

PART A

Report to: Audit Committee
Date of Meeting 10 December 2014
Report of: Head of Democracy and Governance
Title: Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

1. **SUMMARY**

This is a half year report of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

From 1 April to 30 September 2014 the Council received 202 requests of which at least 45 were replied to outside of the required time. A list of the requests is attached at appendix 1

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 1st January 2005. As a public authority we are obliged to answer written requests for information under the Act within 20 working days
- 3.2 This report covers the periods 1 April to 30 September 2014.
- 3.3 In this period the Council recorded receiving 202 requests for information under the Act of those at least 45 were replied to outside of the statutory 20 working days.
- 3.4 The requests have been varied. Appendix 1 gives a brief summary of each request.
- 3.5 Unfortunately since the end of May 2014 the Council's CSM system Lagan which is used by services to log all FOI requests and under which the Customer Services Team Leader can run off reports has not been working and it has not been possible to log any of the requests on Lagan. The information in the appendix has therefore been compiled by the Customer Services Team Leader contacting services Customer Liaison Officers directly. The information is therefore not complete in some areas. Customer Services are working with Capita to try to resolve the issue with Lagan. This has also meant that the Mayor and the Managing Director have not been able to receive their weekly list of all new FOI requests received.
- 3.6 Members will also see in the appendix that the service area where the vast majority of FOI requests have not been replied to within the statutory time period is Revenues and Benefits.
- 3.7 The Customer Service Centre Team Leaders continue to emphasise to departments the need to respond to requests within the statutory time frame. Human Resources have developed an E-Learning module on Freedom of Information which is available for staff.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

The Shared Director 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 Democracy and Governance comments that ongoing training continues to 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

Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Request not replied to within statutory time limit	2	2	4
Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.			

Appendix

Appendix 1

Summary of FOI requests April to September 2014

Background papers:

None