

Part A

**Report to:** Audit Committee

**Date of meeting:** Wednesday, 25 November 2020

**Report author:** Group Head of Democracy and Governance

**Title:** Freedom of Information Act Requests April to September 2020

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 This is the half yearly report of Freedom of Information Act requests received between 1 April and 30 September 2020.

## 2.0 Risks

2.1

<b>Nature of risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested Control Measures</b>	<b>Response</b> (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	<b>Risk Rating</b> (combination of severity and likelihood)
Requests are not regularly responded to	Complaint by requestors and investigation and potential sanction by the Information Commissioner	CLO's diarise response times and chase responders. Heads and Group Heads get regular updates	treat	4

## 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That the report is noted.

### **Further information:**

Carol Chen

carol.chen@watford.gov.uk

Tel: 01923 278350

## 4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 Since January 2005 when the Freedom of Information Act 2000 came fully into force the council has been obliged to respond to requests for information. These requests should be responded to within 20 working days of receipt. The Act and public bodies' compliance is overseen by the Information Commissioner who can

investigate complaints and can compel disclosure of information as well as impose fines for failure to meet deadlines.

4.2 This committee receives half yearly reports on the council's performance in replying to such requests.

4.3 For the period 1 April 2020 to 31 September 2020 the council received 372 requests, some 33 more than in the previous half year. Of those 62 were responded to outside the 20 working days and 6 were not responded to at all.

4.4 There is an improvement in the number of requests not replied to since the last half year when 29 were not replied to at all. Members will recall that the majority of non-replied to requests was in Revenues and Benefits where the officer dealing with them had left. An officer has now been tasked in Revenues and Benefits to deal with requests and is working on the backlog. In addition Group and Executive Heads have, since October, been given fortnightly details of requests received for their area to enable them to monitor response times. The requests received are attached as Appendix 1 and, as usual, are wide ranging and varied.

## 5.0 **Implications**

### 5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications. Services deal with FOI requests from existing resources.

### 5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

### 5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Information is suitably redacted if it contains personal information.

### 5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 FOI's are responded to within services

### 5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 N/A

### 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 N/A

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 N/A

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 FOI requests April – September 2020

### **Background papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.