

Overview and Scrutiny

Meeting date: 9th September 2024

Member questions on UBICO Annual Performance Report (Agenda item 7)

1. Question from Councillor Chris Day

The number of recycling container requests in 23/24 is 12,647 which is an increase of 5,472 (76%) on the number reported in the 22/23 presentation to the Committee. This is a huge increase. The presentation also shows that recycling collected excluding food and garden has fallen by an average of 8% (my calculation). It seems odd that a 76% increase in recycling boxes requested has resulted in an 8% drop in recycling. Are my calculations correct and can this apparent anomaly be explained?"

Answer from Ubico:

The recycling figures within the report for 2023/2024 were inclusive of food caddies which appear to have been double counted in error within the report, the correct recycling container delivery figure should be 9,815 delivered.

The borough saw an increase of 140 properties in the fiscal year which equates to approximately 560 recycling receptacles delivered.

Flex collect bags (soft plastics) are now delivered to residents who are participating in the trial and this accounts for 1,073 of the increased receptacles delivered.

Food caddies that were double counted equates to 2,832 receptacles.

Additional and replacement recycling container requests equates to 1,007.

New properties –	560
Flex collect -	1073
Food caddies double counted –	2832
Additional or replacements -	1007
Total	= 5,472

2. Question from Councillor Chris Day

Can you provide a split of the workforce by calendar month for the last 12 months between Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees and temps/contractors. I am only interested in people working on the ground not office/admin staff. For the avoidance of doubt an employee working 4 days a week would score 0.8 and 5 temps doing 1 day a week every week in a month would score 1.0”

Answer from Ubico :

Role performed	Refuse collections	Trade Collections	Civic Amenity Site	Bring bank collections	Recycling collections	Garden waste collections	Food waste collections	Total headcount required
Headcount Required	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	84.6
Headcount used in April	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in May	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in June	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in July	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in August	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in September	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in October	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in November	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in December	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in January	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in February	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	
Headcount used in March	18.8	3.2	6	2	39.6	9	6	

Role performed	Grounds Maintenance	Streets	Public conveniences	Housing	Total headcount required
Headcount Required	29.1	23.5	2.5	6.3	61.4
Headcount used in April	24.7	19.8	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in May	23.6	19.9	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in June	24.4	19.3	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in July	22.4	18.6	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in August	21.2	18.9	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in September	21.1	18.4	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in October	21.3	18.8	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in November	22.4	18.6	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in December	21.8	17.7	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in January	22.2	18.3	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in February	23.5	18.9	2.5	6.3	
Headcount used in March	22.3	19.1	2.5	6.3	

As you can see from the above tables although the streets and grounds services have a required headcount these are not being met as should an operative be on annual leave or off work for any other form of absence Ubico do not have a financial budget to back fill these positions. On average on the environmental services division there is an average of 3.5 people a week on annual leave plus any additional absence such as sickness on top of this figure. This results in Ubico always being under resourced in this delivery area, meaning certain tasks are unable to be completed. Ubico are working with the council to address this issue, as it has meant that Ubico are currently struggling to provide the full-service requirements as we are always running significantly below the agreed headcount. Ubico do not have this

issue within its waste and recycling services as there is a financial provision that enables Ubico to cover staff holidays and absence using agency staff.

3. Question from Councillor Chris Day

Re flytipping: please can you provide data on efforts to trace perpetrators and penalties issued

Answer from Environmental Partnerships Manager

The Council’s neighbourhood team deal with enforcement and will provide further details on this matter in due course.

4. Question from Councillor Chris Day

Re - working days lost: what % of total working days does this equate to?

Answer from Ubico:

Organisational Unit	April 2023 days lost	May 2023 days lost	June 2023 days lost	July 2023 days lost	Aug 2023 days lost	Sept 2023 days lost	Oct 2023 days lost	Nov 2023 days lost	Dec 2023 days lost	Jan 2024 days lost	Feb 2024 days lost	March 2024 days lost	Total days lost
Cheltenham Contract	101	115	162	196	213	225	230	188	218	228	162	199	2236
Waste & Recycling (Chelt)	76	67	116	95	87	92	104	83	98	111	89	106	1123
Grounds Maintenance (Chelt)	19	43	29	70	99	97	97	72	74	78	47	71	796
Street Cleansing (Chelt)	6	5	17	31	27	36	29	33	46	39	26	22	317
Working days in a month	19	20	22	21	22	21	22	22	19	22	21	21	252
Working days x employees required per day	2774	2920	3212	3066	3212	3066	3212	3212	2774	3212	3066	3066	36792
% sick leave	4%	4%	5%	6%	7%	7%	7%	6%	8%	7%	5%	6%	6%
employees required per day total	146												

5. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

Given the variety of high-profile services provided by Ubico, and the fact that human resources are constrained, how are the various elements of the business prioritised (e.g. fly tipping, street cleaning, refuse collections, landscape maintenance) and what measures are being put in place to maximise the impact of Ubico staff teams across all areas of the service?

Answer from Environmental Partnerships Manager

The Council sets the prioritisation for Ubico and both the Council and Ubico discuss operational/financial issues with cause difficulties in delivering services. This discussion forms part of the contract sum (budget) setting process each Autumn.

Service requests are logged into the Council's Netcall service and allocated to Ubico via Alloy (Ubico's digital/in-cab system) and the response times are based on the priorities set by the Council and set within the systems. This includes fly tip requests, missed bins, weed removal, hedge cutting, grass mowing, overflowing litter bins etc. These are all due for review by the Council over the next year following the introduction of the two new IT systems and a review of how services are being delivered based on the resource constraints imposed by the Council.

Waste and Recycling focus on statutory collections and therefore where necessary these services are prioritised however this rarely means any movement of staff from other services to support waste and recycling due to training, experience and qualifications required.

Similarly grounds maintenance and street cleansing staff tend to remain within their service areas due to the training, experience and qualifications required to operate in different environments and with different equipment. Street cleansing staff did however, during 2024/25, support the weed removal requirements as this was a priority for the Council however fly tipping removals have fallen behind as a result of this movement in resource and this is being addressed over the next few weeks.

Where needed and appropriate, drivers sometime move between services.

6. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

Given the reduction in most of the waste collected, and the consequent impact on income, what plans are being put into place to counteract the decline? [The door knocking exercise mentioned appears to be focusing largely on seeking to increase food waste recycling.

Answer from Environmental Partnerships Manager

The Council is responsible for selling recycling and promotion with residents. Officers continue to promote recycling via social media, letter drops where appropriate, leaflets, talks and visits in the community, the side waste stickering by Ubico on over full refuse bins to encourage more recycling in residual waste bins being moved to the recycling stream. Alternative approaches are also being considered in 2024/25 including campaigns with CBH and communal properties.

It should be noted that promoting waste reduction (not buying more than you need and reducing the amount of packaging) whilst reducing residual waste is also likely to reduce the amount of recycling too.

Packaging is reducing and plastic bottles are getting thinner, this all reduces the weight of the material collected and income received.

The reduction in waste volumes is being seen across the Country and some of the factors above will be contributing as will the cost of living crisis where residents

cannot afford to buy the same things, or the same quantity of things, as they did previously.

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Overview and Scrutiny

Meeting date: 9th September 2024

Member Questions on Local Enforcement Plan(Agenda item 8)

1. Question from Councillor Chris Day

Please could you tell me the current actual DM (Planning) staff numbers split between permanent and contract and how this compares to the target staff numbers? How does the cost of a contractor compare to the cost of a permanent employee performing the same role?

Answer from Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance

The DM team (so excluding planning policy) established structure current comprises:

- 7 x planning officers (permanent) (one post is vacant)
- 2 x conservation officers (permanent) (both vacant)
- 2 x enforcement officers (permanent) (one vacant)
- 1 x ecologist (permanent)

We are currently employing 1 x contractor to cover one of the senior conservation officer roles.

The contractor in question is employed on an hourly rate of £57.60p/h. The hourly rate of an in-house senior conservation officer is £20.85p/h (top Grade H) *excluding* oncosts.

2. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

How does the local enforcement plan get communicated and how can it be done in such a way as to manage residents' perceptions about what can be done within the staffing resource available?

Answer from Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance

If approved by Cabinet, the local enforcement plan will be published on the council's website with a clear link to it highlighted on the planning 'home page'. There is already some text explaining how the enforcement team operates but this can be revised to manage people's expectations and to bring it inline with the local enforcement plan.

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Overview and Scrutiny

Meeting date: 9th September 2024

Member Question on the Peer Review (Agenda item 9)

1. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

The recommendations from the peer review have seen some real enhancements to management processes. Presumably, the deficit in some of these areas was owing to workloads due to staff vacancies and not having time to engage thoroughly in regular meetings, reporting, etc. What has been the impact, so far, of the measures put in place by the Head of Development Management?

Answer from Head of Development Management, Enforcement and Compliance

There has been a noticeable improvement in morale across the team with officer's feeling better supported as well as an improved sense of team working, rather than working in relative isolation.

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