



Report to: Standards Committee, 14th November 2016

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Subject: LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2016

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Standards Committee consider the Annual Review Letter (Appendix 1) of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) for the period covering 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 for information and comment.

2. Background

2.1 The LGO produce an Annual Review Letter at the end of each year which includes a summary of complaints statistics for the Council.

2.2 The data provided in the letter shows the complaints and enquiries the LGO have recorded, along with the decisions made with regards to Worcester City Council.

2.3 The numbers provided in the letter for complaints and enquiries do not match the complaints data that the Council hold and which was reported as part of the Council's annual performance report to the Performance Management and Budget Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in June 2016.

For example, the LGO include cases which they signpost back to the council but who may never contact us and therefore are not recorded in our data. Cases are also logged under the time period the LGO receive them or make their final decisions which may differ from the time period the Council receive and record them.

2.4 The information included in the Annual Review Letter is also published in the Annual Review of Local Government Complaints report which reviews the last year in local government complaints. This report was published on the [LGO website](#) on the 28 July 2016.

3. Complaints against Worcester City Council for 2015/16

3.1 The overall number of complaints and enquiries received by the LGO about Worcester City Council increased from 12 in 2014/15 to 14 in 2015/16.

3.2 The number of cases where a decision was made by the LGO also increased from 10 in 2014/15 to 18 in 2015/16. Seven of these complaints resulted in a detailed investigation and four were upheld.

Year	In complete / invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for local resolution	Closed after initial enquiry	Detailed investigations carried out		Total
					Upheld	Not upheld	
15/16	0	0	6	5	4	3	18
14/15	0	2	5	2	0	1	10

3.3 100% of complaint remedies recommended by the LGO were implemented. These were in relation to two upheld complaints where it was considered that the Council were at fault and that injustice had been caused.

3.4 Reports are made to each meeting of the Standards Committee on any formal reports received from the Ombudsman or when there has been an investigation which identified maladministration or a failure in a service. Details of any recommendations made and action taken by the Council are included in these reports.

4. Comment from Monitoring Officer

4.1 The increase in the number of enquiries received by the LGO, those where a decision was made and the number of upheld decisions in 2015/16 is a concern which the Council has sought to address by improving processes to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity to prevent further escalation.

4.2 Action will also be taken to increase effective use of feedback and lessons learnt to improve the services provided to customers in order to reduce the number of similar or repeat complaints being received.

4.3 The Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service held a Complaints Workshop in January 2016 to consider our corporate processes for complaint management and to agree a more consistent approach to dealing with and learning from feedback.

4.4 Following this workshop, an 'Effective Complaint Handling' training session was held in March 2016 for officers who deal with complaints within each Service. The training was delivered by the Local Government Ombudsman to provide independent, best practice advice but also included a session on the Council's own policy and procedures.

4.5 Feedback from the training indicated that, following the session, attendees felt that they had a better understanding of how to effectively investigate and respond to complaints and use feedback to drive improvement.

Ward(s): All
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Background Papers: [Complaints and Feedback Policy](#)