

PART A

Report to: Audit Committee
Date of meeting: 25th September 2012
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
Title: Ombudsman's Annual Review

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 Attached as Appendix A is a copy of the Ombudsman's Annual Review of its dealings with the Council for the financial year 2011/12.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Annual Review be noted.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Carol Chen
telephone extension: 8350 email: Carol.chen@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Managing Director

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix A is the Ombudsman's Annual Letter now called Annual Review detailing the complaints it received against the Council from members of the public in the financial year 2011/12
- 3.2 In 2011/12 the Ombudsman received 18 enquiries and complaints about the Council down from 22 enquiries and complaints in 2010/11, of which 11 were forwarded for further investigation.
The subject area generating the largest number of complaints and enquiries was planning and development (6), with benefits and tax (3) and environmental services (3) being the next highest.
- 3.3 In addition the Ombudsman decided 11 complaints against the Council in the same period. The figures do not match with those in 3.2 above as some decisions may have related to complaints actually received in the previous accounting year but not finalised, and some cases still being outstanding at the end of this accounting period.

- 3.4 No complaint resulted in a finding of maladministration. Of those investigated in 2 instances the Council accepted at the outset it had made a mistake and had apologised to the complainant before the Ombudsman concluded her investigation. In the remaining 5 cases where the complaint was investigated the Ombudsman concluded either there was not enough evidence of fault (3) or no injustice (2)
- 3.5 The Council's average response time for responding to enquiries was 17.5 days an improvement on the 20 days in 2009/10 and well within the Ombudsman's target of 28 days
- 3.6 The Ombudsman intends to publish all decisions on line during the course of this financial year.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that There are no financial implications in this report. Any payments of compensation agreed with the Ombudsman come out of the budgets of the requisite service area.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Legal and Property Services comments that there are no legal issues in this report.

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 None

4.4 **Potential Risks**

- 4.4.1 None

4.5 **Staffing**

- 4.5.1 None

4.6 **Accommodation**

- 4.6.1 None

4.7 **Community Safety**

- 4.7.1 None

4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 None

Appendices

Ombudsman's Annual Review

Background Papers

"No papers were used in the preparation of this report".

File Reference

None