

Audit, Standards and Governance Committee

29th September 2025

Annual Statistics from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services
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	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	n/a
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Sustainability
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	n/a
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee RESOLVE that, subject to Members's comments the report be noted.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the committee of the annual summary of complaint statistics issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the period ending 31st March 2025
- 2.2 The usual way this information is delivered to Councils is in an annual letter issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ("LGSCO") in September each year. However, this year the LGSCO has decided to change the system. Instead of issuing an annual review letter in September setting out the statistics, a two-stage approach will now be used:-
- (i) In May each year the LGSCO will finalise the annual statistics for the year ended 31st March and will forward this information to Councils and publish it on the LGSCO

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website. This will apply to all councils in England and Wales.

- (ii) In July each year certain councils (but not all) will receive an annual letter. The LGSCO has stated that “this will apply where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation’s complaint handling”.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 Officers can confirm that Bromsgrove District Council did not receive an annual letter as outlined in paragraph 2.2 (ii). Accordingly, this report sets out for Members a breakdown of the annual statistics.
- 3.2 For the period ending on 31 March 2025, the statistics for BDC as collated and published by the LGSCO were recorded as follows:-

Number of Complaints Received – 3

Planning and Development	2
Housing	1

Number of Complaints Decided - 6

Planning and Development	4
Housing	2

- 3.3 Of these 6 decided cases, there was only one case where the LGSCO upheld the complaint and found the Council to be at fault. This was in the category of housing and related to home adaptations under a Disabled Facilities Grant in relation to which both the District Council and Worcestershire County Council were found to be at fault. Specifically, there was a finding of service failure [termed ‘fault’] which adversely affected the complainant [termed ‘injustice’]. The Ombudsman’s Recommendations to remedy this are detailed below:-

- That the District Council apologise to the customer and make a payment of £2000 in financial redress to reflect the distress and frustration caused by its delays and poor communication.
- That the District Council and the County Council, on a 50:50 basis refund to the customer the cost of her private occupational therapy and architect reports on production of receipts/invoices

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(Cost £1183.50) the customer be refunded for additional expenses incurred due to the delay in the adaptations being completed.

- The District Council and County Council each pay compensation to the family member for whom the adaptations were made of £500 (a total of £1,000)
- That officers carry out a review of the relevant policy and procedures to ensure that a similar situation would not be repeated in the future.
- That the District Council and County Council ensure that there is agreement as to who should be the specific point of contact for the applicant for major schemes where the adaptations are substantial.

3.4 Members may recall the details of this particular complaint, which was the subject of a report to Members and was considered at Cabinet on 22nd January 2025. Officers can confirm that the recommendations of the Ombudsman have been complied with.

3.5 In relation to the other decided complaints, the Ombudsman directed that 3 complaints be referred back to the council as being “premature”. This means that the council had not had the opportunity to conduct its own investigation, which is a requirement before the Ombudsman will consider a complaint. The 2 remaining complaints were closed after initial enquiries on the basis that the alleged fault or injustice was not sufficient to merit further investigation.

3.6 Guidance issued by the LGSCO provides that where findings of maladministration/fault with regard to routine mistakes and service failures occur and the authority has agreed to remedy the complaints by implementing the recommendations made following the investigation, the duty to report to members is satisfactorily discharged if the Monitoring Officer makes a periodic report to members summarising the findings on upheld complaints over a specific period. In a small authority this may be adequately addressed through an annual report.

3.7 Only where an investigation has wider implications for council policy or exposes a more significant finding of maladministration, perhaps because of the scale of fault or injustice, or the number of people affected, the LGSCO would expect the Monitoring Officer to consider whether the implications of that investigation should be individually

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reported to members.

- 3.8 Other relevant factors which impact on the levels of complaints are provision of a high standard of customer service and good complaint handling. Members will be aware that an updated compliant handling system was introduced in September 2024. The LGSCO guidance on complaint handling was taken into consideration by officers when the new system was designed.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are financial implications as a result of the recommendations referred to in 3.3 of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Government Ombudsman powers are contained in the Local Government Act 1974 as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 5.2 The main activity of the LGO is the investigation of complaints, which are limited to complaints from members of the public.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 Not applicable

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 An Effective and Sustainable Council.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 Not applicable

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 In terms of customer implications, providing good customer service is of significant importance to the Council and the statistics in the review will assist officers in the monitoring of complaint handling and resolution.

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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 through the Council's Customer services strategy which aims to promote good customer service throughout the Council and includes a defined procedure for responding to complaints before they reach the stage of being referred to the Ombudsman.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 Annual summary of complaint statistics 2024 to 2025

Link to view annual statistics on the LGO website:

[Bromsgrove District Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Cabinet report 22nd January 2025 – Disabled Facility Grant Ombudsman's Report

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Karen May	17.9.25
Lead Director / Head of Service	Claire Felton – Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	15.9.25
Financial Services	Deb Goodall - Assistant Director - Finance and Customer Services	16.9.25

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Legal Services	Nicola Cummings – Principal Solicitor	
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	n/a	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	n/a	