



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION - ANNUAL REPORT 2013

SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides members with a summary report on requests for information received in 2013 under the Freedom of Information Act.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the report.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Audit and Accounts Committee is responsible for providing assurance to the Council on the effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 As part of the quarterly Governance Update report, Members have received statistics regarding the Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by the Council. It was agreed at the meeting on 1 December 2011, that an annual report would be brought to Members. The Head of Governance and Assurance's full report is attached at Appendix 2.
- 4.2 The Council received 1209 requests under the Freedom of Information Act during 2012. FOI requests totalled 946 and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests totalled 263. Of the 1,209 requests, 932 (77.1%) were completed in full, with a further 48 (4%) still in progress as at 31 December 2012. The Council refused 229 requests (18.9%) because it was able to either
- Apply an exemption under the Act;
 - The Council did not hold the information; or
 - The request would take longer than the "appropriate limit" (18 hours) to complete.

Note: The report in Appendix 2 provides more detail on the exemptions applied.

The number of requests withdrawn by the applicant in the year was 36 (2.9%), while 6 requests were transferred to other local authorities.

- 4.3 The Council received 286 more requests (30.9% increase) in 2013 than it received in 2012. Table 1 below shows the number of FOI/EIR requests received since the Act came into force.

Table 1: Number of FOI/EIR Requests Received by Calendar Year

Year	Number of FOI/EIR Requests
Jan - Dec 05	183
Jan - Dec 06	239
Jan - Dec 07	250
Jan - Dec 08	358
Jan - Dec 09	581
Jan - Dec 10	685
Jan - Dec 11	913
Jan - Dec 12	923
Jan - Dec 13	1,209

- 4.4 The majority of the requests (68%) were received by 2 directorates – Resources (37%) and Neighbourhoods (31%). The average number of days taken to complete a request was 8.35 days. The report gives a breakdown of the average number of days taken by each directorate to complete a request.
- 4.5 The Act allows for an applicant to lodge an appeal against a refusal to provide information. In 2013 the Council received 8 appeals. These were all thoroughly investigated by the Appeals Officer and 3 appeals were upheld.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 None.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer	n/a
Financial officer	n/a
Human Resources officer	n/a
Estates/Property officer	n/a
Service Director(s)	n/a
Other(s)	n/a

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – FOI Annual Report 2013

IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

1.1 None directly arising.

Legal

2.1 None directly arising.

Personnel

3.1 None directly arising.

Equalities Impact

4.1 None directly arising.

Health and Safety

5.1 None directly arising.

Environmental Sustainability

6.1 None directly arising.

Asset Management

7.1 None directly arising.

Risk Management

8.1 Sound risk management practices are a key principle of good governance.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

9.1 The governance framework includes arrangements to plan and monitor delivery of the Council's priorities.