

PART A

Report to: Audit Committee

Date of Meeting: 10 January 2013

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 April until 30 September 2012 the Council received 195 requests all but 27 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.

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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 2012 until 30 September 2012.
- 3.3 In this period the Council recorded receiving 195 requests for information under the Act all but 27 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.
- 3.8 When this committee received the last half yearly report in June 2012 members asked for benchmarking data to see how Watford compared with other Hertfordshire districts in responding to requests. Unfortunately despite reminders officers have been unable to get any data. St Albans City and District Council were collating benchmarking information, but they have not supplied any to us for some considerable time.

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 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.			

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of FOI requests April to June 2012

Appendix 2 – Summary of FOI requests July to September 2012

Background papers:

None