House of Commons
Communities and Local Government Committee

Further review of the work of the Local Government Ombudsman: Responses to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2013–14

First Special Report of Session 2014–15

Ordered by the House of Commons
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The Communities and Local Government Committee

The Communities and Local Government Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Current membership

Mr Clive Betts MP (Labour, Sheffield South-East) (Chair)
Bob Blackman MP (Conservative, Harrow East)
Simon Danczuk MP Rochdale (Labour, Rochdale)
Mrs Mary Glindon MP (Labour, North Tyneside)
David Heyes MP (Labour, Ashton under Lyne)
James Morris MP (Conservative, Halesowen and Rowley Regis)
Mark Pawsey MP (Conservative, Rugby)
John Pugh MP (Liberal Democrat, Southport)
John Stevenson MP (Conservative, Carlisle)
Heather Wheeler MP (Conservative, South Derbyshire)
Chris Williamson MP (Labour, Derby North)

Andy Sawford MP (Labour, Corby) was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry.

Powers

The committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk/clg.

Publication

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at www.parliament.uk/clg.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume.

Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Glenn McKee (Clerk), Sarah Coe (Second Clerk), Stephen Habberley (Inquiry Manager), Kevin Maddison (Committee Specialist), David Nicholas (Senior Committee Assistant), Eldon Gallagher (Committee Support Assistant), David Foster (Assistant Media Officer) and Jonathan Olivier Wright (Web and Publications Assistant)

Contacts

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First Special Report

On 15 January 2014 the Communities and Local Government Committee published its Fifth Report of Session 2013–14, *Further review of the work of the Local Government Ombudsman* [HC 866]. On 14 March 2014 the Local Government Ombudsman wrote to the Committee responding to the Report and on 20 May 2014 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wrote to the Chair providing the Government’s response to the Report. The correspondence is published in appendices to this Report.

Appendix A: Letter from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

I welcome the further recommendations your Committee has now made to strengthen and bring greater robustness to the Local Government Ombudsman’s investigative process.

Your Committee has recognised both the efforts made by the Local Government Ombudsman to be more accountable, efficient and transparent, and that further work needs to be undertaken by the Ombudsman to ensure their role as a complaints redress body are fully met. I very much welcome this view.

Your Committee’s work and findings closely align with the recommendations of the independent Governance Review undertaken by Robert Gordon in 2013. As I announced to Parliament in November 2013, I have accepted that Review’s recommendations that the governance arrangements of the Local Government Ombudsman service should be reformed, so that there is only one Local Ombudsman, supported by a Board including the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, and strengthened by the addition of one or two non-executive members. As noted in your Committee’s report, the Government is also now taking forward two further reviews of the complaints landscape, in light of which we intend to consider future wider public sector ombudsman arrangements. Any changes to ombudsman arrangements as a result of all these reviews are likely to be best implemented comprehensively, any necessary legislation being on this basis.

*May 2014*
I am writing to inform you of the progress being made in relation to recommendations made in the January report. These were considered by the Commission at their meeting on 25 February.

1. The second staff survey was completed and the results published in full on the LGO website on 31 January.

2. Terms of reference have been agreed for two internal audit reviews which will consider management information systems (including performance against time targets) and quality framework respectively. The first review is in process and due to report w/c 24 March. The second will take place in April with a report due in May.

3. The Commission agreed on 25 February to appoint two additional independent non-voting members. The current independent chair of the CLAE Remuneration Committee has been confirmed as one member. We are ready to progress a no-cost open appointments process to recruit a second member, as advised by the Committee, as soon as DCLG approval for remuneration has been agreed. A business case for remuneration has been submitted to the department.

4. The Commission also agreed on 25 February to appoint an external evaluator of service complaints within the next six weeks through a no-cost public appointment process.

We will keep the Committee informed as to progress on all the recommendations and would be pleased to provide any further information required.

March 2014