

Meeting of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	16 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	PUBLIC SERVICES OMUBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL LETTER 2022/23
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	MONITORING OFFICER
Responsible Officer:	LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	The Annual Letter for Bridgend County Borough Council must also be presented to Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for the Standards Committee to note the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Letter 2022/23.

2. Background

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The PSOW reports annually on the number of complaints against public bodies received by its office.
- 2.3 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.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 **Appendix A** provides the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2022-2023.
- 3.2 The number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2022–2023 was 55 compared with 55 in 2021-2022 and 31 in 2020-2021. The figure for 2022-23 represents 0.38 complaints received per 1000 residents. Children's Social Services and Planning / Building Control attracted the largest number of complaints. 10 cases

were out of jurisdiction, 17 were premature, 25 were closed after initial consideration, 4 were settled by working with the Ombudsman for early resolution. One complaint proceeded to investigation and was upheld.

3.3 6 Code of Conduct complaints against the Authority's Councillors were received by the Ombudsman's Office in this period, 5 of which were discontinued and one was referred to the Standards Committee for consideration (which was concluded by the Committee at their meeting on 7 July 2023). 25 Code of Conduct complaints were received against Town and Community Councils in Bridgend County, none of which were referred to the Standards Committee, 23 of which a decision was taken not to investigate, and in 2 cases no action was necessary.

3.4 The Complaints Standards Authority publishes datasets on complaints handled by local authorities. These datasets are published on the Ombudsman's website and on the Council's website. This data shows that last year, 21% of the Council's complaints were referred to PSOW.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, 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.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. 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. This report also assists in the achievement of the following well-being objective under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-

A county borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community.

5.2 Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the Annual Letter for 2022/23.

Background documents:

None