

**Committee:** Governance, Audit and Performance Committee

**Date:**

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**Title:** Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2018/19

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## Summary

1. The annual review letter has been received from the Local Government Ombudsman summarising the complaints relating to the Council's services dealt with by the Ombudsman's office for the year ended 31 March 2019.
2. This report also details the complaints and compliments received by the council in the same period.

## Recommendations

3. To note the contents of the Ombudsman's annual review letter and the position with regards to complaints and compliments for the year ended 31 March 2019.

## Financial Implications

4. There are no financial implications arising from this report. There were no instances where the Ombudsman awarded compensation to complainants.

## Background Papers

5. The papers referred to by the author in the preparation of this report are mentioned in the body of the report and are already published.

## Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	Review reports are published on the Council's and the Ombudsman's websites
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal	Residents and users of the Council's services are able to complain to the

Implications	Ombudsman about the handling of complaints where the complainant is dissatisfied with the service or response received, within time limits
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

## Situation

7. The Council's annual review letter has been received from the Local Government Ombudsman and is attached at Appendix A. It lists nine complaints received.
8. In four cases the complaints were closed after initial enquiries and two of these cases were closed because the complaints were submitted late and there was no evidence of fault by the Council.
9. Three complaints were determined as 'not upheld' with the Ombudsman deciding there was no fault found against the Council. Two complaints were referred back for local resolution, these complaints were considered premature and referred back to the Council to complete the internal complaints procedure.
10. This is a typical pattern of complaint investigation by the Ombudsman and there is nothing particularly unusual or that stands out. The previous review letter for 2017/18 reported on nine complaints of which five were referred back for local resolution, one complaint was closed after initial enquiries and advice was given for one case. There were no upheld complaints in this period.
11. There are two cases that will appear on the Ombudsman Annual Review 2019/20 letter where the Council has been found at fault and has been required to apologise and pay compensation. Both cases relate to the Planning Service and are the result of incorrect advice to the complainants.
12. Attached at Appendix B is a summary of complaints received by the Council during the 2018/19 period to enable a contrast to be drawn between the number of overall complaints referred for internal investigation and the number then referred onwards for investigation by the Ombudsman.
13. These complaints are reviewed quarterly by the Council's Corporate Management Team in order to share any lessons learnt. In general these are small in number and make it difficult to identify trends.
14. It is acknowledged that the number recorded as 'complaints' does not represent the genuine level of complaints received by the Council. Issues of dissatisfaction raised directly with service are often apologised for and resolved without being formally recorded. Therefore it is reasonable to

assume the recorded complaints reflect 'stage 2' complaints where the matter has been escalated to a senior service manager.

15. Similarly the level of recorded compliments will be an under representation of the numerous occasions residents and customers recognise the excellent work of our staff.
16. Compliments are also reviewed and shared at all the regular staff briefings, where examples of staff 'going the extra mile' are showcased and staff more publicly recognised.

## Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
1 – full investigation of complaints referred to the Ombudsman is always undertaken	2 – in cases where fault has been found it might be necessary to provide a remedy to satisfy the complainant and in some cases changes to internal procedures followed by service areas	2 – where a change of process is required to meet a recommendation from the Ombudsman it may have some impact on service provision	As recommended by the Ombudsman – sometimes a review of internal practices may be required if significant failings in service provision are identified

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.