

OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Head of Service:	Andrew Bircher, Assistant Director of Corporate Services
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Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Appendices (attached):	

Summary

This report provides the annual review of complaints received and decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) between April 2024- and March 2025 inclusive.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Receive and note the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2024-25.**

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 (LGO), regarding complaints it has considered against the Council.

2 Background

- 2.1 The LGO 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 2024 to 31 March 2025 relating to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

3 Annual Review Letter 2024-2025

- 3.1 The Annual Review Letter sets out that for the year ending 31st March 2024 the LGO received a total of 15 complaints relating to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, a reduction from 24 complains received in the previous year.

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- 3.2 Upon assessment of the 15 complaints received by the LGO in 2024-25, it was found that 7 of the complaints were not suitable for the consideration by the LGO. These include complaints brought to the Ombudsman before the council was given a chance to consider the complaint, or complaints where an alternative governing body has authority to consider the complaint (e.g. the Planning Inspectorate or the Information Commissioner's Office).
- 3.3 A further 6 complaints were closed after assessments. Reasons for this could be that the law says the LGO are not allowed to investigate, or it would be a poor use of public funds if they did. This left 2 complaints that were investigated.
- 3.4 Of the 2 complaints that were investigated, neither of them were upheld, although the council did agree to take forward one recommendation. Details of these complaints have previously been reported to this committee.
- 3.5 Further details of all complaints received by the LGO can be found on their website (<https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/epsom-ewell-borough-council/statistics/>)
- 3.6 A comparison with previous years can be found below:

EEBC	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of complaints received by the Ombudsman	23	27	17	11	17	24	15
Number of complaints upheld	2	0	3	2	2	2	0

- 3.7 The data including complaints received and upheld by the LGO reflects the positive work that has been done to improve internal complaint handling at both stage 1 and stage 2.
- 3.8 The low number of complaints received by the LGO (15) and subsequent investigations (2) compared with the total number of stage 2 complaints (81) responded to by the council in the same period, suggests that complainants are generally satisfied with the council's investigation and response to complaints.
- 3.9 The council's figures for 2024-25 are comparable to other Surrey authorities as outlines in the table below:

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Authority	Complaints received by LGO	Investigations	Complaints Upheld
Elmbridge	22	3	2
Epsom & Ewell	15	2	0
Guildford	22	2	1
Reigate & Banstead	10	0	0
Runnymede	9	2	2
Spelthorne	11	0	0
Surrey Heath	12	2	2
Tandridge	13	1	0
Waverley	17	4	3
Woking	16	5	3

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

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.

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5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 None arising from the contents of this report.
- 5.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None for the purpose 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 for the purposes of this report.
- 6.3 Policies, Plans & Partnerships
- 6.4 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:
- Effective Council
- 6.5 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 6.6 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**
- 6.6.1 None.
- 6.7 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**
- 6.7.1 None.
- 6.8 **Partnerships:**
- 6.8.1 None.
- 6.9 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:**
- 6.9.1 None.

7 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

- Ombudsman Annual Report 2023/24

Other papers:

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Website, your Council's performance: [Your council's performance](#)