**Report of Customer Service Operations Manager**

**To**

**Governance & Standards Committee**

**On**

**23 February 2022**

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN – ANNUAL REPORT**

##### **SUMMARY**

This report details the feedback received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman relating to the complaints made to them about the Council in the financial year 2020/21 and the decisions they made.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATION**

That the report be noted.

#### **3 BACKGROUND**

3.1 Each year the Ombudsman service publish a summary of the complaints they have received for all local authorities. These include the enquiries they have received and the decisions they have made.

3.2 It is important to note that the volume of complaints does not in itself indicate the quality of the service provided. High volumes of complaints can be a sign of an open and learning organisation that welcomes complaints as a means to improving the services they provide. The most significant statistic is the number of complaints upheld by the Ombudsman; this shows how frequently they have found fault with the Council.

3.3 In total the Ombudsman received **4** complaints or enquiries relating to Mansfield District Council (MDC):

2 were closed by the Ombudsman after their initial enquiries.

2were referred back for local resolution.

The Ombudsman does not always provide any complaint information in circumstances where they have referred the customer back for local resolution or where they have provided advice and guidance.

At the end of March 2020 the Ombudsman took the unprecedented step of temporarily stopping their casework, in the wider public interest. This was to allow authorities to concentrate efforts on vital frontline services during the first wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. Casework was restarted in late June 2020 after a three months pause following consultation and feedback with authorities. The Ombudsman decided it was unnecessary to pause casework again during further waves of the pandemic. Instead, they have encouraged authorities to discuss with them, on an ongoing basis, any concerns regarding individual cases.

**Appendix 1** shows further information from this year’s report. Where available, it will detail what the complaint related to, the Ombudsman’s findings and where they identified fault or maladministration, their suggested resolution, together with action taken by the Council.

For comparison, in 2019/20 a total of **16** complaints were made to the Ombudsman.

1 was upheld

1 was not upheld

5 were closed after initial enquiries

5 were referred back for local resolution

2 the Ombudsman provided the customer with advice or explained where to go for the right help

1 remained undecided at the time of the report

1insufficient detail was provided by the complainant

3.4 A range of information is published on the Ombudsman’s website and includes statistics and data about each authority’s compliance with the recommendations the Ombudsman as made.

3.5 The Ombudsman also has a dedicated section on their website containing information to help scrutiny committees and councillors to hold their authority to account. This can be found at [www.lgo.org.uk/scrutiny](http://www.lgo.org.uk/scrutiny).

#### **4 OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

4.1 To note the report.

**5** **RISK ASSESSMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPTIONS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **Risk Assessment** | **Risk Level** | **Risk Management** |
| Legal | There are no legal risks  to the Council in respect of the recommendation or option | Low | N/A |
| Financial | There are no financial risks to the Council in respect of the recommendation or option | Low | N/A |
| Reputation | There are no reputational risks to the Council in respect of the recommendation or option | Low | N/A |

#### **6 ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

6.1 The need to maintain a robust and effective complaints process is fundamental to improving Council services by learning lessons from the complaints we receive and where applicable making changes to our processes and procedures.

#### **7 IMPLICATIONS**

(a) Relevant Legislation

There are no implications.

(b) Human Rights

There are no implications

(c) Equality and Diversity

There are no implications

(d) Climate change and environmental sustainability

There are no implications

(e) Crime and Disorder

There are no implications

(f) Budget/Resource

There are no implications

**8** **COMMENTS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS**

Monitoring Officer – No specific comments

Section 151 Officer – No specific comments

**9 CONSULTATION**

9.1 No additional consultation has taken place

**10 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
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