

Report of:	Meeting	Date	Item No.
Cllr David Henderson, Leader of the Council, and Marianne Hesketh, Service Director Performance and Innovation	Cabinet	5 September 2018	6

Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2017/18

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To consider the Annual Review letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) for 2017/18, attached at Appendix A.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Learn from the outcome of complaints made to the LGO to improve our services and underpin effective working relationships between the council and the LGO's office.
- 2.2 Support greater transparency and democratic scrutiny of local complaint handling and ensure effective local accountability of public services.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the comments made by the LGO in the Annual Review Letter.

4. Background

- 4.1 This annual review provides a summary of statistics on the complaints made to the LGO about Wyre for the year ended 31 March 2018. The data that the LGO has provided shows the complaints and enquiries they have received, along with the decisions they have made.
- 4.2 Last year the LGO provided for the first time statistics on how the complaints they upheld against Wyre were remedied. This year's letter, again, includes a breakdown of upheld complaints to show how they were remedied. This includes the number of cases where the LGO's recommendations remedied the fault and the number of cases where the LGO decided Wyre had offered a satisfactory remedy during the local

complaints process. In these latter cases the LGO provides reassurance that the authority had satisfactorily attempted to resolve the complaint before the person came to them.

- 4.3** Last year, the LGO highlighted its plans to move away from a simplistic focus on complaint volumes and instead turn their focus onto the lessons learned and the wider improvements they can achieve through their recommendations to improve services for the many. The LGO will be providing a broader range of data for the first time in next year's letters, as well as creating an interactive map of local authority performance on its website.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 Enquiries and complaints received

During the year the Advice Team received 17 complaints and enquiries about the council in the 12 months up to 31 March 2018. This is an increase of four complaints when compared to those received by the LGO in 2016/17.

5.2 Complaint outcomes

The number of decisions made in the year will not be the same as the number of complaints received by the LGO Advice Team because some complaints decided in 2017/18 will have been received in the previous year, and some sent to the Investigative Team during 2017/18 will be ongoing. However 18 decisions were made in total.

It must also be recognised that the statistics in this letter do not match the figures we hold. However the LGO is confident that it is an accurate representation of the data it holds for the last 12 months. The LGO suggested that the variation may be attributable to the fact that an element of the LGO's registered complaints received for Wyre will have been premature complaints that it referred back for a local resolution, but which the complainant may not have pursued with the council.

- 5.3** Five complaints were referred back for local resolution.

- 5.4** Nine complaints were closed after initial enquiries and they related to the following service areas:

Benefits & Council Tax	5
Planning & Development	2
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	1
Highways & Transport	1

5.5 Four complaints were not upheld after detailed investigation by the LGO and they related to the following service areas:

Benefits & Council Tax	1
Planning & Development	3

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	On occasion, the Local Government Ombudsman may recommend that a payment is made to a complainant to compensate for any injustice they have experienced. No compensation payments were required in relation to the 18 decisions made in 2017/18.
Legal	None arising directly from the report.

Other risks/implications: checklist

There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with an X.

implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
sustainability	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
climate change	x
data protection	x

report author	telephone no.	email	date
Joanne Porter	01253 887503	joanne.porter@wyre.gov.uk	21/07/18

List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
LGO Annual Review Letter 2017/18	18/07/18	www.wyre.gov.uk

List of appendices

Appendix A – LGO Annual Review Letter to Wyre BC for the period ending 31/03/18

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

18 July 2018

By email

Garry Payne
Chief Executive
Wyre Borough Council

Dear Garry Payne,

Annual Review letter 2018

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2018. The enclosed tables present the number of complaints and enquiries received about your authority and the decisions we made during the period. I hope this information will prove helpful in assessing your authority's performance in handling complaints.

Complaint statistics

In providing these statistics, I would stress that the volume of complaints does not, in itself, indicate the quality of the council's performance. High volumes of complaints can be a sign of an open, learning organisation, as well as sometimes being an early warning of wider problems. Low complaint volumes can be a worrying sign that an organisation is not alive to user feedback, rather than always being an indicator that all is well. So, I would encourage you to use these figures as the start of a conversation, rather than an absolute measure of corporate health. One of the most significant statistics attached is the number of upheld complaints. This shows how frequently we find fault with the council when we investigate. Equally importantly, we also give a figure for the number of cases where we decided your authority had offered a satisfactory remedy during the local complaints process. Both figures provide important insights.

I want to emphasise the statistics in this letter reflect the data we hold, and may not necessarily align with the data your authority holds. For example, our numbers include enquiries from people we signpost back to the authority, some of whom may never contact you.

In line with usual practice, we are publishing our annual data for all authorities on our website, alongside an annual review of local government complaints. The aim of this is to be transparent and provide information that aids the scrutiny of local services.

Future development of annual review letters

Last year, we highlighted our plans to move away from a simplistic focus on complaint volumes and instead turn focus onto the lessons that can be learned and the wider improvements we can achieve through our recommendations to improve services for the many. We have produced a new corporate strategy for 2018-21 which commits us to more comprehensively publish information about the outcomes of our investigations and the occasions our recommendations result in improvements to local services.

We will be providing this broader range of data for the first time in next year's letters, as well as creating an interactive map of local authority performance on our website. We believe this will lead to improved transparency of our work, as well as providing increased recognition to the improvements councils have agreed to make following our interventions. We will therefore be seeking views from councils on the future format of our annual letters early next year.

Supporting local scrutiny

One of the purposes of our annual letters to councils is to help ensure learning from complaints informs scrutiny at the local level. Sharing the learning from our investigations and supporting the democratic scrutiny of public services continues to be one of our key priorities. We have created a dedicated section of our website which contains a host of information to help scrutiny committees and councillors to hold their authority to account – complaints data, decision statements, public interest reports, focus reports and scrutiny questions. This can be found at www.lgo.org.uk/scrutiny I would be grateful if you could encourage your elected members and scrutiny committees to make use of these resources.

Learning from complaints to improve services

We share the issues we see in our investigations to help councils learn from the issues others have experienced and avoid making the same mistakes. We do this through the reports and other resources we publish. Over the last year, we have seen examples of councils adopting a positive attitude towards complaints and working constructively with us to remedy injustices and take on board the learning from our cases. In one great example, a county council has seized the opportunity to entirely redesign how its occupational therapists work with all of its districts, to improve partnership working and increase transparency for the public. This originated from a single complaint. This is the sort of culture we all benefit from – one that takes the learning from complaints and uses it to improve services.

Complaint handling training

We have a well-established and successful training programme supporting local authorities and independent care providers to help improve local complaint handling. In 2017-18 we delivered 58 courses, training more than 800 people. We also set up a network of council link officers to promote and share best practice in complaint handling, and hosted a series of seminars for that group. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Yours sincerely,



Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our website:
<http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/interpreting-local-authority-statistics>

Complaints and enquiries received

Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
0	6	0	0	4	1	0	6	0	17

Decisions made

Detailed Investigations					Complaints Remedied	
Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed After Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate
0	0	5	9	4	0	0%
Notes Our uphold rate is calculated in relation to the total number of detailed investigations. The number of remedied complaints may not equal the number of upheld complaints. This is because, while we may uphold a complaint because we find fault, we may not always find grounds to say that fault caused injustice that ought to be remedied.					by LGO	Satisfactorily by Authority before LGO Involvement
					0	0
					Total	
					18	

Reference	Authority	Category	Received
17000002	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	03/04/2017
17001264	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	25/04/2017
17002386	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	06/09/2017
17003077	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	25/05/2017
17005469	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	05/07/2017
17006311	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	18/07/2017
17008177	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	18/08/2017
17009235	Wyre Borough Council	Highways & Transport	06/09/2017
17009825	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	15/09/2017
17012401	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	31/10/2017
17012530	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	02/11/2017
17013445	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	17/11/2017
17014410	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	06/12/2017
17014580	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	08/12/2017
17014901	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	15/12/2017
17015537	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	04/01/2018
17016754	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	24/01/2018

Reference	Authority	Category	Decided	Decision	Remedy
16018648	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	16/08/2017	Not Upheld	Null
17000002	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	20/04/2017	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17001264	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	26/10/2017	Not Upheld	Null
17002386	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	04/10/2017	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17003077	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	06/10/2017	Not Upheld	Null
17005469	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	05/07/2017	Referred back for local resolution	Null
17006311	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	29/08/2017	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17008177	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	14/09/2017	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17009235	Wyre Borough Council	Highways & Transport	11/10/2017	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17009825	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	15/09/2017	Referred back for local resolution	Null
17012401	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	08/01/2018	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17012530	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	02/11/2017	Referred back for local resolution	Null
17013445	Wyre Borough Council	Planning & Development	23/03/2018	Not Upheld	Null
17014410	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	09/01/2018	Referred back for local resolution	Null
17014580	Wyre Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	16/12/2017	Referred back for local resolution	Null
17014901	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	22/01/2018	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17015537	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	01/02/2018	Closed after initial enquiries	Null
17016754	Wyre Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	26/02/2018	Closed after initial enquiries	Null