



Cabinet

Item
9(i)

7 September 2016

Report of	Monitoring Officer	Author	Andrew Weavers ☎ 282213
Title	Local Government Ombudsman – Annual Review 2015/2016		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report request the Cabinet to note the Local Government Ombudsman’s Annual Review for 2015/2016

1. Decision Required

- 1.1 To note the contents of the Local Government Ombudsman’s Annual Review Letter for 2015/2016.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To inform the Cabinet of the number of complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to Colchester during 2015/2016.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 No alternative options are presented.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Local Government Ombudsman issues an Annual Review Letter to each local authority. The Annual Review Letter for Colchester for the year ending 31 March 2016 is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 4.2 It is worth noting that anyone can choose to make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. Accordingly, the number of complaints is not an indicator of performance or level of customer service. In most instances there was no case to answer. The Local Government Ombudsman will normally insist that the Council has the opportunity to resolve the complaint locally through its own complaints procedure before commencing its own investigation.
- 4.3 The Governance and Audit Committee has an overview of Local Government Ombudsman investigations and the contents of the Annual Review will be reported to the Committee in due course.

5. Key Headlines

- 5.1 There were no findings of maladministration against the Council and no formal reports were issued.
- 5.2 In 2015 /16 the Council received 243,775 customer contacts. The Local Government Ombudsman in the same period received 25 complaints and enquires in relation to how

the Council had dealt with its customers. This is a reduction from the previous year's figure of 30.

5.3 The Local Government Ombudsman made 23 decisions. Of which:

- 12 were referred back for local resolution,
(Referred back to the Council to enable it to deal with the complaint via its own complaint procedures)
- 4 were closed after initial enquiries,
- 3 advice given,
- 2 incomplete or invalid,
- 1 not upheld,
- 1 upheld.

(The Local Government Ombudsman decided that the Council had been at fault in how it acted and the fault may or may not have caused injustice to the complainant, or where the Council accepted that it needed to remedy the complaint before the Local Government Ombudsman made a finding on fault. If the Local Government Ombudsman decided there was fault and it caused an injustice to the complainant, usually it will have recommended the Council take some action to address it).

5.4 The case which the Local Government Ombudsman upheld was in relation to a case where a landlord complained that the Council did not help them claim direct payments when their tenant was in arrears with rent. The Local Government Ombudsman found that the Council had not followed its processes and accordingly the Council was at fault. However the Council had remedied the fault by apologising to the landlord.

6. Financial Considerations

6.1 No direct implications other than mentioned in this report.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 The lessons learnt from complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman link in with our Strategic Plan aims to be efficient accessible, customer focused and always looking to improve. Having an effective complaints process helps us to achieve the Strategic Plan's themes of a vibrant, prosperous, thriving and welcoming Borough.

8. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

8.1 No direct implications.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 Details of the Annual Review Letter are published on the Local Government Ombudsman's website and will also be published on the Council's website.

10. Consultation, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications

10.1 No direct implications.