



**GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT
COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 9th November 2021

**Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
Annual Review Letter Report 2020/21**

Report by:

Mr Ian Knowles, Chief Executive

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

Report on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review letter 2020/21 covering complaints referred to them between April 2020 and March 2021. Examining upheld complaints, learning actions and benchmarking with other authorities.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That committee members welcome this report regarding the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2020/21, scrutinise its contents and are assured that the current complaint handling procedures are functioning adequately.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

None arising from this report.

Financial : FIN/93/22/GA/SL

The LGSCO recommended one payment which is included within this report, which was £450 funded from existing overall resources. There are no further financial implications.

Staffing :

None arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

None arising from this report.

Data Protection Implications :

None arising from this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None arising from this report.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None arising from this report.

Health Implications:

None arising from this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Link to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman website –
Annual Review Letter for West Lindsey District Council:

[Annual LGSCO Review Letters - West Lindsey District Council](#)

Link to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman website –
Complaint Decisions for West Lindsey District Council:

[LGSCO Decisions - West Lindsey District Council](#)

Link to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman website –
Overall 2020/21 Performance for West Lindsey District Council:

[West Lindsey District Council Performance 2020/21](#)

Risk Assessment :

Not Applicable

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

X

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Executive Summary

This report examines the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter 2021 covering complaints that were either received or decided by them during the 2020/21 period.

To allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, the LGSCO did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between the 18th March 2020 and 29th June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints the LGSCO received and decided in the 2020/21 year.

Historical data on complaints referred to the LGSCO is included along with comparison to previous year's figures and findings.

Finally the report compares how West Lindsey District Council has performed overall nationally and in comparison to 20 other similar local authorities in terms of the number of complaints referred, investigated and upheld by the LGSCO.

During the 2020/21 period a total of 15 new complaints were referred to the LGSCO. 67% (10) of these complaints related to Planning and Development services (including Planning Enforcement), 3 were regarding Environmental Protection services, 1 related to Housing Enforcement and 1 was in reference to other matters.

One complainant was given advice and signposted elsewhere.

Nine of the complaints received by the LGSCO were closed after initial enquiries were made, this is when the LGSCO decide that they are unlikely to find fault or maladministration or that any harm or injustice has occurred. 8 of these complaints related to Planning and Development (including Planning Enforcement), 3 complainants were advised that they had a route of appeal and 5 complaints were not investigated as the LGSCO felt that the complaints were not warranted.

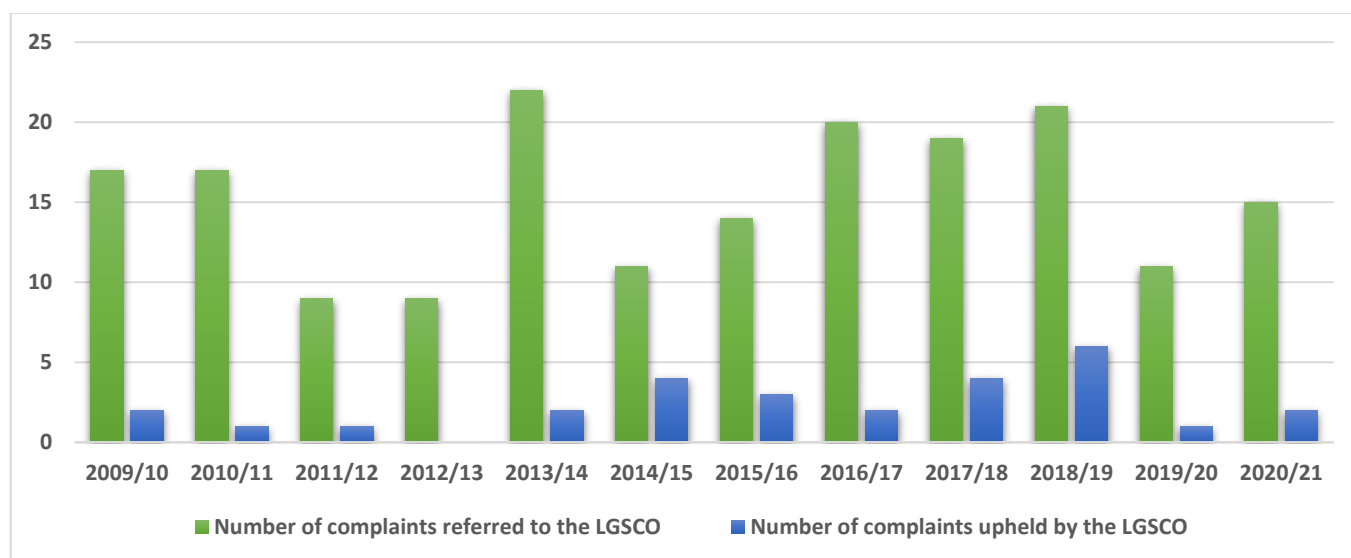
In total the LGSCO carried out detailed investigations into 2 of the complaints referred to them, 1 regarding Planning and Development Services and 1 for Environmental Protection/ASB services.

Both of the complaints investigated were upheld. Although no specific recommendations were made for the Planning and Development complaint learning took place and improvements were made. The LGSCO made several recommendations in regards to the Environmental Protection/ASB complaint, these are detailed within the upheld complaints section of this report (Section 3).

Three of the complaints referred to the LGSCO between April 2020 and March 2021 were still under consideration or investigation when the Annual Review letter for 2020/21 was published therefore those 3 outstanding complaints and the decisions reached will be detailed in next year's report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 If a customer is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way it has been handled by West Lindsey District Council they are entitled to refer their complaint to the LGSCO for review.
- 1.2 The LGSCO will only investigate a complaint once it has been dealt with in full via the West Lindsey District Council Customer Experience Policy Complaints Process and only if it meets their criteria for investigation:
<https://www.LGSCO.org.uk/make-a-complaint/what-we-can-and-cannot-look-at>
- 1.3 Issues that have another formal route of appeal or tribunal will not be investigated by the LGSCO.
- 1.4 There is no cost to the authority for work carried out by the LGSCO.
- 1.5 Each year the LGSCO publish an Annual Review letter for each authority which details the number of complaints referred to them, investigated by them and upheld by them. Information regarding compliance with LGSCO recommendations is also included. The full 2021 Annual Review Letter can be found in **Appendix 1** of this report.
- 1.6 The information published by the LGSCO allows each authority to examine their own performance and how they compare to other similar councils.
- 1.7 LGSCO investigations and decisions on complaints allow us to learn and make improvements to the way we run our services and deal with customers on a daily basis. We can also learn from LGSCO complaints and decisions made for other authorities, when decisions are published these are shared with Team Managers.
- 1.8 The graph below illustrates how many WLDC complaints have been referred to and upheld by the LGSCO each year since 2009. As you can see there was a slight increase during 2020/21 but the numbers still remain below average when compared to the previous 10 year period.



**Number of upheld complaints for 2012/13 unknown due to change in LGSCO procedures.*

1.9 The LGSCO do not necessarily investigate all of the complaints that are referred to them. During the 2020/21 period 15 new complaints were referred to the LGSCO but only 2 of them were investigated. This should be taken into consideration when examining the number and percentage of upheld complaints.

2. Annual Review Letter Figures

2.1 In total 15 new complaints were referred to the LGSCO in 2020/21, this is more than the previous year when 11 were referred but a lot lower when compared to years prior to 2019/20 where an average of 20 complaints were referred to them each year. The table below illustrates which services the complaints related to compared with the previous four years.

	Benefits and Council Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
2020/21	0	0	3	0	1	10	1	15
2019/20	4	1	1	0	1	4	0	11
2018/19	4	1	3	0	1	11	0	20
2017/18	3	2	2	0	0	12	0	19
2016/17	3	1	4	1	2	9	0	20

2.2 During 2020/21 the majority (67%) of the complaints referred to the LGSCO were relating to Planning and Development services. As you can see, historically the majority of complaints referred to the LGSCO have related to Planning and Development, there has been an increase again following a decrease last year. It should be highlighted that there were no complaints relating to Benefits and Council Tax referred to the LGSCO during the 2020/21 period.

2.3 It should be noted that the Planning and Development category includes Planning Enforcement complaints. Two of the complaints included in this year's figures for Planning and Development relate to complaints regarding the Planning Enforcement service.

2.4 LGSCO investigations into 3 of the complaints received during 2020/21 were not completed by the end of March 2021, these complaints are included in the received figures within this report but not the decision figures. The outcome of those 3 complaints will be included in the Annual Review Letter 2022 and will be reported on next year.

2.5 In total 12 decisions were made by the LGSCO during the 2020/21 period. The table below shows information on the complaints that were decided including the dates they were received and decided by the LGSCO, the service they related to and the decision made.

Category and LGSCO Reference	Received	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason
Planning & Development 20000869	06/06/20	20/01/21	Upheld	Maladministration, no Injustice
Planning & Development 20001598	15/07/21	30/11/20	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice
Planning & Development 20003728	20/08/20	01/10/20	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(b) appeal to Minister
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation 20006845	22/10/20	26/03/21	Upheld	Maladministration and Injustice
Planning & Development 20007423	03/11/20	17/12/20	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice
Housing 20007790	12/11/20	13/01/21	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(a) tribunal Other
Other 20007997	16/11/20	16/11/20	Advice given	Signpost - go to advice agency
Planning & Development 20008185	18/11/20	05/01/21	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged maladministration/service failure
Planning & Development 20008369	23/11/20	08/01/21	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(b) appeal to Minister
Planning & Development 20009713	24/12/20	08/02/21	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(b) appeal to Minister
Planning & Development 20011724	04/02/21	24/03/21	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged maladministration/service failure
Planning & Development 20012203	15/02/21	26/03/21	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged maladministration/service failure

2.6 During 2020/21 there were no complaints that were referred back to West Lindsey District Council for a local resolution. This occurs when a customer has not initially made their complaint known to us or given us the chance to investigate and resolve their complaint internally. The LGSCO will only investigate complaints once they have been investigated via the authority under the Council's complaint process.

2.7 One complainant was given advice and signposted to a more appropriate advice agency.

2.8 In total 9 complaints were closed after initial enquiries were made. This occurs when the LGSCO receive a complaint and consider the initial information including details of the complaint. If the LGSCO decide that it is unlikely that any fault or maladministration will be found or that any harm or injustice has occurred they will not investigate the matter further. The LGSCO will also take this approach to complaints where an appeal or tribunal route is available to the complainant.

2.9 Eight of the complaints that were closed after initial enquiries related to Planning and Development services, 3 of these complainants were advised that they had a route of appeal via the Minister and 5 were not investigated as the complaint was not warranted by the alleged maladministration or service failure.

2.10 The LGSCO carried out detailed investigations into 2 of the complaints received, these were in relation to Planning and Development and Environmental Protection Services.

- 2.11 Both of the complaints that were investigated by the LGSCO were upheld as fault was identified, maladministration was found in both cases but it was found that only 1 of the upheld complaints caused injustice.
- 2.12 As the LGSCO only carried out 2 detailed investigations and both investigations led to the complaints being upheld the overall upheld rate for 2020/21 was 100%.
- 2.13 The upheld rate has increased in comparison to previous years despite a smaller number of complaints being taken forward to the investigation stage. The table below shows how these figures compare over the last 5 years.
- 2.14 The decrease in the number of complaints referred to the LGSCO overall and the reduction in the number of complaints that the LGSCO felt were justified and warranted investigation could be attributed to the work of the Customer Experience Officer and the amended more centralised complaints handling process. It is acknowledged that smaller numbers have led to a higher upheld percentage however the cases referred to the LGSCO have been more complex in nature and we welcome a fresh pair of eyes on these matters to assist us in identifying how we can do things differently in the future.

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Complaints and enquiries received by the LGSCO	15	11	20	20	19
Number of detailed investigations carried out by the LGSCO	2	5	10	10	11
Number of complaints upheld by the LGSCO	2	1	6	4	2
Upheld complaint percentage %	100%	20%	60%	40%	18%

3. Upheld Complaints

- 3.1 In total the LGSCO carried out detailed investigations for 2 complaints, this is less than in previous years. Both of the complaints were upheld. The tables below show information on the complaints investigated and the remedy that was recommended by the LGSCO. The received and decided dates illustrate the length of time it took the LGSCO to investigate the complaints and reach a final decision.
- 3.2 It should be noted that the term ‘maladministration’ which is used by the LGSCO covers a broad spectrum of issues that may arise, from a small accidental human or system administration error or mistake to a deliberate and malicious action.

Service and LGSCO Reference	Received	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason
Planning & Development 20000869	06/06/2020	20/01/2021	Upheld	Maladministration, no Injustice
Days to resolve 228 days				
Remedy				
No remedy required				
Service Improvement Recommendations				
No recommendations were made within the LGSCO’s final decision.				
Learning and Improvement Actions				
The maladministration identified was in relation to a human error that occurred when the officer’s report was being written, it was accidentally saved on a personal drive and an incomplete version was published by mistake. The planning team were briefed on this complaint and the LGSCO’s decision report, the investigation findings were used as evidence to support the procurement and implementation of a new document management system for Planning services.				

Service and LGSCO Reference	Received	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation 20006845	22/10/2020	26/03/2021	Upheld	Maladministration and Injustice
Days to resolve 155 days				
Remedy				
Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble, Provide services, Procedure or policy change/review, Provide training and/or guidance				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay Mr B £450 to recognise the distress, time and trouble we caused him. • Commence an investigation into the noise nuisance issue. We should ensure we record our decision making properly and appropriately. • If the Councils investigation leads to any action the Council should consider a financial remedy payment to Mr B for the period we failed to investigate. The LGSCO suggested that we should consider a monthly payment for any loss of amenity. This amount should take into consideration the severity of the loss, circumstances of the complaint and impact on daily life. 				

Service Improvement Recommendations

The Council should:

- Remind relevant staff of the community trigger review process and when to inform a customer of this option.
- Remind relevant officers of the importance of proper and appropriate record keeping of decision making.
- Review its policy and procedure of how it works with other agencies in respect of noise nuisance and ASB complaints. It should conduct the review with the fault and learning points of this investigation in mind. It should provide the Ombudsman with evidence of any changes to prevent a recurrence of the fault.

Learning and Improvement Actions

An email was sent to relevant officers regarding the Community Trigger Review Process and amendments to the Environmental Policy in regards to how we will liaise with other agencies.

Information regarding the Community Trigger Review Process is now included on our standard letters.

The policy for Environmental Protection has been reviewed and amended:

Section 3.6 now states *“Where there are complaints that contain both statutory nuisance and other regulatory issues (i.e. Anti – Social Behaviour) the Council will use the relevant powers available to deal with the specific complaint. This may mean that multiple powers and multiple officers are used across single cases in order to ensure that the overall complaint is resolved. For example, if an ASB case includes a noise complaint, the Council will investigate the noise and the ASB as separate cases in line with its statutory obligations. Where the complaints involve different agencies, it will be made clear to the complainant and any other parties involved, which agency is responsible for which aspects.*

Where possible the Council will ensure that there is a lead officer for the overall case to ensure that there is a coordinated response to the customer. Information in relation to the case or cases will be shared across the relevant agencies in order to ensure that each party is aware of the current position.” - All relevant staff are aware of this amendment to the policy.

The relevant officers have been advised and reminded of the importance of proper and appropriate record keeping via email. Updates have also been made to the decision making form which is used by the team. This is merged through our database, can be used at any step, and is used for any decision recording the officer feels necessary. Our procedures have been updated to include to this process.

3.3 The details below include the details and findings of the 2 complaints that were investigated and upheld.

3.4 **20000869 Planning & Development (Upheld) Maladministration, no Injustice**

The maladministration (report issue) was identified at the internal complaint investigation stage, an explanation and apology were provided in the complaint response. The complainant proceeded to refer their complaint to the LGSCO as they were still of the opinion that the application should not have been given permission.

Mr and Mrs C complained that when processing a planning application the Council failed to refer the case to the planning committee for decision, failed to properly consider the application and the impact it would have on surrounding properties, failed to keep site visit notes, failed to respond to Mr and Mrs C's communications and conducted an unclear decision-making process.

The LGSCO found no fault in how the Council considered the planning application but identified some maladministration because the Council produced three versions of the officer's report, but noted however that this did not affect the overall decision.

Prior to this complaint being referred to the LGSCO the reason why three versions of the officer's report had been published was investigated as part of the formal complaint process and it was found to be due to an administration error on the case officer's part. The LGSCO addressed this in their final decision where they stated:

"The Council accepts it should not have produced more than one version of the report and has apologised. I do not consider any further remedy appropriate here. That is because I am satisfied the production of three different reports did not affect the overall decision-making process. Instead, the evidence I have seen satisfies me it was the delegated officer that wanted the planning officer to set out more of his reasoning in the report in relation to the impact the development would have on one neighbouring property.

I have seen no evidence to suggest the delegated officer granted permission based on a misunderstanding about what was being proposed or how it would impact on neighbouring properties. In those circumstances I consider the Council's apology satisfactory remedy. I also understand the Council has briefed the whole planning team on the process to follow when creating and amending reports as well as the planning officer involved in this case to prevent a similar situation happening again. I welcome that."

No recommendations were made within the LGSCO's final decision. However learning did take place - The planning team were briefed on this complaint and the LGSCO's decision report, the investigation findings were used as evidence to support the procurement and implementation of a new document management system for Planning services.

3.5 20006845 Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation (Upheld) Maladministration and Injustice

The maladministration identified by the LGSCO was not picked up at the internal complaint investigation stage - there was an agreed procedure of how we would deal with reports when other agencies are involved and specifically when the police were the lead agency but it didn't detail what action we would/could take when certain elements were included, for example when there is a noise nuisance element to a wider ASB case.

Mr B complained about the way the Council responded to his reports of noise nuisance from his neighbour. He also complained about the way the Council handled his complaint and did not feel we answered all his complaint points.

Mr B said the Council's failure to properly investigate the noise and take any action had caused him and his family distress. He said it had seriously affected his mental health and wellbeing, and that of his family.

Our understanding at the time the noise issues were brought to our attention was that the Police were leading on the investigations as they were part of a wider Anti-Social Behaviour complaint that the Police were dealing with. However, the LGSCO found fault with the Council for the way we communicated with Mr B about his noise complaint. The LGSCO decided that the communication was misleading. They said it implied we were working with the police and would update Mr B but, we were not investigating the matter and closed the case. We also told Mr B we were following a procedure, but the procedure did not exist.

The LGSCO found fault with the Council for the decision making about the use of monitoring equipment. The LGSCO decided that we failed to record our decision making at the time. Our retrospective justification did not explain why we did not discuss the possibility of monitoring equipment with the police. The police asked the Council for advice and we failed to provide any. The LGSCO said that we should have taken professional responsibility for the action we could have taken to support the investigation.

The LGSCO also found that the Council delayed telling Mr B about the community trigger review process. Mr B's situation appears to fit the criteria for the process, and it would have been an opportunity for the issues to be resolved at an earlier stage. By the time the Council told Mr B about this he had already complained to the LGSCO.

The LGSCO could not say what the outcome of the noise investigation would have been. But they did say that the Council's failure to investigate and our lack of recorded decision-making casts doubt over our decisions. This uncertainty caused Mr B distress.

The LGSCO say that the Council also misled Mr B in some of its communication and delayed telling him about his right to request the community trigger review.

The LGSCO concluded that the Council should investigate the noise issue. The Council should also make a financial payment to recognise the distress, time and trouble we caused him.

The following actions were agreed:

Within one month of the LGSCO's final decision the Council should:

- Pay Mr B £450 to recognise the distress, time and trouble we caused him.
- Commence an investigation into the noise nuisance issue. We should ensure we record our decision making properly and appropriately.
- If the Council's investigation leads to any action the Council should consider a financial remedy payment to Mr B for the period we failed to investigate. The LGSCO suggested that we should consider a monthly payment for any loss of amenity. This amount should take into consideration the severity of the loss, circumstances of the complaint and impact on daily life.

Within two months of the LGSCO's final decision the Council should:

- Remind relevant staff of the community trigger review process and when to inform a customer of this option.
- Review our policy and procedure of how we work with other agencies in respect of noise nuisance and ASB complaints. We should conduct the review with the fault and learning points of this investigation in mind. We should provide the Ombudsman with evidence of any changes to prevent a recurrence of the fault.
- Remind relevant officers of the importance of proper and appropriate record keeping of decision making.

The recommended actions were completed within the set timescales:

A noise investigation was instigated by the Environmental Protection team as recommended by the LGSCO in their final decision. When the Environmental Protection Officer made contact with the complainant to arrange a noise monitoring visit the complainant explained that in view of the level of noise required under statute to be deemed as a nuisance they had given the matter consideration and decided that at that point in time there wouldn't be sufficient evidence for respective enforcement from the Council.

The complainant stated that as it stood it would be beneficial to indefinitely postpone the proposed visits and if the situation was to worsen they would contact WLDC again.

Therefore the noise investigation case was closed and the third recommendation listed above became irrelevant.

4. Compliance with Ombudsman Recommendations

- 4.1 The LGSCO produce and report statistics on compliance with the recommendations they make in relation to upheld complaints. The LGSCO's recommendations are specific and often include a timeframe for completion, allowing them to follow up with authorities and seek evidence that the recommendations have been implemented.
- 4.2 There were no recommendations that were due for compliance during the 2020/21 period. The recommendations made in regards to the upheld complaint included above were only agreed at the end of March 2020 so the compliance period fell into the next year 2021/22. These will be covered in next year's annual review letter and report.

5. Learning from LGSCO Complaint Investigations

- 5.1 In comparison to the previous year and the extensive learning and improvements that took place during that time there have been fewer learning opportunities available in 2020/21 as there has only been one upheld complaint where recommendations have been made.
- 5.2 When the recommendations for the upheld complaint were received the Environmental Protection and Community Safety team were briefed on the complaint, the LGSCO's findings and the recommendations made. The process for joint agency working in terms of noise nuisance and ASB has been updated and more consideration will be made in the future as to the most appropriate level of noise assessment that needs to take place depending on the circumstances. Staff have been reminded of the community trigger

review process and when to inform a customer of this option and the importance of proper and appropriate record keeping of decision making.

6. Comparison with other Local Authorities Nationally

- 6.1 The LGSCO deals with complaints for 356 local authorities in total.
- 6.2 West Lindsey District Council is number **188**/356 overall in terms of the number of complaints referred to the LGSCO for each authority, the highest being 561 complaints referred for Birmingham City Council. Last year (2019/20) West Lindsey District Council were number 278/371 overall.
- 6.3 In terms of the number of upheld complaints West Lindsey District Council is number **203**/365 overall. Birmingham City Council had the highest number of upheld complaints with 107 complaints being upheld by the LGSCO. Last year (2019/20) West Lindsey District Council were number 298/371 overall.
- 6.4 Compared to the previous period (2019/20) West Lindsey District Council has moved to a higher position in the chart in all the areas mentioned above but the numbers of complaints referred to the LGSCO and investigated remain very low overall.
- 6.5 The tables that show results for all authorities can be accessed here: <https://www.LGSCO.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/local-government-complaint-reviews>

7. How we compare with other similar Local Authorities

- 7.1 A list of 20 local authorities that are similar to West Lindsey District Council in terms of size, population and services provided has been compiled so that some meaningful benchmarking and comparison can take place.
- 7.2 The tables in **Appendix 2** of this report show how WLDC compares to the other 20 similar local authorities.
- 7.3 In terms of the number of complaints referred to the LGSCO West Lindsey District Council is number **5**/21 compared to similar local authorities. Last year (2019/20) West Lindsey District Council were number 15/21.
- 7.4 West Lindsey District Council is joint number **2**/21 in terms of the number of upheld complaints when compared to similar local authorities, but please keep in mind that only 2 complaints were upheld. Last year (2019/20) West Lindsey District Council were number 17/21 overall.

Appendix 1- LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2021

21 July 2021

By email

Mr Knowles
Executive Director of Resources
West Lindsey District Council



Dear Mr Knowles

Annual Review letter 2021

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about your authority for the year ending 31 March 2021. At the end of a challenging year, we maintain that good public administration is more important than ever and I hope this feedback provides you with both the opportunity to reflect on your Council's performance and plan for the future.

You will be aware that, at the end of March 2020 we took the unprecedented step of temporarily stopping our casework, in the wider public interest, to allow authorities to concentrate efforts on vital frontline services during the first wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. We restarted casework in late June 2020, after a three month pause.

We listened to your feedback and decided it was unnecessary to pause our casework again during further waves of the pandemic. Instead, we have encouraged authorities to talk to us on an individual basis about difficulties responding to any stage of an investigation, including implementing our recommendations. We continue this approach and urge you to maintain clear communication with us.

Complaint statistics

This year, we continue to focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. We want to provide you with the most insightful information we can and have focused statistics on three key areas:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before we investigated.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations.

Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the authority upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit authorities that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), along with a copy of this letter on 28 July 2021. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the decisions we have made about your Council, public reports we have issued, and the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

I would encourage you to share the resource with colleagues and elected members; the information can provide valuable insights into service areas, early warning signs of problems and is a key source of information for governance, audit, risk and scrutiny functions.

As you would expect, data has been impacted by the pause to casework in the first quarter of the year. This should be considered when making comparisons with previous year's data.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

I am increasingly concerned about the evidence I see of the erosion of effective complaint functions in local authorities. While no doubt the result of considerable and prolonged budget and demand pressures, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have amplified the problems and my concerns. With much greater frequency, we find poor local complaint handling practices when investigating substantive service issues and see evidence of reductions in the overall capacity, status and visibility of local redress systems.

With this context in mind, we are developing a new programme of work that will utilise complaints to drive improvements in both local complaint systems and services. We want to use the rich evidence of our casework to better identify authorities that need support to improve their complaint handling and target specific support to them. We are at the start of this ambitious work and there will be opportunities for local authorities to shape it over the coming months and years.

An already established tool we have for supporting improvements in local complaint handling is our successful training programme. During the year, we successfully adapted our face-to-face courses for online delivery. We provided 79 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,100 people. To find out more visit www.LGSCO.org.uk/training.

Yours sincerely,



Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints upheld		
	<p>100% of complaints we investigated were upheld.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 53% in similar authorities.</p>	<p>2 upheld decisions</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 2 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</p>
Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations		
<p>No recommendations were due for compliance in this period</p>		
Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority		
	<p>In 0% of upheld cases we found the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 16% in similar authorities.</p>	<p>0 satisfactory remedy decisions</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 2 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</p>

NOTE: To allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, we did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between March and June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints we received and decided in the 20-21 year. Please consider this when comparing data from previous years.

Appendix 2- Comparison with 20 similar local authorities – Complaints Received

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN	Adult Social Care	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total Received
South Somerset District Council	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	15	0	21
South Hams District Council	0	1	1	0	5	0	1	10	0	18
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	0	4	3	0	1	0	4	5	0	17
Allerdale Borough Council	0	0	4	1	6	0	1	4	0	16
West Lindsey District Council	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	10	1	15
Mid Suffolk District Council	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	10	0	14
Derbyshire Dales District Council	0	1	1	0	4	0	1	6	0	13
East Lindsey District Council	0	2	3	0	2	0	1	5	0	13
Babergh District Council	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	6	0	12
Breckland District Council	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	7	0	11
Daventry District Council	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	9	0	11
North Kesteven District Council	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	7	0	11
Selby District Council	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	7	0	11
Torridge District Council	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	7	0	10
South Holland District Council	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	5	0	9
Cotswold District Council	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	8
King's Lynn & West Norfolk Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	8
North Devon District Council	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	0	7
Mid Devon District Council	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	6
Hambleton District Council	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	5
Copeland Borough Council	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2

Notes

These statistics include all complaints and enquiries that were received from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

To allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, we did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between March and June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints we received and decided in the 20-21 year.

Some cases are received and decided in different business years. This means the number of complaints and enquiries received may not match the number of decisions made.

For more information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/interpreting-local-authority-statistics>

Appendix 2 continued- Comparison with 20 similar local authorities – Complaints Decided

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN	Invalid or Incomplete	Advice Given	Referred Back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Total	Uphold Rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
South Hams District Council	0	0	9	7	0	5	21	100%	53%
Daventry District Council	1	0	3	4	1	2	11	67%	53%
East Lindsey District Council	2	0	2	6	3	2	15	40%	53%
North Devon District Council	0	0	2	0	3	2	7	40%	53%
South Holland District Council	0	0	2	1	0	2	5	100%	53%
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	2	1	4	4	2	2	15	50%	53%
West Lindsey District Council	0	1	0	9	0	2	12	100%	53%
Allerdale Borough Council	1	0	3	2	1	1	8	50%	53%
Breckland District Council	0	0	4	5	1	1	11	50%	53%
Derbyshire Dales District Council	0	0	5	5	0	1	11	100%	53%
Hambleton District Council	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	100%	53%
King's Lynn & West Norfolk Council	0	0	5	1	2	1	9	33%	53%
Mid Devon District Council	1	1	2	2	2	1	9	33%	53%
South Somerset District Council	0	0	8	11	0	1	20	100%	53%
Babergh District Council	1	0	4	5	1	0	11	0%	53%
Copeland Borough Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1		53%
Cotswold District Council	0	0	1	3	1	0	5	0%	53%
Mid Suffolk District Council	1	2	4	3	0	0	10		53%
North Kesteven District Council	0	0	4	7	1	0	12	0%	53%
Selby District Council	0	2	2	3	2	0	9	0%	53%
Torridge District Council	0	0	2	3	3	0	8	0%	53%

Notes

These statistics include all complaints and enquiries that were decided from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

To allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, we did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between March and June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints we received and decided in the 20-21 year.

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