

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Joint Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 16 September 2024 at 6.30 pm

at the Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Committee Members:

South Oxfordshire District (South) Councillors: Alexandrine Kantor, Leigh Rawlins, Jo Robb, Ed Sadler

Vale of White Horse District (Vale) Councillors: Katherine Foxhall (co-chair in the chair), Andy Cooke, Peter Stevens, Ron Batstone

Officers: Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services) Ben Whaymand (Leisure Facilities Team Leader) and John Backley (Technical Services Manager)

Cabinet members: Councillor Sue Caul (Vale Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure Facilities and Community Buildings) and Councillor Mark Coleman (Vale Cabinet member for Environmental Services and Waste)

Guests: Gary Starkey and Kevin Williams from GLL.

Online attendance:

Cabinet members: Councillors Maggie Filipova-Rivers (South Cabinet member for Housing and Community Hub), David Rouane (South Leader), and Sam James-Lawrie (South Cabinet member for Environment)

Officers: Diane Foster (Licensing and Community Safety Manager), Karen Brown (Community Safety Team Leader), Andrew Busby (Head of Development and Corporate Landlord), Phil Barker (Head of Communities), Katharine Doherty (Community Safety Team Leader)

Guests: Nigel Griffin from Saba

Sc.15 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed all to the meeting and ran through some housekeeping matters. She also welcomed a new committee member, Councillor Peter Stevens.

Sc.16 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies, and a roll call of attendees was taken. It was noted that Cabinet member Georgina Heritage could not attend. Councillors Maggie Filipova-Rivers and David Rouane were present online, to present items as a Cabinet member in place of Councillor Heritage.

Sc.17 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record, and the chair will sign them as such.

Sc.18 Declaration of interests

None.

Sc.19 Urgent business

None.

Sc.20 Public participation

None.

Sc.21 Work schedule and dates for Joint scrutiny meetings

Members considered the work programme. The chair explained that more reports would come forward for autumn, and that members could look at the Cabinet work programme to see if there were any items that would be wanted on the Joint Scrutiny Committee agenda.

Sc.22 Saba (car parks) annual performance report

The item was introduced by Cabinet member for Environmental Services and Waste (Vale), who was present in the room. Cabinet member for Environment (South), was present online. Officers supporting the item were the Head of Development and Corporate Services and the Technical Services Manager. A representative from Saba, Nigel Griffin, was present online.

Members raised the following comments:

- Members discussed Saba pay rates, and Saba confirmed that pay was reassessed and now Saba staff are paid National Living Wage. There was mention of the motions raised at both councils on paying Real Living Wage, and whether this could be considered at contract renewal.
- Members considered the barriers to gathering customer satisfaction surveys, but the link to a survey had been added to all communications to encourage responses.
- How do we build upon an excellent rating – chair added that scrutiny wanted to look at the review framework as raised previously.
- KPI8 – asset condition. Members discussed aging ticket machines and who was responsible for upkeep. An officer responded that the machines were installed by Saba and as part of the service agreement, the council requested that Saba maintained ticket machines. At the end of the contract, the machines stay where they are, but would become the council's responsibility. It was explained that ticket sales were not confined to machines, and people can pay online and by telephone. Most people pay by contactless card. Members wanted to be informed of the future plans for the equipment and modernising. Cabinet member explained that there was a legal obligation for council car parks to put physical Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's) onto a car.

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- A member noted the improvement in staffing

Committee summarised that congratulations should be given to Saba for the performance rating given and members supported the rating. The Cabinet member added his thanks for Saba staff and the officer team.

Recommendation: Joint scrutiny committee considered the performance of Saba in delivering the car park operations contract for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and noted the improvements and supported the rating in the officer's report.

Sc.23 GLL (leisure centres) annual performance report 2023-24

The report was introduced by Vale Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure Facilities and Community Buildings. Also present online was South Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Hub, and statutory Deputy Leader, who was present in place of the Cabinet member for Communities, who could not attend the meeting.

Officers supporting the item were the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord, the Leisure Facilities Team Leader, and two senior staff members from GLL.

Comments raised by committee:

- Noted change in score from fair to good. There had been improvements in continuity of communications and partnership working across the districts. GLL staff explained that they took on board the feedback from the last review.
- A discussion was had on complaints, and GLL staff explained the system for handling complaints. A lot of complaints were handled promptly on site by GLL. A small number of complaints that were later stage complaints go to the council. GLL log their own complaints received as well and GLL were given opportunity to resolve these before becoming a later stage complaint.
- A member suggested customer satisfaction surveys per visit to give a different view from yearly.
- Discussion on the Covid support package and the mechanism for GLL paying back the councils – the Cabinet member explained that the risks were mitigated.
- GLL explained they were committed to being a Real Living Wage employer by improving and streamlining services and giving a better customer experience.
- Members acknowledged a big increase in community initiatives to encourage access to services to all areas of the community and acknowledged the recovery post Covid on uptake of activities.
- A member asked about memberships and whether this was increasing. GLL staff explained that there was improvement despite increasing competition from other gyms. GLL explained that they had been working on seasonal promotions as suggested by members and had a dedicated Community Sports Manager. GLL considered that their centres offered a unique offering to other gym chains.

Recommendation Joint Scrutiny Committee considered the performance of Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) in delivering the joint leisure management contract for the period 2023/24. Congratulations were given to those involved in the improvements, and Cabinet members were asked to keep KPT6 (Financial Performance against Transition Plan – Profit and Loss) under review.

Sc.24 Community Safety Partnership (CSP) annual report

Cabinet member for Community Health and Wellbeing (Vale) introduced the report. South Oxfordshire's Council Leader was present online, in place of South's Cabinet member for

Communities who could not attend the meeting. The Council Leader had previously held the portfolio for community safety.

Officers supporting the item were the Licensing and Community Safety Manager and the Community Safety Team Leader. Members of the committee asked questions and commented on the report.

- A member of committee raised the issue of people employed to help domestic violence victims having bias, and an officer assured that all organisations in the partnership would carry out their own staff checks.
- An officer explained that an increase in Ring doorbells had reduced requests for covert cameras.
- The committee discussed the level of referrals, and trends were variable and small in number, and in the context of Covid (where people were confined to their homes), there was a distortion in the number of referrals.
- Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) – a member enquired about the length of time it takes to review. The Cabinet member explained that a board would be created and a chair nominated. Evidence would be gathered and learnings for agencies involved. A report and an action plan would be produced from the review and would be given to the Community Safety Partnership who will review this. Officers added that some time was also needed to await the completion of legal proceedings and to give consideration to the family of the victim. It could take around 18 months.
- Strategic Needs Assessment – a member suggested that some of the graphs were not helpful and needed review. The officers would feedback to Oxfordshire County Council. It was an interactive report on the website so was easier to navigate there.
- A member raised the quoting of “Berkshire West” in the report (page 61 of the report pack) – this was likely a typographical error.
- Page 123/124: A member discussed early intervention for youth drug offences and crime. Cabinet member and officers explained that early intervention projects were being delivered particularly in schools.
- Officers explained that “Ask for Angela” and “Safe Spaces” schemes were hard to quantify in how they help. There was annual reviewing and training for staff at premises. A member suggested putting a list of premises online. An officer added that more will be added to the council’s CSP webpage in due course.
- The CSP will be looking at the Police and Crime Commissioner’s (PCC’s) Police Crime Plan report for 2024-29 and checking whether priorities align. Officers do not expect significant differences and will look at how to continue to apply for and secure funding from the PCC’s Partnership Fund.
- Some members considered that the Partnership was good value for money.

Recommendation:

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(a) noted the progress that the South and Vale Community Safety Partnership (CSP) made in 2023-24 in delivering its priorities and statutory functions and thanked all those involved in this work and;

(b) supported the CSP’s view that the 2022-25 plan will continue to deliver core priorities and statutory functions and focus on these four key priorities:

- domestic abuse
- modern slavery/exploitation
- serious violence
- rural crime

The meeting closed at 8.54 pm