

Scrutiny committee report

Report of head of economy leisure and property

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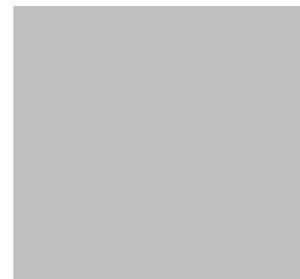
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To: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 25 July 2013



2012/13 performance review of Soll Vale

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee considers Soll Vale's performance in delivering the leisure management contract for the period 2012/13 for Faringdon and Wantage leisure centres and Tilsley Park and makes any recommendations to the cabinet member for leisure to enable her to make a final assessment on performance.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The report considers the performance of Soll Vale in providing the leisure management service for the Vale of White Horse District Council at Faringdon and Wantage leisure centres and Tilsley Park for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2. The review of Soll Vale (Soll) 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

3. The Soll contract commenced on 1 September 2004 and ends on 31 August 2014. The total cost of the contract to the Vale Council over this period is £3,819,000.

4. Soll also manages the outdoor swimming pool in Abingdon under a separate contract, which finishes on 31 August 2014 and has a separate monitoring arrangement with Abingdon Town Council. This outdoor pool contract is not covered by this review.
5. Officers monitor the main contract on a monthly basis. The monitoring regime provides each leisure centre with eight general routine inspections and four health and safety inspections annually. Each visit is unannounced and follows a detailed check list, which is completed by a monitoring officer during each visit. Areas that require immediate improvement are notified to the contractor before the officer leaves the site and a full report detailing all findings is issued to the contractor within two days of the inspection. An action plan is developed after each inspection with deadlines agreed between the Vale Council and Soll. Whilst there are always issues to deal with, there is co-operation between both organisations to achieve the desired outcomes.
6. In addition to these inspections, there are monthly formal contractor / client meetings held at one of the centres where any relevant issues are discussed. These visits also allow for ad-hoc inspections to take place. There are also quarterly strategic meetings, which allow for medium to long-term issues to be discussed and planned for, although any important issues can be raised at any time and resolved should they arise.
7. Managing contractor performance is essential for delivering the Vale Council's objectives and targets. The Vale 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 success of the performance review framework depends on contractors and the Vale 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 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 third year that we have used KPTs to measure the performance of this contractor. Following on from last year’s scrutiny committee, officers and Soll agreed to amend the measurement of water consumption in 2012/13 by basing it against each user of the facility, so that increased usage would not penalise the contractor.
13. An analysis of Soll’s performance against its KPTs appears below (and in more detail in annex A attached to 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	4%	8.2%	Excellent	5
KPT 2	Increase physical activity usage	4%	9.4%	Excellent	5
KPT 3	Increase U16 dry course visits	4%	40.7%	Excellent	5
KPT 4	Increase U16 wet course visits	4%	14.7%	Excellent	5
KPT 5	Increase number of memberships sold in reporting year	5%	-16.28%	Poor	1
KPT 6	Reduce electricity	-3%	-3.23%	Excellent	5
	Reduce gas	-3%	-5.78%	Excellent	5
KPT 7	Increase GP referral clients	15%	5.9%	Poor	1
KPT 8	Reduce water consumption per customer	-1%	-14.5%	Excellent	5
KPT 9	Increase Access to Leisure card holders	30%	100%	Excellent	5
KPT 10	Decrease operating cost per visit without compromising services	-4%	-3.03%	Weak	2
Overall “average” KPT performance rating score (arithmetic average)					4.4
Overall “average” KPT performance (excellent, good, fair, weak or poor)					Good

14. 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

15. Based on this performance, the head of economy, leisure and property has made a judgement on KPT performance as follows:

KPT judgement **Good**

Previous KPT judgement for comparison **Good**

DIMENSION 2 – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

16. Customer satisfaction is monitored annually using a satisfaction survey in each of the three facilities. Because of the numbers of customers attending each of the centres, we asked Soll to complete at least 200 surveys each for Faringdon and Wantage leisure centres and at least 150 for Tilsley Park. Soll added the questionnaire to its website as a voluntary option for customers to complete, as well as sending the document to all members on their database.

17. A total of 1,300 questionnaires were completed, compared to 700 in the previous year - 300 were received from Tilsley Park and 500 each from Faringdon and Wantage leisure centres. Unfortunately, no online surveys were completed by customers.

18. An analysis of customer satisfaction performance appears in annex B attached to this report. There are two areas to note in the results, which are:

- the staff category contains three of the five areas showing less satisfaction than during 2011/12, which could support the views in dimension 3 - council satisfaction - that the levels of front-line staff were not sufficient to deal with the increased user numbers
- the overall level of satisfaction with ease of car parking has improved since 2011/12, although there were 68 additional comments made about car parking at Wantage Leisure Centre.

19. An overall satisfaction score of 4.41 (excellent) was achieved in 2012/13, which is an improvement from 2011/12 when Soll achieved a score of 4.14 (good).

20. 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

21. Based on this performance, the head of economy, leisure and property has made a judgement on customer satisfaction as follows:

Customer satisfaction judgement **Excellent**

Previous customer satisfaction judgement for comparison **Good**

DIMENSION 3 – COUNCIL SATISFACTION

22. The council has taken the opinions of seven officers who had interaction with members of the Soll team at many levels during the year. These officers provided scores that they considered were appropriate to the performance of the contractor and averaged out, these provided the overall council satisfaction score. An analysis of council satisfaction performance appears in annex C attached to this report.
23. The Vale Council was in discussion with Soll regarding the introduction of a carbon management agreement, which was intended to save both carbon and money. Unfortunately, whilst protracted discussions were on-going, the available money for such projects within the Vale Council's budget was allocated to other corporate projects that will achieve those savings, and this effectively negated the need for the draft agreement to be completed.
24. In general, Soll continued to provide a consistent quality of service to customers, which is demonstrated by the increasing number of visits to the centres and the relatively low number of comments and complaints reported to Vale Council officers through the monthly reporting mechanism and directly to the Vale Council. The following table compares the number of customer comments received in the reporting year compared to those received in 2011/12, and shows a decrease in complaints received and an increase in compliments received.

	2011/12	2012/13	Variance
Total number of comments	152	143	- 9 (-6%)
Total number of complaints	109	79	- 30 (-28%)
Total number of compliments	43	64	+21 (+49%)

25. Officers raised a number of questions with Soll managers regarding the company's growth during the reporting period, and the actual and potential resource implications for this contract as a result. The company is expanding for various reasons, including strengthening Soll's position in relation to the joint leisure management contract in 2014 and securing Soll's future if it does not secure the joint contract in 2014, both of which are prudent business strategies. However, the location and private gym aspects of Soll's new business acquisitions causes officers some concern in terms of senior Soll managers being diverted away from the Vale contract.
26. Soll has re-structured its business to accommodate these acquisitions, which has resulted in additional workload on existing staff and one of the most experienced site managers being promoted from Faringdon Leisure Centre to the Park Club in Milton. Officers expressed concern over the loss of this experienced manager and are monitoring the service at that site whilst supporting the new manager and the centre's customers. To date the service has not deteriorated at Faringdon with the new manager initiating some improvements to the service. Soll has recruited additional resources at back office level to assist with improved systems and processes, which is welcomed; however, the front-facing customer teams appear to be at a consistent level, despite the increase in customers and the demands that they bring.

27. Over the reporting year, officers have consistently identified issues on the sites that are obvious to them. These issues include cleaning, maintenance and operational concerns and are notified to the general managers and, where appropriate, the deputy contract manager and above. This is not done necessarily because of the complexity or serious nature of the issue, but because officers are identifying those issues to site staff that we would reasonably expect the site teams to identify and tackle without our prompting. The need for more on-site checking and actions has been conveyed to all involved within Soll to minimise the number of instances officers have to identify.
28. For reasons of consistency with previous assessments, and for fairness between contractors, the following is a rough guide to the assessment of contractors on 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

29. The overall score achieved by Soll for council satisfaction is 3.36 and using the scoring matrix in paragraph 28 above provides a score of weak. This is a lower judgement than the one awarded in 2011/12 of fair based on a score of 3.6.
30. However, the head of economy leisure and property is aware of Soll's achievements under the KPT and customer satisfaction elements of this review. He is also aware of various Soll initiatives to increase participation and its support for the county-wide GO Active and Active Women projects, and Soll's input in relation to the long-term management of Tilsley Park during 2012/13. Taking account of these achievements and other contributory factors, and Soll's performance in this element last year, the head of economy, leisure and property used his discretion to round up the council satisfaction score from 3.36 to 3.4, which results in a classification of Fair for this section. He considers this classification better reflects the council's overall satisfaction, with Soll's performance during the year, whilst being mindful of the need to secure improvements in some areas of Soll's operational performance.
31. Based on this performance, the head of economy, leisure and property has made a judgement on council satisfaction as follows:

Council satisfaction judgement **Fair**

Previous council satisfaction judgement for comparison **Fair**

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

32. Taking into account the performance of the contractor against KPTs, customer satisfaction and council satisfaction, the head of economy, leisure and property has made an overall judgement of Soll's performance throughout 2012/13 as good. Soll performed well in relation to its KPTs and provided a consistent service to customers, as evidenced by the satisfaction results collated by Soll, with what officers consider was a stretched front of house team, which were required to undertake a demanding range of tasks. This is evidenced in the behind the scenes works, which were often slow to be completed and the customer-facing cleaning or repairs, which were consistently being found by officers. The judgement is a balanced one, which

accommodates the excellent customer satisfaction result with the fair council satisfaction result.

Overall assessment

Good

Previous overall assessment for comparison

Good

STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

33. Annex C attached to 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.
34. Officers have developed an action plan for 2012/13 based on the findings of the customer survey and council officers' comments to address areas for improvement. The plan is attached as annex E of this report, and progress on the 2011/12 action plan is attached as annex F of this report, with any uncompleted actions added to the action plan for 2012/13.

CONTRACTORS FEEDBACK

35. 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 attached to this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

CONCLUSION

38. The head of economy, leisure and property has assessed Soll's performance as good for its delivery of the leisure management 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 leisure centres less those made by schools by four per cent - achieved

This target looks at the total number of visits to all three facilities, less the number of school visits (which the three facilities have no control over). Visits increased from 392,325 in 2011/12 to 424,601 in 2012/13, the target set was 408,018. Both Wantage and Faringdon have increased their visitor numbers by over 6 per cent each, due primarily to increased dry side activity programmes and the continuation of the 18 month membership offer. Tilsley Park attendances have dropped by 1.4 per cent, due mainly to poor five a-side league attendances. Soll is addressing this issue by increasing staff numbers in order to manage the leagues more effectively.

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

This target looks at the total number of customers using the facilities for sporting or active participation purposes, which increased by 9.4 per cent from 376,319 in 2011/12 to 411,671 in 2012/13, the target set was 391,372. Tilsley Park again lost customers for the reason as given above, Faringdon gained 4.03 per cent more active customers while Wantage gained 11.68 per cent due to the development of a new multi-purpose studio (formerly the bar) and a significantly enhanced dry side activity programme.

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

This target looks at the total number of under 16's who enrol and participate on dry courses at all three facilities within the contract. The number of visits to these sessions was 8,232 in 2011/12 and increased by 40.7 per cent to 11,580 in 2012/13, with a target set of 8,613. The Vale Council has pressed all of its contracting partners to address the previously low levels of attendance in this area. Tilsley Park has seen the largest growth in this area by re-introducing its academy classes in athletics. Over 900 children have participated in the reporting year, which is to be recognised as a positive start. Wantage increased its attendances by 12.57 per cent and Faringdon by 67.5 per cent because of the increased sports academy programme which includes the introduction of trampolining and football coaching courses as well as the expansion of gymnastics.

KPT 4 - increase under 16 wet course visits by four per cent - achieved

This target looks at the number of visits achieved through the swimming courses offered at Faringdon and Wantage. Both sites have seen an increase in numbers with Wantage reporting growth of 16.31 per cent and Faringdon 5.39 per cent by optimising better available water space. Total swim course visits increased from 46,409 in 2011/12 to 53,232 in 2012/13, with a target set of 48,265. There is still a capacity of approximately 20 per cent in both pools lesson programme to occupy, but there are many factors outside the control of Soll that go into the decisions to continue with swimming lessons. Once a child can swim competently, other activities start to compete for their time and the income available to their families.

KPT 5 - increase the number of memberships sold by five per cent – not achieved

This target looks at the number of memberships sold and shows that sales of annual memberships have reduced for the second year running at the Wantage and Faringdon

facilities. The overall effect is a reduction of 197 memberships sold over the year from a total of 1,210 in 2011/12 to 1,013 in 2012/2013. The membership base has actually increased by 23% in 2012/13 due to the eighteen month membership offer, which retains people for a longer period. It is important that sales are maintained to retain the membership base which remains a focus of attention for the team in the new reporting year.

KPT 6 - reduce energy consumption by three per cent for gas and three 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 3.23 per cent over target and gas by 5.78 per cent across the contract. Tilsley Park has for the second year running made the greatest reductions with electricity reducing by 9.92 per cent and gas by 17.94 per cent. This level of savings came about due to a concerted effort by the on-site team to re-programme time clocks and reduce thermostat settings for building heating. The water-based facilities have made savings but are more sensitive to customer needs, due to pools and primarily indoor activities that offer less opportunity for significant savings.

KPT 7 - increase GP referrals by 15 per cent - not achieved

This target looks at the number of people referred to the facilities by GPs and other referring practitioners, such as practice nurses and physiotherapists. The increased target was 98 people in 2012/13 from 85 in 2011/12 and Soll achieved 90, which was below target. Faringdon increased its GP referrals by three people and Wantage increased its referrals by two. This may be due to the well-established nature of the schemes, which date back to the late 1990s, and a need to remind practices that the schemes exist. There may also be confusion within the scheme operators (PCT) as to the guidance it is giving out to practices.

KPT 8 - reduce water consumption by one per cent per user – achieved

This target looks at the amount of water consumed across the three facilities within the contract in comparison to the previous year. This is one of the most difficult KPT's to achieve as there are legal standards of water quality to meet and if the number of customers increase their demand for water also increases through toilet and shower use.

KPT 9 - increase the number of Access to Leisure Card holders by ten per cent - 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 Soll made a welcome contribution to raising the awareness of the scheme. This led to an increase in card holders from 21 in 2011/12 to 42 in 2012/13. The majority of this increase came from Wantage Leisure Centre, where numbers increased by 16 additional customers.

KPT 10 - decrease operating cost per visit by four per cent (without compromising services) - achieved

This target looks at Soll'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. The contract under achieved its target by £0.26 or two per cent. Wantage reported the greatest underachievement of £0.84 due to the investment costs for the provision of the new studio on the first floor and increased maintenance costs for squash court and corridor floor refurbishments. Correspondingly, income is increasing in the current year due to those works. Faringdon performed most efficiently reducing its operating costs by £0.83, primarily due to increased income from both wet and dry courses and a more planned approach to maintenance due to Soll having control of all maintenance following the removal of Oxfordshire County Council's contractor, Mouchel.

Annex B – Customer satisfaction

Customer Survey Results		SOLL VALE	
	2011/12	2012/13	Variance
Ease of Getting through on Telephones	4.26	4.29	0.03
Activity available at convenient times	4.23	4.30	0.07
Ease of booking	4.23	4.31	0.08
Ease of parking	3.14	3.40	0.26
Waiting time at reception	4.16	4.22	0.06
Activity charge	4.08	4.14	0.06
Range of activities available	4.27	4.27	0.00
Ease of contacting the centre with issues	4.25	4.19	-0.06
If any issues, how well were they dealt with	4.26	4.32	0.06
QUALITY OF FACILITIES / SERVICES			
Quality of equipment	4.05	4.15	0.10
Water quality in the swimming pool	4.26	4.38	0.12
Water temperature in the swimming pool	3.99	4.20	0.21
Quality of food and drink	3.79	4.00	0.21
Quality of brochures / leaflets/websites	4.08	4.17	0.19
Availability of information	4.14	4.21	0.07
Quality of information on notice boards	4.12	4.24	0.12
Quality of flooring in sports hall/activity area	4.19	4.15	-0.04
Quality of lighting in sports hall/ activity area	4.24	4.33	0.09
Quality of artificial turf pitches	3.73	3.86	0.25
CLEANLINESS			
Cleanliness of changing rooms	4.10	4.30	0.20
Cleanliness of activity space	4.15	4.24	0.09
Cleanliness of cafeteria area	3.91	4.31	0.40
Quality of litter removal	4.50	4.23	-0.27
Overall impression on cleanliness of centre	4.21	4.26	0.05
CAFETERIA / FOOD & DRINK			
Range of food and drink	3.67	3.79	0.12
Quality of food and drink	3.77	3.87	0.10
Value for money of food and drink	3.64	3.78	0.14
STAFF			
Helpfulness of reception staff	4.59	4.59	0.00
Helpfulness of other staff	4.60	4.51	-0.09
Standard of coaching / instruction	4.58	4.65	0.07
Availability of staff	4.63	4.50	-0.13
Visibility of staff including uniform	4.62	4.57	-0.05
VALUE FOR MONEY			
Value for money of activities	4.16	4.30	0.14
Overall satisfaction with your visit today	4.27	4.41	0.14
Average score	4.14	4.22	0.08

There were 177 additional comments made across the contract, which was down from 237 in 2011/12, of which 69 related to car parking issues and 30 related to availability and programming of activities. The priority areas from the survey comments form part of the action plan for 2013/14, which can be found in annex E attached to this report. There were 68 comments concerning car parking at Wantage, mainly resulting from

significantly increased activity on the site due to increases in the dry side activity classes now available. Officers are holding discussions with King Alfred's Academy and Wantage Town Football club to provide additional car parking on the leisure centre site as part of new developments and the provision of an artificial turf pitch.

Annex C - Council satisfaction

This assessment allows the Vale Council (as a client) to record its own satisfaction with aspects of a contractor's performance which lie outside Key Performance Targets and customer satisfaction. Each officer with direct knowledge and who frequently interacts with the contractor 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 dissatsfd
1 Understanding of the client's needs			3		
2 Response time			3		
3 Delivers to time		4			
4 Delivers to budget		4			
5 Efficiency of invoicing			3		
6 Approach to health & safety			3		

COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONS

Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dissatsfd
7 Easy to deal with			3		
8 Communications / keeping the client informed			3		
9 Quality of written documentation			3		
10 Compliance with council's corporate identity		4			
11 Listening		4			
12 Quality of relationship		4			
13 Notifies council of organisational or operational change			3		

IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dissatisfied	(1) Very dissatisfied
14 Offers suggestions beyond the scope of work			3		
15 Degree of innovation			3		
16 Goes the extra mile			3		
17 Supports the council's sustainability objectives			3		
18 Supports the council's equality objectives		4			
19 Degree of partnership working		4			

KEY DOCUMENTS

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

1. Annual business plan (Yes / No)

Yes

2. Updated business continuity plan (Yes / No)

Yes

STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Strengths

General managers are willing to listen and action things

Friendly and welcoming staff

Willing to work on joint projects

Supports county-wide projects e.g. Go Active and Active Women

Works well with the Civic Hall in Wantage

Areas for improvement

Communication – Soll needs to inform the Vale Council about proposals in advance of making changes on sites

Investment - is low and Soll needs to increase its investment in terms of general presentation and maintenance

Ownership of issues - Soll needs to have greater ownership of the centres, especially Wantage, in terms of identifying issues

Data – Soll needs to check data for accuracy before issuing it to the Vale Council, which is a repeated issue from last year's report, as officers are having to spend too much time checking and correcting data

Annex D - Contractor 360° feedback

CONTRACTOR'S REACTION / FEEDBACK ON COUNCIL'S ASSESSMENT

Soll is a charitable trust whose mission is to “get more people, more active, more often” and is the only locally based leisure trust currently operating facilities in the Vale or South Districts. The Company has diversified over the last year with a view to winning the combined Vale and South contracts with an exceptional customer value offer supported by the fact that the company overhead will be paid for by the diversified new businesses. This should provide Soll with significant competitive advantage.

Soll is delighted to have worked in partnership with VoWHDC over the last year and since the start of the contract in 2004.

The Soll Charitable Objects and the Vales Strategic Aims for Leisure have strong alignment and I thought it would be useful to detail some facts and evidence to celebrate the strength of the partnership over the last 9 years:

- Because the management fee is not subject to an annual inflationary rise, the real cost to the council has reduced by 24.3% over 9 years. This represents a year on year saving to the Vale.
- Soll has invested £597,237 in the three facilities in 9 years and will continue to invest in the final year of the contract.
- Soll husbandry and optimisation of the plant and the Vale investment in pool covers has resulted in a reduction in the use of gas and electricity of 25.1% over the nine years
- Over the period of the contract Soll has increased gym membership by 141% and customer usage by over 16%. Further in line with our charitable objects and the Vale's strategic aims we have reduced the cost barrier to participation by reducing by 60% The Leisure Pass card for those on means tested benefits and gym memberships by 35% triggering a growth in income and participation that continues today.
- The 9 years of success has been continued in the reporting year of 2012/13 as evidenced in the Customer Survey and KPTs where Soll has provided “excellent” and “good” outcomes.
- Soll's diversification and growth in 2012-13 has led to the employment of 5 fulltime equivalent posts at the Soll offices located on Milton Park. The Vale economic area benefits not only through greater employment of local people but the contract benefits from the addition resources and skills they bring.

IN SUMMARY SOLL IS PROVIDING HIGHER QUALITY SERVICES TO MORE PEOPLE, USING FEWER UTILITIES, MORE SAFELY AND AT CONSIDERABLY LESS COST

ANY AREAS WHERE CONTRACTOR DISAGREES WITH ASSESSMENT

Key points to note:

- The context of the report is based on the Council's drive for excellence; Soll endeavours to deliver excellence in all matters despite this not being a contractual standard required.
- The contractual standard required of facility husbandry and presentation is that which existed at the start of the contract – this has been delivered and Soll has and will continue to provide the standard above and, where possible will provide an excellence standard
- There is a significant difference between the Vale's own measures throughout the year and the scores provided with in Dimension 3 Council Satisfaction

The evidence is that Soll has provided excellence:

- Recently been independently assessed as excellent by Quest for: H&S and Environmental Management,
- IQL (achieving 100%)
- Had standards in place throughout the year which have been accredited recently to ISO 14001.
- Continued to maintain Investors in People.
- The customers' view of the service and facilities has improved year on year to be excellent in 2012/13.

Dimension 1 KPTs

Scoring KPT 5 as 1 is factually correct but has not given credit for the additional value that exceptional retention and the consequential growth in memberships in the year has had. The growth in membership base is far more valuable (both in participation and money terms) and it would be logical to have this recognised.

Dimension 2 Customers

Soll is pleased that our year on year assessment by the users of the facilities has again improved and has achieved an excellent assessment score.

The comment in para. 18 the first bullet point fails to note that the score was excellent in the previous year and remains excellent in the reporting year.

The first bullet point also seems to be an opinion as the evidence from customers is that there are sufficient front facing staff and it completely ignores that the relationship between the two is not straight line and that on line services are accepted and often preferred communication method.

Dimension 3

Vale officers originally assessed Soll as Weak and then changed this to Fair.

Had the Vale's own measures, during the year, been reflected in the report then the evidence would show that this is not a Fair assessment but much closer to Excellent.

Soll is confused by this ambiguity of scoring for example:

- The minuted evidence of the monthly operational and quarterly strategic meetings (16 meetings in total) is that the partnership is working well and at no time has the Vale expressed anything other than satisfaction with the service Soll provides. Satisfaction would relate to a score of 4.
- Item 6: H&S scored 3 out of 5 where every one of the Vale's 12 assessments through the year scored over 90%
- Item 1: Understanding Client Needs scored 3 out of 5, this should reflect the formal process of agreeing a business plan (including the KPTs and action

plan) and achieving it. By any measure Soll has exceeded the business plan. Logically this would be closely associated with item 4 which scored a 4.

Item 13: Notifies Council of Change, Soll provided the Vale with information on operational changes including those not required by contract further there are 16 occasions each year at which this is formally discussed.

Items 14 to 16: evidence from the additional work Soll undertook at Tilsley Park, the investment at Wantage in the gym and studio and the KPTs does not seem to have been considered in the scoring

Para 23: The comments fail to mention that Soll has achieved the KPT reduction target in utilities use in the year with out any investment to achieve this.

Para. 24: the word consistent is not factually accurate “improving and excellent” properly reflect the evidence of the customer surveys.

Para. 27: is based on the occasional visits made by Vale officers the customers who are there every day have assessed the cleaning and presentation as improved year on year and two items within this as excellent

Areas for Improvement

Item 2 here again the expectation goes beyond what is contractually required Officers should already be aware that the standard required under contract is already being achieved and exceeded with respect to investment.

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

Provide feedback at the 16 (12 operational – 4 strategic) scheduled meetings over the course of the year on the Councils perception of performance rather than feeding back only at the year end which of course is too late to rectify any perceived issues.

Feedback provided by

Date

Annex E – 2012/13 action plan to improve performance

Please note that uncompleted actions from the previous year's action plan have been included in the action plan for 2012/13.

Action	Owner	Due date
Improve awareness of disabled facilities at the centre to inform customers	Soll / Vale of White Horse District Council	1 September 2013
Ensure all key pieces of plant are fully working to minimise customer comments, especially in regard to temperatures.	Soll	Continuous throughout the year
In partnership with the Vale Council, encourage customers to comment on the service directly at the time of their visit, so that issues can be rectified as soon as possible	Soll / Vale of White Horse District Council	1 September 2013
Ensure contractor's on-site inspections and checks identify cleaning and maintenance issues in a proactive manner, in order to reduce the requirement for Vale Council staff to identify maintenance and cleaning improvements	Soll	Continuous throughout the year
Investigate cleaning regimes primarily at Wantage Leisure Centre and amend if required	Soll	1 September 2013
Investigate creating more availability of space in activities and classes	Soll	1 October 2013
Improve car parking at Wantage Leisure Centre	Soll / Vale of White Horse District Council	Timescale to be determined by discussions with third parties
Improve checking and accuracy of data before sending to the client team	Soll	Immediate
Improve the overall facility provision in Wantage. Officers are considering the future provision requirements for the area in terms of impending new housing development, which will be brought to elected members in the future	Vale of White Horse District Council	To be agreed
To try to increase membership sales to improve the overall membership base for both Wantage and Faringdon	Soll	Over the whole reporting year.

Annex F – progress on 2011/12 action plan

Action	Owner	Due date	Date Completed	Contract Monitoring officer comments
Supply more healthy food options	Soll	1 September 2012	1 July 2012	Tilsley Park offered a healthier menu in its bar, which did not prove popular with the vast majority of customers.
Improve supervision of cleaning at Faringdon pool	Soll	1 July 2012	1 July 2012	Monthly monitoring has evidenced these improvements have been made.
Improve the speed with which repairs and maintenance are undertaken	Soll	1 July 2012	1 July 2012	The speed was improved after discussions with SOLL's managers however this is an area under still scrutiny
Increase/improve dance studio space at both Wantage and Faringdon Leisure Centres	Soll / Vale of White Horse District Council	Wantage Complete June 2012	June 2012	Wantage developed its bar into a studio, thus creating a daytime programme of activities. Faringdon has extended its programme successfully.
Increase number and type of classes to accommodate demand and industry trends	Soll	1 September 2012	1 September 2012	Primarily through the activities above this action has been achieved.
Improve the preventative maintenance and servicing of gym equipment at Faringdon Leisure Centre	Soll	1 July 2012	1 July 2012	Customer comments have reduced on this matter. although the age of the equipment still is an issue.
Investigate the purchasing of new body pump equipment	Soll	1 September 2012	September 2012	New equipment was purchased.

Replace artificial turf pitches at Tilsley Park	Vale of White Horse District Council	Autumn 2012	Not achieved	Work starts on site June 2013. Works informed by discussions about the long-term future of the site.
Provide detailed plans for service delivery ideas within agreed timescales to allow improvements to take place	Soll	1 August 2012	Achieved	
Improve checking and accuracy of data before sending to the client team	Soll	1 June 2012	Not achieved	Inaccurate data has continued to arrive at the Vale Council. Added to 2012/13 action plan.
Working with the client team to ensure works ordered are those which are delivered on site	Soll / Vale of White Horse District Council	1 June 2012	Achieved	No issues of this nature have occurred
Improve the overall facility provision in Wantage. Officers are considering the future provision requirements for the area in terms of impending new housing development, which will be brought to elected members in the future	Vale of White Horse District Council	To be agreed		Officers continue to work with colleagues in planning and other key third parties. A new post has been created to inform the decision making process and create a viable proposal. Added to 2012/13 action plan.
To enhance the lighting levels and to minimise the carbon footprints of the centres, projects are being evaluated to put in alternative lighting schemes, which will reduce energy usage and utility bills	SOLL/Vale of White Horse District Council	To be agreed	Not completed	Available budget was very limited and was allocated to other carbon projects across the Vale, which negated the need for the carbon agreement to be completed.