

SUBJECT:	PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (PSOW) ANNUAL LETTER 2019/20
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	4 NOVEMBER 2020
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose is to fulfil the expectation of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that their report is brought to the attention of Cabinet and that is what we are doing.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Cabinet note the content of the PSOW's annual letter (Appendix 1) and inform the PSOW of their considerations and any proposed actions by 30 November 2020.
- 2.2 That we engage with the PSOW complaints standards work, access training for staff and provide the PSOW with complaints data.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The PSOW sends every Council an Annual letter which provides a summary of the complaints received and investigated. This compares the number of complaints against the local authority which were received and investigated by the PSOW during 2019/20, with the local authority average during the same period.
- 3.2 The PSOW annual letter provides:
 - a breakdown of the number of complaints about the local authority broken down into subject categories.
 - compares the complaint outcomes for the local authority with the average outcome during the same period.
 - the numbers and percentages of cases received in which an intervention has occurred.
 - a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against councillors.

- a breakdown of all Code of Conduct complaint outcomes against town or community councils.

3.3 The National Assembly for Wales (now Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament) passed the PSOW's new Act. This provides them with operational powers to drive systemic improvements of public services through investigations of their "own initiative" and the Complaints Standards role that consider complaints handling processes to ensure complaints data from across Wales is used to improve services.

3.4 The PSOW received 16 complaints about Monmouthshire County Council. One complaint was investigated by them.

Complaints received by subject: (PSOW definition)	Complaints Received
Children Social Services	4
Complaints handling	2
Education	3
Health	1
Planning and Building Control	3
Roads and transport	1
Various other	2

PSOW Comparison of complaint outcomes

Local Authority	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 reports
Monmouthshire	2	4	7	1	-	-	1	-

- There was two complaints where the PSOW intervened.

Code of Conduct complaints

There were two complaints that were closed after initial consideration.

Town/Community Council Code of Conduct complaints

There were 3 complaints that were closed after initial consideration. One related to Magor with Undy Community Council, one related to Chepstow Town Council and one from Raglan Community Council.

A complaint that related to Magor with Undy Community Council and a complaint that related to Mathern Community Council were discontinued.

3.5 The Standards Committee has seen and discussed the PSOW's Annual letter.

4 EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

This report provides feedback information from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The report does not seek to divert from the Council's corporate priorities and the continued delivery of the wide range of services provided through the Council to the public. As the report deals solely with feedback information, a Future generations and Equality assessment is not considered appropriate in this instance.

5 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

This section is not relevant as the work of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is outside of our control.

6 EVALUATION CRITERIA

We will continue to work with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales office to resolve as many issues as possible at an early stage and monitor the number of complaints the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales receives and deals with.

7 REASONS:

7.1 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) role is to consider complaints about public services providers in Wales and to consider complaints that members of local authorities have broken the Code of Conduct. The PSOW has requested that Cabinet considers the complaints that the PSOW has received and that the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 has now been introduced.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are currently no extra resource costs identified.

9 CONSULTEES:

Head of Law and Monitoring Officer
Head of People Services
Head of Policy & Governance

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual letter 2019/20

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