

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held at 7.00 pm on Thursday, 20th September, 2012
at the Abbey House, Abingdon



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillor Jim Halliday (Chairman), Melinda Tilley (Vice-Chair), Eric Batts, Andrew Crawford, Jane Crossley, Charlotte Dickson, Jason Fiddaman, Bill Jones, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Fiona Roper and Tony de Vere

Officers: William Jacobs, Matt Prosser, Anna Robinson, Sally Truman, Kate Arnold, Paul Howden and Susan Harbour

Number of members of the public: 0

Sc.34 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Angela Lawrence.

Sc.35 Minutes

RESOLVED: To adopt as a correct record the minutes of the committee meeting held on 23 August 2012 and agree that the chairman signs them.

Sc.36 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.37 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

None.

Sc.38 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

None.

Sc.39 Performance review of CAPITA for the period 1 April 2011 - 31 March 2012

William Jacobs, Head of Financial Services; Paul Howden, Shared Revenues and Benefits Client Manager and Darren Keen, Capita Contract Manager, attended the committee to present the items and to answer related questions.

The committee discussed this item. The following items were raised:

- There was concern about the very low response rate to the business rates satisfaction survey.
- The housing benefit/council tax rebate claim form and the letter to claimants are still difficult for some customers to understand, this is due to legislative imperatives, but will it will be easier to use when it is online.
- The committee were content for the overall assessments for each or the areas covered in the report.
- The committee congratulated Capita and the council for its performance in 2011/12.

RESOLVED To recommend the Cabinet member for finance and corporate strategy to assess the performance of Capita for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 as set out in the report:

Revenues – excellent

Benefits – excellent

Exchequer – excellent

Financial management system – good

Concessionary fares - excellent

Sc.40 2014 Leisure Management Contract

Matt Prosser, Strategic Director and Kate Arnold, Leisure Manager introduced this report and answered relevant questions.

- The procurement process for the leisure management contract is due to start in November 2012. This will begin with a notice making potential bidders aware that the contract is coming up for renewal. Decisions which need to be made prior to this are: whether it is to be a joint contract with South Oxfordshire District Council; how long the contract will be awarded for, and which centres are to be involved in the contract.
- The process will be managed by a project board, which will include a member of Cabinet, a member of the opposition and a member of Scrutiny Committee who is a back bencher from the ruling group: this will be Councillor Jason Fiddaman.
- Professional staff from a variety of departments would have input, where appropriate to the procurement process; this would include the Equalities Officer.
- A project officer is to be appointed for the procurement process and also to assess potential new sites.
- The contract process is likely to be managed by “competitive dialogue” by which potential bidders will enter into a dialogue with the Council(s) to establish the best way to deliver the leisure services.
- It is intended that leisure services are inclusive and that usage is increased by all groups. It is also intended that leisure and fitness will not only happen in leisure centres but will be delivered in community settings.
- Abingdon Town Council will be involved in a parallel dialogue with regard to the Abbey Meadows outdoor pool.
- Scrutiny will be involved in the contract process, both by feedback from Councillor Fiddaman and by receiving reports, at times identified by the project plan, which will fit in with Cabinet briefings. Included in this will be proposed KPTs for the contract.

RESOLVED

To request the Leisure Manager to include briefings to, and consultation with, Scrutiny Committee as part of the project plan. This timetable to be notified to Democratic Services for inclusion in the Scrutiny work plan.

Sc.41 Fit for the future update

Sarah Longman, Programme Support Manager and Anna Robinson, Strategic Director, introduced the paper and answered questions on this item.

The committee discussed the paper, and the following points arose from the discussion.

- The £6 million projected savings are cumulative over the life of the project.
- Customer services excellence requires concerted work on the part of all services and this is being pursued via the Customer Service Excellence Award which contains a lot of good practice
- The principle is to start with what customers want and need and then to remove process waste. Service quality is not reduced by FFTF. Sometimes alternative ways of delivering services are proposed
- Fit for the Future provides teams with the tools to enable teams to do the work themselves.
- The consultants contract is fixed price and we expect their work to end by Q2 in 2013/14. The Programme Support Manager's role will continue until the end of next year to oversee the implementation.
- Strategic management board do not want to lose momentum with performance points and other improvements and will be considering how to maintain this

The planning department is currently undergoing Fit for the Future. There is an increasing need for planning officers to enter into dialogues with district and parish councillors, members of the public, developers and agents. The software (Ocella) will free up more staff time when it is fully bedded in. Planning department adjustments have resulted in additional costs in the short term and the anticipated savings have not been made.

Permanent and temporary staff have been recruited to Planning to assist with the increased number of planning applications this year, due largely to the lack of a five year land supply.

Wantage Civic Hall is part of a project to make it more commercially viable. The Cabinet members for finance and corporate affairs and leisure and economy were involved and would be able to liaise with ward members.

Sc.42 Corporate plan 2008-12 - performance review

Matt Prosser, Strategic Director and Sally Truman, Policy, Partnership and Engagement Manager presented a paper which gave performance against the Vale corporate plan.

The committee discussed the paper and the following items arose:

- There is a systemic problem affecting affordable housing: housing associations can only acquire new homes as a percentage of properties built by private developers.
- The service plans which lie beneath the corporate plan contain greater detail including SMART targets.

- Some of the targets which are highlighted in red as missed targets are missed by as little as 0.2%.

The committee wished to express its thanks and congratulations to officers for the number of met targets or very narrowly missed targets.

Sc.43 Consultation

Matt Prosser, Strategic Director and Sally Truman, Policy, Partnership and Engagement Manager presented a report, circulated earlier in the day which listed consultations undertaken across the Council between April 2011 and September 2012. The list is incomplete because it relies on departments to notify Corporate Strategy of consultations undertaken. A new consultation system has been procured which is part database and part workflow; this will allow a more integrated consultation strategy across all departments and will be capable of producing automated data reports on consultations undertaken.

The discussion included an explanation of survey methodology; the difference between quantitative and qualitative surveys; an explanation of the composition of the citizens' panel and how this was boosted for particular items of work and reassurances to the committee that formats other than online were available to potential respondents.

The committee felt that better use could be made of ward members when undertaking consultations, and that ward members could, in turn, liaise with parish councils.

RESOLVED

To request the inclusion of a chart of active consultations in the Vale Information Sheet each week with an introductory paragraph to explain the inclusion.

Sc.44 Scrutiny work programme

The workplan to be updated.

Action: Susan Harbour

Sc.45 Dates of meetings

25 October 2012
22 November 2012
20 December 2012

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm