

**Teignbridge District Council
Audit Scrutiny
30 August 2022
Part 1**

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2022

Purpose of Report

To advise members of the findings of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Recommendation(s)

The Audit Scrutiny Committee resolve to NOTE the report.

Report Author

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Executive Member

Councillor Richard Keeling – Executive Member for Resources

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) investigates complaints which cannot be resolved by the Council, and makes recommendations where faults have caused injustice.

1.2 Before the LGO will consider a case, customers must have first pursued the Council's own complaints process. This involves two stages:

- Stage 1: the service will review the complaint, and respond accordingly. This response will usually be from the relevant service manager.
- Stage 2: if the claimant is still dissatisfied, it will be escalated to a member or the Senior Leadership Team.

1.3 The LGO issues an Annual Review Letter to each Council. Teignbridge's is copied below. In summary, **2** investigations were undertaken for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

1.4 **One of the complaints was upheld. One was not.** The rate of 50% upheld compares to an average of 51% for similar bodies.

Complaints investigated were in the following areas:

1	Waste and recycling 17.6.21 Failure to respond to complainant regarding non collection of household waste and recycling on scheduled days.	Complaint upheld
2	Planning 14.2.22 Complaint about the way the Council dealt with and considered an application for a property extension.	No evidence of fault found

2. IMPLICATIONS, RISK MANAGEMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT

2.1 **Financial** - there are no financial implications.

2.2 **Legal** - there are no legal issues.

2.3 **Risks** - not applicable.

2.4 **Environmental/Climate Change Impact** - not applicable.

3. CONCLUSION

That the report be noted.

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

20 July 2022

By email

Mr Shears
Managing Director
Teignbridge District Council

Dear Mr Shears

Annual Review letter 2022

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2022. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to encourage effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer such valuable opportunities to learn and improve.

Complaint statistics

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, Your council's performance, on 27 July 2022. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

I know your organisation, like ours, will have been through a period of adaptation as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic lifted. While some pre-pandemic practices returned, many new ways of working are here to stay. It is my continued view that complaint functions have been under-resourced in recent years, a trend only exacerbated by the challenges of the pandemic. Through the lens of this recent upheaval and adjustment, I urge you to consider how your organisation prioritises complaints, particularly in terms of capacity and visibility. Properly resourced complaint functions that are well-connected and valued by service areas, management teams and elected members are capable of providing valuable insight about an organisation's performance, detecting early warning signs of problems and offering opportunities to improve service delivery.

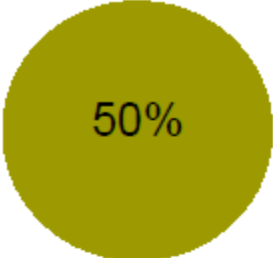
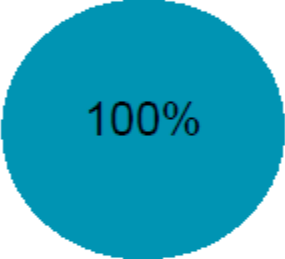
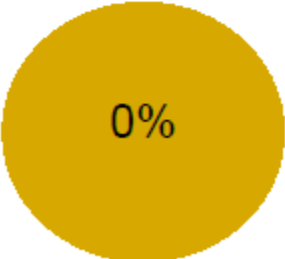
I want to support your organisation to harness the value of complaints and we continue to develop our programme of support. Significantly, we are working in partnership with the Housing Ombudsman Service to develop a joint complaint handling code. We are aiming to consolidate our approaches and therefore simplify guidance to enable organisations to provide an effective, quality response to each and every complaint. We will keep you informed as this work develops, and expect that, once launched, we will assess your compliance with the code during our investigations and report your performance via this letter.

An already established tool we have for supporting improvements in local complaint handling is our successful training programme. We adapted our courses during the Covid-19 pandemic to an online format and successfully delivered 122 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,600 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

We were pleased to deliver an online complaint handling course to your staff during the year. I welcome your Council's investment in good complaint handling training and trust the course was useful to you.

Yours sincerely,

Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints upheld		
	<p>50% of complaints we investigated were upheld.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 51% in similar organisations.</p>	<p>1 upheld decision</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 2 investigations for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022</p>
Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations		
	<p>In 100% of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 100% in similar organisations.</p>	<p>Statistics are based on a total of 1 compliance outcome for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.		
Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation		
	<p>In 0% of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 20% in similar organisations.</p>	<p>0 satisfactory remedy decisions</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 1 upheld decision for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022</p>