

For information

Freedom of Information Annual Report 2016-17

Agenda: 24
HEFCW/17/61

Disclosable

13/07/2017

1 Issue

- 1.1 The Freedom of Information (FoI) Act 2000 gives the public a right of entitlement to information held by HEFCW. This paper provides a report on the number of requests received by HEFCW under the FoI Act for the financial year (FY) 2016-17.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 This report is received annually by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and by the Council.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 To note the number of requests for information under the FoI Act received during FY 2016-17.

4 Timing for decisions

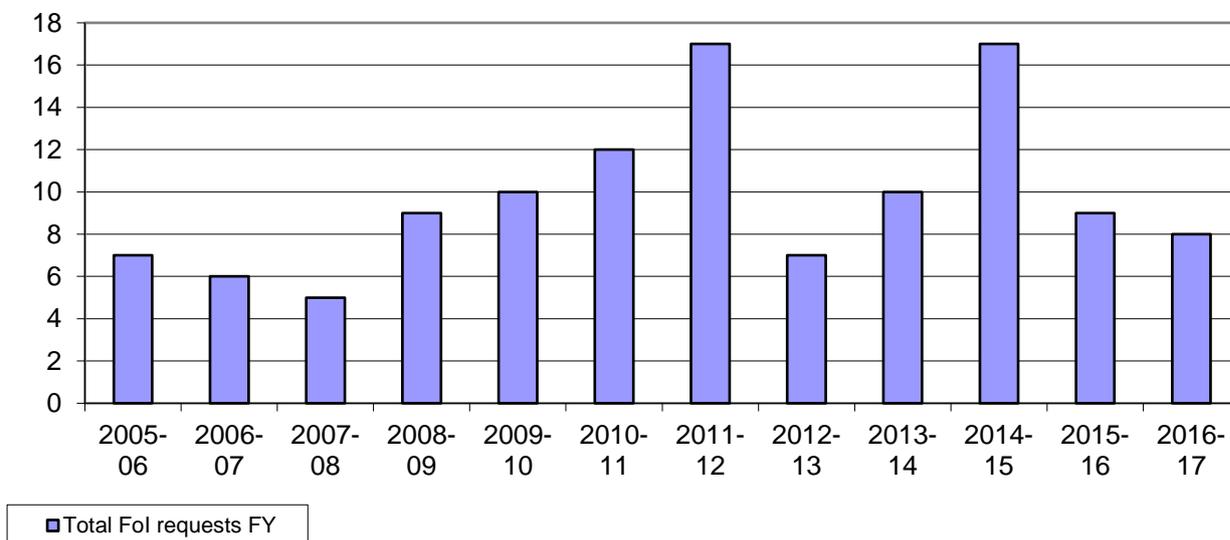
- 4.1 No decisions required. This is an annual report provided for information to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and to the Council.

5 Further information

- 5.1 Contact: Dale Hall (029 2085 9665; dale.hall@hefcw.ac.uk)

6 Requests received under the Freedom of Information Act in FY 2016-17

6.1 To date HEFCW has received a relatively small number of FoI requests each year. The number of requests received since 2005-6 has fluctuated annually but has remained at under 20 requests per year. In FY 2016-17, the total number of FoI requests received was 8.



6.2 The source of the requests received in FY 2016-17 were as follows:

- four individual enquirers/researchers;
- one special interest group;
- one press/media outlet;
- one Assembly Member; and
- one Assembly Member support staff.

For seven of the FoI requests received, the information sought was provided in full; provided in part where some of the information sought was not held by HEFCW; or a nil response was given to the specific questions being asked. For one request, the information sought was not provided as it was judged to be exempt under Section 43(2) (Commercial interests) and Section 36(2) (Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

7 Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this paper.

8 Communications implications

8.1 Transparency in communicating HEFCW's work should help to reduce the number of FoI requests received. In accordance with our Publication Scheme, we proactively publish information on our website. This includes circulars; information about HEFCW policy priorities; and disclosable Council agendas and papers from 2005 to date. We have transferred to The National Archives all Council papers for the period 1992 to 2002 inclusive, which therefore places these papers in the public domain.

8.2 A *Handling of Freedom of Information Requests* protocol is in place between HEFCW and the Welsh Government’s Higher Education Division, intended to ensure efficient and effective communication in dealing with Fol requests and to enable both parties to come to a common understanding of the information to be released.

9 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

9.1 This paper has no specific implications for age, disability, gender, race, religious belief, or sexual orientation. Fol requests received through the medium of Welsh are responded to in Welsh, though none such were received in FY 2016-17.

10 Risk Assessment

Risk	Action to address risk
<p>Legal action taken by the requestor under the Fol Act for failure by the Council to respond to, or appropriately deal with, requests for information under the Fol Act.</p>	<p>Requests received and co-ordinated by the Council Secretary, who manages the responses and maintains a log of requests received.</p> <p>When information requested is refused there is a process in place whereby applicants may apply for a review of the decision, in which instance the review is carried out by a senior officer independently of those HEFCW staff who dealt with the original request. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the final outcome of HEFCWs’ internal review they can appeal to the Information Commissioner.</p>
<p>Resource implications of a request for a large volume of information held by the Council</p>	<p>Requests discussed with information holder at earliest possible stage to determine volume. Information requests can be refused if the estimated cost of responding would exceed the appropriate limit under Fol of £450.</p>