

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

25 September 2017

1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER

Submitted by: Monitoring Officer

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To inform the Members of the Committee of the Council's performance in relation to complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the report be received.

Reasons

Part of being an open and accountable Ombudsman service is having transparent decision making processes.

Background

- 1.1 The LGO provides an annual summary of complaints they have received against the Council. This annual letter is distributed to councils in July and covers the 12 month period from April to March. It includes statistics on the number of enquiries and complaints received by the LGO Advice Team.
- 1.2 Decision statements are published on the LGO website no earlier than three months after the date of the final decision. The information published does not name the complainant or any individual involved with the complaint.
- 1.3 Part of being an open and accountable Ombudsman service is having transparent decision making processes. The LGO will publish its decisions so that the public and bodies within its jurisdiction see the full range of decisions and can feel reassured that they are fair, thorough and impartial.
- 1.4 Publishing decisions also recognises the key role the LGO plays in helping to ensure that public services are accountable to the public, who use and fund those services. Greater transparency of the LGO's decisions means greater transparency of public services.
- 1.5 The LGO does however retain discretion not to publish a decision, for example where it would not be in the interests of the person complaining to publish or where there is a reason in law not to.

Issues

- 2.1 Last year, the total number of complaints and enquiries received was 33. This year the total number is 30.
- 2.2 Last year, the total number of decisions made was 35, of which 2 were upheld and 5 were not upheld. This year, the total number of decisions made has decreased to 28, of which 2 were upheld and 3 were not upheld.
- 2.3 It is considered that overall the Council is performing well in its response to complaints to the LGO. The largest numbers of complaints made relate to Benefits and Tax, and Planning.

Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities

The LGO service contributes to the Council's priority of delivering high quality community driven services.

3. Legal and Statutory Implications

There are no new legal or statutory implications.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

No differential equality impact issues have been identified.

5. Major Risks

There are no specific risk issues.

6. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications flowing from this report but the Council does face the risk of financial penalty should there be a finding of fault causing injustice in any future complaints.

7. List of appendices

Annual review letter
2 x spreadsheets