

**Meeting of the Cabinet – 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2014**

**Report of the Director of Corporate Resources**

**The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2014**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To note the Annual Review Letter for 2014 from the Local Government Ombudsman and information in respect of complaints received against this Council and dealt with by the Ombudsman's office over the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2014.

**Background**

2. Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is a copy of the Annual Review Letter of the Local Government Ombudsman for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.

As indicated in the letter this is the first full year of recording complaints under their new business model so the figures shown in the table, also attached, will not be directly comparable to previous years. Details of the descriptions used in respect of decisions made is also attached.

3. Based on information held by the Council however, the following details can be given:-
  - The number of complaints investigated in 2014 – 19 – has reduced from the 25 considered in 2013.
  - Of the complaints received, 7 were in respect of education and children's services (1 complainant made 3 complaints relating to school appeals) 4 were in respect of housing, (from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2013, the Housing Ombudsman Service also dealt with some types of housing complaint), 7 in respect of various Directorate of the Urban Environment activities, for example planning and development, allotments and trees and 1 in respect of adult care services.
  - In respect of the 3 complaints upheld, 1 involved alleged noise nuisance from a neighbouring property which was remedied by the Council agreeing to undertake noise monitoring; another was a housing matter remedied by the award of £250 to the complainant and a recognition of faults in the way the Council dealt with information received on housing applications and the third was an adult care services case regarding top up fees for residential care remedied by the payment of a £2,000 contribution to legal fees and of £200 to the person concerned.

## **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 Ombudsman, is met from existing Directorate budgets.

## **Law**

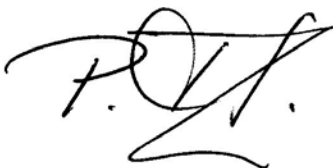
5. The Commission for Local Administration was created under Parts I and 3 of the Local Government Act 1974.

## **Equality Impact**

6. This report accords with the Council's Equality Policy. 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 of the 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 information contained in the report, and Appendix to the report, submitted be noted and that the Chief Executive and Directors be requested to:-
  - (a) Review their internal arrangements, as appropriate; and
  - (b) Continue to ensure that requests for information on complaints received are dealt with by the date requested. This will ensure that responses can be submitted to the Ombudsman's office within the timescale set and the Council's excellent performance on response times can be maintained.
8. That all Directorates continue to impose rigorous monitoring of complaint activity to ensure ongoing good practice and a continued reduction in complaints being received.
9. That the Annual Review Letter be posted on the Council's website.



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**Director of Corporate Resources**

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.