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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 14</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2015</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:U:\JAYNE\Commtee\COMMRE PLGO Annual Review 2015.docx</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2015 AND UPDATE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TO THE OMBUDSMAN SERVICE</b>	<b>REF: J Beech</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	

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## **1.0 Recommendations**

1.1 To accept the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2015.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

2.1 This report will provide Members with a summary of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman ("LGO") against this Authority during the year 2014/15.

2.2 It will also bring Members up to date on developments in the LGO service.

## **3.0 Detail**

3.1 On 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, the Council received the Annual Review Letter for the period 2014/15 and a summary of statistics on complaints.

3.2 The Ombudsman's Office made decisions on 7 complaints about the Council in 2014/15. Of these complaints, 3 were closed after initial enquiries, 2 were referred back for local resolution, 1 complaint was incomplete/invalid, and 1 complaint was upheld and resolved.

3.3 The LGO does not provide detailed information about the statistics and, therefore, in order to provide some background information for Members, the Council's LGO Link Officer has produced a table of complaint decisions, which is attached at **Annexe 'A'**. This provides a breakdown of the type of complaints received and a summary of the decisions.

### **LGO Developments**

#### **Supporting local scrutiny**

3.4 One of the purposes of the annual letter to councils is to help ensure that learning from complaints informs scrutiny at the local level. Supporting local scrutiny is one of LGO's key business plan objectives this year and they will continue to work with elected members to help them understand how they can contribute to the complaints process.

- 3.5 The LGO has worked in partnership with the Local Government Association to produce a workbook (see link below) for councillors which explains how they can support local people with their complaints and identifies opportunities for using complaints data as part of their scrutiny tool kit. The Ombudsman encourages elected members to make use of this workbook.

[http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/7159167/PUBLICATION](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/7159167/PUBLICATION)

#### Single Ombudsman Scheme

- 3.6 In March 2015, the government published a review of Public Sector Ombudsmen. That review, along with a related consultation document, has proposed that a single Ombudsman scheme should be created for all public services in England. The LGO is supportive of this proposal on the basis that it would provide the public with clearer routes to redress in an increasingly complex public service landscape.
- 3.7 The LGO will advise that such a scheme should recognise the unique roles and accountabilities of local authorities and should maintain the expertise and understanding of local government that exists at LGO. The LGO will continue to work with government as it brings forward further proposals and encourages local government to take a keen and active interest in this important area of reform in support of strong local accountability.

#### Extending the jurisdiction of the LGO

- 3.8 The Government has consulted on a proposal to extend the jurisdiction of the LGO to some Town and Parish Councils. The outcome of the consultation is awaited, but the LGO is pleased that the Government has recognised that there are some aspects of local service delivery that do not currently offer the public access to an independent ombudsman. The LGO hopes that these proposals will be the start of a wider debate about how we can all work together to ensure clear access to redress in an increasingly varied and complex system of local service delivery.

### **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 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 decisions on the LGO 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 2015 from the Local Government Ombudsman