

APPENDIX 7

External Review by the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

The LGO provides a free independent and impartial service to the public. They provide an initial point of contact for those wishing to make a complaint through a telephone contact centre in Coventry, or if a person remains dissatisfied following the examination of a particular matter by the Council. Protocols are in place between the Council and the LGO that provide for the majority of cases to be considered through the Council's own procedures before any investigation is considered by their office.

Leaflets and information about the LGO are available at Council offices and all those who exhaust the Council's and the Gateshead Housing Company's procedures (where appropriate) are provided with the leaflet. The day to day management of the relationship with the LGO is vested in the Customer Services Manager who acts on behalf of the Chief Executive in this respect.

During the year the LGO investigated 24 complaints. Of these 17 were closed following a detailed response from the Council, 5 were not upheld and 2 were upheld partially or fully. For each of the two cases upheld I have detailed below a summary of the LGO's finding and the actions subsequently taken by the Council.

Case One

The Ombudsman found some fault with regards to the way in which the Council investigated this complaint.

The Council complied with the Ombudsman's request to provide an apology for this fault and the time and trouble the complainant experienced as a result in pursuing the complaint.

Case Two

The Council was at fault in the failure to ensure that a resident in its care home had access to her prescription.

The Council complied with the Ombudsman's request to provide an apology for this fault and the distress the resident suffered as a result of this.

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

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 Ombudsman continues to investigate complaints about allocations and the lettings policy.

During 2015/16, the Council was contacted by the Housing Ombudsman in respect of 12 cases. Of these:

- Six are ongoing.
- One has been resolved without the need for a full investigation by the Housing Ombudsman.
- Two had not exhausted the Housing Company's complaints procedure
- One was an enquiry which was referred back to the Housing Company as a complaint had never been registered.
- One was transferred to the Local Government Ombudsman as it was deemed not to be in the remit of the Housing Company.
- One was fully investigated and the Housing Ombudsman concluded that the Council had taken reasonable steps to address the complaint.