Workforce Strategy 2026–2029

Approved by the Pensions Committee XXXXX

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1. Purpose and Strategic Context

This Workforce Strategy sets out how the Shropshire County Pension Fund (SCPF) will ensure it has the **capacity**, **capability** and **resilience** to deliver its statutory and strategic objectives over the period **2026–2029**.

It supports the delivery of the fund's Medium Term Business Plan and responds directly to the increasing complexity of pension administration, governance requirements, regulatory change and technological transformation affecting the LGPS environment.

The strategy recognises that people are the fund's most critical asset and that sustained investment in workforce planning, development and succession is essential to maintaining service quality and managing risk.

2. Current Workforce Structure

The Shropshire County Pension Fund is administered by Shropshire Council and delivers pension administration and governance through a dedicated in-house team.

As set out in the Business Plan, the fund employs **39 staff (37 FTE)** covering pension administration, technical services, governance, finance and management functions.

The current structure (Appendix A) has evolved to meet operational demand but faces pressure from:

- Increasing scheme complexity and regulatory change.
- Reliance on experienced technical staff.
- Recruitment challenges within a competitive LGPS labour market.
- Growing expectations around digital delivery and automation.

This strategy therefore focuses on strengthening resilience within the existing structure while enabling flexibility and future growth.

3. Workforce Challenges and Risks

Internal planning documents identify a number of key workforce risks that this strategy seeks to mitigate:

- Difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled LGPS practitioners.
- Loss of corporate knowledge through staff turnover or retirement.
- Skills gaps created by legislative change and system developments.
- Pressure on service delivery during periods of change or absence.

Failure to address these risks could impact performance, regulatory compliance and stakeholder confidence.

4. Salary Benchmarking and Market Competitiveness

SCPF operates within local authority pay frameworks, which can limit flexibility when competing for experienced LGPS professionals. The fund will therefore:

- Continue to benchmark roles against comparable LGPS funds and local government pension teams.
- Use market intelligence to inform role design, grading and business cases.
- Consider non-pay benefits such as flexible working, career progression and development opportunities as part of the overall employment offer.
- Introduction of a career grade for Pensions Assistants.

When challenges related to recruitment or retention arise, the fund will collaborate with Shropshire Council's HR department to identify suitable solutions in line with council policies.

However, policy or practices that impede the ability to secure qualified candidates should not restrict the fund's efforts to address these risks.

5. Value for money context (CIPFA benchmarking – administration costs)

The fund takes part in CIPFA benchmarking to compare the cost of running LGPS administration.

The January 2026 administration monitoring report records:

- **Admin cost per member:** Shropshire **£30** vs average **£36**.
- **Net admin cost per FTE:** Shropshire **£53,500** vs average **£225,091.**
- **Members per FTE:** Shropshire **1,583** vs average **3,877**.

These measures provide useful context for audit assurance and prove the need to balance competitiveness with supporting value for money.

6. Learning, Development and Access to Qualifications

The fund recognises the importance of professional development in attracting and retaining staff and keeping high technical standards.

Over 2026–2029, the fund will:

- Maintain and enhance access to professional LGPS-related qualifications, including Level 2 and Level 3 pension qualifications.
- Support structured learning pathways aligned to defined career stages.
- Embed ongoing technical training to respond to legislative and regulatory change.
- Encourage knowledge sharing and peer support within teams.

This approach directly supports the Business Plan commitment to defined career pathways and structured training programmes.

7. Succession Planning and Knowledge Retention

Succession planning is a critical priority given the specialist nature of pension administration and the risk associated with loss of experienced staff.

The fund will:

- Identify key roles where specialist knowledge or leadership continuity is critical.
- Develop internal talent pipelines through mentoring, acting-up opportunities and development plans.
- Document key processes and technical knowledge to reduce reliance on individuals.
- Use team structures and cross-skilling to build operational resilience.

Succession planning will be reviewed annually as part of business planning and risk management processes.

8. Workforce Flexibility and Use of Technology

In line with the Medium-Term Business Plan, the fund will continue to explore the use of automation and system enhancements to:

- Reduce reliance on manual, high-volume processing.
- Enable staff to focus on higher-value and more complex work.
- Improve service resilience during periods of peak demand or change.

Workforce planning will therefore be closely linked to system development and digital transformation initiatives.

9. Implementation and Governance

Delivery of this Workforce Strategy will be overseen by the fund's senior management team and aligned with:

- Annual business planning and budgeting.
- Risk management and internal controls.

Performance monitoring and reporting arrangements set out in the Business Plan

Progress will be reviewed annually, with updates made where required to respond to emerging risks or changes in the pensions arena.

10. Conclusion

This Workforce Strategy provides a structured and proportionate approach to ensuring the Shropshire County Pension Fund has a skilled, resilient and sustainable workforce over 2026–2029.

By focusing on workforce planning, market competitiveness, professional development and succession, the fund will be well positioned to meet its statutory obligations and deliver high-quality services to members, employers and stakeholders.

Workforce priorities and actions (2026–2029)

The Business Plan includes a specific project to **Implement a Workforce Strategy**, with the context being a review of roles and salary benchmarking following work by external advisors, designed to ensure resilience, recruitment/retention and succession planning, the key actions needed for this work are:

Priority A — Implement a Workforce Plan (roles, structure, resilience)

- Confirm "critical roles" and single points of failure and put mitigations in place (see Succession Planning section).
- Ensure workforce planning is aligned to regulatory change workload (e.g., consultation outcomes and implementation requirements) and technology change.

Priority B — Pay, grading, and recruitment offer (benchmark-led)

- Use LGPS benchmarking to inform evidence-based discussions on grading, role design and targeted market interventions where justified.
- Request a pay review for Pensions Assistants that allows the opportunity to apply increments when role development criteria are met.
- Consider market supplement processes where recruitment evidence supports the need.
- Ensure recruitment and retention decisions are consistent with the fund's self-financing position for staffing costs.
- Implement focused strategies for roles that are difficult to fill (e.g. Senior Officers).

Priority C — Qualifications, capability building and career pathways

The workforce plan will emphasise defined career pathways and opportunities for professional qualifications. Access to the following qualifications will be available:

- **Level 2 Award in Pensions Essentials** (PMI accredited).
- **Level 3 Certificate in Local Government Pension Scheme Administration** (PMI accredited).
- **Level 4 Certificate - Investment Operations Specialist.**
- **AAT Level 2/3/4 Certificates.**
- **CIPFA** or other recognised accountancy qualification.

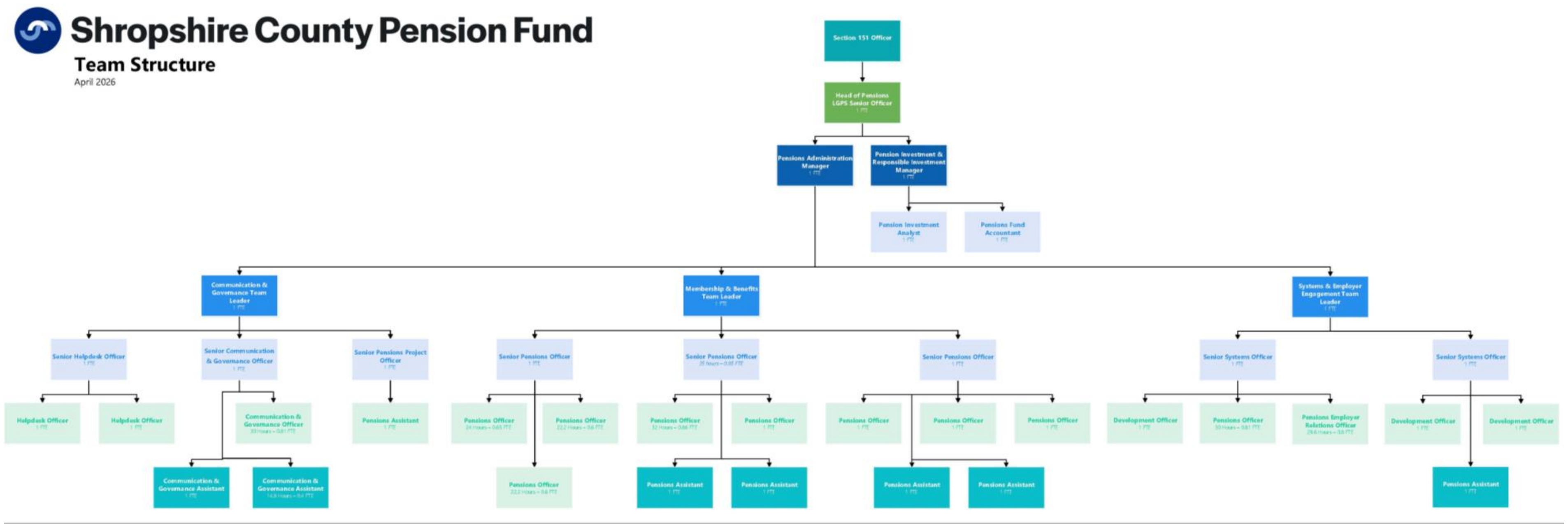
Consider an automatic salary reward/uplift for external course completion.

Monitoring and reporting (how we will track delivery)

workforce actions will be tracked through:

- Annual skills matrix review and succession coverage reporting.
- Training uptake and qualification progression.
- Annual review of workforce risks and control effectiveness, aligned to the risk register.

Appendix A — Pensions Team Structure (April 2026)



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Contact details

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To enable us to perform our statutory duty, we must share your information with certain bodies but will only do so in limited circumstances.

For more information about how we hold your information, who we share it with and what rights you have to request this information from the fund, please visit www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk.

If you can read this but know someone who can't, please contact us on 01743 252130 so we can provide this information in a more suitable format.

Office hours

Monday to Thursday	8:45am to 5pm
Friday	8:45am to 4pm

Helpdesk phonelines: (excluding Bank Holidays)

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday	10am to 4pm
Wednesday and Friday	10am to 1pm

Contact details

Email: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk/contact-us/

Website: www.shropshirecountypensionfund.co.uk

Tel: 01743 252130

Write: Pensions, PO Box 4826, Shrewsbury, SY1 9LJ

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