

Corporate Policy Committee – June 2024 Responses to questions raised by Committee Members

Question:

It was confirmed that there had been a gradual increase in the number of EHCPs during Q4. Members requested further detail around the cause of the increase and the direction of travel for Q1 2024-25. Members raised concerns in relation to the performance of EHCPs being completed on time and noted this had significantly reduced during Q4. Officers committed to providing a written response.

Response: A Performance Board that has been set up which the chair and vice chair of the Audit and Governance Committee will sit in.

The DSG management plan monthly updates and briefings are being provided through the members hub and at the Children and Families committee including EHCP numbers and performance.

All data updates will be put on the members hub which should assist with wider scrutiny of the issue.

Question: Members noted that during Q4 the Council had contracted 237 agency workers totalling £3.6m. Members queried the total number of agency staff/consultants employed over the last year and the impact this has had on the budget. Officers committed to providing a written response.

Response: The total spend on agency workers for 2023/24 was £16,023,324. Please note this breakdown is based on the invoices paid each month and may include an element for adjustments from the previous month. The expenditure was made up as follows:

Sum of Amount	Column Labels					
Row Labels	Adults	Childrens	Corporate	Place	Grand Total	
Apr	£191,916	£119,527	£172,552	£6,201	£490,195	
May	£617,674	£511,917	£595,407	£77,573	£1,802,571	
June	£421,896	£388,790	£418,533	£59,980	£1,289,198	
July	£357,949	£295,577	£311,045	£36,950	£1,001,521	
Aug	£626,908	£483,307	£578,202	£75,445	£1,763,862	
Sept	£591,724	£507,616	£500,988	£69,889	£1,670,217	
Oct	£543,597	£413,190	£458,172	£45,655	£1,460,614	
Nov	£480,386	£375,947	£436,007	£64,321	£1,356,661	
Dec	£340,826	£249,994	£339,747	£52,177	£982,743	
Jan	£633,692	£393,928	£577,637	£51,666	£1,656,923	
Feb	£537,678	£342,238	£517,449	£28,853	£1,426,219	
Mar	£448,843	£262,626	£371,547	£39,584	£1,122,599	
Grand Total	£5,793,090	£4,344,655	£5,277,285	£608,294	£16,023,324	

The number of workers fluctuate throughout the year, depending on the needs of the services and the length of individual contracts. The average monthly number of workers for the period was 279; latterly for Q4, this number had reduced to 237.

Question: Members queried the costs of dealing with complaints.

Response: It is difficult to provide an accurate amount in terms of the amount spent on dealing with complaints due to the varying nature of how much input is required for each complaint depending on the complexity of what needs to be investigated.

For example, a SEND Stage 1 response will take longer to formulate than a Waste and Recycling Stage 1 response. For our purposes, we stated that a Stage 1 complaint can take anywhere between 30 minutes to 2 hours on average.

Customer services instead considered an average time taken to resolve complaints at each stage and the likely involvement of levels of staff that would be involved. This meant that the calculation (in officer time only and without any other overheads or rectification costs), it was determined that this costs on average a Stage 1 costing £40 and a Stage 2 costing £71.

Question: Members queried highways related complaints and noted that these were dealt with by Ringway Jacobs.

It was confirmed that not all enquiries to the council were dealt with as formal complaints, and these were often routine 'Service Requests' or 'insurance complaints'.

Officers committed to providing a written response which would include a process chart for highways related enquiries and how these were dealt with.

Officers also agreed to provide a written response in relation to the process for dealing with damage to cars as a result of potholes and the cost implications arising from these claims/the budget this came from.

Response:

1. A response has already been prepared and circulated relating to insurance claims and damage to cars.(attached)



Highway Claims -
Explained.pdf

2. Ringway-Jacobs is the Council's highways service provider. The service is branded as Cheshire East Highways (CEH).
3. Service requests are where customers ask for a service to be provided. Complaints are where a service hasn't been provided or there is perceived to be a problem with service provision.
4. Complaints received by the service are administered by CEH in line with the Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy and procedures.
5. Cheshire East Highways received nearly 40,000 service requests and 301 complaints during the last financial year.

6. The attached Highways Customer Guide provides details of how to contact the service.



Highways Customer
Guide - FINAL.docx

7. Two quick reference guides for the Highways service (one for members and one for customers) are also attached.



Reporting Highways
Matters - Customer.p



Reporting Highways
Matters - Members.p