

PART A

Report to: Audit Committee
Date of Meeting 27 June 2012
Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services
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 October 2011 until 31 March 2012 the Council received 175 requests all but 33 of which were replied to in the required time. A list of the requests is attached at appendices 1 and 2 for information

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 October 2011 until 31 March 2012.
- 3.3 In this period the Council recorded receiving 175 requests for information under the Act all but 33 were replied to within the statutory 20 working days.
- 3.4 The requests have been varied. Appendices 1 and 2 give a brief summary of each request.
- 3.5 Unfortunately as with my previous report there are a number of requests that have not been replied to within the ambit of Revenues and Benefits. This has primarily been due to pressure on the service to reduce the backlog of claims as a result of implementing the new computer system, and staff who previously dealt with FOI requests leaving the Council's employment.
- 3.6 The Customer Service Improvement Officer continues to emphasise to departments the need to respond to requests within the statutory time frame. The Head of Legal and Property Services is continuing with her quarterly lunch and learn sessions on the Act to provide a refresher and they are proving very popular.
- 3.7 The Mayor and Managing Director continue to receive a weekly list of all new FOI requests that are received.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Financial

The Head of Strategic 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 & Property 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

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 1 – Summary of FOI requests October to December 2011

Appendix 2 – Summary of FOI requests January to March 2012

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.

Lagan database