



Norfolk County Council

at your service

Thursday 12 August 2010

Dear Ms Sykes

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, we have now processed your request.

Figures relating to overdue charges (fines) going back beyond April 2007 are archived and will take much longer for us to access. We have supplied figures from April 2007 to the end of 2009 in the first instance. If these meet the requirements and you are satisfied that these are the type of figures you need then we will go back into the archived files and answer the questions for the earlier period in line with our answers to questions 1-3 below.

1 Please advise number of library fines imposed period 2005-2009.

Answer - The number of overdue charges (fines) imposed from 6/4/07 to 31/12/09 was 1,887,451. Please note this is the total number of overdue charges imposed during this time period and does not indicate the number of loans that have incurred an overdue charge. One item on loan to one customer can incur more than one charge. If an item is overdue but then renewed rather than returned and then becomes overdue again and then returned, it will incur 2 separate overdue charges

2. Number paid -

Answer – We are not able to run a report specifically on the overdue charges issued from 6/4/07 to 31/12/09. The only way we could obtain this information would be to go through each of the 1,887,451 records manually, a task that would greatly exceed the ‘appropriate limit’ of 18 hours of work, as defined by the Freedom of Information & Data Protection (Appropriate Limit & Fees) Regulations 2004

Although we cannot provide this specific information, we can state that in the period from 6/4/07 to 31/12/09 the number of overdue charges paid was 1,367,071. Some of the overdue charges paid in this period may have been imposed prior to 6/4/07.

3. Number unpaid

Answer – We are unable to provide this information within the ‘appropriate limit’ for the same reasons stated in our answer to question 2. As we cannot state how many of the overdue charges imposed between 6/4/07 and 31/12/09 were paid without exceeding the ‘appropriate limit’, we cannot simply deduct that figure

from the total number imposed to state how many were unpaid. Again, the only way we could obtain this information would be to go through each of the 1,887,451 records manually.

Please note, information provided from this point onwards relates to the period 2005-2009.

4. Number of prosecutions

Answer – 32 County court claims have been issued

5. Of the number in 4. Number successful.

Answer – 14 successful. Our Legal Services Department has been minded to treat the determining factor of "successful" as being a judgment that currently has been paid by at least 50% (i.e. it is common for judgments to be paid by instalments).

6. Number unsuccessful.

Answer- This depends again on definition of 'unsuccessful'. Based on the definition used to answer Q5, the answer currently would be 18 although this figure could change if additional payments are made in future.

7. Amount outstanding

Answer – there is £20,054.20 outstanding.

8. Amount recovered through the courts or otherwise

Answer - £3,409.84 has been recovered through the courts
As you can see not many cases get as far as being brought to court and a number of steps are taken before that to recover overdue charges and overdue items. These include letters, phone calls from our stock recovery officer (SRO), and visits from external debt recovery agencies. Our SRO makes over 100 calls a week, and also uses email and texting to remind borrowers to bring items back. In the period from 2005-2009 £460,000 worth of overdue charges and replacement stock has been recovered by the SRO. We cannot differentiate how much of this is overdue charges and how much of it is charges for replacing lost items.

FOI Complaints procedure

You have the right of appeal through the Council's internal complaints procedure by setting out the grounds of your appeal in writing to the Corporate Freedom of Information Officer at: Freedom of Information & Data Protection Unit, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DQ. e-mail: xxx@xxxxxxxx.xxx.xx
Telephone: 01603 222661

If you are dissatisfied after pursuing the complaints procedure, you may apply to the Information Commissioner under Section 50 of the Act for a decision whether your request for information has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of Part I of the Act. Contact details as follows: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. e-mail: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk Telephone 01625 545 745.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Smith
FOI and Data Protection Assistant