

# Executive Scrutiny Committee

## “Reporting In” Review – Freedom of Information Requests

### Outline Scope

<b>Scrutiny Chair:</b> Councillor David Harrington
<b>Responsible Officer:</b> Lesley King / Kate Fulton
<b>Scrutiny Link Officer:</b> Judy Trainer
<b>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b>  Council Plan Objectives – <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuing to ensure we have strong corporate and ethical governance</li></ul>
<b>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</b>  Aim To provide members with an understanding of the requirements of Freedom of Information legislation, how the council currently manages FOI Requests, what potential and scope there is within the legislation that might better support our approach, share good practice examples and to consider recommendations for improvements to the way in which we manage requests.  Key issues : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volumes</li><li>• Complexity of requests</li><li>• Links to Media Enquiries.</li></ul> There are links with Freedom of Information to the open government/ transparency agenda. The review will highlight the links and potential impact on volumes/ processes.
<b>What are the key lines of enquiry:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appropriate interpretation and use of the legislation to manage demand.</li><li>• Use of the exemptions, best practice with respect to use of exemptions.</li><li>• Volumes and Officer time spent on collating and responding to FOI's.</li><li>• Processes to record and respond to FOI.</li><li>• Publication and transparency</li><li>• Whether any records management learning opportunities can be gained which lead to further efficiencies.</li><li>• Whether learning opportunities are being sought as a result of the information gathered to respond to the initial requests</li><li>• Practice elsewhere</li></ul>
<b>Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?</b> Central government , Cabinet, Council Services

**Expected duration of review and key milestones:**

Scope – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
Baseline – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
Options and Recommendations – 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2015  
Cabinet – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

**What information do we need?**

**(Background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):**

- FOI Legislation
- Transparency Regulations
- Information Commissioner Advice and Guidance
- Volumes and response timescales.
- FOI Management Information
- Process flowchart
- Benchmarking, practice in other Local Authorities; good practice examples.
- Central Government review

**How will this information be gathered? (eg. Financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)**

Desktop Analysis, benchmarking.

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:**

- Effective use of exemptions
- Recommendations to the Parliamentary committee reviewing the legislation
- Publication of information
- Standardised approach
- Managing demand.