

REPORT TO:	Standards Committee
REPORT NO:	HCCS /48/18
DATE:	6 September 2018
LEAD:	Sioned Wyn Davies, Monitoring Officer
CONTACT OFFICER:	Linda Roberts, Deputy Monitoring Officer (Tel: 292221)
SUBJECT:	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report
WARD:	N/A

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the publication of the Annual Report and Accounts of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2017/18 entitled “Innovation, Improvement, Influence”.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“The Ombudsman”) has published his Annual Report for 2017/18. The report can be viewed by Members by visiting the Ombudsman’s website www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk and searching under Annual Reports in the Publications tab. This is the fourth report produced by Nick Bennett who took up office as Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in August 2014 and is the second combined annual report and accounts.
- 2.2 The Ombudsman has two specific roles, firstly to consider complaints made by members of the public that they have suffered hardship or injustice through maladministration or service failure on the part of the public body and the second role is to consider complaints that Members of Local Authorities and other public bodies have breached their adopted Codes of Conduct.
- 2.3 In his Annual Report, the Ombudsman reports substantial progress in the activities of the office over the past year, with specific reference to three year strategic themes of innovation, improvement and influence, which have led to substantial increases in outcomes for complainants and, he hopes, positive impacts on public services.

3 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 To note the contents of the report.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To inform Members of the work undertaken by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1 The Ombudsman's Annual Report contains details of the Code of Conduct complaints received in respect of members of different types of public bodies as follows:

<u>Type of Body</u>	<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2016/17</u>
Community Council	167	126
County/County Borough Council	102	108
Fire Authority	0	0
National Park Authority	1	2
Police and Crime Panels	0	0
TOTAL	270	236

4.2 The nature of the Code of Conduct complaints received is broken down according to the Principles of Conduct in Public Life as follows:

<u>Description of Nature of Complaint</u>	<u>Percentage (17/18)</u>
Accountability and Openness	8%
Disclosure and Registration of Interests	19%
Duty to uphold the law	7%
Integrity	16%
Objectivity and Propriety	7%
Promotion of Equality and Respect	42%
Selflessness and stewardship	1%

4.3 With regard to the Code of Conduct closed cases, fewer were fully investigated this year (26) than in 2016/17 (34).

4.4 Consistent with previous years the vast majority of complaints (213 of them) were closed under the category "closed after initial consideration" (184 were closed in this way in 2016/17).

4.5 A breakdown of the outcomes of all complaints made to the Ombudsman is as follows:

<u>Complaint about a Public Body</u>		<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2016/17</u>
Closed after initial consideration		213	184
Complaint withdrawn	4	20	
Investigation discontinued		4	10
Investigation completed – no evidence of breach	13	12	
Investigation completed – no action necessary		10	16
Investigation completed – referred to Standards Committee		0	5
Investigation completed – referred to Adjudication Panel		3	1
TOTAL OUTCOMES		247	248

4.6 Members will be pleased to note that during the reporting period there was only 1 complaint to the Ombudsman in respect of a Member of Wrexham County Borough Council, which was closed after initial consideration. There were 4 complaints in respect of Llay Community Council which were closed after initial consideration, and 1 complaint in relation to that Community Council which required no further action.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 **Policy Framework** – A strong ethical framework and governance arrangements support the Council Plan objective of building an efficient and effective organisation that can best support local well-being.

5.2 **Budget** – There are no immediate budgetary implications arising from this report.

5.3 **Legal** – By virtue of the Local Government Act 2000, Members are required to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. The Code is supplemented by the guidance issued from time to time by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales whose Annual Report is under consideration in this report.

5.4 **Staffing** – There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

5.5 **Equality/Human Rights** – Members are required to observe the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members which includes an obligation that their duties and responsibilities be carried out with due regard to the principle of equality and opportunity for all. There are no specific issues raised in this report which would impact on those obligations and duties. CCS/EIA00165/2017.

5.6 **Risks** – This report does not give rise to any specific risks.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 This report has not been the subject of consultation as it does not involve any decision making or recommendations.

6.2 This matter has not been subject to scrutiny.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	LOCATION	WEBSITE INFO.
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales publications	See website	https://www.ombudsman.wales/