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| Joint Scrutiny Committee Report |  |
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# Performance review of Saba (Car Park Operators) 2021 - 2022

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| Recommendation That scrutiny committee considers Saba’s performance in delivering the car park operations contract for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 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 2021 to 31 March 2022.

## 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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

1. For reasons of consistency and for fairness between contractors, the following guide to the assessment of performance criteria against all KPI is included within the councils’ monitoring criteria.

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| 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

1. Evaluating contractor performance has four elements:
2. performance measured against key performance targets (KPI)
3. customer satisfaction with the total service experience
4. council satisfaction as client
5. 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.
6. 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. Where some dimensions are not relevant or are difficult to apply fairly to certain types of contracts, the framework may be adjusted or simplified at the discretion of the Head of Service.
7. The report includes a summary of officer’s assessment for 2021-22 for each dimension. This is the third year of the current contract directly with Saba previously the council was part of the Vinci 5 Councils Contract. Results from year one and two are included to allow comparisons to be made against previous years.
8. The value of the contract as of the end of 2021-22, as a fixed annual charge was £483,517.32 per annum, of which the Vale proportion was £249,199.56 per annum and the South Oxfordshire proportion was £234,317.76 per annum. The reason for the difference in values is because of the car park ownership is different at each authority.
9. In addition to these contract cost there are also variable costs which the council has to pay, these cover the additional costs of customers using other methods of payments, such as over the phone, web payments and cover the charges made to Saba for the use of these facilities. These variable costs were Vale £17,117.88 pa and South £57,995.80 pa which reflects the differences in income received for the parking service.
10. The contract is to carry out all parking enforcement in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 (RTRA), issue and process Excess Charge Notices (ECNs). This includes delivery of the following services:

* 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 ECNs under the 1984 (RTRA).
* assisting with internal and external audit reviews and attending committee meetings as required by the council
* dealing with out of hours emergencies in car parks
* maintain excellent customer relations by dealing with emails, first disputes against ECNs, telephone calls in line with relevant legislation.
* forward second and further disputes to the nominated council officer for consideration
* 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 ECNs 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 ECN 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.

1. The third year (as novated) of the contract has continued to be affected by Covid-19. As the nation recovered from the epidemic the car parks continued to suffer from low usage as people continued to work from home or were reluctant to mix closely with others. Saba has continued to provide the back-office service from the offices at Milton Park although they have had to move around the offices on several occasions.
2. The main influencing factor in the KPI results was the unsettled nature of the whole Saba team throughout the year.Significant changes took place in the Saba ticket processing team from April through to September, which saw pressures on office routines being maintained by a very inexperienced team. To further compound the demands, the car park inspector team has seen significant change since May which continues through the year with two leavers, one long term absence and one operative having reduced their hours through the year. Recruitment has been an unsurmountable obstacle through the second half of the year despite continuous efforts by Saba.
3. At the early part of this year (April 2021) the effects of Covid and workplace restrictions were still being felt, placing pressures on the contract. Through the rest of the year Saba experienced constant challenges to meet Client activity, for example two price change events. Saba also had challenges for example effects of an Saba internal IT crisis, which placed unprecedented and at times significant levels of extra workload on a small inexperienced team.

## Dimension 1 – Key performance Indicators (KPI)

1. KPIs are recognised as an important element of monitoring the contractor’s performance. The KPI 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. If issues persist, they are referred to the quarterly contract meeting attended by the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord and the Saba’s Regional Commercial Manager.
2. KPIs are split into a number of sub-areas which combined 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.
3. The following table shows the annual results for the KPI for 2021/22 compared with 2019/20 and 2020/21. There are three areas of concern Notice Processing, Reporting and Disputes Management.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Area** | **2019/20** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **Monitoring Score** |
| KPI 1 | Administration | 89% | 100% | 100% | 5 |
| KPI 2 | Notice Processing | 99% | 91% | 86% | 4 |
| KPI 3 | Reporting | 100% | 99% | 93% | 4 |
| KPI 4 | Financial management | 100% | 100% | 97% | 5 |
| KPI 5 | Disputes Management | 100% | 71% | 94% | 4 |
| KPI 6 | Authorised Use | 100% | 100% | 100% | 5 |
| KPI 7 | Customer satisfaction | 0% | 100% | 100% | 5 |
| KPI 8 | Asset Condition | 99% | 97% | 99% | 5 |
|  | **Average taking into account mitigation on KPI 5 (2020/21)** | **86%** | **98%** | **96%** | **5** |

*Table 1*

* **KPI 2 Notice Processing** is highlighted as being an area for 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 58 percent and therefore KPI 2 is subject to a service credit to the council of £1,088.

The reason for the failure can be explained by the need to appoint new staff to three of the office roles within the contract. The KPI measures the time it takes to process notices and with inexperienced staff who needed to be trained in the processes it took longer than allowed.

* **KPI 3 Reporting** is also highlighted as being an area for concern. Within KPI 3, sub KPI 3.1, **Patrol the car parks - in accordance with the deployment plan.** has been seriously affected by not being able to maintain a full CPI team resulting in only achieving 68 percent of required inspections over the year. This has resulted in a service credit of £725.00 for the year.

Saba have been using some of their office staff to undertake patrols and while this has helped the score on sub KPI 3.1, it has had some effect on sub KPI 2.2 as office staff have spent the time undertaking patrols rather than notice processing. Saba have been working with both the councils and employment agencies to try and improve the response to employment opportunities.

* KPI 4 While this whole KPI has not been identified as an area for concern, Saba did fail a sub KPI 4.5 **All funding collected from the ticket machines to be transferred to the Council's bank account within 6 working days** where Saba achieved a result of 85 percent. (Red). As the average score of KPI 4 was 97 percent (green) there is no service credit.

The reason for the failure of sub KPI 4.5 was that Saba changed its financial processes which delayed some payments being transferred. This process has now been changed and Saba are now transferring funds within the required period.

* **KPI 5 Disputes Management.** Within KPI 5, Sub KPI 5.1 **Forward all draft second and third disputes responses to the council where relevant - within 5 working days of receipt** was 87.5 percent (Amber)All disputes were responded to but not within the required timescale Overall KPI 5 was on average 94 percent (Amber) and this resulted in a service credit of £725.

This area of concern was caused by staff shortages

1. The total service credits calculated for these underperformances is £2,538.00 and this will be divided between the councils on the same bases at as the contract payments.

**Overall KPI performance**

1. A detailed analysis of performance against the KPI’s and sub KPI’s can be found in Appendix A **Key performance targets.** Although some sub KPI’s have not been achieved, Saba’s overall performance has given an average KPI performance rating of 96 percent (Green). Based on the councils monitoring criteria 96 percent equates to a classification of Excellent.
2. Given that some sub KPI have not been achieve the Head of Service has made a judgement on KPI performance as follows:

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| KPI judgement | **Good** |
| Previous KPI judgement for comparison – | Excellent |

## Dimension 2 – Customer satisfaction

1. 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 an ECN 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.
2. While the link has been sent out to more than 500 customers during the year, the response from customers has been poor, with only eight responses. (a response rate of under 1.6 percent). Officers are working with Saba to see what can be done to improve the number of returns.
3. The final question on the survey is an open question to allow customers to express their view on the service being provided, as below:

**Is there anything else you would like us to know about your customer service experience with us?**

There were only a few comments put in this section, two were complimentary and one was complaining that they wanted a contact number to contact the parking team, which is on the web site.

1. The questions and results of the customer service questionnaire are included within Annex B. Given such a low return it is difficult to analyze customer satisfaction, all of the questions show a good or excellent service provided by Saba. In question six, overall, from the eight returns most people rated the service provided by Saba either Excellent or Good.
2. As part of this dimension, officers have taken into account that there were no formal complaints regarding Saba staff logged as part of the council’s complaints procedure during the review period.
3. As the number of customer satisfaction surveys returned is so low, in order to complete this assessment, the Head of Service has made a judgement based on this limited evidence on customer satisfaction as follows:

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| Customer satisfaction judgement  ***Note: still a disappointing number of returns from customers*** | **Good** |
| Previous customer satisfaction judgement for comparison | Good |

## Dimension 3 – Council satisfaction

1. As part of the performance review, officers with direct experience of working with Saba and who frequently interact with them were asked to complete a short questionnaire. This included the staff within the property, legal, finance, parks, facilities, and the technical services business support team. In total only five questionnaires were returned as many staff now have little interaction with Saba, due to the different working arrangements that have been put in place following the Covid pandemic. 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.
2. There was also an internal audit undertaken which resulted in a number of recommendations for improvements which have now been implemented by the councils’ officers and Saba. The overall result of the audit was satisfactory.
3. Most officers where happy with the service provided by Saba, however two officers raised concerns about the invoicing process being slow which impacted on the councils’ budget monitoring.
4. Based on Saba’s performance an overall council satisfaction rating score of 4.34 has been achieved. An analysis of council satisfaction can be found in Annex C.

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| 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** |

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

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| Council satisfaction judgement | **Excellent** |
| Previous council satisfaction judgement for comparison | Good |

## Overall assessment

1. Taking into account the performance of the contractor against KPI, customer satisfaction with staff attitude and council satisfaction, the Head of Service has made an overall judgement as follows.

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| Overall assessment | **Good** |
| Previous overall assessment for comparison | Good |

1. The reason for this assessment is based on the continued poor response to customers completing the customer surveys and Saba’s failure to achieve all the sub KPI’s

## Strengths and areas for improvement

1. During 2021-22 officers started the process of implementing Civil Parking Enforcement which required Saba and the Council to work in partnership to ensure that the change over to the new legislation runs a 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.
2. The Head of Service would particularly wish to express their thanks to the Saba’s contract manager, who has worked all year within a difficult employment market but still done their best to provide the service required by the Council.
3. The main areas quoted by officers regarding Saba strengths and areas for improvement are:

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| Strengths | *Entirely new team, eager to learn new things and how to handle legal matters.* |
| *Specifically, I and Anthony have built very good relationship and always take on board each other comments.* |
| *Saba is taking a lot more responsibilities than they used to, and communication is now much better.* |
| *Positive attitude and smooth processes in place.* |
| Areas for improvement | *Team should be more proactive and instruct us in advance to issue proceedings, at the moment there are delays and last-minute instructions and we have had discussion re this issue, I believe Saba is still short staff.* |
| *There are set dates for court hearings and matters needs submitting on a specific date each month, but Saba is not allowing us enough time to review these matters well in advance, last minute instructions are not recommended.* |

1. 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 team as the new process does not normally require legal representation as they are civil matters.

### Climate and ecological impact implications

1. There is no specific climate and ecological implications to this report.

## Financial implications

1. During 2020-21 Saba performance against KPIs was mitigated due to the Covid pandemic. In 2021-22 officers do not feel that there is scope for mitigation.
2. While Saba’s overall performance is considered good, the failure to achieve the following KPIs, has resulted in service credit being identified in line with the contract.
3. The following KPI’s resulted in the following service credits to the councils:

* KPI 2 % of all notice disputes fully replied to within 10 working days penalty £1088.00
* KPI 3 Patrol the car parks - in accordance with the deployment plan - TBC South and Vale visits penalty £725.
* KPI 5.1 Forward all draft second and third disputes responses to the council where relevant - within 5 working days of receipt - penalty £725.00.

1. The total service credits awarded to the councils for the year 2021-22 is £2,538.00

## Conclusion

1. The overall performance rating of “Good” the Head of Service for 2021-22 has remained the same as in 2020-21. 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 94 percent in 2020-21 to 96 percent in 2021-22, there are a number of sub-KPI failed mainly due to staff shortages to undertake specific tasks.
2. The number of customer responses to the customer satisfaction questionnaire is still very low and it is hoped that by expanding the survey to include questions on the customer perception of the conditions of the council’s car parks, will make the completion of the surveys more attractive for customers.
3. The Dimension 3, council satisfaction has improved from fair to excellent although the number of completed questionnaires has reduced due to the new way of working.
4. Saba have worked well with council officers in planning the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) and we are on course to for the implementation date of 1 November 2022.
5. The Head of Service has assessed Saba’s overall performance as **Good** for its delivery of the car park management and enforcement services for 2021-22. 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.
6. 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

1. 

Annex A (continued) Comments on KPI table

2.2 At the start of this financial year there was no office team and the then Operations Supervisor was struggling to meeting the demands of their role. New staff have now been appointed to undertake the office role within the contract

3.1 This KPI has been seriously affected by not being able to maintain a full CPI team since May. This is not just a problem within this contract but many others as the role is not one that attracts staff and currently there are many other opportunities available to them

4.5 Saba had a new financial director who implemented procedural changes without taking into account the contract requirements. Saba resolved the issue quickly once identified and most payments are now completed on time

5.1 Delayed by staff shortages and the requirements of client activity in car parks requiring changes to CPI rotas.

8.4 The ticket machines are coming to the end of their life and will require the council to fund their replacement shortly as parts get more difficult to source. Also, there was a problem with internet connection on level one of the Charter Car Park which took a while to overcome resulting in a new booster being fitted, so that the ticket machine can connect to other resources.

# Annex B – Customer Satisfaction

# Annex C – 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

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Annex D - Contractor 360° feedback

## Contractor’s reaction / feedback on Council’s assessment

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| An exceptionally busy and complex year, with a number of key challenges and impacts outside of normal working practices managed successfully by the Saba Team working in partnership with the council.  In our view, there has been a significant level of commitment from the Team in assisting the council achieve both strategic and localised targets & objectives. I am pleased to report that Nigel has now been formally placed in the role of Contract Manager and has worked tirelessly this year to rebuild a stable team. This is despite challenges relative to recruitment, derived from a competitive employment market driven by the Pandemic recovery and Brexit. The introduction of two key individuals within the Notice Processing and Operational teams, namely the supervisor and key administrator roles has seen increased productivity, efficiency, and effective management of these functions. Recruitment at CPA level remains a challenge and we acknowledge that this has impacted KPI performance. As a result, Saba have introduced additional measures to enhance the recruitment process, including the sourcing of a localised recruitment agency, the utilisation of national recruitment platforms, enhanced pay and benefits, and we will continue to review this position with the council.  In terms of future strategy, we are working closely with the council on formulating a transitional plan to accommodate the change from RTA 84 to TMA 2004 (CPE) , including supporting the council with the provision of costs, training, change control and guidance on the required changes to ensure that we are collectively in the best position to successfully switch to the new legislation. In addition, we continue to work closely with the council on the planned move away from Milton Park to new premises and will continue to provide support both in terms of the physical move, IT services, planning and logistics, whilst maintaining a seamless transition and maintaining services throughout the move. In summary, despite the challenging and change in services, both in real time and those planned, Saba have maintained an effective parking management service for the councils and will continue in partnership to develop future services to meet council requirements and expectations. |
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**Any areas where contractor disagrees with assessment**

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| Saba believes the assessment is fair and reasonable. |

## What could / should the Council do differently to enable the contractor to deliver the service more efficiently / effectively / economically?

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| To continue the collaborative approach already applied to both project management and the current service delivery. To continue to openly discuss and plan for future projects, ensuring that reasonable timelines are applied in order to meet with the councils’ expectations. |

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| Feedback provided by | Andy Marr | Date | 01.09.22 |