

EXTERNAL REVIEW BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL OMBUDSMAN AND THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

All complainants who exhaust the Council’s procedures are provided with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman contact details. The day to day management of the relationship with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman is undertaken by a dedicated officer who acts on behalf of the Chief Executive in this respect.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman provides a free independent and impartial service to the public. Protocols are in place between the Council and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman that provide for the majority of cases to be considered through the Council’s own procedures before any investigation is considered by their office.

During the year, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigated 22 complaints against the Council. Of these, 14 were closed after initial enquiries and 6 were not upheld. A summary of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s findings and the actions taken by the Council for the 2 cases upheld partially or fully is detailed below:-

Case	Ombudsman’s Decision	Remedy	Category
1.	No further action, satisfactory remedy provided by the Council.	The Council agreed to settle the complainant’s claim for damage to his car by a falling tree.	Environmental Services and Public Protection and Regulation
2.	The Council was at fault for its lack of transparency and its communication with the complainant.	The Council apologised, agreed to pay the complainant £150 for the uncertainty and frustration caused and reminded all relevant staff to ensure they appropriately communicated with foster carers and allowed their voices to be heard during a LADO investigation.	Education and Children’s Services

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman now monitors his specific recommendations to remedy any fault he finds and follows up with Councils to seek evidence that the recommendations have been implemented. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has confirmed that the Council complied with his recommendations on time for case 2 above, and in regard to case 1, the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review is available on their website at www.lgo.org.uk

As part of his statutory duty, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, in October 2020, issued the latest version of guidance – Effective complaint handling for local authorities.

The Housing Ombudsman

From 1 April 2013, the Localism Act 2011 extended the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman to cover all social landlords, including Councils. The Housing Ombudsman is able to consider housing complaints in so far as they relate to the provision or management of housing. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman continues to investigate complaints about allocations and the lettings policy.

The Housing Ombudsman Service published a Complaint Handling Code in July 2020. The new code aimed to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements. Landlords must comply with some elements of the code and it is recognised that this will mean adapting complaints policy and practice to ensure compliance. Following the reintegration of Housing Services into the Council, a revised Council complaints policy has recently been agreed.

During 2021/22, the Council was contacted by the Housing Ombudsman in respect of twenty one cases. Of these:

- Seventeen cases had not exhausted the Council's complaints procedure.
- One case is currently being investigated by the Housing Ombudsman.
- One case the Housing Ombudsman determined that there was no maladministration by the Council in its handling of the resident's reports of anti-social behaviour and its approach to his use of CCTV.
- One case the Council paid £100 compensation in respect of its handling of the complaint and re-offered compensation of £400 for service delays and £100 for decoration.
- One case the Council apologised, re-offered £150 decoration vouchers and £180 compensation, paid £550 compensation for the distress and inconvenience caused by the handling of repairs between July 2019 and July 2020 and complaint handling failures, inspected and ensured that repairs completed in 2020-21 were carried out to an acceptable standard, asked the resident if she wished to raise a formal complaint about issues between April-December 2021 and deal with it in line with its complaints policy and reminded staff of the importance of keeping a clear and accurate audit trail of

all repairs, including major works, and the timescales and exclusions in the complaints policy.