

## Audit and Governance Committee

### Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2019

**Date:** 11 October 2019

**Agenda No:**

<b>Title of Report</b>	Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2019
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To review the Council's arrangements for handling complaints and investigations by the Local Government Ombudsman.
<b>Recommendations:</b>	To note the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2019
<b>Officer(s) Contact:</b>	Rob Ayliffe, Monitoring Officer and Head of Strategic Planning, Performance & Change (01452) 328506
<b>Key Risks:</b>	Strategic Risks SR 1.1 and SR 1.2  Failure in corporate governance, which leads to service, financial or reputational damage or failure.  Failure to effectively understand, inform, consult or engage customers, resulting in dissatisfaction, criticism or challenge.

## Local Government Ombudsman’s Review of Local Government Complaints 2019

1. Responding to and learning from complaints is an important element of the corporate governance of an organisation and the Local Government Ombudsman’s (LGO) annual review letter is a helpful indicator of the quality of the Council’s governance arrangements. The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for formulating and keeping under review the Council’s arrangements for handling complaints and investigations by the LGO.
2. The Local Government Ombudsman produces an annual summary of statistics on complaints made to them about all councils. The report for Gloucestershire for the year ended 31 March 2019 is attached at Appendix 1.
3. In 2018/19 the LGO recorded 67 complaints about Gloucestershire County Council. This compares to 67 last year, 70 in 2016/17, 62 in 2015/16 and 75 in 2014/15. Of the 21 detailed investigations 10 were not upheld and 11 were upheld.
4. The Council’s own data records can be different to those referred to the Ombudsman. The LGO only provides the number of complaints received and not the detailed data which sits behind it so it is always possible to reconcile the two sets of data. The number of LGO complaints and enquiries will include some which were not pursued. It is also the case that some complaints are concluded in a different financial year to them being received.

### Local data on complaints

5. The majority of complaints were in relation to education and children’s services. Where complaints have been up-held, there has been a local resolution.

Service area	Up-held	Not up-held	Closed after initial enquires	Incomplete/ invalid or open	Total
Adults	4	3	1	10	18
Corporate and other	0	0	2	2	4
Education and Children Services	6	5	7	13	31
Environmental	0	0	1	2	3
Highways and Transport	1	2	6	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>67</b>

## **Review and follow-up**

6. Each report received is carefully considered by the relevant service area. In addition, the cases are reviewed on a regular basis by the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer). They are particularly looking at the broader organisational risks and governance issues.
8. Members receive information on complaints, including Ombudsman findings, as part of the quarterly strategic reviews of performance. This is in addition to the formal annual report, here today.
9. Both Adults Social Care and Children's Social Care have separate statutory complaints procedures. They are both required to produce annual reports which will be considered by the relevant scrutiny committee.
10. Any comments or suggestions on how reporting could be improved are welcome.

## **Conclusion**

11. The LGO's Annual Review Letter for 2019 gives a summary of statistics on the complaints made about Gloucestershire County Council. Of the 21 complaints which they investigated, 11 were upheld, all of which were resolved locally.