

## **10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER**

### **1. Purpose of the report**

This report provides details of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Annual Review of complaints for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

#### **Key Issues**

- The LGO annual review has not stated any concerns about the Authority's performance.

### **2. Recommendations(s)**

- 1. That the Local Government Ombudsman annual review letter in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.**

#### **How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?**

3. Quarterly reports on complaints received are considered by the Audit, Resources and Performance Committee as part of its agreed work programme. This is to give Members the opportunity to discuss lessons learnt and improvements made as a result of this feedback including from complaints which have been referred to the LGO. Learning from complaints received will contribute to one of our four cornerstones: 'Our organisation- develop our organisation so we have a planned and sustained approach to performance at all levels'.

#### **Background Information**

4. The Authority changed from annual reporting on complaints to quarterly reporting in 2011; however it was agreed that the annual review letter from the LGO would still be reported annually. Appendix 1 shows the LGO's annual review for the Authority covering the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.
5. The letter shows that the LGO received 3 complaints and made a total of 2 decisions in relation to the Authority during this period. It is important to note that these figures include enquiries dealt with by the LGO where they have offered advice on, made initial enquiries with the Authority or referred complainants back to the Authority. When the LGO refer complainants back to the Authority there is not always contact between the LGO and the Authority or the complainant may decide not to pursue their complaint with the Authority so we do not hold a record of these complaints. Of the complaints received and decisions made all were Planning and Development related issues. Appendices 2 and 3 show the benchmark figures for complaints and enquiries received and determined by the LGO for National Park Authorities.
6. As can be seen in Appendix 1 during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, the LGO took decisions on 2 complaints and of these:
  - a. 1 was closed after initial enquiries
  - b. 1 was not upheld
7. These decisions were reported to the Audit, Resources and Performance Committee via the quarterly reports on complaints. Both these decisions were included in the Quarter 4 report of the period 2016/17. In both these matters it was determined that no changes to processes or practices were required.

## **Proposals**

8. It is proposed that the details of the LGO annual review, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, be noted.

## **Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?**

### **Financial:**

9. We handle complaints within existing resources. However when a complaint has to be investigated it is often time consuming and distorts planned work programmes.

### **Risk Management:**

10. The following risks have been identified at this time:
- Failure to ensure action is taken to improve service or address a problem as appropriate in response to complaints received.
  - Failure to improve the way we handle and respond to customers making complaints.
  - Unreasonable cost in time and staff resource spent in dealing with complaints.

Action taken as a result of complaints received and our procedure for handling unreasonably persistent complainants help us to mitigate these risks.

### **Sustainability:**

11. The Authority's complaints procedure highlights that:
- All comments and complaints are treated in confidence and will not disadvantage complainants in any future dealings they might have with the Authority.
  - Everyone will be treated fairly.

### **Equality:**

12. There are no issues to raise.

### **13. Background papers (not previously published)**

None.

### **14. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - LGO Annual Review Letter 2017

Appendix 2 - Benchmark figures for complaints received by the LGO for National Park Authorities

Appendix 3 - Benchmark figures for complaints determined by the LGO for National Park Authorities.

## **Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

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