

Title of meeting: Governance and Audit and Standards Committee

Date of meeting: 7 November 2014

Subject: Local Government Ombudsman Complaints 2013/2014

Report by: Head of Customer, Community and Democratic Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

To bring to the attention of the Governance and Audit & Standards Committee the Annual Review by the Local Government Ombudsman dated July 2014 regarding the complaints it has considered against Portsmouth City Council for the year 2013/2014.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the report be noted.

3. Background

The local government ombudsman's annual review provides a summary of the complaints they have dealt with regarding Portsmouth City Council. It includes comments of the authority's performance and complaint handling arrangements, to assist with service improvements.

This year, out of a total of 20,306 complaints, the LGO registered 18,436 new complaints and enquiries specifically about local authorities. In comparison to the previous year:

- complaints about benefits and tax increased by 26%
- complaints about local authority adult social care increased by 16%

The two areas where the LGO was more likely to uphold complaints in detailed investigations were also in benefits and tax (49%), and adult social care (48%).

Housing complaints to the LGO also decreased by 39%, although this was an expected result of all new complaints about councils' role as social landlords becoming the responsibility of the Housing Ombudsman Service in April 2013.

Complaints about Portsmouth City Council:

The Local Government Ombudsman received 67 complaints about Portsmouth City Council during 2013/2014, compared with 19 in 2012/2013 and 53 in 2011/2012. Of these, 20 cases were closed following initial enquiries, 24 were referred back to Portsmouth City Council for local resolution, with formal enquiries being carried out in 15 cases. Only 3 complaints were upheld.

The three upheld cases were remedied either during the investigation or as a result of an investigation by the ombudsman. These are termed as 'local settlements' and are where, during the course of an investigation the council takes or agrees to take some action which the Local Government Ombudsman considered to be a satisfactory conclusion to the complaint.

The following actions have been agreed as a direct result of complaints received.

Adult Social Care agreed to:

- Apologise for a nursing homes failure to involve next of kin in decisions regarding end of life care.

Financial Services agreed to:

- Review a contact restriction placed on a resident using the Financial Assessments and Benefits service. The LGO believed that the restriction to be too severe.

Corporate Assets and Business standards agreed to:

- Pay Mr X £150 to acknowledge that faults by the Council caused delays and avoidable frustration, putting Mr X to extra time and trouble to pursue the issue.

4. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as this report is for information only.

5. Legal Implications

A key role of the Committee is to review Ombudsman's complaints on an annual basis and where appropriate to hold the Council and its services to account.

6. Finance Comments

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report other than that expenditure that has already been made.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

- Appendix one: 14 01 29 - Adult Social Care
- Appendix two: 14 04 02 - Finance
- Appendix three: 14 05 29 - Corporate Assets and Business Standards

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Review of Local Government Complaints 2013-14	http://www.lgo.org.uk/news/2014/jul/ombudsman-publishes-local-authority-complaint-statistics-new-report/