

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

31ST MARCH 2009

OMBUDSMAN STATISTICS

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Smith
Responsible Head of Service	Claire Felton, Monitoring Officer
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a six monthly update on ombudsman statistics.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested:

- 2.1 to note the contents of the report; and
- 2.2 to amend the Committee Work Programme to include two reports on Ombudsman statistics per year as follows:
- 2.2.1 full report in September, to include the annual statistics (final version) and comparison with other neighbouring authorities; and
- 2.2.2 interim update (based on records maintained by the Senior Solicitor) in February/March.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The provisional Ombudsman statistics were reported the Standards Committee in July 2008 and the final statistics and comparison with neighbouring authorities were reported in September 2008. This report provides an update on the number of complaints received so far in 08/09, and is based on the records maintained by the Senior Solicitor.
- 3.2 For the period from 1st April 2008 to 31st December 2008 the number of ombudsman complaints about the Council was 14. Of these 8 were referred for investigation and 5 were classed as premature meaning that the complainant had not given the Council an opportunity to resolve the complaint but had instead reported it directly to the LGO. These complaints are referred back to the Council to be considered through the internal complaints system. Finally one further complaint was discontinued because

the decision complained about was found to have had no adverse effect on the complainant.

3.3 With reference to response times, 6 of the complaints fell to be replied to over holiday periods, 2 being received just prior to August bank holiday and 4 during the first two weeks of December. This had the effect of cutting down the time available for responses to be prepared as the 28 days runs regardless of bank holidays and staff absences on leave. Despite these difficulties the majority of responses were submitted within the time limit and the average response time currently stands at 26.5 days.

3.4 The current figures do not reveal a significant increase or decrease in the number of complaints compared to the 07/08 figures. Members will receive a more detailed analysis of the numbers of complaints in the next report in September 09 which will include the Council's annual statistics as published by the LOG for 08/09.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 Improvement – Customer Service: the statistics will enable the Council to improve its services to customers

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are those linked to poor standards of complaint handling. The effects of not handling complaints efficiently can include poor customer service, increased customer dissatisfaction, increased numbers of complaints and damage to the Council's reputation.

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Through the Council's customer feedback system and Customer First Policy.
- Through training for all staff and managers in implementing the Customer First Policy and managing complaints.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The statistics should enable the Council to improve service delivery to customers.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues	None
Personnel Implications	None
Governance/Performance Management	None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998	None
Policy	None
Environmental	None

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects	No
Executive Director - Services	No
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	<u>Yes</u>
Head of Financial Services	<u>No</u>
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	<u>Yes</u>
Head of Organisational Development & HR	<u>No</u>
Corporate Procurement Team	<u>No</u>

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All wards

14. APPENDICES

None

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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