

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 15 AUGUST 2023

TITLE OF REPORT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN - ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2023 – VERSION 2

Report of: Corporate Services

Cabinet Portfolio: Leader and Strategic Direction and Partnerships

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Non-Exempt

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to receive the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (The LG&SCO) Annual Review Letter 2023 (attached as Appendix 1). It contains a summary of statistics on complaints and enquiries made to the LG&SCO about Hart District Council for the year ending 31 March 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

2. The report is for information only.

BACKGROUND

3. The LG&SCO investigates allegations of maladministration that have caused injustice to the complainant. Most council services can be investigated including some areas of housing, planning, education, social services, council tax, housing benefit and highways.
4. The LGO provides dispute resolution services free of charge to the complainants. It will usually only become involved after a council's complaints procedure has been exhausted.
5. If the LGO finds the body investigated acted with fault, which caused the person an injustice, it will recommend a remedy to put things right. The LGO remedies are aimed at putting the person back in the position they would have been were it not for the fault. Where appropriate it also recommends action to avoid similar issues affecting other people – such as reviewing practice and procedure – and can recommend remedies for other persons affected by faults found in an individual complaint.

COMMENTARY

6. The Council has a good relationship with the LG&SCO and this year is no different. The LGO received four complaints that related to Hart District Council, with none being taken forward to the formal decision stage.
7. The LGO synopsis of these four cases is provided below and a link to the guidance the LGO publishes in relation to the decision reasons, has been provided for each.

Category	Decision	Decision Reason
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given

Planning & Development	Closed after initial enquiries	26B(2) not made in 12 months
Corporate & Other Services	Closed after initial enquiries	Sec 26(7) - all or most
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.1 court proceedings

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or The Hart Vision 2040

8. Complaints analysis of those case that received input from the Ombudsman provide officers with invaluable feedback on the provision of services at an operational level. As part of building a resilient Council learning from such cases helps to provide the best customer service we can.

Legal and Constitutional Issues

9. None identified.

Financial and Resource Implications

10. None identified.

Risk Management

11. No direct risks identified from this report.

EQUALITIES

12. An equalities assessment is not required for this report.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

13. No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the report.

ACTION

14. Monitoring Officer to review any areas for improvement.

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Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – LG&SCO annual review letter 2023 (also available at www.lgo.org.uk/documents/councilperformance/2023/hart%20district%20council.pdf)

Background Papers: None