

# Minutes

of a meeting of the

## Joint Scrutiny Committee

held on Tuesday, 14 September 2021 at 6.00 pm  
at the 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park OX14 4SB

### Open to the public, including the press

#### Present:

Members:

South Oxfordshire District Councillors: Sam Casey Rerhaye, Kate Gregory, Jane Murphy and David Turner

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Nathan Boyd (Chair), Andy Cooke, Amos Duveen, Hayleigh Gascoigne and David Grant

Officers:

In person – Candida Mckelvey and Adrianna Partridge

Remotely – Patrick Arran, John Backley, Harry Barrington-Mountford, Jayne Bolton, James Carpenter, Pat Connell, Liz Hayden, Simon Hewings, Suzanne Malcolm, Catrin Mathias and Ian Matten

Also present remotely: Councillor Matthew Barber and Councillor Simon Howell as speakers

Cabinet members Councillors Robin Bennett (remotely) Andrew Crawford (remotely) Leigh Rawlins (remotely) David Rouane (in person) and Catherine Webber (remotely)

Other councillors and officers were present remotely to view

Also present: Biffa representatives Francis Drew and Andrew Dutton. Saba representatives Andy Marr and Nigel Griffin.

### Sc.46 Urgent business and chair's announcements

No urgent business, but chair ran through housekeeping matters.

### Sc.47 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Ian White and Stefan Gawrysiak.

Councillor Jane Murphy was in attendance as a substitute member, in place of Councillor Ian White for this meeting.

## **Sc.48      Declarations of interest**

None.

## **Sc.49      Minutes**

The Joint Scrutiny Committee minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record, and the chair will sign them as such.

## **Sc.50      Work schedule and dates for all South and Vale scrutiny meetings**

The committee reviewed the work programme, and members were encouraged to let the relevant chair know if they want anything added or changed.

## **Sc.51      Public participation**

Councillor Matthew Barber spoke to the committee. He was speaking regarding the Biffa performance report. In particular, the grading of the reports – see page 192, the rating for 2019-20 satisfaction.

The understanding Councillor Barber had from the report was that Head of Service determines customer and council satisfaction – how does the council determine customer satisfaction objectively, as he was surprised to see a level of satisfaction maintained where the service performance had been lower. What was the methodology?

Chair confirmed that this question would be answered within the Biffa annual performance report item. Councillor Barber was content with this.

Councillor Simon Howell also registered to speak and chose to address the meeting in confidential session.

## **Sc.52      Retrofitting Homes Task and Finish Group**

Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye introduced the report from the Joint Retrofitting Homes task and finish group.

Councillor Casey-Rerhaye briefly explained the methodology for why this report was created. There was concern that the green homes grant from central government wasn't working well, and a task and finish group was set up to investigate why, and how the district councils can utilise such schemes more productively.

The green homes grant was shortly withdrawn. We looked at retrofitting homes in particular to save carbon emissions and running costs for homes. We have had very informative discussions with interested parties, such as OxLEP. We propose projects in the report for council to consider. We ask scrutiny if we should take it through CEAC/CEEAC, and what next steps should we take?

Chair recommended that officers comment on the report, then pass it onto CEAC/CEEAC and then onto Cabinet.

Members felt that it should go to CEAC/CEEAC.

A member raised funding is an issue. The proposals require money. Chair felt that this was why officers should look at the report to find ways forward.

The report mentioned that 3,000 homes needed to be retrofitted a year by 2030. This was ambitious but in line with previous recommendations and in line with South Oxfordshire's targets (when the group became a joint project). It was explained that it was not just funding, but the skill set to complete the works and the desire for construction parties to get involved, staff and resource implications. The report outlined these barriers so we can be prepared for when more funding becomes available.

Officers will be able to give realistic expectations when reviewing the report, prior to moving onto CEAC/CEEAC.

**Resolved:**

To send the Retrofitting homes report to officers for review, before sending to CEAC/CEEAC, who can advise Cabinet on next steps.

## **Sc.53 Strategic property review**

This item was introduced by Cabinet member, Councillor Robin Bennett from South. Also present was Cabinet member, Councillor Andrew Crawford from Vale.

The paper discussed next steps, including approval of a disposal strategy. This was an ongoing continuous process to align action plans and corporate plan objectives, such as climate emergency. This was a major piece of work for officers involved, as the data received from Vinci was in poor condition.

The report included the process for receiving assets from developers, from developer contributions, to manage this in line with the strategic property review, and work with communities when they want to take on bigger community assets.

Every 3 months, an Asset Management Group will sit together to review assets and approve the disposal strategy. It will include officers and Cabinet members from property. Recommendations from the property team will be reviewed in line with corporate priorities. The group will report back to Cabinet briefing and the group will consult relevant ward members when a new asset was due to be approved.

The disposal strategy will allow best use and best value for public assets.

Councillor Crawford commended the report as a very good step forward for the councils. Officers involved were thanked by both Cabinet members. There were two separate asset management groups for both councils. Vale did learn a lot from the Old Abbey House disposal. We welcome this disposal policy, and the lessons learned are reflected in it.

The committee asked questions of clarification on the report.

Councillor Bennett added that larger scale items will still come to Cabinet and/or Council. Social value calculators that exist will be looked at for our use in future. Councillor Crawford added that GIS training has been requested for councillors.

The report was highly commended, and officers were thanked.

## **Sc.54 Saba car park contract - performance review**

Cabinet member, Councillor David Rouane introduced this report.

This paper was only relevant to performance of car park operators over the period of 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The report followed the standard template for assessing performance:

1. KPIs
2. Council satisfaction
3. Customer satisfaction

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#### 4. Summary of strengths and areas for improvement and contractor feedback

This was the second year of the contract with Saba.

For KPIs, the pandemic did impact some measures due to staffing issues to manage the infection, therefore impacting customer service.

Customer satisfaction surveys were distributed but only 4 were returned. No complaints were made. Surveys were given with direct communication, not on issuing a fine. This response may be improved.

Council staff raised concerns over Saba risk assessments, but gave good overall feedback on staff, who were viewed as collaborative, even during the pandemic, and friendly. Good flexibility at short notice – during the pandemic, Saba provided car parking spaces for the NHS and special permits.

Improvement needed on high staff turnover. Paper systems that were in place were not effective for home working – this will be worked upon. The overall performance was rated as good.

The committee asked questions on the report. There was discussion about ways to reach more customers to gather feedback on the service. There was a suggestion that a section on climate implications should be added to report templates. It was responded that the performance report was a different template and that may be why. Officers will look to update all forms of report.

### **Sc.55 Biffa annual report 2020**

Cabinet member for Vale, Councillor Catherine Webber introduced the report.

Also present was Cabinet Member Councillor David Rouane for South.

This report was for calendar year 2020. Chair reminded the committee that discussion was on 2020 performance only.

The joint contract provides household waste collection, recycling, food collection services, and other services by household subscription such as garden waste and clinical waste.

Other services include street cleansing, dog waste bins, litter fly tip and graffiti removal. A call centre service operates.

The standard performance report was used. During 2020, performance was good despite challenges of the pandemic, and waste services were continuing. There was an impact on performance from the previous year. Less than 5% of waste was sent to landfill. We were in top 5 English councils for recycling. The area for concern was missed bins and incomplete rounds, mainly due to staff turnover issues, trouble recruiting and covid related absence. Loss of staff knowledge was a concern.

The assessment overall was good for 2020 despite covid related difficulties.

Comments and questions were raised on the report.

Biffa achieved well during 2020 considering the pandemic. Thanks were given for quick response to fly tipping. There were press releases also to remind the public that fly tipping was always prosecuted.

It was suggested that a target should be in line with overall aim to reduce waste. For example, recycling levels were increased due to for example, Amazon packaging. This ups the recycling waste amount, but we don't really want that. It was responded that this was an historic KPT, recycling is now a last resort. Reusing and reducing were hard to measure and wouldn't fall into Biffa's remit. Measures were discussed generally, and another suggestion was whether we could have a KPT for repeat missed collections – particularly for the same houses. This was a subject of frustration from customers. Officer responded that it was a good point. Despite no KPT, the situation was tracked, and default notices issued for repeat missed collections.

Councillor Barber's question was answered as follows:

We don't have use of the residents survey we used to have. The data from that is too old. We can think about this in future. We only had eight complaints one complaint got to stage two and one

went to the ombudsmen and 38 compliments. This is the data we had to make an assessment that the time.

## **Sc.56 Exclusion of the public**

### **Resolved:**

The committee voted in favour of excluding the public to discuss a confidential report

## **Sc.57 Review of current garden waste provision**

The committee discussed the current garden waste / brown bin collection service.

The committee were presented with a confidential report. The committee were informed of the current situation and the work taking place to resume a normal service, under difficult circumstances, experienced across the county and nationally. Committee scrutinised the report and were satisfied with the response of officers working on the issue.

### **Resolved**

That the chair of scrutiny will contact the chair of JAGC to suggest a review of process for bin collections, at an appropriate time in the future, copying in Deputy Chief Executive for Place.

The meeting closed at 8.54 pm