

## Gravesham Borough Council

**Report to:** Finance and Audit Committee  
**Date:** 10 September 2019  
**Reporting officer:** Service Manager, Customer & Theatre Services  
**Subject:** Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2018-19

### **Purpose and summary of report:**

To provide Finance & Audit Committee with a copy of the Local Government & Social Care 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 & Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) 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 2019, the LG&SCO received a total of 13 complaints or enquiries about Gravesham Borough Council services (Appendix II). This was lower than the previous year (19) with the majority relating to Housing e.g. allocations and banding (7), followed by Environmental & Public Protection e.g. waste management (4) and Benefits & Tax e.g. Council tax liability (2).

2.2 Of the 13 contacts, decisions were made for 12 of them (Appendix III), with one contact being disregarded, presumably as it was not within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. The majority of contacts were considered to be premature resulting in advice being given to the customer. The remainder were signposted back to our corporate complaint procedure, with one complaint being investigated but not upheld.

2.3 The final decision for the investigated complaint is attached at Appendix IV.

## **3. Recommendations**

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

## **4. Background papers**

4.1 Further information is available on the LG&SCO website at [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>		<b>APPENDIX 1</b>																
<b>Legal</b>	<p>The Local Government Act 1974 (the '1974 Act') established the, then, Local Government Ombudsman for England and for Wales and defines the main statutory functions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to investigate complaints against councils and some other authorities</li> <li>• to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their adult social care (Health Act 2009)</li> <li>• to provide advice and guidance on good administrative practice</li> </ul> <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>																	
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	<p>The LG&amp;SCO 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>																	
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<p>This report is for information only.</p>																	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3" data-bbox="373 1180 1469 1238"><b>Screening for Equality Impacts</b></th> </tr> <tr> <th data-bbox="373 1247 743 1305"><b>Question</b></th> <th data-bbox="750 1247 1102 1305"><b>Answer</b></th> <th data-bbox="1109 1247 1469 1305"><b>Explanation</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="373 1314 743 1630">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?</td> <td data-bbox="750 1314 1102 1630">No</td> <td data-bbox="1109 1314 1469 1630">This report is not proposing decisions or changes to services. It provides information about the LG&amp;SCO complaint handling.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="373 1639 743 1883">b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?</td> <td data-bbox="750 1639 1102 1883">No</td> <td data-bbox="1109 1639 1469 1883">As above, the report is not proposing decisions or changes to service.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="373 1892 743 2051">c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?</td> <td data-bbox="750 1892 1102 2051">N/A</td> <td data-bbox="1109 1892 1469 2051">N/A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			<b>Screening for Equality Impacts</b>			<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	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 LG&SCO 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
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	<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>
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Corporate Plan Objective 4 – Sound & self-sufficient council
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	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.