

Risk and Audit Service: Performance

Audit and Governance Committee
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David Eden
Chief Internal Auditor
Risk and Audit Service
Corporate Resources
Magdalen House
30 Trinity Road
Bootle
L20 3NJ

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report summarises the performance and activity of the Risk and Audit Service for the period 1 March 2024 to 30 April 2024.

1.2 The report covers each of the areas of the service:

- Internal Audit
- Health and Safety
- Insurance
- Risk and Resilience.
- Counter Fraud

1.3 The report highlights the following key points:

- This has continued to be a busy period for the Service, with the completion of a number of key pieces of work. The performance indicators and key data in this report reflect this positive progress.
- The service continues to seek to support the effective management of risk, which is especially pertinent as the Council transforms.
- The development of the service continues, with a number of improvements having been completed in the period.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Risk and Audit Service is managed by the Chief Internal Auditor.
- 2.2 The mission of the Service is *“to deliver a first-class risk and audit service that is highly respected and valued by Sefton and is the envy of our peers”* and the Service has the following objectives:
- To lead the Council in embedding a system of internal control and risk management that facilitates the achievement of the organisation’s objectives.
 - To be a valued corporate influence in promoting the due consideration of risk in Council decisions, strategies, and plans
 - To align the service with the Council’s changing needs.
- 2.3 In delivering this mission and objectives, the Service encapsulates the following teams:
- **Internal Audit** – this statutory service provides the internal audit function for all areas of the Council, including maintained schools. Internal Audit can be defined as: “an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation’s operations. Internal Audit helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.” (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards)
 - **Health and Safety** – supports Council officers and members in providing an effective health and safety management system that meets the Council’s statutory health and safety duties; thereby controlling the risks of injury and ill health to staff and others affected by the Council’s activities.
 - **Insurance** – fulfils the duty to provide an appropriate insurance service for the Council, including claims management, advice on insurance issues and the management of insurable risk.
 - **Risk and Resilience** – develops risk management and mitigation strategies for the Council on emergency planning (ensuring that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004), public safety and business continuity issues.

- **Assurance Team** – will develop a Counter Fraud strategy and co-ordinate the development of counter fraud services across the Council.

1.4 This report summarises the main aspects of the performance of the Service for the period 1 March 2024 to 30 April 2024, covering the following areas:

- Internal Audit:
 - work undertaken in the period, including a summary of work completed and an outline of the high priority recommendations made.
 - performance against Key Performance Indicators
 - anti-fraud update
 - developments relating to this part of the Service.
- Health and Safety, Insurance, Risk and Resilience and Assurance and Counter Fraud:
 - work undertaken in the period, with key data provided where applicable.
 - developments relating to these parts of the Service.

2.5 The report concludes by looking ahead to the challenges which will be addressed in the forthcoming period.

3. Internal Audit: Performance Update

3.1 Completion of Audit Plan

Since the last update to the Committee, the team have progressed a range of engagements. The table below outlines the audits in the Audit Plan that have progressed during the year. For engagements where a draft or final report is issued, the Audit Opinion and number of recommendations are identified.

Audit Engagement	Audit Opinion	Recommendations			Current Audit Engagements		
		High	Medium	Low	Draft	Final	Progress since last update
Our Lady Star of the Sea	Moderate	0	2	2	26-02-24	22-03-24	Final Report issued
Freshfield Primary	Moderate	0	1	3	26-02-24		Draft Report issued
St John Bosco Primary	Moderate	0	3	2	26-02-24	18-04-24	Final Report issued
Crosby High School	Moderate	0	2	3	26-02-24	20-03-24	Final Report issued
Our Lady of Compassion	Moderate	0	3	1	26-02-24		Draft Report issued
Our Lady of Walsingham Primary School	Moderate	0	2	1	19-04-24		Draft Report issued
Our Lady Queen of Peace	Minor	0	1	1	19.04.24		Draft Report issued
St Philips CE Primary	Moderate	0	1	3	19.04.24		Draft Report issued
Maricourt High School	Negligible Risk	0	0	1	19.04.24		Draft Report issued

Audit Engagement	Audit Opinion	Recommendations			Current Audit Engagements		
		High	Medium	Low	Draft	Final	Progress since last update
Petty Cash	Moderate	0	2	5	21.03.24		Draft Report issued and response received.
St Edmund and St Thomas	Moderate	0	4	2	01-10-24	20.03.24	Final report issued
St Nicholas Primary	Minor	0	0	1	28-02-24	22.3.24	Final Report issued
Pupil Place Planning	Minor	0	1	2	26-02-24	21.3.24	Final Report Issued
ASC Market Sustainability	Moderate	1	5	0	01.03.24	18.03.24	Final report issued
Climate Emergency	Minor	0	0	1	18.03.24	23.04.24	Final report issued
Sefton New Directions 22/23	Moderate	5	8	0	25-01-24		Draft Report issued and response received.
Public Health Commissioning - Living Well	Minor	0	0	1	28-02-24	26.03.24	Final Report issued
Risk Management Health Check	n/a				29-04-24		Draft report issued to Chief Internal Auditor for consideration. Five short- and medium-term recommendations and two longer term recommendations.
Tree Management (External Review)					Following up with Management to ensure that recommendations from the review will be addressed. Historically there has been a fragmented approach to tree management which the review has identified and tried to address. The Risk and Audit Team have produced a joint report with Green Sefton, that was presented to ELT for discussion in December 2023. The outcome if that the Assistant Director of Operational In House Services is the duty holder for trees and the report has been shared with the aim that this is included within the proposed workplan to implement tree		

Audit Engagement	Audit Opinion	Recommendations			Current Audit Engagements		
		High	Medium	Low	Draft	Final	Progress since last update
					management across the Council.		
Social Value Outcomes					Draft report prepared		
ASC – Inspection Preparation					Draft report prepared		
Leisure Centres					Draft report prepared		
Waste management					Fieldwork in progress		
Sefton New Directions Risk Management					Draft report prepared		
Major Construction Projects					Draft report prepared		
SHOL Risk Management					Draft report prepared.		
Consultancy / Management Support – Children’s Services					Finalising revised draft reports for fact finding exercise regarding contract expenditure, procurement of agency workers; Code of Conduct and mandatory training.		
Mayor’s Charity 22/23					Independent Examiner’s Report completed to facilitate submission of final accounts for year ending 30 June 2023.		
High Needs Funding					Fieldwork commenced.		
Early Help and Aiming High - Commissioning					Draft report prepared.		

Grants Certified	Value Certified
Food waste collections – capital transitional grant to support the delivery of weekly food waste collections.	£2,644,182
Key Route Network Levelling Up - 2023/24 Q4	£400k
Key Route Network Levelling Up - 2022/23 Q4	£400k

3.2 High Priority Recommendations

There are the following high priority recommendations made in the reports issued since the last update to the Committee.

ASC Market Sustainability - ASC management should develop contract management guidance in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and good practice, outlining roles and responsibilities and key processes for recording and storing of contracts, maintaining the Contracts Register and the management/ monitoring of contracts.

Sefton New Directions

- Ensure that Articles of Association and changes to Directors are notified to Companies House within statutory timescales. (2 recommendations)
- Draft budget for the year should be approved before 1 April, start of the financial year, each year.
- The directors' mandatory training programme should be extended to include all statutory responsibilities.
- The Risk Management Policy should be developed and presented to the Board.

3.3 Commissioned Health Check Review of Risk Management undertaken by Gallagher Bassett

The response to the draft report received on 29 April 2024 has not been completed at the time of writing the report and shared with Gallagher Bassett however the key recommendations include:

- Providing more developmental opportunities for staff at all levels to raise understanding particularly amongst front line leaders.
- Updating the Corporate Risk Management Handbook (and appendices) so that it is more user friendly and is clearly recomunicated and available.

- Raising the profile of risk management by publicly celebrating risk management successes within the Council, as well as publishing lessons learned from failures.
- Identifying ways of integrating risk management more overtly so people are aware it's importance within their roles.
- If cross cutting operational risks are being adequately identified and evaluated in a collective / corporate way.
- In the longer term continue to develop the suite of KPI's associated with measuring the performance of the risk management journey and how it can be used more proactively to exploit opportunities.

A further update after the final report has been agreed will be provided to Members at the September meeting.

3.4 2023/24 Resources and Performance

The following table outlines the Audit Team's performance against the Key Performance Indicators outlined in the Audit Plan agreed by the Committee in March 2023.

Description and Purpose	Target	Actual	Variance and Explanation
<p>This measures the extent to which the Internal Audit Plan agreed by this Committee is being delivered. The delivery of the Plan is vital in ensuring that an appropriate level of assurance is being provided across the Council's systems.</p> <p>Percentage of revised Audit Plan completed.</p>	<p>See graph below.</p> <p>100%</p>	<p>See graph below and narrative.</p> <p>88%</p>	<p>12% variance.</p> <p>The variance is due to a combination of factors the main issue being it being agreed that resources would be diverted to undertake unplanned Children's Social Care work, and additional work to improve the assurance mapping framework have impacted on delivery of the original plan.</p> <p>If these work priorities had been factored into the plan</p>

Description and Purpose	Target	Actual	Variance and Explanation
			then the actual achievement would have been 97%.
<p>Percentage of Client Survey responses indicating a “very good” or “good” opinion</p> <p>This measures the feedback received on the service provided and seeks to provide assurance that Internal Auditors conduct their duties in a professional manner.</p>	100%	100%	One client survey received during quarter.
<p>Percentage of recommendations made in the period which have been agreed to by management.</p> <p>This measures the extent to which managers feel that the recommendations made are appropriate and valuable in strengthening the control environment.</p>	100%	100%	No variance

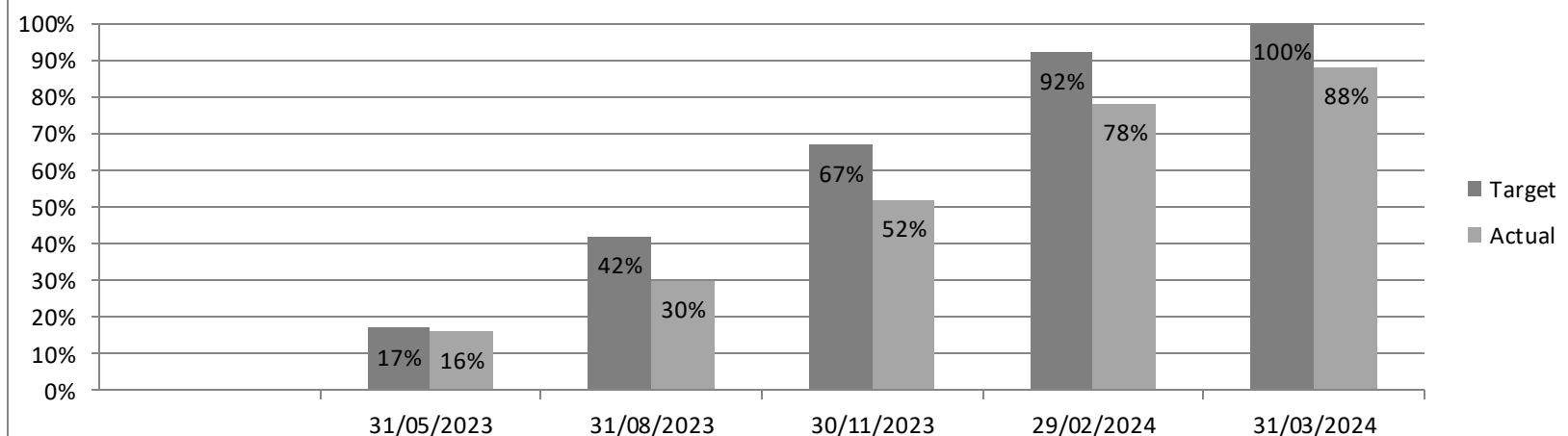


Fig 1: % of 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan completed. Performance in May and August measured against Original Audit Plan, performance in November, February and March against revised plans.

Figure 1 above shows that 88% of the revised audit plan was completed during the year (but see comments in table above).

As reported previously to the Committee, in January 2024, a Principal Auditor joined the team and we have also obtained the services of a second new agency Principal Auditor for up to six months. Currently, the team comprises Audit Manager, four Principal Auditors, a new CIPFA trainee and a part-time trainee ICT-Auditor.

- The CIPFA trainee joined the team from Financial Management at the end of January 2023 and returned to Financial Management in April 2024. On return to her role in Financial Management a new CIPFA trainee joined the Audit team and a smooth handover of responsibilities has occurred.
- Financial Management in February 2023 as part of the audit planning process agreed that a newly qualified CIPFA apprentice (one Full time Equivalent (FTE)) would join the Internal Audit team from July 2023 for two years. The 2023/24 Audit Plan was presented to and approved by this Committee based on this assumption. Financial Management subsequently confirmed that Audit would not receive this resource.
- More than 50-days (6% of the plan) has been spent on fact-finding work to support Children's Social Care.
- In practice, there is a lead time for new members of the team before they are 100% productive in the delivery of audit engagements. During this time, they complete their formal induction, all the necessary mandatory training courses, learn the Internal Audit process (there are similarities and differences between organisations) and are also starting two or three audits engagements which can be fragmented. New starters will not be in the normal ebb and flow of the audit process for several weeks and we estimate there to be approximately ten development days where new starters are not delivering to their full capacity. For the recruitment in January 2024, there was a slight delay in the start-date compared to the revised has resulted in an additional lost 2% of audit days. Currently, two members of the team have been in post for a few weeks and a third for less than six-months.

Revisions to the Audit Plan 2023/24 were approved by the Committee in September 2023 and March 2024 to better reflect the resources available.

Since the start of the financial year two temporary Principal Auditors have been recruited with one staff member joining in April 2024 and another in June 2024.

The proposed re-structure of the Risk and Audit Team has implications for the Audit Team which includes a new Principal Auditor and the recruitment to the existing Trainee ICT Auditor post as the post holder moves to another position within the Risk and Audit Team. We are currently in the process of starting the recruitment to both positions although as we have discussed when the audit plan was approved the recruitment market remains challenging although we have seen promising signs in the recruitment of the temporary auditors that there appears more candidates available seeking work.

3.5 Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)

In March 2018 the Internal Audit Service was externally evaluated against the PSIAS and was found to generally comply. We report annually to the Committee on our progress and develop an Improvement Plan to further enhance our systems and processes. During 2022/23, the planned external assessment could not be conducted, due to resourcing issues, which has impacted our five-year planning cycle and as a result the service no longer complies with the PSIAS. Despite this, we have completed our annual self-assessment, which will inform our ongoing improvement efforts. Some of the improvements are reported below in 3.10. We are now scheduling an external validation for Q2 2024/25 to ensure compliance with the standards and have contact CIPFA to obtain a review.

3.6 Institute of Internal Auditors International Professional Practices Framework

Internal audit professionals around the globe rely on the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing (Standards) and the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) to help navigate the complex world of risk management, governance, and control. For more than a generation, these documents from The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), which flow through to the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, have guided practitioners in providing internal audit assurance and advice that is independent, objective, effective, efficient, ethical, and of the highest quality.

We reported in December 2023 that the IIA had released a draft that dramatically changes how the *Standards* and other elements of the IPPF are presented and explained. The new *Global Internal Audit Standards*[™] more clearly articulate the keys to effective internal auditing by grouping the *Standards* into five domains:

- Domain I: Purpose of Internal Auditing
- Domain II: Ethics and Professionalism
- Domain III: Governing the Internal Audit Function
- Domain IV: Managing the Internal Audit Function
- Domain V: Performing Internal Audit Services

In January 2024, the Global Internal Audit Standards were issued which will replace the 2017 International Standards for Professional Practice. The 2017 Standards remain in effect for a 12-month transition period until 9 January 2025. The standards apply to any individual or function that provides internal audit services. The Chief Internal Auditor is accountable for the internal audit function's implementation of and conformance with all principals and standards. All internal auditors are

responsible for conforming with the principals and standards relevant to performing their duties. CIPFA have confirmed that revised Public Sector Internal Audit Standards are being developed and will be effective from 1 April 2025.

3.7 Developments and Improvements

We reported in December 2023 that an improvement plan for Internal Audit had been developed. Since the last Audit and Governance Report, Internal Audit has:

- Involvement in the development of an across Risk and Audit report on event management in the Council which has been shared with Tourism colleagues. The content has been shared with management within Tourism.
- Involvement in the development of an across Risk and Audit Report on Driving Standards and their implementation including eligibility and competency of staff to drive Council vehicles including the use of electric vehicles
- Continued to monitor staff wellbeing during the prolonged period of home working maintaining frequent regular contact with all team members.
- Completed induction process for one new Principal Auditor.
- Completed three recruitment cycles to recruit two Principal Auditors for fixed terms.
- Continued to implement dedicated team office days to further strengthen our already strong team dynamics.
- Started on the implementation of the Audit improvement plan including
 - Re-structure approved job descriptions evaluated by HR.
 - Completion and implementation of a pre-audit planning document designed to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the start of the review process.
 - Training course on data analytics for one staff member to train the rest of the staff
 - Self- assessment completed for Audit Team against pre-determined competency requirement
 - Priority of work in the Annual Audit Plan
 - Ethics review added to the Annual Audit Plan
 - Disclosure of the use of AI in planning included in standard disclosure.
 - Post audit checklist corporates a check if any non-conformance with Code of Ethics or PSIAS has impacted on the engagement.
- Team is now focused on delivering the revised 2024/25 Audit Plan.
- Trialling shorter weekly update meetings with the team.
- Joint working with the various Risk and Audit Teams on project work. In addition to providing useful project outcomes, it is hoped this will strengthen knowledge and cohesion between teams.

In the next quarter, the planned development for the service includes:

- Continue with preparations for upcoming Public Sector Internal Audit External Assessment due in coming year.
- Finalise recruitment of the second Principal Auditor to fixed term post.
- Continue with the implementation of the Internal Audit Improvement Plan.
- Begin the process of reviewing the Global Internal Audit Standards to identify gaps in current processes and documentation and add to the existing Internal Audit Improvement Plan.
- Review the approach to school audits.

4. Health and Safety: Performance Update

4.1 Progress

- 4.1.1 With the addition of new team members in January and March 2024, the corporate Health and Safety team now consists of four team members in post. The resources will allow a more proactive approach in tackling safety issues and has allowed better planning for the coming year via the new health and safety improvement plan.
- 4.1.2 The team continues to be extremely busy in meeting the demands of the council, supporting nearly 8,000 staff (including maintained school staff and schools with a Service Level Agreement in place) in day-to-day health and safety, advising on accidents, incidents and investigations as well as playing the lead role in seven Health and Safety Sub Committees and the Corporate Health and Safety Committee. This also includes advice relating to agency staff, contractors and volunteers working on behalf of the Council. The team is also involved in advising upon events (internally led and external) that occur on council land, as well as overseeing the authorisation process of school visits where they are of an adventurous, overseas or residential nature.
- 4.1.3 The team continues to deliver a range of services across all departments and schools, which can generally be divided into three main areas:
- Policy and communication
 - Operational reactive and proactive response
 - Active monitoring.
- 4.1.4 Health and safety objectives and key performance indicators have been aligned to the council's 'Vision 2030' and 'One Council' initiatives and core values. These are continually reviewed and drive the programme of work, not only for the team but for services areas through the health and safety sub-committees.

- 4.1.5 Health and safety consultation arrangements remain in place, with the Corporate Health and Safety Committee (CSSC) playing a key role in conjunction with the Departmental Health and Safety Sub-Committees. The next scheduled CSSC meeting will take place in June 2024. Seven sub-committees are held and attended by health and safety ahead of the main meeting, where salient points raised feed into the main meeting for further discussion and consideration. The structure provides a good avenue for the dissemination of information relating to that particular department and the wider dissemination via the full Committee.
- 4.1.6 The Health and Safety team has been engaged in a thorough review of asbestos management both in its council buildings and the schools. This has involved inspections of premises and their accompanying documentation, reactive response upon discovering issues containing asbestos, as well as liaising closely with Building Services. A report was provided for Property Service's information in January 2024 for which assurances have been provided that this has been, or is in the process of being, acted upon. Asbestos training has been offered to all maintained and voluntary controlled schools with a view to bringing about better day to day management. This is being delivered by a third party in Environmental Essentials and is conducted in two parts – part one being online and part two, via virtual classroom. Whilst most schools have now completed the training without issue, there are a small number that did not manage to complete for varying reasons. Such non-completion leaves the council in a vulnerable position where those schools are concerned. The matter is therefore being escalated to the relevant senior manager within Education Excellence.
- 4.1.7 With the majority of schools now having completed asbestos management training, the health and safety team will continue to monitor the effectiveness of such management via audit. There is now a requirement for asbestos management roll out across the council for which a report has been compiled for the attention of the extended leadership team. There is a need to identify relevant duty holders and their responsible persons within council departments, ahead of those staff members undertaking the relevant training.
- 4.1.8 The under reporting of accidents, incidents and near misses continues in some departments. Whilst we are not unique in experiencing this, there remains room for improvement, and we continue to promote the issue. The team continues to encourage managers to ensure all accidents, incidents and near misses are reported to ensure safety management is improved, thereby ensuring that the Council is protected in the event of future claims. This will also aid compliance with its

legal duty to report accidents under the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations. The reporting system has been made more accessible to greater numbers, with access now being available directly from the intranet's front page. Reporting rights are no longer just restricted to team managers but also to first line supervisors to relieve administrative burdens and increase information flows.

- 4.1.9 The team continues to review the quality of incident reporting and provides comments in most cases so the inputter is aware that the report has been received and any further action that should take place. A small number of incidents continue to be reported under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) when they should not be. It is believed that the number of RIDDOR reports submitted each year can be reduced, thereby only allowing genuine ones to be forwarded to the HSE. We are continuing to educate managers on the criteria for reporting RIDDOR incidents.
- 4.1.10 The team are active members of Sefton Event Safety Advisory Group (SESAG) advising other stakeholders on the Group, as well as event organisers in relation to their responsibilities and best practice. 2023/24 brought about a full schedule of events held across Sefton's parklands and other associated sites, which included everything from music to comedy, food, drink, flowers, fireworks and air displays. All of these have boosted tourism and rejuvenated some of our more disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Whilst most events are relatively low risk in nature, some of the activities incorporated within may be deemed higher risk and require further consideration. Fair rides, inflatables and daredevil stunts are examples of activities that can raise the risk levels of an event and thereby attract the attention of the team. The volume of documentation that can be submitted for such events can be significant. Following an incident at the 2023 Southport Food and Drink Festival, guidance has been formulated relating to the use of inflatable attractions on Sefton land.
- 4.1.11 The Team has recently reviewed the Council's procedures when dealing with event applications, to ensure a more coordinated approach across Service Areas and enhancing systems that are currently in place. The need for improved and coordinated responses is heightened by the forthcoming legislation relating to Martyn's Law, especially regarding security arrangements at some of our larger events. The team has been, and continues to be, involved in considerations and advice around this proposed legislation.

4.1.12 Visits to schools with a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place continued throughout the last quarter. A significant minority of maintained schools abstained from receiving a health and safety audit in 2023/24. The team is currently arranging audits on a selection of those schools up until the summer closedown to ensure that adequate safety management remains in place. Visits that have been conducted in schools opting in have generally been well received and the team intends to build upon this success for the 24/25 period. A review of the schools' health and safety SLA was undertaken to maximise the effect of the service, retain current customers and stave off approaches from third party competitors. Instead of a full inspection occurring each year that tied the school and our inspecting team member up for a full day (thereby putting some schools off), audits will now be limited to half a day and run over a three-year cycle. A significant number of our maintained schools (around 17) are in the process of becoming academies which will impact upon revenue generated by the team as academies tend to utilise their own health and safety consultants.

4.1.13 Risk assessment remains the mainstay of health and safety and the team receive such documents for review from a range of sources, including corporate departments, schools' external events organisers (via the Evolve database) and from public event organisers (via the Sefton Events Safety Advisory Group). There is a wide range of differing standards when it comes to risk assessment submissions and advice is given upon receipt to strengthen the quality of those submitted. Risk assessments and safe systems of work should be reviewed following accidents or incidents and this message is regularly disseminated by the team to wider management to secure a more robust due diligence system. The team has also been working closely with Property Services to develop its latest risk assessment across the Council's corporate buildings. The standard of risk assessment in most schools has been identified as requiring improvement and will therefore be a major feature for this year's targeted audit.

4.1.14 The team continues to work alongside other Service Areas to review existing practice and establish best practice. Examples of such cross - departmental work include:

Property Services in relation to:

- fire marshal and first aid provision,
- PAT testing,
- security and aggression in public facing council buildings,

- asbestos management,
- asbestos training
- building etiquette and the
- review of corporate buildings risk assessments.
- Workforce Learning and Development in relation to the establishment of a new health and safety training programme.
- Various parties on the re-establishment of the Workforce Wellbeing Group.
- Adult Social Care in relation to better accident / incident reporting measures and dealing with aggression.
- Operational In-House Services in relation workers working in excessive heat, hand – arm vibration and working in or near water.
- Operational In-House Services and Communities on managing open water spaces and beach environments.
- Various teams regarding a Zero Tolerance of Violence Policy.

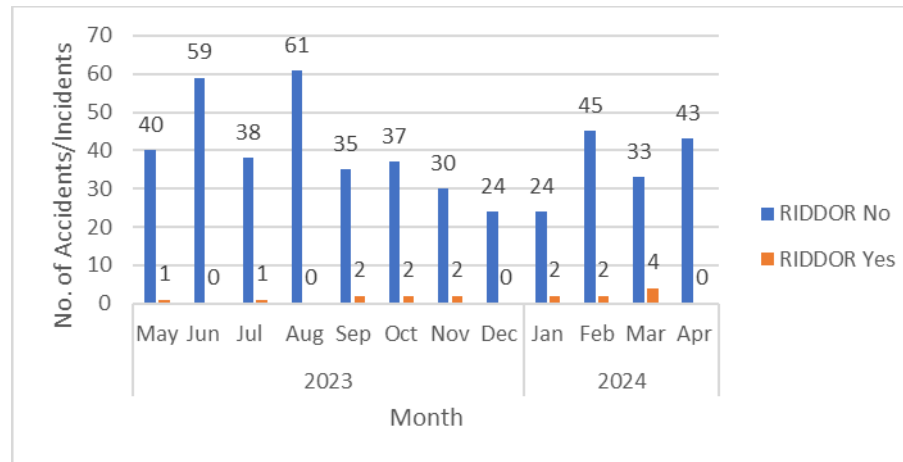
4.1.15 Along with some of the broader projects, the team remains busy with more specific / individual enquiries from both the schools and corporate side. These cover such areas as:

- DSE and Ergonomic issues including the purchase of relevant chairs.
- School's struggling to access the CLEAPSS and Evolve systems.

4.2 Key Incident Data

4.2.1 The Health and Safety Team continue to manage the Council's incident reporting system which records work-related accidents and incidents involving employees, agency workers, contractors, volunteers, and members of the public.

Graph 1 below shows the number of Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) against Non-RIDDOR accident and incident data for the Council over the past 12 months, from 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2024.



4.2.2 The above are corporate figures, excluding some of the playground bumps and falls of the schools. This shows a total of 469 accidents / incidents across the 12-month period, with 16 being reported as RIDDOR.

Figures have remained relatively steady, with peaks potentially being due to increased usage of leisure facilities over the summer period. RIDDOR reporting in the Quarter 4 of the financial year 2023/24 is high and having reviewed the same, it is believed a couple were extremely borderline, with a further couple incorrectly being recorded as RIDDOR by the reporting manager. Further advice and follow ups will be provided. Accidents reported as RIDDOR since the beginning of 2024 have included:

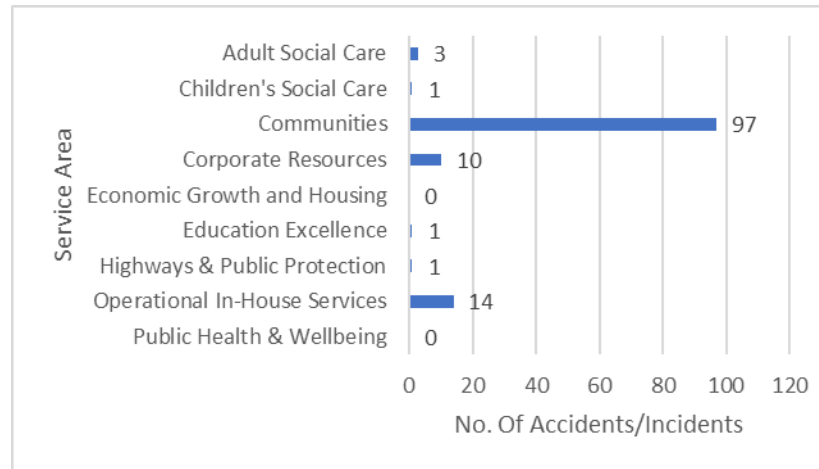
- Injury to foot playing sports – damage to bone.
- Injury to child falling from climbing frame.
- Injury to staff member’s eyes whilst on duty.
- Injury following a trip.
- Significant cut sustained during cleaning operations.

- Vehicle collision.
- Fall at ground level.
- Rolled ankle

Table 1 showing comparisons in accident/incident numbers for February to April 2023 against February to April 2024

Month	2023	Month	2024
February	50	February	45
March	47	March	33
April	35	April	43
Total	132	n/a	131

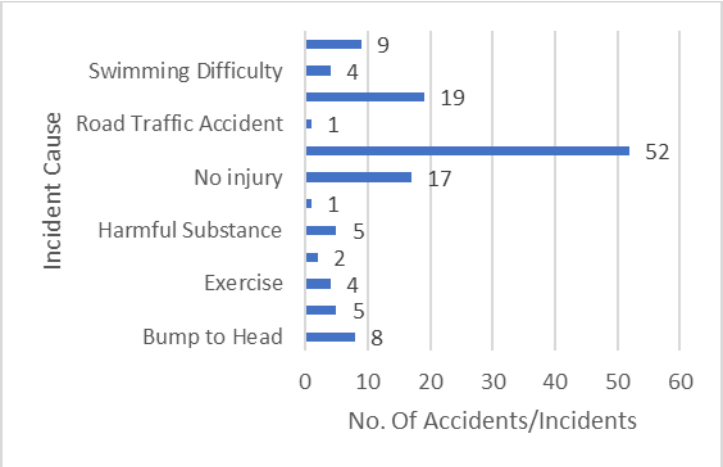
Graph 2 shows Accident and incident data comparisons for Service Areas between 1 February 2024 and 30 April 2024



4.2.3 This graph demonstrates some of the figures per department from the last quarter. Communities' figures have doubled from the last quarter which is perhaps indicative of good reporting in a higher risk area involving children, adventurous activities and

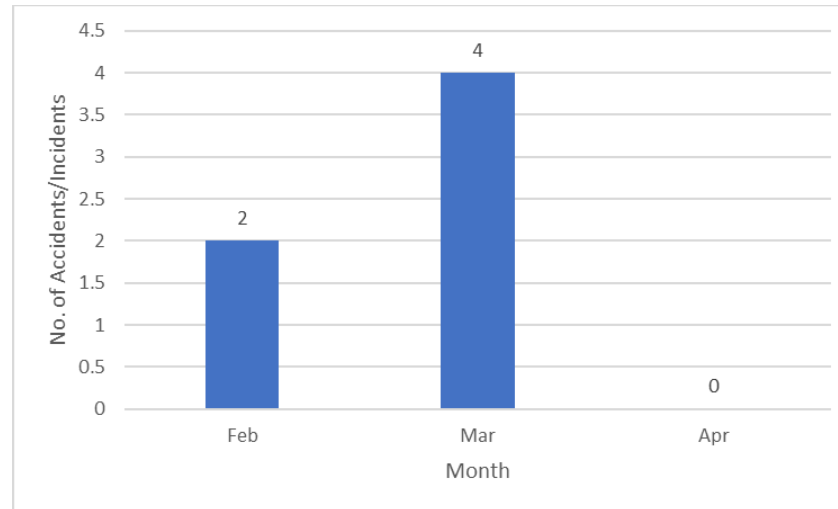
wet surfaces. Figures for Corporate Resources have also doubled, which shows improvement in reporting. Whilst figures for Operational In-House Services remain steady, they are still believed to be on the low side. Adults and Childrens Social Services incident reporting continues to be obviously low despite attempts to improve this area. There were no zero returns for the last quarter, whereas they have reappeared for this one.

Graph 3: Reported causes of accidents/ incidents reported across Sefton Council from 1 February 2024 and 30 April 2024



4.2.4 No injury incidents tend to be near misses, which are important considerations as they usually manifest into full accidents at a later stage. There was a slight increase in these reporting from 14 to 17 in this quarter, which is positive in terms of better reporting. There was a major rise in physical impact incidents from 17 to 52, however, there was a slight decrease in slips and trips at ground level from 22 to 19. As both physical impact and slips and trips are constantly the highest incidents, across the Council, any decrease is welcomed.

Graph 4: The number of notifications made to enforcement authorities and insurers under the Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), between 1 February 2024 and 30 April 2024



4.2.5 RIDDOR reports generally relate to more serious incidents or where a staff member has been injured and is subsequently absent from work for more than seven days, due to a work-related injury. This is the key part in any RIDDOR consideration - that the injury stems from a work-related injury and not just merely from it occurring in work. This misunderstanding leads to a number of invalid submissions for which again, the team continues to work with relevant teams to improve understanding. Something that the team has requested over recent quarters is that accidents which are deemed to be RIDDOR's are first discussed with the health and safety team. Unfortunately, very few are and RIDDOR's therefore continue to be submitted without the team's input. With six RIDDOR's being submitted this quarter, this is believed to be rather high.

4.3 Developments

4.3.1 A reviewed Health and Safety Improvement Plan has been formulated for the coming year with focus now on delivering that plan. The team will be working with the health and safety sub-committees to develop their own service area improvement plans, considering lessons learnt and areas of good practice.

4.3.2 The Corporate Health and Safety Team will:

- Continue to support managers and head teachers with the review and implementation of satisfactory health and safety management systems.
- Review relevant Health and Safety Standards and Policies, creating and publishing new ones where required. Recently formulated guidance included that relating to conducting home visits, use of inflatables and working from home.
- Continue to review and develop the council wide training needs assessment which will include the creation of accident and incident reporting and dynamic risk assessment into the training provision.
- Focus on improving the accuracy of incident reporting, investigation and implementation of controls and monitoring to prevent reoccurrence. Work with managers to ensure incidents of threatening and abusive behaviours towards staff are reported and investigated.
- Support the review of event management by Green Sefton and Tourism as well as Open Water safety by Green Sefton and Leisure.
- Continue to deliver a health and safety monitoring regime across the council, to schools where the council retains responsibility for the health and safety as the employer and those schools with a Service Level Agreement with the Councils Corporate Health and Safety Team. This will provide assurance that health and safety management systems remain suitable and effective.
- Monitor outdoor education activities, offering advice and reviewing risk assessments for off-site visits and adventurous activities involving young people in schools. This is managed by the EVOLVE system which schools can purchase as part of the Service Level Agreement offering.
- Instigate its responsibilities to conduct visits under the radiation protection officer (RPO) duty in schools.

5. Insurance: Performance Update

5.1 Work Completed

5.1.1 During the period, the following key pieces of work/projects have been undertaken:

5.1.2 As previously advised, cyber insurance policies are being considered using the Council's Insurance Brokers. The exercise launched with schools produced a very limited response in appetite, however quotes for those that showed interest have now been received and sent to the schools for their consideration. Some of the schools have committed to procure the insurance cover with cover starting. The ICT Team are still currently considering the indicative premiums for similar cover for the Council, and to assist with their understanding of the cover are meeting with insurers.

5.1.3 As previously reported, an external contractor was appointed to undertake an Actuarial Report on the Council's insurance claims to determine if the Insurance Fund has sufficient reserves to fund both current and future claims. The report provides an analysis of current claims reserves, a forecast of expected ultimate losses after allowing for volatility and considering emerging risks within the sector. Results from the exercise suggested that the Council considers the sizes of the reserves and this is currently being considered by the Finance Service Manager. The report has highlighted increased numbers of claims and their aggregate value, claims costs have increased to reflect inflation and the potential impact if increased contributions are required to support historical claims covered by Municipal Mutual. The next report will be commissioned at the start of the 2026 calendar year.

5.1.4 The Council continues to defend cases robustly to protect the public purse and, where necessary, will enlist the assistance of Weightmans, the Council's liability insurance solicitor, to provide litigation support for appropriate claims. No court trials have taken place since the last update however Weightmans continue to act in the Council's best interest and negotiate settlements wherever possible.

5.1.5 The Insurance Team, where necessary, will continue to work with service areas to improve the management of insurable risk especially in areas where there are high numbers of claims or areas of concern. The Council generally has high defensibility rates, and such risk management activity will assist in maintaining and potentially improving the position further.

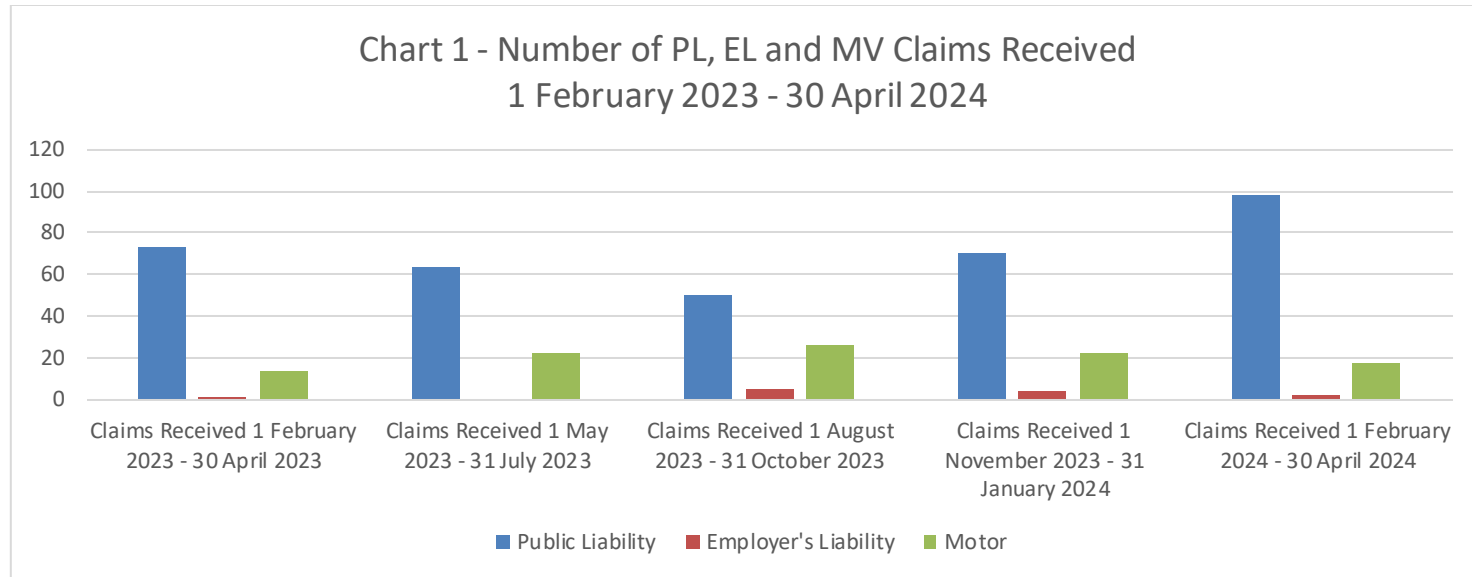
5.1.6 To assist with the above, the Team have recently developed claims experience reports for some service areas which can be built on for a more bespoke service if required. It is intended that these will be provided at a regular frequency in line with the requirements of the service areas.

5.2 Key Claims Data

5.2.1 The following charts outline the insurance performance and include:

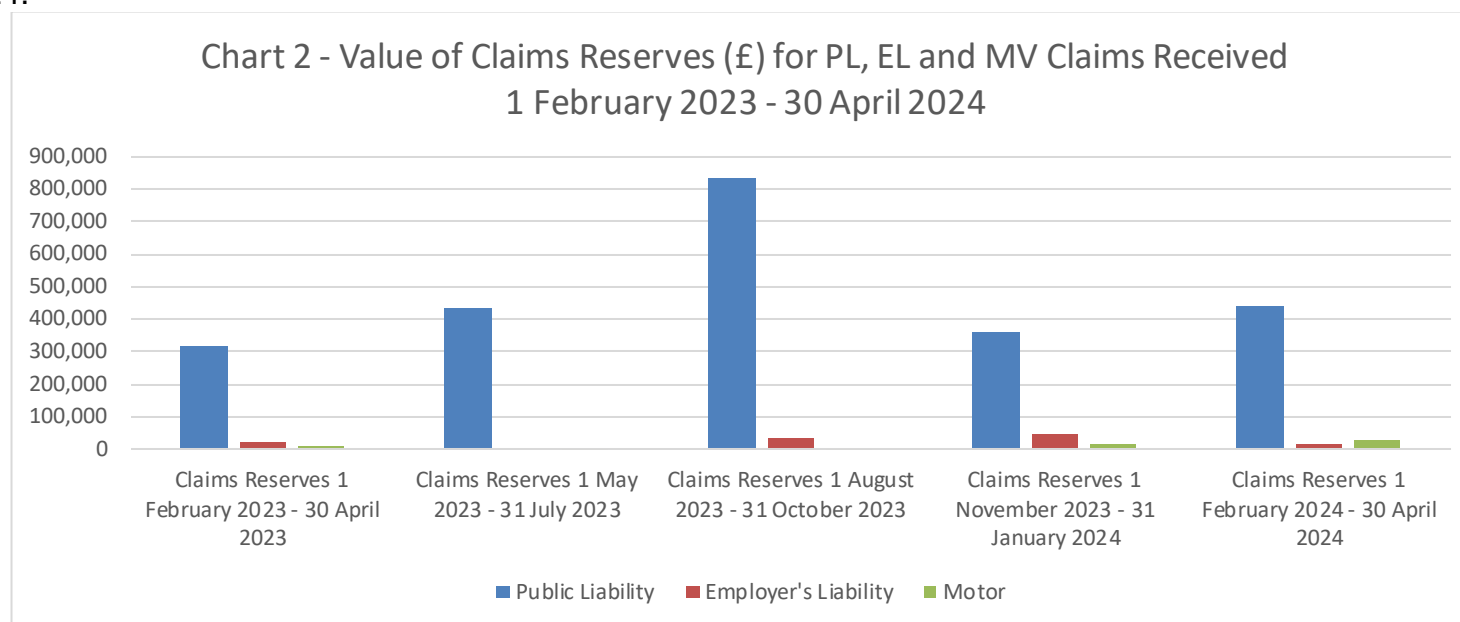
- Numbers of claims for Public Liability (PL), Employers Liability (EL) and Motor (MV) received by Sefton Council for the period 1 February 2023 to 30 April 2024.
- Value of the reserves for PL, EL and MV claims received by Sefton Council for the period 1 February 2023 to 30 April 2024.
- The average reserve value for PL, EL and MV claims received by Sefton Council for the period 1 February 2023 to 30 April 2024.

Chart 1 below outlines the number of claims for PL, EL and MV received for the period 1 February 2023 to 30 April 2024.



- 5.2.2 The number of PL claims has increased by 40% since the previous quarter and represent the highest of the overall period. Personal injury claims represent 28% of the claims received with the remainder being third party property damage. The majority (87%) of all claims received relate to the Highways service area of which 26% relate to personal injury claims and 74% to property damage claims. There appears to have been an increase in pot hole claims which can partly be attributed to the longer winter weather experienced in the period.
- 5.2.3 EL claim numbers remain low, and there has been a 50% decrease since the previous quarter.
- 5.2.4 The number of MV claims has decreased by 18% from the last quarter although is the second highest of the overall period. The Waste and Cleansing service area account for 72% of the claims received with the remainder spread across several service areas. Overall, own damage claims also count for 72% of the claims received with 22% involving third party damage and 6% representing one claim for personal injury.
- 5.2.5 The current profile in all three areas presents no cause for concern however claim numbers will be monitored for any changes in trend.

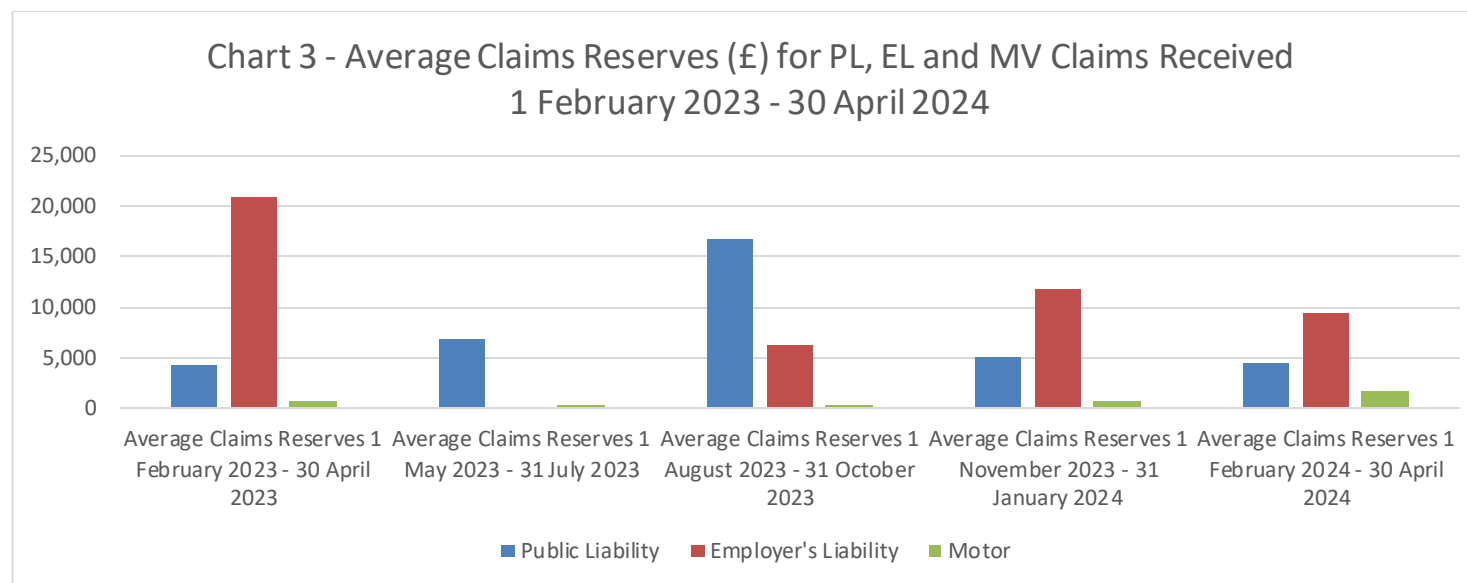
Chart 2 below outlines the value of the reserves for PL, EL and MV claims received for the period 1 February 2023 to 30 April 2024.



- 5.2.6 Claim reserves are allocated by the insurers and/or claims handlers independent of the Council and are determined by the type of injury sustained by the third parties and/or damage occasioned to their property.
- 5.2.7 Following the increase in PL claim numbers, total reserves increased by 22% from the previous quarter and 39% from the first quarter of the overall period. However there has been a decrease of 47% from the middle quarter. This fluctuation can be explained by the type and complexity of injury and/or damage sustained by the third parties.
- 5.2.8 EL total reserves are the lowest of the overall period, decreasing by 60% since the previous quarter.
- 5.2.9 Although MV claim numbers have decreased this quarter, claim reserves are the highest of the overall reporting period having increased by 75% since the previous quarter and 180% since the first quarter. This reflects the repair costs to own fleet and third party vehicles. Of the overall reserve, 40% relates to one own damage claim for the Green Sefton service area

where external engineers have deemed a fleet vehicle a write-off following damage sustained from a falling tree in recent inclement weather.

Chart 3 below outlines the average value of the reserves for PL, EL and MV claims for the period 1 February 2023 to 30 April 2024.



5.2.10 The average reserve for PL claims shows a decrease of 13% since the last quarter, being the second lowest of the overall period.

5.2.11 The average reserve for EL claims has decreased by 20% since the previous quarter and is the third lowest in the overall period.

5.2.12 The average MV claims reserve, which is the highest of the overall reporting period, has significantly increased by 113% from the previous quarter. This has been caused mainly by the receipt of the personal injury claim and also the fleet write-off.

5.2.13 Trends in claims performance will continue to be monitored.

5.3 Developments

- 5.3.1 The Team have recently liaised with the Liverpool Archdiocese and Sefton Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided (RCVA) schools with regard to material damage cover provided through the Catholic Insurance Service. Historically this was provided via the Archdiocese for all Sefton RCVA schools, and all other insurance policies, liability and motor, were provided by the Council. However, unbeknown to the Council until after the event, the material damage cover was withdrawn by the insurer with effect from 1 April 2024 although extensions were put in place to 10 May 2024 to ensure that alternative cover was obtained. The Team worked at pace in challenging circumstances with the Council's current material damage insurers to bring the schools into the Council's portfolio and reinstate cover with immediate effect ensuring that there was no break in cover.
- 5.3.2 There was a potential risk that the schools in the event of a potential catastrophic losses with no insurance cover to meet the cost of reinstatement. Although school building valuations have been provided, it is not known when they were undertaken, how accurate they are and if they have subsequently been indexed appropriately. There are additional concerns that mandatory actions from risk surveys carried out by insurers may not have been implemented which may potentially put future cover for the affected school at risk. We are currently exploring how contents figures for the schools were calculated historically to ensure that the schools have the correct level of cover to reflect contents they have. There is ongoing enquiries with the Catholic Insurance Service to gain assurance on valuations and the indexing, or if a desktop exercise or further valuations are required to be undertaken. The Team will continue to work closely with the affected schools and Assistant Director of Education providing updates and assurance when possible.
- 5.3.3 Given the potential conversion of a large number of Sefton maintained schools to academies in this financial year (20 known to date), the Team will be required to determine the effect of this on the subsequent shortfall of insurance recharges collected from the remaining schools and service areas to meet the insurance premiums put forward by Insurers.
- 5.4.4 The main focus of the Team moving forward will be in preparing for the upcoming renewal of the Council's Insurances Programme which takes place on 29 September 2024 (second period of the current Long-Term Agreement in place until 28 September 2026). The required data will be collated in conjunction with Heads of Service and their Teams before being presented to Insurers via Brokers. In line with prior claims experience and the current market, Insurers will then determine their rating and premium to apply to all policies. Current forecasts on the material damage policy indicate that sums insured should be increased by a minimum of 5% and that ratings will be increased by 12.5% which will of course impact on premiums. Indications for liability increases are not yet known. Market indications are that whilst the premium pressure has

reduced on material damage and liability insurance to more normal levels, claims dependent, there is pressure in the motor segment. This is resulting from higher claims costs resulting from delays in repairs, labour shortages, electric vehicle cost repairs, supply chain difficulties, difficulties in getting hold of hire cars etc.

- 5.4.5 The class action claim previously reported now has a total of 61 historical claims of abuse. The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer continues to liaise with the Council's solicitors and Counsel and to date a total of 16 claims have been settled along with interim third party costs. Final third party costs for these are now being negotiated. Discussions will continue as seen appropriate by Weightmans and any progress will be provided in future updates.
- 5.3.6 As the Council continues to change and commercialism develops, discussions will continue with the Insurance Broker to ensure that all new risks/liabilities to the Council are identified, and, if required, relevant insurance cover is sourced and procured to provide appropriate protection.
- 5.3.7 The Team, and the Risk & Audit Team in general, will continue to make use of the allocation of free of charge risk management days made available as part of the liability, material damage and motor insurance contracts. These are utilised to provide service areas with training or advice for their specific roles and to strengthen areas of the Council where relevant. This year we have used the days on reviewing the Sefton Assurance Map, the risk management review and a horizon mapping workshop with ELT.
- 5.3.8 To build on the already strong relationships forged, and to ensure the smooth running of all relevant contracts to provide value for money, regular meetings will continue with external suppliers to the Team – Brokers, Insurers, Claims Handlers, and Solicitors. Attendance at webinars will also be accepted where content is relevant and of interest to the Team and the organisation as whole. The team is attending the annual ALARM conference in Manchester in June 2024, which is this year focusing on risk.

6. Risk and Resilience: Performance Update

6.1 Work Completed

- 6.1.1 The Risk and Resilience Team (Team) continue to ensure progressive development across the key areas of Business Continuity, Emergency Planning and Risk Management and an improvement plan for each portfolio area has been produced for the forthcoming year.
- 6.1.2 The Emergency Planning function of the Team is delivered at both singular organisation (Council) and multi-agency (local resilience forum) levels. Both officers of the Team remain fully engaged with the planning, preparedness, response, recovery training and exercise activities of both the Council and partner agencies of the Merseyside Resilience Forum (MRF). Sefton's Risk and Resilience Team maintain strong working relationships and quarterly attendance at all ten subgroups to fulfil participation in the planning and delivery of multi-agency activities and ensure continuation of partnership links.
- 6.1.3 The Team regularly promotes and encourages opportunity for training and exercising by sharing invitations to Council colleagues and Emergency Duty Co-ordinators (EDCs) about MRF and other appropriate emergency preparedness events to support and enhance their knowledge and experience. During the quarter, Merseyside Resilience Forum circulated the offer of two Strategic level courses, free of charge, for June and October 2024. This offer was shared with all ELT and SLB members. Two officers have agreed to attend the Multi Agency Gold Incident Commander (MAGIC) course in October 2024.
- 6.1.4 A recruitment exercise has expanded the council's Crisis Response Team (CRT) with several new members. The CRT volunteer to support the council's response to a civil emergency in a variety of ways. The Team met with the new recruits to discuss the role and showed a short presentation on the type of incidents they may be asked to support. Information on the

more specialist roles within the team has been provided and dedicated training will be arranged if any new members wish to pursue those roles.

- 6.1.5 The Team are members of Sefton Events Safety Advisory Group (SESAG) and have continued to participate in reviews and meetings with event organisers. The Group meet regularly at this time of year to review the summer calendar of events. As a multi-agency team, they provide advice on the safety of events being held within the borough through consideration of organiser's presentations, event plans and risk assessments submitted and site visits where appropriate.
- 6.1.6 The Team developed, and shared with appropriate partners, contingency arrangements to support the Radox Health Grand National Meeting at Aintree (11 – 13 April 2024). Normal Emergency Duty Cover arrangements were enhanced to ensure correct levels of command and coordination in the event of an incident requiring council support.
- 6.1.7 As part of the Council's Major Emergency Plan arrangements, there has been a review of the current Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) facility located within Council premises since 2005 due to the cost of updating to reflect current requirements and its current use by staff members. Suitable venues within the council's buildings portfolio were assessed and a new location in Sefton has been identified. This new site was the favoured option due to the capacity of meeting rooms and the existing fixtures/fittings matching the specification required for the activity. The Team will now be looking at moving over any further kit and equipment as needed.
- 6.1.8 An update of each service area's Business Continuity plan continues to be facilitated by the Team in consultation with the plan owners. The service plans will, in turn, each be fully reviewed by ensuring the information captured at team level and included in the Business Impact Analysis documents is up to date.
- 6.1.9 An exercise to test the Council's Corporate Business Continuity plan took place in March 2024. This followed a previous exercise held in January 2023. An external consultant hosted the session, post event feedback is being considered and will be reported to SLB in June 2024.
- 6.1.10 The Business Continuity Plan for Children's Social Care is currently being updated and a scoping meeting has taken place to begin work on this document. The leadership team within CSC is currently reviewing content and will feedback to progress the plan further.

- 6.1.11 Following the Internal Audit review of the Risk Management function the Team have introduced a checklist to ensure compliance of the various risk registers in accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Handbook and good risk management practice. The Team have produced, throughout the quarter, checklists for all completed Risk Registers at Corporate, Service and Operational levels. The results of the checklists are being fed back to relevant risk owners. This is increasing engagement with those risk owners and encouraging robust reviews.
- 6.1.12 The team are currently await the outcome of the review by Democratic Services with the Chief Legal Officer to ensure that the Committee meeting header sheet includes risk appetite before considering whether further support is required for the implementation.
- 6.1.13 During the quarter, the team have attended two Climate Resilience Workshops and several webinars and bitesize risk presentations to improve their knowledge of the current climate change risk landscape. The team have worked with the Energy Team to assist in the development of service climate change risk assessments methodology and to ensure that there is a cross over into the Council's corporate risk management framework on climate change where appropriate.
- 6.1.14 A review of the Council's risk management framework has been undertaken by Gallagher Bassett, the Council's claims management provider, as part of the free risk management days available to the Council. A draft report of the review has now been shared and the findings will be evaluated and responded to appropriately. An update on the key recommendations has been provided in the Corporate Risk Management paper and it is intended that a fuller responses is provided in September 2024.
- 6.1.15 The Team have met with each of the risk owners from the Corporate Risk Register to identify Key Risk Indicators (KRIs). These indicators provide early signals of increasing risk exposures for each Corporate Risk and should be utilised effectively to understand where additional or fewer risk responses are required. The presentation of the Corporate Risk Register is being reviewed to include this information for the next risk management cycle.
- 6.1.16 The team have agreed a phased approach with The Executive Director for Children's Services to introduce Operational Risk Registers (ORRs) across all teams within the service. This will ensure alignment to the Council's Corporate Risk Management Framework. Work began in December with the first two teams and varying progress has been made to draft and develop the ORRs with managers from each team. Due to the number of ORRs to be completed within Childrens Social Care, a stepped plan to undertake work with a couple of teams each cycle will be adopted, and further teams brought on board each quarter.

6.2 Developments

- Major incident plans and processes will continue to be reviewed and updated as necessary or following learning from any incidents.
- Reintroduce quarterly Emergency Duty Coordinator (EDC) briefings to increase knowledge and awareness of EP arrangements.
- Review and formalise an internal Incident debrief process.
- Continued engagement and proportionate preparation for introduction of Martyn's Law and associated workstreams.

- The Team will continue to support further planning and training for the MRF Shoreline Pollution workstream following a successful event to validate the MRF multi-agency plan for multi-agency partners.
- Ongoing review of the business continuity plans with particular focus on supporting the updating of Business Impact Analyses.
- Awaiting feedback from Executive Leadership Team to refine the priority activities within the Corporate Business Continuity Plan
- Planning an exercise for service specific Business Continuity plans.
- Further development of risk registers from all teams/services, including a qualitative exercise to ensure escalation of risks from Service Risk Registers to the Corporate Risk Register where appropriate.

7. Assurance and Counter Fraud: Performance Update

7.1 Work Completed

As highlighted in previous reports two members of the Team were on secondment with the Revenues and Benefits Team until March 2023 and the one remaining staff member has been focused on providing support to the Health and Safety Team and the Risk and Resilience Team to assist in co-ordinating business continuity and risk management. The support is required in particular to the Health and Safety Team due to the staffing issues following the School Advisor leaving in August 2022, the Senior Health and Safety Officer leaving in December 2023 and the Health and Safety Officer leaving in June 2023 and the difficulties subsequently in obtaining suitably qualified and experienced staff. Ensuring that there is sufficient capacity within Health and Safety Team to address business as usual, with gaps in the team and challenges in the recruitment of staff using the prescribed routes to recruit staff, has been key to ensure that key processes have operated as well as some progress being achieved in health and safety. The two staff members seconded to the Revenues and Benefits Team transferred permanently on the 1 April 2023 to Revenues and Benefits Team.

There has been a Council wide recruitment freeze for the past two financial years which has affected this area although plans have been drawn up to re-structure the team and provide a Counter Fraud Investigator post. Permission to re-structure the team in advance of the 2024/25 financial year was provided in January 2024.

A team re-structure has taken place and a new Counter Fraud Investigator post has been created and job description created, evaluated and moderated since the last meeting.

In advance of the post holder being in post the following activity has been undertaken:

- An action plan has been drawn up to implement the outstanding actions from the CIPFA Fraud self-assessment.
- Research Counter Fraud Strategies
- A draft Counter Fraud Strategy has been developed and is due to be shared with ELT in July 2024.
- Research on a sanctions policy has been undertaken with Legal Services

- A benchmarking exercise on counter fraud resources, qualifications and target outputs has been undertaken across North West Local Authority “Heads of Internal Audit”.
- Training resources from a neighbouring local authority are being evaluated by both the team and Workforce Learning colleagues to assess whether we can utilise this free resource.
- Requests for completion of Fraud Risk Assessments has been provided to all Assistant Directors and the wholly owned companies. We have had documents from the majority of the Assistant Directors or a timescale when they have been completed and are following up the outstanding areas.
- We have worked with colleagues in HR to incorporate counter fraud as a topic in the induction process.

7.2 Developments

The intention is to appoint into the Counter Fraud Investigator post in June 2023 before considering how additional support can be provided from across the Risk and Audit team, in light of the benchmarking, to provide additional capacity.

The focus on the next quarter is to:

- Finalise the draft Counter Fraud Strategy and present to ELT.
- Develop a draft Sanctions Policy for consideration by ELT before presentation to Cabinet
- Obtain the outstanding Fraud Risk Assessments and evaluate the information provided.
- Develop a Fraud Risk Register from the completed Fraud Risk Assessments
- Evaluate the benchmarking exercise to determine proposals on resourcing for Counter Fraud and qualifications for the Counter Fraud Investigator.
- Progress the action plan from the CIPFA Self – assessment on fraud.

8. Looking Ahead

- 8.1 The Service continues to develop, with a number of key projects being undertaken to embed the role and influence of the team over the next quarter:
- The completion of the re-structure to re-direct resources into Internal Audit, Risk and Resilience and Counter Fraud and undertake recruitment for vacant posts.
 - The embedding of regular risk management reviews across the Council to ensure that Operational and Service Risk Registers are updated on a regular basis. Other work includes the completion of the external review of risk management and the horizon scanning session.
 - Finalising the Assurance Mapping exercise should assist in providing assurance on the key risks affecting the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives.
 - The finalisation of the Risk Appetite Framework inclusion on the Committee header sheets.
 - Continued delivery of the Internal Audit Plans for 2024/25, focusing attention on reviewing the key risks to the organisation, which will evolve as the Council changes.
 - Implement the actions from the BC exercise in March 2024, finalising of the Corporate BC plan and finalising the planning for a BC in March 2024.
 - Completion of the review of the Health and Safety Policy, work on developing wider occupational health, safety and wellbeing of staff.
 - Delivering on the service improvement plans for the Risk and Audit Team.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Internal Audit has made reasonable progress in the completion of the original approved Internal Audit Plan 2023/24 despite the underlying difficulties in recruiting suitable internal audit staff and unplanned absences. Performance in respect of the agreement of recommendations and the feedback from clients has been particularly positive and reflects the value added by the Service. Progress on the 2023/24 approved Internal Audit plan will be hampered by the unplanned reduction in resources requiring a revised Internal Audit Plan.
- 9.2 The Council's accident record continues to be positive, although reported incidents remain below expected and there are plans to improve the risk management further by working with colleagues across the organisation with improved training offer.
- 9.3 The Health and Safety team is continuing to focus on incident reporting, review of risk assessments and the review of event management.
- 9.4 The Council's insurance claims performance remains good.
- 9.5 Further work is planned to improve risk management within the Council by finalising the work on embedding the Council's risk appetite through the Departmental Management Teams and the Committee reports. We will continue to ensure that there are risk registers are in place in line with the Corporate Risk Management Handbook.
- 9.6 Progress has been made in embedding business continuity with a focus this year of reviewing the existing BC plans clear road map for the completion of the outstanding business continuity plans shortly and a focus over the remainder of the financial year at testing and exercising the BC plans.
- 9.7 We have developed improvement places across each of the service areas to deliver improvements which will result in improved risk services as well as an integrated risk and audit approach.

