
REPORT TO:	COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM: 11
DATE OF MEETING:	31st OCTOBER 2019	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	FRANK McARDLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EXT. 5702)	DOC:U:\JAYNE\Commtee\COMMRE PLGO Annual Review 2019.docx
SUBJECT:	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN – ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2019 AND LGSCO UPDATE	REF: J Beech
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 To accept the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2019.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report will provide Members with a summary of complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ("LGSCO") against this Authority during the year 2018/19.
- 2.2 It will also provide an update on developments in the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman service.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 On 24th July 2019, the Council received the Annual Review Letter for the period 2018/19 and a summary of statistics on complaints.
- 3.2 The Ombudsman's Office made decisions on 7 complaints about the Council in 2018/19. Of these complaints, 5 were closed after initial enquiries, 1 complaint was not upheld and 1 complaint was upheld. In the upheld complaint, the investigator found that the Council had misfiled information which caused delay, which was fault, but decided that the complainant was not affected significantly enough to warrant further investigation.
- 3.3 The LGSCO does not provide detailed information about the statistics and, therefore, in order to provide some background information for Members, the Council's Ombudsman Link Officer has produced a table of complaint decisions, which is attached at **Annexe 'A'**. This gives a breakdown of the type of complaints received and a summary of the decisions.

LGSCO Developments

Complaint statistics

- 3.4 Statistics on an authority's compliance with recommendations made by the Ombudsman are now being included with the Annual Letter. The new statistics on compliance are the result of a series of changes the LGSCO has made to how recommendations are made and monitored to remedy fault found. The recommendations are specific and often include a time frame for completion, allowing the Ombudsman to follow up with authorities and seek evidence that recommendations have been implemented.
- 3.5 In line with usual practice, the LGSCO is publishing annual data for all authorities on its website, alongside the annual review of local government complaints. For the first time, this includes data on authorities' compliance with recommendations. This collated data further aids the scrutiny of local services.
- 3.6 No compliance data has been recorded by the Ombudsman for this authority during the year ended 31st March 2019. This is because no recommendations or remedies were suggested to the Council in relation to any of the complaints made during that period.

New interactive data map

- 3.7 In recent years, the LGSCO has been taking steps to move away from a simplistic focus on complaint volumes and instead focusses on the lessons learned and the wider improvements that can be achieved through the Ombudsman's recommendations to improve services for the many. Their ambition is outlined in the corporate strategy 2018-21 <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/about-us/our-aims/our-mission-and-objectives> and commits the Ombudsman to publishing the outcomes of investigations and the occasions that their recommendations result in improvements for local services.
- 3.8 The result of this work is the launch of an interactive map of council performance on the website <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance>. This shows annual performance data for all councils in England, with links to published decision statements, public interest reports, annual letters and information about service improvements that have been agreed by each council. It also highlights those instances where the authority offered a suitable remedy to resolve a complaint before the matter came to the Ombudsman, and the authority's compliance with recommendations made to remedy complaints.
- 3.9 The intention of this new tool is to place a focus on the authority's compliance with investigations. It is a useful snapshot of the service improvement recommendations the authority has agreed to and also highlights the wider outcomes of investigations to the public, advocacy and advice organisations, and others who have a role in holding local councils to account.
- 3.10 The LGSCO is the first UK public sector ombudsman scheme to provide compliance data in such a way and believes it will lead to improved scrutiny of councils as well as providing increased recognition to the improvements councils have agreed to make following the Ombudsman's interventions.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None directly arising from this report.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 A good complaints system is an opportunity for the Council to show that it cares about providing a good service, and that it genuinely values feedback on whether there are any problems which need attention. It is, therefore, imperative that we get feedback, not only through our own complaints system, but also from the Ombudsman, and that this information is widely distributed to show that this Authority takes complaints seriously and deals with them sympathetically.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 One of the roles of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is to investigate complaints about Councils from members of the public. Its aim is to get Councils to put things right if they have gone wrong and if this has affected members of the public directly.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The Annual Review Letter and the publishing of complaint statistics on the LGSCO website are useful additions to other information held by the Council, highlighting how people experience or perceive its services. They should also be seen as an opportunity to continue to improve the services offered by the Council.

8.0 Background Papers

Annual Review Letter 2019 from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman