

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to:	Finance & Audit
Date:	12 September 2017
Reporting officer:	Service Manager, Customer & Theatre Services
Subject:	Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2016-17

Purpose and summary of report:

To provide the Finance & Audit Committee with a copy of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter for Gravesham.

Recommendations:

This report is for information and to support transparency and learning from complaints.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) publish an annual review letter for each authority, summarising the complaints and enquiries they have dealt with over the past year, along with the action taken i.e. whether the complaint was investigated. Gravesham Borough Council's annual letter is attached as appendix II.

2. Year End Findings for Gravesham Borough Council

- 2.1 For the year ending 31 March 2017, the LGO received a total of 17 complaints and enquiries about Gravesham Borough Council services. This was lower than the previous year (23).
- 2.2 As with previous years, the majority of those complaints related to Council Housing* (homelessness, housing allocations, housing benefit, improvement services) (9), followed by Benefits & Tax (3), Planning & Development (3), Corporate Services (1).

*From April 2013, the Housing Ombudsman Service took over responsibility for all new complaints about social housing. These include leasehold services, moving to a property, rent and service charges, occupancy rights, repairs and improvements, tenant behaviour and estate management. Whilst the Housing Ombudsman do not issue individual reports to Councils, their annual full report and accounts can be found at [Housing Ombudsman](#)

- 2.3 Of the 17 complaints and enquiries, investigations were undertaken for 5, with the remaining 12 either being referred back to the Council for local resolution or closed after initial enquiries.
- 2.4 With regards to the 5 investigated cases, 1 related to Housing but was not upheld, 2 related to Benefits & Tax with 1 being upheld and 2 related to Planning & Development, both of which were upheld. Copies of the Ombudsman's Final decisions for these complaints are attached as Appendices III, IV and V.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 There are no recommendations. This report is for information.

4. Background papers

- 4.1 Links to information referenced above are available in this report. Further information is available on the LGO website at www.lgo.org.uk

IMPLICATIONS		APPENDIX 1	
Legal	<p>The Local Government Act 1974 (the '1974 Act') established the Local Government Ombudsmen (LGOs) for England and for Wales and defines the main statutory functions for the Ombudsmen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to investigate complaints against councils and some other authorities • to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their adult social care (Health Act 2009) • to provide advice and guidance on good administrative practice <p>The main activity under Part III of the 1974 Act is the investigation of complaints, which the Act states is limited to complaints from members of the public alleging they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration and/or service failure.</p> <p>Under Part IIIA the Ombudsman investigates complaints from people who allege they have suffered injustice as a result of action by adult social care providers. The Ombudsmen's jurisdiction under Part III covers all local authorities (excluding town and parish councils); police and crime bodies; school admission appeal panels and a range of other bodies providing local services.</p>		
Finance and Value for Money	<p>The LGO annual report summarises the complaints it has investigated in relation to Gravesham Borough Council in the previous financial year. Good complaint handling ensures instances of service failures or injustice are limited and that improvements to services can be identified at the earliest opportunity.</p>		
Risk Assessment	<p>This report is for information only.</p>		
Equality Impact Assessment	Screening for Equality Impacts		
	Question	Answer	Explanation
	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	This report is not proposing decisions or changes to services. It provides information about the LGO complaint handling.
	b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	As above, the report is not proposing decisions or changes to service.
	c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?	N/A	N/A
<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming they have given due regard to equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>			
Corporate Business Plan	<p>Corporate Plan Objective 4 – Sound & self-sufficient council</p>		
Crime and Disorder	<p>Good complaint handling can help to identify issues that may link, for example, anti-social behaviour. Effective management of complaints can therefore lead to a reduction in such instances or appropriate action being taken to address them.</p>		