



# Agenda

## Standards Committee

**Wednesday, 30 November 2016 at 4.30 pm,**  
Scaitcliffe House, Ormerod Street, Accrington

### Membership

Chair: Councillor June Harrison

Vice-Chair: Councillor Joyce Plummer

Councillors: Kath Pratt and Jeff Scales

Altham Parish Councillors: Thomas Fearon, Anthony Hickson and Rennie Pinder

Independent Person: Patricia Higginbottom

### **A G E N D A**

**1. Apologies for Absence, Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

**2. Minutes of Last Meeting (Pages 3 - 6)**

To submit the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2015 for approval as a correct record.

**Recommended**

**- That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.**

**3. Grant of Dispensations (Pages 7 - 36)**

To seek the granting of dispensations to a number of Hyndburn Councillors and one Altham Parish Councillor to speak and vote on certain issues, as set out in Section 3 of the report. Copies of the applications signed individually by the Councillors concerned are appended to the report.



Telephone Enquiries: Monica Bell, Democratic Services (01254) 380114

Email: [monica.bell@hyndburnbc.gov.uk](mailto:monica.bell@hyndburnbc.gov.uk)

Published on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2016

Page 1 of 2

**Recommended**

- (1) That Standards Committee considers the requests from Hyndburn Borough Council members to grant dispensations to speak and vote on the issues set out in Section 3.2 of the report; and,
- (2) That Standards Committee considers the request from Altham Parish Councillor John Halstead to grant a dispensation to speak and vote on the issues set out in Section 3.4 of the report.

**4. Annual Ombudsman's Letter 2016 (Pages 37 - 46)**

To inform the Standards Committee about the Annual Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO's) Letter for 2015/16.

**Recommended**

- That the Standards Committee welcomes the Ombudsman's letter and notes the report.

**5. Exclusion of the Public**

**Recommended**

- That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item, when it is likely, in view of the nature of the proceedings that there will otherwise be disclosure of exempt information within the Paragraph at Schedule 12A of the Act specified at the item.

**6. Local Assessment of Complaints - Update**

*(The report will contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual)*

To receive a verbal update on local assessment of complaints.

**Recommended**

- That the verbal report be noted.

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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**Monday, 5th October, 2015**

**Present:** Hyndburn Borough Councillors

Councillor June Harrison (in the Chair), Councillors Joyce Plummer (Vice Chair), Bill Pinder and Kath Pratt

Altham Parish Councillors

Councillors Thomas Fearon, Anthony Hickson and Rennie Pinder

Independent Persons

Ms. Patricia Higginbottom and Reverend John Holland

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**205 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**206 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations.

**207 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Standards Committee held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

**Resolved** - That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.

**208 Annual Ombudsman's Letter**

The Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) submitted a report relating to the Annual Local Government Ombudsman's Letter for 2014/15. The Letter was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and a comparison between the Council's position and that of neighbouring District Councils over the same period was attached as Appendix 2. The Local Government Ombudsman had received a low level of complaints about Hyndburn which made it difficult to identify trends from the statistical information provided. The low level of complaints might reflect good service delivery and / or a good internal complaint handling process. The Letter had not flagged up any areas of concern about either the Council's services or its procedures for dealing with complaints.

The Executive Director reported in relation to the twelve enquiries and / or complaints received about the Council and the determination of complaints during that period.

**Resolved** - That the Local Government Ombudsman's Letter be welcomed and the report be noted.

## **209 Review of Whistleblowing Policy**

The Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) submitted a report seeking a review of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy prior to presentation to Cabinet for approval. The revised and updated draft Policy was appended to the report. The Committee was charged in the Council's Constitution with monitoring the operation of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and advising on revision to the same. The current Policy had been adopted in 2010 and although the Council was not required by law to have one, most local authorities had and that was recognised good practice endorsed by the National Audit Office.

The Executive Director reported that the Policy was intended to support the Council's employees, councillors and contractors to raise concerns about wrongdoing or malpractice within the Council without fear of harassment or other reprisal. The Committee requested that it be made clear in the Policy who Councillors and Contractors could complain to.

**Resolved**

**- That the revised and updated Whistleblowing Policy be approved, subject to the inclusion of information on who Councillors and Contractors could complain to.**

## **210 Grant of Dispensations**

The Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) submitted a report seeking the grant of dispensations to five members of Hyndburn Borough Council for a period of four years to enable them to speak and vote on the following matters:-

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to Members
- Ceremonial honours given to Members
- Setting Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992, as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local Council Tax reduction scheme for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local scheme for the payment of business rates, including eligibility for rebates and reductions, for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation

The five Councillors were Lisa Allen, Loraine Cox, Diane Fielding, Melissa Fisher and Eamonn Higgins who had applied individually for dispensation to speak and vote on the above matters. Their request forms were appended to the report.

A dispensation had already been granted to the remaining 30 Hyndburn Borough Councillors.

**Resolved**

**- That, as requested, a dispensation be granted to the above named five Members of Hyndburn Borough Council to allow them to speak and vote on the issues set out above, the dispensation to expire after a period of four years or earlier if they ceased to be Members of the Council.**

## **211 Training - Dealing with Member Complaints**

The Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) provided a training session on how to deal with Member Complaints (Standards Committee - Local Determinations), as follows:-

- Role of Monitoring Officer
- Assessment Panel
- Formal Investigations
- Pre-Hearing Process
- Hearing Process
- Penalties
- Deciding on a Sanction
- Mitigating Factors
- Aggravating Factors

**Resolved**

**- That the contents of the training session be noted.**

Signed:.....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
At which the minutes were confirmed

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# Agenda Item 3.

|  |   |                              |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| <b>REPORT TO:</b>  | Standards Committee                             |                              |
| <b>DATE:</b>   | Wednesday, 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2016       |                              |
| <b>PORTFOLIO:</b>  | Cllr Gareth Molineux - Resources                |                              |
| <b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>  | Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer |                              |
| <b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>  | Grant of Dispensations                          |                              |
| <b>EXEMPT REPORT<br/>(Local Government<br/>Act 1972, Schedule<br/>12A)</b> | <b>No</b>                                       | Not applicable               |
| <b>KEY DECISION:</b>   | <b>No</b>                                       | If yes, date of publication: |

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek the granting of dispensations to a number of Hyndburn Councillors and one Altham Parish Councillor, to vote on certain issues (see Section 3 of the report).

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 That Standards Committee considers the requests from Hyndburn Borough Council members to grant dispensations to speak and vote on the issues set out in Section 3.2 of the report.

2.2 That Standards Committee considers the request from Altham Parish Councillor John Halstead to grant a dispensation to speak and vote on the issues set out in Section 3.4 of the report.

## 3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

3.1 In June 2012, Hyndburn Borough Council and Altham Parish Council each adopted a new Code of Conduct following the introduction of the new standards regime under the Localism Act 2011. Unlike the previous codes, the new Codes do not expressly enable Councillors to speak and vote on a number of specific issues where a large number would have an interest, e.g. setting the Council Tax. Therefore, Standards Committee will need to consider granting dispensations on those issues where legislation does not specifically allow Hyndburn and Altham Parish Councillors to speak and vote.

3.2 Hyndburn Councillors Judith Addison, Mohammad Ayub, Noordad Aziz, Jean Battle, Peter Britcliffe, Stephen Button, Clare Cleary, Paul Cox, Munsif Dad, Bernard Dawson, Tony Dobson, Stewart Eaves, Glen Harrison, June Harrison, Stephanie

Haworth, Terry Hurn, Abdul Khan, Gareth Molineux, Ken Moss, Tim O’Kane, Miles Parkinson, Kath Pratt, Jeff Scales and Paddy Short have applied individually for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters and their request forms are attached:-

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to Members; and
- Ceremonial honours given to Members; and
- Setting Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local Council Tax reduction scheme for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local scheme for the payment of business rates, including eligibility for rebates and reductions, for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation

3.3 A dispensation in the above terms has already been granted to the remaining 11 Hyndburn Borough Councillors.

3.4 Similarly, legislation is silent on the issue of Parish Councillors being able to speak and vote on the setting of a parish precept even though most, if not all of them, could have an interest in the decision as local residents. Parish Councillor John Halstead has now applied for dispensation to speak and vote in respect of the setting of a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation. The individually signed request form is attached. A dispensation to this effect has already been granted to the remaining five serving Altham Parish Councillors. Although there are seven seats in total on the Parish Council, one of the seats is currently vacant.

3.5 The Government takes the view that a dispensation is unnecessary in these circumstances and that councillors do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in decisions relating to the setting of council tax levels. The matter has not been decided by a court however and there is scope to argue that Hyndburn Borough Council and Altham Parish Councillors do potentially have a disclosable pecuniary interest when making decisions of this type as they reside in the Borough / Parish and would be required to pay any new level of council tax or precept. However, legal grounds exist to grant the requested dispensations pursuant to the Localism Act 2011.

3.6 Standards Committee needs to decide whether to grant dispensations to allow each Councillor to speak and vote on the relevant issues.

3.7 If granted, the dispensation will last for four years. Committee may grant a dispensation to speak only or may grant a dispensation to speak and vote. A dispensation can be granted if Committee is satisfied on any of the following grounds:

- The number of members prevented from speaking or voting would be so great as to “impede the transaction of business”; or

- The political balance at the relevant meeting would otherwise be sufficiently affected as to alter the likely outcome of the vote; or
- The dispensation is in the interests of people living in the area; or
- All the members of the Cabinet are affected by the interest; or
- it is otherwise appropriate to grant the dispensation.

#### **4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection**

4.1 Not applicable.

#### **5. Consultations**

5.1 None required.

#### **6. Implications**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)</b>  | None.  |
| <b>Legal and human rights implications</b>  | The legal requirements are discussed in Section 3 above. |
| <b>Assessment of risk</b>   | No risks identified.                                     |
| <b>Equality and diversity implications</b><br>A <i>Customer First Analysis</i> should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report. | Not applicable.  |

#### **7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: List of Background Papers**

7.1 None.

#### **8. Freedom of Information**

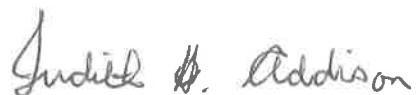
8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

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**Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer**

As a Councillor of Hyndburn Borough Council, I wish to apply to the Standards Committee for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters:-

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to members; and,
- Ceremonial honours given to members; and,
- Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local council tax/reduction scheme for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local scheme for the payment of business rates, including eligibility for rebates and reductions for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation



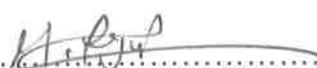
Signed: Councillor JUDITH HELEN ADDISON

Date: 25th May 2016

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

As a Councillor of Hyndburn Borough Council, I wish to apply to the Standards Committee for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters:-

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to members; and,
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Signed: Councillor ..... 

Date: ..... 16.15.16 .....

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

As a Councillor of Hyndburn Borough Council, I wish to apply to the Standards Committee for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters:-

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Signed: Councillor .....

*M. Bell*

*19/5/16*

Date: .....

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor ..... J. B. *Battie*.....

Date: ..... 24-5-2016.....

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

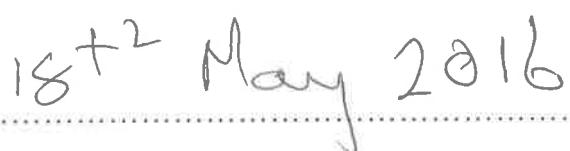
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Signed: Councillor



Date:



Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor ..... *Stephen Booth* *S. Booth*

Date: ..... *18/5/16*

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor Monica Bell

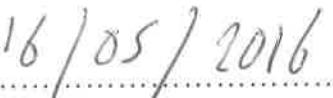
Date: 16/05/2016

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor ..... 

Date: ..... 

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Signed: Councillor ..... *Monica Bell* .....  
.....

Date: ..... *16.1.5.2016* .....

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor ..... *B. Dawson* .....

Date: ..... *16.5.16* .....



Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor



Date:



Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor Stewart Eaves STEWART EAVES.....

Date: 18.5.16.....

**Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer**

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Signed: Councillor ..... *G. Hamson* .....

Date: ..... *20th May 2016* .....

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor ..... 

Date: ..... 

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor ..... *S. Shaworth* .....

Date: ..... *19.5.16* .....

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor

Date:

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor ..... *Monica Bell*

Date: ..... *16/5/2016*

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor Gareth Molinex



Date: 16/05/2006

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor  (Monica Bell)

Date: 16/5/16

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Signed: Councillor Tim O'Hare

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

As a Councillor of Hyndburn Borough Council, I wish to apply to the Standards Committee for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters:-

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Signed: Councillor ..... .....

Date: ..... 16<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016 .....

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

As a Councillor of Hyndburn Borough Council, I wish to apply to the Standards Committee for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters:-

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to members; and,
- Ceremonial honours given to members; and,
- Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local council tax/reduction scheme for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local scheme for the payment of business rates, including eligibility for rebates and reductions for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation

Signed: Councillor



Date:



Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

As a Councillor of Hyndburn Borough Council, I wish to apply to the Standards Committee for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters:-

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to members; and,
- Ceremonial honours given to members; and,
- Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local council tax/reduction scheme for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local scheme for the payment of business rates, including eligibility for rebates and reductions for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation

Signed: Councillor SEFF SCALES

Date: 18/05/2016

Please return to Monica Bell, Senior Democratic Services Officer

As a Councillor of Hyndburn Borough Council, I wish to apply to the Standards Committee for dispensation to speak and vote on the following matters:-

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to members; and,
- Ceremonial honours given to members; and,
- Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local council tax/reduction scheme for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation
- Setting a local scheme for the payment of business rates, including eligibility for rebates and reductions for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation

Signed: Councillor Paddy Short

Date: 18/05/2016

**ALTHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**REQUEST FOR DISPENSATION**

I, the undersigned, request the grant of a dispensation to speak and vote at meetings of Altham Parish Council on any issue relating to the setting of a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992, as amended from time to time, or any superseding legislation. I further request that the dispensation be granted for four years.

Name: Altham Parish Councillor ..... John Haisted.....

Signature:



Date: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016

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# Agenda Item 4.

**Report to:** Standards Committee

**Date:** 30th November 2016

**Report Author:** Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services)

**Title of Report:** Annual Ombudsman's Letter 2016

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report informs Committee about the annual Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO's) letter for 2015/16

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 That Committee welcomes the Ombudsman's letter and notes this report.

## 3. Background and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 A copy of the LGO's letter is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

3.2 The LGO receives a low level of complaints about Hyndburn, which makes it difficult to identify trends from the statistical information provided. The low level of complaints may however reflect good service delivery and / or a good internal complaint handling process.

3.3 In summary, in 2015/16 the LGO received 9 complaints about the Council. The table below shows the service areas to which the complaints related and compares this to the position in 2014/15:

| 2015/16                  |          | 2014/15                    |
|--------------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| Benefits and Council Tax | 2        | Benefits and Council Tax 5 |
| Environmental Services   | 3        | Environmental Services 0   |
| Housing                  | 1        | Housing 1                  |
| Planning                 | 3        | Planning 6                 |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>9</b> | <b>Total</b> 12            |

3.4 During this period the LGO also determined 8 complaints about the Council. Details are set out in the table below, which also compares this to the position in 2014/15:

| 2015/16           |   | 2014/15             |
|-------------------|---|---------------------|
| Complaint invalid | 1 | Complaint invalid 0 |
| Advice given      | 0 | Advice given 0      |

|                              |          |  |                              |           |
|------------------------------|----------|--|------------------------------|-----------|
| Sent back to HBC             | 4        |  | Sent back to HBC             | 7         |
| Closed after initial enquiry | 2        |  | Closed after initial enquiry | 1         |
| Detailed investigation       | 1        |  | Detailed investigation       | 5         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>8</b> |  | <b>Total</b>                 | <b>13</b> |

Complaints will usually be referred back to the Council for resolution because the complaint to the Ombudsman was made before the complainant had been through the Council's own complaints procedure.

The complaint referred for detailed investigation in 2015/16 was upheld. Of the 5 cases referred for detailed investigation in 2015/14, 4 were upheld and 1 was dismissed.

3.5 Most importantly, the Ombudsman's letter does not flag up any areas of concern about either the Council's services or its procedures for dealing with complaints.

3.6 The table below shows a comparison between the Council's position and that of neighbouring District Councils over the same period. This exercise also does not indicate any obvious cause for concern in respect of the Council, with Hyndburn receiving a comparable number of complaints to its neighbours:

| Council       | Complaints received | Complaints decided | Complaints upheld after detailed investigation |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|
| Hyndburn      | 9                   | 8                  | 1  |
| Burnley       | 12                  | 13                 | 0  |
| Pendle        | 15                  | 16                 | 2  |
| Rossendale    | 9                   | 13                 | 2  |
| Ribble Valley | 9                   | 8                  | 1  |

#### 4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 None.

#### 5. Implications

| Issue                               | Comments  |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Financial (including mainstreaming) | No costs identified.  |
| Legal                               | No issues identified.<br><br>The Ombudsman's letter gives an indication of the Council's approach to dealing with complaints. A fair and open complaint handling process is one indicator of the strength of the Council's corporate governance |

|                    |                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
|                    | arrangements.                  |
| Assessment of Risk | No risks identified.           |
| Equality           | No equality issues identified. |

## **6. Consultations**

6.1 None.

## **7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: List of Background Papers**

Ombudsman's letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

## **8. Freedom of Information**

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

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# Local Government OMBUDSMAN

21 July 2016

*By email*

David Welsby  
Managing Director  
Hyndburn Borough Council

Dear David Welsby,

## **Annual Review Letter 2016**

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2016.

The enclosed tables present the number of complaints and enquiries received and the decisions we made about your authority during the period. I hope that this information will prove helpful in assessing your authority's performance in handling complaints.

Last year we provided information on the number of complaints upheld and not upheld for the first time. In response to council feedback, this year we are providing additional information to focus the statistics more on the outcome from complaints rather than just the amounts received.

We provide a breakdown of the upheld investigations to show how they were remedied. This includes the number of cases where our recommendations remedied the fault and the number of cases where we decided your authority had offered a satisfactory remedy during the local complaints process. In these latter cases we provide reassurance that your authority had satisfactorily attempted to resolve the complaint before the person came to us. In addition, we provide a compliance rate for implementing our recommendations to remedy a fault.

I want to emphasise that these statistics comprise the data we hold, and may not necessarily align with the data your authority holds. For example, our numbers include enquiries from people we signpost back to the authority, but who may never contact you.

In line with usual practice, we are publishing our annual data for all authorities on our website, alongside an annual review of local government complaints. The aim of this is to be transparent and provide information that aids the scrutiny of local services.

## **Effective accountability for devolved authorities**

Local government is going through perhaps some of the biggest changes since the LGO was set up more than 40 years ago. The creation of combined authorities and an increase in the number of elected mayors will hugely affect the way local services are held to account. We have already started working with the early combined authorities to help develop principles for effective and accessible complaints systems.

We have also reviewed how we structure our casework teams to provide insight across the emerging combined authority structures. Responding to council feedback, this included reconfirming the Assistant Ombudsman responsible for relationship management with each authority, which we recently communicated to Link Officers through distribution of our manual for working with the LGO.

## **Supporting local scrutiny**

Our corporate strategy is based upon the twin pillars of remedying injustice and improving local public services. The numbers in our annual report demonstrate that we continue to improve the quality of our service in achieving swift redress.

To measure our progress against the objective to improve local services, in March we issued a survey to all councils. I was encouraged to find that 98% of respondents believed that our investigations have had an impact on improving local public services. I am confident that the continued publication of our decisions (alongside an improved facility to browse for them on our website), focus reports on key themes and the data in these annual review letters is helping the sector to learn from its mistakes and support better services for citizens.

The survey also demonstrated a significant proportion of councils are sharing the information we provide with elected members and scrutiny committees. I welcome this approach, and want to take this opportunity to encourage others to do so.

## **Complaint handling training**

We recently refreshed our Effective Complaint Handling courses for local authorities and introduced a new course for independent care providers. We trained over 700 people last year and feedback shows a 96% increase in the number of participants who felt confident in dealing with complaints following the course. To find out more, visit [www.lgo.org.uk/training](http://www.lgo.org.uk/training).

## **Ombudsman reform**

You will no doubt be aware that the government has announced the intention to produce draft legislation for the creation of a single ombudsman for public services in England. This is something we support, as it will provide the public with a clearer route to redress in an increasingly complex environment of public service delivery.

We will continue to support government in the realisation of the public service ombudsman, and are advising on the importance of maintaining our 40 years plus experience of working with local government and our understanding its unique accountability structures.

This will also be the last time I write with your annual review. My seven-year term of office as Local Government Ombudsman comes to an end in January 2017. The LGO has gone through extensive change since I took up post in 2010, becoming a much leaner and more focused organisation, and I am confident that it is well prepared for the challenges ahead.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jane Martin  
Local Government Ombudsman  
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our website:  
<http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/interpreting-local-authority-statistics>

## Complaints and enquiries received

| Adult Care Services | Benefits and Tax | Corporate and Other Services | Education and Children's Services | Environment Services | Highways and Transport | Housing | Planning and Development | Other | Total |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------|--------------------------|-------|-------|
| 0                   | 2                | 0                            | 0                                 | 3                    | 0                      | 1       | 3                        | 0     | 9     |

## Decisions made

| Detailed Investigations |              |                                    |                                | Uphold Rate |        |  | Total |   |  |
|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|--------|--|-------|---|--|
| Incomplete or Invalid   | Advice Given | Referred back for Local Resolution | Closed After Initial Enquiries | Not Upheld  | Upheld |  |       |   |  |
| 1                       | 0            | 4                                  | 2                              | 0           | 1      |  | 100%  | 8 |  |

## Notes

Our uphold rate is calculated in relation to the total number of detailed investigations.

The number of remedied complaints may not equal the number of upheld complaints. This is because, while we may uphold a complaint because we find fault, we may not always find grounds to say that fault caused injustice that ought to be remedied.

The compliance rate is the proportion of remedied complaints where our recommendations are believed to have been implemented.

| Complaints Remedied |                       |                 | Compliance Rate                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
|                     | Satisfactorily by LGO | Compliance Rate | by Authority before LGO Involvement | Compliance Rate |
|                     | 1                     | 0               | 100%                                | 100%            |

| Reference  | Authority   | Category  | Decision Date |
|------------|-------------|---|---------------|
| 1 15005463 | Hyndburn BC | Planning & Development                                  | 02/07/15      |
| 2 15006247 | Hyndburn BC | Benefits & Tax  | 14/07/15      |
| 3 15008915 | Hyndburn BC | Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation | 27/08/15      |
| 4 15005410 | Hyndburn BC | Planning & Development                                  | 07/09/15      |
| 5 15009806 | Hyndburn BC | Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation | 15/09/15      |
| 6 15014492 | Hyndburn BC | Housing   | 07/12/15      |
| 7 15000236 | Hyndburn BC | Benefits & Tax  | 15/03/16      |
| 8 15018240 | Hyndburn BC | Planning & Development                                  | 15/03/16      |

| <b>Decision</b>                    |
|------------------------------------|
| Referred back for local resolution |
| Referred back for local resolution |
| Referred back for local resolution |
| Closed after initial enquiries     |
| Incomplete/invalid                 |
| Referred back for local resolution |
| Upheld                             |
| Closed after initial enquiries     |

| Remedy                     |
|----------------------------|
| NULL                       |
| Apology, Financial Redress |
| NULL                       |