



Audit Committee
22 September 2016

**Report from the Strategic Director –
Community Wellbeing**

For Action

Wards affected:
All wards

**Local Government Ombudsman's investigation into a
complaint against London Borough of Brent -Ref 14019 234**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1** This report relates to the Housing Needs Service's and Brent Housing Partnership's handling of a BHP tenant's request for urgent rehousing due to domestic violence. Ealing further delayed in processing the case when it was referred to them.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** That the Committee note the decision of the Local Government Ombudsman.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1** The Local Government Ombudsman issued the enclosed joint report against the London Boroughs of Brent and Ealing on 8 August 2016. The report relates to the Housing Needs Service's and Brent Housing Partnership's handling of a BHP tenant's request for urgent rehousing due to domestic violence. Ealing further delayed in processing the case when it was referred to them.
- 3.2** The complaint was initially investigated within the Council's complaints procedure. The Council's final review response to the complaint, in July 2015, accepted that there had been fault that caused injustice to the complainant, apologised to her, awarded her compensation, and outlined a number of service improvement measures that would be implemented to prevent a similar

situation recurring. Nevertheless, the Local Government Ombudsman decided to issue a report when the complainant referred the complaint to them.

- 3.3 The Local Government Ombudsman's covering letter with the report, dated 8 August 2016, made a number of significant points. Dr Jane Martin, the Local Government Ombudsman, said in this letter:
- 3.4 'I agree we have seen no evidence of a systemic failure to provide housing advice and services to victims of domestic violence.'
- 3.5 'I also accept we made no criticism of the Council's investigation of Ms X's complaint.'
- 3.6 Dr Martin therefore justified the issuing of the report for this reason: 'there is a wider public interest in publishing a report because this case highlights the importance of effective partnership working between councils when they are dealing with a vulnerable person.'

The report outlined a number of recommendations, outlined in the final sections (75-77) which the Housing Needs Service is implementing.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 None.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 None.

Background Papers

Local Government Ombudsman decision notice

Contact Officers

Further background information can be obtained from Martin Stollery, Principal Complaints Service Officer

Tel: 020 8937 1029 or 020 8937 2444

Email: martin.stollery@brent.gov.uk or complaints.service@brent.gov.uk

Phil Porter
Strategic Director - Community Wellbeing