

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2014
Committee: Co-operative Scrutiny Board
Date: 19 November 2014
Cabinet Member: Councillor Peter Smith
CMT Member: Giles Perritt
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Ref: LGO Annual Review 2014
Key Decision: No
Part: I

Purpose of the report:

This report provides analysis of the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2014 for noting.

The Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2014 outlines the complaints monitoring position of the Council as at 31 March 2014. It presents the annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman. After investigation, the Local Government Ombudsman has found that only 10 complaints out of 82 (12%) were upheld.

The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 -2016/17:

The Balanced Scorecards for each Directorate have measures for complaints to assist in the delivery of the Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:

No additional implications associated with this report.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

No additional implications associated with this report.

Equality and Diversity:

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

Note the report and analysis.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

None

Published work / information:

[Review of Local Government Complaints 2013/14](#) (Local Government Ombudsman website)

[Note on interpretation of local authority statistics](#) (Local Government Ombudsman website)

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin		Leg		Mon Off		HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Giles Perritt													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the content of the report? Yes / No													

Presentation of the Annual Review Letter

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) publishes annual statistics for each of the authorities within England. In the years 2013 and 2014, it modified how it classified the results of complaints; this change means that we are now unable to show breakdowns of comparative figures for the previous years. The categories presented this year were not used before.

In 2014, the LGO received for England 18436 complaints and made 19382 decisions on complaints received that year or before. It is very important to note that not all complaints are decided in the same year that they are received. This means that the number of complaints received and the number decided will be different.

Last year the LGO received 77 complaints and enquiries for Plymouth. The table below shows these figures are broadly consistent with national ones with the exception of the Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation category and the Planning & Development category.

Complaints and enquiries received in 2013/14 by the LGO	Adult Care Services	Benefits & Tax	Corporate & Other Services	Education & Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation	Highways & Transport	Housing	Planning & Development	TOTAL
Numbers for Plymouth City Council	10	10	4	13	12	13	10	5	77
Percentages for Plymouth	13%	13%	5%	17%	16%	17%	13%	6%	100%
Percentages for England	12%	16%	8%	17%	9%	11%	13%	14%	100%

The second table details the 82 decisions made by the Ombudsman for Plymouth in 2013/14. The process adopted by the LGO involves an initial investigation into a complaint/enquiry, which allows them to decide whether it warrants further more detailed investigation. The LGO has carried out only 21 detailed investigations (26% of the total) for Plymouth. These investigations led to 10 complaints being upheld (12% of the total decisions) and 11 not being upheld (13%). The appendix to this report details how to understand the categorisation of the decisions made by the LGO.

Decisions made by the LGO	Detailed investigations carried out		Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries	Incomplete / Invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Total
	Upheld	Not upheld					
Plymouth City Council	10	11	2	25	1	33	82

The complaints and customers' feedback is a topic that will be looked at by the Customer Services Transformation Programme in the next year.

Care is required in interpreting the report, for example, the numbers of complaints against an authority do not prove that it is a 'bad' or 'good' council. This is because the larger the population an authority serves, the higher the number of complaints and enquiries.

Also a significant uplift in complaint numbers does not necessarily show that a council has become worse at what it does. The LGO may have received several complaints about the same issue from different residents, for example a controversial planning decision or application.