

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on THURSDAY 30 JANUARY 2020

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL, TIME SQUARE, MARKET STREET, BRACKNELL, RG12 1JD

Present: Parry Batth (Vice-Chairman), Hilary Cole (Chairman), James Cole, John Harrison and John Porter

Also Present: Paul Anstey (Head of Public Protection and Culture), George Lawrence (Residential Team Leader), Suzanne McLaughlin (Senior Environmental Health Officer), Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager), Stephen Chard (Principal Policy Officer), Kevin Gibbs (Bracknell Forest Council), Damian James (Chair of the PPP Joint Management Board) and Clare Lawrence (Wokingham Borough Council)

Apologies for absence: John Ashworth and Councillor Chris Bowring

PART I

20 Minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 November 2019 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

22 Notice of Public Speaking and Questions

No public questions were submitted.

23 FHRS Inspection Request Charging Decision

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 5) which sought approval of a policy decision that would confirm recharging as a position for the Partnership for the purpose of food hygiene inspection rescoring requests made by businesses under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS).

George Lawrence (Compliance and Enforcement Team Manager) explained that a charge was not currently levied but a cost was incurred by the service. The process for this type of inspection was similar to that conducted for a standard inspection.

Councillor John Porter supported the recommendations in the report. He queried whether a charge could be levied for the re-inspection of a premises as a result of a premises receiving a low rating. Councillor Porter queried whether this could be used by businesses as a way of raising standards.

Mr Lawrence explained that a charge was not levied for a re-inspection. He would refer to the regulations to ascertain if this was possible. He felt that an incentive for businesses to improve would be for commercial gain. A charge could be levied for enforcement.

Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager) added that all ratings were published, including in the local press. A poor rating could have a negative impact on businesses

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and they were generally very eager to be rescored to move towards improving their rating.

A project to improve lower rated premises was in operation. This involved targeted work with businesses to bring them up to a rating of at least 3. The vast majority of premises were rated 4 or 5 (higher end rating).

Mr Murphy also explained that the Food Standards Agency document 'Regulating Our Future' looked to introduce a greater level of self-regulation. Businesses were also expected to meet the costs of regulation.

Councillor John Harrison supported the approach. He felt it was appropriate that high rated businesses did not have to subsidise poor performers.

RESOLVED that:

- **A cost recovery approach to food hygiene inspection requests for rescoring purposes would be incorporated using the existing fees and charges policy and methodology.**
- **The Partnership would ensure all FHS associated documentation was updated accordingly in order to keep businesses advised of this course of action.**
- **George Lawrence to ascertain if it was possible to levy a charge for the re-inspection of premises.**

24 Safeguarding Update

The Committee noted the report (Agenda Item 7) which provided an update on the work of the Safeguarding Lead for the Public Protection Partnership and the progress of embedding this cross cutting issue across the service.

Councillor John Harrison welcomed the content of the report.

RESOLVED that:

- **The report, detailing the work being undertaken, be noted.**
- **The Partnership be supported in progressing this work further.**

25 Air Quality Status Reports

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 8) which provided information that would allow for a policy decision to inform the Committee of the submission of the annual air quality reports for the three local authorities. The reports attached to this agenda covered monitoring data and action plan progress for the calendar year 2018.

Suzanne McLaughlin (Principal Officer – Policy and Governance) explained that Annual Status Reports (ASRs) had been submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). These reports showed a continued reduction of air pollution levels.

DEFRA had since provided feedback on work conducted to date, the progress being made and where further work was necessary. Full appraisals were provided for each local authority and these were appended to the report. Overall, air pollution levels had not been exceeded in any locations. These locations would continue to be monitored.

The importance of the Partnership's work with other services, i.e. Highways, was highlighted.

Suzanne McLaughlin highlighted that the key consideration of this monitoring and the different locations was the impact on public health. Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) were identified in the maps included in each local authority's report. The air

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quality of an AQMA was reported as an annual average. The location of monitoring devices was a difficulty in some cases. If they were not ideally placed then calculations would have to be adjusted. DEFRA could recommend an alternative location if they felt locations were not suitable.

Councillor Hilary Cole felt that positive reports and comments had been received from DEFRA.

Councillor John Porter agreed. He drew attention to initiatives to improve air quality on the A322 in Bracknell such as a reduction in engines idling. Efforts were also ongoing to improve traffic flow in Crowthorne High Street.

Councillor Parry Batth was pleased to note that pollution levels were decreasing. A reduction in traffic idling in Twyford was an ongoing piece of work. Enforcement measures could be implemented to help combat idling.

Suzanne McLaughlin clarified that pollution concerns were all related to traffic. There were no other pollution concerns, i.e. from industry.

Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager) explained that a report had been produced which looked to combat idling. Work on this included analysing the measures deployed in other areas. This report could be presented to the JPPC in due course.

Councillor Hilary Cole referred to the introduction of electric vehicles which would help to reduce pollution levels over time. She queried if the use of electric vehicles was being monitored across the Partnership and beyond. Suzanne McLaughlin confirmed that this information was being collated.

Councillor Hilary Cole asked officers to ensure that reports were produced on the new template in order to achieve consistency.

RESOLVED that:

- **The contents of the report and the three separate Air Quality Annual Status reports be noted.**
- **Feedback from DEFRA on the reports be noted.**
- **Progress on the measures to improve air quality set out in each report be noted.**
- **The ongoing and planned future measures to improve air quality set out in each report be approved.**

26 Future Plan

The Committee noted the Future Plan, in particular the items scheduled for the next meeting in March 2020.

The date of the next meeting and dates for subsequent meetings was discussed. It was noted that Tuesdays were no longer suitable for this meeting and a preference was given for Wednesday evenings.

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 6.30pm in Newbury (venue to be confirmed). Future meetings would need to be rescheduled.

Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager) proposed an addition to the Future Plan. This was an annual return for the Partnership of the use of its surveillance powers. These included covert intelligence and telephone usage. It was agreed that this would be scheduled for the June 2020 meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- **Future meeting dates would need to be rescheduled.**

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- An annual report would be added to the Future Plan on the use by the Partnership of its surveillance powers (June 2020).

27 Any other items the Chairman considers to be urgent

2020/21 Budget

Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager) explained that since the discussion at the previous meeting, further work had been undertaken on the budget. However, the cost centres had only just been pulled together for budget setting purposes. Information was tabled for Members to consider outside of the meeting. This would also be e-mailed to the JPPC Members. Any queries could be directed to Sean.

The budget information included income from fees and charges, and from grants. This income contributed to expenditure and enabled the budget to balance.

Taxi Trade use of Electric Vehicles

Councillor James Cole reported on a discussion held at West Berkshire Council's Licensing Committee on the use of electric vehicles by the taxi trade. His expectation was that local authorities would be asked to provide incentives for taxi firms to move to electric vehicles. He queried if this had been looked at across the Partnership.

Councillor John Porter advised that similar discussions had been held in Bracknell Forest. It was felt that this would require significant investment and Councillor Porter queried if electric taxis were actually available.

Sean Murphy was aware that incentives had been put in place by Reading Borough Council, but he was unclear on their effectiveness.

Councillor John Harrison highlighted the importance of ensuring that charging points were available and could be accessed by taxi firms.

Paul Anstey (Head of Public Protection and Culture) reported that a Government grant could be applied to for the installation of charging points. However, the necessary infrastructure would need to be in place in order to introduce chargeable taxi ranks.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.15pm)

CHAIRMAN *Parry Batth*

Date of Signature 24 June 2020