

12. OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REVIEW (RC)

1. Purpose of the report

This report provides details of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (the Ombudsman) Annual Review of complaints for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Key Issues

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

2. Recommendation

1. To note the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman annual review letter as at Appendix 1 of the report.

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 Ombudsman. 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 Ombudsman would still be reported annually. Appendix 1 shows the Ombudsman's annual review for the Authority covering the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.
5. The letter shows that the Ombudsman made a total of 4 decisions in relation to the Authority during this period. It is important to note that this figure includes 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 Ombudsman refers complainants back to the Authority there is not always contact between the Ombudsman and the Authority, in addition the complainant may decide not to pursue their complaint with the Authority therefore we do not hold a record of these complaints. Of the decisions made all were Planning and Development Management related issues. Appendices 2 and 3 show the benchmark figures for complaints and enquiries received and determined by the Ombudsman for National Park Authorities.
6. As can be seen in Appendix 1 during the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the Ombudsman took decisions on 4 complaints and of these:
- 1 was referred back for local resolution.
 - 1 was closed after initial enquiries.
 - 2 were not upheld.
7. These decisions, except the one referred back for local resolution, were included in the quarterly reports to Audit, Resources and Performance Committee for 2017-18 in quarters 1, 3 and 4. In all three of these matters it was determined that no changes to

processes or practices were required.

8. In the instance of the complaint referred by the Ombudsman for local solution there was no contact between the Ombudsman and the Authority so there have been no details to report.

Proposals

9. It is proposed that the details of the Ombudsman's annual review, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, be noted.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

10. 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:

11. 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 complaints help us to mitigate these risks.

Sustainability:

12. 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:

13. There are no issues to raise.

14. Background papers (not previously published)

None.

15. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter, 18 July 2018

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

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

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