

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	<i>Corporate Performance Panel</i>		
DATE:	26 February 2024		
TITLE:	Complaints against the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023		
TYPE OF REPORT:	<i>For information only</i>		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Cllr Jo Rust – Portfolio for People and Communities		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Honor Howell – Corporate Governance Manager		
OPEN/EXEMPT	Open	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	No

SUMMARY:
<p>This report is produced on an annual basis for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and sets out the breakdown of MP Enquiries, Corporate and Ombudsman complaints and details on compliments received from members of the public. It also includes the number of Freedom of Information requests made in the same period as well as Data Protection Breaches, together with any reported to the Information Commissioners office. It is presented to Corporate Performance Panel members for information only.</p>
ANALYSIS:
<p><u>MP Enquiries</u></p> <p>In total, 97 MP Enquiries were dealt with during 2022/23, compared with 81 during the previous year. MPs are often contacted by their constituents for help and advice on a range of local issues or individual problems with a service delivered by the council. These are then passed to the relevant Assistant Director or Service Head for a response.</p> <p>A breakdown of the MP enquiries received and the service area they relate to is attached at Appendix A.</p> <p><u>Corporate Complaints</u></p> <p>59 Corporate Complaints were received during 2022/23, compared with 54 the previous year. Of these complaints during 2022/23, 13 were upheld as justified and 46 not upheld at Stage 1 of the complaints process.</p> <p>Of the 59 Corporate Complaints which were received, 13 went to an Appeal to the Chief Executive (Stage 2) and out of the 13 complaints, 3 were considered to be justified and 10 were not upheld at Stage 2 of the complaints process.</p> <p>A breakdown of the complaints received and the service area they relate to is attached at Appendix B.</p> <p><u>Ombudsman Complaints</u></p>

In total, 2 complaints were investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman with 1 being upheld. This represents a 50% uphold rate compared to an average of 59% in similar authorities.

The complaint upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman was also upheld by the council at Stage 2 of the complaint's process, although the complainant was still dissatisfied and referred their complaint to the Ombudsman.

Attached at **Appendix C** is the brief Ombudsman Annual Report 2022/23 for information. The Ombudsman will generally only investigate complaints in respect of **process**. For example, a complaint about a planning decision will only be investigated if a process has not been correctly followed, not about the decision made as there is a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

Compliments

Whilst we receive complaints about a range of issues, we also receive compliments from customers, visitors and businesses expressing their gratitude and thanks for the service they received. This information is captured and published in the staff magazine 'Internal Affairs' to share good feedback with colleagues and to acknowledge the service provided by that individual/team.

For the year 2022/2022, we received 163 compliments from our customers. These have been published in the council's staff magazine, Internal Affairs.

Freedom of Information

For the period 2022/2023, a total of 559 Freedom of Information requests were made via the councils then Legal Services provider, Eastlaw. In April 2023, this service was returned to an in-house function within the Corporate Governance Team. More detailed reporting on response times and trends will be available for this service in next year's report. There will also be quarterly monitoring of the data and reported to CPP.

If customers are not satisfied with the response to their information request, they can complain to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). For the year 2022/23, one complaint was reported and subsequently upheld by the ICO.

Data Protection

Reports of Data Breaches under the Data Protection Act are recorded by the council. For 2022/2023, these were reported to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) at Eastlaw. These breaches are then assessed by the DPO to establish if they are reportable to the ICO. For 2022/23, there were xx breaches recorded with one reportable to the ICO.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are no recommendations; it is an annual report for Members to note.