

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

29 SEPTEMBER 2023

OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER 2022/2023 CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Purpose:

to receive the Public Services for Wales Annual Letter 2022/23 (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 understanding performance.

Cabinet Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Y Cynghorydd/Councillor Darren Price

Directorate:

Name of Head of Service:
Linda Rees Jones

Report Author: Nigel J Evans:

Designations:

Head of Administration
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

29 SEPTEMBER 2023

OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER 2022/2023 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 understanding performance.**
2. **This year's Letter is attached to this summary. Selected items include:**
 - The number of new cases the PSOW received relating to local authorities reduced when compared with last year;
 - There has also been a fewer number of Code of Conduct complaints nationally overall when compared with last year. In addition, there has been a reduction in the number referred to either the Adjudication Panel for Wales, or local standards committees;
 - Under the new 2019 Act powers, the Ombudsman began work on her second wider "Own Initiative" investigation looking at carers assessments within local authorities. The four local councils where that work is taking place are Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Flintshire and Neath and Port Talbot. The findings will be shared by the PSOW when available;
 - Also under the new powers, the Complaints Standards team (CSA) have continued to work with public bodies, with more than 50 public bodies (including this Authority) operating the PSOW model complaints policy;
 - In terms of Carmarthenshire (CCC) specifically, the PSOW received 53 complaints directly to her office against the Council. See Appendix A of the Letter. This is a small reduction over last year (-2%). In terms of population the number of complaints equated to 0.28 complaints per 1000 residents, against an average for Wales of 0.33 (CCC being the fourth most populous county in Wales). Last year the figure of complaints for Carmarthenshire was 54, which equated to 0.29 against an average of 0.36. Also in terms of CCC, the Letter mentions that of the overall complaints received by CCC in 22/23, 4% of those ended up with the PSOW;
 - Appendix B shows how CCC complaints are broken down into subject area. Nationally and traditionally Housing, complaints handling and Planning generate the largest proportion of complaints. The classification of subject area in the appendix to the Letter does not reflect service structures throughout CCC. Subject areas may therefore contain individual cases that CCC would categorise to a different area of service. For instance, in terms of "Housing" both Housing and Housing Property (whilst separate services) are brought together under the umbrella of "Housing" for the PSOW's data purposes;
 - Appendix C shows that there were no reports issued against CCC, either upheld or not upheld. There were also no Public or Special Interest reports. It is also seen that nearly half the cases closed by the PSOW were classified as "premature". This means the Ombudsman felt that CCC had not had an opportunity to investigate the complaint itself. Those premature cases were referred back by the PSOW into CCC's corporate or statutory complaints procedures;
 - Appendix D shows to what extent the Ombudsman intervened in cases. These are cases that are settled or resolved early. For Carmarthenshire the rate of interventions decreased when compared with last year. It equated to 12% of Carmarthenshire's cases with the national average being 13%. This is in comparison with 14% of cases last year with a national average also being 14%;
 - Code of Conduct figures for CCC at Appendices E and F, show there were two referrals to the Standards Committee.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED? YES – the PSOW's Annual Letter 2022/23

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 an understanding of performance. 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

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 2022/23	CCOM-1055	https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Carmarthenshire-ENG-22-23-Annual-Letter.pdf http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/Carmarthenshire-CYM-22-23-Annual-Letter.pdf
The PSOW's Annual report 2022/23	CCOM-1055	https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2022-23-19-07-2023-Auditor-signed.pdf https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2022-23-EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY.pdf http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/Adroddiad-a-Chyfrifon-Blynyddol-2022-23-19-07-2023-gyda-llofnod.pdf http://www.ombwdsmon.cymru/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/08/Adroddiad-a-Chyfrifon-Blynyddol-2022-23-CRYNODEB-GWEITHREDOL.pdf