

PART A

AGENDA

ITEM **4**

Report to: Audit Committee  
Date of Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> March 2007  
Report of: Head of legal and Democratic Services  
Title: Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

---

1. **SUMMARY**

This is the quarterly report of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

From 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006 the Council received 12 requests of which 9 were replied to in the required time and 1 the time limit had not expired by the end of the quarter, however it was responded to within the statutory time limit. A list of the requests is attached at appendix 1 for information

Of those not replied to within the time, one subsequently received a response the other request was too vague for the Council to determine what information was wanted and the requester did not respond to a request for clarification.

The reason for not replying in time is set out below.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To note the contents of this report.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Carol Chen  
telephone extension: 8350 e-mail: carol.chen@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by Managing Director

**3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 came fully into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005. As a public authority we are obliged to answer written requests for information under the Act within 20 working days.
- 3.2 Functions Committee asked for quarterly reports to assess the impact of the Act and the types of requests received. This now falls within the remit of this Committee.
- 3.3 In the period 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006 the Council recorded receiving 12 requests for information under the Act.
- 3.4 The requests have been varied although and do not yet show any pattern of requests for information about any particular Council service or function, although requests about Council contracts, and the parking service is a feature that has been in every quarter. Appendix 1 gives a brief summary of each request.
- 3.5 Of those requests not responded to within the time, the reasons for missing the deadline were as follows:  
1050720 Was initially allocated to the wrong service (legal and democratic) to reply to, and there were delays in passing to the correct service due to workload issues a response has been sent.  
1053019 The request was for all building control notices issued. There was no time period or specification of properties in the request so clarification was sought of the requester as it was likely that the request would have exceeded the statutory fee limit for responding (£450). The requestor never responded to the request for clarification and the matter was closed.

**4.0 IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1 Financial**

The Head of Finance comments that this report indicates that information is found using existing staff resources. If, in the future, the requests increase in number and/or complexity then it may become necessary to review this situation.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services comments that ongoing training will be provided across the council to ensure officers are aware of the Council's responsibilities under the Act

4.3 Staffing

Requests are currently being managed within existing resources

4.4 Accommodation

No implications

4.5 Equalities

No implications

4.6 Community Safety

No implications

4.7 Sustainability

No implications

4.8 Risk Management

The Council's complaints officer monitors responses to requests under the Act. Each service has an officer who has the responsibility of administering request in their service. Lagan is used to keep a record of requests to ensure time limits are met.

The intranet has FAQ's about the Act and it is included in officer induction.

Appendix 1

Summary of FOI requests October - December 2006

Background papers:

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of background papers please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

File:

Freedom of Information response file.