

Report to: Audit Committee
Date of meeting: 22nd September 2008
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
Title: Ombudsman's Annual Letter

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the contents of the Ombudsman's Annual Letter be noted.

Contact Officer:

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Report approved by: Managing Director

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Attached as appendix 1 is the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the year to 31st March 2008. The main points to note are the decrease in the number of complaints made from 22 in 2006/7 to 18 in 2007/8. Also the fact that the Council received a finding of maladministration in the period in relation to a housing matter that was reported to Council
- 3.2 During the year the Ombudsman actually made 21 decisions as not all complaints received are actually determined within the same period. Of the complaints determined during the period in addition to the finding of maladministration already reported the Ombudsman agreed to 6 being determined by a local settlement, 6 he decided to take no action, 4 were outside his jurisdiction and 4 were classed as premature and referred back to the Council to consider under our own complaints procedure.
- 3.3 Of the 18 complaints the Ombudsman received 7 were housing related including 2 in the other category that related to the same matter. 3 related to planning, 2 to council tax, 2 to parking, 2 to waste management (by same person), 1 to housing benefit and 1 to land issues
- 3.4 Of the 21 decisions of the local settlements 3 related to housing, 1 to waste management, 1 to council tax and 1 to parking

3.5 Members will note on the attached tables that by 31st March 2007 the Ombudsman had yet to reach a conclusion on 5 matters. These will be reported in next year's Annual Letter.

3.6 The Ombudsman has commented on the length of time to answer enquiries in relation to planning complaints. Having investigated the particular complaints that the Ombudsman was referring to it would appear that the delay was not in the Planning Department but in the Legal Department who co-ordinate the replies. Steps have been taken to ensure that responses are now made in a timely fashion to comply with the Ombudsman's stated deadlines. With regard to Housing this was primarily down to delays in receiving information from the relevant departments. Processes have been put in place to progress chase responses.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications in this report. The payments made as a result of the maladministration finding and local settlements came out of the relevant service departments budgets.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments that there are no implications arising from this report

4.3 **Equalities**

4.3.1 No implications

4.4 **Potential Risks**

4.4.1

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Score
Finding of maladministration	2	3	6

4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 No implications

4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 No implications

4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 No implications

4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 No implications

Appendices

1. Ombudsman's Annual Letter

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

File Reference

None