

19 September 2017

Report of	Monitoring Officer	Author	Andrew Weavers 282213
Title	Local Government & Social care Ombudsman – Annual Review 2016/2017		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report request the Committee to note the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review for 2016/2017

1. Decision Required

- 1.1 To note the contents of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter for 2016/2017.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 The Local Government Ombudsman have recently changed their name to Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman to reflect the fact that since 2010 they have also had jurisdiction over all registered adult social care providers.
- 2.2 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman issues an Annual Review Letter to each local authority. The Annual Review Letter for Colchester for the year ending 31 March 2017 is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 It is worth noting that anyone can choose to make a complaint to the Local Government & Social Care 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 & Social Care 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.
- 2.4 The contents of the Annual review was reported to Cabinet on 5 September when they noted the report.

3. Key Headlines

- 3.1 There were no findings of maladministration against the Council and no formal reports were issued.
- 3.2 In 2016 /17 the Council received 250,386 direct customer contacts in the customer services area. However this figure does not include ad hoc customer contacts across the organisation. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman in the same period received 16 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 25.
- 3.3 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman made 13 decisions. Of which:

- 4 were referred back for local resolution,
(Referred back to the Council to enable it to deal with the complaint via its own complaint procedures)
- 5 were closed after initial enquiries,
- 1 advice given,
- 0 incomplete or invalid,

3 detailed investigations were undertaken. Of which:

- 2 not upheld,
- 1 upheld.
(The Local Government & Social Care 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 & Social Care Ombudsman made a finding on fault. If the Local Government & Social Care 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).

3.4 The upheld case was in relation to a complaint regarding processing of housing applications. The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman upheld the complaint because of two instances of fault by the Council in the way that it processed the applications. However the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman determined that there was no outstanding injustice and, overall, the Council had correctly dealt with the case.

4. Financial Considerations

4.1 No direct implications other than mentioned in this report.

5. Strategic Plan References

5.1 The lessons learnt from complaints to the Local Government & Social Care 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.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

6.1 No direct implications.

7. Publicity Considerations

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

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

8.1 No direct implications.