

Wiltshire Council

Standards Committee

26 January 2017

Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2015 – 2016

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Standards Committee of the Annual Review Letter for 2015-16 published by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) in respect of Wiltshire Council.

Background

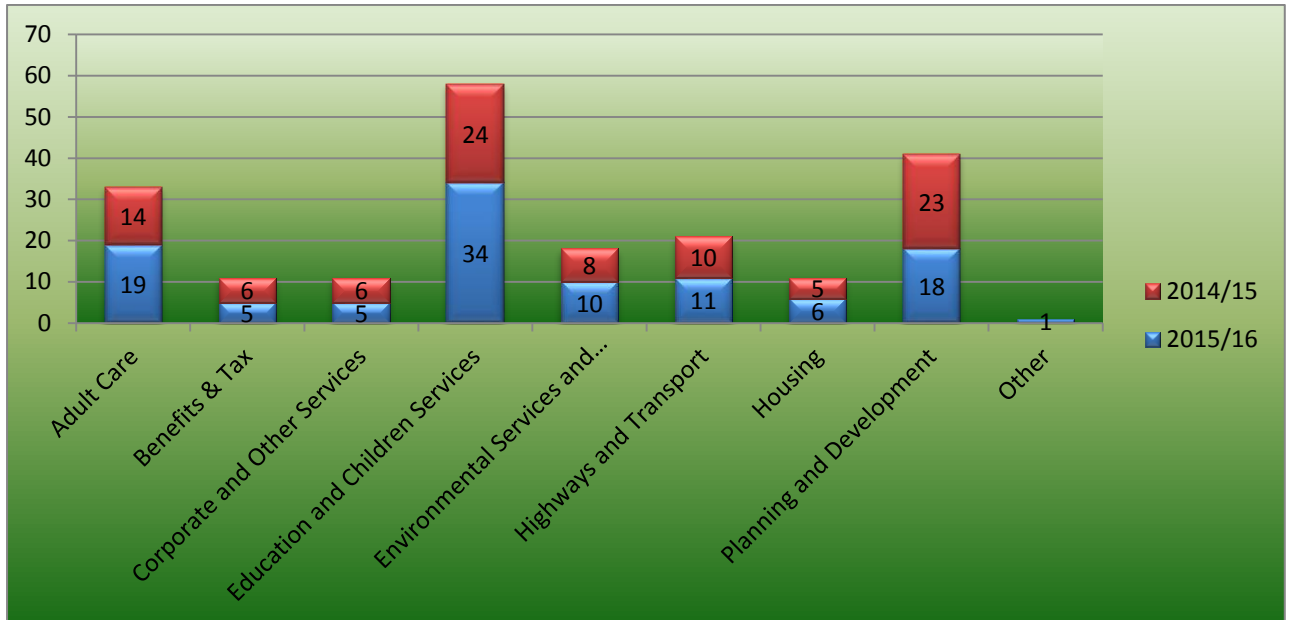
2. Under the Council's Constitution the Standards Committee has responsibility for the oversight of complaints handling, including complaints to the LGO.
3. The LGO is required to provide an annual overview of complaints received. The LGO issues its findings in the form of an Annual Review Letter which goes out to all authorities at the same time, providing a breakdown of the number of complaints received against each authority.

Main considerations

4. A copy of the LGO's report for Wiltshire Council for 2015-16 is attached at Appendix 1.
5. It is encouraging to see that the number of complaints referred to the LGO for 2015-16 has not changed significantly from the previous reporting year 2014/2015, as shown in the table below. The total number of complaints and enquiries referred to the LGO in 2015-16 was 109, compared with 96 for 2014-15.
6. Whilst there is no ability to control whether customers of the Council decide to pursue their complaint further with the LGO, the fact that the numbers remain consistent may in part be attributed to the approach taken by the Council's complaints team and the efforts which are undertaken within the Council's own complaints procedure to engage with the customer and ensure that a full response and explanation are provided, together with a clear plan of action. Rigorous monitoring of LGO investigations ensures that the Council engages constructively with the LGO and contributes to providing the customer with a detailed and reasoned outcome.
7. In terms of the number of complaints upheld by the LGO there was a slight rise from 17 in 2015-15 to 19 in 2015-16. There were no public reports of

maladministration issued and the Council agreed and actioned all recommendations proposed by the LGO in order to resolve these cases.

8. A comparison of the complaints received by the LGO in 2014-15 and 2015-16, broken down between the various services, is included below.



9. The complaints handling function is currently in the process of being restructured within the Council's Legal team and an update on the new arrangements will be provided to the next meeting of the Standards Committee in April when the restructure has been concluded.

Safeguarding Implications

10. There are no safeguarding issues arising from this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

11. There are no equalities impacts arising from this report.

Risk assessment

12. There are no significant risks arising from this report.

Financial Implications

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Public Health Impact of the Proposals

15. There are no public health impacts arising from this report.

Environmental Impact of the Proposals

16. There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Recommendation

17. The Standards Committee is asked to note the outcome of the LGO's Annual Review Letter 2015-16.

Ian Gibbons

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Report Author: Ian Gibbons, assisted by Sarah Butler, former Complaints Manager.

Background Papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report: NONE

Appendices

Appendix 1 Local Government Ombudsman Review Letter for 2015-16