

Meeting of the Cabinet – 13th September 2017

Report of Chief Executive and the Lead for Law and Governance

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s Annual Review Letter 2017

Purpose of the Report

1. To note the Annual Review Letter for 2017 from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and information in respect of complaints received against this Council and dealt with by the Ombudsman’s office over the period from 1st April 1st 2016 to 31st March 2017.

Background:

2. Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is a copy of the Annual Review Letter of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the financial year ended 31st March 2017. The information included in the tables highlights the number of complaints and enquires received and decisions made. This includes information on complaints upheld and not upheld.
3. The summary of involvement on complaints by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are as follows;
 - The total number of complaints decided by the Ombudsman during this period was 68, of which 17 were subjected to a detailed investigation. The outcome of these detailed investigations was that 9 were upheld and 8 not upheld. The remaining Decisions were;
 - 38 referred back for local resolution
 - 9 Closed after initial enquiries
 - 3 Advice given
 - 1 incomplete or invalid
 - The number of Upheld complaints decided by the Ombudsman for Dudley continues to be low. When compared with all English metropolitan boroughs we continue to be in the best performing quartile. (Table 1 provides the benchmark data)

Table 1: Decision Upheld	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Dudley MBC	16	7	7	9
MET Quartile	2nd	1st	1st	1st
Best/lowest	4	4	2	3
MET Average	14	12	11	13
Worst/highest	43	41	71	63

- Attached as Appendix 2 is the summary of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman upheld decisions. These were in respect of Adult Care Services (5), Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation (2) and Education and Children's Services (2).
- Not Upheld complaints were in respect of Planning & Development (3), Education and Children's Services (2), Housing (2) and Adult Social Care (1).
- In respect of the complaints determined by the Ombudsman in the year to 31st March 2017, one public report against the Council was issued. This was presented to Cabinet Members on the 29th June 2017 and Members approved that the Strategic Director People address the issues outlined in the report.

Finance

4. There are no direct financial implications arising from the content of this report. Any compensation determined, arising from an investigation by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, is met from the relevant Directorate budgets.

Law

5. The Commission for Local Administration was created under Parts 1 and 3 of the Local Government Act 1974.

Equality Impact

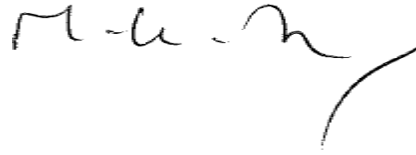
6. The complaints that were subjected to a detailed investigation did not have any equality impacts. The role of the Ombudsman affords a system of complaint and redress to members of the public who feel they have been subject to maladministration by the Council. Some complaints made concern children and young people and so, dependent on the remedy proposed, if any, there may have been either a direct or indirect impact on them.

Recommendations

7. That the report and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2017, be noted.
8. That the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Chief Officers continue to ensure that requests for information on complaints received are dealt with by the date requested to ensure that the Council's excellent performance on response times and remedy of complaints is maintained.
9. That all Directorates continue to monitor and review their complaints activity to ensure ongoing good practice and to achieve the speedy local resolution of complaints wherever possible.



Sarah Norman
Chief Executive



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Lead for Law and Governance

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Background Documents/ appendices

- 1) Appendix 1: The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter for the year ended 31st March 2017.
- 2) Appendix 2: 2016-17 Decision summary