



Minutes

of a meeting of the

Joint Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 21 September 2023 at 6.30 pm
at the Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon OX14 3JE.

Open to the public, including the press

The meeting was streamed live on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xhQRw1K8BE>

Present in the meeting room:

Members:

South Oxfordshire District Councillors: Stefan Gawrysiak (co-chair), Alexandrine Kantor, Leigh Rawlins, Jo Robb and Ed Sadler

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Katherine Foxhall (co-chair in the chair), Diana Lugova (sub), Lucy Edwards, Judy Roberts and Andrew Skinner

Cabinet members: Councillor Sue Cooper (South, Cabinet Member for Environment), Councillor Mark Coleman (Vale, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Waste), Councillor Debra Dewhurst (Vale, Cabinet Member for Leisure Centres and Community Buildings) and Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing)

Officers: Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive for Operations and Transformation), Andrew Busby (Head of Development and Corporate Landlord), Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer), Ben Whaymand (Leisure Facilities Team Leader) and Mark Foster (Property Assets Manager)

Guests: Gary Starkey and Kevin Williams from Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)

Members of the public: seven

Council members observing: Councillor Ian Snowdon

Remote attendance:

Council members observing: Council Leader Councillor Bethia Thomas, Councillor Ken Arlett

Officers: Patrick Arran (Head of Legal and Democratic), John Backley (Technical Services Manager)

Guests: Nigel Griffith, Saba

Sc.8 Apologies for absence

Councillor Andy Cooke sent his apologies, and Councillor Diana Lugova was in attendance as substitute committee member.

It was noted that Adrian Lear, Technical Projects Team Leader, and Andy Marr from Saba were unable to attend.

Sc.9 Urgent business and chair's announcements

There was no urgent business, but chair ran through some housekeeping matters.

Sc.10 Declaration of interests

No declarations were declared.

Sc.11 Minutes

Resolved:

The minutes of the Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record and the co-chair shall sign them as such.

It was commented that it was hoped that the item discussed at the above meeting on the Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) would be revisited in a year's time.

Sc.12 Work schedule and dates for Joint scrutiny meetings

Resolved:

Committee noted the work programmes.

Sc.13 Public participation

Mr. Salmons addressed the committee, providing a statement on the withdrawn planning application for a maintenance depot site, which he objected to. He was thanked for his statement and provided with a response from the Head of Legal and Democratic, who explained the correct process would be the review of his recently submitted corporate complaint on this matter.

Sc.14 Performance review of Saba (car park operators) 2022-23

Cabinet Member for Environment (South), Councillor Sue Cooper, and Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Waste (Vale), Councillor Mark Coleman, were present to introduce the report and answer any questions.

Officers supporting the item were Head of Development and Corporate Landlord, and the Technical Services Manager. Saba representative Nigel Griffin was present to answer questions.

Councillor Coleman gave an introduction to the report. The contract end was in three years' time. In summary, overall performance was 97%, despite a few KPIs not meeting targets, and the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord considered that performance for the year 2022-23 should be rated 'good'. Scrutiny were asked for any comments before the assessment was formalised.

Comments for officers and Cabinet members were as follows:

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- It was asked why there was an 8.8% contract cost rise year on year. Councillor Cooper explained it was index linked.
- Regarding a question on revenue, Councillor Cooper explained that we receive a report every November, showing details of revenue coming in. A member raised whether members could look at revenue figures. Councillor Coleman suggested that he could bring a response back to the Co-chair.
- A member asked how often pay machines break down? Could this information be given?
- Members would like to see how the public feel about the carpark service, noting there were no complaints reported in this period. Nigel Griffith added that customer satisfaction was not widespread over the contracts they had, but he would look for opportunities. There were issues around what was Saba responsibility – customers may complain about maintenance issues that are out of the scope of the Saba contract.
- A member suggested a mystery shopper experience to gain feedback.
- A small number of customer satisfaction survey returns was a trend, members and officers could look at options.
- A member asked about Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) – could Saba comment on what they felt was going well? Cabinet member added that lots of praise was given on Saba staff training. Saba representative was happy with the collaboration, and it had gone very well and CPE was considered to be a better system so far.
- A member asked Saba about KPI's that reached 100% - do they look to improve KPI's further or just maintain the score? Saba representative explained that KPIs can be reviewed.
- KPI2 – had the staffing issue been resolved for issuing Customer Penalty Notices (CPN's)? Saba representative explained that there was a period of time developing a new team, and this team had now stabilised over this period.
- A member questioned whether the Saba staff wage was competitive enough to retain staff. Particularly as the contract price increase should be reflected in staff pay, as staffing was Saba's biggest running cost. It was asked that the Saba representative take this away to discuss.
- KPI7: A member questioned the rating changing from "good" to "fair". It was considered that data was not there to support a downgrading of that score for customer satisfaction. Cabinet members considered that Saba should have attempted improvement in the score over three years of notice, hence the downgrade.
- A member asked about pay machines that can differentiate between vehicles (for climate implications). Potentially charge brand new cars more if they use polluting fuels. Cabinet member added that this would need to be a contract discussion and would need stipulating in there.
- If there was not good utilisation of car parks, can we look at alternate uses, such as mobile car washes etc, to contribute to revenue.

In summary, the chair stated that committee would like to see the following:

- A way of finding meaningful customer feedback
- How do we review KPI's that keep hitting 100%?
- Addressing the concern over competitiveness of pay for Saba staff, and
- Investment in machines to make more intelligent charging and to be climate conscious.

Resolved:

It was proposed that the committee was satisfied with the performance rating within the report of the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord for Saba contract performance during 2022-2023. Committee provided their comments which can be considered during contract negotiation and future service.

Sc.15 Performance review of Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) 2022-23

Cabinet Member for Leisure Centres and Community Buildings (Vale), Councillor Debra Dewhurst, and Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing (South), Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers, were present to introduce the report and answer questions.

Supporting officers present were Leisure Facilities Team Leader, Property Assets Manager and Head of Development and Corporate Landlord. GLL representatives present were Gary Starkey and Kevin Williams.

Councillor Filipova-Rivers introduced the report. GLL had been contracted with since 2014. There were differences between South and Vale, but the contract was shared. The management fee had changed for South – a reduction was made due to the Covid support package - see paragraph ten of the report.

Contextually, the reporting year was a Covid recovery year, with impacts still being felt. Energy costs had been the newest development, with little government support (although a new funding scheme was being developed). Uncertainty was still an issue, but to the credit of both councils and the work of GLL, we had kept all services running for residents. The only exception was some tweaks to opening times when needed. Decarbonisation schemes were picking up momentum, which was positive, supported by successful funding bids and contributions. There was a strong relationship between council officers and GLL staff, which was based on check and challenge, with regular meetings held to challenge performance and have frank discussions about challenges to delivery.

Comments to officers and Cabinet members were as follows:

- Congratulations was given on customer usage. Cabinet member explained that KPT2 differed for customer usage, depending on whether people are pay-as-you-go or had a membership and what facilities they use. GLL representative also explained that “warm places” would have been a free service that would not have been for members only. The social value of these schemes was noted.
- The difference between subscriptions pre-Covid and now would like to be understood. Cabinet member explained that the rate was down. Noted that GLL had become a living wage provider as well.
- Cabinet member for Vale explained that Vale memberships lost subscriptions from corporate memberships – during Covid, people worked from home and those memberships were lost.
- A member raised issues with Faringdon Leisure Centre complaints, and that the standards varied across the districts and wasn't reflected in the KPT for complaints to the council (KPT8). It was explained that a national customer service team had been put into place and had seen improvements from the previous system of trying to call a centre directly.
- Poor scores for food and drink – may seem unimportant but could have a big impact on how a customer may feel about their experience of their visits in data surveys. This would need ongoing conversations.
- Concern over the large variation in centres and whether an overall KPT was fair. Could centres be grouped? GLL could bring appendices to the next performance report to committee to show KPT breakdown per centre.
- Cabinet member explained that for costs related to energy – GLL was picking up those costs as the councils outsourced the risks. Savings from decarbonisation would be to GLL utility costs.
- Discussion around Covid package repayments. Ben Whaymand explained the utilities situation was GLL's costs and was not considered when the deed of variation was set as it wasn't an issue. Ben was taking a report to CEAC/CEEAC in December on decarbonisation, including large and small projects and changes. The Salix grant projects were a whole building approach (to have building insulation needs addressed, not just an air source heat pump).

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- Discussion was had around financial reporting on joint use.
- Abbey sports centre water leak – it was a main water pipe that had split under the reception and was not a quick fix. Leaking half a litre per second.
- Praise given on other community uses of the centres and reaching out to diverse groups with their programming (e.g., asylum welcome).
- A member discussed the sensory challenges at leisure centres and potential programmes for those with sensory needs. GLL representative had explained that there were some programmes that touched on this.
- A member discussed concerns over drowning risk for groups who statistically swim less / don't learn to swim in their youth. GLL representatives would consider this.

Members debated the need to reassess the customer satisfaction rating as a member made a proposal that the assessment made in the report should be revisited, considering the varying performance of individual centres (for example, reported complaints). It was explained that the current KPTs needed to be adhered to contractually, and it was how GLL were contracted to be assessed at present. Members then agreed that the assessment should remain as it was.

Resolved:

Committee accepted the performance rating in the report of the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord and provided the comments above. Committee would like officers and Cabinet members to work with GLL to:

1. Consider how we look at customer satisfaction as a whole, and
2. Provide a granular look at individual centres in future reporting, where the KPT can be appropriately broken down to that level. This would be for officers to decide the format and what was achievable.

The meeting closed at 8.24 pm