

## **OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

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| <b>Head of Service:</b>       | Andrew Bircher, Interim Director of Corporate Services                               |
| <b>Report Author:</b>         | Kersty Wood, Kush Chatrath   |
| <b>Wards affected:</b>        | (All Wards);   |
| <b>Appendices (attached):</b> | Appendix 1 – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2023/24 |

### **Summary**

This report provides the annual review of complaints received and decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman during 2023-24.

### **Recommendation (s)**

#### **The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Receive and note the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2023-2024.**

## **1 Reason for Recommendation**

- 1.1 To bring to the attention of the Committee the Annual Review of Complaints by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), regarding complaints it has considered against the Council.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman produces an Annual Review Letter for all local authorities detailing the number and type of complaints received and decisions made relating to each authority. The annual review letter for the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 relating to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

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### 3 Annual Review Letter 2023-24

- 3.1 The Annual Review Letter sets out that for the year ending 31 March 2024 the LGSCO received a total of 24 complaints relating to the Council. Upon assessment by the Ombudsman, they decided four of these complaints required investigating. The Ombudsman upheld 2 of these complaints, the third was closed as there was no worthwhile outcome achievable by further investigation by the Ombudsman, and in the fourth no injustice was identified.
- 3.2 The details of the two complaints upheld by the Ombudsman have previously been reported to this committee.
- 3.3 Further details for all of these complaints can be found on the LGSCO website.
- 3.4 The Annual Review letter does not detail the total number of complaints made to the LGO against the Council. For the year ended 31 March 2024, this was 24. A comparison with previous years is provided below:

|   | 2017/18   | 2018/19   | 2019/20   | 2020/21   | 2021/22   | 2022/23   | 2023/24   |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Number of complaints received by the Ombudsman</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>27</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>24</b> |
| <b>Number of complaints upheld</b>                    | <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>0</b>  | <b>3</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>2</b>  | <b>2</b>  |

- 3.5 The Council's figures for 2023-24 are comparable to other Surrey authorities, as outlined in the below comparison table:

| <b>Authority</b>              | <b>Investigations</b> | <b>Upheld</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| <b>Elmbridge</b>              | <b>3</b>              | <b>1</b>      |
| <b>Epsom &amp; Ewell</b>      | <b>4</b>              | <b>2</b>      |
| <b>Guildford</b>              | <b>5</b>              | <b>3</b>      |
| <b>Reigate &amp; Banstead</b> | <b>1</b>              | <b>1</b>      |
| <b>Runnymede</b>              | <b>1</b>              | <b>1</b>      |
| <b>Spelthorne</b>             | <b>0</b>              | <b>0</b>      |
| <b>Surrey Heath</b>           | <b>1</b>              | <b>1</b>      |
| <b>Tandridge</b>              | <b>3</b>              | <b>3</b>      |
| <b>Waverley</b>               | <b>1</b>              | <b>1</b>      |
| <b>Woking</b>                 | <b>0</b>              | <b>0</b>      |

### 4 Risk Assessment

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### 4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

4.1.1. There are no equalities issues arising from the contents of this report.

### 4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1. None.

### 4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1. None.

### 4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1. None.

### 4.5 Other

4.5.1. None.

## 5 Financial Implications

5.1 None arising from this report.

5.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

## 6 Legal Implications

6.1 The Council is obliged to respond to complaints of maladministration through the Ombudsman. The Local Government Act 1974 prescribes the way in which the Ombudsman conducts investigations.

6.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

## 7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council

7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

7.3.1. None.

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

7.4.2. None.

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### 7.5 **Partnerships:**

7.4.2. None

## **8 Background papers**

8.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

### **Other papers:**

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Website, your Council's performance: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance>