

Report to: Audit Committee

Date of Meeting 30 June 2011

Report of: Head of Legal and Property Services

Title: Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

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## 1. SUMMARY

This is a half year report of requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 the Council received 184 requests all but 26 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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<sup>st</sup> October 2010 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

- 3.3 In this period the Council recorded receiving 184 requests for information under the Act all but 26 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 We received the most ever requests in the period January to March 2011, with a total of 107 requests, the majority coming in via e-mail. We have had a number seeking information about people who have died without next of kin, where we have had to deal with their burial, the answer to date being we have not had any. We have also had a number of requests relating to issue of personal search fees and correspondence with the LGA on the subject and a number of requests generated by one individual over a planning matter.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 The Mayor and Managing Director now 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

4.5 Community Safety

No implications

4.6 Sustainability

No implications

**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 - December 2010

Appendix 2

Summary of FOI requests January - March 2011

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