



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 2 nd September 2024
Report Subject	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report for the year 2023/24
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) has published her Annual Report (AR) for 2023/24. The AR is a global report across all of the PSOW's responsibilities and only the part of the report relating to code of conduct complaints falls within the remit of their committee.

The report summarises the headline matters in the AR with a particular focus on matters relating to standards of County & Town and Community Councillors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To consider the matters relating to Code of Conduct Complaints reported in the AR and decide whether any action is needed by the Committee.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	The PSOW has published her AR for 2023/24 pursuant to Paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019. The majority of the report relates to the PSOW's functions to investigate service complaints. Pages 26 – 32 and the statistics at page 141 relate to code of conduct complaints which are within this committee's remit.

	The purpose of the AR is to report on the performance of the PSOW's office over the year, provide an update on developments and to deliver any key messages arising from the work carried out during the year.		
1.02	The AR sets out the workload that has been dealt with by the PSOW during 2023/24.		
		No.	Variation
	Number of complaints overall	518	+16%
	Number of complaints assessed	328	
	Number of complaints about		
	• County councillors	176	+11%
	• Town/community councillors	151	+17%
	• Park Authority member	1	-67%
1.03	The number of complaints has risen again by 16% since 2022/2023. This is a continuing the upwards trend over the last 4 years. Although the AR does not quote statistics it asserts that a higher proportion of complaints were investigated and 21 were referred for a hearing. In 2022/23 the number was 12 and in 2021/22 20 cases were referred for a hearing.		
1.04	Of these 55% were about equality and respect – see page 141 for the full breakdown. This is slightly lower than last year, but this is always the largest category of complaint. This is broadly reflected in the complaints about our own Community, County and Town Councillors.		
1.05	As has been noted elsewhere that the increased demands on the PSOW have inevitably caused delays in investigation speeds.		

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	N/A

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	N/A

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	N/A

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – the Annual Report 2023/2024

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: Gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>PSOW - the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales whose duty it is to investigate complaints made by members of the public in relation to the actions and decision making of public bodies in Wales.</p> <p>AR- Annual Report of the PSOW for 2023/24</p>