

AUDIT COMMITTEE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2009

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REVIEW OF
OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Report by County Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Introduction

1. This report summarises the findings of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)'s Annual Review of Oxfordshire County Council for the year ended 31 March 2009. The Ombudsman has commented on the complaints made about the Council and our performance in handling them.

Ombudsman's Annual Review - findings

Complaints

2. The LGO received 36 complaints and enquiries about the Council during the year 2008/09. Of these:
 - 13 related to education matters
 - 8 to transport and highways
 - 6 to children, young people and families
 - 3 to adult care
 - 3 to environmental issues
 - 1 to finance
 - 1 to planning
 - 1 to anti-social behaviour

Outcome & handling

3. Of these issues, only 13 were eventually investigated by the LGO and he found no evidence of maladministration in 9 of the cases. In two further instances, the LGO used his discretion not to pursue or considered the matter outside his jurisdiction. In the final two instances, the Council reached a local settlement to the satisfaction of the LGO. This involved:
 - *Care planning:* a plan of action was implemented to redress a failure to involve a parent in the care planning of his son, plus the payment of £500 for the uncertainty caused
 - *School admission:* a school place was offered as soon as the Council realised an error with regard to the child's legitimate entitlement.

Response times

4. The LGO commented very favourably about the increase in the Council's speed of response time to issues considered by the LGO. The Ombudsman commented: "Your Council's average response time was 23.4 days. This is significantly within our target of 28 days and I congratulate the Council for its consistently good record in this area and for its improvement on its performance in previous years".

Conclusion

5. The LGO found no evidence of maladministration in the cases before him relating to Oxfordshire County Council. He commended the Council for its response times and approved of the Council's willingness to find local settlements in the closure of two complaints.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to note and comment upon this report and on the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review of Oxfordshire County Council for 2008/09**

PETER CLARK
County Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Background papers: Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review of Oxfordshire County Council 2008/09 – copy available on the Council's website at:
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/complaints

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