1. **Decision required**

   Cabinet is requested to

1.1 **Note the content of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter for 2018.**

2. **Introduction and Background**

2.1 The office of the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) was created by the Local Government Act 1974. The main functions of the LGO are to:
- investigate complaints against Councils and other public authorities
- investigate complaints about social care providers from people who arrange or fund their adult social care (Health Act 2009).

2.2 Complaints against the Council are dealt with under the Council’s Complaints procedure or in the case of Adults and Children’s Services, through the statutory complaints procedure. Where a Complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome he/she has the right to refer the matter to the LGO. The LGO however has the power to accept and investigate a complaint even if the internal or statutory complaints procedure has not been exhausted in certain circumstances.

2.3 Each year the LGO produces an Annual Review Letter which is a summary /review of complaints made against the council during the preceding year. The letter is intended to enable councils to assess their performance. The Ombudsman Annual Review letter 2018 is at Appendix A.
3. **Report**

3.1 Since the Annual Review letter 2017, which was considered by Cabinet on 6th December 2017 the Assistant LGO has visited the Council, and there have been changes in the Council’s complaints handling procedures which are referred to favourably in the Annual Review letter. The LGO has demonstrably taken a more proactive approach to investigating complaints than was previously the case. The focus is more on outcomes and lessons learned and the Annual Review Letter is also seen as an opportunity for the Ombudsman to make general recommendations.

3.2 The Annual Review Letter dated 18th July 2018 covers the period 01.04.17 to 31.03.18 and shows that in the period a total of 121 complaints were made of which 22 were upheld. The LGO reflected the fact there have been significant improvements in complaints handling since the 2017 Letter and that the Council has:

- Conducted a review of the complaints process
- Introduced a new recording system
- Complaints officers for each directorate who meet regularly have been appointed
- In 3 complaints this year the investigator reported positively on how the council handled the complaint and interacted with the investigators.

The narrative in the Letter is very positive, reflecting the process work carried out behind the scenes and our efforts to increase engagement with the LGO.

3.3 Compared to 2016/17, the total volume of complaints is down from 137 to 121. The number of upheld complaints (following detailed investigation) is up from 17 to 22. Overall, these are still low numbers given the size of our organisation.

3.4 The Letter continues the LGO’s themes started in the 2017 Letter of moving away from a simplistic focus on the volumes and instead focusses on the lessons learned and wider improvements that can be achieved. The LGO has produced a new Corporate strategy for 2018 to 2021 which commits them to more comprehensively publish information about outcomes and the occasions when their recommendations result in improvement to local services. They will be providing a broader range of data in next year’s Letter. We can expect more detailed reports and recommendations based on outcomes.

ITEM NO: 8
3.5 The LGO makes no specific recommendations in this year’s Letter.

4. **Next Steps**

4.1 The Monitoring Officer and Directorate complaints officers will continue to analyse complaints to identify trends/lessons learned and report to GMT on a six monthly basis.

5. **Consultation Results**

5.1 The issues covered by this report do not require public consultation

6. **Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Sign-off</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal including Human Rights Act</td>
<td>The report raises no specific legal issues.</td>
<td>Azuka Onuorah, Deputy Head of Legal Services, 16 October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and other resources including procurement implications</td>
<td>There are no financial implications arising from this report.</td>
<td>Damon Cook, Assistant Director of Finance &amp; Deputy s151 Officer, 17 October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalities</td>
<td>The report raises no equalities issues.</td>
<td>Azuka Onuorah, Deputy Head of Legal Services</td>
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## Risk management

Failure to comply with an Ombudsman determination may result in the publication of a Public Report resulting in reputational damage. Whilst a LGO report is not binding legal authority, it is relied on as a persuasive authority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services, 16 October 2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>Azuka Onuorah, Deputy Head of Legal Services, 16 October 2018</td>
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### 7. Report Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Annual Review Letter 2018

### 8. Background Papers

None

Report Author: Azuka Onuorah – Deputy Head of Legal Services  
Tel No. 020 8921 5179  
Email. Azuka.Onuorah@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Chief Officer: John Scarborough – Head of Legal Services  
Tel No. 020 8921 5123  
Email. John.Scarborough@royalgreenwich.gov.uk