

Scrutiny Committee Agenda



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Date: 11 September 2013
Website: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

A meeting of the
Scrutiny Committee
will be held on Thursday 19 September 2013
at 7.00 pm
Council Chamber, The Abbey House, Abingdon

Members of the Committee:

Councillors

Jim Halliday (Chairman)
Charlotte Dickson (Vice-chairman)
Eric Batts
Tony de Vere
Jason Fiddaman
Debby Hallett

Mohinder Kainth
Sandy Lovatt
Julie Mayhew-Archer
Fiona Roper
Alison Thomson
Richard Webber

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

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

Map and vision

(Page 4)

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

The council's vision is to take care of your interests across the Vale with enterprise, energy and efficiency.

1. 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.

2. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the committee meetings held on 25 July and 22 August (circulated separately).

3. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

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

5. 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.

6. Leisure Contract Monitoring (DC Leisure and Active Nation)

(Pages 5 - 26)

To receive the report of the head of leisure, economy and property.

7. Review of Two Hours Free Parking Scheme

(Pages 27 - 39)

To receive the report of the head of economy, leisure and property.

8. Action List

To review actions taken since previous meeting and any outstanding actions (circulated separately/ tabled at meeting).

9. Scrutiny work programme

(Pages 40 - 43)

To review the attached scrutiny work programme.

10. Dates of meetings

To note the dates of the forthcoming committee meetings (Thursdays at 7pm unless stated):

- 24 October
- 21 November
- 19 December
- 23 January 2014
- Wednesday 12 February
- 20 March
- 17 April

11. Exclusion of the public, including the press

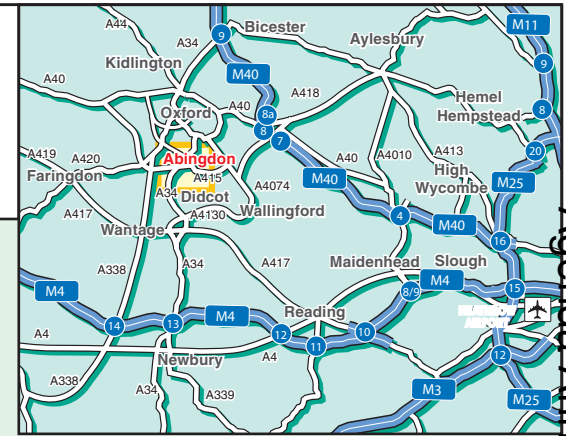
The chair to move that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the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

Minutes of the meeting of 23 May 2013

(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

Minutes of the meeting of 23 May 2013 (circulated separately).



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KEY: Car Parks

- P Abbey Close
- P Cattle Market
- P Charter Multi-storey
- P Civic
- P Rye Farm
- P Hales Meadow
- P Audlett Drive
- P 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 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. Contact details for bus operators can be found on the travel information pages on our website www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

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

Extract from the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 August 2012 which was considering the annual performance review of DC Leisure & Active Nation.

This is a limited extract with the aim of assisting committee members in their scrutiny of the annual performance review 2013

- There is a new online booking service which will assist in reducing the pressure on the telephone system. There will also be a new phone system in place from 11/12 September 2012 which will filter calls and divert them to the correct department. It will also be connected to a voicemail service and will notify the correct department by email.
- The new telephone system will provide statistics on all calls, both successful and failed which the current system does not do. It will also monitor the time between messages being left and being responded to.
- Customer satisfaction with the centre has been “fair”. DC Leisure/Active Nation were pleased that the score had risen since last year, but were disappointed not to have received “good”. They will be working towards this in the coming year. Officers felt that “fair” was an appropriate reflection of customer feedback but also pointed out that the leisure centre provided a very wide range of activities and that it serviced a discerning customer base.
- Active Nation conducted interviews with 205 customers. The Scrutiny Committee felt that this was very low as a proportion of the 724,000 visits they received per year and asked Active Nation to consider incentivising a far larger response rate in the coming year.
- The Scrutiny Committee wanted to know about the re-branding of the leisure centre to ensure that the Vale of White Horse DC logo was as prominent as that of Active Nation. The new dual branding will be in place from early September. As Active Nation do not keep large stocks of stationery, it will not take long for the dual branding to feed through.
- The Scrutiny Committee was concerned about how water consumption was being measured as, the more usage of the leisure centre increases, the more water consumption will increase. The committee would prefer water consumption to be measured on a *per capita* basis.
- The Scrutiny Committee wished to know what was planned with regard to expanding car parking at the leisure centre. There are current plans to increase car parking by 50 spaces but these are dependent on discussions with the Environment Agency, the parks team and the planning department. In the mean time, Active Nation is trying to manage use of the car park and schedule leisure centre activities to maximise the use of the car parking available.
- The Scrutiny Committee noted the overall assessment that DC Leisure’s performance during 2011/12 had increased to Good from Fair last year and commended the officers and contractors on this result.

Scrutiny committee report

Report of head of economy, leisure and property

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To: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 19 September 2013

Performance review of DC Leisure

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the committee considers DC Leisure's performance in delivering the leisure contract for the period 1 April 2012 until 31 March 2013 for the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, Abingdon, and makes any recommendations to the cabinet member for leisure to enable her to make a final assessment on performance.

That the committee agrees that, as 2013/14 is the last full financial year of this contract, there will not be a performance report produced in line with the council's performance reporting process for contracts reaching the end of their life cycle.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The report considers the performance of DC Leisure Ltd in providing the leisure service at the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre in Abingdon for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.
2. As this is the last full financial year of the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre contract extension, this means that the Vale Council would not normally produce a performance report on its contractor for 2013/14. The head of service has delegated authority to determine if a report is required in the last year. Based on the overall performance and the client officer's opinion, the head of service is recommending that this is the last report on this contractor for this leisure contract.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

3. The review of DC Leisure helps ensure the Vale Council is achieving its strategic objectives in the following areas:

- excellent delivery of key services: deliver high performing services with particular emphasis on ensuring good quality sports and leisure provision
- effective management of resources: reducing energy usage throughout the council's operations and continue to work in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council to extend the sharing of services and all resources.

BACKGROUND

4. The contract with DC Leisure was originally a ten year arrangement starting in 2002, which provided the Vale Council with a nil return and no expenditure arrangement. In 2010, the contract was extended for a further two years to end in 2014, making it co-terminus with the Vale Council's other leisure contract. As a result of this extension, the Vale Council now receives a sum of £60,000 a year from 2010 until the end of the contract on 31 August 2014.
5. The contract, although let to DC Leisure, is operated through a sub-contract arrangement with Active Nation. This registered charity has provided the day to day management of the centre since it opened on 1 April 2002 and has continued to provide a consistent level of service throughout that period.
6. The main deliverables within the contract are to: "successfully manage and operate the centre, which is a community based facility and to promote and encourage the widest possible use of the centre by providing a substantial and varied programme of activities designed to attract customers of all age groups, abilities, ethnic groups and social classes."
7. Managing contractor performance is essential for delivering the Vale Council's objectives and targets. Since a high proportion of the Vale Council's services are outsourced (approximately half the revenue budget is spent on seven main contractors), the council cannot deliver excellent service to its residents unless its contractors are excellent. Therefore, working jointly with contractors to review performance regularly is essential.
8. The Vale Council's process for managing contractor performance focuses on continuous improvement and action planning. The Vale Council realises that the success of the framework depends on contractors and the council working together to set and review realistic, jointly agreed and measurable targets.
9. The overall framework is designed to be:
 - a consistent way for the Vale 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

10. The review process consists of three essential dimensions:
 1. performance measured against key performance targets (KPTs)
 2. customer satisfaction with the total service experience
 3. Vale Council satisfaction as client.

11. 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.

DIMENSION 1 – KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS

12. This is the second year that key performance targets (KPTs) have been measured in this contract. Ten KPTs were agreed in April 2012 and are reported in the table below (and in more detail in annex A of this report).

KPT ref	Description of KPT	Target	Performance	Individual KPT rating (excellent, good, fair, weak or poor)	KPT rating score (excellent = 5, good = 4, fair = 3, weak = 2, poor = 1)
KPT 1	Increase total visits less schools	3%	4%	Excellent	5
KPT 2	Increase physical activity usage	3%	7%	Excellent	5
KPT 3	Increase U16 dry course visits	5%	13.0%	Excellent	5
KPT 4	Increase U16 wet course visits	4%	3%	Good	4
KPT 5	Increase number of annual memberships sold in a reporting year	5%	11%	Excellent	5
KPT 6	Reduce energy usage - electricity - gas	-3.5% -3.5%	-8.5% -6.5%	Excellent	5
KPT 7	Increase GP referral clients	3%	61%	Excellent	5
KPT 8	Reduce water consumption per customer	-2%	-3%	Excellent	5
KPT 9	Increase access to leisure card holders	500%	180%	Poor	1
KPT 10	Decrease operating cost per visits without compromising services	-5%	-4%	Good	4
Overall "average" KPT performance rating score (arithmetic average)					4.4
Overall "average" KPT performance (excellent, good, fair, weak or poor)					Good

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

Score	1 – 1.4999	1.5 – 2.4999	2.5 – 3.4999	3.5 – 4.4999	4.5 – 5.0
Classification	Poor	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent

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

KPT judgement

Previous KPT judgement for comparison

DIMENSION 2 – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

15. Active Nation undertook face to face satisfaction surveys across the spectrum of customers who use the centre. A copy of the survey results is attached in annex B of this report.

16. The overall customer satisfaction result from the survey is a mark of 3.8, which has resulted in a judgement of fair. In 2011/12, DC Leisure and Active Nation were awarded a mark of 3.68 in the survey, which resulted in a judgement of fair. Although the judgement has not changed, there is continued improvement in customers' overall satisfaction, which is encouraging and in line with the positive progress the centre is making.

17. Within the survey there is an opportunity for customers to make additional comments and from the total completed surveys, 267 additional comments were received. These have been grouped and form the basis of the action plan for 2013/14. This plan can be found in annex F of this report, along with the progress made on the previous year's plan in annex E. It is important to note that whilst there are a significant number of additional comments made in regard to this facility, it is testament to the importance that Active Nation and DC Leisure give to this process that customers are encouraged to provide this additional feedback, which is helpful in improving services.

18. The three main areas of additional comments relate to the cleanliness (67 comments), repairs and maintenance and equipment (45 comments) and staff and instructors (30 comments). Between them, these three areas resulted in 142 additional comments.

19. As well as the customer satisfaction surveys, scrutiny committee requested information on the number of customer comments received by contractors in a reporting year. This information does not form part of the scoring system but provides additional background on the number and types of issues raised by customers.

20. In 2012/13 the leisure centre received a total of 207 comments. Of these, 38 were compliments or requests for additional services and 169 were complaints. When taken as a percentage of the total number of users of the centre in 2012/13 (753,113) this equates to a total of 0.02 per cent in terms of complaints. The main areas raised are detailed in the table below.

Complaints	2011/12	2012/13
Swimming lessons	19	6
Classes, of which many relate to telephone booking issues	43	44
Gym	16	7

Pool hall	28	19
Café	10	7
Tennis	6	0
Cleanliness	40	19
Maintenance	39	13
Telephone system	15	25
General: bookings/staffing/car parking	45	29
Total	261	169
Compliments		
Cleanliness	4	0
General issues	21	24
Staffing	26	14
Café	2	0
Additional services: classes/equipment	26	0
Total	79	38
Grand total	340	207

21. As a whole, these areas of concern mirror the comments made in the comments section of the customer surveys and provide a good level of consistency in the areas where the centre needs to improve.

22. 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	<3.0	3.0 – 3.399	3.4 – 3.899	3.9 – 4.299	4.3 – 5.0
Classification	Poor	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent

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

Customer satisfaction judgement

Previous customer satisfaction judgement for comparison

DIMENSION 3 – COUNCIL SATISFACTION

24. A number of council officers who have contact with DC Leisure and Active Nation have completed a satisfaction document and provided a score that reflects the contractor's performance in regard to its interaction with the Vale Council. These seven officers include the client team, which has the largest and most varied contact and has the greatest consistency in evaluating the overall performance. An analysis of council satisfaction of performance appears in annex C of this report.

25. The relationship with DC Leisure and Active Nation throughout the reporting year has been excellent and communications have been open and positive. Active Nation has made significant capital investment into the facility, including the replacement of the main carpeted areas in the reception and gym areas, as well as other improvements to the café and seating areas. This investment started to take place in the reporting year and will be completed very early in 2013/14. Further investment will also take place in 2013/14 to refurbish and update the wet-side changing accommodation.
26. In July 2012 the centre celebrated the tenth anniversary of its official opening. To celebrate this, Active Nation, supported by D.C. Leisure and the Vale Council, opened its doors for free and hosted a special tennis clinic and question and answer session attended by Tim Henman. Mr Henman supported the event at no cost and spent over two hours playing tennis with a range of customers on the indoor courts and then answering questions presented by the audience.
27. Active Nation also hosted its annual Kids TRYathlon, which this year attracted 550 children from Abingdon schools. The company also provided support for various events and activities such as Swim Britain, Spend Nectar Points on swimming and Go 4 it, which have run over the year and have raised charitable funds and raised the profile of sport.
28. The main area of contention from the report last year was the lack of profile given to the Vale Council in advertising and promotional material used by Active Nation. This issue has been rectified and an agreed set of branding templates, including logos, is now in place.
29. As identified in customer satisfaction surveys, contacting the centre has been a significant issue, due primarily to the continuous high volume of customers using the centre. In response to this, In September 2012 Active Nation invested in a new telephone system to improve call handling and to provide information menus for opening hours etc. Added to this, members can now book courses and classes on-line, as well as pay for courses through direct debiting. All of which has had a positive impact on most customers.
30. In 2011/12, DC Leisure and Active Nation achieved a council satisfaction score of 4.12, which achieved a judgement of Good. In 2012/13, the satisfaction score is 4.22, which reflects the continued positive interaction with the Vale Council and has resulted in a judgement of Good.
31. For reasons of consistency with previous assessments, and for fairness between contractors, the following is a rough guide to the assessment of contractors on council satisfaction:

Score	<3.0	3.0 – 3.399	3.4 – 3.899	3.9 – 4.299	4.3 – 5.0
Classification	Poor	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent

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

Council satisfaction judgement

Previous council satisfaction judgement for comparison

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

33. The contractor's overall assessment takes into account its performance against KPTs, customer satisfaction and council satisfaction. Recognising the high importance of customer satisfaction, this dimension is accorded greater weight in the judgement. However, although DC Leisure achieved a score of Fair for customer satisfaction, it increased its survey score and continually demonstrated its willingness to further improve. This particular facility has a huge throughput of customers each year, with ever increasing demands on the staff and the facility. In 2012/13 users increased by four per cent on the previous year's figure and, despite those extra demands, the satisfaction score also increased, confirming DC Leisure's commitment to customer satisfaction. In addition, DC Leisure achieved Good in its KPI performance and Good for its council satisfaction, and the head of economy, leisure and property's overall judgement is Good. The committee is asked for its views in order for the cabinet member for leisure to make a final assessment.

Overall assessment

Good

Previous overall assessment for comparison

Good

STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

34. Annex C of this report records strengths and areas for improvement relating to the performance of the contractor over the last year. Where performance is below expectations, the contract monitoring officer will agree an improvement plan with the contractor.

35. Officers with Active Nation managers have developed an action plan for 2013/14 based on the findings of the customer survey and council officers' comments to address areas for improvement. The plan is attached as annex F of this report. The updated 2012/13 action plan is attached as annex E of this report, and any uncompleted actions added to the action plan for 2013/14.

CONTRACTORS FEEDBACK

36. A key feature of the process for reviewing the performance of contractors is that the Vale 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 of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

CONCLUSION

39. The head of economy, leisure and property has assessed DC Leisure's performance as **good** for its delivery of the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre contract during 2012/13.

The committee is asked to make any recommendations to the cabinet member for leisure to enable her to make a final assessment on performance.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- none.

Annex A – Key performance targets

KPT 1 - increase total number of visits to the centre less those made by schools by three per cent - achieved

This target looks at the total number of visits to the facility, less the number of school visits (which the facility has no control over). Visits increased from 715,113 in 2011/12 to 746,745 in 2012/13. This is a four per cent increase over the previous year's attendance and this is due primarily to a continued increase in dry sports courses, which have continued with a surprisingly consistent growth in 2012/13.

KPT 2 - increase physical activity usage by three per cent - achieved

This target looks at the total number of customers using the facility for sporting or active participation purposes, which increased from 623,071 in 2011/12 to 667,970 in 2012/13. It does not take into account spectators or people attending the site for other social activities. This is a seven per cent increase over the previous year's attendance and was due primarily to the same reasons as described above.

KPT 3 - increase under 16 dry course visits by five per cent – achieved

This target looks at the total number of under 16s who enrol and participate on dry courses at the centre. The number of visits to these sessions increased from 6,612 in 2011/12 to 7,446 in 2012/13. Although growth has slowed from the previous year in difficult trading conditions, a 13 per cent growth is to be congratulated

KPT 4 - increase under 16 wet course visits by four per cent – not achieved

This target looks at the number of visits achieved through the swimming courses offered at the centre; these have historically been very successful. In 2011/12 attendances were 57,551 and although the centre grew its attendances by three per cent to 59,457 it failed to achieve the target set.

KPT 5 - increase the number of annual memberships sold by five per cent – achieved.

This target looks at the number of annual memberships sold and shows that sales of these memberships have increased, despite a growing trend towards direct debit methods of payment. The numbers increased from 3,054 members in 2011/12 to 3,401 a total of 11 per cent.

KPT 6 - reduce energy consumption by three and a half per cent for gas and three and a half per cent for electricity – achieved.

This target looks at the consumption of utilities over the reporting year and compares these figures directly to the previous year's results. Electricity consumption has reduced by eight and a half per cent and gas also by six and a half per cent across the contract. The Vale Council has invested heavily in carbon reduction schemes and has completely relit the sports hall and tennis hall, which significantly reduces the carbon footprint of the centre and saves money, which is shared by both the Vale Council and Active Nation.

KPT 7 - increase GP referrals by three per cent - achieved

This target looks at the number of people referred to the facility by GPs and other referring practitioners, such as practice nurses and physiotherapists. There has been an increase of 42 people over the year (from 69 to 111), an increase of 61 per cent. This is partly down to the

profile that Active Nation has given to the scheme and also down to referral practitioners sending patients to the centre to either aid their recovery or prevent illness.

KPT 8 - reduce water consumption by two per cent per customer– achieved

This target looks at the amount of water consumed per customer across the centre in comparison to the previous year. This is one of the most difficult KPTs to achieve as there are legal standards of water quality to meet and if the number of customers increases their demand for water also increases through toilet and shower use. If water consumption against users is compared over the reporting year and the previous year, then consumption per customer has dropped. This fall is down to 23.34 litres per customer from 24.11 litres in 2011/12 – a reduction of three per cent.

KPT 9 - increase the number of Access to Leisure Card holders by 500 per cent - not achieved

This target looks at the number of Access to Leisure cards provided to individuals eligible to receive them across the district. The scheme has had a low profile in recent years and Active Nation has made a limited start to raising the profile of the scheme. This has led to an increase in card holders from four in 2011/12 to 13 in 2012/13, which is 11 short of the target of 24 set for the reporting year. This is a disappointing outcome and Active Nation is encouraged to apply more resource to this KPT.

KPT 10 - decrease operating cost per visit by - five per cent (without compromising services) – not achieved

This target looks at Active Nation's operating costs per visit and tries to reduce those costs by either better efficiency or through increasing income. Officers try to ensure that efficiencies do not compromise the service delivered and that staff, equipment and buildings that provide the service are maintained. This KPT was not achieved by a margin of 3p.

White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre – KPT 2012/13

KPT no	Action	Target	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Actual	Variance Year on Year	2013/14 Target
1	Increase total visits less schools	3%	715,113	736,566	746,745	+4%	3%
2	Increase physical activity usage	3%	623,071	641,763	667,970	+7%	4%
3	Increase U16 dry course visits	5%	6,612	6,942	7,446	+13%	8%
4	Increase U16 wet course visits	4%	57,551	59,853	59,457	+3%	4%
5	Increase number of annual memberships sold in a reporting year	5%	1,151	3,206	3,401	+11%	7%
6	Reduce energy usage: - electricity - gas	- 3.5% - 3.5%	2,025,377 4,679,523	1,954,489 4,515,740	1,883,482 4,378,217	-8.5% -6.5%	-4% -5%
7	Increase GP referral clients	3%	69	71	111	+61%	50%
8	Reduce water consumption per customer	2%	24.11	23.63	23.34	-3%	-2%
9	Increase number of Access to Leisure Card holders	500%	4	24	13	+275%	300%
10	Decrease operating cost per visits without compromising services	-5%	3.47	3.30	3.33	-4%	-3%

Annex B – Customer satisfaction

		2011/12	2012/13	Variance
Qu. No.				
	ACCESS			
1	Ease of getting through on telephone	3.1	2.4	-0.7
2	Activity available at convenient time	4.1	4.3	0.2
3	Ease of booking	3.6	4.2	0.6
4	Ease of parking	3.5	4.0	0.5
5	Waiting time at reception	3.4	3.6	0.2
6	Activity Charge	3.7	3.9	0.2
7	Range of activities available	4.1	4.1	0
8	Ease of contacting the centre with issues	3.5	3.7	0.2
9	If any issues, how well were they dealt with	3.4	4.0	0.6
	QUALITY OF FACILITES			
10	Quality of equipment	3.9	3.4	-0.5
11	Water Quality in the pool	3.9	4.0	0.1
12	Water temperature in the pool	3.5	3.8	0.3
13	Quality of food & drink	3.4	3.0	0.6
14	Quality of brochures/leaflets/web	3.6	3.6	0
15	Availability of information	3.7	3.8	0.1
16	Quality of information on notice boards	3.6	3.3	-0.3
17	Quality of flooring in sports hall/activity area	3.9	3.7	-0.2
18	Quality of lighting in sports hall/activity area	3.9	3.8	-0.1
	CLEANLINESS			
19	Cleanliness of changing rooms	3.2	3.2	0
20	Cleanliness of activity space	3.6	4.3	0.7
21	Cleanliness of cafeteria	3.4	3.6	0.2
22	Quality of litter removal	3.5	4.0	0.5
23	Overall impression on cleanliness of centre	3.5	4.3	0.8
	CAFETERIA/ FOOD & DRINK			
24	Range of food & drink	3.3	3.1	-0.2
25	Quality of food & drink	3.4	3.1	-0.3
26	Value for money of food & drink	3.4	3.1	-0.3
27	Reliability of vending		3.2	0
	STAFF			
28	Helpfulness of reception staff	4.1	4.3	0.2
29	Helpfulness of other staff	4.2	4.3	0.1
30	Standard of coaching/ instruction	4.2	4.4	0.2
31	Availability of staff	3.9	4.0	0.1
32	Visibility of staff including uniform	4.1	4.1	0
8c	VALUE FOR MONEY			
33	Value for money of activities	3.9	4.3	0.4
34	Overall satisfaction with your visit today	4.0	4.3	0.3
	Overall Average	3.68	3.8	0.12

Annex C - Council satisfaction

This assessment allows the council (as a client) to record its own satisfaction with aspects of a contractor's performance which lie outside KPTs 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	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dis-satisfied
1 Understanding of the client's needs		4.17			
2 Response time		4.00			
3 Delivers to time			3.57		
4 Delivers to budget		4.33			
5 Efficiency of invoicing		4.00			
6 Approach to health & safety		4.00			
7 Easy to deal with		4.71			
8 Communications / keeping the client informed		4.29			

COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONS

Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dis-satisfied
9 Quality of written documentation		4.50			
10 Compliance with council's corporate identity		4.00			
11 Listening		4.20			
12 Quality of relationship		4.43			
13 Notifies the council of organisational or operational change		4.20			
14 Offers suggestions beyond the scope of work		4.20			

IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dis-satisfied
15 Degree of innovation		4.20			
16 Goes the extra mile		4.20			
17 Supports the council's sustainability objectives		4.33			
18 Supports the council's equality objectives		4.33			
19 Degree of Partnership working		4.50			

KEY DOCUMENTS

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

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Updated risk register (Yes / No) | Yes |
| 2. Updated business continuity plan (Yes / No) | Yes |

STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Strengths	Good relationship with centre manager and staff
	Innovative ideas
	Management are honest and open with operational issues
	Staff are welcoming and helpful
	Always friendly and approachable
	Supportive of projects such as Go Active and Active Women
Areas for improvement	Speed by which telephones are answered if they are at all by staff at the centre

Annex D - Contractor 360° feedback

CONTRACTOR'S REACTION / FEEDBACK ON COUNCIL'S ASSESSMENT

Active Nation is a registered charity. Its purpose is 'to persuade the nation to be active'. It is difficult to capture everything achieved in 2012-13 retrospectively in this Assessment – and our reaction is to (1) outline some additional highlights here to feedback to Scrutiny Committee Members and (2) record our sincere thanks to the Councils' Shared Leisure Officers we have enjoyed working with throughout the year in order to jointly sustain and strengthen the Centre's performance, both at our monthly Operational Meetings and quarterly Strategic Partnership Board Meetings.

2012-13 saw a continuance of our focus on increasing participation, improving service quality and refreshing facility presentation. We are pleased that the Council has noted our investments into a replacement telephone system and, after working closely with the Council's Authorised Officer on specifications and finishes, the space-use enhancements made in the Café and replacement floor coverings laid in the Centre's main entrance and public circulatory areas. We also invested in new technology to improve the administration of our swimming lesson programme, making it easier for enrolments to be processed, and also improving our ability to track pupil progress and provide parents/children with performance reports.

During the year we were also able to review and revise local arrangements in order to improve building maintenance schedules, as well as appointing a new Operations Manager (to strengthen the senior leadership team), launching our 'Brilliant! People Programme' and 'InterActiveNation' (Facebook-style) internal online communications tool for employees.

The Contract Manager (Dave Rolls) has, with a strengthened team of Duty Managers, successfully delivered a number of special events, including the English Schools National Trampoline Championships, Southern Counties Trampoline Club Championships (each event attracting more than 1,000 children and young people), Oxfordshire County Badminton Championships, as well as achieving a 'top ranking' in the annual 'Swimathon' swimming challenge (Ranked #30 UK, #2 Southern Region, 102 swimmers raising £8,500) Dave also worked jointly with Abingdon & Witney College to deliver a Skills & Learning Programme for Level 3 Students, involving the production of Webinars, as well as working with the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) to produce a comprehensive swimming 'catchment area' study using Sport England's Market Segmentation Tool, enabling us to better understand people's attitudes to swimming, their motivations and barriers to participation locally.

We are extremely pleased to have persuaded 31,632 (+4% from 715,113 to 746,745) more people to use the Centre this year than last year; highlighted in the following growth:

- 44,899 (+7% from 623,071 to 667,970) more physical activity users;
- 1,996 (+3% from 57,551 to 59,547) more U16 wet course visits;
- 834 (+13% from 6,612 to 7,446) more U16 dry course visits;
- 2,259 (+11% from 1,151 to 3,401) more annual Supporters;
- 42 (+61% from 69 to 111) more GP Exercise Referral Clients

The Centre's Campaign, Sport & Exercise Teams deserve special mention for doing a remarkable job throughout the year, in an increasingly competitive local marketplace, in

Recruiting and Retaining so many Supporters. Our Group Exercise activity programme was further strengthened as a consequence of our alliance with Les Mills (delivering an Instructor Education Programme and launching new classes on a quarterly basis, including RPM and Sh'Bam, both proving to be extremely popular with Supporters).

We would ask Committee Members to note the considerable achievements of our (Brilliant!) Tennis Team. Their enthusiasm, hard work and expertise produced:

- Strengthened links with Oxford & Cherwell Valley College (launching a BTEC Tennis Apprenticeship Programme), Abingdon & Witney College, Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University;
- Opportunities for WHL&TC tennis players to visit the Sanchez-Casal Tennis Academy (Barcelona), and for parents/players to meet Sarah Borwell (Ex British No.1 Woman's Tennis Player) to learn about Tennis Scholarships in USA Universities;
- More than 73 organised tennis opportunities per week;
- Over 750 visits per week on junior and adult tennis programme;
- More than 2,700 individual tennis lessons;
- LTA Performance Centre Status for their work with 11 & under players;
- Tennis activity for 18 Primary Schools;
- A Free Open Day resulting in more than 125 children attending – and more than half of them accessing discounted tennis activities over the summer holidays;
- 7 GB representatives – 2 in disability tennis;
- 24 members of Oxfordshire Tennis Teams;

As this is the last Council review of our performance, we wish to formally record our gratitude to Nick Elliott (Active Nation's Director of Tennis) for his vision, leadership and development of tennis locally since the Centre opened. His passion and commitment has been exemplary throughout this time – creating a very special (and highly regarded) environment for tennis and excellent links with Oxfordshire, Regional & National LTA Officers, and building a highly qualified, skilful and professional Coaching Team.

Our feedback on the 3 Dimensions of the Councils Review Framework follows:

- Dimension 1 – Key Performance Targets:
 - KPT 3: Increase U16 wet course visits. Rated as 'Good/4'. Whilst missing the target (59,853) by 306 visits – we actually added 1,906 visits (i.e. from 57,551 to 59,547) this year. Our ability to achieve the target is intrinsically linked to the availability of water time for us to programme swimming lessons – and we are grateful to the Council's Authorised Officer for supporting our Learn to Swim Campaign when considering pool programming arrangements and access times for public swimming;
 - KPT10: Decrease operating cost per visit without compromising services. Rated as 'Good/4'. The Council extended its contract with DC Leisure for two years. This extension resulted in revisions to the Contract's cost structure, with (1) a management fee payment to the Council for the first time and (2) DC Leisure adjusting its Licence Fee for Active Nation as a consequence of contractual arrangements. We would ask the Committee to consider the effect of this on KPT10. If both of these new contractual costs are taken out of KPT10 the target would be achieved, with the Centre's improved

income and improved efficiency when applying the same methodology as in previous Scrutiny Reports.

- Dimension 2 – Customer Satisfaction:
 - Limited parking is an increasing cause of customer frustration. The Centre continues to struggle – at busy times of day/week – with demand being placed on current car parking capacity. The 2012/13 Action Plan itemised Council action on this issue (feasibility study & budget allocation to try to provide up to 100 additional spaces). This task is ongoing and has been incorporated into the 2013-14 Action Plan.
- Dimension 3 – Council Satisfaction:
 - This measure provides an opportunity for Council Officers – who have direct knowledge of us and frequently interact with us – to rate their satisfaction across several aspects of our performance. We are pleased that the Council is satisfied with our ‘Degree of Partnership Working’ and ‘Supporting the Council’s sustainability objectives. We have worked closely, cooperatively and collaboratively with the Councils’ Shared Leisure Officers to achieve this.

ANY AREAS WHERE CONTRACTOR DISAGREES WITH ASSESSMENT

n/a

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

n/a

Feedback provided by

- David Johns (Contract Support Manager, Active Nation)
- Tim Hewett (Business Development Director, DC Leisure)

Annex E – progress of previous year’s action plan (2012/13)

Action	Owner	Due date	Date completed	Contract monitoring office comments
Parking is limited	AN / VWHDC	July 2012	Still ongoing	Feasibility plans are being compiled and a budget is allocated to try to provide up to 100 additional spaces.
Cleanliness of poolside changing	AN	July 2012	July 2012 and ongoing	A full review completed of cleaning team responsibilities and job list, external deep clean of village change and poolside surround. This is an ongoing issue caused by the volume of customers continually using this facility
Changing village needs refurbishment	AN	Ongoing	March 2013	Pool hall decorative program complete, including full painting of pool hall. A full refurbishment of the pool hall changing is to take place in 2013/14
Shower temperatures vary	AN	April 2012	July 2012	Showers adjusted in the building during June to address temperature variations.
Pool temperature too cold	AN	July 2012	Ongoing	Pool temperatures are maintained within industry guidelines, and are monitored through daily pool testing
Cleanliness of gym and studio	AN	July 2012	July 2012	Full review of gym cleaning completed, with re-allocation of cleaning tasks within the cleaning team.

Upgrade of phone system	AN	July 2012	September 2012	A new telephone system has been installed, which allows customers to leave messages at busy times and also searches for free call points for staff to answer in back office situations
Maintenance issues	AN	August 2012	August 2012	A revised fault defect system has been implemented to improve on small maintenance issues
Corporate identity	AN	August 2012	December 2012	A revised and comprehensive corporate identity document has been developed jointly, which is now in place and being adhered to

Please note that uncompleted actions have been added to the action plan for 2013/14

Annex F – 2013/14 action plan to improve performance

Action	Owner	Due date	Date completed	Contract monitoring officer comments
Improve car parking at the centre	VWHDC	Planning application submitted by 1 October 2013 Tendering process starts January 2014 Award of contract April 2014 Completion of works August 2014		
Cleanliness of wet side changing areas	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Deep clean of changing area September 2013. Increased management inspections of area on a weekly basis starting in April 2013	Inspections started in April 2013	
Quality of food and drink	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Transfer of catering to third party provider Continual review of customer comments Active Nation to meet regularly with Host to review prices, menus and service delivery issues.	Transfer in April 2013 Review of comments at monthly client meetings Meetings started in May 2013	
Ease of getting through on the telephone	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Review with installer the functionality of the system by December 2013 Test every month that the system is working as required Review the staff resources available to answer phones and report to client on potential outcomes by December 2013		
Quality of equipment (primarily spin bikes)	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Continued review of quality and condition of the equipment with PPM schedules in place with manufacturer's maintenance contracts.		
Ensuring equipment and	DC Leisure and Active	Review of maintenance team structure completed by May 2013		

Action	Owner	Due date	Date completed	Contract monitoring officer comments
building is maintained	Nation	and implemented new structure accordingly.		
Continuous staff development	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Launch of the Active Nation Training Academy, partnership working with Les Mills, ASA and Lifetime Training for skills development.		
Capital Investment on wet side changing	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Active Nation currently working with providers to finalise plans and costs by December 2013.		
Further development of consistent service quality	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Active Nation is launching a new Quality Management System working with Right Directions (service and safety) to achieve ISO18001 demonstrating sound occupational health and safety performance by November 2013		
Enhanced efficiency within environmental management	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Active Nation will be looking to achieve ISO14001, which are a family of standards relating to environmental management to improve there service delivery, by November 2013		
Tennis education programme	DC Leisure and Active Nation	Active Nation, working with Grow the Game, aims to become a coach education centre – supported by the LTA to provide qualifications and CPD's for coaches – by December 2013		

Scrutiny committee



Report of head of economy, leisure and property

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Wards affected: all

Cabinet member responsible:

Tel: Elaine Ware

E-mail: elaine.ware@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: Scrutiny committee

DATE: 19 September 2013

Review of free two hours parking scheme

Purpose of report

1. Officers have compiled a report which summarises the impact of the free two hours parking scheme on the towns in the Vale of White Horse district for the Scrutiny Committee to consider.

Corporate objectives

2. The provision and pricing of car parking impacts on two of the Vale of White Horse District Council's strategic objectives: excellent delivery of services and building the local economy. Continuing to offer a period of free parking may help to improve the viability and attractiveness of our towns.

Background

3. On 8 July 2011, cabinet agreed to introduce free car parking for up to two hours in the Vale Council's off-street car parks. This decision was called in and considered by the scrutiny committee at its meeting on 4 August 2011. The committee resolved:
 - (a) not to refer the decision back to cabinet for reconsideration;

(b) to review the retail trade survey at its meeting in September prior to circulation to retailers and the method of monitoring the impact of the scheme on town centre vitality; and

(c) to consider the monitoring reports on the impact of the scheme on town centre vitality and consider whether, in light of experience, the scheme should be modified.

4. Officer proposals for monitoring the impact of the free parking scheme were discussed by the scrutiny committee on 22 September 2011. The officer report included an appendix with a table listing the means by which this monitoring could be carried out - this table is attached to this report as appendix 1. Officers and the relevant cabinet member took account of the scrutiny committee's suggestions before finalising the monitoring arrangements. In addition to the list in the table, officers and the cabinet member agreed that the monitoring arrangements would include additional information, such as evidence from bus companies and results of the 2013/14 budget consultation.
5. The two hour free car parking scheme was implemented on 11 December 2011.
6. A report published by the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) and the British Parking Association, "Re-think! Parking on the High Street" (January 2013) highlights the conflicts that local authorities face in balancing the needs of town centre users, transport strategies and budgets. The report suggests there is no simple formula that can be given on determining the right kind of tariff in car parks. Car parking must be viewed holistically as part of an overall accessibility strategy for town centres. Therefore, having a period of free parking is just one factor to be taken into consideration.

Results of the monitoring of the free two hours car parking scheme

7. Each of the measures referred to within the table attached as appendix 1 to this report is dealt with in turn below.
8. OFF-STREET CAR PARK USAGE
9. Information taken from car park 'pay and display' machines allows for calculations showing how many people either bought 'pay and display' tickets or obtained free tickets. The average number of users of car parks per month prior to the implementation of free parking in December 2011 was some 44,690 between October 2010 and July 2011. During the period October 2012 to July 2013, this increased to over 77,000, an increase of some 72 per cent. Table 1 below shows a breakdown for each car park.
10. Comparisons show that all the car parks show a considerable increase in the number of vehicles staying for short periods compared to before the free two hours was introduced. The biggest proportional increases are in Cattlemarket car park in Abingdon and Limborough Road in Wantage.
11. Direct comparisons for short stay monthly usage is not possible as the tariff ranges changed with the introduction of the free two hours parking. However, it is clear that the number of people staying for short stay has increased. This has

been accompanied by a reduction in the number of people staying for up to three hours in most car parks. Also in the majority of car parks the number of vehicles parked for more than three hours has decreased, apart from car parks at Audlett Drive, the Civic, the Charter and Portway in Wantage. It should be noted that the usage figures are based on tickets taken from the machines and, therefore, do not include people parking and displaying a permit.

12. Table 1 below summarises all car parks' average usage per month during part of 2010/11 before the free parking scheme started and in part of 2012/13 after the free two hours parking had been introduced.

Table 1 Average monthly use of car parks per tariff band before and after introduction of free two hours parking

Car park	Before free two hours (monthly average usage October 2010 to July 2011)			After free two hours (monthly average usage October 2012 to July 2013)		
	0-1 hour	1-3 hours	over 3 hours	0-2 hours	2- 3 hours	over 3 hours
ABINGDON						
Abbey Close	292	426	545	1,886	178	128
Audlett Drive	129	284	193	1,410	136	236
Cattlemarket	399	986	720	5,006	371	185
Civic	2,260	1,389	1,307	8,679	411	1,569
Hales Meadow	389	387	421	1451	137	300
Charter	5,766	5,111	670	14,857	754	672
Rye Farm	424	774	969	2,460	348	665
Rye Farm lorry park	0	0	70	0	0	60
West St. Helen's Street	2,301	2,391	1287	9,691	613	501
WANTAGE						
Portway	2,004	3,330	424	8,237	839	461
Limborough Road	79	220	143	873	86	109

Undercroft	178	300	336		902	81	134
FARINGDON							
Southampton Street	4,960	1,487	0		10,883	211	0
Gloucester Street	723	453	164		1,954	100	110
TOTALS	19,902	17,539	7,249		68,289	4,263	5,100
Total monthly average	44,690				77,652		

ON-STREET CAR PARK USAGE IN ABINGDON

13. Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for managing on-street car parking, and has indicated that the income from on-street pay and display in Abingdon decreased by £2,100 in the period December 2011 to November 2012, compared to the same period in the previous year. This represents about one twelfth of the total on-street income from Abingdon. This would indicate that some people are choosing to use the free two hours parking rather than pay to park on-street.

CAR PARK OFFENCES

14. The number of ECNs issued has increased from 1,843 to 2,411 (30 per cent increase) when comparing the calendar year 2011 with 2012. Table 2 below summarises the changes. The increase in ECNs issued for 'no ticket' reflects the relative increase in the usage of the car parks and also the impact of having to display a ticket for the free period. The number of ECNs issued for 'no permit' has decreased as, since April 2012, the council no longer enforces the restricted parking areas behind Market Place and Queen Street in Abingdon, which used to be for permit holders only. Although the number of ECNs issued for other offences has increased, their proportion has stayed the same in relative terms.

Table 2 Comparison of excess charge notices issued by offence between 2011 and 2012

	Expired ticket	No ticket	No permit	Other offences (no disabled badge, outside bay, etc)	Total
2011	663 (36%)	593 (32%)	199 (11%)	388 (21%)	1,843

2012	825 (34%)	1052 (44%)	62 (2%)	472 (20%)	2,411
2013 (Jan to July)	518 (39%)	585 (44%)	18 (2%)	195 (15%)	1,316 (estimated end of year of 2,256)

EXCESS CHARGE NOTICES CANCELLED

15. The number of ECNs cancelled during the calendar year 2012 has decreased compared to 2011. In 2011 it was 237 out of 1843 issued (some 13 per cent) and in 2012 it was 226 out of 2,411 issued (some nine per cent). To the end of July 2013, the number of ECNs cancelled is 119 out of 1316 issued (nine per cent). This decrease reflects how difficult it is to successfully dispute the ECNs issued due to the clear communication campaign in the car parks. Permanent signs to remind people about having to display a pay and display ticket at all times, including during the free two hours are in place in all car parks.

COMPLAINTS

16. The car park team received a few complaints from users about having to obtain and display a ticket. When the scheme was introduced in December 2011, only warning notices (rather than actual ECNs) were issued for the first six weeks to allow people the chance to get used to having to display a ticket, even though it was free. During the year, the complaints received have generally been from users who have received ECNs, claiming they were not aware of the regulations in the car park. Initially large yellow temporary signs were displayed prominently in the car parks informing users that they had to display a ticket at all times, including during the free two hours. These signs have been replaced by standard permanent signs.

17. Some users advised that they had difficulty understanding the tariff structure and complained that it is confusing as to whether the tariffs for three, four, six or eight hours include the free two hours or not. The tariff boards display the various fees as being '£1.50 for up to 3 hours' for example, which includes any free time.

18. Being able to obtain a free ticket does lead to some low-level abuse in certain situations, but officers consider the numbers are quite low. Officers carried out some spot checks in the Civic and Cattlemarket car park in May 2013. This showed that a very small minority of people take advantage of the free parking and enhanced enforcement on an ad hoc basis has helped to reduce this.

INCOME

19. In the original report to cabinet in July 2011, officers initially estimated that the reduction in income as a result of the free two hours would be £192,500 a year. This figure was based on the reduction in income from the ticket sales for the zero to one hour tariff plus 50 per cent of the income from the one to three hour tariff band.

20. The total income from car parks for the year 2012/13 was £454,000. This compared to £760,000 in 2010/11. This represents a reduction in income of £306,000, a variance of some £113,500 from the officers' estimate.
21. The figures in table 1 above would suggest that the change in habit has been different from what officers anticipated when calculating the estimated loss of income. Not only have all the people who used to park for up to one hour taken advantage of the free two hours, but a larger than anticipated proportion of those that used to stay for one to three hours now only stay for up to two hours. In addition, it would also appear that less people are staying for more than three hours.

FOOTFALL SURVEY

22. The economic development team undertakes annual surveys in Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage to monitor the number of pedestrians in a range of locations in each of the towns.
23. In Faringdon, footfall declined by around ten per cent between 2011 and 2012, though this masked some variation between different locations. For example, mornings were busier outside Budgens, but were quieter in the Market Place and on London Street. Officers are also aware that the Budgens supermarket was closed for refurbishment in 2012, which will have contributed to the decline of footfall.
24. In Wantage, footfall stayed around the same level. There was a slight increase in footfall outside Sainsbury's and in Mill Street in 2012 compared with 2011.
25. In Abingdon, detailed surveys were carried out for the town at the same period. However, due to the extensive refurbishment work in the town centre, the usual survey locations were not possible and, as such, different flow levels were experienced. However, with this caveat on the data, footfall appears to have remained fairly static over the period. The Choose Abingdon Partnership Manager advised that independent retailers in the town reported a drop in footfall of around 15 per cent during the refurbishment works; however, the Choose Abingdon Partnership Manager considers that the introduction of two hours free car parking ensured that this loss wasn't more significant.
26. The full survey is available at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/business/support-businesses/market-research-and-data-0

VACANT SHOP SURVEY

27. The economic development team also carries out annual vacant shop surveys in the towns of Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage in order to monitor the number of empty shops.
28. Table 3 below summarises the figures for each town. Between September 2011 and September 2012 the retail vacancy rate increased by one per cent on average across all three towns. This overall increase was due to an increase in vacant premises in Wantage, whereas there was a reduction in the number of

vacant premises in Abingdon. The improvements to the Abbey Shopping Centre in Abingdon in 2012 may have affected the occupancy of some of the retail units, as the developer was holding empty units in preparation for major refurbishment work at the time when the survey was undertaken.

Table 3 Retail vacancy rate in the Vale towns for 2011 and 2012

	Abingdon	Wantage	Faringdon	Vale average
Vacancy rate 2012	8.7%	14.2%	1.5%	8.2%
Vacancy rate 2011	9.5%	10.3%	1.5%	7%

29. In July 2012, the national average of vacancy rates was 11.4 per cent as recorded by the Springboard Research on behalf of the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM). Overall, there has been a varying picture in terms of vacancy rates across the Vale towns. As a district, the vacancy rate has increased by 1.2 per cent since 2011. Whilst Abingdon has seen a positive decline in the number of vacant units and Faringdon has maintained an extremely low level of vacant units, Wantage has seen a relatively significant increase to above the national average.

30. A full copy of the report is available at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/business/support-businesses/market-research-and-data-0

BUSINESS SURVEY

31. The economic development team carried out two business surveys. The first one was in October/November 2011 before the two hours free car parking initiative was introduced. The second one was carried out a year later in December 2012. A summary of these surveys is set out below.

32. There were a total of 489 businesses in the town centres. In 2011, 88 businesses responded (18 per cent). In 2012, 97 businesses responded (20 per cent).

33. In 2011, 73 per cent thought that the free two hours parking would have a positive impact on the future of their business. Also, 65 per cent predicted that footfall would increase.

34. In 2012, there was a good, and proportionate, spread of those businesses that chose to take part in the 2012 survey, as below:

- Abingdon 50 per cent
- Faringdon 20 per cent
- Wantage 23 per cent
- Botley – two businesses responded.

35. Almost 70 per cent of businesses reported that the free two hours car parking had a positive impact on their business. Of the 97 businesses that responded, only one business, which was located outside of Abingdon, reported a negative impact.

36. Table 4 below summarises the top line results for the 2012 survey:

Table 4 Summary of top line results for the 2012 business survey

Question	Top line results 2012
What impact, if any, has the introduction of two free hours car parking had on your business?	61 per cent agreed that it made it easier for people to access their business.
What effect has the introduction of two hours free parking in your town had on number of people visiting your business?	52 per cent reported an increase in visitors to their premises. No businesses reported a reduction in footfall.
How much do you think the footfall to your businesses has increased by, per week, as a result of the introduction of two hour free car parking?	Most businesses indicated an increase in footfall of at least five per cent.
What effect, if any, has the introduction of two hours free parking in your town had on your turnover?	35 per cent reported an increase in turnover. No businesses reported a decrease in turnover.
How much do you think your business turnover has increased by per week, as a result of the introduction of two hours free car parking?	The largest response was 36 per cent who reported less than five per cent increase in turnover.
Do you have any other comments about the two hour free car parking initiative in Vale's towns?	Positive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - excellent initiative (Faringdon) - has made business life a lot easier (Abingdon) - compensation for the building upheaval (Abingdon) - encourages people to Wantage. Negative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - having to get a ticket is an inconvenience - lack of parking for employees and residents - needs to be longer, three hours would be better - need to make it cheaper to buy long-stay parking permits.

AIR QUALITY

37. It is impossible to measure the impact of free car parking on air quality levels because the monitoring equipment cannot detect small changes in traffic movements. Air quality data is assessed over long periods and small changes would be masked by other impacts such as changes in district wide traffic levels, changes in traffic make up and weather impacts. Monitoring of nitrogen dioxide has continued to be undertaken at a number of sites within the Abingdon Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and at other locations. In the 12 month period following the introduction of free car parking, levels at these sites have either remained static or have fallen in central Abingdon compared to 2011 monitoring results.

Other results (not included in the original table to scrutiny)

38. Officers received feedback from the Waitrose store manager in Abingdon to indicate that, although detailed car park usage information is not available, there has been no noticeable impact on the turnover at the Waitrose store.
39. Officers also received feedback from the Stagecoach commercial officer. He states that any fall in passenger numbers has been masked by Stagecoach's 'significant investment and marketing campaigns' although he considers that there has undoubtedly been 'urban patronage loss'. He continues to say that Stagecoach as a company is completely opposed to having free parking as it 'encourages congestion and pollution and undermines public transport networks'.
40. No feedback has been received from the Oxford Bus Company.
41. The Faringdon community bus showed a small increase in users in early 2012, compared to the same time in 2011.
42. The council's budget consultation for 2013/14 included questions on car parking and there were 137 responses. In addition, 48 people were recruited to take part in a workshop. Half of those who took part (51 per cent) said they were more likely to visit Abingdon, Faringdon or Wantage since the two hours free parking was introduced. Two thirds of those who took part (68 per cent) rated providing two hours free parking as a high or medium priority.
43. However, there were some comments that the free parking is restrictive and could be extended to up to three hours. Also that the charges to stay for more than two hours were 'excessive', which meant that people stayed for just two hours taking advantage of the free period only and fitted in what they needed to do within a limited amount of time.

Financial implications

44. Offering free parking has meant a significant loss of income. Actual figures from the car park budget for 2010/11 and 2012/13 show that the income has reduced by just over £300,000 due to the introduction of the free two hours. This loss of

income has been funded from contingencies and built into the 2013/14 base budget.

Equality implications

45. Officers consider that the period of free parking has had a positive equality impact, as it increases access to the shops and facilities in the towns for everyone, and they are not aware of any negative equality impact arising from this scheme.

Options

46. Reducing the free parking to just one hour or one and a half hours would reduce the loss of income. However, the retailers fully support the free two hours and any change would be confusing for the car park users.

Conclusions

47. Most of the indicators show that the introduction of the free two hours parking has had a positive impact on the towns in the Vale district. The car park usage data shows a large increase in the number of people staying for short periods, although it appears that this is to the detriment of those people who used to stay longer. All car parks, apart from those at Audlett Drive, the Civic, the Charter and Portway, are showing less people now staying for periods longer than three hours compared to before the free two hours was implemented.

48. In terms of the economic benefits of the introduction of the free two hours parking, in some of the towns, the effects on footfall and vacant units haven't been as significant as may have been anticipated. For example, the footfall in Faringdon has declined and vacancy levels have increased in Wantage. Businesses in the towns however have stated that the free two hours parking has had a positive effect on footfall, number of customers and turnover in the Vale's towns.

49. In addition to the changes in the parking scheme, there are a number of wider economic factors to be considered when looking at the economy of each of the towns. As ATCM highlights in its recent report (see paragraph 6 above), a period of free parking is just one part of creating a vibrant economy. Officers within the economic development team are working closely with each of the towns to deliver a range of projects to improve the viability and attractiveness of the towns. This includes delivery of annual market town action plans and high street innovation funding.

50. There have been some negative impacts on the towns. For example, there is evidence from the county council that there is a small shift of people from on-street parking places into the off-street car parks resulting in a loss of income for the county council. More people using the car parks has meant there has been an increase in the number of ECNs issued, particularly to those people not displaying any ticket at all, which may relate to an assumption that free parking does not require the user to display a ticket.

51. Officers are aware that there is some abuse of the free parking. Spot checks during May 2013 show that this at quite a low level and ad-hoc enforcement deters this.
52. The most significant impact has been a reduction in the income from the car parks. This has been larger than officers originally predicted and may be explained by a larger than anticipated number of users who stayed for medium and long periods now taking advantage of the free two hours.
53. Overall, businesses have stated that the free two hour parking has had a positive effect on footfall, number of customers and turnover in the Vale's towns.
54. Although the scheme is not supported by the one of the bus operators, there is no evidence to support a major shift from public transport to car use due to the free parking scheme.
55. Businesses have commented on the increase in the price of the long-stay parking permits (for example, an all day permit for West St Helen Street car park in Abingdon for Monday to Friday increased from £613 to £650). Users were also unhappy about having to display a ticket.
56. Based on the available evidence, officers consider that overall the free two hours parking has had a positive impact on the towns. Officers invite members of the scrutiny committee to consider the outcomes of this review and to pass any appropriate comments on the review to the cabinet member.
57. New and more substantial signs are now displayed in the Vale Council's car parks to indicate that a ticket is required to be displayed, even during the free parking period. Officers are currently reviewing the signs on the approach roads into Abingdon, which are the responsibility of the county council, to indicate the free parking in the longer term.
58. Officers will review the car park fees and charges on an annual basis (normally in December each year), taking into account the annual car park account and the overall impact on the vitality of the towns, and will make recommendations to cabinet as necessary.

Background papers

- none

Appendix 1. Monitoring of the impact of free two hour car parking on the towns.

Name of survey	Measure	How information currently collected	Cost	Benchmark data/past info currently available	Future data to be collected	Comments
Off-street car park usage	Council pay and display and free tickets taken from machines	From number of tickets issued per car park for: - up to one hour - up to three hours - up to four hours - up to six hours - over six hours	None – collected in house	Yes, collected and updated monthly	The number of tickets issued per car park for: - up to two hours - up to three hours - up to four hours - up to six hours - over six hours	N.B. There is currently no 'up to two hours' ticket, so a direct comparison is not possible. We can back up data by anecdotal evidence from car park inspectors who patrol each car park daily
On-street car park usage in Abingdon	The number of vehicles using the on-street parking in the towns	Income from the pay and display machines averaged out over the year	None – collected by Abingdon Town Council	Yes	Will be supplied by Abingdon Town Council	
Car park offences	The number of tickets issued for not displaying a valid ticket and ticket expired	Information available from car park ticket processing system	None – collected in house	Yes, collected and updated monthly	Information available from car park ticket processing system	
Excess charge notices (ECNs) cancelled (fines)	No of ECNs cancelled per month	Information available from car park ticket processing system	None – collected in house	Yes, collected and updated monthly	Information available from car park ticket processing system	
Complaints	The number of complaints to the car park team from users and residents about the new system of free parking	n/a	None – collected in house	From the consultation that will be carried out to implement the new Order	Complaints to the council about the new system to be recorded by car park team	

Name of survey	Measure	How information currently collected	Cost	Benchmark data/past info currently available	Future data to be collected	Comments
Income	The income from the pay and display car parks and the ECNs (fines)	Information available from car park ticket processing system and uploaded onto Agresso	None – collected in house	Yes	Information available from car park ticket processing system and uploaded onto Agresso	
Footfall survey	Monitoring the number of pedestrians in a range of locations in each town	Surveys are carried out on range of dates/times – once a year in Faringdon and Wantage, and twice a year in Abingdon	None – surveys carried out by economic development team staff and Choose Abingdon Partnership	Yes, 2009 and 2010 data available	Yes, annually in Faringdon and Wantage, and twice a year in Abingdon	Next survey for all three towns is due in October 2011
Vacant shop survey	Monitoring the number of empty shops in each of the towns	Surveys are carried out annually for the three towns	None – surveys are carried out by economic development team staff / Choose Abingdon Partnership	Yes, 2008, 2009 and 2010 data available. Published on website.	Yes, annually	Next survey for all three towns is due in October 2011
Business survey	Monitoring the views of businesses about the impact of parking charges on their business	Not currently collected – plan to undertake first survey in October / November 2011 to establish benchmark	None – survey will be carried out electronically by economic development team	No – benchmark to be established and published on website.	Yes, annually	
Air quality	Monitoring for nitrogen dioxide at various locations throughout the district	Diffusion tubes exposed for a month and then analysed. Results collated and the annual average is recorded	None – as part of current work on air quality	Yes and published on website, reports for 2008, 2009 and 2010	Data collected monthly and published annually	Note of caution as many variables affect results. Not to be used individually to measure impact.

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME



containing scrutiny work to be undertaken 1 SEPTEMBER 2013 - 31
AUGUST 2014

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.

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Item title	Meeting date	Lead officer	Cabinet member	Why is it here?	Scope	Notes
Review two hours free parking scheme	Scrutiny Committee 19 Sep 2013	Chris Tyson, Head of Leisure Economy and Property Tel. (01235) 540378 Email: chris.tyson@southandvale.gov.uk	Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property.	The committee previously asked to review the effectiveness of introducing two hours free car parking.	To review the scheme and make any suggestions to Cabinet.	Moved to September due to officer availability
Leisure contract monitoring (DC Leisure & Active Nation)	Scrutiny Committee 19 Sep 2013	Kate Arnold Tel: (01235) 540416 Email: kate.arnold@southandvale.gov.uk	Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property	The committee undertakes an annual monitoring of the leisure contract with DC Leisure & Active Nation	To review the contractors performance and make any recommendations to the Cabinet member	

Agenda Item 9

Item title	Meeting date	Lead officer	Cabinet member	Why is it here?	Scope	Notes
s106 progress report	Scrutiny Committee 24 Oct 2013	Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning 01235 540340 adrian.duffield@southandvale.gov.uk	Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning development control			Requested by Scrutiny committee. Delayed from September meeting for further information.
Corporate plan - annual review of performance	Scrutiny Committee 24 Oct 2013	Sally Truman, Policy and Community Engagement Manager Tel. (01235) 540408 Email: sally.truman@southandvale.gov.uk	Matthew Barber, Cabinet member for finance.	The committee wishes to the council's review performance against the corporate plan over the past year.	To review performance and make any recommendations to Cabinet.	
Local development plan, including SHMA	Scrutiny Committee 24 Oct 2013	Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning 01235 540340	Mike Murray, Cabinet member for planning policy, including the core strategy.	Scrutiny is keeping a watching brief on the development of the core strategy and making recommendations to cabinet where appropriate	To consider the consultation feedback	Officer requesting delay date. Including Gantt chart and project plan. Revised timetable to be provided by head of planning.
Council Tax reduction scheme	Scrutiny Committee 21 Nov 2013	Paul Howden 01235 540385	Matthew Barber, Cabinet member for finance.			
Community Safety Partnership	Scrutiny Committee 21 Nov 2013	Liz Hayden	Matthew Barber, Cabinet member for legal and democratic	Annual review of CSP		

Item title	Meeting date	Lead officer	Cabinet member	Why is it here?	Scope	Notes
The health, wellbeing and social care role of local authorities	Scrutiny Committee 2 Jan 2014	Anna Robinson, Strategic Director	Cabinet member for planning development control, Roger Cox	The committee asked for an update at this time.	To receive information on the district authority's role	
Review of final draft budget	Scrutiny Committee 13 Feb 2014	William Jacobs, Head of Finance				
Review of Wantage Independent Advice Centre and South and Vale CAB	Scrutiny Committee 1 May 2014	Clare Kingston, Head of Corporate Strategy Tel: 01235 540356. Email: clare.kingston@so uthandvale.gov.uk	Matthew Barber. Cabinet member for finance.	To review both Centres a year after the grant of the four year budget and, in particular, to review the South and Vale CAB a year after its merger		Review is due after a full year of operation under new grant terms which start April 2013.
Leisure contract monitoring: Soll Leisure	Scrutiny Committee 1 Jul 2014	Kate Arnold	Elaine Ware. Cabinet member for leisure.	The committee undertakes an annual monitoring of the council's leisure contracts.	To review the contractor's performance and make any recommendations to Cabinet.	
Financial Services Contract: Capita	Scrutiny Committee 1 Jul 2014	William Jacobs, Head of Finance	Matthew Barber, Cabinet member for finance.	The committee undertakes an annual monitoring of the financial services contract.	To review the contractor's performance and to make any recommendations to the Cabinet member.	

Item title	Meeting date	Lead officer	Cabinet member	Why is it here?	Scope	Notes
Financial outturn 2013/14	Scrutiny Committee 1 Sep 2014	William Jacobs, Head of Finance		Annual report to Scrutiny on the financial outturn or the previous year.	To make recommendations to Cabinet.	
Review of the Leisure Facilities Strategy	Scrutiny Committee 1 Oct 2014					After it's last consideration of this item the committee requested to: "add this item to the scrutiny work programme for a further review after the local plan is approved."
Councillors' access to IT systems	Scrutiny Committee 21 Nov 2013	Anna Robinson, Strategic Director				
WiFi in Vale Towns	Scrutiny Committee					Requested by Scrutiny committee.