

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 10th July 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

PORTFOLIO: Leader's

SUBJECT: Report by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To notify members that the Local Government Ombudsman has issued a report against the Council following an investigation of a homelessness case.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report and the actions taken to address the issues raised by the Ombudsman be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Local Government Ombudsman has issued a report against the Council following their investigation of a homelessness complaint (A copy of the report is enclosed separately).
- 3.2 The Ombudsman has found there has been fault on the part of the Council. Although the LGO found fault with the way the Council handled the case, there were areas of the case where the Council did not agree with the Ombudsman's findings.
- 3.3 That said the Council has agreed to take the action which the Ombudsman regards as providing a satisfactory remedy.
- 3.4 The Council has completed all the non-service specific recommendations and the Ombudsman has confirmed that they are happy with the steps the Council has taken. In implementing the recommendations the individual has confirmed they no longer wished to proceed with the Property Pool Plus scheme and do not want the Council to offer them temporary accommodation.
- 3.5 The LGO report highlights that in many areas the Council followed due process. It had created a Housing Plan for the individual and offered temporary accommodation which had been refused and the individual had been placed in temporary relief.

- 3.6 The main area of concerns raised by the LGO was over the submission of evidence to support a decision around the main housing duty. The LGO felt this information had been provided but the Council felt it had shown the necessary financial information required to make a decision fell short of what was required.
- 3.7 The Council eventually closed the case when we felt information had not been provided but the Ombudsman felt we should have completed the assessment and offered the main duty. The Council had a letter on file closing to the case but we could not evidence it was sent which the Ombudsman felt was fault. The Council has accepted fault in the way the case was closed.
- 3.8 As a result of the case, the Ombudsman undertook a wider review into around 16 similar cases we had closed in similar ways. In all but three cases the LGO was satisfied the Council had dealt with these correctly after we had provided them with evidence.
- 3.9 The report does highlight that we could have done more to work with Halton Housing to try and resolve registration on Property Pool Plus and we need to review and make sure of our record keeping around closure of cases.
- 3.10 As part of this the Service are currently undertaking a review of
- how they ensure they give written decisions about whether it owes a main housing duty
 - how they ensure applicants can access the Property Pool Plus scheme and its support for vulnerable users.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Service is undertaking a review of specific areas to see if any changes or improvements are needed.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report sets out a compensation payment which the Council has paid.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence.**

None.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy.

None.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families.

None.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need.

None.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future.

None.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community.

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Service reviews are taking place to highlight if any changes in practice are required.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 None, under the meaning of the Act.