

# Cabinet

3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2022

## OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER 2021/2022 CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Purpose: to receive the Public Services for Wales Annual Letter 2021/22 (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

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Y Cyngorydd/Councillor Darren Price**

Directorate:

Name of Head of Service:  
Linda Rees Jones

Report Author: Nigel J Evans:

Designations:

Head of Administration  
and Law

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Ombudsman's Annual Letter 2021/2022 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 number of complaints relating to Local Authorities increased by 47% nationally when compared with last year;
  - There has also been a higher number of Code of Conduct complaints when compared with last year. In addition, there has been a record number referred to either the Adjudication Panel for Wales, or local standards committees;
  - Under the new 2019 Act powers, the Ombudsman published the outcome of the first "Own Initiative Investigation" (Homelessness Review), resulting in specific recommendations and suggestions designed to bring about changes for people using homelessness services. The Ombudsman also completed three extended investigations i.e. extending an investigation already underway to cover other issues;
  - Also under the new powers, the Complaints Standards team (CSA) have continued to work with public bodies, and for the first time have published information on complaints handled by Local Authorities. The CSA information showed over 15,000 complaints were recorded by Local Authorities, with nearly half (46%) of those complaints being investigated within 20 working days. About 8% of all closed complaints ended up being referred to the PSOW;
  - In terms of Carmarthenshire specifically, the PSOW received 54 complaints directly to her office against the Council. See Appendix A of the Letter. Whilst all Councils were subject to more complaints, Carmarthenshire was one of the Council's that saw the highest increase. In terms of population the number of complaints equated to 0.29 complaints per 1000 residents, against an average for Wales of 0.36 (Carmarthenshire being the fourth most populous county in Wales). Last year the figure of complaints for Carmarthenshire was 27, which equated to 0.14 against an average of 0.25;
  - Appendix B shows how Carmarthenshire complaints are broken down into subject area. Planning, Housing and complaints handling, nationally and traditionally, generate a large 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 reports issued against Carmarthenshire, either upheld or not upheld;
- Appendix D shows to what extent the Ombudsman intervened in cases. These are cases that are settled, resolved early, or where she has issued a report. For Carmarthenshire the rate of interventions decreased when compared with last year. It equated to 14% of cases with the national also being 14%. This is in comparison with 21% of cases last year with a national average of 13%;
- Code of Conduct figures for Carmarthenshire at Appendices E and F, show there were no referrals to the Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

**DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED? YES – the PSOW's Annual Letter 2021/22**

## 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

Consultations 1 – 5 not applicable.

**1.Scrutiny Committee**

**2.Local Member(s)**

**3.Community / Town Council**

**4.Relevant Partners**

**5.Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations**

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO  
HOLDER AWARE/CONSULTED**

YES

**Include any observations here – no consultations required. The 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
<b>The PSOW's Annual Letter 2021/22</b>	<b>CCOM-975</b>	<a href="https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Carmarthenshire-Eng.pdf">https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Carmarthenshire-Eng.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/08/Carmarthenshire-Cym.pdf">http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/08/Carmarthenshire-Cym.pdf</a>
<b>The PSOW's Annual report 2021/22</b>	<b>CCOM-975</b>	<a href="https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ANNUAL-REPORT-2021-22-Signed-Version.pdf">https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/ANNUAL-REPORT-2021-22-Signed-Version.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021-22-ANNUAL-REPORT-2021-22-EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.pdf">https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2021-22-ANNUAL-REPORT-2021-22-EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/08/ADRODDIAD-BLYNYDDOL-2021-22-Signed-Version.pdf">http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/08/ADRODDIAD-BLYNYDDOL-2021-22-Signed-Version.pdf</a>  <a href="http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/08/2021-22-ADRODDIAD-BLYNYDDOL-2021-22-CRYNODEB-GWEITHREDOL.pdf">http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/08/2021-22-ADRODDIAD-BLYNYDDOL-2021-22-CRYNODEB-GWEITHREDOL.pdf</a>