

16 July 2013

By email

Mr Ian Davidson
Chief Executive
Tendring District Council

Dear Mr Davidson

Annual Review Letter

I am writing with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2013. This year we have only presented the total number of complaints received and will not be providing the more detailed information that we have offered in previous years.

The reason for this is that we changed our business processes during the course of 2012/13 and therefore would not be able to provide you with a consistent set of data for the entire year.

In 2012/13 we received 11 complaints about your local authority. This compares to the following average number (recognising considerable population variations between authorities of a similar type):

District/Borough Councils-	10 complaints
Unitary Authorities-	36 complaints
Metropolitan Councils-	49 complaints
County Councils-	54 complaints
London Boroughs-	79 complaints

Future development of annual review letters

We remain committed to sharing information about your council's performance and will be providing more detailed information in next year's letters. We want to ensure that the data we provide is relevant and helps local authorities to continuously improve the way they handle complaints from the public and have today launched a consultation on the future format of our annual letters.

I encourage you to respond and highlight how you think our data can best support local accountability and service improvements. The consultation can be found by going to www.surveymonkey.com/s/annualletters

LGO governance arrangements

As part of the work to prepare LGO for the challenges of the future we have refreshed our governance arrangements and have a new executive team structure made up of Heather Lees, the Commission Operating Officer, and our two Executive Directors Nigel Ellis and Michael King. The Executive team are responsible for the day to day management of LGO.

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Since November 2012 Anne Seex, my fellow Local Government Ombudsman, has been on sick leave. We have quickly adapted to working with a single Ombudsman and we have formally taken the view that this is the appropriate structure with which to operate in the future. Our sponsor department is conducting a review to enable us to develop our future governance arrangements. Our delegations have been amended so that investigators are able to make decisions on my behalf on all local authority and adult social care complaints in England.

Publishing decisions

Last year we wrote to explain that we would be publishing the final decision on all complaints on our website. We consider this to be an important step in increasing our transparency and accountability and we are the first public sector ombudsman to do this. Publication will apply to all complaints received after the 1 April 2013 with the first decisions appearing on our website over the coming weeks. I hope that your authority will also find this development to be useful and use the decisions on complaints about all local authorities as a tool to identify potential improvement to your own service.

Assessment Code

Earlier in the year we introduced an assessment code that helps us to determine the circumstances where we will investigate a complaint. We apply this code during our initial assessment of all new complaints. Details of the code can be found at:

www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint/how-we-will-deal-with-your-complaint/assessment-code

Annual Report and Accounts

Today we have also published *Raising the Standards*, our Annual Report and Accounts for 2012/13. It details what we have done over the last 12 months to improve our own performance, to drive up standards in the complaints system and to improve the performance of public services. The report can be found on our website at www.lgo.org.uk

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Martin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dr Jane Martin
Local Government Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

From: Press [<mailto:Press@lgo.org.uk>]
Sent: 23 July 2013 09:53
To: Nicky Watson
Subject: LGO Link newsletter - July 13

LGO Link

Keeping Link Officers up-to-date on developments at the LGO

July 2013

Annual review letters

Our annual review letters were sent out last week; if you haven't received yours please [email](#) us.

We've received queries from some councils about the statistics and the process, so have decided to put together answers to the most common questions being asked for all councils to see.

1 Will you be providing any other statistics or more detailed data?

No, this year we will only provide the number of complaints received. During the last 12 months we have made considerable changes to our business processes. As a result we do not have a consistent set of data for the entire year so are not able to provide the same level of data as in previous years. However, our annual letters next year will provide more detailed statistics.

2 The number of complaints you've quoted in your letter doesn't tally with the statistics we've recorded. Can you give us more information so we can check?

We understand that our figures may not always match the data collected by local authorities. However, we are satisfied that the figures provided in your annual letter accurately reflect the data we hold for the last 12 months. As a result we will be unable to provide any more information about them.

3 In previous years you sent us draft data to comment upon. Why hasn't this happened this year?

The approach taken in previous years diverted a significant amount of resource from our core work of resolving individual complaints that are raised

by the public. We have ensured that our data accurately reflects the work of our organisation. Whilst it may not match data held by local authorities we are satisfied that the annual letters correctly record the data we hold.

4 What's included in the complaint figure?

The figure we have provided for 'complaints received' does not include enquiries we received or any matters referred to us prematurely.

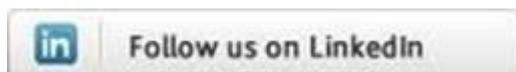
5 How can we help shape the future content of the annual review letters?

We remain committed to sharing information about your council's performance and providing data which helps local authorities continuously improve the way they handle complaints.

We have launched a [consultation](#) on the future format of our annual review letters. This is your opportunity to highlight how you think our data can best support local accountability and service improvements so please respond as soon as you can.

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