



COUNCIL - 7TH OCTOBER 2014

SUBJECT: ANNUAL LETTER FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES 2013-14

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 1.1 The attached report was presented to the Standards Committee on 23rd September 2014. The Annual Letter, received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, provides a breakdown of all complaints received and investigated by his Office during 2013/14 and the response times to requests for information.
- 1.2 The Standards Committee noted that there has been decrease in the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman compared with 2012/13 whilst the number of complaints investigated has remained at the same level. Both figures are below the local authority average. The figures show that the Ombudsman has received an above average number of complaints relating to Housing whilst there has been a noticeable drop in the number of complaints relating to Planning and Building Control.
- 1.3 In relation to the number of Housing complaints, Members noted that the Ombudsman has stated that *"as with previous exercises the figures for 2013/14 have not been adjusted to take account of the transfer of housing stock. However it is noted that there is likely to be a higher proportion of Housing complaints where local authorities have retained their housing stock"*. In this respect the Members were reminded that this Authority has retained its housing stock.
- 1.4 The Committee were informed that the second paragraph of the Annual Letter makes reference to "a noticeable increase in social services complaints". It was noted that whilst there has been an increase in Caerphilly, the Council is still below the Wales average. With regard to the new statutory social services complaints procedure, this was implemented in August. The new procedure reduces the numbers of stages prior to a referral to the Ombudsman from three to two. It is recognised that this change has the potential to increase the number of referrals to the Ombudsman and the relevant Officers are actively monitoring this issue.
- 1.5 With regards to the data, it was noted that the graph on page 8 indicates that all responses were received more than four weeks after the request. This data relates to two complaints investigated by the Ombudsman. Following clarification with the Ombudsman it has been ascertained that the information is incorrect, one complaint was responded to within four weeks, the second was responded to within four weeks, but unfortunately the response was received one day late, hence is correctly referred to in the data. In the circumstances the Council has asked the Ombudsman to issue an amended Letter to reflect the correct response time
- 1.6 The Standards Committee noted the content of the Annual Letter and were advised that it will be presented to Council.
- 1.7 Members are asked to note the content of the Annual Letter, received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Standards Committee – 23rd September 2014 (agenda item no 4 refers).