

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Audit and Governance Committee

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> January, 2013
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Performance, Customer Services and Capacity
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Annual Report of Corporate Complaints and Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review for the year ended 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2012
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor David Brown

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### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the complaints received by Cheshire East Council and also those dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about Cheshire East Council for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That having regard to the parameters of the Committee's terms of reference as outlined in this report, the Committee notes this report and makes any further response it considers appropriate.

### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 The LGO received 116 enquires and complaints relating to the Council during the year, 63 of which were forwarded onto the Investigative Team for formal investigation.
- 3.2 The Customer Relations Team received 1,421 corporate complaints during the same time period. In addition, Adult Services received 146 and Children's Services received 90. The Council also received 645 compliments (861 in 2010/11) and 95 suggestions (247 in 2010/11).

### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All

### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 All

## **6.0 Policy Implications including Carbon and Health**

- 6.1 Adherence to the Corporate Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy is key to ensuring that service users have an effective means of feeding back about our services, so that we understand what we are doing well and where we may need to improve the standard of services we deliver.

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 If maladministration causing injustice is found, Cheshire East Council can be asked to pay compensation to a complainant. A compensation payment is also possible where a matter is settled prior to a formal finding by the Ombudsman.

## **8.0 Legal Implications (authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

- 8.1 The Committee's terms of reference, as set out in the Constitution, include the following:
- ensuring the Council has in place appropriate policies and mechanisms to safeguard the Council's resources, and
  - seeking assurance that customer complaint arrangements are robust.
- 8.2 The Committee's role in considering this report is to determine what, if any, action it should take to further the above aims.

## **9.0 Risk Management**

- 9.1 In addition to other measures within the Council's management structure, the remit of this Committee contributes towards the management of risk in handling complaints, and the promotion of good practice.

## **10.0 Background and Options**

- 10.1 The table below details enquiries submitted to the Local Government Ombudsman's Office over the past two years.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Informally Investigated 2011/12</b>	<b>Formally Investigated 2011/12</b>	<b>Informally Investigated 2010/11</b>	<b>Formally Investigated 2010/11</b>
Adult Services	19	14	16	11
Housing Benefits & Council Tax	12	6	11	1
Corporate & Other Services	4	3	8	2
Education & Children's Services	21	13	16	11
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	9	4	9	3

Highways & Transport	7	3	11	3
Housing	3	2	5	3
Planning & Development	41	18	31	15
Other	-	-	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>50</b>

10.2 Of the 63 enquiries which were formally investigated and concluded in 2011 – 2012; 10 related to the previous year. The Local Government Ombudsman is still investigating 8 enquiries made in the 2011 – 2012 period.

10.3 In 10 of the cases, Local Settlements were reached. None of these has been highlighted as a cause for concern.

*A Local Settlement is when an authority takes or agrees to take action that the Local Government Ombudsman considers to be a satisfactory response. This can be either one or all of the following: a change in procedures, an apology, a compensation payment.*

10.4 The outcome of the remaining formal investigations was as follows:

Not investigated	25
Discontinued - not enough evidence of fault	16
Discontinued- no or minor injustice and other	12

10.5 The following table details the total complaints received by the Council during 2011/12, with the figures for 2010/11 included for comparison:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Number of Complaints Received 11/12</b>	<b>Number of Complaints Received 10/11</b>
Waste & Recycling North	316	308
Waste & Recycling South	308	179
Streetscape & Bereavement	18	83
Environmental Protection	10	17
Parking Enforcement	30	32
Spatial Planning, Building Control & Land Charges	17	15
Development Management North	37	83
Development Management South	82	75
Housing Strategy	7	20
Highways & Transportation	70	23
Regeneration	28	19
Library Services	13	44
Cultural Facilities & Events, Arts Heritage	7	14
Leisure Facilities (inc Development)	67	82
Green Spaces	8	40
Customer Services (inc Web Site)	104	83
Housing Benefit Service	51	109
Council Tax & Business Rates Service	185	165

Legal & Democratic Services	8	30
Assets	5	
Other	28	39
Adults (non-statutory complaints)	5	9
Children's (non-statutory complaints)	17	15
<b>Total Corporate Complaints 2010/11</b>	<b>1421</b>	<b>1484</b>
<b>Complaints to Adults Services 2010/11</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Complaints to Children's Services 10/11</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>50</b>

## 11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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