

Wolverhampton City Council

OPEN INFORMATION ITEM

CONFIDENT CAPABLE COUNCIL **SCRUTINY PANEL**

Date 18 JULY 2013

Originating Service Group(s)	OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Contact Officer(s)/ Telephone Number(s)	Charlotte Johns 4240
Title/Subject Matter	Information Requests and Complaints Report 2012-13

1.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To comment on the report and note the plans in place to ensure the Council handles both complaints and requests for information in an effective and efficient manner.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To present to Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel information relating to Freedom of Information requests and corporate complaints for 2012-13, and improvement plans for 2013-14.

3.0 Freedom of Information Requests

- 3.1 Public authorities are required to respond to requests for information under two legislative frameworks. Firstly the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) covering non-environmental information, and secondly the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) covering environmental information.
- 3.2 803 FOI requests were received between April 2012 and March 2013. 799 were completed in the same period. Of these requests, a total of 458 (57%) have been responded to in accordance with the response time of 20 days. (Because of this timescale some of the responses will have been completed after March 2013).

A total of 799 FOI requests were responded to between April 2012 and March 2013. This figure includes the processing of 98 requests received prior to April 2012 in addition to 701 of the 803 received in 2012-13.

- 3.4 In undertaking the statutory duties linked to FOI requests, in addition to those resulting from the broader openness and transparency agenda, the council has no control over the number or scope of requests. What is evident is that whilst there are peaks and troughs the general trajectory is upward with a response rate at 57% in 2012/13, compared to 55% in 2011/12. (897 received, 494 responded to in time).

- 3.5 There has been action taken in order to improve the unacceptable FOI performance, including:

- Resources re-prioritised to address FOIs, including additional FOI co-ordinator support in the Delivery directorate.
- Restructure of the Policy Team has enabled a re-prioritisation of resources to provide support to the wider information governance function.
- A systems thinking review of the process has been undertaken, to create a more efficient process.
- Implementation of an improved database, and currently testing a new system to help better track FOI requests across the authority. This will also enable improved performance reporting.

- 3.6 As a result, performance in Quarter 1 of 2013-14 has shown an improvement. Average response time is now around 15 working days. Since 1 April 2013, the Council has received 265 FOI requests. 174 have been responded to 'in time' (65.7%) and another 52 are still being responded to and are within time (19.6%). Therefore the current compliance rate is at 85.3%. There is still scope for improvement though, with 34 FOI requests in breach (12.8%) and 5 in breach and still yet to respond (1.9%).

3.7 Further performance information is available in Appendix 1.

4.0 Complaints

4.1 The complaints information covers the period September 2012 to March 2013. Prior to September 2012 complaints were not monitored, however since then a new complaints database was created which allows the relevant information to be captured by the Corporate Complaints Team. The information will be used to monitor the delivery of services as well as shape Council services. Quarterly reports will be published from the end of July 2013. Future complaint reports will include:

- Number of complaints received for each Team/Service Area/Directorate/Ward
- Nature of complaints for each Team/Service Area/Team/Directorate/Ward
- Number of complaints upheld for each Team/Service area/Directorate/Ward
- Trends and concerns will be highlighted
- Policy and or procedural changes as a result of complaints (“You Said We Did” section on website)
- Learning from complaints will be highlighted
- Number of Ombudsman enquiries received for each service area
- Outcome of Ombudsman enquiries and learning points
- Number of compliments received and will highlight good practice leading to a policy or procedural change
- Equality data will be included

4.2 115 corporate complaints were received between September 2012 and March 2013. The timescale for responding to complaints was 28 calendar days.

4.3 Since September 2013, there has also been a review of the complaints procedure. Following this the timescale for responding to complaints has been reduced to 21 calendar days with effect from 1 May 2013. New performance measures are in place which sets a target of 95% of responses made within the 21 day timescale.

4.4 On 1 April 2013 the Corporate Complaints Team moved to the Customer Services Team in the Delivery Directorate. Performance figures for April 2013 show a 94% response rate and May 2013 has produced a response rate of 95%.

4.5 Further performance information is available in Appendix 2.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report. [GE/09072013/U]

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Responding to Freedom of Information requests has a statutory timescale of 20 working days. Failure to meet this could result in enforcement action by the Information Commissioner. [FD/09082013/L]

7.0 Environmental Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct environmental implications contained in this report

8.0 Equalities Implications

- 8.1 The Freedom of Information regime and the Complaints procedure provides open access to information held and services provided by the council to all who chose to exercise their right. As a council we must ensure that we apply our processes fairly to ensure that everyone has equal access.
- 8.2 Wherever possible performance will be disaggregated to report on equalities data to ensure that monitoring picks up any trends and action can be taken to address them.

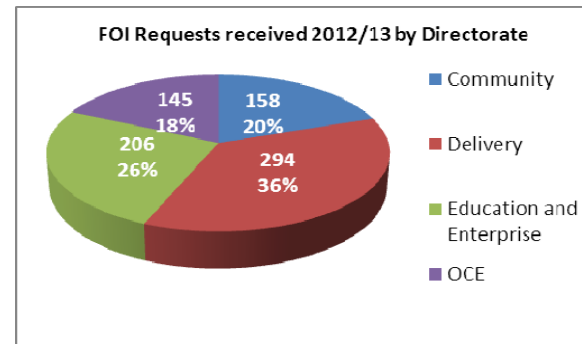
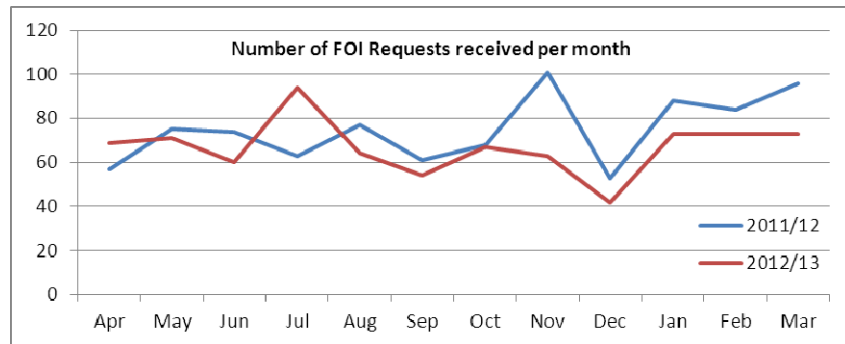
Appendix 1 - Freedom of Information

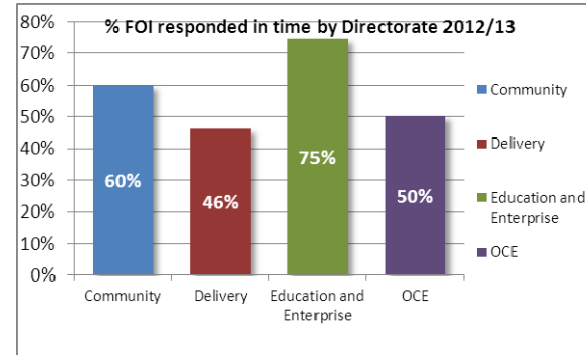
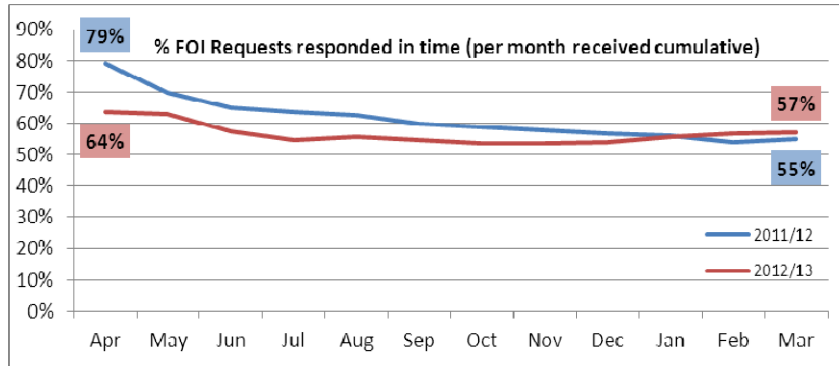
Table 1 and 2 will not be in sync with the figures as it depends on when the Freedom of Information requests was received this will calculate the deadline from the receipt date. For example if a request was received end of April the deadline will be in towards end of May.

The Freedom of Information requests over all have been achievable and deliverable within ICO guidelines. Over the new financial year there will be new changes which help directorate to achieve deadlines within a given time frame.

Freedom of information requests received 2012/13

	Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13
Received	69	71	60	94	64	54	67	63	42	73	73	73
Responded in time	45	47	42	37	46	26	36	53	24	45	32	61
% Responded in time	64%	62%	45%	49%	59%	50%	46%	54%	60%	68%	64%	62%
% Responded in time YTD	64%	63%	58%	55%	56%	55%	54%	54%	54%	56%	57%	57%





Appendix 2 – Complaints

Table 1												
Number of corporate complaints received												
Apr-12	May-12	Jun-12	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Total
					23	16	28	7	14	17	10	115

