



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Standards Board – 20 June 2012

Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2011/12

Purpose of report: The report provides information on the complaints about East Northamptonshire Council which were dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) in 2011/12.

Attachment(s): None

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Local Government Ombudsman has issued his annual review report on enquiries and investigations into complaints against the Council for the previous financial year. This report advises the Board of the position and compares the position with that of the previous period. This fulfils the Board's responsibility under Article 9.04 (b) of the Council's constitution.

2.0 Enquiries and Complaints Received

2.1 The figures from the Local Government Ombudsman indicate that a total of 8 enquiries and complaints were received. Advice was given on 2 of them and on 3 further cases, they were regarded as premature (the complaints not having progressed through all stages of the Council's own complaints procedure. Three cases were forwarded to the LGO investigative team. The details are as follows (with the previous year's cases in brackets):-

Premature complaints: 3 - 1 Benefits/Tax; 2 Planning (3)

Advice Given: 2 - 2 Planning (3)

Forwarded to investigative team (new and resubmitted) 3 - 1 Environmental Services; 2 Planning (3)

3.0 Decisions by the Investigative Team

3.1 There were 2 decisions taken by the LGO investigative team (compared to 4 decisions in 2010/11), with the following outcomes:-

Investigation Not Justified 1

This case involved a householder planning application

No maladministration 1

This case also involved a planning application and the Ombudsman felt that the injustice was not significant.

4.0 Work related to an earlier Ombudsman finding

4.1 Last year, the Board was informed of progress made in relation to the case going back several years involving a small housing development in Rushden, where this Council and Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) were asked to meet 50% of the costs of making up the highway to adoptable standards following a finding of maladministration

4.2 The conveyance of the various areas of land to this council was completed earlier this year and this enabled this council to enter into an agreement with the county council providing for the eventual adoption of the road.

4.3 The necessary work was carried out and completed in March of this year and the county council has paid 50% of the costs. The residents have expressed their satisfaction at this outcome.

5.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1 Apart from the item relating to progress on the making up of the road to adoptable standards at Rushden (which has made the area safer – especially for older people and those with a disability - there are no equality and diversity implications arising from the report.

6.0 Risk Management

6.1 There are no risks to East Northamptonshire Council arising from consideration of this report.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the feedback on the Annual Review by the Ombudsman. The case in Rushden had financial implications but this was within the supplemental estimate approved some years ago.

8.0 Corporate Outcomes

8.1 Consideration of the request will help deliver the following corporate outcome:

- Strong Community Leadership (in some cases, ward councillors have been involved in complaints)
- Safer communities (in relation to the case in Rushden).

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 The Ombudsman's Annual Review for 2011/12 show that the trend of few complaints to the council is continuing. As last year, the decisions made by the LGO's investigative team in 2011/12 show that there has been no case to answer in any of the cases investigated.

10.0 Recommendation

10.1 Subject to any comments about the Council's performance, the Board is invited to receive and note the contents of the report.

Legal	Power: Section 92, Local Government Act 2000 Section 5, Local Government and Housing Act 1989				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers: None					
Person Originating Report: Sharn Matthews - Monitoring Officer					
Date: 20 February 2012					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 22)