

COMPLAINTS
(Report by the Director of Central Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information on internal complaints and a summary of complaints determined by the Local Government Ombudsman.

2. SUMMARY OF INTERNAL COMPLAINTS

- 2.1 The Council's internal complaints system summarises complaints into six categories as follows:-

- ◆ action of employee;
- ◆ council policy;
- ◆ council procedures;
- ◆ equality of service;
- ◆ failure to respond; and
- ◆ service delivery.

- 2.2 The table attached at Annex A provides an analysis of complaints by complaint reason, the Division involved and results compared with the previous two years.

- 2.3 The Council captures information relating to verbal complaints. These complaints predominantly relate to the Operations Division and, for the period 2009/10, 420 (457) complaints were received out of 39,450 (41,546) service requests, which represented a complaint rate of 1.1% (1.1). The figures in parenthesis are for 2008/09.

3. SUMMARY OF OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

- 3.1 The Local Government Ombudsman Service has published its provisional statistics for enquiries and complaints dealt with in relation to the District Council in the year 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010. The Ombudsman received a total of 18 enquiries and complaints in 2008/09, which represents a small decrease on the 15 received in the previous year. The Ombudsman will not normally consider a complaint unless a Council has had the opportunity to deal with the complaint itself. So if someone complains to the Ombudsman without having taken the matter up with a Council the Ombudsman will usually refer it back to the Council as a '*premature complaint*' to see if the Council can itself resolve the matter. Of the 18 enquiries, three were deemed to be premature, six resulted only in advice being given and two re-submitted premature complaints and seven new complaints were forwarded to the investigative team to pursue.

- 3.2 The following table provides a summary of the decisions reached by the Ombudsman during the year compared with previous years.

Annex A

Complaint Reason	Division involved 2007/08 and action	Division involved 2008/09 and action	Division involved 2009/10 and action
Action of Employee	1 Public Health 1 Benefits (SI) 5 Development Control 2 Planning Policy	3 Benefits (1 SI and 2 NAT) 1 Customer Services (NAT) 4 Council Tax (3 NAT and 1 SI) 1 Housing (SI) 2 Planning Policy (1 SI and 1 NAT)	2 Council Tax (NAT) 4 Development Mgt (3 NAT, 1 SI) 6 Benefits (2 NAT, 2 SI, 2 FT) 1 Operations (CIS) 1 Env & Comm Health (NAT) 3 Leisure (3 NAT)
Council Policy	3 Council Tax 2 Benefits 4 Housing (NAT) 1 Development Control	1 Benefits (NAT) 7 Council Tax (1 CIS and 6 NAT) 1 Ops (SI)	1 Council Tax (NAT) 3 Benefits (NAT))
Council Procedures	1 Development Control (NAT) 4 Benefits (1 NAT, 2 SI) 1 Business Rates (NAT) 5 Housing (3 NAT) 1 Commercial Team	7 Development Control (4 NAT and 3SI) 1 Benefits (NAT) 2 Council Tax (2 CIS)	4 Development Mgt (3 NAT, 1CIP) 3 Benefits (2 NAT, 1 CIP) 1 Council Tax (NAT) 2 Operations (NAT) 1 Env & Comm Health (NAT)
Equality of Service	1 Housing (NAT) 1 Operational 1 Development Control		1 Council Tax (NAT) 1 Development Mgt (SI)
Failure to Respond			3 Development Mgt (2 CIS, 1 NAT) 1 Planning Policy (NAT) 1 Dev Mgt + CI Tax ((NAT) 1 Env & Comm Health (NAT)
Service Delivery	8 Development Control 3 Operational (CIP) 1 Amenities 2 Benefits (1 SI, 1 NAT) 2 Housing (1 NAT) 4 Council Tax (NAT) 1 Planning Policy	8 Development Control (4 SI and 4 NAT) 2 Ops)1 CIP and 1 NAT) 1 Council Tax (NAT) 4 Benefits (2 NAT, 1 SI and 1 CIS) 1 Housing (CIP)	6 Development Mgt (4 NAT, 1 CIS, 1 SI) 6 Council Tax (4 NAT, 2 CIS) 3 Benefits (3 NAT) 3 Housing (2 NAT, 1 CIS) 5 Operations (4 NAT, 1 CIS) 3 Env & Comm Health (3 NAT) 1 Building Control (NAT)
Total	58	52	67

KEY:

NAT	No Action Taken	RTC	Referral to Contractor
CIP	Change in Procedures	CIS	Change in Service
SI	Staff Instruction	FT	Formal Training