

Title of Report: Ombudsman (NI) Act 2016	Officer Presenting: Lead Legal Services Officer Author: Lead Legal Services Officer
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 Is to advise Members of correspondence received from the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman in relation to new powers under the Ombudsman (NI) Act 2016 (the 2016 Act).
- 1.2 It is recommended that Members note the correspondence attached at Appendix 1.

2 Background

- 2.1 The 2016 Act provided for significant changes to the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman who is, inter alia responsible for investigating complaints made against Local Authorities.
- 2.2 Correspondence has been received dated 21st December 2017 from the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman detailing additional powers which the Ombudsman has and which will come into effect from 1st April 2018.
- 2.3 The correspondence is at Appendix 1.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The correspondence outlines the following powers which the Ombudsman will have from 1st April 2018.
 1. Publishing Investigation Reports in the public interest. From 1st April 2018 the Ombudsman will have the power to publish investigation reports. This will be done where the Ombudsman deems that it will be in the public interest.
 2. Own Initiative Investigations. The Ombudsman will have the power to undertake investigations even where no complaint has been received where it believes such an investigation is merited. Criteria to be used in determining whether or not to commence an own initiative investigation are to be published.
 3. Improving complaints handling. The Ombudsman will be engaging with public bodies with a view to developing a common set of complaints handling principles and a model complaints handling procedure.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement and other Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial, equality, legal, HR, Improvement and other implications arising from this report.

5 Recommendations

5.1 It is recommended that Members note the correspondence attached at Appendix 1.

Background Papers