

7 July 2014

*By email*

Mr Steve Atkinson  
Chief Executive  
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

Dear Mr Steve Atkinson

**Annual Review Letter 2014**

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 2014. This is the first full year of recording complaints under our new business model so the figures will not be directly comparable to previous years. This year's statistics can be found in the table attached.

A summary of complaint statistics for every local authority in England will also be included in a new yearly report on local government complaint handling. This will be published alongside our annual review letters on 15 July. This approach is in response to feedback from councils who told us that they want to be able to compare their performance on complaints against their peers.

For the first time this year we are also sending a copy of each annual review letter to the leader of the council as well as to the chief executive. We hope this will help to support greater democratic scrutiny of local complaint handling and ensure effective local accountability of public services. In the future we will also send a copy of any published Ombudsman report to the leader of the council as well as the chief executive.

During 2013/14 we decided nine complaints about the Council. Two of those complaints resulted in a published report. They were about noise nuisance at a motor racing track. I found that the Council delayed in taking enforcement action in relation to persistent breaches of a statutory notice. As a result the complainants, and those they represented, endured avoidable noise nuisance up until October 2013, when the activities at the track stopped. However, a new operator was intending to resume motor racing early in 2014 and residents were naturally concerned about a recurrence of the nuisance.

The remedy I recommended contained several elements. The Council agreed to instruct a barrister to provide legal advice on the contents of a new notice which would be served on the new track operators once they start activities. I also recommended that further consideration be given to how some physical changes to the track will affect noise level. I recommended a financial remedy for both complainants, one for loss of amenity and the other to reimburse reasonable expenses incurred in seeking professional help as well as a contribution to a local village committee for the wider benefit of residents affected by the noise. I am pleased that the Council has accepted my recommendations in full.

## ***Developments at the Local Government Ombudsman***

At the end of March Anne Seex retired as my fellow Local Government Ombudsman. Following an independent review of the governance of the LGO last year the Government has committed to formalising a single ombudsman structure at LGO, and to strengthen our governance, when parliamentary time allows. I welcome these changes and have begun the process of strengthening our governance by inviting the independent Chairs of our Audit and Remuneration Committees to join our board, the Commission for Administration in England. We have also recruited a further independent advisory member.

## ***Future for local accountability***

There has been much discussion in Parliament and elsewhere about the effectiveness of complaints handling in the public sector and the role of ombudsmen. I have supported the creation of a single ombudsman for all public services in England. I consider this is the best way to deliver a system of redress that is accessible for users; provides an effective and comprehensive service; and ensures that services are accountable locally.

To contribute to that debate we held a roundtable discussion with senior leaders from across the local government landscape including the Local Government Association, Care Quality Commission and SOLACE. The purpose of this forum was to discuss the challenges and opportunities that exist to strengthen local accountability of public services, particularly in an environment where those services are delivered by many different providers.

Over the summer we will be developing our corporate strategy for the next three years and considering how we can best play our part in enhancing the local accountability of public services. We will be listening to the views of a wide range of stakeholders from across local government and social care and would be pleased to hear your comments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Martin', with a horizontal line underneath.

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

## Local authority report – Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

For the period ending – 31/03/2014

For further information on interpretation of statistics click on this link to go to <http://www.lgo.org.uk/publications/annual-report/note-interpretation-statistics/>

### Complaints and enquiries received

Local authority	Adult care services	Benefits and tax	Corporate and other services	Education and children's services	Environmental services and public protection and regulation	Highways and transport	Housing	Planning and development	Total
Hinckley & Bosworth BC	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	5	11

### Decisions made

	<u>Detailed investigations carried out</u>						
Local authority	Upheld	Not upheld	Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries	Incomplete/Invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Total
Hinckley & Bosworth BC	4	2	0	3	1	5	15