

---

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>FULL COUNCIL</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 12</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021</b>	<b>CATEGORY: DELEGATED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>	<b>OPEN</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>FRANK MCARDLE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EXT. 5702)</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN – ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2021 AND LGSCO UPDATE</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	

---

## **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 To accept the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2021.

## **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 2020/21.
- 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 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021, the Council received the Annual Review Letter for the period 2020/21 and a summary of statistics on complaints.
- 3.2 The Ombudsman, Michael King, has commented that following a challenging year, maintaining good public administrations is more important than ever and hopes this feedback will provide the Council will the opportunity to reflect on its performance and plan for the future. At the end of March 2020, The Ombudsman took the unprecedented step of temporarily stopping casework, in the wider public interest, to allow authorities to concentrate efforts on frontline services during the first wave of Covid-19. Casework was later resumed 3 months later, in June 2020, in response to feedback that it would be unnecessary to pause casework again during further waves of the pandemic. Instead, the Council are urged to talk to the Ombudsman on an annual basis about difficulties responding to any stage of an investigation, including implementing recommendations, as clear communication remains key.

- 3.3 The Ombudsman's Office made decisions on 4 complaints about this Council in 2020/21. Of these complaints, 2 were closed after initial enquiries, 1 complaint was referred back for local resolution, and advice was given for 1 complaint.
- 3.4 The LGSCO does not give 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

- 3.5 This year, the Ombudsman service continues to place the focus on outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. It wants to provide the most insightful information it can and therefore has made several changes over recent years to improve the data captured and reported. The statistics are focussed on the following three key areas:
- 3.6 Complaints upheld – Complaints are upheld when some form of fault is found in the authority's actions, including where the authority has accepted fault before an investigation is commenced. A focus on how often things go wrong, rather than simple volumes of complaints provides a clearer indicator of performance.
- 3.7 Compliance with recommendations – The Ombudsman recommends ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice. The recommendations try to put people back in the position they were before the fault, and the Ombudsman monitors authorities to ensure they comply with the recommendations. Failure to comply is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning. In the 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, no recommendations were made to this Authority.
- 3.8 Satisfactory remedies provided by the Authority – The Ombudsman wants to encourage early resolution of complaints and credit authorities that have a positive and open approach to resolving complaints. Cases are recognised where an authority has taken steps to put things right before the complaint came to them.
- 3.9 The LGSCO compares the three key annual statistics for the Authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance. They do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils and London Boroughs. Further information on this Council's performance can be found at: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/south-derbyshire-district-council/statistics>

## **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 2021 from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman