

**Meeting: STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item:

**Date: 13 January 2009**

**5**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2008**

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**1 PURPOSE**

To review the Ombudsman complaint statistics for 2007/8.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

To note the report.

**3 DETAILS**

The Local Government Ombudsman provides end of year statistics to every local authority. These are followed by an annual letter, usually issued in June.

The Stevenage statistics for 2007/8 are set out in the Appendix to this report. There is also attached a sheet showing the number of complaints over the past three years and the average of local authority response times.

In his annual letter for 2007/8 he indicated that he had received 18 complaints, five more than in the previous year but fewer than in 2005/06. Planning complaints were the more numerous, four about planning applications (albeit two from a complainant about the same matter) and two about trees. Housing had four, having declined steadily in recent years; the Ombudsman is unaware of any underlying reason for the decline. None of the complaints investigated this year justified the issue of a report; four local settlements were agreed.

The Ombudsman noted that the response times, as in previous years was outside the target response time, one housing allocation being 88 days which he considered not acceptable. The Ombudsman has requested our plans to address problems in this area. The Council has agreed a revised allocation policy prior to adoption which was submitted to the Ombudsman for approval. It is hoped that the new policy is intended to remove some of the time consuming uncertainties in the old policy.

#### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS**

None.

#### **APPENDICES**

- [The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the year ended 31 March 2008.](#)