

11. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2021/2 (JMC)

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 April 2021 to March 2022.

Key Issues

- **The Ombudsman's Annual Review has not stated any concerns about the Authority's performance.**
- **The complaint statistics provided focus on 3 key areas – Complaints Upheld, Compliance with Recommendations and Satisfactory remedies provided by the Authority.**

2. Recommendation

- 1. To note the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2022 at Appendix 1 of the report.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The Authority reports on complaints bi-annually, in Quarters 2 and 4 each year. These reports 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 will contribute to the Authority's outcome as an 'agile and efficient organisation'.

Background Information

4. The annual review letter from the Ombudsman is reported annually. Appendix 1 shows the Ombudsman's annual review for the Authority covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
5. The letter shows that the Ombudsman received four complaints and made three decisions in relation to the Authority during this period. Three of the complaints received were regarding Planning and Development and one was regarding Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation. These are the headings created and used by the Ombudsman when categorising complaints.
6. As can be seen in Appendix 1, of the three decisions the Ombudsman made during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021:
 - One was referred back for local resolution (Planning and Development)
 - Two were closed after initial enquiries.

Of these three complaints, two were dealt with by the Authority and were reported as follows:

One relating to Planning and Development (Reported at Min.86/21 for Stage 1, and Min.38/22 for Stage 2)

One relating to Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation (reported at

Min.38/21 for Stage 1 and Min.86/21 for Stage 2)

7. Appendices 2 and 3 show the benchmark figures for complaints and enquiries received and determined by the Ombudsman for National Park Authorities and provide an average marker of performance.

Proposals

8. It is proposed that the details of the Ombudsman's annual review, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, be noted and acknowledge that complaints can provide an useful insight about the Authority's performance, detecting early warning signs of potential problems and offering opportunities to improve service delivery.

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 complaints 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, Diversity and Inclusion:

12. There are no issues to raise.

Climate Change

13. There are no issues to raise.

Background papers (not previously published)

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2022, 20 July 2022

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

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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