

# Audit and Standards Committee

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**Thursday 21 October 2021 at 5.00 pm**

**Town Hall, Sheffield, S1 2HH**

**The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend**

## **Membership**

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Councillors Sioned-Mair Richards (Chair), Simon Clement-Jones (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Mohammed Mahroof, Josie Paszek, Ben Curran and David Barker.

## **Independent Co-opted Members**

Alison Howard.

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## **PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING**

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The Audit and Standards Committee oversees and assesses the Council's risk management, control and corporate governance arrangements and advises the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements. The Committee has delegated powers to approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and consider the Annual Letter from the External Auditor.

The Committee is also responsible for promoting high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at <http://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk>. You can also see the reports to be discussed at the meeting if you call at the First Point Reception, Town Hall, Pinstone Street entrance. The Reception is open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Thursday and between 9.00 am and 4.45 pm. on Friday. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information.

Recording is allowed at meetings of the Committee under the direction of the Chair of the meeting. Please see the website or contact Democratic Services for details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

If you require any further information please contact Sarah Cottam in Democratic Services on 0114 273 5033 or email [sarah.cottam@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.cottam@sheffield.gov.uk).

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## **FACILITIES**

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There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall. Induction loop facilities are available in meeting rooms.

Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

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**AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE AGENDA  
21 OCTOBER 2021**

**Order of Business**

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- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of the Press and Public**  
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public.
- 4. Declarations of Interest** (Pages 5 - 8)  
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting.
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 9 - 14)  
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 September 2021.
- 6. Final Accounts Audit Progress** (Pages 15 - 16)  
Report of the Ernst and Young (External Auditor).
- 7. Annual Ombudsman Report** (Pages 17 - 40)  
Report of the Director of HR and Customer Services / Director of Legal and Governance.
- 8. Customer Services Contact Centre Performance** (Pages 41 - 48)  
Report of the Director of HR and Customer Services.
- 9. Progress Report of Member Development** (Pages 49 - 60)  
Report of the Director of Legal and Governance.
- 10. Work Programme** (Pages 61 - 68)  
Report of the Director of Legal and Governance.
- 11. Dates of Future Meetings**  
To note that meetings of the Committee will be held at 5.00 p.m. on:-  
  
16<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
20<sup>th</sup> January 2022  
24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Additional Meeting if required)  
24<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
16<sup>th</sup> June 2022  
21<sup>st</sup> July 2022

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## ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

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If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its executive or any committee of the executive, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** (DPI) relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period\* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

\*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority –
  - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
  - which has not been fully discharged.

- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) –
  - the landlord is your council or authority; and
  - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
  - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
  - (b) either -
    - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
    - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or
- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously.

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Audit and Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance on 0114 2734018 or email [gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk).

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## SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

### Audit and Standards Committee

#### Meeting held 23 September 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillors Sioned-Mair Richards (Chair), Simon Clement-Jones (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Mohammed Mahroof, Josie Paszek and Alison Howard (Independent Co-opted Member)

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#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 1.1 Apologies were received by Councillor's David Barker and Ben Curran.

#### **2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- 2.1 The Chair stated that the report and appendices at agenda item 5 of the agenda (Item 11 in these minutes) were not available to the public and press because they contained exempt information described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person. Accordingly, the public and press would be excluded from the meeting during consideration of that item of business. This item would be considered last on the agenda.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 4.1 **RESOLVED:-** That the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

#### **5. ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION REPORT**

- 5.1 The Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit, Linda Hunter, explained that the report highlighted the work undertaken by Internal Audit for the municipal year 2020/21.
- 5.2 The Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit stated that her opinion on the Risk Management, Governance and the Internal Control Framework were adequate to allow the Council to conduct its business appropriately.
- 5.3 It was also mentioned that there were no audit assignments given an audit opinion of no assurance for 20/21.
- 5.4 Members of the Committee asked questions and the key points to note were-
- 5.5 Councillor Simon Clement-Jones asked what had caused the risks to be highlighted in red in the report, The Head of Strategic Finance, Dave Phillips, said

that the risk management plan was in place to identify risks at an early stage, therefore the Audit and Standards Committee along with the Council could review the risks and make sure actions were requested as soon as possible. Alternatively, it was mentioned that the Council was currently experiencing pressure due to a budgetary overspend for the municipal year, mainly due to COVID-19 related issues in Adult and Children Social Care.

- 5.6 Councillor Angela Argenzio asked if the internal audit had been impacted due to the internal audit staff working from home. The Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit responded, explaining that auditing was difficult to begin with, although there were no delays in carrying out work as the audit staff already had access to the appropriate IT kit. One area of auditing that auditors found difficult, was the auditing of Schools, this was due auditing them remotely so we encountered delays with schools returning evidence and the impact of half-terms, although the auditors did manage to audit the schools successfully in the end. For 21/22 school audits, the plan is to conduct school visits rather than remote working.
- 5.7 Councillor Argenzio asked if there had been any occasions where managers had attended the Audit and Standards Committee to justify their actions when not accepting their audit recommendations. The Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit confirmed that no critical or high priority recommendations have been disagreed/rejected therefore there had not been the need for anyone to attend the Audit and Standards Committee.
- 5.8 Councillor Argenzio asked what percentage of responses were received for the performance targets questionnaire. The Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit mentioned that she would aim to put the returns figures in future reports and added that the returns response rate had not been great this year (20/21). Internal audit also did not chase up responses as priorities lied elsewhere through these challenging times. However, for 21/22 questionnaire responses will be chased.
- 5.9 Councillor Mohammed Mahroof asked how Senior members had managed and monitored staff whilst working from home. The Committee were advised that appropriate software like Microsoft Teams was used to engage with staff, although agreed this had been difficult. It was mentioned that the Internal audit team had now got access to office facilities again therefore some staff have planned to utilise that, meaning staff monitoring would be far easier.
- 5.10 Councillor Josie Paszek referred to the reporting of excessive use of the internet in work hours. It was possibly not a fair reflection, as different factors could have occurred that increased internet use in work time.
- 5.11 The Chair thanked the Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit for the report.
- 5.12 **RESOLVED:** - that the Committee notes the content of the report and the opinion of the Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit.

## **6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

- 6.1 The Director of Legal and Governance, Gillian Duckworth, highlighted the report and explained that the Annual Governance Statement formed part of the Councils statutory accounts. The statement was intended to identify any significant control weaknesses and to set out how the Council intended to address any weaknesses identified. This statement was for the municipal year 2020/21.
- 6.2 The Director of Legal and Governance mentioned that the Council has a duty to carry out an annual review of the effectiveness of the Governance framework.
- 6.3 The Statement has two additional areas highlighted, the impact of COVID 19 which has resulted in the areas of weakness identified in the Annual Governance Statement being similar to the previous statement. Secondly, the report refers to the referendum in May 2021 which has resulted in a change to the Councils Governance arrangements from May 2022.
- 6.4 The Chair asked how many Council employees had carried out the fraud awareness e-learning course. The Senior Finance Manager for Internal Audit explained that the course was not mandatory although staff were encouraged to complete it. Currently, reports did show that not many employees have completed the course.
- 6.5 **RESOLVED:** - that the Committee notes the content of the Annual Governance Statement.

## **7. EXTERNAL AUDIT RE-PROCUREMENT REPORT**

- 7.1 The Head of Strategic Finance, Dave Phillips, explained the purpose of the report is to communicate what factors to be considered when re-procuring the Council's external audit service.
- 7.2 The Council currently had a 5-year contract with Ernst & Young (external auditors) which was procured nationally through Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). The Majority of Councils including Sheffield, opted-in to the national procurement process rather than procuring auditors themselves.
- 7.3 Although the Council was only 3-years into the contract, the PSAA was starting the process of the next re-procurement exercise, and as part of this giving all councils the option on whether they would like to opt-in to the national procurement process again, or if they would like to re-procure themselves, or jointly with other councils.
- 7.4 The Head of Strategic Finance highlighted that the report explained the different options and recommended that the Council chose to opt-in with PSAA again for re-procuring external auditors.
- 7.5 **RESOLVED:** - That the committee endorses the decision to opt-in to PSAA re-procurement.

## **8. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 8.1 The Committee considered a report of the Director of Legal and Governance that outlined the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. Members were asked to identify any further items for inclusion.
- 8.2 The Chair suggested that a progress report on Member Development be brought to the next meeting of the committee.
- 8.3 Councillor Angela Argenzio requested that a report on the telephony system and webpages following reports of negative experiences from customers, be brought to the next meeting of the committee. It was requested that the appropriate member from the Cooperative Executive also attend the committee.
- 8.4 The next meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee would consider; -
- Annual Ombudsman Report
  - Final Accounts Audit Progress
- With the possibility of also including reports on –
- Progress report on Member Development
  - Customer Care
- 8.5 **RESOLVED:** - that **(1)** the work programme be noted; and **(2)** that the further mentioned reports be included at the next meeting of the Committee.

## **9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 9.1 Future meetings of the Audit and Standards Committee would be held on Thursdays at 5pm on:
- 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021  
16<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
20<sup>th</sup> January 2022  
24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (Additional Meeting if required)  
24<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
16<sup>th</sup> June 2022  
21<sup>st</sup> July 2022

## **10. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- 10.1 **RESOLVED:** That the public and press be excluded from the meeting before discussion takes place on the following item of business (Strategic Risk Management) on the grounds that, if the public and press were present during the transaction of such business, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

**11. STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 11.1 The Finance Manager, Helen Molteno, referred to the report which summarised current Council risks and what actions the Council were taking to mitigate them.
- 11.2 Members of the Committee asked questions on the report.
- 11.3 **RESOLVED:** - that the Committee notes the report.

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## **Sheffield City Council Audit and Standards Committee 21 October 2021 Audit Progress update**

### **Overview**

This brief paper seeks to update members of the Audit & Standards Committee on the progress of the audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts.

### **Financial statements audit**

In our audit planning report submitted to the Audit & Standards Committee in July 2021, we provided you with an overview of our audit scope and approach for the audit of the financial statements. To date we have not identified any changes to our audit scope and approach, or to the identified audit risks.

Due to unavoidable staff absences we were unable to commence our audit procedures in September as originally planned, with this being rescheduled to October. We continued to work collaboratively with management, and ensured that audit procedures continued in higher risk areas such as Property, Plant and Equipment, as well as sample selection.

We continue to aim to report our audit findings to the Audit & Standards Committee at the next meeting on 16 December 2021. However, there remains a significant amount of work to complete putting the achievement of reporting a complete set of findings to the meeting at risk.

We will continue to monitor this, providing regular updates to the finance team, and as necessary we will ensure this is communicated with the Chair.

### **Value for Money**

In our audit planning report we identified that there have been changes to the Value for Money approach in 2020/21, and there will be the need for additional work. Whilst our risk assessment process was underway at the time of presenting the audit planning report, we identified and presented two potential risks of significant weaknesses. These related to financial sustainability and regeneration programmes.

We have since completed our risk assessment procedures and can confirm that these risks remain. For the regeneration programmes we have identified two sub-risks, the first being the governance arrangements for West Bar and the second being the ongoing decision making associated with the financial sustainability of Heart of the City.

Given the close links between financial sustainability and going concern we will consider the risks on the Council's medium-term financial position. We have been regularly liaising with management on the financial performance in the 2021/22 year to date and as part of our responsibilities will consider if there are any matters that we need to report.

This report is made solely to the Audit and Standards Committee and management of Sheffield City Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Audit and Standards Committee, and management of Sheffield City Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Audit and Standards Committee and management of Sheffield City Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.

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## Audit & Standards Committee Report

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**Report of:** Mark Bennett, Director of HR and Customer Services/ Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance

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**Date:** 21 October 2021

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**Subject:** Annual Ombudsman Complaints Report 2020/21

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**Author of Report:** Paul Taylor, Head of Customer Services

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**Summary:**

This report provides an overview of the complaints received, and formally referred and determined by the three Ombudsmen (Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman, Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman) during the twelve months from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report also identifies future developments and areas for improvement in complaint management.

The report is jointly presented by the Director of Legal Services and the Director of HR and Customer Services, who are respectively the Council's Monitoring Officer, and the Director responsible for managing the Complaints Service.

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**Recommendations:**

The Audit & Standards Committee is asked to consider the Annual Ombudsman Report in order to provide its view on the performance of Ombudsman complaints and the issues raised.

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**Background Papers:**

LGSCO Annual Letter 2020/21

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

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## Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

<b>Financial Implications</b>
<b>Legal Implications</b>
<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
NO
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
NO
<b>Human rights Implications</b>
NO:
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
NO
<b>Economic impact</b>
NO
<b>Community safety implications</b>
NO
<b>Human resources implications</b>
NO
<b>Property implications</b>
NO
<b>Area(s) affected</b>
None
<b>Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Lead</b>
Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Governance
<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in</b>
Not applicable
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
NO
<b>Press release</b>

NO

# **Annual Report Ombudsman Report 2020-2021**

## **Contents:**

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS OVERVIEW 2020/21</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>RESPONSE PERFORMANCE – OMBUDSMAN</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>BENCHMARKING</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>LEARNING</b>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENTS 2020/21 AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS 2021/22</b>
<b>9.0</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The effective handling of customer complaints across the organisation enables the Council to be open and transparent, respond in the right way, make the best use of resources and make well-informed decisions.
- 1.2 As part of Sheffield City Council's One Year Corporate Plan, to become a more listening and learning organisation, we will overhaul our complaints process so that customers are able to challenge and help us drive improvement in all our services. This will include not only the replacement of our complaints case management system from 1 November 2021 but will also focus on our culture and behaviours when handling complaints.
- 1.3 We aim become better at listening to complainants; learning from complaints and improving the customer's experience when they make a complaint.
- 1.4 We welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve our services. Indeed, our definition of a complaint is "any expression of dissatisfaction whether justified or not", which is deliberately wide to ensure that complaints are recognised and are properly addressed. We also encourage positive feedback on the services we provide.
- 1.5 The Feedback & Complaints Team in Customer Services is responsible for the development and implementation of policy and procedures on complaints. In addition, the Team acts as the Council's liaison point with the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), Housing Ombudsman (HO) and Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO).
- 1.6 The Ombudsmen provide a free, independent and impartial service. They consider complaints about the administrative actions of local authorities. They cannot question what a council has done simply because someone does not agree with it.

However, if they find something has gone wrong, such as poor service or service failure, and that a person has suffered as a result, they recommend a suitable remedy.

- 1.7 The LGSCO's powers are set out in the Local Government Act 1974, as amended. The HO's powers are set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended. The PHSO's powers are set out in the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, as amended, and the Health Service Commissioners Act 1993, as amended.
- 1.8 Overall, the Council and its strategic delivery partners (Amey and Veolia) dealt with 2014 complaints through the formal complaints process in 2020/21.
- 1.9 The LGSCO received 95 complaints and enquiries about Sheffield City Council and its strategic delivery partners during 2020/21. The number of complaints/enquiries received by the Housing Ombudsman is unavailable at this time (HO annual reporting is delayed until January 2022).
- 1.10 The Council's Feedback and Complaints Team has recorded 13 complaint referrals/enquiries from the HO.

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report provides an overview of the complaints received, and formally referred and determined by the Ombudsmen during the twelve months from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- 2.2 The report also identifies future developments and areas for improvement in complaint management.
- 2.3 The report is jointly presented by the Director of Legal Services and the Director of HR and Customer Services, who are respectively the Council's Monitoring Officer, and the Director responsible for managing the Complaints Service.

## **3.0 COMPLAINTS OVERVIEW 2020/21**

- 3.1 In 2020/21, there were 434 'formal' complaints about Council Portfolios. The highest numbers of 'formal' complaints received were in relation to Children and Families Services (28%) and Adult Social Care (19). Complaint numbers across the Council's Portfolios are significantly lower than the previous year. A separate annual complaints report looking at the Council's complaint handling during 2020/21 is being finalised and will provide more detailed commentary on this. There was a total of 1580 'formal' complaints about highways maintenance and waste management services delivered by our Strategic Partners. Overall, this is higher than in 2019/20 (1339), but lower than in 2018/19 (2104).

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>People</b>	361	326	227
<b>Place</b>	303	246	148
<b>Resources (incl. PPC)</b>	46	56	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>434</b>
<b>Amey</b>	1744	1004	1119
<b>Capita</b>	228	101	N/A
<b>Veolia</b>	360	335	461
<b>Total incl. partners</b>	<b>3042</b>	<b>2068</b>	<b>2014</b>

- 3.2 The Council's Feedback & Complaints Team recorded a total of 80 complaints received by the LGSCO and HO during 2020/21, a significantly lower than the 151 received the previous year. This figure is undoubtedly influenced by the LGSCO closing its door to new complaints at the start of the year to assist local authorities in dealing with the pandemic. A breakdown by service area is provided at [Appendix A, \(Table 1\)](#).

The service areas that generated the largest number of Ombudsman enquiries during 2020/21 were Adult Social Care (14), Planning (12) and Housing and Neighbourhood Services (11).

- 3.3 The numbers reported do not match the number recorded by the Council's Feedback & Complaints Team because they include, for example, people who have made an 'incomplete or invalid' complaint or cases where advice was given but details were not shared with the Council.
- 3.4 It is important to note that not all Ombudsman enquiries lead to a formal investigation. In fact, of the 80 enquiries recorded by the Council's Customer Feedback & Complaints Team in 2020/21, 73% were concluded without a formal investigation. Of the 22 (27%) that were formally investigated, the highest numbers were about Adult Social Care (9) and Housing and Neighbourhood Services (5).
- 3.5 The LGSCO has reported that 95 complaints/enquiries were received about the Council during 2020/21, compared with 143 in 2019/20 and 165 in 2018/19. More detailed breakdowns by category are provided at [Appendix A \(Table 2\)](#).

The HO is yet to issue an annual report (delayed until January 2022) and so the number of complaints/enquiries received is not available at this time. A summary of Table 2 is provided below:

Complaints/Enquiries Received	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>LGSCO</b>	165	143	<b>95</b>
<b>HO</b>	59	58	<b>TBC</b>

## 4.0 RESPONSE PERFORMANCE - OMBUDSMAN

- 4.1 The Council's average response time to 62 preliminary ombudsman enquiries in 2020/21 was 7 calendar days (generally 3 working day target but some preliminary enquiries have specific response date on case by case basis).
- 4.2 The average response time to 24 initial formal enquiries made by the LGSCO/HO in 2020/21 was 29 working days, with 17 (71%) meeting the original or formally agreed extended response deadline.
- Due to the pandemic and the resulting pressure on service delivery the Ombudsmen were flexible during 2020/21 in extending timeframes beyond the 20 working day target usually set by the LGSCO and 15 working day target usually set by the HO.

	Number of Initial Formal enquiries	Number within original or formally agreed extended timescale	1 - 3 day over timescale	4 - 7 days over timescale
LGSCO	18	12 (67%)	4 (22%)	2 (11%)
HO	6	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	0

- 4.3 Delays in responding are mainly due to late/incomplete service comments and information. The 7 responses that exceeded the original or formally agreed extended timeframe were in relation to 2 Adult Social Care related complaints, 2 Children's Social Care related complaints and 3 Housing and Neighbourhood related complaints.

## 5.0 OUTCOMES

- 5.1 In resolving complaints, we aim to work with the customer to try to achieve their preferred outcome, and when appropriate we will apologise. When the Council is found to be at fault, we will aim to resolve the complaint by putting the customer back into the position they would have been in had the fault not occurred, or by offering another remedy if this is not possible.
- 5.2 During 2020/21, the LGSCO upheld 17 complaints and the HO upheld 1 complaint. A breakdown of all LGSCO/HO decisions is provided at [Appendix A \(Table 3 and 4\)](#). Further details of the upheld complaints and the remedies and service improvements that were agreed are set out in [Appendix B](#).
- 5.3 The LGSCO issued two public reports during 2020/21.

The first report was concerning the Council's removal and replacement of street trees, as part of its 'Streets Ahead' programme. The Ombudsman found the Council had not been open about the policies and procedures it followed when deciding on which street trees it would remove and had not been transparent about decision making in the case investigated. The LGSCO did however recognise the Council has since reconsidered its approach and from late 2018 it has worked with a campaign group to agree a new approach to managing street trees in the city. In the annual

Letter (**Appendix C**) the LGSCO states he is pleased the Council accepted the findings of their report and welcomes that the Council gave a public and unreserved apology and agreed to undertake further work to embed the principles of transparency, openness and accountability in its decision making and to improve the quality of decisions taken in relation to street trees.

The LGSCO issued a second public report about the Council's failure to provide suitable education and Special Educational Needs provision to a young person with additional needs. In the annual letter (**Appendix C**) the LGSCO states he is pleased the Council responded positively to their recommendations and welcomes the Council's agreement to an additional recommendation requested by the complainant to review the young person's needs and consider alternative education provision.

Further details of both complaints are included in **Appendix B**.

- 5.4 In total, the Council paid £26,792 in compensatory payments and other reimbursements following Ombudsman enquiries. This compares with £20,070 paid in 2019/20.

## **6.0 BENCHMARKING**

- 6.1 Looking at LGSCO involvement and how Sheffield City Council compares with other local authorities (**see Appendix A - Table 5 and 6 and Appendix C**):
- The LGSCO upheld 71% of the complaints that were formally investigated about Sheffield City Council, which is slightly below the 72% average for similar authorities.
  - In 12% of upheld cases the LGSCO found the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman, which is slightly above the average of 11% in similar authorities.
  - In terms of LGSCO recommendations, Sheffield City Council, like all the other Core Cities during 2020/21, had a 100% compliance rate but we were 'late' in completing an agreed action in 1 complaint (**see Appendix B – complaint 7**).
- 6.2 Due to the delay in HO annual reporting for 2020/21 we are currently unable to include further detail relating to HO involvement and how Sheffield City Council compares with other local authorities, ALMOs and landlords.

## **7.0 LEARNING**

- 7.1 We aim to learn from complaints, so that we do not repeat the same problem. **Appendix B** includes details of the remedies, improvements and changes that have been made following Ombudsman investigations. Examples of key learning/service improvements include:

- Further guidance/reminder issued to staff across the service regarding statutory social care complaint timescales (*Children & Families*).
- Action plan developed building on a review conducted previous year to develop the curriculum intent and revised framework around alternative education provision (*SENDARS*).
- Complaint Handling training delivered to all relevant managers (*Amey/Streets Ahead Client Team*).
- Creation of an archive for all related tree related material and development of Street Tree Partnership Working Strategy to embed principles of transparency, openness and accountability in its decision making and improve the quality of decisions taken in relation to street trees. We commissioned a local non-statutory inquiry into the management of the street trees dispute, led by an independent person, to continue to rebuild trust with our communities.
- Complaint outcome/findings further considered as part of an ongoing review/project looking at the area of transitions when children transfer into adult services. A new Transitions team has been set up to work alongside Social Workers from year 9 until the child reaches 18. The service is also looking into an Occupational Therapist being part of the Team. Changes to the way the Service works are due to be implemented by September 2021 with the aim that families have a better and more holistic response to the additional challenges faced by parents of children with complex needs. This will ensure that information is shared at an earlier stage in the process and plans are in place to ensure a smooth transition (*Preparation for Adulthood*).

## 8.0 IMPROVEMENTS 2020/21 AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS 2021/22

The following provides an update on actions and areas identified for improvement in 2020/21 and ongoing/future developments for 2021/22:

### 8.1 Service improvements:

- ***Maintain statutory complaint handling (responses to Ombudsman enquiries) despite continued disruptions to service delivery and challenges of remote working due to Covid-19.*** The Ombudsmen were mindful of pressure on service delivery during 2020/21 due to the pandemic and as a result were flexible in extending timeframes beyond usual 20 working day target (LGSCO) and 15 working day target (HO). Ombudsmen expectations around response times have now reverted to the usual standard target timeframes.

- **Reinforce service ownership and embed improved monitoring/open case reporting/escalation routes in order to improve on response times to Ombudsman enquiries.** Work is ongoing but Executive Director briefings and dedicated time slots to review and sign responses are assisting greatly in improving the timeliness and quality of information collated.
- **Complete self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code published by the Housing Ombudsman in July 2020.** The self-assessment was completed in December 2020 and the outcome published on website <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/content/sheffield/home/council-housing/housing-complaints-handling.html> An action plan has been drawn up to address the gaps identified and bring about the necessary changes and improvements to complaint handling, recording and reporting. Some of the improvements will be delivered as part of the ongoing complaints project.

## 8.2 Organisational improvements

- **Sign off new approach to complaints management with the Executive Management Team.** An overhaul of the complaints process is included in the Council's One Year Plan so that customers are able to challenge and help us drive improvement in all of our services. The ongoing Complaints Project focuses on the transformation of how we record and manage customer feedback and complaints across the organisation. It aims to improve the customer journey as well as our internal case management processes.
- **Development of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to improve recording and reporting of complaints.** The new complaints case management system is due to go live on 1 November 2021 which will bring about improved, more timely reporting capabilities.
- **Review and develop the information/guidance available to all employees and managers around resolving, investigating, reviewing and responding to complaints.** All employees will be provided with the support and training needed to professionally manage complaints, by taking ownership and accountability of a complaint from the day it is received. Existing on-line and remote classroom training is being refreshed and relaunched. Complaint and feedback procedures, guidance and letter templates are all being refreshed and information will be made available to all staff via a new complaints and feedback Sharepoint site.
- **Link these changes and improvements to the performance framework.** Following 'go live' of the new complaints case management system, we will be reinforcing a robust performance approach and culture across the organisation in respect of complaints and feedback to drive improvement and accountability and to deliver better services. This will involve the development of performance and learning 'You said, we did!' dashboards.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Audit & Standards Committee is asked to consider the Annual Ombudsman Report in order to provide its view on the performance of Ombudsman complaints and the issues raised.



## OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

**Table 1:** This table shows a breakdown of the **80 ombudsman complaints** recorded by the Council's Customer Feedback and Complaints Team during 2020/21.

Portfolio/ Partner	Subject	Formal premature referrals	Considered without Investigation	Formal investigation made	Totals 2020/21	Totals 2019/20
<b>People</b>	Social Care – Adults	1	4	9	<b>14</b>	23
	Social Care - Children's	1	2	1	<b>4</b>	17
	Education	3	4	1	<b>8</b>	15
<b>Place</b>	Bereavement Services	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	1
	Building Control	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	2
	Environmental Services	0	2	0	<b>2</b>	1
	Housing & Neighbourhood Services	2	4	5	<b>11</b>	18
	Licensing					2
	Parking Services	2	2	0	<b>4</b>	4
	Parks & Countryside	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	1
	Planning	2	9	1	<b>12</b>	7
	Repairs & Maintenance (Council Housing)	7	0	2	<b>9</b>	21
<b>Resources</b>	Customer Services	0	2	1	<b>3</b>	10
	Legal	0	3	0	<b>3</b>	3
	Benefits	0	2	0	<b>2</b>	8
	Revenues	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	3
<b>Amey/Client</b>	Streets Ahead	0	6	2	<b>8</b>	14
<b>Veolia/Client</b>	Waste Management	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	1
<b>Totals</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>80</b>	151

**Table 2:** This table shows a breakdown by subject of the **95 complaints/enquiries received by the LGSCO** in 2020/21, compared with the previous two years.

LGO subject category	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Adult Social Care	28	36	21
Benefits and Tax	17	12	3
Corporate and other	12	14	10
Education and Children's Services	34	25	18
Environmental Services and Public Protection & Regulation	25	12	11
Highways & Transport	21	25	9
Housing	18	13	9
Planning & Development	10	6	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>95</b>

**Table 3:** This table shows a breakdown of LGSCO decisions over the last three years.

LGSCO Decisions	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Incomplete or invalid	13	8	5
Advice Given	7	7	7
Referred back for local resolution	51	40	23
Closed after initial enquiries	62	53	35
Investigated – not upheld	13	4	7
Investigation – upheld but remedied by LA		6	2
Investigated – upheld	22	27	13
Report – upheld	0	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>94</b>

**Table 4:** This table shows a breakdown of HO decisions over the last three years.

HO Decisions	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Closed after initial enquiries (outside jurisdiction/no further action)	3	2	1
Investigated – not upheld (no maladministration)	4	4	3
Investigated – upheld (maladministration/partial maladministration)	2	3	1
Remedied by LA (redress provided)	1	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table 5:** This table compares complaint numbers across the Core Cities based on information provided by the LGSCO in the Annual Review Letters.

	Number enquiries received 2019/20	Number enquiries received 2020/21	% increase/decrease (+ / -)	Number of enquiries per 1000 population
<b>Birmingham</b>	561	362	-77%	0.32
<b>Bristol</b>	130	98	-25%	0.21
<b>Leeds</b>	185	135	-27%	0.17
<b>Liverpool</b>	130	71	-45%	0.14
<b>Manchester</b>	157	102	-35%	0.19
<b>Newcastle</b>	65	39	-40%	0.13
<b>Nottingham</b>	75	52	-31%	0.16
<b>Sheffield</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>-34%</b>	<b>0.16</b>

**Table 6:** This table compares complaint outcomes across the core cities based on information provided by the LGSCO in the Annual Review Letters.

	Number of detailed investigations 2020/21	Number of complaints upheld 2020/21	Upheld rate 2020/21	Number of complaints where Satisfactory Remedy provided before complaint reached Ombudsman 2020/21 - % of upheld cases		Compliance with Ombudsman Recommendations 2020/21
<b>Birmingham</b>	130	107	82%	7	7%	100%
<b>Bristol</b>	23	19	83%	3	16%	90%
<b>Leeds</b>	33	25	76%	4	16%	100%
<b>Liverpool</b>	27	20	74%	3	15%	100%
<b>Manchester</b>	22	14	64%	4	29%	100%
<b>Newcastle</b>	14	10	71%	1	10%	100%
<b>Nottingham</b>	7	3	43%	0	0%	100%
<b>Sheffield</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Average % (similar LA to SCC)</b>			<b>72%</b>		<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>

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	Portfolio/ Partner	Complaint	Date of Ombudsman Decision	Ombudsman Finding/Investigation Outcome	Agreed Remedy/Service Improvements	Remedy implementation detail and learning outcomes	Ombudsman compliance outcome
1	People - ASC 19 009 137	Mr X complained for his wife Mrs X that the Council delayed in responding to his request in August 2018 for assistive technology and delayed in reviewing Mrs X's care and support plan.	22/05/20	LGSCO upheld Mr X's complaints about a delay in responding to his request for assistive technology (AT) for his wife Mrs X and a delay in reviewing her care and support plan and found the fault caused avoidable distress and financial loss.	Council agreed (within two months) to apologise; fund the items set out in Mr X's original proposal for AT; reimburse Mr X for the items of AT he has already bought; pay Mr X £2000 in recognition of severe and long term impact; and identify and arrange suitable respite for Mrs X, consulting with Mr and Mrs X about the available options.	23/07/2020 - Apology letter sent to Mr and Mrs X. 24/07/2020 - £2000 payment raised 17/09/2020 - Further letter to Mr and Mrs X confirming verbal agreement that £775 reimbursement for assisted technology to be taken from surplus monies in the DP account. Copy of support plan hand delivered to Mr and Mrs X.	06/10/2020 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome.
2	People - Children & Families 18 011 187	Miss B complained the Council did not meet timescales for responding to her, did not address all her complaints in its response or provide a satisfactory remedy which she said caused her distress and frustration.	26/06/20	The LGSCO found fault with the Council for an unnecessary delay in the complaint procedure and this caused Miss B injustice	The Council agreed (within one month of the final decision) to pay Miss B £300 for the distress caused by the delay in processing her complaint and completing the file audit and chronology. This is in addition to any reimbursement the Council makes to Miss B for avoidable costs incurred as a result of service actions. The Council also agreed (within two months of the final decision), to review its complaint procedures to ensure they are compliant with statutory guidance, including timescales and issue complaint staff with guidance about timescales for the statutory complaint procedure.	Miss B did not wish to accept £300 payment. Review of complaint procedures completed and further guidance/reminder issued to staff across service regarding statutory timescales.	12/10/2020 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy not complete but satisfied' outcome
3	People - ASC 19 005 588	Mr Y complained the Council failed to meet his brother Mr X's needs due to the inadequacy of his current supported living accommodation and it failed to deal with the disruptive behaviour of another tenant.	30/07/20	The LGSCO concluded any concerns Mr Y has about the current accommodation are matters for the housing association and are outside the LGSCO's jurisdiction. The LGSCO found no fault in the way the Council is meeting Mr X's needs or in respect of the taken action to address the concerns about the other tenant's behaviour. The LGSCO did find fault for failing to review Mr X's care plan.	The Council agreed (within three months of the final decision) to review Mr X's needs assessment and support plan.	Review of the support plan commenced 26/08/2020 and was completed/agreed 14/10/2020. Copy shared with LGSCO 29/10/2020.	05/11/2020 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome.
4	Place - Housing & Neighbourhood Services 19 018 849	Mr K complained about how the Council has dealt with his housing situation.	28/08/20	During the investigation, the Council found that its files did not show how it considered all the information available to it and so it offered to review Mr K's case and if he is entitled to more priority, to backdate this. The LGSCO considered this a reasonable way to settle this complaint.	The Council agreed (within six weeks of the final decision) to review Mr K's case; to backdate any additional priority; and write to Mr K and the Ombudsman to confirm the outcome. The Council also agreed to consider whether there are any lessons to be learned from Mr K's complaint and write to the Ombudsman and Mr K about this (within 10 weeks of the date of this decision).	Case reviewed and priority awarded. Service considered if any lessons to be learned but concluded overall issue was mainly due to lack of information from customer.	26/11/2020 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome.
5	People - ASC 20 002 758	Mr X complained the Council underfunded his mother-in-law's care between 2017 and 2019 and as a result the family had to pay more than £9,000 in top-up fees to the care provider. He complains the care provider failed to respond to his correspondence or assist with the refund and did not properly deal with his complaint.	15/09/20	The LGSCO found that in 2019 Mrs Y's social worker noticed the Council's error and informed Mr X. Mr X raised the matter with the Council and the care provider and while the Council acknowledged its error and agreed to reimburse the family the care provider did not respond to his correspondence or phone calls and maintained the family had not overpaid and were not due a refund. The LGSCO noted the Council had now issued Mr X a refund for the overpayment and agreed to pay more than £250 in interest and a further £300 for his time and trouble.	No further action deemed necessary. Although Mr X remains unhappy with the care provider's handling of the matter and wants it to acknowledge its failures, improve its practices and apologise. The LGSCO will not investigate the complaint as the body commissioning Mrs Y's care the Council is responsible not only for its own actions but also for those of the care provider it commissioned to care for Mrs Y on its behalf. The Council acknowledges it failed to properly assess Mrs Y's care needs or to increase its funding for her care as required and it has provided a suitable remedy for this.	Not applicable	Not applicable
6	Place - Streets Ahead 17 004 913 (PUBLIC REPORT)	Mr G complained about the removal of street trees from his road as part of the Council's 'Streets Ahead' programme of works delivered by its contractor, Amey Hallam Highways plc.	18/09/20	The LGSCO welcomed the steps already taken by the Council to improve how it consults and makes decisions around street tree removals but recommended the following action to remedy the complaint: provide a public unreserved apology accepting the findings of this investigation which draw attention to general failings in the implementation of its 'Streets Ahead' policy; provide a private apology to Mr G's family to include specific recognition of its failings in its communications with him; share with the LGSCO the further detailed proposals it has for embedding transparency within its new tree strategy and how it proposes to ensure its contracts and management agreements reflect its new street tree strategy; and consider further how it can ensure contractors and managers are aware of the need to signpost correspondents to the Council's complaint procedure whenever appropriate. Consider if there are wider implications for how it delivers services and lessons it should learn as a result of how it implemented its Streets Ahead programme. In particular, how it can embed the principles of openness and accountability across all its services.	Report considered by Cabinet 21/10/20. Resolved that Cabinet: (a) endorses the publication of a public unreserved apology accepting the findings of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman investigation; (b) notes that the Cabinet Member for Environment, Streetscene and Climate Change has provided a private apology to the family of Mr G recognising the failings of the Council in its communications with him; (c) notes that the Street Tree Partnership Working Strategy details the new, transparent decision process for tree removals, and the additional information requirements from the contractor in submitting the recommendation; (d) notes that the Highways Maintenance (Streets Ahead client team) and contractor will receive additional training in the Council's complaints procedure; (e) notes the work that is being done to embed openness and transparency across all of the Council's services; and (f) approves the funding for Sheffield Archives Service to establish and manage the creation of a complete archive of SCC tree related material to be held within the City Archives in perpetuity.	14/10/2020 - Apology letter posted to family.  04/11/2020 - Link to public apology issued sent to LGSCO.  06/11/2020 - Complaints Manager attended Highways Service Meeting to deliver complaints briefing/refresher.  17/12/2020 - Link to information and updates in respect of the Sheffield Street Tree Partnership (including meeting minutes) shared with LGSCO to evidence the progress made on the new process and transparency. LGSCO also informed that managers have also been asked to complete the online 'complaints module' training on the Council's Sheffield Development Hub and a more detailed training session via Zoom is being organised (based on existing ½ day classroom course aimed at those tasked with investigating and responding to complaints).  14/11/2020 - Further specific comment provided on how the Council is embedding the principles of openness and accountability across all its services.	22/01/2021 - LGSCO issued compliance outcome 'Remedy complete and satisfied'

7	People - SEND 18 004 957 (PUBLIC REPORT)	Miss B, complained the Council did not properly provide for her son G's education and Special Educational Needs between September 2014 and September 2019.	25/09/20	The LGSCO found fault by the Council because: • it did not name School Y in G's Statement of SEN in 2015 within the timescale set out in statutory guidance; • it did not transition G from his Statement of SEN to an EHCP when it said it would; • Miss B experienced a four month delay before receiving G's final EHCP; • there was an excessive delay between January 2016 and April 2018 in finding school placement for G; • it did not maintain G's alternative provision through Provider 1 during the transition to School Z, as specified in his EHCP; • it did not provide appropriate transport for G for several weeks when he began to attend School Z; • it did not communicate effectively with Miss B; • it took no action to address the concern expressed by Miss B about Settlement to school meals; • it did not meet G's entitlement to a full-time education and by extension, did not make appropriate SEN provision; • there was a delay of over four months before the Council started to arrange an investigation into Miss B's complaint; • its investigation into her complaint did not consider the impact of its findings on Miss B or G; and • it is not certain that the action the Council says it has taken has fully resolved the significant issues of systemic concern highlighted by its investigation.	Report considered by Cabinet 16/12/2020. Resolved that Cabinet agrees the actions taken following publication of the Ombudsman report.  Council had already agreed to apologise individually to Miss B and G for the fault identified; pay G a total of £19,950, for his missed education provision; pay £250 to Miss B for the time and trouble in making her complaint; pay £800 to Miss B for the avoidable distress caused by having to delay her education and the loss of respite; pay Miss B £467 for G's lost school meal entitlement from May 2017; immediately review all alternative provision currently being made to identify and report back to the relevant committees about issues identified and the development of a SMART action plan to address the following: - any EHCP that names a non-educational provider; - any inadequate alternative education provision; and - any alternative provision that is not subject to a contract or has not been commissioned in line with the Council's agreed procedures. Also agreed to arrange during September for an Educational Psychologist to work with the school and the family to establish any additional and unidentified needs due to G's experience and update his EHCP accordingly and ensure that G is receiving provision to address the identified needs within three months of the date of this report.	November 2020 - Apologies issued to Miss B and G.  10/12/2020 Agreed financial payments made to bank account  16/12/2020 - Report to Cabinet confirmed that the Council has reviewed alternative provision being made within EHC Plans and is developing an action plan building on a review conducted last year to ensure that the recommendations of the ombudsman are addressed via the review. The action plan for developing the curriculum intent and revised framework will be completed in January 2021 as part of building on the previous review. Action Plan shared with LGSCO 16/03/21. Report to Cabinet further confirmed the Educational Psychology Service has started work with the school and family to identify any potential additional support that G requires including contact with the family, school and services such as CAMHS to ensure that assessments are updated so that a full report can be issued in December. The Educational Psychologist's report was completed 22/12/20.  Annual Review initially delayed and held 06/05/2021 - Notes/AR record shared with LGSCO on 21/06/2021.	28/06/21 - LGSCO issued "remedy complete and satisfied with action taken (late)".
8	Place - Housing and Neighbourhood Services - 201914523	Ms X complained about the Council's response to and handling of the reports of ASB from current and former tenancy; handling of the her community trigger applications and complaint handling.	12/10/20	HO deemed complaint about the handling of her community trigger applications to be outside jurisdiction. The HO found no maladministration by the landlord in respect of its response to and handling of the resident's reports of ASB from current or former tenancy but did find service failure by the landlord in respect of its complaint handling.	HO ordered Council to pay Ms X £100 compensation in respect of its complaint handling and the time and trouble she would have spent pursuing the matter (within four weeks of decision).	Payment made to rent account and apology letter issued 21/10/20.	06/11/20 - HO confirmed closure of case.
9	People ASC - 18 016 351	Mr B complains on behalf of his partner, Ms C, about the quality of care she received between August and November 2018. Care arranged by the Council and delivered by care provider.	13/11/2020	On balance the LGSCO found the Care Provider failed to always meet standards expected in caring for Ms C including failure to keep appropriate records around visits and contacts; failure to investigate reported incidents and failure to take reasonable steps to ensure female carer attended. LGSCO also found failure by Council to follow basic good administrative practice when Mr B first made service aware of concerns including failure to ensure adequate investigation and failure to keep a record of key meeting, which was compounded by poor/delayed complaint handling.	LGSCO gave credit to the Council for refunding to Ms C all fees paid for the care given by the Care Provider and writing off any balance due and because of this and given Mr B's own wishes did propose a financial remedy. The Council agreed (within 20 working days of decision) to provide a written apology to Mr B and Ms C accepting the findings of the investigation; Also (within three months) to write to LGSCO to clarify what further steps it has taken to assure itself the Care Provider: • has satisfactory procedures in place to ensure the safe administration of medication to users of its services; • has satisfactory training in place to ensure the safe moving, handling and transfers of users of its services; • keeps adequate records on its client files of such matters as the user of services' preference for care workers of a specific gender; how it records concerns or complaints from users of services including those brought to its attention by the Council; • undertakes prompt investigation into any concerns raised about the practice of individual care workers. Also (within three months) write to LGSCO to clarify what further steps it has taken: • to ensure that its social care staff ensure investigation of concerns raised by users of services; • to ensure that its social care staff maintain oversight where they have asked a Care Provider to look into a user of service's concern; • to ensure that officers asked to respond to complaints are reminded of the need to respond to the individual concerns around poor care raised by complainants; as well as considering broader questions of care provider's policy and practice; • to ensure timely responses to complaints and steps it has taken to avoid a repeat of the communication breakdown between its social care and contracts team that it says caused delay in replying to Mr B's complaint.	02/12/20 - Apology letter sent  31/03/21 - Chronology shared with LGSCO detailing contract monitoring and support visits undertaken and evidencing review of moving and handling training.  24/05/21 - Further evidence shared with LGSCO that various background documentation has been revisited and reviewed with Provider to ensure Provider aware of their responsibilities in completion of these documents and to also ensure compliance with the contract in place. This included: - Summary statement from Provider outlining their approach for Person Centred Care Plans and actions taken following concerns raised regarding a staff member. - Provider Complaints and Compliments Policy. - Incident Report Form - Investigation Disciplinary process - Person centred care plan (PCP) - Person centred medication plan (PCM) - Risk Assessment documents - Provider Service User Guide Provider confirms all Care workers are encouraged to read entire care plans to ensure important information is not missed for any client. Care plans are supported by additional documents such as risk assessments and if require, a medication care plan.	22/06/2021 - LGSCO issued "Remedy complete and satisfied" outcome.
10	People ASC - 19 019 521	Mr X complained about distress caused to him and his wife because of errors the Council made with a care assessment. He also complained the Council commissioned care with a provider he had complained about previously.	24/11/2020	The LGSCO found multiple errors in the assessment report the Council sent Mr and Mrs X. The issues with the assessment led to concern and anxiety and a loss of trust in the Council meeting Mrs X's needs and this took some time to resolve. There was further fault when a communication breakdown led to the Council commissioning care from Care Provider A. The Care Provider acknowledged due to an error when the Council cancelled the service, the visit still went ahead. The LGSCO concluded this would not have happened, had the Council clearly communicated Mr and Mrs X's wishes to the team organising her care.	The Council had already apologised to Mr and Mrs X and taken steps to ensure the same problems are not repeated. However, to recognise the distress and anxiety caused by the failings set out above the Council agreed to make a payment of £100 to them (within four weeks of final decision).	11/12/20 - Email to Mr X to confirm that £100 payment (cheque) will be posted out on Wednesday 16th December - copy shared with LGSCO.	17/12/2020 - LGSCO issued "Remedy complete and satisfied" outcome.

11	Partner - Streets ahead 20 007 173	Mrs Y complained about pavement works the Council carried out outside her home.	11/12/2020	The LGSCO found that following initial works the Council arranged an inspection and some remedial works in response to Mrs Y's complaint. Using its professional opinion, the Council is satisfied no further action is needed for the pavement to meet the required standard. LGSCO decided not to investigate as unlikely they would find fault by the Council which has caused Mrs Y an injustice which has not already been remedied.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
12	People ASC - 20 000 246	Ms B complained the Council failed to involve her as next of kin or take account of her father's wishes when placing him in a care home. Ms B complained the Council placed her father in an inappropriate placement, delayed meeting with her father to discuss his wishes, delayed completing a deprivation of liberty application, delayed completing a mental capacity assessment, failed to hold a best interests meeting, failed to carry out a safeguarding investigation and delayed completing an assessment when he was ready for discharge from hospital.	15/01/2021	The LGSCO found the Council delayed meeting Ms B's father and in carrying out a mental capacity assessment and safeguarding investigation but no fault in the other parts of the complaint. The Council's delay caused Ms B distress and created some uncertainty about whether the outcome would have been different.	The Council agreed (within one month of decision) to apologise to Ms B for the faults identified in this statement and pay her £400 to reflect her distress and the time and trouble she had to go to pursuing the complaint. Also (within two months) the Council agreed to draw up an action plan to address the faults identified (or provide evidence its practice development programme does so). That action plan to include: • consideration of how to keep the service user/vulnerable adult at the centre of the planning rather than being deflected by what the family's wishes are; • carrying out mental capacity assessments where a person's mental capacity is questioned and arranging a best interests meeting as soon as possible following that if the person is assessed as not having capacity; • the need to fully complete the record from the best interests meeting to show the options considered and the final decision reached; • consideration of the circumstances in which advocacy should be considered and/or some type of mediation where there is a difference of opinion or a person wants to return home and the partner disagrees; and • consideration of progressing a safeguarding referral where a family has requested it be put on hold.	11/02/2021 - Copy of apology letter sent to LGSCO alongside confirmation that £400 compensation payment will be made on the 16/02/2021. 19/03/2021 - Copy of updated Action Plan (with supporting documents) shared with LGSCO confirming following:  - A series of practice development webinars have been developed to support staff in a number of different areas including Safeguarding, Financial conversations, Carers, Advocacy and the statutory assessment (Conversation 3). - Key messages around advocacy shared with staff and guidance around assessment (Conversation 3) circulated and discussed at team manager level, who are sharing with their staff. - Development of a legal literacy training course for staff covering the Mental Capacity Assessment and Best Interest processes. - Skills audit as part of the personal development review process will check individual training needs.	23/03/2021 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome
13	Place - Housing and Neighbourhood Services - 19 020 639	Mr B complained that the Council failed to consult with garage tenants before removing parking enforcement in 2016; failed to monitor and enforce parking in the area since then; wrongly issued him with notices to quit his garage tenancy; and completed a flawed consultation on a Traffic Regulation Order in January 2020.	20/01/2021	LGSCO ruled most points of complaint outside jurisdiction (parking enforcement and the management of his garage tenancy are matters managed by council acting as a registered social housing provider). LGSCO did consider Mr B's complaint that the Council completed a flawed consultation on a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in January 2020 as this was a process managed by the Council acting as local traffic authority. LGSCO found the Council was at fault in that the consultation letter contained an incorrect response date and the signs were put up late. However these errors did not cause Mr B a significant injustice as closing date was extended and residents were given a full opportunity to respond.	No remedy/service improvements recommended.	Not applicable	Not applicable
14	People - School Admissions/ Democratic Services - 20 002 945	Mr B complained the Council did not carry out his son's school admissions appeal correctly. Mr B complained the Council did not give his son a place at the same school as his sibling and this caused the family distress and inconvenience.	12/02/2021	LGSCO found the emergency regulations required the Council to give appellants at least 14 calendar days' written notice of an appeal hearing but only gave Ms C ten calendar days, fewer than the number required which was fault. However, the LGSCO did not consider this fault caused Mr B, Ms C or D significant injustice. The LGSCO further found the Council carried out the Infant Class Size (ICS) appeal hearing in line with the School Admissions Code, School Admission Appeals Code and School Admissions (England) (Coronavirus) (Appeals Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (the 2020 regulations). The	No remedy/service improvements recommended.	Not applicable	Not applicable
15	People Children & Families (Preparation for Adulthood Team) 19 020 813	Ms X complained the Council delayed providing a care package for her adult son, Mr Y, so his needs were not met, and inappropriately questioned Mr Y's proposed personal assistant as part of the process. This caused her and Mr Y distress and frustration. Ms X also complained the Council failed to review the care package since its introduction and it was not sufficient to meet Mr Y's needs. In particular, it did not include any access to transport or mileage provision.	15/02/2021	LGSCO found the Council was at fault. It took too long to complete needs assessment and support plan; failed to properly consider whether to award transport costs, failed to review the plan and inappropriately questioned a prospective personal assistant as part of the process.	The Council agreed (within one month of final decision) to apologise to Mr Y and pay him £500 to acknowledge the loss of support, frustration and distress caused by the identified faults. It has also agreed to apologise to Ms X and pay her £250 to acknowledge the frustration, distress and missed respite caused by the identified faults. The Council also agreed (within two months) to review Mr Y's needs assessment and support plan. In particular, consider whether to provide transport costs as part of his care and support plan.	05/03/2021 - Apology letter posted  16/03/2021 - Agreed payments made - confirmation sent to LGSCO 24/03/2020.  16/04/21 - Copy of updated support plan sent to LGSCO.	16/04/2021 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome.
16	Resources - Customer Services 20 004 908	Mrs X complains the Council failed to properly consider her application to renew her concessionary travel pass.	24/02/2021	LGSCO found fault. The Council failed to undertake an adequate assessment of Mrs X's mobility in considering her application for a renewal of a concessionary travel pass. The LGSCO concluded a telephone assessment was not a sufficient way to accurately assess a person's mobility and Mrs X qualified for a pass for the last ten years there would need to be a material change in either her circumstances or the relevant policy or law in order for her to no longer qualify and the Council has provided no evidence to show such a change in circumstances.	The Council agreed to provide Mrs X with a temporary travel pass until it is able to arrange a face-to-face assessment of her mobility. It also agreed to provide Mrs X with a written apology for its failure to properly assess her mobility.	15/03/21 - Apology letter sent and copy shared with LGSCO 18/03/2021. Letter confirms that the Travel Permit authorisation letter was posted on the 09/03/2021 and this permit is for a period of 6 months.	25/03/21 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome.

17	People - School Admissions/ Democratic Services 20 007 278	Mr D complained there was fault in the way the Council and the school admission panel dealt with his appeal for a school place for his daughter, C.	05/03/2021	The LGSCO found the Council gave insufficient notice of the appeal hearing and fault with the way the appeal was conducted by the panel members with no evidence in the panel notes that show how the Council proved that admitting further pupils would cause prejudice and that it considered the evidence properly. This causes uncertainty as the outcome of the appeal might otherwise have been different.	The Council agreed to arrange a fresh appeal with a different panel and different appeal clerk as soon as possible in order that the appeal may be heard properly. The Council agreed the Panel would take place and the decision issued within one month.	Following decision, Admissions Team confirmed that the child in question had now been placed at the school and so no requirement for a further appeal to be arranged.	25/03/2021 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome
18	People - C&F/ASC Preparation for Adulthood 19 015 370 Joint investigation LGSCO/PHSO	Mrs A complained about the Council's and the CCG's actions in relation to arranging and funding care for two of her children, Mr Y and Ms Z. Specifically, Mrs A complained about a) an unreasonable and avoidable delay in agreeing home-based support plans for Mr Y and Ms Z; from 2016 to 2019 for Mr Y and from 2018 to 2019 for Ms Z; and b) An unreasonable delay in responding to her complaints about these matters.	08/03/21	The Ombudsmen found there was an extensive avoidable delay in the Council assessing two young adults' needs and producing a support plan for their care at home. This situation caused their mother significant avoidable stress which is an injustice.	<p>The Council agreed (within one month of final decision) to write to Mrs A to acknowledge the full extent of the avoidable delays in its assessments of Mr Y's and Ms Z's need for support at home; to reiterate its acknowledgement of delays in the complaints process; and apologise to Mrs A for the avoidable stress, frustration, time and trouble these delays caused her.</p> <p>The Council also agreed within two months to pay Mrs A £1,000 to serve as a tangible, symbolic recognition of the injustice she suffered, and the prolonged nature of it, as a result of the delays in this case.</p> <p>The Council further agreed (within three months) to review the circumstances of this case to identify the reasons why the assessments took so long and should produce a SMART action plan to address any issues its review identifies, with the aim of preventing recurrences.</p>	<p>26/03/2021 - Letter sent to Ms A and copy shared with LGSCO 09/04/2021.</p> <p>20/04/2021 - Payment of £1,000 processed via BACS and LGSCO updated.</p> <p>21/05/2021 - Further letter inc apology sent as initial letter not received - LGSCO updated.</p> <p>07/06/2021 - Update sent to LGSCO outlining ongoing review/project looking area of transitions, when children transfer into adult services. New transitions team to be set up which will work alongside Social Workers from year 9 and they will continue to work the case until the child reaches 18. Also looking into an Occupational Therapist being part of the Team.</p> <p>Changes to the way the Service works are due to be implemented by September 2021 with aim that families have a better and more holistic response to the additional challenges faced by parents of children with complex needs. This will ensure that information is shared at an earlier stage in the process and plans are in place ensuring a smooth transition.</p>	10/06/2021 - LGSCO issued 'Remedy complete and satisfied' outcome.

# Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

21 July 2021

*By email*

Ms Josephs  
Chief Executive  
Sheffield City Council

Dear Ms Josephs

## **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.

During the year, we issued a public report concerning your Council's removal and replacement of street trees, as part of its 'Streets Ahead' programme. We found the Council had not been open about the policies and procedures it followed when deciding on which street trees it would remove. It had also not been transparent about decision making in the case we investigated. We found these faults had likely contributed to the Council's decision to undertake tree removals in a joint operation with the police in the early morning, causing distress to the complainant and others. It also removed some street trees which most likely would have been retained but for flaws in the approach taken.

We recognise the Council has since reconsidered its approach and from late 2018 it has worked with a campaign group to agree a new approach to managing street trees in the city. However, we thought the Council should go further in recognising the distress caused by its actions. I am pleased the Council accepted the findings of our report and welcome that it willingly gave a public and unreserved apology. It also agreed to undertake further work to embed the principles of transparency, openness and accountability in its decision making and improve the quality of decisions taken in relation to street trees.

We issued a second public report about your Council's failure to provide suitable education and Special Educational Needs provision to a young person with additional needs. Our investigation found the Council delayed providing an Education, Health and Care Plan and subsequently finding a school placement. The Council then compounded the injustice by delaying its investigation into the complaint and failing to address the injustice to the complainant.

We asked the Council to apologise to the young person and his mother in a way that he would be able to understand, pay £19,950 to him for missed education and pay his mother £1,050 for the time, trouble and distress she experienced, plus £1,000 for lost school meal entitlement. I am pleased the Council responded positively to our recommendations and welcome its agreement to an additional recommendation requested by the complainant to review the young person's needs and consider alternative education provision.

## **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.

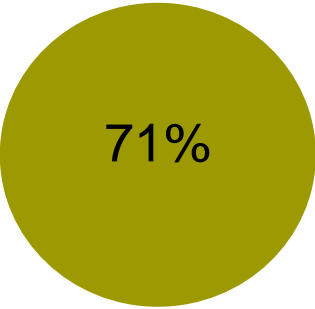
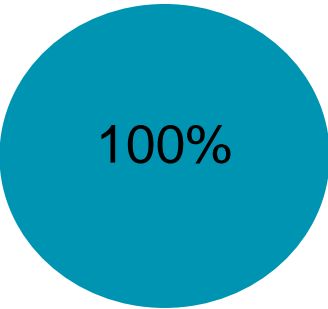
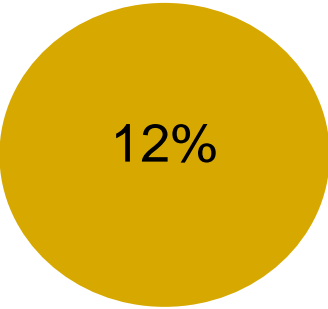
With this context in mind, we are developing a new programme of work that will utilise complaints to drive improvements in both local complaint systems and services. We want to use the rich evidence of our casework to better identify authorities that need support to improve their complaint handling and 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.lgo.org.uk/training](http://www.lgo.org.uk/training).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MK' with a stylized flourish underneath.

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

Complaints upheld		
	<p><b>71%</b> of complaints we investigated were upheld.</p> <p>This compares to an average of <b>72%</b> in similar authorities.</p>	<p><b>17</b> upheld decisions</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 24 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</p>
Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations		
	<p>In <b>100%</b> of cases we were satisfied the authority had successfully implemented our recommendations.</p> <p>This compares to an average of <b>100%</b> in similar authorities.</p>	<p>Statistics are based on a total of 18 compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.</li> </ul>		
Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority		
	<p>In <b>12%</b> 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 <b>11%</b> in similar authorities.</p>	<p><b>2</b> satisfactory remedy decisions</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 24 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.



## Audit & Standards Committee Report

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**Report of:** Mark Bennett, Director of HR and Customer Services

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**Date:** 21 October 2021

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**Subject:** Customer Services Contact Centre Performance

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**Author of Report:** Paul Taylor, Head of Customer Services

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**Summary:**

This report provides an overview of 2021-22 year to date performance for Customer Services Contact Centre. The report identifies issues that affect performance and identifies future developments and areas for improvement.

The report is presented by the Director of HR and Customer Services who is responsible for Customer Services.

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**Recommendations:**

The Audit & Standards Committee is asked to consider the report in order to provide its view on the future performance of service, the improvements proposed, and the issues raised.

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**Background Papers:**

None

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

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**Statutory and Council Policy Checklist**

Financial Implications
Legal Implications

<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
NO
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
NO
<b>Human rights Implications</b>
NO:
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
NO
<b>Economic impact</b>
NO
<b>Community safety implications</b>
NO
<b>Human resources implications</b>
NO
<b>Property implications</b>
NO
<b>Area(s) affected</b>
None
<b>Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Lead</b>
Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources & Governance
<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in</b>
Not applicable
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
NO
<b>Press release</b>
NO

## Contact Centre Performance Q1 & Q2 2021-22

### Contents:

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>CONTACT CENTRE PERFORMANCE 2021/22</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>ISSUES IMPACTING PERFORMANCE</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENTS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council's Corporate Contact Centre takes telephone enquiries for customers for the following services:
- Council Housing
  - Council Housing Repairs
  - Revenues and Benefits
  - Corporate – comprising 17 Services
  - Out of Hours – comprising Emergency Repairs, Homeless, Children's, Adult's, Social Services

### **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report provides an overview of year-to-date performance for Q1 & Q2 2021–22 and issues impacting upon performance.
- 2.2 The report identifies future developments and areas for improvement in performance.

### **3.0 PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW Q2 2021-22**

- 3.1 The service has a Key Performance Indicator to answer 85% of all calls offered. Year to date performance by service area is shown in the tables below

#### **REVENUES AND BENEFITS**

	Offered	Answered	% Answered	Waiting time (M:S)	Handling time (M:S)
Q1	31993	21045	66%	14:39	8:14
Q2	41773	17650	42%	56:56	9:49
October	4079	2110	52%	42:15	9:07

Revenues and Benefits Service impacted by a mailing to residents – 77000 letters regarding failed Direct Debits. In addition to this, several thousand payment reminder and final notices letters were sent weekly

#### **CORPORATE**

	Offered	Answered	% Answered	Waiting time	Handling time
Q1	50125	34736	69%	7:52	6:05
Q2	51435	31437	61%	15:47	6:47
October	4802	3972	83%	4:38	5:55

Seasonal pressures include:

- Parking permits - overlapping student years
- School holiday free school meals letters sent, some with erroneous voucher codes.
- Increased Register Office demand for ceremonies
- Pest Control requests
- Elections Annual Canvas

#### **COUNCIL HOUSING**

	Offered	Answered	% Answered	Waiting time	Handling time
Q1	54771	33953	62%	13:46	5:40
Q2	46909	36498	78%	11:46	5:35
October	5110	4468	87%	6:25	4:54

Slight reduction in demand whilst increasing percentage answered. Significant rent calls peaking on Mondays and Fridays. Telephony issues persist when referring to back offices - Teams hunt groups: calls are cancelled rather than forwarded if staff are unavailable, and the Storm to Teams telephony issue meant request details had to be sent electronically rather than a call transfer.

#### **COUNCIL HOUSING REPAIRS**

	Offered	Answered	% Answered	Waiting time	Handling time
Q1	75547	47522	63%	14:47	6:56
Q2	62079	38634	62%	29:43	7:19
October	7320	4706	64%	35:58	7:23

Demand steadily reduced through July, plateaued in August and through September, excepting Gas Servicing calls: appointment letters arrived after the appointment date (postal issue). Issues contacting some Back Office teams. Chase calls 35% of all calls. Training for front and back-office teams on new Repairs system.

#### **EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS**

	Offered	Answered	% Answered	Waiting time	Handling time
Q1	15,448	13,159	85%	03:23	05:24

Q2	14,470	12,079	83%	03:52	05:21
October	1,832	1,584	86%	03:17	05:05

Demand mirroring pre-covid seasonal patterns, however overall volumes higher (i.e. average of 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, compared to 2021-2022): homeless 216%, social care 142% and repairs 125%

- 3.2 Interventions by the service have stabilised performance and are starting to deliver improvements in the key indicators, apart from Revenues & Benefits, which continues to be challenging.

#### **4.0 ISSUES IMPACTING PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1 The service took responsibility for extra services and additional calls related to the support for residents during the pandemic such as:
- Provision of Free School Meals in holidays
  - Winter hardship grants.
- 4.2 Like many other service sector organisations maintaining staffing levels has been challenging during the pandemic, this has led to capacity issues for the service, which in turn has increased waiting times for customers. 7 experienced Customer Services staff moved to the Council's Test, Track, and Isolate Team when this was created, as well as staff turnover and staff absence.
- 4.3 Training and recruitment has been challenging as staff and mentors adapt to hybrid working and the service has had to change established methods and adapt to new methods. Recruiting Agency staff was unsuccessful as the demand for temps outstripped supply.
- 4.4 "Back-Office" performance issues affect the number of calls and the handling time of calls received in the Contact Centre
- Although the Contact Centre now returned to full opening hours. Some back-office services are still not able to operate at full pre-covid service levels
  - Difficulty contacting back-office colleagues for referrals is an issue, which leads to longer call handling times
  - Upon reinstatement of services there were significant backlogs of Council Housing repairs – chase calls / appointments queries are circa 30% of call demand
  - Housing Customer Records Management system does not integrate with OHMS system, this causes increased call handling times
- 4.5 Revenues and Benefits call-handling performance remains a significant challenge:
- Finance colleagues are catching up on post-pandemic billing, meaning we have a constantly high level of calls
  - The Customer Services have 4 R&B vacancies, recruitment is underway but takes additional time due to the introduction of CRB checks for this cohort.

- 4.6 The new Customer Records Management system and the new Storm phone system were implemented at pace during the pandemic which interrupted a smooth transition opportunity. This has slowed down call-handlers as they learned new systems encountered some system implementation issues.

## **5.0 IMPROVEMENTS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Improvements**

- 5.1 The service takes a proactive approach, collaborating with colleagues in services who use the Contact Centre for customer contact, to better understand and mitigate cross-service issues that impact on call waiting times.
- 5.2 Recruitment to vacant posts is underway with successful applicants serving their notice. New recruits should join the service in November 21. To shorten recruitment timeframes the service has trialled different approaches to recruitment.
- 5.3 Training has been reviewed and refined to reduce the training period to 3 weeks from 6 weeks, enabling new staff to start call handling with their mentors sooner.
- 5.4 The Total Mobile system to order repairs will be rolled out to all Contact Centre staff, which will reduce handling time and therefore waiting time. If a trades person cannot get to their next appointment, the system will alert the Repairs Co-ordinator, they re-appoint it and let the tenant know. This should reduce chase calls. Additionally, it will be easier to train other Contact Centre staff who can help out during peak periods.
- 5.5 The weekend-working for Housing Repairs trial is extended to November, it is positively impacting on Monday's call volumes if the trend continues, the service will work with colleagues to extend.

### **Possible Future Developments**

The following are currently being explored.

- 5.6 Extended opening hours will be considered, where back-office support can be secured.
- 5.7 Live Chat & Web Chat - Initiatives which will enhance customer experience and that may shift demand from telephony operations. Contact-handlers can deal with up to 4 enquiries at once.
- 5.8 Natural Language is available in the Storm telephony system – it is an automated voice-recognition system that interacts and automatically routes callers to the correct place without initially involving a call-handler. A pilot will commence with Housing Services.

- 5.9 Merge telephone queues. By cross-skilling staff and deploying them across more skill-sets enables the service to be more resilient and handle calls quicker.
- 5.10 Greater joining-up between Revenues and Benefits front and back-office will provide an opportunity to deal more effectively with spikes in calls.
- 5.11 Not all calls into the Council go through the Contact Centre. An exercise is underway to establish which numbers related to which service, and how customer interaction is delivered.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The Audit & Standards Committee is asked to consider the report in order to provide its view on the performance of the Contact Centre and the issues raised.





## Audit and Standards Committee Report

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**Report of:** Director of Legal and Governance

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**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021

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**Subject:** Member Development Progress Report

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**Author of Report:** Rachel Marshall, Principal Committee Secretary

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### **Summary:**

This report describes what Member Development has taken place so far and what the plans are for further and future development.

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**Recommendations:** the Committee are asked to note the progress of Member Development.

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**Background Papers:** None

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

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\* Delete as appropriate

## Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

<b>Financial Implications</b>
NO - Cleared by: Paul Schofield
<b>Legal Implications</b>
NO - Cleared by: Andrea Simpson
<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
NO - Cleared by: Adele Robinson
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
NO
<b>Human rights Implications</b>
NO:
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
NO
<b>Economic impact</b>
NO
<b>Community safety implications</b>
NO
<b>Human resources implications</b>
NO
<b>Property implications</b>
NO
<b>Area(s) affected</b>
None
<b>Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Member</b>
Councillor Julie Grocutt
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
NO
<b>Press release</b>
NO

## **Member Development Progress**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report describes the work and progress that has taken place with Member Development at SCC and the plans for its future development.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 For some years, Member Development has been limited at Sheffield City Council to a programme of Member Induction, largely due to resource availability. This is not uncommon at authorities which elect by thirds, since there is a need to conduct an induction programme in three out of every four years. Following a change in administration, a new Chief Executive, and in light of the forthcoming change to a committee system it was felt that a more enhanced Member Development Programme was fundamental to support Members in their roles as they adapt to contextual challenges. The programme also includes general and mandatory training.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 This report describes the work and progress that has taken place with Member Development at SCC and the plans for its future development.
- 3.2 Sheffield City Council has embarked upon a Member Development programme for all members. Initially the development programme was divided into four main streams:

- Induction;
- Local Government Association (LGA) courses;
- Local Area Committees (LACs); and
- Transition to a Committee System.

Each stream will now be detailed in turn to describe what training has taken place and/or what the current plans are.

#### **3.3 Induction**

- 3.3.1 Induction development sessions have a varied audience of members. Some sessions are aimed at newly elected Members only, some are committee-specific or role-specific and others are applicable to all Members.
- 3.3.2 For newly elected Members there are seven development sessions delivered by officers:
- Introduction to the Council,
  - Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding,
  - Local Government Finance,

- Emergency Planning,
- Public Health,
- Introduction to Planning for Newly Elected Members and
- Policy and Performance,

All but the last three of these sessions has already taken place in September and early October 2021. It is hoped that the other two sessions can be delivered before the end of November.

### 3.3.3 Attendance to these sessions are shown below:

- Introduction to the Council – 47%
- Local Governemnt Finance – 47%
- Corporate Parenting & Safeguarding – 33%
- Emergency Planning – 33%

### 3.3.4 Committee-specific training and development is also offered to Members on specific committees and in some instances to all Members. This is shown in the list below:

- Planning – All planning Members
- HR Appeals Panels – All appeals panel Members
- Licensing – All licensing Members
- Audit & Standards – All audit and standards Members
- Scrutiny – All scrutiny Members
- Equality, Diveristy & Inclusion – All Members
- Information Management – All Members

Some of this training and development has already taken place, some is planned and some is to be arranged.

### 3.3.5 Mandatory Planning training and development was delivered via three sessions in May 2021, June 2021 and July 2021. Members that have already attended this training within the past two years were not required to attend. All other relevant members have attended this year as required.

### 3.3.6 HR Appeals Panels training and development is forthcoming.

### 3.3.7 Licensing training and development has taken place between April 2021 and September 2021 in the following areas:

- Introduction to the Licensing Act 2003
- Introduction to Street Trading
- Licensing Induction Course
- Introduction to The licensing Committee and Hearings
- Introduction to Licensing Policies
- Introduction to Taxi Licensing

- Safeguarding – Protection of Children and the Vulnerable

The following sessions will be taking place between October 2021 and March 2022:

- Introduction to Safety at Sports Ground Events
- Introduction to the Gambling Act 2005
- Introduction to Commons Registrations and Land Owner Agreements
- Introduction to Setting Licence Fee and Budget
- Introduction to Equality Act 2010 – Disability and Equality Awareness
- Introduction to Sex Establishments and Sexual Entertainment Venues

- 3.3.8 Audit and Standards training and development is currently being arranged and is to be delivered by an external provider, Ian Fifield, at the request of Members.
- 3.3.9 Scrutiny training and development took place in early September and was delivered internally. Attendance to this was 57%.
- 3.3.10 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and development has been arranged internally for the 23rd November 2021. 23 Members are so far due to attend.
- 3.3.11 Information Management training and development is going to be delivered in November. A pre-meet has been arranged for the 26<sup>th</sup> of October to discuss requirements.

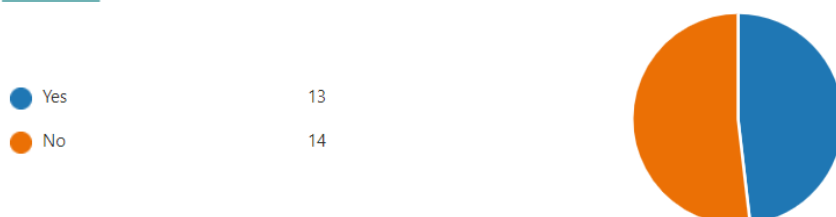
#### **3.4 Local Government Association Stream**

- 3.4.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) have offered one year's worth of training and development to SCC. Sessions delivered by the LGA are offered to all Members, however there may be some instances where training is delivered in single party groups. Initial discussions took place of what development sessions would be useful and some sessions started to be arranged.
- 3.4.2 In early July a single party session was offered to all Members. This session was delivered by a legal and governance officer from Rochdale Council and a Member Peer was also present of the same political party from a different council. The aim of this session was to provide a safe space for Members to bring forward their views and ask any questions that they have. The scope that was covered was:
- Registration of interest
  - Code of conduct
  - Member/officer relations
  - Behaviour
  - What members want from the development programme

- 3.4.3 Overall 51% of members attended one of these party-specific sessions.
- 3.4.4 Following the party-specific sessions Members were sent a survey to ask for feedback. Twenty-two members responded to this survey, giving an average 3.1 stars out of 5.
- 3.4.5 Members were also sent a survey to ask them about what their technological training needs were and 27 Members responded. The feedback is shown below:

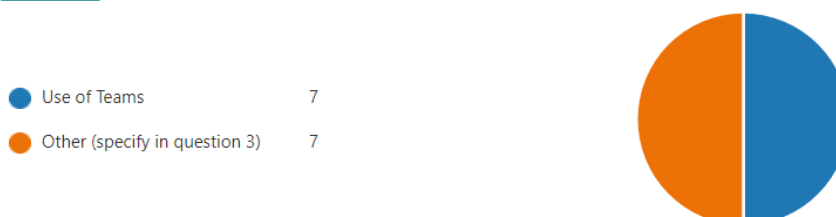
Do you feel you need some training & development on the use of technology to support you in your role? (if you answer 'No' you do **not** need to answer the next few questions)

[More Details](#)



What do you feel you need some training on?

[More Details](#)



Some of the members specified that they would like further technological training on:

- Microsoft Office System
- Excel Spreadsheets
- Support as issues arise
- Improving productivity through linking applications
- Access to information on council systems
- Access to intranet
- Printing in Town Hall
- Refresher on use of laptops
- How to use council website effectively

- 3.4.6 In early September two 'Community Leadership' sessions were offered to all Members. These sessions were duplicates of each other and were offered at different times and days to offer more choice and flexibility to Members. The aim of this was to increase Member participation. These sessions were delivered by an LGA officer and a Member Peer from East Sussex Council. 35% of members

attended. The scope included:

- Collaboration – solutions to problems
- Listening to, and understanding your ward
- Encouraging citizen participation
- Harnessing how communities can work together during a time of need
- Appropriate use of social media
- How to be an effective Ward Councillor
- Local Area Committees

3.4.7 The next stages of training and development from the LGA are in development, with a view to prioritising issues specific to Sheffield's unique situation, including the forthcoming transition to a committee system. Feedback from members about the breadth of issues they would like to see covered is informing this discussion.

3.4.8 From the 7th of June to beginning of July a programme of development for officers was put together at the request of the Empowering Communities Programme (ECP), mainly arising from discussions at the HR Workstream. See the table below. Chairs and Deputy Chairs were invited to the officer sessions if they were available. The aim was to provide an induction for the new Communities teams and was intended to be an ongoing development programme for the Team. Following these sessions the ECP Board felt that Members would benefit from receiving similar development opportunities to assist them in their new roles within the Local Area Committees. Due to the vast array of sessions and demands on Member's time, ten were prioritised to be delivered throughout September - shown in the priority column. Nine out of the ten were delivered and it was the aim to deliver the rest out before 2022, however due to demands on Members' and Officers' time it may well be that these sessions will be delivered in 2022.

Priority	Other Sessions		
City of Sanctuary	Initial Induction	Team Around the Person	Digital Inclusion and connectivity
Parks	Communities Service Event	Housing	City Centre/High Streets/Business Engagement
Sheffield Insights	Covid Hub	Community safety Plans/Prevent etc	Adult Learning, employment and skills
AMEY/Veolia	Community Response	Local political structure TO BE RESCHEDULED	VAS
Family Centres	Roles & Responsibilities	LAC rules, procedures and meetings; LAC governance	Accountable Care Partnership
Libraries	Working in a Political Environment	Cohesion	People Keeping Healthy
Highways	Gov delivery email notification system	Children & Families	
Sheffield Economy	South Yorkshire Police / Community Safety	Adults	
Climate/Greener	City wide Partnerships	Early Help Review	
Environmental Health	Community Support Workers	Grants and grant aid admin	

3.4.9 The Member attendance for each of the sessions is shown below:

- City of Sanctuary – 23%
- Parks – 23%
- Sheffield Insights – 18%
- AMEY/Veolia – 29%
- Family Centres – 31%
- Libraries – 11%
- Sheffield Economy – 23%
- Climate/Greener – 25%
- Environmental Health – 21%

### 3.5 **Transitioning to a Committee System Stream**

3.5.1 Initial plans for development under this stream have recently begun. A list of topics was compiled as to what would be the most imminent needs for training and development are. The draft list includes, but is not limited to:

- Scrutiny – whether or not a separate scrutiny committee exists in the new governance model, there will be some statutory scrutiny functions to undertake and, as per the Governance Committee’s draft design principles, a need to ensure that decision-makers are effectively held to account by whatever system is in place.
- How to be an effective committee member (including ‘how to disagree well’).
- Chairing and Vice-chairing in Sheffield’s committee system.
- Chairing and Vice-chairing Local Area Committees.

- Community Engagement
- Leadership and decision-making in a committee system.
- Lord Mayor Training
- Audit Committee
- Policy and Performance

Decisions need to be made as to whether the training and development around these areas will be delivered internally or externally and by whom – this is currently in development.

### **3.6 Additional Training and Plans**

- 3.6.1 Through additional discussions with officers and Members a list of further training and development topics has been raised. The intention is not necessarily to offer specific courses relating to each of these issues separately, but to ensure these issues are covered by the member development programme as a whole over the coming municipal year and induction cycle.

- Personal Safety – Violence against women and all Members
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Carbon Literacy
- Cultural Awareness including eg racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia
- Media & Technology skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Personal Resilience
- Climate Change
- Standards and Member Code of Conduct
- How Local Area Committees work
- Appropriate use of Social Media
- Health and Social Care
- Portfolio Leadership
- Understanding how the NHS works – commissioning and provision

### **3.7 Feedback**

- 3.7.1 Following each training and development session a short survey is sent via a link to each Member that has attended the session. Members are asked to rate the usefulness of the session to them and also to use the form to follow up with any questions that they may have so that these can be followed up with the relevant officer or stakeholder that has delivered the session.

### **3.8 Member Working Group**

- 3.8.1 A Member Working Group was formed in mid-September. The group was formed by speaking to the Whips who then liaised with their groups and the following Members offered to be their groups representative for Member Development: Cllr Garry Weatherall, Cllr Sue Alston and Cllr Martin Phipps. The aim of this cross-party group is to discuss Member Development needs, offer informal direction to

officers who are developing this programme when consulted, and to help keep members updated on what is happening with development opportunities and what is being planned. These are informal discussions.

### **3.9 Member Development Site – SharePoint**

- 3.9.1 It was raised by some Members that they would like a central place to access useful resources and information. A SharePoint area was previously set up for Members following the Covid-19 Pandemic. This has now been updated and enhanced and is available for access. All Members have been informed of this via email and verbally in some training and development sessions. Instructions have been provided on how to access the site. All resources from training sessions are added to this site alongside useful training videos and links to the LGA. There is a direct link to the Local Area Committees SharePoint site too. The link to the site is:

<https://sccextranet.sharepoint.com/sites/MembersInformation>

- 3.9.2 In the last 30 days the analytics show that the traffic to this page has had a maximum of 46 page views in any one day. It is hoped that as members become more aware of the usefulness of this new resource, the pages will see more traffic.

### **3.10 Member Development Strategy and Plan**

- 3.10.1 A formal, four-year Member Development Strategy is being developed for Sheffield City Council in order to formalise and coordinate the above arrangements from May 2022 onwards. The aim is to ensure that member development activity is aligned to the strategic needs of the organisation for years to come. It is envisioned that this will be for members' sign-off although it is not yet confirmed which committee would have jurisdiction for this. Each year an annual member induction and development plan would be agreed in line with the strategy.
- 3.10.2 Sheffield City Council is dedicated to providing a wider range of training and development opportunities for Members to build on knowledge and develop further skills in order to help them in their roles. Priority training and development will be addressed first followed by additional training that has been requested or suggested. The Member Working Group will be able to act as a communication vehicle from the groups to drive Member Development forwards.
- 3.10.3 It is to be hoped that an increased focus on the quality and relevance of member development will result in an increased take-up of the offer by members. Attendance rates, while not untypical amongst councils, have not historically been high.

## **4.0 IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1 Financial implications**

There are no specific financial implications from this report. Training sessions are provided by a mix of internal officers and external providers for more specialist topics, funded from existing budgets. In the event that new specific initiatives were proposed, the funding would be approved through the appropriate decision making route.

4.2 **Legal Implications**

There is no legal requirement to provide training for Members. However, doing so ensures that they have a knowledge and awareness of the Council's and their own statutory obligations and enables the efficient running of Council business.

4.3 **Equality of Opportunity Implications**

As a Public Authority, we have legal requirements under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. These are often collectively referred to as the 'general duties to promote equality'. We have considered our obligations under our Duties and found that whilst there are some direct equality of opportunity implications arising as a result of this report, we have taken our duty into account and at this stage a more detailed EIA is not required. We will however continue to assess our Member development plan in line with our commitments to Equality diversity and inclusion and our Duties. We are for example ensuring that all Members are aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Equality Act and the Councils overall Duties. This training is highlighted in the report in several places, following feedback from the training undertaken we will further develop more specific training as required.

**5.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 That the Committee notes the report on the update on Member Development.

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## Audit and Standards Committee Report

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**Report of:** Director of Legal and Governance

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**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021

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**Subject:** Work Programme

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**Author of Report:** Sarah Hyde, Democratic Services  
(Tel - 0114 273 4015)

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### Summary:

The report provides details of an outline work programme for the Committee.

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### Recommendations:

That the Committee:-

(a) considers the Work Programme and identifies any further items for inclusion;  
and

(b) approves the work programme.

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**Background Papers:** None

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**Category of Report:** OPEN

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## Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

<b>Financial Implications</b>
NO      Cleared by:
<b>Legal Implications</b>
NO      Cleared by:
<b>Equality of Opportunity Implications</b>
NO      Cleared by:
<b>Tackling Health Inequalities Implications</b>
NO
<b>Human rights Implications</b>
NO:
<b>Environmental and Sustainability implications</b>
NO
<b>Economic impact</b>
NO
<b>Community safety implications</b>
NO
<b>Human resources implications</b>
NO
<b>Property implications</b>
NO
<b>Area(s) affected</b>
NONE
<b>Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?</b>
NO
<b>Press release</b>
NO

## **WORK PROGRAMME**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To consider an outline work programme for the Committee.

### **2. Work Programme**

- 2.1 It is intended that there will be at least five meetings of the Committee during the year with additional meetings arranged if required. The work programme includes some items which are dealt with at certain times of the year to meet statutory deadlines, such as the Annual Governance Report and Statement of Accounts, and other items requested by the Committee. In addition, it also includes standards related matters, including an annual review of the Members Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedure and an Annual Report on the complaints received.
- 2.2 An outline programme is attached and Members are asked to identify any further items for inclusion.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 That the Committee:-
- (a) considers the Work Programme and identifies any further items for inclusion; and
  - (b) approves the work programme.

**Gillian Duckworth**  
**Director of Legal and Governance**

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Audit and Standards Work Programme 2021-22- Working Copy

Date	Item	Author
16 December 2021	Statement of Accounts 20/21	Dave Phillips (Head of Strategic Finance)
	Education Healthcare Plan Update	Andrew Jones (Director of Education and Skills)
	Report of those Charged with Governance (ISA 260)	(External Auditor) Ernst & Young
	Whistleblowing Policy Review	Claire Corneile (Head of HR)
	Progress on High Opinion Audit Reports	Linda Hunter (Senior Finance Manager)
	Work Programme	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)
20 January 2022	Formal Response to Audit (ISA 260) Recommendations	Dave Phillips (Head of Strategic Finance)
	Annual Audit Letter 2020/21	Ernst and Young (External Auditor)
	Review of Members' Code of Conduct	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)
	Review of Standards Complaints Procedure	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)
	Annual Standards Report	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)
	Work Programme	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)
24 February 2022	(Additional meeting if required)	
24 March 2022	Compliance with International Auditing Standards	Dave Phillips (Head of Strategic Finance)

## Audit and Standards Work Programme 2021-22- Working Copy

	Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2020/21	External Auditor (EY)
	External Audit Plan 2021/22	External Auditor (EY)
	Annual Audit Fee Letter 2021/22	External Auditor (EY)
	Work Programme	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)
June 2022	Audit Training	External Facilitator (Gary Bandy)
16 June 2022	Summary of Statement of Accounts	Dave Phillips (Head of Strategic Finance)
	Internal Audit Annual Fraud Report	Linda Hunter (Senior Finance Manager)
	Internal Audit Plan 2022/23	Linda Hunter (Senior Finance Manager)
	Progress in High Opinion Reports	Linda Hunter (Senior Finance Manager)
	Strategic Risk Reporting	Helen Molteno (Corporate Risk Manager)
	Work Programme	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)
21 July 2022	Work Programme	Gillian Duckworth (Director of Legal and Governance)

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR REPORT WRITERS

The Audit and Standards Committee provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of the Committee is to provide independent assurance to the Council of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of Sheffield City Council's

## Audit and Standards Work Programme 2021-22- Working Copy

governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

The Committee also cover Standards and is primarily responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, independent members,

and co-opted members. It is responsible for advising and arranging relevant training for members relating to the requirements of the code of

conduct for councillors. The Committee also monitor the Council's complaints process and the Council's response to complaints to the Ombudsman.

The Committee is not an operational committee, so is not focussed on the day to day running of your service. However, its focus is on risk management and governance, so it will want to understand how you manage your key risks, and how you are responding to new challenges and developments. In particular the Committee will be interested in the progress on implementing agreed recommendations from inspection and audit reports, and will want to review your services' outputs and actions in response. You can expect some challenge if deadlines for implementing agreed actions have been missed. Please ensure breakdowns of information are included in your report, as the Committee is interested in the key facts and figures behind areas.

Most Audit and Standards papers are public documents, so use everyday language, and use plain English, don't use acronyms, or jargon and explain any technical terms. Assume the reader knows little about your subject.

Think about how the paper will be interpreted by those who read it including the media.

Use standard format - don't subvert it.

**Ensure** – You convey the key message in the first paragraph not the last.

The report should include –

- **Summary**
- **Recommendation (s)**
- **Introduction**
- **Background**
- **Main body of the report (in. legal, financial and all other relevant implications)**

**(report templates are available from Democratic Services)**

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