

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

INFORMATION REPORT TO CABINET

15 OCTOBER 2020

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL, HR AND REGULATORY SERVICES

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2019-2020

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2019-2020 to Cabinet.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective/objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-
1. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) is independent of all government bodies and has legal powers to investigate complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales. They also investigate complaints that Members of local government bodies have breached their authority's Code of Conduct.
- 3.2 The PSOW reports annually on the number of complaints against public bodies received by its office.
- 3.3 The Complaints Officer is the Contact Officer for the PSOW and the Monitoring Officer is responsible for liaising with the PSOW regarding Member Code of Conduct complaints.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 **Appendix A** provides the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2019-2020.
- 4.2 The number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2019-2020 was 34 compared with 33 in 2018-19. The figure for 2019-20 represents 0.23 complaints received per 1000 residents. None of the complaints against the Authority proceeded to investigation. The PSOW intervened in 1 of these cases. Children's Services attracted the largest number of complaints at 15 followed by Adult Services with 4. By its nature Children's Services attracts a higher number of

complaints than other service areas, and a number of the complaints relate to the decisions made by Children's Social Services under safeguarding legislation.

- 4.3 7 Code of Conduct complaints against the Authority's Councillors were received by the Ombudsman's Office in this period and all were closed after initial consideration. 3 Code of Conduct complaints were received against Town and Community Councils in Bridgend County 2 of which required no further action, and 1 of which was closed after initial consideration.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework or the Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. As the report is for noting only, it is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The PSOW has the legal power to require authorities to make payments to complainants where they have suffered financial loss or in compensation for distress and inconvenience.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the Annual Letter attached as **Appendix A**.

Kelly Watson
Chief Officer, Legal, HR and Regulatory Services
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Contact officer: Charlotte Branford
Information and Data Protection Officer

Telephone: (01656) 643565

Email: Charlotte.Branford@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Background documents: None