FOI COMPLAINTS PROJECT BOARD
TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2010

Attendees: Chris Graham (CG), Graham Smith (GS), Simon Entwisle (SE), Steve Wood (SW), Andy Laing (AL), Louise Mottershead - minutes (LM)

ACTION POINTS

1 Terms of Reference were agreed as “To identify and oversee the implementation of improvements to the FOI complaints handling process”.

2 Complaints handling process to be divided into four main groups:

First Contact – Group 1
Information Gathering – Group 2
Investigation and Decision Notice – Group 3
Enforcement, Case Review and Tribunal – Group 4

Group 1
Lead member - Andy Laing
Support – Paul Arnold

Group 2
Lead member - Andy Laing
Support – Graham Smith

Group 3
Lead member – Graham Smith
Support – Andy Laing

Group 4
Lead member – Steve Wood
Support – to be identified

3 Lead member of each group to identify participants in January and to arrange schedule of meetings (action – AL, GS and SW).
4 Topics to be pursued further in the various groups include:

- Aim to close cases with six months of receipt (KPI 90%)
- We must be tougher with public authorities around their obligations
- We should encourage informal resolution between the parties
- We give Public Authorities one more chance to explain the situation to the complainant
- We should operate the Right First Time policy and enforce its application appropriately
- We should make simpler our view of vexatious and frivolous complaints
- We should make clear to public authorities our expectations of them
- We should consider the audience when writing our Decision Notices
- We should aim for plain English, particularly when referencing the law in our Decision Notices
- We should share our lines to take when asking for more argument in the information gathering stages – revised guidance will help.
- We have more emphasis on how to avoid the situation from happening again, through feedback
- We should move away from “partially upheld” as an outcome – explicitly either agree with the actions of the Public Authority or not
- We should move away from being “unconvinced” by argument – this invites further submissions from the public authority. Better to express a view based on the limited information provided.
- We should ensure we continue to manage consistency and quality of FOI casework outputs

5 Project milestones to be agreed (action – AL and GS).

6 ICON link to FOI Complaints Project to be created and introductory information posted on ICON main page (action - AL)

7 Action points from each meeting to be posted onto FOI Complaints Project page (action – LM).
8 Project Board to be in existence for approximately six months. Meetings scheduled after June 2011 to be cancelled (action – LM).

9 CG to attend January Signatory Board and meetings thereafter if required (action – LM).

10 Investigate prioritisation of training needs post PDR Process in light of the FOI agenda (action – CG).

Date of next meeting: Monday 10 January 2011 at 1530hrs