


Our ref: NB/MA

Ask for: Matthew Aplin

 01656 641150

Date: 15 October 2018

 communications
@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

To: Council Leader
Denbighshire County Council

Annual Letter 2017/18

Following the recent publication of my Annual Report, I am delighted to provide you with the Annual Letter (2017/18) for **Denbighshire County Council**.

Despite a challenging complaints context, I am delighted to be able to report positive progress in the activities of the office over the past year.

Four public interest reports have been published in the past year, but none related to local authorities.

A new Public Services Ombudsman Bill has been introduced to the National Assembly and is currently at the second stage in the legislative process. This means that Members have agreed the general principles of the Bill and a Financial Resolution was agreed on 17 July 2018. This new legislation will help drive up public service standards as it is important that Wales continues to adopt best practices in complaints handling and public service improvement. If the Bill progresses I will be engaging with public bodies in Wales in preparation for the introduction of the new powers within the Bill.

Overview of complaints

Overall the number of complaints and enquiries received by my office has increased by 5% this year, this is attributed to an 8% rise in enquiries.

This year my office saw a 4% decrease in public body complaints. Despite complaints against NHS bodies increasing by 7%, we have seen a 10% reduction in complaints against councils.

After Health, which comprises 41% of all complaints, housing (11%), social services (9%) and planning and building control (8%) remain significant areas of complaint.

The number of Code of Conduct complaints increased by 14% in the past year, this is attributed to a 33% increase in Code of Conduct complaints involving Community Councils. Many of these complaints have arisen following changes in the membership of councils.

42% of Code of Conduct complaints received were with regards to the promotion of equality and respect, 19% were with regards to disclosure and registration of interests and 16% were with regards to integrity.

We are pleased to report that the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman concerning Denbighshire have decreased in the past year from 24 to 20.

You will find below a factsheet giving a breakdown of complaints data relating to your Local Authority. This year we have included a new set of statistics regarding Ombudsman interventions. These include all cases upheld by my office as well as early resolutions and voluntary settlements.

Please would you present my annual letter to the Cabinet to assist Members in their review of the Council's performance.

This correspondence has been copied to the Chief Executive of the Council and to your Contact Officer within your organisation. I would again reiterate the importance of this role. Finally, a copy of all annual letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Bennett
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

CC: Chief Executive
Contact Officer

Factsheet

A. Complaints Received and Investigated with Local Authority average adjusted by population

| Local Authority | Complaints Received | Average | Complaints Investigated | Average |
|--|---------------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|
| Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council | 10 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| Bridgend County Borough Council | 40 | 36 | 1 | 1 |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | 40 | 45 | 1 | 1 |
| Cardiff Council | 109 | 90 | 5 | 3 |
| Carmarthenshire County Council | 25 | 46 | 3 | 1 |
| Ceredigion County Council | 35 | 18 | 5 | 1 |
| City and County of Swansea | 62 | 61 | 1 | 2 |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 36 | 29 | 3 | 1 |
| Denbighshire County Council | 20 | 24 | 3 | 1 |
| Flintshire County Council | 50 | 39 | 6 | 1 |
| Gwynedd Council | 29 | 31 | 2 | 1 |
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | 29 | 17 | 2 | 0 |
| Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council | 13 | 15 | 2 | 0 |
| Monmouthshire County Council | 16 | 23 | 0 | 1 |
| Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council | 35 | 35 | 2 | 1 |
| Newport City Council | 37 | 37 | 2 | 1 |
| Pembrokeshire County Council | 34 | 31 | 0 | 1 |
| Powys County Council | 39 | 33 | 3 | 1 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council | 36 | 60 | 0 | 2 |
| Torfaen County Borough Council | 15 | 23 | 0 | 1 |
| Vale of Glamorgan Council | 30 | 32 | 4 | 1 |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 41 | 34 | 3 | 1 |

B. Complaints Received by Subject

| Denbighshire County Council | Complaints Received |
|--|----------------------------|
| Children s Social Services | 1 |
| Community Facilities. Recreation and Leisure | 1 |
| Complaints Handling | 1 |
| Education | 3 |
| Environment and Environmental Health | 6 |
| Finance and Taxation | 1 |
| Planning and Building Control | 4 |
| Roads and Transport | 2 |
| Various Other | 1 |

C. Comparison of complaint outcomes with average outcomes for Local Authorities, adjusted for population distribution

| County/County Borough Councils | Out of Jurisdiction | Premature | Other cases closed after initial consideration | Early Resolution /Voluntary settlement | Discontinued | Other Report - Not upheld | Other Report Upheld - in whole or in part | Public Interest Report | Total Cases closed |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---|---|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Denbighshire | 3 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| Denbighshire (adjusted) | 4 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 23 |

D. Number of cases with PSOW intervention

| Local Authority | No. of complaints with PSOW intervention | Total number of closed complaints | % of complaints with PSOW interventions |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council | 3 | 11 | 27 |
| Bridgend County Borough Council | 5 | 39 | 13 |
| Caerphilly County Borough Council | 3 | 39 | 8 |
| Cardiff Council | 37 | 123 | 30 |
| Carmarthenshire County Council | 1 | 24 | 4 |
| Ceredigion County Council | 4 | 35 | 11 |
| City and County of Swansea | 11 | 62 | 18 |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 4 | 32 | 13 |
| Denbighshire County Council | 1 | 15 | 7 |
| Flintshire County Council | 11 | 47 | 23 |
| Gwynedd Council | 1 | 26 | 4 |
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | 2 | 26 | 8 |
| Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council | 3 | 13 | 23 |
| Monmouthshire County Council | 1 | 14 | 7 |
| Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council | 4 | 31 | 13 |
| Newport City Council | 8 | 34 | 24 |
| Pembrokeshire County Council | 3 | 32 | 9 |
| Powys County Council | 6 | 38 | 16 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council | 6 | 36 | 17 |
| Torfaen County Borough Council | 1 | 16 | 6 |
| Vale of Glamorgan Council | 3 | 32 | 9 |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 8 | 41 | 20 |

E. Code of Conduct Complaints Closed

| County/County Borough Councils | Closed after initial consideration | Discontinued | No evidence of breach | No action necessary | Refer to Standards Committee | Refer to Adjudication Panel | Withdrawn | Total |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Denbighshire | 2 | | | | | | | 2 |

F. Town/Community council Code of Conduct Complaints

| Town/Community Council | Closed after initial consideration | Discontinued | No evidence of breach | No action necessary | Refer to Standards Committee | Refer to Adjudication Panel | Withdrawn | Total |
|-------------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Prestatyn TC | 2 | | | | | | | 2 |

Appendix

Explanatory Notes

Section A compares the number of complaints against the Local Authority which were received and investigated by my office during 2017/18, with the Local Authority average (adjusted for population distribution) during the same period.

Section B provides a breakdown of the number of complaints about the Local Authority which were received by my office during 2017/18. The figures are broken down into subject categories.

Section C compares the complaint outcomes for the Local Authority during 2017/18, with the average outcome (adjusted for population distribution) during the same period.

Section D provides the numbers and percentages of cases received by the PSOW in which an intervention has occurred. This includes all upheld complaints, early resolutions and voluntary settlements.

Section E provides a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against Councillors during 2017/18.

Section F provides a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against town or community councils.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback on the enclosed information, including suggestions for any information to be enclosed in future annual summaries. Any feedback or queries should be sent to catrin.wallace@ombudsman-wales.org.uk or matthew.aplin@ombudsman-wales.org.uk