

Cabinet
8th November 2021

**Subject: OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER 2020/2021
CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Purpose: to receive the Public Services for Wales Annual Letter
2020/21 (the Letter)**

Recommendations / key decisions required:

**to receive the Letter and to assess performance and consider
any actions thereupon.**

Reasons:

Each year the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (**PSOW**) 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

Cabinet Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required NO

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Councillor Emlyn Dole

Directorate:

Name of Head of Service:
Linda Rees Jones

Report Author: Nigel J Evans

Designations:

Head of Administration
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SUBJECT

Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2020/2021 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 pandemic and how, nevertheless, information received will bring insight into how public services will have reacted in a year unlike any other;
 - The overall number of new complaints received relating to Local Authorities has decreased by 12.5% over the figure for last year. This, the PSOW says, is reflective of the reduction of complaints being reported to Local Authorities during the pandemic;
 - There has been a higher proportion of Code of Conduct complaints referred to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales;
 - Under his new powers, he has in the last year instigated his first "Own Initiative Investigation" (Local Authority Homelessness Assessments), and also four extended "Own Initiative Investigations" (that is, extended from complaints already under investigation);
 - Also under his new powers, his Complaints Standards team have received data from each Local Authority which shows that they recorded (inter alia) nearly 12,000 complaints, which equates to 3.77 for every 1000 residents;
 - In terms of Carmarthenshire specifically, the PSOW received 27 complaints directly to his office against the Council. See Appendix A of the Letter. In terms of population this equated to 0.14 complaints per 1000 residents, with the average for Wales being 0.25 (Carmarthenshire being the fourth most populous county in Wales). Last year the figure of complaints was 42, which equated to 0.22 against an average of 0.28;
 - Appendix B shows how Carmarthenshire complaints are broken down into subject area. Planning and Housing nationally and 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;
 - Appendix C shows that there were no public interest reports issued against Carmarthenshire, however there were two other reports issued. One was upheld and the other not upheld. The upheld case related to Children's Social Services. The PSOW was concerned about the way matters were handled and this included (inter alia) the support given to the complainant; not all visits were documented; further visits were not arranged. The Authority apologised to the complainant and shared the report with those teams involved in the case to aid future learning. The second report issued was not upheld and related to Planning and Building Control. The PSOW found that (inter alia) representations were considered in reaching the decision arrived at; minutes were sufficient and correctly summarised; and, that the complaint handling was robust.

- Appendix 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. For Carmarthenshire this equated to 21% of cases with the national average being 13%.
- Code of Conduct figures for Carmarthenshire at Appendices E and F, shows there were no referrals to the Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES – the PSOW’s Annual Letter 2020/21

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: Linda Rees Jones, Head of Administration and Law

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

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. Consultation 1-5 not applicable.

Signed; Linda Rees-Jones, Head of Administration and Law

1. Scrutiny Committee

Not applicable

2. Local Member(s)

Not applicable

3. Community / Town Council

Not applicable

4. Relevant Partners

Not applicable

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Not applicable

EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO HOLDER 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

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
The PSOW's Annual Letter 2020/21	CCOM-913	https://www.ombudsman.wales/ https://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/
The PSOW's Annual report 2020/21	CCOM-913	http://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2020-21-Delivering-Justice-FINAL.pdf http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/07/Adroddiad-a-Chyfrifon-Blynyddol-2020-21-Cyflawni-Cyfiawnder.pdf http://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Annual-report-2020-21-Executive-Summary-FINAL.pdf http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/07/Adroddiad-Blynyddol-2020-21-Crynodeb-Gweithredol.pdf