

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

INFORMATION REPORT TO CABINET

16 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HUMAN RESOURCES AND CORPORATE POLICY

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2020 - 2021

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2020-2021 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 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 2020-2021.
- 4.2 The number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2020–2021 was 31 compared with 34 in 2019-2020. The figure for 2020-21 represents 0.21 complaints received per 1000 residents. None of the complaints against the Authority proceeded to investigation. The PSOW intervened in 2 of these cases. Children's Social Services attracted the largest number of complaints at 7. By its nature Children's Social 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 6 Code of Conduct complaints against the Authority's Councillors were received by the Ombudsman's Office in this period 2 of which were discontinued and in 4 cases no evidence of a breach of the Code of Conduct was found. 24 Code of Conduct complaints were received against Town and Community Councils in Bridgend County 1 of which was referred to the Standards Committee, 4 of which were discontinued, 1 of which was withdrawn and in 18 cases no evidence of a breach of the code was found.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

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

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of 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**.

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Background documents: None