

Audit and Governance Committee – May 2024

Responses to questions raised by Committee Members

Question: Officers committed to providing a written response with details of key themes arising from exit interviews.

Response: Following a request at Audit and Governance Committee, a headline summary of the key themes and figures of those leaving the organisation is set out below.

Cheshire East Council's exit survey is a non-mandatory survey of leavers. It forms a part of all line manager's responsibility to remind and encourage a leaver to complete the online survey. The survey is accessed via Centranet and consists of multiple-choice and free text questions. It is not possible to break down the reasons for leaving by directorate or service due to the survey being anonymous to encourage completion. The results of exit interviews are shared with directorates on a quarterly basis. Each Head of Service is asked to consider the results of exit interviews when completing their Service Workforce Plans.

Based on data from 01/09-2023-15/03/24, 26% of leavers (50 out of 190) responded to the exit survey, with 90% of these declaring their directorate:

Directorate	% Response
Corporate	14.9%
Place	17.0%
People - Adults, Health and Integration	31.9%
People - Children's services	34.0%
Other (please specify): Communities	2.1%

96% of these (48 out of 50) confirmed their reason for resignation:

Resignation Reason	% Response
Improved pay and conditions	29.2%
Retirement	14.6%
Promotion/Career Opportunities	12.5%
Job nearer to home	12.5%
Personal Circumstances	8.3%
Relocation	6.3%
Change of career	4.2%
End of Employment (End of Fixed Term Contract/Redundancy)	4.2%
Health	4.2%
Leadership/Management	4.2%

90% (45 out of 50) of respondents confirmed what they enjoyed most about working at CEC with an overwhelming key theme:

Enjoyed The Most Working For CEC	% Response
Team	80.00%
Working Conditions	8.89%
Role	6.67%
Leadership	2.22%
Opportunities	2.22%

Question: Members queried the process for Equality Impact Assessments and the robustness of these.

Response: There is supporting documentation and links to training on the Centranet [Complete an Equality Impact Assessment \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](http://cheshireeast.gov.uk) and there has been recent internal communication about [The importance of completing an Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\) \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](http://cheshireeast.gov.uk) and all of our EIA are published on [Equality Analysis Impact Assessments \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](http://cheshireeast.gov.uk).

The points which members have raised will be raised at the next EDI board 25th July. It will be suggested that a number of EIA are reviewed by the Equality Champions and that for some, more complicated EIA, that this becomes a regular approach to ensure that a more diverse group is involved in the assessment.

Officers will link in with the organisational development team and ask that they revisit the idea that the EIA training on learning lounge become mandatory for officers graded HoS and above.

Officers within service areas are responsible for undertaking an initial Equality Impact Assessment when proposing to make a change. They are asked not to work in isolation when assessing the impact of change and to ensure that a group of officer's work together to undertake the initial draft. This first draft is then shared for initial review and for suggestions on how to improve the assessment to be made. The process can take several interactions for the assessment to be deemed of good enough quality to be reviewed by the senior officer for the service, normally the Head of Service.

Each Head of Service is responsible for the Equality Impact Assessment and is required to approve and sign-off the assessment, having been involved in a final review of the EIA prior to final sign-off and publication.

1. Members requested details of how to Pothole Funding had been spent
2. Members asked numerous questions relating to the SEND management plan
3. Members

Question: Members raised a number of questions in relation to the DSG Deficit Management Plan, as set out below. Officer responses are provided in red.

- The balance of EHCPs for both academies and local authority-maintained schools.
 - Academy on average 4.3% of total number on roll have an EHCP (taken from January 24 census data)
 - Maintained on average 4% of total number on roll have an EHCP (taken from January 24 census data)

- Overall number/availability of SEN placements within Cheshire East. – **appendix attached & SEN sufficiency (attached far below).**
- Overall number of out of borough SEN placements and plans to build additional capacity and deliver more in-borough placements – **attachments far below.**
New free special school x 120 place
2 x 60 place special (satellite sites to existing special schools)
1 x 20 place special (satellite sites to existing special schools)
Up to 180 additional places for resource provision or SEN units within mainstream schools
- Number of children in Cheshire East placed in private schools out of borough. **appendix far below provides this information.**
- Cllr Clowes also referred to the formation of the new DSG Management Board and its membership, urging that the terms of reference be shared with the committee – **Appendix to C&F committee report 3/06/23** [Agenda for Children and Families Committee on Monday, 3rd June, 2024, 2.00 pm | Cheshire East Council](#)



SEND Sufficiency
Statement for Children



Appendix 1 -
Performance data of t

Q. Members requested details of how many times the non-compliance process relating to purchase cards was enacted. Officers agreed to provide a written response.

Response: Purchase cardholder compliance is based on cardholders providing a completed monthly return to the Finance within the target of number of working days of the statement being issued for review. As a reminder the current company purchase card process is manual.

Compliance currently relates to whether all transactions are:

- fully coded,
- VAT analysis completed,
- appropriate descriptions added to describe the spend,
- approved by the Line manager/budget holder.

Whilst it is not a specific requirement of the Card Holder Undertaking to provide/submit receipts (see extract from Undertaking below), Ansa's policy is to provide receipts/supporting information to aid accurate completion of VAT treatment.

Extract: "supporting paperwork & receipts must be retained by the Establishment/Service, on a file in a chronological sequence for audit purposes. As a minimum, financial records must be retained for a period of six years prior to the current year".

Whilst some cardholders failed to meet the initial submission deadline during 2023-24, the majority of cardholders provided completed/approved submissions before the end of the month enabling cards to be processed in the ledger in time for monthly reports.

The performance relating to the submission of returns with receipts also provided has been mixed across the 23 Ansa cardholders with the following results:

% of 23/24 returns where Receipts provided at the submission date*	No of Cardholders
100%	7
50% - 99%	7
25% - 49%	4
0% - 24%	5

*Note – card holders are chased for receipts after the initial submission date but recording of receipts provided after the submission date is not currently maintained due to the manual system in place.

Budget holders/managers receive reminders and are cc'd in when cardholders are chased for outstanding information.

- Purchase cards are raised periodically at the Business Manager meetings.
- Provision of supporting information at submission

As mentioned in the Committee meeting, the Companies are moving to the Lloyds Purchase card system in July/August 2024 and this will enable more automated completion of transactions by cardholders (coding, VAT, spend description) and approvers; and also enable management reporting and KPI's straight from a system rather than manual collation enabling timely and prompt action where delays occur.

Question: Members asked for an update on the review and approval of the Wholly Owned Company Shareholder Agreements.

Response: Since the A&G Committee meeting at which this request arose, the Finance Sub Committee taken a decision that the majority of Ansa services be taken in house and Orbitas be dissolved. A briefing on this decision and the reasons behind it has been delivered to A&G by the Director of Governance and Compliance and Hayley Kirkham (one of the officers leading on the company review). This change in circumstances impacts on the amendments that will be needed to the shareholder agreements. Orbitas is being dissolved and the need for an agreement has been superseded. The future of that part of Ansa that remains to yet be decided and if the company remains (in some form) a separate entity then consideration will need to be given to a suitable form of shareholder agreement at that point.