a working knowledge of the difference between Defined Benefit and Defined Contribution schemes. On page 9, in case you have other pension pots, we have provided some information on the proposed changes and answer some of the questions we are most frequently asked.

In the meantime...

To prepare for the new rules a set of temporary changes were introduced in March 2014. These include:

- An increase from £18k to £30k as the overall amount of pension pots that can be taken as a lump sum.
- A reduction in the amount of income needed in retirement to access flexible drawdown from £20k per year to £12k per year.
- An increase in the amount of income that can be taken each year from a capped drawdown arrangement from 120% to 150%.
- An increase in the size of a small pension pot that can be taken as a lump sum from £2k to £10k.
- An increase in the number of small pension pots that can be taken from 2 to 3.

If you have other pension pots (non LGPS) we have outlined the changes below.

The Current Rules for Defined Contribution schemes

Under the current pensions rules there are limited choices as to how you can take your Defined Contribution pension. There is little flexibility and currently over three quarters of people opt to buy an annuity.

Defined Contribution Pension Pot

25% Tax-free lump sum

Trivial Commutation

If you are 60 or over and have pension savings of less than 18k this can be taken as a lump sum

Capped Drawdown Pension

You can take an annual income from your pension but there is a maximum amount (120% of an equivalent annuity)

Flexible Drawdown

There is no limit on the amount that can be withdrawn but you must have a guaranteed income of £20k per year in retirement

Annuity- An insurance product

A fixed sum of money is paid annually, typically for the rest of your life

Defined Contribution Pension Pot

25% Tax-free lump sum

Full or Gradual removal of money to be taxed as income

Annuity

'Drawdown' where pot stays invested and income is taken

The Proposed Changes

The proposed changes will come into force in April 2015. From this date, individuals will be able to take their entire Defined Contribution pension built up in a Defined Contributions scheme, as a lump sum whatever the size of the pot. The money can be taken in one whole lump sum or in smaller frequent sums over a longer period of time.

People aged 55 and over will pay their marginal rate of income tax on anything they withdraw from their defined contribution pot- either 0%, 20%, 40% or 45%. However, as before, 25% of a pension pot remains tax free.

For further information visit:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-work-pensions

Telephone the Department of Work and Pensions:
 0845 6060 265

Our New Look Website

In the spring issue of Intouch we informed you about the exciting new changes to the Pensions website. Our new retired members area is up and running. The site contains useful information about your pension and includes a feature which enables you to check your payslip.

A Basic Overview

For those among you who already use the facility the process hasn't changed.

Go to:

www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk
- Click on the 'RETIRED MEMBER' Tab- and scroll down the menu to the tab entitled 'VIEW YOUR PAYSIPS ONLINE' and follow the links as normal.

Website

www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk

An In-depth Overview

For those members who are less familiar with the changes from paper pay slips to the online version, we would like to give you a step by step guide on how to access your payslips.

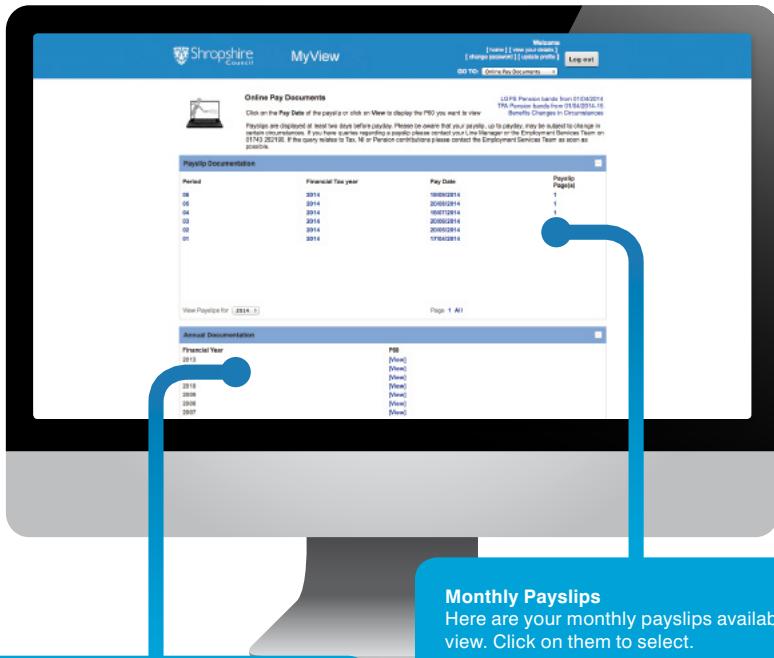
Step 1. Go to the search bar on your computer and type in the address to the pensions website www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk.

Step 2. You should have arrived on our website home page. Our website contains information on your pension, such as the next pay dates and previous versions of this newsletter. To access your payslips go to the 'RETIRED MEMBER' tab and click on the drop down menu.

Step 3. Next click the option 'VIEW YOUR PAYSIPS ONLINE'. This will take you to a page providing useful information about how MyView works and how to use it. Click on the link at the bottom of the page entitled 'LOG ON TO MYVIEW'.

Step 4. Enter your employee number and password into the box provided. For first time users you will need to create a password. Please note that if you haven't already provided us with your email address you must do so before logging on, you can do this by contacting the team via email or phone. Once we have recorded your email address you can create a password by clicking 'FORGOTTEN PASSWORD'. You will then be sent an email to your account, and, by following the instructions you will be able to set a new password.

Step 5. You should now be logged into MyView and you will be able to see your payslip. First go to the area entitled 'PERSONAL DETAILS', to ensure that your personal details are correct. Then select 'ONLINE PAY DOCUMENTS' to view your payslips.



Annual Documents

Here are your P60 Documents from previous years. Click on them to select.

Monthly Payslips

Here are your monthly payslips available to view. Click on them to select.

Once you have checked your account remember to log off

For members who have minimal experience using a computer, or who do not have access to a computer, we recommend giving Shropshire Online a call. They will be able to advise you on locations near you home that offer computer access and will be able to help you get started.

Website:

www.getshropshireonline.co.uk

Telephone:

01743 342177

Access

By switching to online payslips our aim was to make the service simpler and more efficient. If you have any suggestions on how we can improve the service please get in touch with the pensions team.

And remember, you will still receive a notification if your pension changes by at least £5 and one will arrive every April joint with your P60.

New HMRC Address

From time to time whilst receiving your pension you may have to contact the tax office



HM Revenue
& Customs

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has introduced a new system for people who need extra help to access their tax, tax credits and child benefit entitlements. This service came into force at the end of June 2014.

Getting help

HMRC's enquiry centres have been replaced by a new service of specialists offering help over the phone. This service is also supported by a mobile team of face-to-face advisors. There used to be an enquiry centre at Guildhall, this has now closed.

The new service is based around helping customers access the support they require and providing additional services for those with specialist needs. If you have a speech impediment, are deaf or hard of hearing you can contact HMRC by text relay or by text phone. Alternatively if you feel unable to use these services and require a face-to-face appointment, you can make an appointment through their website.

To access this service call the usual phone lines to get assistance. The numbers and website address are:

Tax

Telephone: 0300 200 3300

Textphone: 0300 200 3319

Tax Credits

Telephone: 0345 300 3900

Textphone: 0345 300 3909

Self Assessment

Telephone: 0300 200 3310

Textphone: 0300 200 3319

Child Benefit

Telephone: 0300 200 3100

Textphone: 0300 200 3103

For details of HMRC's other helplines go to www.hmrc.gov.uk/contactus

Textphone:

For customers who are deaf or hard of hearing and speech impaired

NB: Please have your National Insurance number with you when you phone

Do you have a lost pension?

With more of us changing jobs more often than ever before, it can sometimes be difficult to keep track of our pensions. Estimates put forgotten pension accounts at more than a million and it is thought there is £3 billion in lost pension benefits in the UK. Do you have a lost pension? Use the chart below for advice on how to locate it.



The Pension Tracing Service can help you locate or trace lost or misplaced pensions
Here are their recommendations:

Write down the dates you worked for the companies you had pensions with.

No Details?
Try This

If you don't have the current company details use the online search tool Companies House to find their last known details.

If your previous company has disappeared contact the scheme administrator or scheme trustees.

Not Worked?
Try This

Speak to the Pension Protection Fund. In the event of a business going under, they take over final salary schemes.

Contact Pension Tracing Services to provide you with the details you need.

Not Worked?
Try This

Calling around all of the pension providers. It's worth a try!

When you have the details you need contact the pension provider directly.
They will be able to tell you how much pension you have accumulated and keep you updated on the progress of your pension. Congratulations you have found your missing pension!

Useful Contacts

Pension Tracing Service: 0845 6002537

Companies House: 0303 1234 500

National Insurance Contracted Out Pensions Helpline: 0300 200 3507

Pension Protection Fund: 0845 600 2541

Keeping Us Informed Plan Ahead - Help to Prevent Overpayment of Your Benefits



Shropshire County Pension Fund participates in the National Fraud Initiative. This initiative requires that payroll and pensions data be made available for bodies responsible for auditing and administering public funds. As well as protecting the fund by picking up cases of fraudulent claims, it also helps ensure that beneficiaries themselves receive the money they are entitled to in the event of your death.

Not everyone wants to think about what would happen in the event of their death. However, to ensure your pension matters are dealt with promptly you can make sure that whoever is going to look after your affairs after you've died knows you have membership of the LGPS and have our contact details.

They can let us know by phone on 01743 252130. That way we can put into place as quickly as possible any new pensions which may arise – for example a pension for your spouse or partner, or child.

Being part of the National Fraud Initiative means we may share information with other public bodies, such as the Department for Work and Pensions, in order to prevent and detect fraud. All data will be dealt in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Code of Data Matching Practise 2008.

Further information about the National Fraud Initiative can be obtained by contacting Audit Services on:

Telephone: 01743 252081

Web: www.shropshire.gov.uk/privacy.nsf

Card Fraud Awareness

As part of a modern society the way we shop has changed dramatically. Cash and cheque used to be the currency of choice but every year more of us are choosing to do our shopping on our cards. Using a card provides you with extra protection if things go wrong- protection that you don't necessarily have if you pay by cash or cheque. However, despite the ease and convenience this type of payment provides us, it is also important to be aware of the risks. Whilst other crime statistics are falling card fraud continues to be a booming industry. Not only did fraud losses on UK cards total £450.4 million in 2013, but the money stolen often goes on to fund other criminal activities.

UK cardholders are not financially liable for fraud on their cards. However, card fraud is a real problem that costs the UK hundreds of millions of pounds a year. The Action Fraud department recommends:

- Keeping your pin number secret by concealing the keypad as you type in your number. An old chestnut but an important action to take. Your card may have been cloned but your pin number is still needed to access your bank account.
- If you feel that someone is watching you make a transaction, stop immediately and visit a different cashpoint. It is always better to be safe than sorry.

- Never store pin numbers and bank details next to your credit and debit cards.
- If the cashpoint swallows your card inform the branch where your card was lost and then contact your own bank if your card cannot be retrieved.
- Check your bank statements regularly. Any payments that you believe have not been made by you should be reported immediately to your bank.
- If you believe that your card has been cloned or stolen, cancel it and request a new pin number with your replacement card.

If you believe that you have become a victim of fraud contact your bank straight away. They will stop your account and help you to recover the money stolen. It is also up to the bank to involve the police, you only need to do so yourself if there was an accompanying crime such as if your purse or wallet is stolen or threats were made against you.

If you are unlucky enough to become a victim of fraud you are protected by The Lending Code. The Lending Code protects you from suffering any financial consequences providing you have not acted fraudulently or without due care.

By being aware of the risks and taking care to minimise the dangers you can reduce your chances of becoming a victim of card fraud.

**For more information contact
Action Fraud:**

Telephone: 0300 123 2040

Web: www.actionfraud.police.uk

Volunteers Required for the Shropshire ME Group

An article submitted by LGPS member
Maralyn Hepworth



I had to retire from teaching, at 48 years, due to ME/CFS. As CFS stands for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, it is often thought of an illness where the person is tired all the time. In fact, it is a neurological disease, and can manifest in a number of very debilitating symptoms, including for some, being bed ridden for years.

After 8 years of being on incapacity benefit, I managed to get back to part-time work, with the Council as a passenger assistant and freelancing as a Textile Artist, where I was able to balance my time and pace my energies. For a number of years now I have been on the committee of the Shropshire ME Group, where I feel that I can make a difference for others. The group are now looking to expand the skills base of the committee, and also to have active members for fundraising and in the community.

The group has been in existence for 25 years, and is run for and by people with ME and their carers. As such, our health is intermittent, and, although we would like to achieve more, this impinges on our abilities to do this. At present we have regular newsletters, run a yearly conference, hold a library of books, and have get-togethers around the county when health permits.

If you have time to spare, do get in touch. This would be a very rewarding volunteering opportunity where you could make a real difference.

Maralyn Hepworth

Telephone: 07516401097

Email: maralyn4@gmail.com

Web: www.shropshiremegroup.orhg.uk

**Want to include an article
in the next Intouch?**

Simply contact the Pensions Team

Health and Social Care Champion for Shropshire

An article supplied by Healthwatch Shropshire

Healthwatch Shropshire has been set up to act as the county's independent consumer champion for health and social care. Our remit covers hospitals, GPs, mental health services, pharmacists, opticians, community health services, residential care and children's services.

Healthwatch Shropshire gathers information and opinions from patients, carers, service users and the wider public about health and social care services across Shropshire, then makes sure those views are used to improve services for all.

We also provide information and signposting services to support the people of Shropshire in making choices about health and social care services and how to access them.

Healthwatch Shropshire has a statutory authority to visit locations where health and social care services are being delivered for the people of Shropshire, observe what is happening, and report on its findings. We are keen to hear from anybody who is interested in volunteering with us to be trained as a visitor but we also have



other volunteering opportunities in the form of community champions and specialist leads.

Individuals and organisations can become associate members of Healthwatch Shropshire. Benefits include receiving the Healthwatch Shropshire newsletter, being kept up to date on local health and care issues, participating in events, and nominating individuals to sit on the Board.

We are regularly out and about across Shropshire at various events so please come and meet us. Details are on our website.

Enquiries

Telephone: 01743 237884

Twitter: @HWSHropshire

Facebook: /HealthwatchShropshire

Web: www.healthwatchshropshire.co.uk

Severn Valley Country Park



Opening Times for the Visitor Centre and Tea Shop

April-October

Wednesday to Sunday
11am - 5pm

November-March

Saturday and Sunday
11am - 4pm

School & Bank Holidays

Open every bank holiday
and day of the school holidays
(except for Christmas Day and Boxing Day)

The park

Open every day from dawn until dusk.

Contact

Tel: 01746 781192

Web: outdoor.recreation@shropshire.gov.uk

Once again we have reached that time of year where the nights draw in and the sun is replaced by seemingly endless rain. One of the few delights of the season is to curl up in front of the fire with a hot drink and chunky jumper whilst we wait for spring to return. But just because summer has faded into autumn, our enjoyment of the countryside need not be dampened like the weather. Why not visit The Severn Valley Country Park, a wonderful feature of the Shropshire landscape.

The Severn Valley Country Park on the outskirts of Alveley, nine miles south of

Bridgnorth off the A442, is a place of natural beauty open to visitors all year round. It offers a range of outdoor activities, suited to the different seasons, in celebration of the countryside. Take an autumnal stroll through the woodlands and watch the golden trees shed their leaves, or discover the wildlife that truly comes alive through the winter.

From an unusual beginning to a happy ending, the Severn Valley Country Park has a lively history. The Park originated in the 1800s when coal mining began in Highley. Production later switched to the Alveley Colliery in 1936 until mining ceased in 1969.

Autumn/Winter Timetable 2014

October

Sun 5th Nordic Walking
 Thu 9th Medicine: Prehistory to Renaissance
 Sun 12th Nordic Walking
 Thu 16th 10 mile Guided Wyre Forest Walk
 Sat 18th Work Party –at Severn Valley
 Sun 19th Nordic Walking
 Sat 25th-Sun 2nd Spooky Halloween Trail
 Sun 26th Nordic Walking
 Tue 28th Fungi Foray
 Wed 29th Halloween Fun
 Fri. 31st Lantern Making & Ghost Story

November

Sat 1st Halloween Crafts
 Thu 13th 8 mile Guided Riverside Walk
 Thu 13th Shropshire Wildlife Talk
 Sat 15th Work Party at Eardington

December

Thu 4th 7 mile Guided Kingsnordley Walk
 Sat 7th Dec Work Party at Stanmore
 Thu 11th Nature & Conservation Talk

The Severn Valley Country Park has a lively history



The area was left badly scarred by spoil heaps and in desperate need of attention. Help came in the form of a reclamation scheme in 1986 and then in 1992 Severn Valley Country Park opened to the public, reclaimed as an environmental success story.

These days the Park offers a large selection of outdoor pursuits. There are plenty of waymarked trails for all abilities and a permanent orienteering course. There is also a wide variety of educational activities available to suit every generation and, for the younger members of the family, there are opportunities to go pond dipping or

to come face to face with Shropshire's hidden wildlife on a mini beast hunt.

And why not take the opportunity to unwind at the end of a busy day at the visitor centre and tea shop? The tea shop offers a wide range of freshly made sandwiches and homemade cakes. Hot chocolates and homemade soups are also available; perfect to banish that winter chill.

So, as you can see there is no reason to lock yourself indoors this season. Choose an activity and visit Severn Valley Country Park to dust away the autumn cobwebs.

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 8.30am to 5pm and Friday 8.30am 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.co.uk

Other useful contacts

Tax Office: 0300 200 3300 | **Outside the UK** 0044 1619 308 705

Department for Work and Pensions Tel: 0845 6060 265

Pension Credit Tel: 0800 99 1234

Website: www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/pensioncredit

**Do you need this magazine in an alternative format?
If so, please contact us.**