

Minutes

of a meeting of the



Listening Learning Leading

Five Councils Partnership Corporate Services Joint Committee

held on Thursday, 24 November 2022
at 1.00 pm at Abbey House, Abbey
Close, Abingdon OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Attendance:

Committee members

Vale of White Horse District Councillors: Neil Fawcett and Debby Hallett
South Oxfordshire District Councillors: Pieter-Paul Barker and Andrea Powell
Hart District Councillors: Richard Quarterman and James Radley
Havant Borough Councillor: Tim Pike
Mendip District Councillor: Ros Wyke

Officers and guests: Claire Hughes (Client Relationship Director), Michael Oatway (Transition Project and Contract Support Manager), Andrew Down (Commercial Director), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services - South and Vale District Councils), Candida Basilio (Democratic Services Officer), Paul Merrick (Head of IT – 5C's), Emma Hall (Account Director - Capita), Gareth Stemp (Capita – Head of Customer Services), Darius Zarazel (South and Vale Democratic Services Officer) Susan Harbour (Strategic Partnerships Manager - South and Vale District Councils), Karen Dhaliwal (Director, Hartley Law), David Clark (Head of Law and Governance - Mendip DC), Stuart Brown (Chief Executive Officer - Mendip DC), Daryl Phillips (Chief Executive Officer – Hart DC) and Chris Bradley (Executive Head for Commercial - Havant Borough Council).

17 Opening announcements

Client Relationship Director opened the meeting and briefed the members on housekeeping matters.

18 Chairs announcements and urgent business

Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker was nominated as chair for the 2022-23 municipal year.

RESOLVED: to confirm Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker as chair of the Five Councils Partnership Corporate Services Joint Committee for the 2022-23 municipal year.

Councillor Richard Quarterman was nominated as vice chair for the meeting.

RESOLVED: to confirm Councillor Richard Quarterman as vice chair of the Five Councils Partnership Corporate Services Joint Committee for the duration of the meeting.

There was no urgent business.

19 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Liz Leyshon (Mendip District Council), Lulu Bowerman (Havant Borough Council), and David Rouane (South Oxfordshire District Council), who was substituted with Councillor Andrea Powell.

20 Declaration of interests

There was no declaration of interests.

21 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED: to note the minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 22 June 2022.

22 Capita Performance Report

The Client Relationship Director introduced the item and the committee were informed that the report covered performance for the period from April to September 2022. It was noted that the Land Charges service met all of their key performance measures but for Customer Service calls (PI002), they failed to meet their KPI of being answered within an average of 20 seconds across the period. This was driven by significant issues with missed bins in the Havant area and with the annual garden waste renewals in Mendip. However, it was noted that performance against this PI was improving in recent months.

Council Tax and Benefits calls (PI004) also failed to meet their KPI of being answered within 60 seconds at any point throughout the period. The reason for this was due to the complexity of the customer enquiries, driven by the cost-of-living crisis, therefore needing more time on each call. Capita had confirmed that they were currently looking at the costs and benefits of recruiting more staff to call centres to address these issues, particular to help cover Revenues and Benefits.

The Revenue and Benefits service was experiencing high demand as the team had been implementing the energy rebate scheme, which completed in September 2022. Also, the collection rate of council tax was ahead of the same point last year, although now showed signs of slowing down. The forthcoming Royal Mail strikes were expected to have an impact on this service and Capita confirmed that they were working with authorities to ensure alerts were in place to inform customers about possible delays.

IT also met most of its KPIs across the period, occasionally priority 1 incidents could not be remedied during the period, but the Client Relationship Director confirmed that there were no significant worries around IT.

On rectification plans, the Client Relationship Director notified the committee that three rectification plans were still open; one related to VAT coding errors, although this had subsequently been closed outside of this reporting period, the second was for the management of committals/summonses for South and Vale District Councils which was nearly closed, and the third was about Socrata Land Charges data which was still open. Further information about all the points raised above were presented in the agenda pack to the meeting.

The committee then asked about the changing nature of customer services calls and if the nature of calls could be tracked to help anticipate future calls. Officers noted that the changing nature of calls would be addressed in customer services update item, item 8 of the agenda.

On IT, members asked whether the South and Vale officers are working with Capita on the items that were recently raised in the internal audit, notably over cyber security. It was confirmed that an action tracker had been developed and that regular meetings between the two organisations were in place to monitor progress in this area.

Finally, members asked about how the red and amber colours for KPIs are tracked and what was used to determine the difference between them. The Client Relationship Director confirmed that there were percentage criteria, however, it was agreed that this context should be added to the next report to the committee.

RESOLVED: to note the performance reported against contract measures.

23 Capita Strategy Briefing

Capita representatives introduced the item, and the committee received a presentation on the strategic review. This presentation broke down the changing nature of the contract and certain priorities over the next two to three years, through to the end of the contract in 2025.

The key item for Capita was the Mendip move to the Somerset Unitary Authority. Work began on the transfer of IT to Somerset which was due to end in March 2023. Other changes to other services were also being made in advance of 1 April 2023. Capita informed the committee about the smaller projects they were working on, such as the South and Vale automated switchboard, the Havant out of hours service, office moves for South and Vale and for East Hants, the Havant & East Hants separation, and the advanced exit planning ahead of the end of the contract.

Throughout the period from the present to, potentially, the end of 2023 or beyond, it was predicted that economic condition would remain uncertain, and it was expected that central government would continue to put more emphasis on local authorities to deliver schemes, such as further grants. Finally, Capita confirmed they were working with the authorities on implementing central government changes to Land Charges.

The committee were then presented with an IT roadmap which showed the specific IT projects each authority wanted to pursue over the period from now up until the end of

the contract. For example, Mendip's exit into Somerset was currently underway, South and Vale's separation out of the shared Office 365 was next on the agenda, and the final stage was for the separation of all the authorities' data. There was a running order for each of these projects and Capita were working on how best to achieve each.

The Committee asked about risk, specifically with the Mendip exit, would there be a risk of other authorities' data being moved or lost. In response, the 5CP Head of IT confirmed that although there would always be potential risks, due to due diligence from Somerset and third parties, this risk was minimal. The committee noted that learning from this process would benefit the other councils with their contract exits.

When asked about the costs of the exit, and if they would be apportioned fairly, members were advised that this was addressed in the Inter Authority Agreement. It was also noted that the authorities' Section 151 officers were in regular discussion about the impact of any service exit on the other authorities. Members also asked about transition costs at the end of the contract and asked to be presented with a detailed briefing about how the exit costs would be spread across the authorities. Officers confirmed that this would be provided in due course as work progressed on managing the end of the contract.

RESOLVED: to note Capita strategy briefing.

24 Customer Services Update

Capita representatives introduced the item, and the committee received a presentation on the performance of their Customer Services. Members noted that the KPIs were mostly met and in the green. On the speed to answer for Customer Service queries, the KPIs had improved in the past months due to a reduction in volume of calls. Capita were working closely with colleagues to improve the journey for customers.

On Council Tax and Benefits call lines, this was the challenging area. The target for 80% of calls to be answered in 60 seconds, and under. The wait time on average was three minutes. The two factors that needed to be looked at were the number of calls and call length. A trend Capita had observed was that the average call time from 2019 to 2022 had increased – due to Covid and the cost-of-living crisis. Some customers were struggling to pay council tax or were claiming benefits for the first time. Capita were telling their customer support officers to take their time with customers and help direct as best as possible to try to address the queries on the first call.

Members of the committee asked about the relationship between residents calling the call centres and using the resources that had been provided by the councils, on their website for example. Capita confirmed that they did use the appropriate councils' resources and often directed people to the council's websites. From this, the committee noted how important it was to keep these pages of their website updated and for Capita to feedback the key items so that the websites can be adjusted to meet customers questions and requests.

Staff recruitment and retention challenges was a point that was raised as a potential issue, and members asked if Capita had experienced this. Capita officers confirmed that this was something they were also dealing with. They were trying to boost numbers through country wide recruitment, using virtual resources, agencies, and

increasing pay to above the real living wage. Due to these points, Capita were happy with their staffing situation and had increased staffing in the contact centre. Finally, it was emphasised that Capita were receiving very few complaints around wait times, which were averaged to be around three minutes, but will continue to monitor this.

RESOLVED: to note the customer services update.

25 Governance Review Update

The Client Relationship Director introduced the item, and the committee were informed of the decisions taken by the Strategic Management Board. The Client Relationship Director informed the committee that the current governance arrangement was put into place at the beginning of the contract and was designed for a complex contract. However, since then, the contract had simplified, yet the intensive governance arrangement remained. As the governance was not meeting needs, the Client Relationship Director was tasked with simplifying it.

The governance review streamlined the management line and proposed amending the meeting schedule. In summation, the authorities Monitoring Officers and Section 151 officers will meet monthly, through to the end of the Mendip exit, the Operational Management Board and Joint Tactical Board was proposed to meet quarterly, both the Strategic Management Board and Joint Committee would move to an annual meeting (before the budget). The Client Relationship Director also confirmed to members that further information or action on contract performance can be provided if requested and that the Chief Executive Officers of the authorities were comfortable with the proposals. The Inter Authority Agreement was being revised to reflect these changes and the aim was to finalise the draft before Christmas 2022.

The committee also noted that Capita were consulted throughout the process, and that if extra meetings were needed, they can be held. The governance changes had progressed through each of the authorities' cabinets and were formally approved.

RESOLVED: to note the following changes to the governance structure of the Capita contract:

- 1) Joint Committee to meet annually, down from quarterly currently. The Committee, whilst not being a formal decision-making body, provides budgetary oversight and continues the spirit of partnership working whilst keeping Members informed on the contract.
- 2) Strategic Management Board (SMB) to meet annually or as required during the year. The process for obtaining SMB approval on important strategic matters that cannot wait until the annual meeting to be fully set out in a redrafted Inter Authority Agreement (IAA).
- 3) Joint Tactical Board (JTB) and Operational Management Board (OMB) to meet quarterly, with virtual sign off on change controls as required in between meetings. The mechanism to agree matters in between meetings to be set out in a redrafted IAA.
- 4) Service Improvement Group (SIG) to continue to meet monthly, with the option to include the Land Charges Service Group in the monthly meetings as the HMLR project moves into its main delivery phase.
- 5) IT Strategy Board and IT Operational Board meetings to continue without change.

- 6) The Commercial Director to take on the strategic lead for all client team staff.
- 7) All the above changes to be incorporated into a redrafted IAA. This will also capture the Section 151 officers triung up agreement, the ongoing arrangements regarding the Zellis payroll bureau and software contract and how Somerset Council and East Hants are to be accommodated within the contract or otherwise moving forward.

26 Any other business

There was no other business.

27 Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED: to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business under Section 100A and 100I of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that:

- (i) It is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

28 2023/24 contract and client team budget

The committee reviewed the 2023/24 contract and client team budget.

RESOLVED: to endorse the draft contract and client team budget for submission by the individual authorities as part of their annual budget setting process.

29 Update on the Somerset Unitary Authority

The committee received and noted a verbal update on the Somerset Unitary Authority.

30 Havant and East Hampshire update

The committee received and noted a verbal update on Havant and East Hampshire.

31 Strategic IT update

The committee received and noted a verbal update on the strategic IT roadmap by the commercial director and the Head of IT.

The meeting closed at 2.54 pm