



The Commission for  
Local Administration in England

# **The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter to Rugby Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2007**

**The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) investigates complaints by members of the public who consider that they have been caused injustice through administrative fault by local authorities and certain other bodies. The LGO also uses the findings from investigation work to help authorities provide better public services through initiatives such as special reports, training and annual letters.**

## **Annual Letter 2006/07 - Introduction**

This annual letter provides a summary of the complaints we have received about your authority. Where possible, we comment on the authority's performance and complaint-handling arrangements to assist with your service improvement.

I hope that the letter will be a useful addition to other information your authority holds on how people experience or perceive your services.

Two attachments form an integral part of this letter: statistical data covering a three year period and a note to help the interpretation of the statistics.

## **Complaints received**

### ***Volume & Character***

The number of complaints received by my office against the Council rose from 11 in the previous year to 25. Most of that rise came from an increase about complaints concerning housing issues – a rise from two to 12. None of those housing complaints was the subject of a critical finding however and I have no basis to comment any further.

## **Decisions on complaints**

### ***Reports and local settlements***

A 'local settlement' is a complaint that is resolved by the Council taking, or agreeing to take, action which we consider is a satisfactory response to the complaint so that the investigation can be discontinued. In 2006/07 27.7% of complaints dealt with by the three Local Government Ombudsmen (excluding premature and those outside jurisdiction) were resolved by local settlement. When we complete an investigation we must issue a report.

I did not issue any reports against the Council during the year. Two complaints merited my staff seeking a remedy. There is nothing in those cases that merits comment in this letter.

### ***Other findings***

In all, 19 complaints were decided by my staff and six of those were premature. That means that they were referred back to the Council because it had not had a proper opportunity to investigate and respond before I become involved. One complaint was outside my jurisdiction, and in three cases my Investigators exercised their discretion not to pursue the complaints. No maladministration was found in the remaining seven complaints.

## **Your Council's complaints procedure and handling of complaints**

I am not aware of any problems with the way in which the Council deals with complaints from members of the public.

## **Training in complaint handling**

Part of our role is to provide advice and guidance about good administrative practice. We offer training courses for all levels of local authority staff in complaints handling and investigation. The feedback from councils that have taken up the training is very positive.

The range of courses is expanding in response to demand and in addition to the generic Good Complaint Handling (identifying and processing complaints) and Effective Complaint Handling

(investigation and resolution), we can run open courses for groups of staff from smaller authorities and also customise courses to meet your Council's specific requirements.

All courses are presented by an experienced investigator so participants benefit from their knowledge and expertise of complaint handling.

I have enclosed some information on the full range of courses available together with contact details for enquiries and any further bookings.

### **Liaison with the Local Government Ombudsman**

The Council improved from the previous year in getting responses to my office in a timely manner. We set a target of 28 days and the average response time for the Council was just over 26 days compared to 36 days previously. I commend the Council for that improvement and trust it will continue.

Working relations between our offices remain good. In October the Assistant Ombudsman who led the team that deals with Rugby met you as a newly appointed Chief Executive. He reports on a very open, positive and helpful meeting around issues of mutual interest.

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**Anne Seex**  
**Local Government Ombudsman**  
**Beverley House**  
**17 Shipton Road**  
**York**  
**YO30 5FZ**

**June 2007**

Enc: Statistical data  
Note on interpretation of statistics  
Leaflet on training courses (with posted copy only)

<b>Complaints received by subject area</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Planning &amp; building control</b>	<b>Transport and highways</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>01/04/2006 - 31/03/2007</b>	2	12	6	5	0	<b>25</b>
<b>2005 / 2006</b>	0	1	4	6	0	<b>11</b>
<b>2004 / 2005</b>	0	1	4	9	1	<b>15</b>

**Note:** these figures will include complaints that were made prematurely to the Ombudsman and which we referred back to the authority for consideration.

<b>Decisions</b>	<b>MI reps</b>	<b>LS</b>	<b>M reps</b>	<b>NM reps</b>	<b>No mal</b>	<b>Omb disc</b>	<b>Outside jurisdiction</b>	<b>Premature complaints</b>	<b>Total excl premature</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>01/04/2006 - 31/03/2007</b>	0	2	0	0	7	3	1	6	13	<b>19</b>
<b>2005 / 2006</b>	0	1	0	0	4	0	4	5	9	<b>14</b>
<b>2004 / 2005</b>	0	0	0	0	10	2	0	2	12	<b>14</b>

See attached notes for an explanation of the headings in this table.

<b>Response times</b>	<b>FIRST ENQUIRIES</b>	
	<b>No. of First Enquiries</b>	<b>Avg no. of days to respond</b>
<b>01/04/2006 - 31/03/2007</b>	7	26.3
<b>2005 / 2006</b>	4	35.8
<b>2004 / 2005</b>	10	38.6

**Average local authority response times 01/04/2006 to 31/03/2007**

<b>Types of authority</b>	<b>&lt;= 28 days %</b>	<b>29 - 35 days %</b>	<b>&gt;= 36 days %</b>
District Councils	48.9	23.4	27.7
Unitary Authorities	30.4	37.0	32.6
Metropolitan Authorities	38.9	41.7	19.4
County Councils	47.1	32.3	20.6
London Boroughs	39.4	33.3	27.3
National Park Authorities	66.7	33.3	0.0