



**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

**MEMBERS UPDATE - 2022/23
ISSUE: 2**

Article of: Legal & Democratic Services Manager

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SUBJECT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMEN – STATISTICS 2021/22

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

1.1 To inform Members of the Council's performance in respect of the Local Government Ombudsmen statistics 2021/22.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council is overseen by two ombudsmen following changes brought about by the Localism Act 2011.

2.2 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) deals with complaints by Council housing tenants about matters such as estate management, repairs to Council house properties, rent and service charges, possession proceedings and mutual exchanges.

2.3 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) deals with all other complaints against the Council across all the services it provides, including complaints by Council housing tenants about matters such as housing improvement grants, homelessness and statutory noise nuisance. The Council's response to enquiries and complaints received from the LGSCO are co-ordinated by the Legal & Democratic Services Manager, and the Electoral Services Manager.

2.4 In July 2022 the LGSCO published its annual review letter which provides a summary of statistics on enquiries and complaints made in respect of the Council for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The annual review letter can be found at Appendix 1.

2.5 At the time of publication, the HO had not published its figures for 2021/22.

3.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN PERFORMANCE-2021/22

3.1 During 2021/22 the LGSCO made decisions on 16 enquiries and complaints about the Council. This is 7 more than the previous year.

- 3.2 Of those 16 matters, 4 were referred back to the Council for local resolution (because the Council had not had an opportunity to properly consider the enquiry or complaint). 8 were closed after initial enquires as without merit or outside of the remit of the LGSCO. 4 formal investigations were completed during this period, of which 2 were not upheld and 2 were upheld.
- 3.3 Of the 2 upheld cases, 1 related to an anti-social behaviour case and the other to allotments. In the former, an apology from the Council was deemed sufficient remedy. In the latter case, the Council was asked to review and revise its tenancy agreements and complaint processes for allotment sites. Please contact the Electoral Services Manager for further information on these cases.
- 3.4 Using information available from the LGSCO website, the table at Appendix 2 allows a comparison of the Council's performance with the 11 other non-unitary district councils within Lancashire. Across Lancashire there were 31 detailed investigations (average 2.6 per authority) of which 19 (average 1.6 per authority) were upheld, which is more than double the amount for the previous year.
- 3.5 Whilst enquiries and investigations are up for West Lancashire, the same trend is repeated across Lancashire, particularly for investigations, and can be explained in part by a build up in cases during the initial phases of the pandemic when the LGSCO temporarily ceased operations during lockdown.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this article and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Investigating and co-ordinating responses to enquiries and complaints made to the Ombudsmen takes officer time for the Electoral Services Manager and for the service area or multiple areas to which the complaint or enquiry is directed. Given the importance to the Council in satisfactorily resolving enquiries and complaints made by service users this work stream will continue to receive a high priority.

6.1 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This article is for information only and makes no recommendations. It therefore does not require a formal risk assessment and no changes have been made to risk registers as a result of this article.

7.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Article.

Equality Impact Assessment

This article is for information only and does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and/or stakeholders. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review Letter – West Lancashire Borough Council – 2021/22

Appendix 2: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - Table of Detailed Investigations – Lancashire Non-Unitary Councils – 2021/22