

WIRRAL COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 24 NOVEMBER 2007 REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

COMPLAINTS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – ACTION PLAN AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE

1. **Executive Summary**

An Action Plan for improving response times for complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and advises members of current performance in this area.

2. **Background**

2.1 Members will recall that this committee, at its meeting on 25 September 2007 considered the Annual Letter of the Local Government Ombudsman. This highlighted an average response time of 112 days. This figure included multiple cases involving a complex housing benefit issue which was the subject of litigation. If these cases were not considered the average would have been 43 days.

2.2 Committee resolved:

- (1) That the Ombudsman's Annual Letter be noted.
- (2) That –
 - (a) circulate to all members the Ombudsman's special report on telecommunication masts;
 - (b) provide this committee with quarterly updates on the progress of Ombudsman complaints;
 - (c) ensure that the Action Plan for improving response times is presented in a form that allows members to monitor progress;
 - (d) remind those officers who have benefited from training in the handling of Ombudsman complaints of the need to cascade what they have learnt down their departments;
 - (e) report back on these issues to the next meeting.

2.3 An Action Plan has been prepared to improve response times this year. A copy of that Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The key features are:

- (1) a dedicated officer responsible for co-ordinating and tracking responses, with nominated deputies; and

- (2) regular reporting on performance to Legal and Member Services Management Team (monthly), Chief Officers and this Committee quarterly.

2.4 Most of the actions identified in the plan have been implemented and have resulted in an improved performance, as identified in paragraph 3 below.

3. **Current Performance**

3.1 To date in 2007/08 the Council has received 17 complaints. The response times and performance are set out below.

Period	No. of Complaints	Response Times
01.04.07-30.06.07	4	45 days
01.07.07-30.09.07	8	27
01.10.07 to date	5 (3 responded to, to date)	19

3.2 This means that overall this year we have received 15 complaints which have been responded to. Two further report was received recently which have yet to be responded to. The average response time has been 30 days. This is a very marked improvement on the previous year's performance. However, it fails to meet the target of 28 days. It is important to note that the figure for the second and third quarters shows significant improvements on the first quarter as the actions identified in the Plan have been implemented. Therefore, it is anticipated that this improvement will be maintained resulting in average response times over the full year being better than the target. I intended to set an intended response target of 21 days to ensure these improvements continue.

4. **Financial and Staffing Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

5. **Local Member Support**

There are no implications for individual wards arising directly from this report.

6. **Equal Opportunity Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

7. **Human Right Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

8. **Local Agenda 21 Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

9. **Community Safety Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

10. **Planning Implications**

There are none arising directly from this report.

12. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers

13. **Recommendations**

- (1) That the Committee approves the Action Plan appended to this report.
- (2) That the Committee receives further reports on progress and performance.

J. WILKIE

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services

SG/LW. PR/S10/1
16 November 2007

OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS – ACTION PLAN

Action	Target Date	Response Officer
A dedicated officer in Legal and Member Services to process and track all complaints.	Achieved	S. Goacher
Reports on all current Ombudsman's Complaints to be produced to Legal and Member Services' Management Team on a monthly basis.	First report received on 7 November 2007. Further reports to be produced every four weeks.	S. Goacher
Reports on progress on Ombudsman cases to be brought to Chief Officers and Standards Committee on a quarterly basis.	First report on 26 November 2007. Further report on 31 March 2008.	S. Goacher
Contact to be made with Ombudsman to discuss standardised format for complaints.	31 November 2007	S. Goacher
Where delays are highlighted reports to responsible Chief Officers will be made highlighting causes.	Ongoing	S. Goacher