

**Report to:** Standards Committee

**Date:** Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018

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

**Title of Report:** Annual Ombudsman's Letter 2017/18

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report informs Committee about the annual Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO's) letter for 2017/18

**2. Recommendations**

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

**3. Background and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The LGO has now published its annual complaint figures in respect of each local authority.
- 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 2017/18 the LGO received 14 complaints about the Council. The table below shows the service areas to which the complaints related and compares this to the position in 2016/17 when 6 complaints were received:

2017/18			2016/17	
Benefits and Council Tax	1		Benefits and Council Tax	0
Environmental Services	4		Environmental Services	2
Housing	2		Housing	1
Planning	7		Planning	2
Corporate Services	0		Corporate Services	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

- 3.4 During this period the LGO also determined 11 complaints about the Council. Details are set out in the table below, which also compares this to the position in 2016/17 when 7 complaints were determined:

2017/18			2016/17	
Complaint not upheld	3		Complaint not upheld	0
Sent back to HBC	6		Sent back to HBC	3
Closed after initial enquiry	2		Closed after initial enquiry	3
Upheld	0		Upheld	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>7</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.

- 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	14	11	0
Burnley	5	5	1
Pendle	17	17	2
Rossendale	12	12	2
Ribble Valley	7	6	1

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

- 4.1 None. This is a report for information.

#### 5. Implications

Issue	Comments
Financial (including mainstreaming)	No costs identified.
Legal	No issues identified.  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 July 2018

## **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.