

Audit and Governance Committee

Written Responses to Questions – July 2024

- a) **Written responses to Member questions raised on 29 July 2024 (Pages 3 - 6)**

OFFICIAL

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Audit and Governance Committee – July 2024

Written responses to questions raised by Committee Members

Question 1:

Members queried the impact of changes to senior leadership in Children and Families on the delivery of the DSG Management Plan. Officers committed to providing a written response.

Response 1:

The Director of Education and senior staff in SEND remain in post.

Meetings are in place with the Chief Executive and Section 115 officer for the continued oversight and scrutiny of the DSG management plan and the Director of Education continues to work with the DFE SEND advisor attached to the Safety Value Programme to ensure there is progress being made against the agreed actions of the plan.

Question 2:

Members requested a response on the impact of academisation on DSG.

Response 2:

The DSG would not be impacted by academisation as there is no difference to the approach we take when issuing EHCP's to academy's or maintained.

Question 3:

The committee asked for consideration to be given to reducing the 20-working day response time for SEND complaints. Officers agreed to share the committees feedback with the relevant HoS for consideration.

Response 3:

The SEND service is working hard to reduce the number of days parents wait for a response. We will ensure that a holding response is given whilst the complexity of the case and complaint is explored to give a robust response. However, a response will always be provided as quickly as possible, within the 20-day timeframe. Complex cases may delay an earlier response.

Question 4:

Members queried the increase of 4% in complaints for waste and recycling and requested a breakdown of this for general waste, recycling, and food waste. Officers committed to providing a written response.

Response 4:

We are unable to provide a breakdown from the complaints data into general, recycling and garden/food waste. This is because the data we capture is not broken down into these categories. We will record a multiple missed bin collection or damage to bin but do not identify the type of bin. However, we can provide such a breakdown from service request data for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 year. These figures represent the valid missed collections for cases that went through from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 for all channels into the contact centre:-

Black household waste bins = 4639

Silver recycling bins = 4629

Garden waste = 4882

Question 5:

Committee members referred to the variances between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 pension liability which had decreased from £84.3m to £13.7m and requested further detail in relation to this. Officers committed to providing a written response.

Response 5:

The figures quoted within this question reference the in-year pension liability movement taken from the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, rather than the pension liability total in each year.

The movements in each year are made up of the **highlighted** figures from note 16c in the draft Statement of Accounts: Pension Reserve –

2022/23 £000	Pensions Reserve	2023/24 £000
(147,712)	Opening Balance at 1st April	(88,910)
351,630	Remeasurement gains / (losses) on pensions assets and liabilities	67,221
(63,825)	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(20,142)
38,291	Employer's pension contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	38,175
(267,294)	Adjustment for Asset Ceiling Calculation 2022/23 (and reversal in 2023/24)	267,294
-	Adjustment for Asset Ceiling Calculation 2023/24	(348,180)
(88,910)	Closing Balance at 31st March	(84,542)

The overall pension liability has only changed from £88.9m in 2022/23 to £84.5m in 2023/24 as highlighted in the narrative statement (page 38 of the Statement of Accounts).

Please note, these figures include the adjustment for the notional asset ceiling calculation.

Further detail on the Pension position, make up of the 'remeasurement of gains/losses', and asset ceiling calculation can be found in note 29 (page 122) of the statements and within the Finance Sub Committee Pension update report on the website - [Library folder - Reports for Noting - Reports for Noting - Finance Sub Committee | Cheshire East Council](#)

Question 6:

Members queried if S106 monies could be transferred to Town and Parish Councils to facilitate works being undertaken when capacity is limited. Offices committed to providing a written response to clarify this matter.

Response 6:

Yes, in some instances where it is considered projects could be delivered more efficiently monies can be transferred to Town or Parish Councils. There are already a small number of live examples of this practice however these are subject to formal funding agreements which subject to value require committee approval and set out the relevant constraints around how the monies can be spent, in line with the original S.106 agreement. The option to transfer funding to local councils remains at the discretion of the relevant senior officer.

Question 7:

Members requested that as much information as possible be shared with Town and Parish Councils in relation to S106/CIL monies to enable them to do more future planning/budgeting. Officers committed to considering this further and how information and advice could be shared.

Response 7:

S.106 training to be offered to local councils post the conclusion of the member training – October onwards.

The relevant ward reports for S.106 allocations will be able to be shared with these organisations, once issued.

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