

AUDIT COMMITTEE - 30 November 2012

Title of paper:	Ombudsman Annual Letter	
Director:	Claire Richmond Director of Policy, Performance and Communications (Interim)	Wards affected: All
Contact Officer:	Lynne North Customer Liaison Officer Lynne.north@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Officers who have provided input:	David Griffin david.griffin@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Relevant Council Plan theme(s):		
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
World Class Nottingham		
Work in Nottingham		
Safer Nottingham		
Neighbourhood Nottingham		
Family Nottingham		
Healthy Nottingham		
Serving Nottingham Better		✓
Summary of issues (including benefits to customers/service users):		
<p>The Ombudsman sends each Local Authority an Annual Letter setting out the details of the enquiries dealt with on our behalf. This report will look at those results and identify ongoing trends from previous years. The second part of the annual letter details changes in the work of the Ombudsman's office.</p> <p>The annual report and Nottingham City statistics for the year April 2011 to March 2012 are contained in appendix one.</p>		
Recommendation:		
o	that Members note the contents of the report.	

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Each year all local authorities are provided with a letter from the Ombudsman and a report covering their performance with regard to dealing with complaints. Appendix One shows the letter from the Ombudsman and the report supporting it, for the period April 2011 to March 2012.
- 1.2 Nottingham City Council is still the responsible body for complaints about housing provided by Nottingham City Homes and their figures are included in our Annual Letter.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION (INC. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 Complaints need to be used to influence service improvement and therefore to increase Citizen satisfaction.

2.2 There are several trends to note in this years report, firstly the LGO have changed their reporting methodology so measuring with last year is more complicated. Overall our number of cases is down by 19, which is just under 13%. Our total number of days to respond is 25.3, which is a 0.7 of a day increase on the previous year. The LGO records response times in three categories and this figure remains in the best performing category of all authorities.

Housing, Benefits and Council Tax, as they have done historically, account for more than 50% of the case load. In percentage terms, adult care services, education, children's services and planning development have all experienced a reduction in LGO complaints, whilst environmental services and public protection and regulation, highways and transport have seen an increase.

During the year 2011-12, we received 19 less complaints on the previous year, and of the 132 complaints, 62 of them were adjudged "no maladministration", where the LGO have found no, or insufficient evidence of, maladministration. We are currently undergoing a review of 'citizen first', which includes the way we handle complaints corporately. The 'Have Your Say' compliments, comments and complaints system is now operational both for staff and citizens. This is enabling us to have clear guidelines on response times and ensure corporate standards are met.

Please note that in the Annual letter from Anne Seex, the Local Government Ombudsman, she states:

"I am pleased to say that I have no concerns about your authority's response times and there are no issues arising from the complaints that I want to bring to your attention"

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY)

There are no financial implications directly linked with this report.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS)

Timely responses to enquiries from both customers and the Local Government Ombudsman are essential to the reputation of the authority.

6 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

None.

7 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

None.

Appendix one

22 June 2012

OMBUDSMAN

Ms Jane Todd
Chief Executive
Nottingham City Council
Loxley House
Station Street
NOTTINGHAM NG2 3NG

Dear Ms Todd

Annual Review Letter

I am writing with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to me about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2012. I hope the information set out in the enclosed tables will be useful to you.

The statistics include the number of enquiries and complaints received by our Advice Team, the number forwarded by the Advice Team to my office, and decisions made on complaints about your authority. The decision descriptions have been changed to more closely follow the wording in our legislation and to give greater precision. Our guidance on statistics provides further explanation ([see our website](#)).

The statistics also show the time taken by your authority to respond to written enquiries.

I am pleased to say that I have no concerns about your authority's response times and there are no issues arising from the complaints that I want to bring to your attention.

Changes to our role

I am also pleased to have this opportunity to update you on changes to our role. Since April 2010 we have been exercising jurisdiction over the internal management of schools on a pilot basis in 14 local authority areas. This was repealed in the Education Act 2011 and the power restored to the Secretary of State for Education. During the short period of the pilot we believe we have had a positive impact on the way in which schools handle complaints. This was endorsed by independent research commissioned by the Department for Education which is available [on their website](#).

Our jurisdiction will end in July 2012 and all complaints about internal school matters will be completed by 31 January 2013.

From April 2013, as a result of the Localism Act 2011, local authority tenants will take complaints about their landlord to the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO). We are working with the IHO to ensure a smooth transition that will include information for local authority officers and members.

Local authority report - Nottingham City C

for the period - 01/04/2011 to 31/03/2012

LGO advice team

Enquiries and complaints received	Adult Care Services	Benefits & Tax	Corporate & Other Services	Education & Childrens Services	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Highways & Transport	Housing	Planning & Development	Total
Advice given	0	5	1	4	4	1	12	0	27
Premature complaints	2	13	3	5	7	2	8	0	40
Forwarded to Investigative team (resubmitted)	4	4	1	0	2	1	3	1	16
Forwarded to Investigative team (new)	4	6	4	5	5	4	20	1	49
Total	10	28	9	14	18	8	43	2	132

Investigative team - Decisions

	Not investigated			Investigated		Report	Total
	No power to investigate	No reason to use exceptional power to investigate	Investigation not justified & Other	Not enough evidence of fault	No or minor injustice & Other		
3		4	21	20	11	0	69

Response times to first enquiries	No of first enquiries	Avg no of days to respond
	22	25.3