

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Review of complaints received by the Council and Annual Review Letter – Local Government Ombudsman 2015/16

Date: 29th September 2016

Author: Director of Organisational Development and Democratic Services

Wards Affected

Not applicable.

Purpose

To inform Members of the receipt of the Annual Review letter from the Office of the Local Government Ombudsman and the complaints dealt with by the Council through the internal Complaints Procedure during the year 2015-16.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the Council's arrangements for dealing with formal complaints full details of which are available on the website. The departmental analysis of complaints by Service Manager appears below. Members are to note that some of the columns will not add up because some complaints have not been dealt with entirely within the year and therefore fall outside the monitoring period.
- 1.2 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, the Council received 272 complaints which is a reduction from the 323 complaints received the previous year. The complaints are broken down into individual service areas as follows:

Service	Number of complaints received	Upheld/partially upheld at Stage 1	Not Upheld at Stage 1
Community Relations	2	2	0
Customer Services,			

Service	Number of complaints received	Upheld/partially upheld at Stage 1	Not Upheld at Stage 1
Communications and IT	39	11	28
Housing	10	1	9
Legal Services	1	0	1
Leisure and Culture	53	33	20
Parks and Street Care	2	1	1
Planning & Economic	32	4	27
Public Protection	21	5	16
Revenue Services	95	40	54
Waste Services	17	12	5
Totals	272	109	161

*two complaints still in progress

- 1.3 Where a complaint is not upheld in full or in part, the complainant may ask for it to be considered further under Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. 30 complaints were considered under Stage 2 between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016 which is a reduction from the 27 complaints considered at Stage 2 the previous year. The complaints are broken down as follows:

Service	Number of complaints considered at Stage 2	Upheld/partially upheld at Stage 2	Not Upheld at Stage 2
Communications	0	0	0
Customer Services and IT	0	0	0
Housing	2	0	2
Legal Services	0	0	0
Leisure and Culture	3	2	1
Parks and Street Care	0	0	0
Planning & Economic	13	2	11
Public Protection	4	1	3
Revenue Services	7	1	5
Waste Services	1	1	0
Totals	30	7	22

*one complaint still in progress

- 1.4 If the complainant is not happy with the response at Stage 2 he or she is entitled to refer the complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, 9 complaints were received by the Council via the Ombudsman, which is a reduction from the 14 complaints received the previous year. A summary of the decisions of the LGO appears in the table below.

Service	Decision of LGO
Housing	Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.

Legal	Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.
Planning Services	Closed after initial enquiries – no injustice suffered, no further action
Planning Services	Closed after initial enquiries – no injustice suffered, no further action
Planning Services	Not upheld: no maladministration
Planning Services	Not upheld: no maladministration
Planning Services	Closed after initial enquiries - out of jurisdiction.
Revenues Services	Not upheld : no maladministration.
Revenues Services	Closed after initial enquiries - no further action.

- 1.6 The Annual Review letter for the year ending 31 March 2016 is attached at Appendix 1. The statistics include all the complaints and enquiries received by the Ombudsman in 2015/16. Members are to note that the number of complaints and enquiries received do not match the Council's figures as a number of cases will have been received and decided in different business years. In addition, those categorised as 'referred back for local resolution' by the Ombudsman include those who are signposted back to the Council and therefore are not treated as an Ombudsman complaint.
- 1.7 Since April 2013, the Ombudsman has been publishing all decisions on complaints they receive. Decision statements are published on the Ombudsman website at www.lgo.org.uk no earlier than three months after the date of the final decision. The information published does not name the complainant or any individual involved with the complaint. The Ombudsman also retains discretion not to publish a decision, for example where it would not be in the interests of the person complaining to publish or where there's a reason in law not to.
- 1.8 In addition, the Ombudsman has published its review of local government complaints for 2015/16. The report provides complaint statistics for each English local authority, all in one place. A copy of the review is available on the Ombudsman website.

Proposal

- 2 It is proposed that Cabinet note the report.

Alternative Options

- 3 There are no Alternative Options.

Financial Implications

- 4 None arising from this report.

Appendices

- 5 Appendix 1 – Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter.

Background Papers

- 6 None identified.

Recommendation

THAT Cabinet notes the contents of the report.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 7 To alert the Executive to the contents of the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter and raise awareness of the complaints received by the Council during 2015-16.