

Joint Scrutiny Committee



Report of Head of Development and Corporate Landlord

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Performance review of Saba (Car Park Operators) 2022 - 2023

Recommendation

That scrutiny committee considers Saba's performance in delivering the car park operations contract for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and makes any comments before a final assessment on performance is made.

Purpose of Report

1. To ask scrutiny committee for its views on the performance of Saba in providing the car park operations services to the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. The service contributes to both Councils Corporate Plan 2020-2024. In the Vale's corporate plan, it assists in delivering strategic objective four - Building stable finances. The car park management contract assists in managing the council's resources responsibly and make effective use of the council's assets. In South's corporate plan, strategic objective six Investment and innovation

that rebuilds our financial viability, the contract assists the council in meeting this objective.

BACKGROUND

2. Managing contractor performance is essential for delivering the council's objectives and targets. Since some of the council's services are outsourced, the council cannot deliver high quality services to its residents unless its contractors are performing well. Working jointly with contractors to review performance regularly is therefore essential.
3. The council's process for managing contractor performance focuses on continuous improvement and action planning. The 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.
4. The overall framework is designed to be:
 - a way for the 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.
5. For reasons of consistency and for fairness between contractors, the following guide to the assessment of performance criteria against all key performance indicators (KPIs) is included within the councils' monitoring criteria.

Percentage Score	0 – 69.9%	70% – 79.9%	80% – 84.9%	85% – 94.9%	95% – 100%
Monitoring Score	1	2	3	4	5
Classification	Poor	Weak	Fair	Good	Excellent

OVERVIEW OF THE REVIEW FRAMEWORK

6. Evaluating contractor performance has four dimensions:
 - i. performance measured against key performance targets (KPI)
 - ii. customer satisfaction with the total service experience
 - iii. council satisfaction as client
 - iv. summary of strengths and areas for improvement, plus feedback from the contractor on the overall assessment and the contractor's suggestions of ways in which the council might improve performance.
7. The first three dimensions are assessed, and the Head of Service makes a judgement of classification. The fourth element is a summary of strengths and areas for improvement and includes contractor feedback.
8. The report includes a summary of officer's assessment for 2022-23 for each dimension. This is the fourth year of the current contract directly with Saba

previously the council was part of the Vinci 5 Councils Contract. Results from year one, two and three are included to allow comparisons to be made.

9. The cost of the contract as of the end of 2022-23, as a fixed annual charge was £472,691 per annum, of which the Vale proportion was £243,293 per annum and the South Oxfordshire proportion was £229,398 per annum. The reason for the difference in values is because of the car park ownership and the number of parking spaces in each authority.
10. In addition to these contract costs there are also variable costs which each council has to pay. These cover the banking and transaction costs of customers using different methods of payments to park, such as over the phone, web payments. These variable costs were Vale £18,655 pa and South £65,591 pa which reflects the differences in income received for the parking service.
11. In November 2022 we adopted new legislation to manage and enforce the car parks (Civil Parking Enforcement, CPE). This change was undertaken in an efficient and professional manner by Saba who worked with the council and ensured that all training required was undertaken that all staff were able to understand the new process as it was implemented.
12. Officers wish to extend their thanks to all of Saba's staff for the work that they undertook to ensure that this change in legislation went as smoothly as it could. Obviously, we have had some minor issues with this change, but all the staff worked together to ensure that the service continued to be provided in a professional manor.
13. This Contract includes delivery of the following services for the councils:
 - maximise income from parking, keeping close accounts of spends, income and reconciliations in line with council policy.
 - relevant administration of permits and notice processing and administration of PCN's.
 - assisting with internal and external audit reviews and attending committee meetings as required by the councils.
 - dealing with out of hours emergencies in car parks
 - maintain excellent customer relations by dealing with emails, challenges against PCNs, telephone calls in line with relevant legislation.
 - Representations made by offenders are now dealt with by the nominated council officer.
 - taking and checking all payments by all methods, balance income from the pay and display machines and record the data, deal with queries make any relevant transfers, checking VAT calculations in line with proper accountancy practices and to all car park accounts are accurate and up to date.

The main duties and responsibilities of enforcement officers are:

- enforcement is carried out by officers who are responsible for the day to day running of the car parks, issuing PCNs and ensuring the smooth and safe operation of the car parks.

- ensure good customer satisfaction by ensuring that the ticket machines are maintained in good working order which includes replenishing supply of tickets in machine, carry out regular checks and scheduled inspection surveys to identify any potential health and safety issues and signs are clear and graffiti free.
- carry out enforcement role effectively and efficiently by inspecting all vehicles to check that a current parking ticket, season ticket or disabled badge is displayed and issue appropriate PCN in accordance with legislation.
- act as an ambassador for the council, offering information and assistance to members of the public on a variety of issues (not only car parking). Provide excellent customer service by dealing with confrontational and emergency situations in a polite and efficient manner.

DIMENSION 1 – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI)

14. KPIs are recognised as an important element of monitoring the contractor’s performance. The KPIs cover those aspects of the service which are most important as a means of benchmarking against which performance can be measured. KPI’s are reported monthly to the council using a traffic light system Green – achieved, Amber - Area for concern and Red – Failure and are discussed at the monthly Client/Contractor meeting. A full breakdown of all KPIs is included in Appendix A.
15. KPIs are split into a number of sub-areas which combined to make up the KPI score. The table showing the results of all sub-areas with a detailed breakdown of the scores is included within Appendix A.
16. The following table 1 shows the annual results for the ‘top line’ KPI for 2022/23 compared with 2019/20 2020/21 and 2021/22. There are two areas of minor concern this year: ‘Notice Processing’, and ‘Customer Satisfaction’. The main influencing factor in the KPI results was the difficulty that all employers faced with retaining and recruiting reliable staff. While the back-office staff have been a settled team throughout the year, Saba have continued to struggle to appoint enforcement officers. Recruitment has been a constant battle through the year despite continuous efforts by Saba.

Table 1 History of top line KPIs for Saba over the last four years

	Area	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Monitoring Score
KPI 1	Administration	89%	100%	100%	100%	5
KPI 2	Notice Processing	99%	91%	86%	94%	4
KPI 3	Reporting	100%	99%	93%	95%	5
KPI 4	Financial management	100%	100%	97%	100%	5
KPI 5	Disputes Management	100%	71%	94%	100%	5

KPI 6	Authorised Use	100%	100%	100%	100%	5
KPI 7	Customer satisfaction	0%	100%	100%	92%	4
KPI 8	Asset Condition	99%	97%	99%	98%	5
Average KPI Score		86%	98%	96%	97%	5

- KPI 2 Notice Processing** is highlighted as being an area for minor concern. Within KPI 2, sub KPI 2.2 **the percentage of all notice disputes fully replied to within 10 working days**, only achieved a score of 81 percent. The reason for this sub KPI not being achieved was down to operational difficulties within the contract in April (70%) and July (52%) which was compounded in October (0%) & November (59%) due to the office move from Milton Park to Abbey House. In addition, Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) implementation in November 2022, new staff permits, and staff absence stretched resource. Performance between December 2022 to March 2023 after implementation of CPE has been 100 percent.
- KPI 7 **customer satisfaction** is highlighted as being an area of minor concern, but this was due enterally to an issue in May when no customers were invited to complete a customer service survey. Throughout the rest of the year customer satisfaction surveys were sent out to everybody who contacted the parking team, (except those who had been issued with a parking ticket, as it is considered that this would reflect in their response). We reported last year that very few customers responded to these questionnaires. This year Saba did not receive any completed customer surveys. Officers and Saba continue to explore alternative ways of obtaining satisfaction information.
- KPI 3 is shown as 95 percent, this slightly lower score is due to the number of car park patrols undertaken compared to target resulting in the sub KP3.1 being recorded at 78 percent. Major difficulties with recruiting a full team of inspectors have been encountered from April to November 2022, when there was only the equivalent of 2.8 CEOs against the required 5.2 full time equivalent. Notably in December 2022 a full team was appointed, and 100 percent of patrols was achieved up until March 2023.
- KPI 8 is the other indicator that is slightly below the 100 percent, and this measures the condition of the car parks, machines and health and safety. Each quarter the car park inspectors undertake car park condition surveys. Due to the moving of the office and the implementation of CPE this survey was not carried out in October with the agreement of council officers, however, this was still recorded as a failure within the sub KPI.
- The other issue within this KPI is the condition of the 'pay and display' ticket machines which are breaking down more often than in the past and subject to abuse and vandalism. The machines were replaced in 2018 by Saba, these machines were reconditioned and not new, it remains the responsibility of Saba to ensure the machines are maintained and in good working order through the length of their contract.

Overall KPI performance

17. A detailed analysis of performance against the KPI's and sub KPI's can be found in Appendix A Key performance indicators. Saba's overall performance has given an average KPI performance rating of 97 percent (Green). Based on the councils monitoring criteria 97 percent equates to a classification of 'Excellent'.
18. However, given that some sub KPIs have not been achieved the Head of Service has made a judgement on KPI performance as follows:

KPI judgement	Excellent
Previous KPI judgement for comparison –	Good

DIMENSION 2 – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

19. In the year 2019-20 there was no data relating to customer satisfaction collected by Saba. During 2020-21, Saba worked with council officers to develop a customer service questionnaire. A link to an on-line survey is attached to correspondence sent out by Saba to car park customers. Officers agreed that customer feedback from people issued with a parking ticket is likely to provide a negative or biased view of the process which would not be a true reflection of customer satisfaction. Therefore, officers agreed that the link should be included in general communications only and not be included in any communication directly regarding the issuing of a ticket or the dispute of a ticket.
20. While 142 invites were sent out following customers contacting the car park team, unfortunately nobody has responded to the request to complete the questionnaire. The response from customers has always been poor and it is difficult to get customers to engage with the service directly once their issue has been resolved.
21. Given that no responses were recorded to the questionnaire last year it is difficult to provide a rating for the customer service. The only measure that we are able to use is that we have received no formal complaints regarding the service, and nobody has contacted the council officers to raise any issues with the service that Saba provide.
22. As the number of customer satisfaction surveys returned was nil but no formal complaints were received, in order to complete this assessment, exceptionally the Head of Service has made a judgement based on this limited evidence on customer satisfaction as follows:

Customer satisfaction judgement	Fair
Previous customer satisfaction judgement for comparison	Good

DIMENSION 3 – COUNCIL SATISFACTION

- 23. As part of the performance review, officers with direct experience of working with Saba and who interact with them were asked to complete a short questionnaire. This included the staff within the property, legal, facilities, property and the technical services team. In total five questionnaires were returned as many staff now have little direct contact with Saba. This is because most of the council’s interaction with Saba is now through the Technical Service Team, who then deal with other areas within the councils as and when required.
- 24. Officers were happy with the service provided by Saba, commenting on how good communication was and how reactive and helpful their team was.
- 25. Based on Saba’s performance an overall council satisfaction rating score of 4.3 has been achieved. An analysis of council satisfaction can be found in Appendix B.

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

- 26. Based on this performance, the Head of Service has made a judgement on council satisfaction as follows:

Council satisfaction judgement	Excellent
Previous council satisfaction judgement for comparison	Excellent

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

- 27. Considering the performance of the contractor against KPI, customer satisfaction and council satisfaction, the Head of Service has made an overall judgement as follows.

Overall assessment	Good
Previous overall assessment for comparison	Good

- 28. The reason for this assessment is Saba’s failure to achieve all the sub KPI’s,

STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 29. During 2022-23 officers implemented Civil Parking Enforcement which required Saba and the Council to work in partnership to ensure that the change over to the new legislation ran as smoothly as possible. This joint working has led to a better understanding of each other’s roles within parking enforcement and how we can improve joint operations.

30. The Head of Service would particularly wish to express their thanks to the Saba staff for all the work they undertook to make the transfer to the new enforcement system run smoothly.
31. The main areas quoted by officers regarding Saba strengths and areas for improvement are:
- a) Good communication, always willing to learn from each other.
 - b) The Saba manager has provided some ideas to improve how we/Saba structure the patrols and the number of times car parks are visited per day to improve efficiency.
 - c) Saba has been very supportive and helpful during the transition to civil parking. Ensuring wording in template letters is correct and making sure enforcement officers are trained on the new offence codes and having the correct processes in place and documenting operating procedures.
32. The main area for improvement for Saba this year has been in recruiting and retaining car park enforcement officers, which they are working with the council to try and improve. The employment market currently is extremely difficult, and this job is not seen as an attractive job by many, as it is mainly working outside in all weather and includes weekend working.
33. The change to CPE will mean that the interaction with the legal team will change considerably. The new process will mean that most enforcement action will be the responsibility of the council's car park officers, as the new process does not normally require legal representation as they are civil matters.

CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

34. There are no specific climate and ecological implications to this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

35. The table below shows the comparisons in the fixed contract price over the last four years (increase each April by consumer price index published in January).

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
South pa	£ 224,088	£ 228,122	£ 232,228	£ 234,318	£ 245,799	£ 267,430
Vale pa	£ 238,320	£ 242,610	£ 246,977	£ 249,200	£ 261,410	£ 284,414
TOTAL FIXED pa	£ 462,408	£ 470,731	£ 479,204	£ 483,517	£ 507,210	£ 551,844

36. During 2022-23 officers do not feel that there is scope for mitigation of any of the KPI's. While a number of the sub KPI's have fallen below the level

required because of the over performance of other sub KPI there is not any KPIs that fall below a level that service credits would have been deducted.

CONCLUSION

37. The overall performance rating of “Good” from the Head of Service for 2022-23 has remained the same as in 2021-22. This rating is mainly due to the difficulties that Saba has had in employing new staff. While the overall score against KPI has improved from 96 percent in 2021-22 to 97 percent in 2022-23, there are still a number of sub-KPI which do not meet their expected levels.
38. Saba have worked well with council officers in planning the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) and we achieve the implementation date of 1 November 2022.
39. The Head of Service has assessed Saba’s overall performance as **Good** for its delivery of the car park management and enforcement services for 2022-23. The committee is asked to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for car parks to enable them to make a final assessment on performance by way of an Individual Cabinet Member Decision.
40. If the committee does not agree with the Head of Service assessment, then this report will be referred to Cabinet for further discussion and a final assessment of Saba’s performance.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Annex A – Key performance Indicators

	Area	KPI	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
KPI 1	Administration		89%	100%	100%	100%
1.1	Administration	Reply to all public, officer and councillor parking and car parks queries (where relevant to Saba, for off street, public parking), 100% of full responses sent within 10 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%
1.2	Administration	% of call outs for lock-ins to the Charter Car Park where responded to and released within 30 minutes. .	87%	100%	100%	100%
1.3	Administration	2 usage surveys (one for each council of all car parks) completed per annum with results published within 30 days of the survey end date (Council to give 30 days' notice)	100%	100%	100%	100%
KPI 2	Notice Processing		99%	91%	86%	94%
2.1	Notice processing	% achievement of target for notice progressions (for 1984 regs) - Send out 7-day letters after 21 days of being unpaid after the 23 rd day	100%	92%	100%	100%
2.2	Notice processing	% of all notice disputes fully replied to within 10 working days	99%	82%	58%	81%
2.3	Notice processing	% achievement of target for cpi error "excess charge notices" (not to exceed 7% of total issued averaged over the year)	99%	100%	100%	100%
KPI 3	Reporting		100%	99%	94%	95%
3.1	Reporting	Patrol the car parks - in accordance with the deployment plan - TBC South and Vale visits	99%	93%	68%	76%
3.2	Reporting	% of monthly reports (stats in tabular and graphical format on notices issued, P+D income and permits issued (number and income) issued by the tenth of each month	100%	100%	100%	100%
3.3	Reporting	Provide monthly financial records on income vs budget for pay and display fees, ECN/PCN and permits and all other miscellaneous uses separately for each council in table and graphical format.	100%	100%	100%	100%
3.4	Reporting	Requests from the council's (Internal) auditors, acknowledge requests within 24 working hours and provide all relevant information requested with five working days	100%	100%	100%	100%
3.5	Reporting	Production of Annual Report (summarising all aspects of the car park operation and service) – Annually (by 30 April each year)	100%	100%	100%	100%
KPI 4	Financial management		100%	100%	97%	100%
4.1	Financial management	100% of all records of cash collected for the previous month to be reported and reconciled by the 10th of each month. (Agresso vs Saba collection)	100%	100%	100%	99%
4.2	Financial management	100% of all records of non-cash collected for the previous month to be reported and reconciled by the 10th of each month. (Agresso vs Saba collection)	100%	100%	100%	100%
4.3	Financial management	% of payment vouchers and refunds raised within five working days of requests	100%	100%	100%	100%
4.4	Payments processing	All payments received at Abbey House to be banked within 24 working hour of receipt (on site)	100%	100%	100%	100%
4.5	Payments processing	All funding collected from the ticket machines to be transferred to the Council's bank account within 6 working days	100%	100%	85%	99%
KPI 5	Disputes Management		100%	71%	94%	100%
5.1	Disputes management	Forward all draft second and third disputes responses to the council where relevant - within 5 working days of receipt	100%	43%	88%	100%
5.2	Disputes management	% achievement of target for number of second disputes - 97% of total issued averaged over the year (up to 3% can be cancelled at 2nd dispute) ie incorrect interpretation of cancellation criteria	100%	100%	100%	99%
KPI 6	Authorised Use		100%	100%	100%	100%
6.1	Authorised use	% of permitted use issued or forwarded for agreement, within three working days being agreed	100%	100%	100%	100%
6.2	Authorised use	Issue 100% of (parking) permits (season tickets) within 3 working days once agreed (excluding bulk application requests)	100%	100%	100%	100%
KPI 7	Customer satisfaction		0%	100%	100%	92%
7.1	Customer satisfaction	To send out customer surveys for completion to all customers who contact the service by email or other means.	0%	100%	100%	92%
KPI 8	Asset Condition		99%	97%	99%	96%
8.1	Asset condition	Report H+S issues and confrontational situations monthly to the council (incidents and accidents and near misses) via monthly report	100%	100%	100%	100%
8.2	Asset condition	Car park inspection survey (all car parks including those free) – Completed an agreed checksheet once a quarter to identify issues within the car parks that need resolving by the Councils.	100%	100%	100%	92%
8.3	Asset condition	% achievement Risk assessments - to review and update Saba risk assessments once per year or as required following any reported incidents. 100% compliance required	100%	100%	100%	100%
8.4	Asset condition	% of car park machine faults responded to and fixed within three day working day of identification - via monthly report (Three working days Monday to Saturday)	97%	90%	96%	92%
Average KPI score			86%	94%	96%	97%

Annex B – Council staff satisfaction

This assessment allows the 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 has been requested to complete this form. Some questions can be left blank if the officer does not have direct knowledge of that question.

1. Service delivery							
When thinking of Saba service delivery, please rate the following items on the scale provided:							
	Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dissatisfied	Monitoring Score
1	Understanding of the client's needs	2	1	1			3.6
2	Response time	3	2				4.2
3	Delivers to time	2	1	2			4.0
4	Delivers to budget	2	1	2			4.0
5	Efficiency of invoicing	2	1	2			4.0
6	Approach to health and safety	2	1	2			4.0
7	Accuracy of information	2	2	1			4.2
Average Score awarded							4.0
2. Communications and relations							
When thinking of Saba communications and relations delivery, please rate the following items on the scale provided:							
	Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dissatisfied	Monitoring Score
8	Easy to deal with	3	2				4.6
9	Communications / keeping the client informed	4	1				4.8
10	Quality of written documentation	2		3			3.8
11	Compliance with council's corporate identity	2	2	1			4.2
12	Listening	2	3				4.4
13	Quality of relationship	2	3				4.4
Average Score awarded							4.4
3. Improvement and innovation							
When thinking of Saba's service objectives, please rate the following items on the scale provided:							
	Attribute	(5) Very satisfied	(4) Satisfied	(3) Neither	(2) Dis-satisfied	(1) Very dissatisfied	Monitoring Score
14	Offers suggestions beyond the scope of work	3		2			4.6
15	Degree of innovation		3	2			4
16	Goes the extra mile	3	1	1			4.4
17	Supports the council's sustainability objectives	3		2			4.6
18	Supports the council's equality objectives	3		2			4.6
19	Degree of partnership working	1	3	1			4
Average Score awarded							4.4
Total Average Score							4.3
4. Strengths and areas for improvement							
Strengths	Good communication, always willing to learn from each other.						
	The relationship between us and the client is very good and we work really well together.						
	Always very reactive to emails and quick to react in case of incidents or accidents						
	The Saba manager has provided some ideas to improve how we/Saba structure the patrols and the number of times car parks are visited per day to improve efficiency						
	Saba has been very supportive and helpful during the transition to civil parking. In particular ensuring wording in template letters is correct and making sure enforcement officers are trained on the new offence codes and having the correct processes in place and documenting operating procedures.						
	Saba have been particularly vigilant in checking the income from PCNs is being posted into Unit 4 correctly. This has been an issue in the move to CPE.						
	I have a desk in office near to the Saba team, this make communications very easy.						
	We both need each others help and support at times and we have built a good working relationship						
When myself and my team are working out in the field the wardens are always friendly and supportive							
Areas for improvement	The main difficulty for Saba this year has been in recruiting and retaining car park enforcement officers. The recruitment market in this sector is very difficult in South and Vale areas and there needs to be some innovative ideas during the last two years of the contract to ensure Saba has the staff to carry out the enforcement.						
	We carry out repairs in the carparks, it would be useful and helpful if when we are going out to carry out repairs if the areas could be cordoned off so we don't have to wait for parked cars to move.						
	Contractor should have sufficient cones / tape / traffic signs available for use in car parks if areas needed to be closed or traffic / pedestrians diverted at short notice.						

Annex C – Contractors Feedback

Annex C - Contractor 360° feedback

CONTRACTOR’S REACTION / FEEDBACK ON COUNCIL’S ASSESSMENT

ANY AREAS WHERE CONTRACTOR DISAGREES WITH ASSESSMENT.

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

Feedback provided by

Date

