



**Report to: Standards Committee, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

**Report of: Monitoring Officer**

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**Subject: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2018**

**1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the Standards Committee consider the Annual Review Letter (Appendix 1) of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) for the period covering 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 for information and comment.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The LG&SCO 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 LG&SCO have recorded, along with the decisions made with regards to Worcester City Council.
- 2.3 The data provided in the letter for complaints and enquiries does not always match the complaints data that the Council holds and reports.

For example, the LG&SCO letter includes cases where they signpost the complainant back to the Council, but may never contact us and therefore are not recorded in our data. Cases are also logged under the time period the LG&SCO receive them or make their final decisions which may differ from the time period that the Council receives and records 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 complaints in the last year in the local government sector. This report is published on the [LG&SCO website](#).

**3. Complaints against Worcester City Council**

- 3.1 The overall number of complaints and enquiries received by the Ombudsman about Worcester City Council has increased from seven in 2016/17 to eleven in 2017/18.
- 3.2 The number of cases where a decision was made by the Ombudsman also increased from six in 2016/17 to eight in 2017/18. Two of these complaints resulted in an investigation.

Year	In complete / invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for local resolution	Closed after initial enquiry	Investigations carried out		Total
					Upheld	Not upheld	
<b>15/16</b>	0	0	6	5	4	3	<b>18</b>
<b>16/17</b>	0	0	3	1	0	2	<b>6</b>
<b>17/18</b>	0	0	3	3	1	1	<b>8</b>

- 3.3 One upheld decision was received against the Council. However, the Ombudsman's final decision was not to investigate the complaint because the Council had provided a proportionate response and there was not enough outstanding injustice to require a detailed investigation. In addition, the LG&SCO did not produce a report about this case.
- 3.4 The complainant was dissatisfied with the Council's response after it paid their housing benefit to their landlord rather than to the agent.
- 3.5 The Ombudsman found that there was fault by the Council but it had apologised, explained what went wrong and had taken action to ensure the mistake was not repeated. The LG&SCO considered this to be a fair and proportionate response.
- 3.6 This case was initially reported to the Council with a decision of 'Closed after initial enquiries - no further action', so was not reported to the Standards Committee.
- 3.7 The LG&SCO have since confirmed that there was an error in the recording of this decision description. In 2017-18, new decision reasons were introduced which allow recognition of circumstances where an authority provides a satisfactory remedy before a complaint is taken to the LG&SCO. In this case, there was an error in the way their system allocated the decision.
- 3.8 In conclusion, the Annual Report of the LG&SCO notes a low level of complaints received which demonstrates that matters are being addressed through the Council's internal procedures and only in a small minority of cases do complainants feel that their case needs to be escalated to the LG&SCO.

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