



COUNCIL – 11TH OCTOBER 2016

SUBJECT: ANNUAL LETTER FROM PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES 2015-2016

REPORT BY: INTERIM HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The attached report was presented to the Standards Committee on the 27th September 2016. The Annual Letter, received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, provides a breakdown of all complaints received and investigated by his Office during 2015/16 and the response times to requests for information.
- 1.2 The Standards Committee noted that in relation to Caerphilly, the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman compared with the local authority average adjusted for population distribution is slightly higher at 56 compared with 52. Whilst there was an increase in the number of complaints none were taken into investigation.
- 1.3 The Committee was informed that the figures show that the Authority's largest area of complaints is Housing. This data has been analysed and of the twelve complaints relating to Housing, seven were made prematurely i.e. had been referred to the Ombudsman before exhausting the Council's Corporate Complaints Process. Practically it is not possible to prevent premature referrals to the Ombudsman. The Council's Complaints Policy is available via the Council's web site and a hard copy booklet readily available to the public. The remaining five were not taken into investigation.
- 1.4 Members noted that overall 17 premature complaints were received by the Ombudsman. This is equal to the Local Authority average but as mentioned above there is nothing further that can be done by the Council to prevent premature referrals.
- 1.5 Members noted the reference is made in the Annual Letter to the increase in complaints in relation to Adult Social Services where the figure increased to five from three. This data was reviewed, three were not investigated, one was premature and one was resolved under the Quick Fix arrangements.
- 1.6 As mentioned earlier no complaints were taken to investigation during 2015/16 and therefore there are no relevant response times in Section E.
- 1.7 The Ombudsman has "upheld" one report against the Council issued in April 2015, which has been the subject of Reports to the Standards Committee. In addition the Ombudsman has not upheld one report issued in June 2015 details of which were set out in Appendix 2 of the report.
- 1.8 There have been two quick fixes which are contained in the case book summaries, which for members ease of reference are included at Appendix 3 to the attached Report.

- 1.9 Details of the Code of Conduct complaints for elected Members will be found at Section F of the Annual Letter. There were no code of conduct complaints made against members of Caerphilly County Borough Council during 2015/16.
- 1.10 The Standards Committee noted the content of the amended Annual Letter and were advised that it will be presented to Council.
- 1.11 Members are asked to note the content of the amended Annual Letter, received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Author: Lisa Lane, Solicitor

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Standards Committee – 27th September 2016