

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 28 JANUARY 2008 REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

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#### COMPLAINTS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN –CURRENT PERFORMANCE

##### 1. Executive Summary

I reported to this committee on 26 November 2007 setting out an Action Plan for improving response times for complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and advising members of performance in this area. As part of that Action Plan it was agreed that regular reports would be made to the committee on current performance. This report updates members on performance.

##### 2. Background

2.1 The Action Plan sought to improve upon the response times for Ombudsman's Complaints. In 2006/7 the Ombudsman's Annual Letter stated that the average response time was 112 days. This 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 against a target of 28 days.

2.2 A number of measures have been put in place to improve performance. Since the Action Plan was improved further measures have been implemented. A single point of contact has been created for Ombudsmans Complaints using the e-mail address [ombudsmans@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:ombudsmans@wirral.gov.uk). All Ombudsman's Complaints are sent to that address which is monitored by dedicated staff within the Legal and Member Services Section. Within 1 working day of receipt of a complaint it is forwarded to the appropriate Departmental Complaints Co-ordinator. The target for a response from the Department is 14 days, with an overall target of 21 days for Legal and Member Services to respond to the Ombudsman. Many Ombudsman's cases involve complicated and protracted complaints, which makes these response times challenging. However, since these changes have been made performance has improved dramatically and consistently throughout the year.

2.3 A dedicated officer monitors response times and chases responses which are not received within time limits. Departmental Complaints Co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that Departments respond within the timescales. The Legal and Member Services Management Team receives reports every 4 weeks on performance which will result in corrective action being taken should there be any delay in individual cases.

##### 3. Current Performance

3.1 When I reported to Committee in November the average time taken to respond to the Ombudsman was 30 days. However, I indicated that times had improved throughout the year and I anticipated that this trend would continue.

3.2 The Ombudsman has confirmed to the Council that her records show that the current average time for responding for 2007/8 is 27.4 days. This is considerable improvement on last year's average and within the target. It is anticipated that this trend will continue and performance will improve still further.

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 notes the content of this report.
- (2) That the Committee receives further reports on progress and performance.

J. WILKIE

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