

PART A

Report to: Audit Committee
Date of Meeting 26 June 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 October 2012 until 31 March 2013 the Council received 196 requests all but 49 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 2012 until 31 March 2013.

- 3.3 In this period the Council recorded receiving 196 requests for information under the Act all but 49 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. Particularly during the January to March period 2013 the council received a number of requests relating to Farm Terrace Allotments and also to the changes to benefits.
- 3.5 There has been a large number of requests responded to within the ambit of Revenues and Benefits since the last report which has cleared a back log that have been out standing for some months. There are still 6 requests outstanding, as at the time of writing but it is hoped they too will have been answered by the date of the Committee. There are also a number of requests that have not been replied to that are IT related.
- 3.6 The Customer Service Improvement Officer continues to emphasise to departments the need to respond to requests within the statutory time frame. Human Resources are developing an E-Learning module on Freedom of Information which is hoped will be available for staff shortly.
- 3.7 The Mayor and Managing Director continue to receive a weekly list of all new FOI requests that are received.
- 3.8 Officers have still not received any benchmarking data as requested by the Committee last June.

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.			

Appendix 1
Summary of FOI requests October to December 2012

Appendix 2
Summary of FOI requests January to March 2013

Background papers:

None