

Disaster Recovery Plan for Fund's Pension Administration System

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1. **Summary**
The report provides Pension Board members with an update on the Funds current disaster recovery plan.
2. **Recommendations**
Pension Board Members are asked to note the contents within this report.

REPORT

3. **Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**
 - 3.1 **Risk Management**
By ensuring the guidance and legislation mentioned in this report is followed and adhered to, risks to the Fund are minimised.
 - 3.2 **Human Rights Act Appraisal**
The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.
 - 3.3 **Environmental Appraisal**
There is no direct environmental, equalities or climate change consequence of this report.
 - 3.4 **Financial Implications**
Currently there are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any future change in costs as a result of procurement of a new server provider will be managed and met by Shropshire County Pension Fund.
4. **Disaster Recovery Plan**
 - 4.1 The team have in place a Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP). To ensure the plan is robust an annual test is undertaken. This ensures that the Pensions Administration System (PAS) can be moved on to and run on a backup server, in the event of the main server not being available. Currently the PAS is run from a server held at the Shirehall. The backup server is in Nuneaton.

- 4.2** The Team works with Shropshire Council's internal IT department, based at Shirehall, to test the DRP. The DR test is usually run November/December time. A test plan is agreed prior to the live date. Control tests are run prior to the live test date and the move of the PAS to the off site server. All of which is fully documented.
- 4.3** On the morning of the DR all users are locked out of the PAS and when all pre-tests have been completed, IT starts the move to the off-site mirror server. When they have confirmed this has successfully moved, members of the pensions team commence the tests and ensure access is obtained and the PAS is usable. During the last DR a member of the pension's team also accessed the PAS working from home to test if the mirror server could be accessed remotely. Once these tests are completed, IT are informed and they start the move back to the main server and when this is complete, pensions staff will run the tests again on the on site server. All tests are documented in a spreadsheet together with any document downloads and reports.
- 4.4** The most recent DR took place on the 13th December 2016. The process went well and the system was successfully transferred to the Nuneaton site and successfully transferred back again. It was proved that a user can access the mirror server when working remotely. However, the PAS run much slower on the mirror server and it took a longer amount of time to navigate around the PAS compared to normal use. The DR was tested with 3 users, therefore it may be difficult to connect many more users to this server if needed, based on current capabilities.
- 4.5** In conclusion, the mirror server would not be robust enough for all of the pension's team to access the system at the same time if required but nevertheless the PAS system was able to be recovered from the backup server. In the event of a disaster, meaning the PAS had to be restarted on the mirror server a small number of users could continue to use the system, but only for a limited time. All issues raised from the DR process are logged and investigated. The weakness of the backup server has been logged with IT. They are fully aware that it is not of the same quality as the day to day server in use.

5.

- 5.1** We understand we were the only team to perform a DR within Shropshire Council however, this may have changed recently. Going forward the Fund will be required to review its server arrangements and it may be necessary to look at external providers due to the lack of space available on the current server hosted by Shropshire Council.
- 5.2** Our test shows that the backup server is not of the same quality of the day to day server running the PAS and this is confirmed by the Councils own findings as reference should be made to an extract item number 9, from the Audit Committee meeting held on Thursday 15th September 2016. Minutes of the meeting can be found on the Shropshire Council website or using this link:

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=163&MId=3265&Ver=453>

Extract below from item 9: Audited Annual Statement of Accounts 2015/16 (appendix 2 – Annual Governance Statement, point 53.)

‘On the basis of the work undertaken and management responses received; the Audit Service Manager has qualified her overall opinion on the Council’s internal control environment. This is based primarily on the continuing numbers, and negative direction of travel, of the internal audit assurances provided on the IT infrastructure systems. These risks are already known to Directors and Members and are reflected in the strategic risk register. The IT infrastructure on which Council applications operate continues to present a clear risk to service continuity. This has now been the case for several years, and although it is acknowledged that significant resource and prioritisation has been applied to manage this risk, it was also accepted that it may take several years for the necessary improvements to be implemented and embedded sufficiently to attain appropriate assurance levels. The issues currently identified are sufficient to warrant qualifying the annual audit opinion to the extent that management must continue to prioritise implementation of plans to address the matters raised. Whilst identifying these control weaknesses and highlighting them to management, it should be said, there has been no evidence of significant IT business failure or other error that could result in a material misstatement in the Council’s accounts and reliance can still be placed upon it for that purpose.’

6. Service recovery

- 6.1** The Fund has recently updated its Service Recovery Plan and Business Impact Analysis to determine the key functions and resources required if a major incident caused the pensions team disruption of service.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

NA

Local Member

NA

Appendices