

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL LETTER
2023/24**

MEETING: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2024

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 this Committee and Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Governance & Audit Committee to note the content of the Public Sector Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) annual letter (Appendix 1) and inform the PSOW of their considerations and any proposed actions. The PSOW is aware that due to the scheduling of meetings there would be a delay in responding to them.
- 2.2 That the authority continues to engage with the PSOW complaints standards work, access training for staff and provide the PSOW with complaints data. We have also fully implemented the PSOW's model complaints policy.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Public Sector Ombudsman for Wales 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 2023/24, 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.
 - shows the complaint outcomes for the local authority and the volume and proportion that each outcome represents for the local authority.
 - 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 PSOW received 29 complaints about Monmouthshire County Council. This is 6 more than they received in the previous year, although they closed 32, some complaints were carried over from the previous year. They did not investigate any complaints although they requested early resolutions in 3 cases which was agreed. Comparisons are shown below, noting that the categories used by the commissioner differ between years.

Complaints received by subject: (PSOW definition)	Complaints Received	
	22/23	23/24
Adult Social Services	1	0
Children Social Services	6	7
Complaints handling	3	5
Environment and Environmental health	2	0
Licensing	0	0
Finance and Taxation	1	1
Housing	1	3
Planning and Building Control	6	4
Roads and transport	0	4
Community Facilities, Recreation & Leisure	0	0
Covid 19	0	0
Benefits Administration	0	1
Education	0	0
Various Other	4	4

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	6	10	13	3	0	0	0	0

The PSOW sought early resolution on 3 complaints which we agreed.

Compliance performance comparison

The PSOW's annual letter now includes the number of recommendations made to individual local authorities and the timeliness of our response. The PSOW made four recommendations and 25% of them were complied with on time. Three of the four

were not responded to on time. Two of these were one day late and one was eleven days late.

Code of Conduct complaints

There were 15 complaints that the PSOW decided not to investigate and one where it was decided no action was necessary.

Town/Community Council Code of Conduct complaints

There was one complaint that was referred to the Standards Committee and one complaint where it was decided not to investigate.

- 3.4 This report and the PSOW Annual letter 2023/24 will also be presented to the Standards Committee and Cabinet.

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 Impact 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 the Governance & Audit Committee and Cabinet considers the complaints that the PSOW has received.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are currently no extra resource costs identified.

9 CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual letter 2023/24

11 AUTHOR:

Annette Evans, Customer Relations Manager

12 CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644647

E-mail: annetteevans@monmouthshire.gov.uk