

**Executive Board**  
**30<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

<b>Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2019/20 Carmarthenshire County Council</b>		
<b>Purpose: to receive the Public Services for Wales Annual Letter 2019/20 (the Letter)</b>		
<b>Recommendations / key decisions required: to receive the Letter and to assess performance and consider any actions thereupon.</b>		
Reasons: Each year the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ( <b>PSOW</b> ) provides every Welsh Local Authority with a letter in the form of a fact sheet and accompanying data. It is provided to assist in reviewing performance.		
Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted NA		
Exec. Board Decision Required YES		
Council Decision Required NO		
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Y Cyngorydd/Councillor Emlyn Dole		
Directorate:  Name of Head of Service: Linda Rees Jones  Report Author: Nigel J Evans	Designations:  Head of Administration and Law	Tel: 01267 224694  Email addresses: NEvans@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **30<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

#### **Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2019/20 Carmarthenshire County Council**

- 1. Annually, the PSOW provides to each County Council a letter in the form of a factsheet with accompanying data. It is provided to assist in reviewing performance.**
- 2. This year's Letter is attached to this summary. Selected items include:**
  - The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic;
  - In May, the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 received Royal Assent. The Act has a number of new features, but two that the Ombudsman mentions are the new Standards Agency and "own initiative" investigations;
  - The overall number of new complaints against Local Authorities has decreased by 2.4% over the figure for last year;
  - In addition, the number of Code of Conduct referred to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales has also fallen;
  - The Ombudsman received 42 complaints against Carmarthenshire. Factsheet A. In terms of population this equated to 0.22 complaints per 1000 residents, with the average for Wales being 0.28 (Carmarthenshire is the fourth most populous county in Wales). Last year the figure of received complaints was 49;
  - Factsheet B shows how Carmarthenshire complaints are broken down into subject area. Planning and Housing traditionally generate the largest proportion of complaints. It is also mentioned that the classification of subject area is ascribed by the Ombudsman, so does not take into account service structures at Carmarthenshire. Subject areas may therefore contain individual cases that Carmarthenshire would categorise to a different area of service;
  - Factsheet C shows that there were no public interest reports issued against Carmarthenshire, however there were two other complaints upheld. One related to MH and LD and the other Planning. The first was a Children's Services case, where the Ombudsman found that the time taken to complete an investigation was excessive. The Authority provided an apology, a financial redress of £500 and shared the findings with staff. The second was upheld in part only, the Ombudsman finding that communication with the complainant had been insufficiently clear, leading to delays in process. The Authority provided an apology, a financial redress of £250, and was required to set out clearly to the complainant what it required to determine the application before it.
  - Factsheet D shows to what extent the Ombudsman has intervened in cases. These are cases that are settled, resolved early, or where he has issued a report. Carmarthenshire's figure falls exactly on the average figure of 13%;
  - Code of Conduct figures at E shows the smaller proportion of cases referred to in the Letter, when compared with the position last year. It hopefully also reflects the results of the programme of training delivered by Carmarthenshire officers to Community and Town Councils;

### **3. The Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 and the new Complaints Standards Agency (CSA)**

- This new Agency is tasked with gathering data, monitoring performance and promoting improvements;
- Officers from Carmarthenshire met with representatives of the new Standards Agency in November 2019, and since that time have been delivering performance statistics to the Agency on a quarterly basis. The Ombudsman makes reference in the Letter to the data from Welsh Authorities and what it has been showing. The Authority has also arranged three training sessions to be delivered to officers by the Agency. It is also worth mentioning that the Ombudsman has also brought into being a new, all-Wales model complaints policy. This Authority has localised its policy in light of the Ombudsman's model, with a view to formal approval of this draft in due course.

**DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?**

**YES – the PSOW's Annual Letter 2019/20**

## IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

**Signed:** Head of Administration and Law

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
<b>NONE</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>

- 1. Legal - the PSOW Annual Letter asks that the annual letter is presented in order for performance to be reviewed. The Letter is attached to this report.**

# CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed; Linda Rees-Jones Head of Administration and Law

(Please specify the outcomes of consultations undertaken where they arise against the following headings)

1. Scrutiny Committee

N/A

2. Local Member(s)

N/A

3. Community / Town Council

N/A

4. Relevant Partners

N/A

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

N/A

**EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO  
HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED**

YES

Include any observations here – no consultations required. This report is to receive data and information.

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information**  
**List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

**THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW**

<b>Title of Document</b>	<b>File Ref No.</b>	<b>Locations that the papers are available for public inspection</b>
<b>The PSOW's Annual Letter 2019/20</b>	<b>CCOM-881</b>	<a href="https://www.ombudsman.wales/annual-letters/"><u>https://www.ombudsman.wales/annual-letters/</u></a> <a href="https://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/llythyrau-blynyddol/"><u>https://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/llythyrau-blynyddol/</u></a>
<b>The PSOW's Annual report 2019/20</b>	<b>CCOM-881</b>	<a href="http://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PSOW-Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2019-20.pdf"><u>http://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PSOW-Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2019-20.pdf</u></a> <a href="http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/07/OGCC-Adroddiad-a-Chyfrifon-Blynyddol-2019-20.pdf"><u>http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/07/OGCC-Adroddiad-a-Chyfrifon-Blynyddol-2019-20.pdf</u></a>