

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held at 7.00 pm on Thursday 25 July 2013

at the Council Chamber, The Abbey House, Abingdon



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillor Jim Halliday (Chairman), Charlotte Dickson (Vice-Chair), Tony de Vere, Jason Fiddaman, Debby Hallett, Mohinder Kainth, Sandy Lovatt, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Fiona Roper and Alison Thomson

Officers: Susan Harbour, Paul Howden, William Jacobs, Ian Matten, Matt Prosser, Anna Robinson, Chris Tyson and Chris Webb

Sc.13 Notification of substitutes and apologies for absence

Apologies received from Councillor	Substitute Councillor
Richard Webber	Jeanette Halliday
Eric Batts	Bill Jones

Sc.14 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt the public minutes of the committee meeting held on 23 May 2013 as a correct record and agree that the chairman signs them.

Exempt minutes to be circulated to members of the committee.

Sc.15 Declarations of interest

Disclosable pecuniary interests	Non pecuniary interests
None.	Councillor Alison Thompson is chair of Faringdon joint leisure liaison committee.

Sc.16 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

No urgent business notified.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Scrutiny Committee minutes

Thursday, 25th July, 2013

Sc.1

The agenda would be heard in order: items 8, 7 and 6.

The minutes are in the order in which items were heard at the meeting, rather than agenda order to provide a continuous narrative.

The Scrutiny representative on the joint project board had changed from Councillor Jason Fiddaman to Councillor Sandy Lovatt. Councillor Lovatt would be asked to update future Scrutiny meetings on the work of the project board.

Councillors Jim Halliday, Tony de Vere and Elaine Ware had attended a scoping meeting about the new leisure contract meeting. *Notes from the meeting would be circulated to all Scrutiny members.*

Sc.17 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Scrutiny Committee

None.

Sc.18 Financial Services Contract Monitoring

Matthew Barber, the Cabinet member for Finance; William Jacobs, Head of Finance; Paul Howden, Revenues and Benefits Client Manager, together with Darren Keen Contract Manager, Capita came to the table to introduce the report of the Head of Finance and to assist the discussion.

The following points were made during the presentation and discussion of the report.

- Payroll function was being fully assessed for the first time this year.
- There had been a consistent improvement with Capita's management of the contract since 2008/9.
- Capita were looking at ways of tracking whether customers open emails and all of their attachments, when these are sent out with e-billing. This will be reported on next year.
- The committee requested that reasons for customer dissatisfaction (where it exists) are included in next year's report.
- The committee requested that in future a question is included in the customer satisfaction survey which asks about customers' satisfaction with correspondence from Capita.
- Paragraph 69 of the report states "... the contractor could be more proactive with problem solving and resolution.... what would be helpful if lessons learned from their other client contracts could be readily shared and integrated into this contract (*sic*)". The committee would like this matter addressed by Capita during the coming year and reported on at next year's Scrutiny committee.
- Capita described some of the changes coming during the following year, such as more on-line services. However, provision would still be made for those unable to use on-line services.
- Capita's aim for improvement for the next year included: better collection rates and improved customer services. They also aimed to maintain their excellent rating.

The current contract runs until 2016.

RESOLVED

To recommend the report and assessment to the Cabinet member for finance and to congratulate Capita and the Vale officers on the excellent performance.

Sc.19 Leisure Contract Monitoring

Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for Leisure Services; Chris Tyson, Head of Economy, Leisure and Property; Chris Webb, Facilities Leisure Officer; together with Adrian Bidwell and Warren Higgins from SOLL, the leisure contractor came to the table to introduce the report of the Head of Economy, Leisure and Property and to assist the discussion.

The following points were made during the presentation and discussion of the report.

- The incentive scheme attached to online surveys, which was agreed to last year, had not been done. However, SOLL had now recruited a new marketing manager and this would be done in the coming year.
- Car parking at Wantage Town Football Club. This issue is still outstanding from last year, but SOLL are awaiting the outcome of discussions between the football club and King Alfred's School. In the mean time there will be temporary evening parking at King Alfred's available in the next couple of weeks on the tennis courts.
- The carbon variation document, raised in last year's minutes has not been achieved because the finance was not available by the time that SOLL had agreed to sign up to document.
- SOLL and the council had reduced energy usage in the managed centres in the last five years by 25 percent.
- The committee requested that officers revisit the question of funding for carbon reduction programme: to take away from tonight and provide a written answer.
- KPT 5 on page 17 of the report is poor because the number of new memberships is poor, but member attrition rates are also lower, meaning that total numbers of members are up.
- KPTs 5 and 7 are included because the contract specification includes a community based ethos and is interested in the number and type of customers.
- SOLL have employed someone to go into doctors surgeries to stimulate referrals from surgeries to leisure centres.
- The committee recommended that, in future, KPT5 measures the numbers of members and not the numbers of memberships sold as the memberships may vary in length.*

**It has subsequently been established that this recommendation cannot be complied with as it would mean putting commercially sensitive information into the public arena*

Contractor feedback.

SOLL expressed their concerns about the methodology used in the assessment and feel that they should have been told earlier in the year if there were problems as they meet often with officers.

Further committee discussion

- There has clearly been miscommunication between SOLL and the council regarding expectations, this needs to be addressed through the next year and procedures need to be in place to address these issues. This report related to the year 2012/13 and both parties considered that there were improvements on these issues in the current operational year.
- Every meeting between the council and SOLL should consider these issues and assess them on a regular basis so that the assessment is not a surprise at the end of the year.

- It was suggested that there should be an interim review mid way through the current year.
- It was suggested that the Cabinet member should monitor the ongoing situation and consider bringing back to the Scrutiny committee part way through the year.
- SOLL were asked to respond to the Scrutiny committee on the benefits which they offered to loyalty card holders in local areas: eg Faringdon.

RESOLVED

To recommend to the Cabinet member that the contractor's performance was good and improving.

Sc.20 Call in of individual Cabinet member decision: removal of co-mingled recycling containers at bring sites.

Reg Waite, Cabinet member for Commercial Services; Matt Prosser, Strategic Director and Ian Matten, Waste and Parks Service Manager, came to the table to introduce the individual Cabinet member's decision and to assist the discussion.

The decision had been called in because some members of the committee considered that the decision did not fully follow these key principles:

- a) proportionality – i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome
- b) due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers
- c) clarity of aims and desired outcomes
- d) an explanation of the options that were considered before a decision was
- e) taken, and the reasons for that decision
- f) the social, economic and environmental well-being of the community

The full reasons for the decision are attached to the agenda pack for this committee.

- The problems of extensive fly tipping at bring-sites and the contamination of bins were explained to the committee.
- Measures have been taken to address the problems but, despite this, the problem continues, so removing the bins seemed to be the only viable option.
- Since the introduction of the current waste contract in 2010, there was a duplication of services to recycle waste.
- There has been a move by the public to reduce using the bring sites in car parks and towards using the wheelie bin kerbside services.
- Only two of the 17 sites have not suffered from fly tipping or contamination.
- Site managers frequently ask for the bins to be removed.
- Bins are frequently full despite being regularly emptied, in line with the contractor's obligations.
- It is very costly to have cameras constantly monitor all the bring sites and to continually take action against offenders on every instance of fly tipping.
- Sometimes people from outside the Vale are responsible for the fly tipping.
- Enforcement teams have been very effective in enforcement against fly tipping, but at a significant cost.
- Where bins have been removed there has been no evidence of increased fly tipping at the former site or elsewhere.
- Three quarters of all fly tipping has been at the bring sites.
- Other options have been considered, but there is no guarantee that more staff/ more cameras etcetera would reduce the rates of offending.

- Removal of the bring sites would produce a very modest cost saving in the region of £1,000 to £15,000 per year, so this is not being done as a cost saving exercise.
- Contaminated recycling has to go to landfill which is expensive.

Scrutiny committee made the following requests/ observations:

- The wish was expressed that decisions of this importance should come to Scrutiny for discussion before decisions were taken, to allow the committee to carry out its role as “critical friend”, rather than to subject decisions to the call-in procedure.
- The Board Report monitors and tracks fly tipping, and members of the committee were encouraged to raise this item if the Board Report showed any significant increases in fly tipping.
- The officers were requested to let the Scrutiny committee know if, in their opinion, additional fly tipping resulted from the removal of these sites.

The committee thanked the Cabinet member and were satisfied with the decision taken.

Sc.21 Action List

Noted. No items to follow up.

Sc.22 Scrutiny work programme

Noted.

Sc.23 Dates of meetings

Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm