

# Scrutiny Committee Agenda



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Date: 15 June 2011  
Website: [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

A meeting of the  
**Scrutiny Committee**  
will be held on Thursday 23 June 2011  
at 6pm  
Abbey House, Abingdon

## Members of the Committee:

### Councillors

Jim Halliday (Chair)  
Melinda Tilley (Vice-Chairman)  
Eric Batts  
Andrew Crawford  
Jane Crossley  
Tony de Vere

Charlotte Dickson  
Jason Fiddaman  
Bill Jones  
Sandy Lovatt  
Julie Mayhew-Archer  
Fiona Roper

A large print version of this agenda is available. In addition any background papers referred to may be inspected by prior arrangement.

Please note that this meeting will be held in a wheelchair accessible venue. If you would like to attend and have any special access requirements, please let the Democratic Services Officers know beforehand and they will do their very best to meet your requirements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Reed', written in a cursive style.

Margaret Reed  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Members are reminded of the provisions contained in the code of conduct adopted on 30 September 2007 and standing order 34 regarding the declaration of personal and prejudicial interests.

# Agenda

## Open to the Public including the Press

### Map and vision

(Page 6)

A map showing the location of the venue for this meeting is attached. A link to information about nearby car parking is [http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/transport/car\\_parking/default.asp](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/transport/car_parking/default.asp)

The council's vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community.

## 1. Chair and Vice-Chairman

To note that at the annual Council meeting held on 18 May 2011, Councillors Jim Halliday and Melinda Tilley were elected as Chair and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Scrutiny Committee for the 2011/12 municipal year.

## 2. Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

To record the attendance of substitute members, if any, who have been authorised to attend in accordance with the provisions of standing order 17(1), with notification having been given to the proper officer before the start of the meeting and to receive apologies for absence.

## 3. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the committee meeting held on 22 February 2011 (previously published).

## 4. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of personal or personal and prejudicial interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

## 5. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

To receive notification of any matters, which the chair determines, should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances, which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

## **6. Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee**

Any statements and/or petitions from the public under standing order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

## **7. Terms of reference**

To note the committee's terms of reference:

- (1) review and scrutinise the decisions made by, and performance of, the Cabinet, committees of the Council, directors and assistant directors both in relation to individual decisions and over a period of time;
- (2) review and scrutinise the performance of the council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- (3) question members of the Cabinet, committees of the Council, directors and assistant directors as required, about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
- (4) test the rigour and process of reviews (including Best Value Reviews) of council services and make recommendations to the Executive, the appropriate committee or the Council on the outcomes;
- (5) make recommendations to the Cabinet, a committee of the Council or the Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
- (6) exercise the right to call in for reconsideration decisions made but not yet implemented by the Cabinet or any other body, member or director or assistant director;
- (7) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the committee and local people about their activities and performance; and
- (8) question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent).

The committee may exercise overall responsibility for the finances made available to them and can request reports from directors and assistant directors on issues affecting their work.

The committees must report at least annually to full Council on their work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended work programmes having regard to the overall resources made available to the committee by the Council.

The committees will conduct proceedings in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of the council's Constitution.

## **8. Review of recycling and waste collection over Christmas and New Year 2010/11**

(Pages 7 - 23)

To consider the attached paper regarding recycling and waste collection over Christmas and New Year 2010/11.

## **9. Grounds maintenance contract monitoring**

(Pages 24 - 33)

To consider report 4/11 of the head of corporate strategy.

The committee is asked to consider whether:

- to accept the report, or
- to require the client officer and contractor to attend a future meeting of the committee to answer questions.

## **10. Leisure contract monitoring**

(Pages 34 - 48)

To consider report 5/11 of the head of economy, leisure and property.

The committee is asked to consider whether:

- to accept the report, or
- to require the client officer and contractor to attend a future meeting of the committee to answer questions.

## **11. Scrutiny work programme**

(Pages 49 - 51)

Each year the committee forms a work programme setting out the issues for scrutiny. This year, the committee is asked to attend an event on Thursday 21 July to talk to the council's managers about services. At the end of the event, councillors will be asked to indicate which areas should be scrutinised. From this, the committee can form its work programme. To assist, a draft is attached to this agenda.

## **12. Election review**

(Pages 52 - 54)

Councillors are asked to note that David Buckle, Returning Officer, has commissioned an independent review of the way in which the recent local elections and Alternative Vote referendum were conducted in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. Part of the review will examine the apparent higher than usual non-delivery of postal votes. The terms of reference of the review are attached.

Mr Tim Revell has been appointed to carry out the review. He was chosen from a short list of consultants provided by Solace Enterprises having worked in local government at a senior level for over 15 years with extensive experience of running a variety of elections in London boroughs and Wiltshire. He aims to complete his review by early July and report to the two councils' scrutiny committees at a joint meeting in July. The report will be published on both websites once it is available.

### **13. Exclusion of the public, including the press**

The chair to move that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following items are considered:

#### **Leisure contract monitoring - appendix**

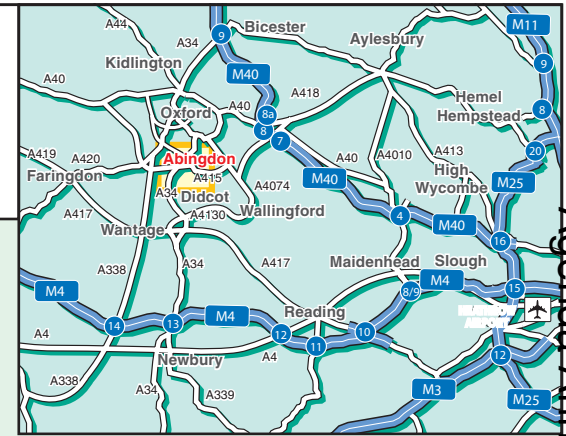
(Category 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.)

### **Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972**

#### **14. Leisure contract monitoring - appendix**

(Page 55)

To note the confidential appendix to the leisure contract monitoring report.



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OS data. PU100040256. Crown ©2008. Mapping sourced from Ordnance Survey

KEY: Car Parks	
	Abbey Close
	Cattle Market
	Charter Multi-storey
	Civic
	Rye Farm
	Hales Meadow
	Audlett Drive
	West St Helen Street

**By rail** – the nearest main line railway stations to Abingdon are either Didcot Parkway (seven miles) or Oxford (eight miles). Radley railway station is located on the main line between Oxford and Didcot and is three miles from Abingdon town centre. For details of train times visit [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) or call 08457 484950

**By bus** – there are a number of bus routes serving Abingdon town centre. For details of services and timetables, visit Oxfordshire County Council’s website at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk). Contact details for bus operators can be found on the travel information pages on our website [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

**Parking** – details of car parks charges can be found on our website

## BRIEFING NOTE

### REVIEW OF WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE DECEMBER 2010

In the week before Christmas 2010 heavy snow and ice resulted in two full collection days (Monday and Tuesday) of recycling being suspended. The decision to suspend collections was made on the Monday morning jointly by Steve Bishop the strategic director (and acting chief executive at the time), Verdant's contract manager and in consultation with the portfolio holder for Waste - the decisions was in accordance with the February 2010 Adverse weather report. (Appendix 1).

It should be noted that the timing of the snow with bank holidays gave us a 'worst case scenario'. Whereas the pre-agreed winter plan provides for a catch-up service in the event of only two full days being lost, that presupposes the following two Saturdays are available. However, in December 2010 the following Saturday was Christmas day, which could not be used. Therefore, the effect was the loss of three days. The winter plan - as appended to this report - requires us to revert to the calendar without catch-up in the event of three days being unavailable.

Therefore, no catch-up was intended; instead Verdant would revert to the calendar when conditions allowed for collections. Because conditions were predicted to be bad for the rest of the week it was agreed that Verdant would resume collections as normal only where it was safe to do so. Some collections re-started on Wednesday. Continued icy conditions that week meant that most parts of the district were affected with many smaller roads remaining impassable.

The rationale for the winter plan reverting to the published Christmas calendar without catching-up (and therefore the rationale for the December 2010 decision) was to disrupt as few residents as possible. Had we attempted to catch up the missed collections it would have meant disrupting the Christmas schedule for all 50,000 Vale households. It would also have resulted in collections not returning to normal until well into February.

Those residents that did miss a collection were advised that they could put out additional side waste at their next scheduled collection.

By keeping to the calendar and collecting side waste on the next collections, disruption was kept to a minimum and normal collections resumed on 24 January. Clearly there was disruption to a large number of residents, but it was the minimal disruption possible and much less than had we tried to catch up.

### **Verdant's inclement weather policy**

Verdant employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to get to work, adapting their means of travel if necessary. Verdant recognizes the need to safely maintain services during adverse weather conditions, whilst properly discharging its duty of care to employees.

All employees are expected to present themselves for duty, this may mean, with management approval, alternative duties may be given where it is not safe to carry out normal duties.

### **Re-deployment of resources**

Verdant staff were deployed where possible to help clear snow and ice from pavements, walkways and councils car parks in the main town centres.

This involved using Verdant's fleet of street cleansing vehicles, utilized to carry the equipment and grit/sand.

### **Garden Waste Collection**

During and immediately following the disruption the garden waste collection service was suspended and the vehicles and crews were used to help pick up additional side waste that was presented over the period. This exceeded the February 2010 adverse weather report and was a very flexible, pragmatic offer by Verdant, which should be applauded.

### **Communications**

Prior to the bad weather Verdant had delivered a bin hanger to all residents informing them of the Christmas collection dates. Other methods of communicating the collection days included a series of radio advertisements, updating the council website, informing all the parish/town councils and putting out press releases.

During the periods of disruption, the following communications were put out to ensure as many residents as possible were made aware of the changes to the waste collection arrangements:

- regular website updates
- weekly press releases
- parish and town council updates
- posters in main towns and villages
- council 'text' alerts to mobile phones – for those residents signed up to the scheme
- radio updates (Heart and Fox FM)
- Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) radio adverts and updates

Residents were told to follow the Christmas calendar for the correct collection day and which bin would be collected (recycling or waste).



### **Review**

Attached to this briefing note (Appendix 1) is the adverse weather report produced in February 2010 following the cold weather in December 2009 and January 2010 which formed the basis of the actions taken in December 2010.

A review of this years collections during the adverse weather took place in March and a revised report has been produced (Appendix 2)

### **Future action points**

In the event of a repeat of extreme weather conditions that affect refuse, recycling and garden waste collections, the following actions have been agreed:

### **Actions**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Verdant/Council</b>
Follow scenarios a,b or c below depending on scale of disruption.	Verdant
8am deadline for operational decisions to be made between council and Verdant.	Verdant/Council
3 updates – 8am, midday and later afternoon. Information provided to the council at the end of each day regarding what is outstanding.	Verdant
Use supervisor vans to deploy more staff and snow clearing equipment.	Verdant
Organise central working points close to where staff live.	Verdant
Utilization of the garden waste vehicles.	Verdant
Ensure adequate supply and storage of salt/grit.	Council
Increase no. of grit bins in public areas i.e. council leisure centres etc.	Council

### **Operational scenarios:**

- a) 1 day disruption:-  
Collections will be one day late and catch up will take place on the Saturday. It will be necessary to ensure disposal sites are open on the Saturday.
- b) 2 days disruption:-  
Collections will be two days late in the initial week of disruption and one day late in the next week following a Saturday catch up. For example:-

<b>Normal collection day</b>	<b>Revised collection day</b>
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday
Thursday	Saturday
Friday	Monday
Monday	Tuesday
Tuesday	Wednesday
Wednesday	Thursday
Thursday	Friday
Friday	Saturday

If catch up for scenario's (a) and (b) can not be achieved prior to a Christmas calendar starting then refer to scenario (c) below. Also where certain roads still cannot be accessed these will be collected on the next scheduled collection as per scenario (c)

- c) 3 days disruption or more:-  
Revert back to the latest published calendar when collections resume and collect all excess waste and recycling for the next two weeks from properties which have missed collections.

### **Communications**

The following communication procedures have been agreed

<b>Action</b>	<b>Verdant/Council</b>
Provide operational updates – 8am, midday and afternoon. Evening email with what is outstanding.	Verdant
Script – for all staff both Verdant and Councils. Daily staff briefings to go through the script.	Verdant/Council
Posters/information – send to council /communications to send out to parishes/councilors and encourage door stepping.	Verdant/Council
Look into diverting call centre number to a mobile phone held by the call centre manager.	Verdant
Daily town/parish and councilor email	Councils
Text and email alert system – (increase numbers on alert system). Be specific to each district i.e. which bin to put out.	Councils
Regular website updates.	Verdant/Council
Phone system updates (recorded messages am and pm)	Verdant/Council
Radio updates	Council/OWP
Call newspapers – update their websites	Council
Disable postcode search	Council

## **Questions and Answers**

### **Q. *Why could other companies such as Tesco's continue to access roads but Verdant could not?***

- A. The sizes and weight of the vehicles are very different. The waste vehicles are 26 tonnes and would cause considerable damage if they were to slide on icy roads.  
The vehicles are continually stopping and starting along the street rather than delivering to individual properties.  
The crew has to be able to wheel the bins from properties to the vehicles safely, which is more difficult with snow and ice on the ground.  
The vehicles have to be able to empty the waste at the County Councils waste sites, if these were not accessible or closed due to bank holidays it was not possible for Verdant to send out their vehicles either.

### **Q. *Why did the council not attempt to provide a catch up service?***

- A. The decision not to attempt a catch up of those residents who missed a collection was taken in order to safeguard collections for the majority of households who had been unaffected by the disruption. One of the most

challenging aspects of a service to every household is the inability to provide 'real time' updates on a daily or even more frequent basis. Our text service would be beneficial here but we only have a small percentage of residents who have currently signed up for this, although the numbers are growing. Therefore without a reliable means of communicating with all residents it was decided to seek to minimize the impact on the existing waste calendar. To have gone back to the routes that had been suspended would have meant every household in the Vale would have been affected with a delayed collection.

**Q *Who made the decision to suspend collections and not attempt to catch up?***

A This was a joint decision made on the first day of disruption by the strategic director, Verdants contracts manager and the portfolio holder for Waste.

**Q *Were additional resources provided to deal with the missed collections?***

A Yes, the garden waste crew and street cleansing crews were used to clear additional side waste at the next scheduled collection, crews worked longer hours within the restrictions imposed on them and they worked Saturdays.

**Q *Why did Verdant not employ additional staff to help catch up***

A Having an effective and cost efficient contractor means that the right number of staff is trained for delivery of the core service. This does however mean that when the service is disrupted due to extreme weather or when there are large quantities of material to collect such as over Christmas the service will take time to recover. It is not financially viable for the contractor to employ spare staff and vehicles for when these situations arise. It is also not possible to bring in at short notice additional waste vehicles (such as hiring) as well as provided instantly trained drivers and crews.

**Q *Why did the backlog take so long to clear?***

A The amount of waste, recycling and food waste presented at Christmas is at the highest level of the year in general. When the service resumed the waste vehicles were filling up much more quickly and therefore could not complete the usual rounds before having to go and empty the vehicles, this added time to the process.



## **Appendix 1**

### **Adverse weather report for South Oxfordshire District Council**

**February 2010**

#### **Background**

Due to the unusually prolonged spell of cold weather from December 2009 into January a number of disruptions occurred to the refuse and recycling collections. This, coupled with the scheduled Christmas and new year collection changes meant further disruptions to collections, every effort was made to ensure these disruptions were kept to a minimum. This report sets out the actions that were taken including re-deployment of duties and communication with residents including future action points in the event of a re-occurrence of adverse weather.

#### **Verdant's inclement weather policy**

Verdant employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to get to work, adapting their means of travel if necessary. Verdant recognizes the need to safely maintain services during adverse weather conditions, whilst properly discharging it's duty of care to employees.

All employees are expected to present themselves for duty, this may mean, with management approval, alternative duties may be given where it is not safe to carry out normal duties.

#### **Adverse weather December 2009 – January 2010**

The initial spell of the adverse weather that affected collections in South Oxfordshire began on 21 December 2009. Collections were suspended on Tuesday 22 due to the unsafe conditions. When collections resumed on Wednesday 23 they were a day later than the scheduled Christmas calendar.

On the week commencing 4 January, the refuse and recycling service was suspended due to the snow from the 6 – 9 January.

This put the service exactly 5 working days behind the published Christmas schedule, which meant that everyone's collection was on their normal day, but collecting the alternative waste.



If the catch-up continued by the original plan, collecting on a Saturday to catch up one day per week, the collections would have been affected until at least mid February.

To complicate things further, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January (the following week) was also suspended due to a further fall of snow. This day was caught up on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup>.

During the week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> January, we re-commenced the service, but with limitations as there were still roads that were heavily iced and many paths were covered in snow still. The Verdant crews went out and completed as much as they could each day, but there were a small number of roads that were not collected due to inaccessibility of the road or the running out of drivers hours caused by the length of time needed to make collections in the conditions. It was again decided in conjunction with SODC that as these bins were to be collected again the following week, they would not be returned too but collected with all side waste the following week.

During w/c 11 January, the garden waste vehicles were placed as static vehicles that refuse could be taken too across the district.

### **Re-deployment of resources**

Where possible staff were deployed to help clear snow in the main town centres to make pavements and walkways safe. This also involved gritting/sanding the car parks.

This involved using Verdant's fleet of street cleansing vehicles, utilized to carry the equipment and grit/sand.

### **Collections return to calendar – w/c 18 January**

As mentioned above, a strategic decision was made, in conjunction with SODC, that a return to the scheduled calendar collections was needed as soon as possible to reduce confusion and prolonged disruption. This meant a return to the published schedule as of Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January. This would mean everyone receiving a collection of the same waste stream two weeks in a row.

A consequence to this was that half the residents of South Oxfordshire would not get a collection of recycling for three weeks (the more rural



properties). Verdant used the garden waste vehicles, totaling four, to go around where possible and collect recycling from those residents that were due to have their refuse collected, as long as they had presented them as requested. These crews stuck mainly to the main routes and towns to ensure the maximum coverage.

Week commencing 25<sup>th</sup> January, Verdant instructed crews to continue to pick up all side waste to ensure that anyone who did not receive two collections the previous week, has all their waste taken.

Garden waste collections returned to normal w/c 25 January.

### **Communications**

Prior to the first hit of bad weather in December Verdant delivered a bin hanger to all residents informing them of the Christmas collection dates. Other methods of communicating the collection days included a series of radio ad's, updated the website, informed all the parish/town councils and put out press releases.

During the 3 weeks of disruptions, the following communications were put out to ensure as many residents as possible were made aware of the waste collection arrangements:

- regular website updates
- weekly press releases
- parish and town council updates
- posters in main towns and villages
- council 'text' alerts
- radio updates (Heart FM)

To avoid confusion, it was asked that everyone put both recycling and refuse out and Verdant would collect the correct bin and any side waste over the coming weeks.



## **Future action points**

In the event of a repeat of extreme weather conditions that affect refuse and recycling collections the following actions should be followed:

### **Operations**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Verdant/Council</b>
Follow scenarios a,b,c below depending on scale of disruption.	Verdant
8am deadline for operational decisions to be made between council and Verdant.	Verdant/Council
Updates midday and late afternoon/early evening.	Verdant
Email council list of outstanding roads/areas by the end of the day.	Verdant
Use supervisor vans to deploy more staff and snow clearing equipment.	Verdant
Organise central working points close to where staff live.	Verdant
Swap the barrows for mobile gritting units in the four main town centres, prior to snow fall.	Verdant
Better utilization of the garden waste vehicles.	Verdant
Ensure adequate supply of salt/grit.	Council
Increase no. of grit bins in public areas i.e. council leisure centres etc.	Council
Purchase 6 mobile gritter units for Verdant staff and car park inspectors to use.	Council





**Operational scenarios:**

- a) 1 day disruption = collections will be one day late (ensure tips are open for Saturday catch up).
- b) 2 days disruption = collections will be two days late (except Fridays) and use following two Saturdays for catch up i.e. if snow occurs on Monday and Tuesday:

<b>Normal collection day</b>	<b>Revised collection day</b>
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday
Thursday	Saturday
Friday	Monday
Monday	Tuesday
Tuesday	Wednesday
Wednesday	Thursday
Thursday	Friday
Friday	Saturday

- c) 3 days or more = revert back calendar when collections resume and collect all excess waste and recycling for the next two weeks.

## **Communications**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Verdant/Council</b>
Provide operational updates – 8am, midday and afternoon. Evening email with what is outstanding.	Verdant
Script – for all staff both Verdant and Councils. Daily staff briefings to go through the script.	Verdant/Council
Posters/information – send to SODC /comms to send out to parishes/councilors and encourage doorstepping.	Verdant/Council
Look into diverting call centre number to a mobile phone held by the call centre manager.	Verdant
'Keep bins out message' to be clear on all communications.	Verdant/Council
Daily town/parish and councilor email	Councils
Text and email alert system – increase numbers on alert system (use list of 10,000 from PA database)	Councils
Regular website updates.	Verdant/Council
Phone system updates (recorded messages)	Verdant/Council
Radio updates	
Call newspapers – update their websites	Council
Disable postcode search	Council

## Appendix 2

# Adverse Weather Report

February 2011



December 2010 – Verdant vehicles queuing at the Sutton Courtenay landfill site.

### **Background**

In December 2010 a period of bad weather affected collections in South Oxfordshire and Vale. This occurred the week before Christmas and resulted in two full collection days (Monday and Tuesday) being suspended.

Because conditions were predicted to be bad for the rest of the week it was agreed with the council that collections would resume as normal on Wednesday as far as was practical to do so (some smaller roads and closes were still unable to be accessed). Lessons learnt from 2009/10 adverse weather meant strategic decisions were made earlier, and the plan of action going forward could be carried out more efficiently.

It was agreed to carry on with the published Christmas collection schedule to avoid further disruptions and those residents who missed a collection at the start of the week would be able to put side waste out on their next scheduled collection. If collections had not reverted back to normal collections, the Christmas collection calendar catch ups would have gone on into February, almost two months after the adverse weather hit. By sticking to the calendar and collecting side waste on the next collections, disruptions were kept to a minimum.

### **Verdant's inclement weather policy**

Verdant employees are expected to make every reasonable effort to get to work, adapting their means of travel if necessary. Verdant recognizes the need to safely maintain services during adverse weather conditions, whilst properly discharging its duty of care to employees.

All employees are expected to present themselves for duty, this may mean, with management approval, alternative duties may be given where it is not safe to carry out normal duties.

### **Re-deployment of resources**

Where possible staff were deployed to help clear snow in the main town centres to clear pavements, walkways and the councils car parks.

This involved using Verdant's fleet of street cleansing vehicles, utilized to carry the equipment and grit/sand.

The garden waste collections were suspended during the disruptions and into January. The vehicles and crews were used to help collect extra waste that was presented by those households that had missed a collection. It has been agreed going forward that there will be no garden waste collections over the two week Christmas period. The garden waste crews will be utilized to collect the increased volumes of recycling normally put out over this period.

### **Communications**

Prior to the bad weather in December Verdant had delivered a bin hanger to all residents informing them of the Christmas collection dates. Other methods of communicating the collection days included a series of radio advertisements, updating the council website, informing all the parish/town councils and putting out press releases.

During the periods of disruption, the following communications were put out to ensure as many residents as possible were made aware of the changes to the waste collection arrangements:

- regular website updates
- weekly press releases
- parish and town council updates
- posters in main towns and villages
- council 'text' alerts to mobile phones – for those residents signed up to the scheme
- radio updates (Heart and Fox FM)
- Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) radio adverts and updates

Residents were told to follow their calendar for the correct collection day and which bin would be collected. Anyone that missed a collection would be able to put out extra waste (approx 3 black bags if on refuse week) which would be collected on their next scheduled collection.

**Future action points**

In the event of a repeat of extreme weather conditions that affect refuse and recycling collections, the following actions should be followed:

**Operations**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Verdant/Council</b>
Follow scenarios a,b,c below depending on scale of disruption.	Verdant
8am deadline for operational decisions to be made between council and Verdant.	Verdant/Council
Updates midday and late afternoon/early evening.	Verdant
Email council list of outstanding roads/areas by the end of the day.	Verdant
Use supervisor vans to deploy more staff and snow clearing equipment.	Verdant
Organise central working points close to where staff live.	Verdant
Swap the barrows for mobile gritting units in the seven main town centres, prior to snow fall.	Verdant
Utilization of the garden waste vehicles.	Verdant
Ensure adequate supply and storage of salt/grit.	Council
Increase no. of grit bins in public areas i.e. council leisure centres etc.	Council

**Operational scenarios:**

- a) 1 day disruption = collections will be one day late (ensure tips are open for Saturday catch up).
- b) 2 days disruption = collections will be two days late in the initial week of disruption and one day late in the next week following a Saturday catch up. For example :-

<b>Normal collection day</b>	<b>Revised collection day</b>
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday
Thursday	Saturday
Friday	Monday
Monday	Tuesday
Tuesday	Wednesday
Wednesday	Thursday
Thursday	Friday
Friday	Saturday

If catch up for scenario's (a) and (b) can not be achieved prior to a Christmas calendar starting then refer to scenario (c) below. Also where certain roads still cannot be accessed these will be collected on the next scheduled collection as per scenario (c)

3 days or more = revert back to current calendar when collections resume and collect all excess waste and recycling for the next two weeks from properties which have missed collections.

**Communications**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Verdant/Council</b>
Provide operational updates – 8am, midday and afternoon. Evening email with what is outstanding.	Verdant
Script – for all staff both Verdant and Councils. Daily staff briefings to go through the script.	Verdant/Council
Posters/information – send to council /communications to send out to parishes/councilors and encourage door stepping.	Verdant/Council

Look into diverting call centre number to a mobile phone held by the call centre manager.	Verdant
Daily town/parish and councilor email	Councils
Text and email alert system – (increase numbers on alert system). Be specific to each district i.e. which bin to put out.	Councils
Regular website updates.	Verdant/Council
Phone system updates (recorded messages am and pm)	Verdant/Council
Radio updates	Council/OWP
Call newspapers – update their websites	Council
Disable postcode search	Council

# Scrutiny Committee Report 23 June 2011



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

Report no. 4/11

Author: Ian Matten

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Wards affected: All

## **Grounds maintenance contract monitoring: performance review of ISS Facility Services Landscaping**

### **Recommendation**

That the committee considers ISS Facility Services Landscaping performance in delivering the grounds maintenance service for the period 1 January to 31 December 2010 and makes any recommendation to the cabinet member to enable him to make a final assessment on performance.

### **Purpose of Report**

1. The report considers the performance of ISS Facility Services Landscaping (ISS) in providing grounds maintenance for the period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010.

### **Strategic Objectives**

2. The performance review of ISS helps ensure that the council is achieving its strategic objectives and corporate priorities, particularly the following:

Strategic objective 13: managing our business effectively, and corporate priority EB1: provide value for money services which meet the needs of our residents and service users.



Strategic objective 16: keeping the district a clean place to live, and corporate priorities CV1 and CV2: deal effectively with litter and detritus, tackle envirocrime, such as fly tipping, dog fouling and graffiti.

## Background

3. The grounds maintenance partnership contract commenced on 1 January 2005, initially with a company called JV Strong and Co Ltd. They were subsequently acquired by ISS Waterers Landscape Ltd in January 2007. Then in March last year the company went through a re-branding exercise to remove the inherited branding which had been adopted through business acquisition and renamed themselves ISS Facility Services Landscaping.
4. The original contract was due to end on 31 December 2009 but an option to extend for a further two years was approved last year and will now end on 31 December 2011. The decision to extend was taken for two main reasons:
  - It has enabled us to work with the contractor to address the council's financial constraints and to agree a sustainable budget for grounds maintenance whilst limiting the impact on service provision.
  - It has allowed us to align the finishing dates for this contract with South Oxfordshire District Councils grounds maintenance contract so that both authorities can now enter into a single joint contract to commence on 1 January 2012.
5. The service provided by ISS encompasses the maintenance of district council owned parks, open spaces and play areas. It includes grass cutting, hedge maintenance, shrub and flower beds, trees, litter collection, flood prevention and maintenance of sports facilities. The contract also includes work undertaken on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council and Abingdon Town Council.
6. An open and trusting relationship between the contractor and council has developed over the years, providing a service which has proved to be effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the district. As part of the 2010/11 budget setting process savings identified and implemented impacted on the contractors staffing levels last year. However, dry weather at the peak growing time enabled the contractor to maintain a good level of service although there was an overall increase in the number of notification notices issued compared to previous years. Finding experienced reliable labour to fill seasonal posts proved difficult again this year because of the type of work involved and the associated levels of pay.
7. The council monitors this contract by regular weekly update meetings, monthly formal minuted meetings to discuss performance, work scheduling and issues associated with the service. Joint performance monitoring inspections are carried out at randomly selected sites each month.
8. In addition to monthly performance monitoring inspections regular Health and Safety audits were undertaken to confirm safe working practices, provision of suitable equipment and compliance with agreed risk assessments and method statements.
9. Managing contractor performance is essential for delivering the council's objectives and targets. The councils cannot deliver excellent service to its residents unless its

contractors are excellent therefore working jointly with the contractor to review performance regularly is essential.

10. The council's process for managing contractor performance focuses on continuous improvement and action planning. The success of the performance review framework depends on contractors and the council working together to set and review realistic, jointly agreed and measurable targets.

11. The overall framework is designed to be:

- a consistent way for the council to measure contractor performance in order to help highlight and resolve operational issues
- flexible enough to suit each contract, including smaller contracts which may not require all elements of the framework
- a step towards managing risk more effectively and improving performance through action planning.

## **Overview of the review framework**

12. The review process consists of three essential dimensions:

- performance measured against key performance targets (KPTs)
- customer satisfaction
- client satisfaction.

13. Each dimension is assessed and the head of service makes a judgement of classification. Contractor feedback and an assessment of strengths and areas for improvement are also included. Where some dimensions are not relevant, or difficult to apply fairly to certain types of contract, the framework may be adjusted or simplified at the discretion of the head of service.

### **Dimension 1 – Key performance targets**

14. Key performance targets are included in the grounds maintenance contract, they are:

- KPT 1 -the pass rate on randomly selected monthly monitoring inspections of district council play areas
- KPT 2 - the pass rate on randomly selected monthly monitoring inspections of district council owned parks and open spaces
- KPT3 - the annual customer satisfaction rating for Abbey Meadows and Manor Road.

15. The key performance targets KPT 1 and KPT 2 are measured by monthly joint inspections by the client and contractor. As well as an overall assessment providing a general impression about the level and quality of the service being achieved, each service activity for the site is subject to a more detailed assessment and given a score out of ten. The total of all scores for the site are then shown as a percentage and an

average is calculated for all sites assessed throughout the year. The sites are randomly selected and the inspections undertaken in most cases within 48 hours.

16. Total average scores achieved in 2010 are:

	Target	Achieved
KPT 1	83%	86%
KPT 2	87%	85%
KPT 3	78%	79%
Average %	82.66%	83.33%

17. KPT 2 was not achieved due mainly to delays in completing some renovation works to the council's football pitches which were identified at an inspection carried out in October.

18. The other two targets were exceeded and therefore the average percentage achieved against the average target set for all key performance indicators results in a rounded up score of 101 per cent. This has been calculated as follows target achieved (83.33 per cent) ÷ Target (82.66 per cent) x 100 = 100.81 per cent.

19. For reasons of consistency with previous assessments, and for fairness between contractors, the following is a rough guide to the assessment of contractors against KPTs

Score	>95%	90-95%	80-89%	70-79%	<70%
Classification	excellent	good	fair	weak	poor

20. Based on this performance, the head of service has made a judgement on KPT performance as follows:

KPT judgement 

excellent
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#### Dimension 2 – Customer satisfaction

21. A customer satisfaction survey was undertaken in August at Abbey Meadows and Manor Road. Visitors to the parks were asked to complete a short questionnaire covering a range of issues associated with the park and its maintenance including equalities impact assessment data which will lead to further improvements in service provision. A total of 112 responses were received with 79 per cent of respondents being satisfied or very satisfied with the park they visited.

22. As part of the consultation process for the new grounds maintenance contract officers also undertook a web based survey where residents could complete a short on-line questionnaire. They were asked for their views on current service provision but also what their priorities were for the new contract. A total of 28 responses were received.

23. Customers were asked in both questionnaires “how satisfied are you with the cleanliness and maintenance of the park” and “how satisfied are you with the grounds maintenance tasks listed”. Each response was then ranked from 1-5 with 5 being very satisfied and 1 being not satisfied at all. This resulted in an average score of 3.92. An analysis of customer satisfaction performance appears in annex A attached to this report.
24. There have been no official complaints regarding the contractor’s performance logged through the council’s comments and complaints procedure during this review period.
25. For reasons of consistency with previous assessments, and for fairness between contractors, the following is a rough guide to the assessment of contractors on customer satisfaction

Score	4.3 – 5.0	3.9 – 4.3	3.4 – 3.9	3.0 – 3.4	<3.0
Classification	excellent	good	fair	weak	poor

26. Based on this performance, the head of service has made a judgement on customer satisfaction as follows:

Customer satisfaction judgement

### Dimension 3 – Client satisfaction

27. The grounds maintenance client team and a number of council officers who have interaction with ISS have provided feedback on their experience of the contractor. An analysis of council satisfaction performance appears in annex B attached to this report, along with the average score for each question and the strengths and areas for improvement that were identified. Officers were asked to mark each category from 1-5 with 5 being excellent and 1 being very poor. This resulted in a score of 3.97 out of a maximum of 5.
28. For reasons of consistency with previous assessments, and for fairness between contractors, the following is a rough guide to the assessment of contractors on customer satisfaction.

Score	4.3 – 5.0	3.9 – 4.3	3.4 – 3.9	3.0 – 3.4	<3.0
Classification	excellent	good	fair	weak	poor

29. Based on this performance, the head of service has made a judgement on customer satisfaction as follows:

Client satisfaction judgement

### Overall assessment

30. The council considers that ISS has provided a consistent level of service despite the financial constraints imposed on them and contributed significantly again to the council achieving a Green Flag award for Abbey Gardens. This award recognises well managed and maintained high quality parks and open spaces.

31. Taking into account the performance of the contractor against KPT's, customer satisfaction and council satisfaction, the head of service has made an overall judgement as follows:

Overall assessment 

good
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### **Strengths and areas for improvement**

32. Annex B also records strengths and areas for improvement relating to the performance of the contractor over the last year. If performance is below expectations, the shared parks manager would agree an improvement plan with the contractor. This is not necessary based on the contractor's performance in this review year.

### **Contractor's feedback**

33. A key feature of the process for reviewing the performance of contractors is that the council provides them with an opportunity to give their feedback on the assessment including suggestions for improvements to council processes. This is included in annex C attached to this report.

### **Financial Implications**

34. There are no financial implications arising from this report

### **Legal Implications**

35. There are no legal implications arising from this report

### **Conclusion**

36. The head of corporate strategy, based on the information contained within this report, has assessed the performance of ISS Facility Services Landscaping for the period 1 January 2010 – 31 December 2010 as good. The committee is asked to make any recommendations to the cabinet member to enable him to make a final assessment on performance.

# Annex A - Customer Satisfaction

140 completed questionnaires were received.

Customers were asked “how satisfied are you with the cleanliness and maintenance of the park” and “how satisfied are you with the grounds maintenance tasks listed”. They were asked to mark each question out of 1-5.

The combined results are shown in the table below.

Rating	Questions Answered	Ranking	Total Score
very satisfied	134	5	670
satisfied	223	4	892
neither satisfied or dissatisfied	15	3	45
dissatisfied	38	2	76
very dissatisfied	26	1	26
TOTAL	436		1709

calculation  $1709 \div 436 = 3.92 = \text{good}$

Some additional comments were made by residents relating to the grounds maintenance service:

more litter and dog bins needed  
would like to see additional seating  
more shrubs/trees with wildlife food, bird boxes  
frequency of grass cutting should not be reduced.

# Annex B - Client Satisfaction

This assessment allows the council (as a client) to record its own satisfaction with aspects of a contractor's performance which lie outside Key Performance Targets and customer satisfaction. Each officer with direct knowledge and who frequently interacts with the contractor should complete this form. Questions can be left blank if not relevant to a contract or contractor.

Contractor / supplier / partner name

From (date)  To

## SERVICE DELIVERY

Attribute	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Very Poor (1)
1 understanding of the client's needs		4.12			
2 response time		4.12			
3 delivers to time			3.62		
4 delivers to budget		4.00			
5 efficiency of invoicing			3.80		
6 approach to health & safety		4.00			

## COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONS

Attribute	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Very Poor (1)
7 easy to deal with		4.75			
8 communications / keeping the client informed			3.87		
9 quality of written documentation			3.57		
10 compliance with council's corporate identity			3.50		
11 listening		4.25			
12 quality of relationship		4.50			

## IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Attribute	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Very Poor (1)
13 offers suggestions beyond the scope of work		4.14			
14 degree of innovation			3.20		
15 goes the extra mile		4.25			
16 supports the council's sustainability objectives			3.71		
17 supports the council's equality objectives			3.66		
18 degree of partnership working		4.42			

## KEY DOCUMENTS

If required, has the contractor provided the council with annual updates of the following documents?

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. Annual Corporate Governance Assurance Statement? (Yes / No) | N/A |
| 2. updated risk register (Yes / No)                            | YES |
| 3. annual business plan (Yes / No)                             | N/A |
| 4. updated business continuity plan (Yes / No)                 | N/A |

## STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Strengths	good reliable workforce which is responsive and always willing to help
	excellent local knowledge and experience of the work force
	good working relationship with client
Areas for improvement	management team's knowledge and experience
	better self monitoring
	increase labour levels during peak periods



# Annex C - Contractor 360° feedback

## Contractor's reaction / feedback on Council's assessment

A fair reflection of the relationship ISS have built up with Vale of White Horse managers over the period we have been partnering in particular since the open and honest review undertaken to achieve savings for the year. This shows how we proactively work and plan together to achieve, or partially achieve targets set by current financial pressures.

Areas for improvement has indicated three specifics which ISS have and will continue to concentrate on. Specifically 'management team' where a recent change has taken place, 'better self monitoring' where an in-depth review of routes and teams has taken place with a view to increase productivity and improve efficiencies.

ISS are aware of the resources levels which will be acutely monitored to ensure they are correct and adequate for the season ahead. ISS are looking to synergies with other local teams with a view to improving efficiencies and productivity.

## Any areas where contractor disagrees with assessment


## What could / should the Council do differently to enable the contractor to deliver the service more efficiently / effectively / economically?


Feedback provided by 

Brian Ackroyd
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Date 

29 March 2011
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# Scrutiny Committee report

## 23 June 2011



Report of head of economy leisure and property

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To: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 23 June 2011

Report no. 5/11

## Leisure contract monitoring: performance review of DC Leisure Ltd

### RECOMMENDATION

That the committee considers DC Leisure's performance in delivering the leisure management contract for the period 2010/11 for the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre and makes any recommendations to the cabinet member for leisure to enable her to make a final assessment on performance.

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The report considers the performance of DC Leisure Ltd in providing the leisure management contract at the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre for the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2. The performance review of DC Leisure Ltd helps ensure that the Vale Council is achieving its strategic objectives and corporate priorities, particularly the following:  
  
strategic objective 2: managing our business effectively, and corporate priority EB1: provide value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users – through negotiations with DC Leisure the Vale Council has procured an extension to the existing contract, which delivers an income stream up to 2014 when the contract will be aligned with the Vale Council's other leisure management contract. Annual customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken to monitor that customer needs are being met and action plans put in place to address areas in need of improvement.

strategic objective 2: managing our business effectively, and corporate priority EB2: optimise access to our services – by working collaboratively with DC Leisure and our various customer panels we will increase awareness of the Access to Leisure scheme. With the introduction of schemes such as Go Active into the centre's programme, officers anticipate that new users will be encouraged to visit the centre, as well as regular users continuing to participate in activities.

strategic objective 5: helping to maintain a safe Vale, and corporate priorities SV1: help to maintain, or further reduce, low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and SV2: reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour – structured leisure activities can divert people from crime and anti-social behaviour. Those participating in regular physical activity tend to have a lower fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

## **BACKGROUND**

3. The DC Leisure Ltd contract for the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre was let from 1 April 2002 for a ten year period ending on 31 March 2012. Due to improved tax benefits, the Vale Council allowed DC Leisure to sub-let the contract to a charitable not for profit organisation, the former Community Leisure Services (now known as Active Nation). Both companies were involved in the centre from the design stage. However, for the purposes of this report, DC Leisure is the main contractor and the organisation that is accountable to the Vale Council for the centre's performance. The original contract required the Vale Council to pay DC Leisure a small annual grant.
4. In 2009/10 the Vale Council negotiated an extension to the original contract, which allows DC Leisure to continue its arrangements with Active Nation up to 31 August 2014. In return for this extension, the Vale Council receives a monthly payment from DC Leisure from 1 April 2010 until 31 August 2014. The change in end date allows all of the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire leisure management contracts to run conterminously; presenting opportunities for increased shared working in the future.
5. DC Leisure and Active Nation have maintained their performance during 2010/11, by increasing the size and skill base of their management team at the centre and ensuring the whole team performs to the best of its abilities. Since the centre opened in 2002, there has been a significant increase in competition to the centre in the local area in the form of built leisure facilities and the trend towards private training and other lifestyle providers. Despite this, the centre continues to perform well in all areas of its programmed activities.
6. The Vale Council monitors this contract on a monthly basis; each visit is unannounced and follows a detailed check list. Throughout the year, eight of these visits will be normal operational inspections and four will be based on health and safety. Areas that require immediate improvement are notified to the contractor before the officer leaves site and a full report detailing all findings is issued to the contractor within two days of the inspection; along with a summary section detailing required actions and deadlines for completion.
7. In addition to the formal inspections, there are formal monthly client / contractor meetings at the centre where any relevant issues are discussed. These visits also allow for ad-hoc inspections to take place. There are quarterly strategic meetings, which allow for medium to long-term issues to be discussed and planned for but any important issues can be raised and resolved should they arise.

8. Managing contractor performance is essential for delivering the council's objectives and targets. The Vale Council cannot deliver excellent service to its residents unless its contractors are excellent. Working jointly with contractors to review performance regularly is therefore essential.
9. The Vale Council's process for managing contractor performance focuses on continuous improvement and action planning. The success of the performance review framework depends on contractors and the council working together to set and review realistic, jointly agreed and measurable targets.
10. The overall framework is designed to be:
  - a consistent way for the council to consistently measure contractor performance, to help highlight and resolve operational issues
  - flexible enough to suit each contract, including smaller contracts which may not require all elements of the framework
  - a step towards managing risk more effectively and improving performance through action planning.

## OVERVIEW OF THE REVIEW FRAMEWORK

11. The review process consists of three essential dimensions:
  1. performance measured against key performance indicators (KPIs)
  2. customer satisfaction with the total service experience
  3. Vale Council satisfaction as client.
12. Each dimension is assessed and the head of service makes a judgement of classification. Contractor feedback and an assessment of strengths and areas for improvement are also included. Where some dimensions are not relevant, or difficult to apply fairly to certain types of contract, the framework may be adjusted or simplified at the discretion of the heads of service. In the case of this review, there are no key performance indicators to measure performance against in dimension 1, so trend monitoring is used to track performance instead.

## DIMENSION 1 – TREND MONITORING

13. The DC Leisure contract was not set up using key performance targets as measures of achievement. The client team has introduced a monitoring process, which provides a trend analysis of key areas of performance. Detailed trend analysis of the data appears in confidential annex A attached to this report.

14. The data is based on the following criteria monitored on a quarterly basis:

- **number of visits (the total number of users who pay to use the facility as either casual customers or members)**

attendance at the centre in 2010/11 (558,024 visits) has recovered well after the major pool pipe failure in 2009/10 (477,158 visits), although is still lower than usage in 2008/09 (603,045) and 2007/08 (698,099). Active Nation has launched a number of initiatives to encourage an increase in participation; trying to resist the national trend of reducing numbers of people taking part in formal indoor activities. One area of potential growth is outdoor-based fitness and Active Nation

is working with officers to consider the options for implementing an outdoor-based programme at the site.

- **subsidy per visit (the management fee paid by the council divided by the number of visits)**

the subsidy arrangements for the centre changed in April 2009. Since 2002, the council had paid a nominal sum of £500 a year to DC Leisure to operate the centre. Since April 2010, DC Leisure has paid the council a significant annual sum for an extension to the contract until 31 August 2014.

- **maintenance costs (the expenditure from the contractor for maintenance is divided by the square meterage of the facility)**

the centre has been maintained to a good level and continues to retain its core customer base. The expenditure on maintenance is at a level expected for the age and needs of the facility and will need to be enhanced as age inevitably takes its toll. Maintenance costs have remained within 11 per cent over the past three years, which is considered commendable with material costs increasing and the building requiring more and more work; it is unlikely that these costs will reduce despite the best procurement skills of the contractor.

- **utility costs (the contractor's expenditure on utilities is divided by the square meterage of the facility)**

costs associated with utilities will continue to rise despite DC Leisure's and the Vale Council's best efforts to reduce consumption. The Vale Council is working closely with DC Leisure to introduce green technology and agreements to recover council investment costs and share savings were introduced during 2010/11. Lighting projects and the installation of a pool cover are already underway, with estimated savings of £11,849 a year being achieved from the pool cover alone.

15. In comparison to our other leisure management contract (for Wantage and Faringdon leisure centres and Tilsley Park), the above trends are largely comparable taking into account the older age of these buildings and the design and technologies used in the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre (which is eight years younger than Tilsley Park and 28 years younger than Wantage Leisure Centre).

16. It is recognised that the outcomes of these key areas of performance are to some extent outside of the contractor's control. The criteria that are monitored as part of this contract do not give a basis to form a score as there is no requirement within the contract for the contractor to improve performance. Therefore, the head of service recommends that this dimension of the review is not scored.

## **DIMENSION 2 – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

17. A customer satisfaction survey was developed by officers and DC Leisure. Centre staff encouraged customers to complete the survey. A total of 143 completed surveys were received (171 surveys were returned in 2009/10). The survey covers a range of customer-related issues from the start of their relationship with the facility to the time they leave the building. The survey also captures equalities data, which will assist in developing the leisure equalities impact assessments potentially leading to future service improvements. Customers were asked to score each of the 32 satisfaction categories on a scale of 1 (poor) - 5 (excellent). This resulted in an average score of 3.59, which is similar to last year's score of 3.6.

18. Consideration was given to undertaking electronic surveys but based on response rates received by other contractors who have trialled this; it was decided to continue with face to face surveys to ensure a valid response rate.
19. Additional comments were encouraged on the completed survey documents where customers could provide more feedback as to how various elements of the service could be improved or changed. These comments ranged from better standards of cleanliness to changes in the menu in the café, pool temperature and car parking. All of these comments will form the basis of an action plan, which will aim to improve the service in these particular areas. An analysis of customer satisfaction performance appears in annex B attached to this report.
20. Whilst cleanliness still remains the area where the greatest number of comments are received, the number of customers who raised this as part of the customer satisfaction survey has reduced from 42 in 2009/10 to 25 in 2010/11. This is due to a concerted effort to respond to the previous years survey results by introducing regular deep cleaning of the pool changing area and a trial of using external contractors to undertake the majority of cleaning in the centre. The reduction in comments is positive and further efforts in this area will hopefully reduce the number further.
21. The other areas where a high number of comments were received included the telephone system where 10 comments were recorded in both 2009/10 and 2010/11. The telephone system was upgraded in 2009 with facilities to filter calls and provide a menu option to try and reduce the number of calls requiring an operator. The client team will further investigate additional improvements to the system with DC Leisure and Active Nation as part of the 2011/12 action plan.
22. An action plan based on the key areas of both customer and council satisfaction comments has been agreed with the contractor. This will be reported on as part of the report for 2011/12 and can be compared against future satisfaction reports.
23. For reasons of consistency with previous assessments and for fairness between contractors, the following is a rough guide to the assessment of contractors on customer satisfaction:

Score	4.3 – 5.0	3.9 – 4.3	3.4 – 3.9	3.0 – 3.4	<3.0
Classification	Excellent	Good	<b>Fair</b>	Weak	Poor

24. Based on this performance, the head of service has made a judgement on customer satisfaction as follows:

Customer satisfaction judgement 

Fair
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### **DIMENSION 3 – COUNCIL SATISFACTION**

25. A number of council officers have professional interaction with the DC Leisure and Active Nation teams and have provided feedback on their experiences of the contractor. An analysis of council satisfaction performance appears in annex C attached to this report, along with the calculations giving the overall rating. This produced a score of 3.41 out of a maximum score of 5. DC Leisure was awarded its highest scores for their approach to partnership working and health and safety. Its lowest score was for compliance with the Vale Council's corporate identity, a matter

which is to be challenged in the forthcoming year. Areas where improvements are required will be included within an action plan, which is being developed.

26. Based on this performance, the head of service has made a judgement on council satisfaction as fair; this is consistent with the fair judgement that was awarded in 2009/10.

Council satisfaction judgement 

Fair
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## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

27. The Vale Council considers that DC Leisure has continued to provide a consistent level of service throughout 2010/11. Overall user figures appear to have recovered from the low in 2009/10 experienced due to the unforeseeable closure of the pool following the pool pipe failure. The wet side figures are still lower than in 2009/10 but this is almost certainly due to the accuracy of the raw data capture and the open design of the centre's reception desk, which allows customers to bypass the desk if they are members. In 2009/10 there was an experiment to position turnstiles at the entrance to the pools. This assisted in distorting the user figures to a higher level as every spectator and person accompanying a swimmer would have been counted rather than just the swimmer themselves. The client team will be working with DC Leisure and Active Nation to improve both the reception layout and accuracy of data capture in 2011/12.

28. This will provide a significant challenge to both DC Leisure and Active Nation in the year ahead; however there is a determination to provide accurate data as well as maximising direct interaction at reception with all customers coming into the centre. This may require a new reception design and layout but the improvements will be a benefit in terms of user information gathered.

29. Taking into account the performance of the contractor against customer satisfaction and council satisfaction, the head of service has made an overall judgement as follows. Recognising the high importance of customer satisfaction, this dimension is accorded greater weight in the judgement.

Overall assessment 

Fair
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## STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

30. A key feature of the process for reviewing the performance of contractors is that the council provides them with an opportunity to give their feedback on the assessment, including suggestions for improvements to council processes. This is included in annex D attached to this report.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

31. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

32. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## CONCLUSION

33. The head of economy, leisure and property has assessed DC Leisure's performance as **Fair** for its delivery of the leisure management contract for the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre. The committee is asked to make any recommendations to the cabinet member for leisure to enable her to make a final assessment on performance and to enhance the action plan, which is currently being developed.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

34. None



# Annex B – Customer satisfaction

Customers were asked to score each element of their visit to the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre on a scale of 1 (poor) – 5 (Excellent). Average scores per question are shown in the table below:

<b>WHLTC</b>		<b>CENTRE PERFORMANCE</b>
<b>ACCESS</b>		
1	Ease of getting through on telephone	3.01
2	Activity available at convenient times	3.78
3	Ease of booking	3.53
4	Ease of parking	3.45
5	Waiting time at reception	3.35
6	Activity charge	3.55
7	Range of activities available	4.06
8	Ease of contacting the centre with issues	3.33
9	If any issues, how well were they dealt with	3.41
<b>QUALITY OF FACILITIES / SERVICES</b>		
10	Quality of equipment	3.78
11	Water quality in the swimming pool	3.78
12	Water temperature in the swimming pool	3.44
13	Quality of food and drink	3.29
14	Quality of brochures / leaflets/websites	3.21
15	Availability of information	3.36
16	Quality of information on notice boards	3.29
17	Quality of flooring in sports hall/activity area	3.64
18	Quality of lighting in sports hall/activity area	3.83
<b>CLEANLINESS</b>		
19	Cleanliness of changing rooms	3.47
20	Cleanliness of activity space	3.64
21	Cleanliness of cafeteria area	3.52
22	Overall impression on cleanliness of centre	3.60
<b>CAFETERIA / FOOD &amp; DRINK</b>		
23	Range of food and drink	3.17
24	Quality of food and drink	3.23
25	Value for money of food and drink	3.30
<b>STAFF</b>		
26	Helpfulness of reception staff	4.02
27	Helpfulness of other staff	4.09
28	Standard of coaching / instruction	4.20
29	Availability of staff	3.83
30	Visibility of staff including uniform	4.03

<b>VALUE FOR MONEY</b>		
31	Value for money of activities	3.86
32	Overall satisfaction with your visit today	3.98
TOTAL AVERAGE		<b>3.59</b>

In addition to the marking above, there was space on the survey forms for additional comment. These comments will form the action plan for service improvement by DC Leisure in 2011/12 and concentrate on the areas which generated most adverse comment in the survey. A summary of the comments received is shown in the table below:

<b>Summary of customer satisfaction questionnaire comments</b>	<b>Number of customers raising issue</b>
operations of gym - poor layout, no involvement of clients	1
swimming pool temperature too cold	11
RPM booking needs improving	4
cleanliness of poolside changing rooms - dirty floors/shower area	13
gym flooring - needs improving	2
two people at 6:30am on reception.	3
new rowers in gym	2
squat rack in the gym	1
more food choice in the cafe - healthier options	10
more staff in cafe	2
better phone system	10
attitude of reception staff could be improved	3
fixing of lockers	4
more/better activities	2
more RPM classes	1
cleanliness of cafe needs improving - dirty	6
not enough parking	9
reception waiting time to long	2
more than 2 lanes available for lane swimming	1
policing of disabled parking	1
poolside staff attitude could be improved	1
too many queues for classes due to swim bookings	1
cleanliness of disabled toilet	1
more TV channels in the gym	1
badminton set ups could be better - on time	1
preferential rates on court bookings for members	1
more fans in the classes	1
attitude of gym staff could be improved	1
not enough showers for women	2
better air conditioning in the gym	1
more X-trainers in gym	1
cleanliness of main studio needs improving	2

gym equipment needs to be fixed quicker - some delays	2
fewer disruptions to adult lane swimming	1
better range of free weights equipment	2
increase class numbers	1
improve booking facilities (online)	1
heavier weights - up to 50kg dumbbells	3
larger gym area	1
centre user forums would be a good idea, has been raised previously.	1
fast track desk for classes	1
overcrowding in gym and body combat classes	1
more kids activities	1
unruly children in the cafe	3
no lane change before 8:30am in the pool	1
double lanes for early riser swimmers	1
open at 6:25am so we can be in the water for 6:30am	2
centre open at 6:00am	1
better value for money for swim memberships	1
timetable needs to be in larger scale - easier to read	2
website not always up to date	1
classes to start on time	1
air conditioning on squash courts	1
availability of classes at weekends could be better	1
too many swimming lessons	1
more lane swimming	1
gym change cleanliness could be better	2
main Hall floor needs cleaning more often	1
more Staff in the gym	1
great Facility	2
staff friendly and helpful	2
RPM colour and layout good	1
fantastic centre	1
timetable is brilliant	1
Tennis is excellent	1

# Annex C - Council satisfaction

This assessment allows the Vale Council (as a client) to record its own satisfaction with aspects of a contractor's performance which lie outside Key Performance Targets and customer satisfaction. Each officer with direct knowledge and who frequently interacts with the contractor has completed this form and an average score of 3.41 has been recorded.

Contractor / supplier / partner name | DC Leisure

From (date) | 1 April 2010 | To | 31 March 2011

## SERVICE DELIVERY

Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dissatsfd
1 Understanding of the client's needs			3.8		
2 Response time			3.33		
3 Delivers to time			3.17		
4 Delivers to budget			3.67		
5 Efficiency of invoicing			3.25		
6 Approach to health & safety		4			

\* These spaces are deliberately left blank for the addition of any performance criteria which are specific to this particular contract / service.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONS

Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dissatsfd
7 Easy to deal with			3.86		
8 Communications / keeping the client informed			3.36		
9 Quality of written documentation			3.4		
10 Compliance with council's corporate identity				2.25	
11 Listening			3.71		
12 Quality of relationship			3.86		

## IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dissatsfd
13 Offers suggestions beyond the scope of work				2.83	
14 Degree of innovation			3.17		
15 Goes the extra mile			3.17		
16 Supports the council's sustainability objectives			3.75		
17 Supports the council's equality objectives			3.75		
18 Degree of partnership working		3.67			

## KEY DOCUMENTS

If required, has the contractor provided the council with annual updates of the following documents?

1. Annual Corporate Governance Assurance Statement? (Yes / No)	N/A
2. Updated risk register (Yes / No)	N/A
3. Annual business plan (Yes / No)	N/A
4. Updated business continuity plan (Yes / No)	N/A

## STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Strengths	
	Positive, proactive approach
	Responds positively to feedback received from client team
	Team on site keen to get job done and are generally easy to work with
	Varied activity programme on offer
	Keen to be involved in partnership working, such as GO Active and Active Women
	Low complaint levels to council about good levels of cleanliness

Areas for improvement	
	Keep council officers better informed, especially regarding items/issues already discussed

Response times to messages or requests for call backs
Lack of management knowledge on site, particularly in terms of pool plant issues
In-house maintenance responsibilities need to be carried out more quickly and back of house tidiness needs improvement

Score	4.3 – 5.0	3.9 – 4.3	3.4 – 3.9	3.0 – 3.4	<3.0
Classification	Excellent	Good	<b>Fair</b>	Weak	Poor

# **Annex D - Contractor 360° feedback**

## **CONTRACTOR'S REACTION / FEEDBACK ON COUNCIL'S ASSESSMENT**

DC Leisure / Active Nation accept that the report represents an accurate summary of the findings from the Customer Satisfaction Survey which the Charity undertook and we are working with the Authority to further develop the centre and to attempt to rectify any areas of concern. Active Nation are continually striving to improve their standards and are already fitting a new heat exchanger to improve the consistency of the pool temperature in the Teaching Pool and working closely with the Council in finding a more customer friendly telephone system which allows callers to be filtered to relevant areas within the facility and therefore improve this particular area highlighted within the survey results.

In addition, Active Nation are looking at a more robust Fault Defect Ordering system for all maintenance responsibilities with individual defect history and revised defect response times. The appointment of a new Operations Manager has been very positive and will continue to provide operational robustness and quality, whilst also developing the Operational team's capability. Active Nation has also developed their scope of work by developing new fitness and swim propositions, together with launching an apprentice scheme within their Tennis program, with plans to grow other areas of activity and participation within and outside the centre.

## **ANY AREAS WHERE CONTRACTOR DISAGREES WITH ASSESSMENT**

## **WHAT COULD / SHOULD THE COUNCIL DO DIFFERENTLY TO ENABLE THE CONTRACTOR TO DELIVER THE SERVICE MORE EFFICIENTLY / EFFECTIVELY / ECONOMICALLY?**

D C Leisure and Active Nation believe the Council may wish to consider how the Customer Survey scoring format is calculated. There are currently five categories for the customer to decide upon when answering the specific questions. To achieve an average score of Good, i.e. in excess of 80% (4 out of 5), the majority of customers would need to respond - Good or Very Good. Whilst there remains an option to respond of "fair", undoubtedly a large number of respondees will take this "middle ground". If "fair" were removed and the options were "poor" or "good", without doubt, the survey results would see a significant improvement. Another issue to consider when reviewing the overall report is the weighting between the Customer Survey and the Council's view. Because the weighting is greater for the Customer Survey, if the Council view is "good" and the customer view is "fair" as was the case for 09/10, the overall result was "fair".

By revising the number of answers from five to four and reconsidering the relationship in weighting between the Council and Customer opinion, we believe the scoring would provide a more reasonable reflection of how the Operator's are performing. "

Feedback provided by

Date



# SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME



containing scrutiny work to be undertaken 1 June 2011 - 30 April 2012

The scrutiny work programme belongs to the council's Scrutiny Committee and sets out a schedule of scrutiny work due to be carried out over during period shown above. It is a rolling plan, subject to change at each Scrutiny Committee meeting; however, the scrutiny work programme and changes to it are subject to the council's approval.

Representations can be made on any of the following issues before an item is considered by the Scrutiny Committee. Representations must be made to the relevant contact officer shown below by 10am on the day the Committee is due to meet. The meeting dates are shown below.

Item title	Meeting date	Lead officer	Why is it here?	Scope	Notes
<b>Leisure contract monitoring</b>	Scrutiny Committee 23 Jun 2011	Kate Arnold Tel. (01235) 540416 Email: <a href="mailto:kate.arnold@southhandvale.gov.uk">kate.arnold@southhandvale.gov.uk</a>	To conduct an annual review of the leisure contractor's performance	Relates to the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre	To consider whether to accept the report or whether to interview the service manager and contractor at a future meeting and recommend any corrective actions or improvements.
<b>Grounds maintenance contract monitoring</b>	Scrutiny Committee 23 Jun 2011	Ian Matten Tel. (01235) 540373 Email: <a href="mailto:ian.matten@southhandvale.gov.uk">ian.matten@southhandvale.gov.uk</a>	To conduct an annual review of the contractor's performance	Relates to the grounds maintenance contract	To consider whether to accept the report or whether to interview the service manager and contractor at a future meeting and recommend any corrective actions or improvements.

Item title	Meeting date	Lead officer	Why is it here?	Scope	Notes
<b>Election review</b>	Scrutiny Committee 21 Jul 2011	Margaret Reed, Head of Legal and Democratic Tel. (01235) 540407 Email: <a href="mailto:margaret.reed@southandvale.gov.uk">margaret.reed@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	To conduct a review of the management of the elections held in May 2011		
<b>Annual equality update</b>	Scrutiny Committee 24 Aug 2011	Cheryl Reeves Tel. 01491 823047 Email: <a href="mailto:cheryl.reeves@southandvale.gov.uk">cheryl.reeves@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	To monitor performance against the council's equality policy.	Invite the corporate equalities officer and the Cabinet member for corporate strategy.	This is an annual update.
<b>Leisure contract monitoring</b>	Scrutiny Committee 24 Aug 2011	Kate Arnold Tel. (01235) 540416 Email: <a href="mailto:kate.arnold@southandvale.gov.uk">kate.arnold@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	To conduct an annual review of the contractor's performance	Relates to Faringdon and Wantage Leisure Centres, the Abbey Meadows, Abingdon, and Tilsley Park	To consider whether to accept the report or whether to interview the service manager and contractor at a future meeting and recommend any corrective actions or improvements.
<b>Fit for the future update</b>	Scrutiny Committee 24 Aug 2011	Anna Robinson, Strategic Director Tel. (01235) 540523 Email: <a href="mailto:anna.robinson@southandvale.gov.uk">anna.robinson@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	To receive an update on the fit for the future programme		

Item title	Meeting date	Lead officer	Why is it here?	Scope	Notes
<b>Financial services contract monitoring</b>	Scrutiny Committee 24 Aug 2011	William Jacobs, Head of Finance Tel. (01235) 540455 Email: <a href="mailto:william.jacobs@southandvale.gov.uk">william.jacobs@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	To conduct an annual review of the contractor's performance	Relates to council tax collection, business rates, benefits, payroll, accountancy, accounts payable, financial management system, and assisted travel	To consider whether to accept the report or whether to interview the service manager and contractor at a future meeting and recommend any corrective actions or improvements.
<b>Community safety annual report</b>	Scrutiny Committee 24 Nov 2011	Liz Hayden Tel. (01235) 540309 Email: <a href="mailto:liz.hayden@southandvale.gov.uk">liz.hayden@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	The Police and Justice Act 2006 gave the Council powers to scrutinise the crime and disorder reduction partnership, known as the community safety partnership	To scrutinise the Vale community safety annual report and recommend any corrective actions or improvements. Police authority co-optee to be invited to attend	Invite the Cabinet member for community strategy
<b>Recycling and waste contract monitoring</b>	Scrutiny Committee 2012	Clare Kingston, Head of Corporate Strategy Tel. (01235) 540356 Email: <a href="mailto:clare.kingston@southandvale.gov.uk">clare.kingston@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	To conduct an annual review of the contractor's performance	Relates to recycling and waste collection services	To consider whether to accept the report or whether to interview the service manager and contractor at a future meeting and recommend any corrective actions or improvements.

### **Terms of reference for a review of the district and parish elections and AV referendum in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse**

#### **Background**

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils (South and Vale) operate a joint management structure. The joint chief executive is the returning officer for both councils. Key members of the elections team work across both South and Vale.

Last week South and Vale held all out district council elections (comprising 58 separate elections), 38 parish council elections (21 in South, 17 in Vale) as well as the AV referendum. The combined electorate of the two councils is 194,586, whilst the number of postal voters is 17,320.

#### **Printing issues**

Earlier this year the two councils appointed a printing firm, Paragon Group UK Ltd to provide a full range of services, including the printing and despatch of poll cards and postal votes, the printing of all ballot papers and the production of grass skirts for the count. Paragon had limited experience in the production of election material.

Paragon made a number of significant errors including:

- printing the name of the relevant district council on the reverse of parish council ballot papers rather than the parish council's own name
- poor quality ballot papers which did not meet legislative requirements
- failing to include the ballot paper number on the postal vote statements for the AV referendum
- failing to match the numbers on some postal vote statements with those on ballot papers and generally failing to match the numbers on postal vote statements and ballot papers with those on the Envelope A in which votes were returned
- sending postal voting packs to the wrong addresses in the case of at least two parish council elections (rectified by another printing company)
- failing to send out postal voting packs at all in the case of two parish council elections (rectified by another printing company)

- producing a ballot paper for one parish with candidates from another parish (rectified by another printing company)
- omitting a candidate's name on one parish ballot paper (rectified in-house)
- including withdrawn candidates on three parish ballot papers (rectified in-house)
- failing completely to provide grass skirts for the count (rectified by another printing company)

This list is by no means exhaustive but it gives a flavour of the problems that elections staff had to deal with resulting from the performance of Paragon.

### **Postal vote and poll card issues**

A significant number of postal ballot packs were despatched later than agreed and did not arrive with their intended recipient. I have received documentary evidence from Paragon that they had passed all the postal vote packs to Royal Mail by the evening of Wednesday 27 April and I am now in correspondence with Royal Mail to establish why, despite five subsequent postal delivery days, so many postal votes appear not to have arrived with their intended recipient. Both councils received a high volume of calls from voters requesting replacement packs, although this was more of a problem in south than Vale. Staff dealt with the majority of these before 5pm on polling day, but some voters were unable to vote.

There is also evidence that some people did not receive their poll cards. This was mainly a problem in Vale, where I have been told of widespread non-delivery. I have not yet been able to establish whether Paragon can provide evidence of passing all poll cards to Royal Mail for delivery.

### **Election counts**

The election counts were held at two venues – Abingdon for the Vale and Thame for South. There has been significant local criticism of the time taken for the counts at Thame, although evidence collected already suggests that this was not excessive.

### **What is required?**

The councils require a review, including the production of a final report and a presentation to a joint meeting of the two councils' scrutiny committees, that looks at the whole election process and address the following questions in particular:

Was the procurement process that led to the appointment of Paragon sound?  
Should I have foreseen the problems that subsequently arose and appointed a different company?

Where did the problem over the non-arrival of postal votes emanate from? Was the problem greater than in other parts of England? Did council staff do enough to overcome the problems once they became aware of them?

Was the election count at Thame longer than necessary?

Did council staff do all that could reasonably be expected of them to mitigate the problems that they faced?

David Buckle  
Chief Executive and Returning Officer  
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse councils

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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