

Part A

Report to: Audit Committee

Date of meeting: Thursday, 23 November 2023

Report author: Group Head of Democracy and Governance

Title: Freedom of Information Act Requests 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023

1.0 Summary

1.1 This is the half yearly report of Freedom of Information Act requests received between 1 April 2023 and 30 September 2023.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Requests are not regularly responded to.	Complaints by requesters and investigation and potential sanction by the Information Commissioner.	CLO's and the CSC diarise times and chase responders.	Treat	4

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That the report be 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 with it, is overseen by the Information Commissioner who can investigate complaints and can compel the 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 2023 to 30 September 2023 the council received 339 requests of which 274 were replied to on time 82.03%. For the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 the council received 275 requests and 264 were replied to on time. Whilst we have had 65 more requests our response rate has dipped.

4.4 All FOI requests are now logged on Firmstep and are able to be viewed on the Qlik system. Appendix 1 details the requests.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Chief Finance Officer comments that that there are no financial implications. Service requests are dealt with 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.

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

5.3.1 Information is redacted if it contains personal information.

5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 Replies are dealt with within services. The customer service centre managers oversee the process via the Firmstep platform.

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 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.