

more questions have been asked and this has led to high-profile newspaper stories about senior officials' salaries, councillors' allowances and expensive junkets.

There have been stories about councils hiring magicians to cheer up staff, banning Latin phrases, or paying celebrities to switch on Christmas lights. Underneath the headlines, FOI is being used more quietly, day-to-day, by the public, to find out about things that matter to them: allotments, parking and speed bumps. Businesses are using it to keep ahead of the opposition, and national and local pressure groups are making FOI requests on topics ranging from zoo licences to libraries.

But it is by no means perfect. Some councils are more open and more

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FOI to
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Alamy

The Freedom of Information Act has helped make c