

**COMPLAINTS**  
**(Report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At the last meeting, during consideration of the annual report on complaints, the Panel requested a further report on the lessons learnt from cases referred to the Ombudsman. This report provides Members with this information.

**2. OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS**

- 2.1 As the previous report indicated, in 2011/12 two complaints to the Ombudsman resulted in local settlements. Both of the complaints referred to the same matter. The Ombudsman found that the Council had delayed seeking legal advice and had not passed on concerns about antisocial behaviour. It was recommended that the Council should pay the complainants compensation for the time and trouble they had taken to submit the complaint and to chase it and to reflect their distress that their complaints were not being listened to. With the approval of the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Panel compensation was paid to the complainants. In accordance with the requirements of the Constitution, this was reported to the Panel on 27th September 2011 (Minute No. 11/15 refers).
- 2.2 In response to the provisional findings the Council expressed the view that the kinds of matters referred to the Development Management section were not the sort of things it would be expected that Development Management Officers should refer to Environmental Health or the Community Safety Partnership. However, in the spirit of wanting to learn from the complaint, Development Management Officers were asked to obtain advice from the other departments on the kind of information on which they would act. The intention was to improve our systems by establishing clear criteria for passing information between departments.
- 2.3 In practice, the Council's Planning Enforcement Officer, has agreed with the Community Safety Team Leader that she will take the lead on such matters through her Anti-Social Behaviour Order work. Cases will be discussed on their merits as they arise. The Neighbourhoods Intervention Team Leader is involved in these meetings from an Environmental Health perspective. There has been a further complaint about the same site, which has been dealt with through the new arrangements. There have not been any other complaints that have had to be addressed in this way.

**3. RECOMMENDATION**

The Panel is:

**RECOMMENDED**

to note the contents of the report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Local Government Ombudsman      LGO Statement of Reasons – 11 008 609 / 10 010 911.

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