

Agenda item:



Walsall Council

Standards Committee

6 April 2009

Response from the Ministry of Justice – Freedom of Information Act, 2000

Summary of Report

This report advises the Committee of the response received from the Ministry of Justice relating to the Freedom of Information Act, following the letter sent after the October 2008 Standards Committee meeting.

A copy of letter sent to the Ministry of Justice is attached as Appendix 1 and the copy of their response is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Recommendations

- (1) That the content of the report be noted;

Resource Considerations:

Financial:

None arising from this report

Legal:

None arising from this report

Staffing:

None arising from this report

Citizen Impact:

None arising from this report

Community Safety:

None arising from this report

Environmental:

None arising from this report

Performance and Risk Management:**Risk:**

None arising from this report

Performance Management:

None arising from this report

Equality Implications:

This report complies fully with the Council's policies on equality and diversity

Consultation:

None arising from this report

Background papers

All published

Signed:

Assistant Director of Legal and Constitutional Services

Date: 17 March 2009

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Background

At the Standards Committee meeting on 30 October 2008, the Committee received a report on the Freedom of Information Act which detailed a review of activity relating to the Act during the financial year 2007/08.

The review indicated that the number of requests for information made during this period had increased by around 25%, which was seen as an ongoing trend. The report also indicated that the complexity of requests was increasing partly due to the use of the Act by journalists from the national/local/trade press.

Following a full discussion, the Committee resolved that a "letter be sent to central government asking for a change in the law so that fixed charges may be put against information requests which were to be used for commercial gain". This was sent to the Director General and Chief Legal Advisor on 23 December 2008 and is attached as Appendix 1.

On 26 January 2009 a letter was received in response from the Head of Information Policy Decision. This is attached as Appendix 2.