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# PPP Covid19 Response and Service Update

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Joint Public Protection Committee
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	15 December 2020
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## Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Joint Public Protection Committee with an update on the service response to Covid19.
- 1.2 To provide an update on other service delivery matters including performance; and
- 1.3 To provide an update on the work of the case management unit as requested at the last JPPC meeting.

## Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee **NOTES** the role PPP are playing across the Councils with respect to Covid19 response.
- 1.2 The Committee **NOTES** the status of non-Covid related service delivery including the Q2 performance report.
- 1.3 The Committee **NOTES** the update on the Case Management Unit.
- 1.4 The Committee **RESOLVES** to receive a further update at its February 2021 meeting on progress.

## Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	<p>The Covid19 pandemic has presented a number of financial challenges for the service particularly with respect to income from licensing. Many sectors of the licence trade including hospitality, taxi and private hire, street trading and licensed animal establishments have been significantly hit by the combination of the Covid19 business restrictions and the restrictions around essential travel. This has resulted in a significant number of licences being surrendered or not renewed.</p> <p>At the time of writing the impact in terms of lost income from licence receipts is estimated to be around £180K for the period April – November 2020. The matter of emerging financial pressures is dealt with elsewhere on this agenda.</p> <p>In relation to the new duties the PPP has obtained, it has accessed a total £169K of the local outbreak response grant.</p>

	<p>Grant funding has also been accessed to support the local tracing functions set out in this report.</p> <p>The service has also accessed grant funding with respect to Covid compliance work. This has enabled additional staffing resource to support work around compliance checks, enforcement, business advice, events and safety advisory group meetings.</p>
<p><b>Human Resource:</b></p>	<p>The service now has only three full-time / part time vacancies and, at the time of writing, these are in the process of being recruited to. There are 15 agency and casual staff currently in the service. These are mostly grant funded for work around Covid and investigations as well as providing cover to long term absence such as maternity leave.</p> <p>The Housing Team is now fully staffed having recruited to the three vacant posts. Partnership support is also now fully staffed and is being supported by a number of temporary staff to support increased workload volumes.</p> <p>The new team structure and functional split set out to the Committee in the last update is functioning effectively and optimises the skills of the individuals within the teams.</p>
<p><b>Legal:</b></p>	<p>The service is the primary enforcement body for all three councils with respect to Covid legal controls.</p> <p>At the moment these controls fall into two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first deals with business restrictions of which very few still exist. These can be re-introduced as a result of so-called local lockdowns.</li> <li>- The second category relates to controls on Premises, Events (gatherings) and Public Spaces where the Councils have powers to issue directions and prohibitions.</li> </ul> <p>These are enforced through delegated authority from the secretary of state or through the existing scheme of delegations to officers.</p> <p>It is a statutory duty to enforce many of the provisions in place to tackle Covid19 at local level.</p>
<p><b>Risk Management:</b></p>	<p>We will continue to manage risk in line with the prevailing situation and corporate policies.</p> <p>The most significant Covid19 risks relate to workload and income. Mitigation includes:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective prioritisation of workload and the deployment of additional grant funded resource. The long-term sustainability of working a seven day service with evening / late evening working is a challenge but many staff have come forward to assist with this to ensure that people can get effective breaks.</li> <li>- Lost income is being covered this year in part by government support schemes for local authorities. The long term future of this support is unknown at this time and consideration is being given as to how we manage what is likely to be a long term loss of income. A report will be brought to Committee on this issue once the picture is clearer.</li> </ul> <p>A further major risk is around the balance of existing statutory duties with new workloads arising from Brexit. The PPP is providing routine briefings on the progress of negotiations and monitoring national bodies for new intelligence on the subject.</p> <p>JMB will be kept informed of any service changes and adjustments and any consequences arising from these will be notified.</p>			
<b>Property:</b>	<p>There are no direct implications arising from these proposals. Each Council is taking its own approach to property issues.</p> <p>Partnership Support largely operate from a central base in Theale. This has provided for efficiencies for example in the area of licence applications where it is now possible to produce licences for all three areas from one central office.</p>			
<b>Policy:</b>	There are no policy implications from this paper.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		<p>This is not a decision report.</p> <p>The report does however set out the steps taken to protect vulnerable staff and address community need during this period.</p>

<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		The level of service will be improved with competent and appropriately qualified staff delivering to our customers, from initial contact through to enforcement action. Staff will also have the opportunity for personal development and self-worth.
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>	x			There has been an unquantifiable environmental impact from the new service arrangements as travel has been significantly reduced. Longer term it is anticipated that this impact will be maintained as new ways of working are embedded in service delivery.
<b>Health Impact:</b>	x			The proposals create no direct health impacts on staff. They do however set out community based health protection measures.
<b>ICT or Digital Services Impact:</b>	x			The use of ICT on service delivery has been transformational. Telephone conferencing, MS Teams and Zoom have all been employed in the day today running of the service but also in the delivery of democratic decision making. Staff have engaged in planning meetings remotely and all three PPP authorities have held virtual licensing panels where the technology has delivered effectively.
<b>PPP Priorities :</b>	x			The proposed to maximise the use of resource to deliver against the JPPC priorities particularly around health protection, protection of vulnerable people and environmental protection on a risk led basis. The priority relating to effective and efficient service delivery has been at the core of arrangements.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		✓		None
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Managers and JMB have been involved in the development of the service recovery proposals. Discussions will take place with staff to ensure their competences and knowledge will be employed to deliver the best outcome for residents, businesses and the partner Councils.			

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 In June 2020 the JPPC received two reports. The first set out the role PPP had served in the local response to Covid19. The second set out the proposals around recovery. The Committee resolved at that time to receive further updates, the last of which was in September.
- 1.2 This report builds on those previous two reports as well as providing an interim performance update.
- 1.3 The interim structure has been in operation for 4 months and is working effectively to deliver large elements of 'business as usual' work as well as providing for effective management of the public protection Covid19 response.
- 1.4 The interim structure has also proved effective in terms of a cross team / cross discipline response to the pandemic:
  - (a) The trading standards team have been dealing with business closure enforcement and advice;
  - (b) The commercial team have led Covid19 compliance on workplaces;
  - (c) Licensing have led on all forms of compliance in licenced establishments;
  - (d) The case management unit has provided oversight of all law changes and assisted with drafting prohibition notices; and
  - (e) The intelligence team have assisted with outbreak mapping.
- 1.5 This ability to build specialist knowledge bases, adapt quickly and build critical mass is one of the key assets of the shared service arrangement.

## 2.0 Local Covid19 Response

- 2.1 **Service Requests:** Since the last report, service requests for 'business as usual' matters have fallen back to broadly yearly average levels for this period. There continues to be a high level of service requests regarding Covid19 compliance issues.
- 2.2 There are broadly three categories:
  - businesses looking for compliance advice insofar as it relates health protection measures;
  - business enquiries relating to the recent national requirements on business closures;
  - more recently on business re-opening matters and complaints from members of the public regarding how businesses are operating.

Across Q1/Q2 the service received around 9850 service requests (including 826 relating to Covid). This compares to around 7280 for the equivalent period for 2019/20.

2.3 **Outbreak Planning and Local Outbreak Investigation:** Each Public Health Authority (all three Councils) have in place an outbreak plan. Our contribution to this plan is as follows:

- Advisory visits to Care Homes (West Berkshire) and Care Home outbreak visits in West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest.
- Monitoring and review of all Covid notifications from Public Health England (PHE) as well as 'soft intelligence' notifications from businesses, employees and members of the public. These notifications have increased significantly since the second wave of the outbreak has taken hold. We produce regular reports for all three Councils on local outbreaks including analysis and updates on any developing outbreaks in high risk settings such as schools, care homes and workplaces.
- Being 'Subject Matter Experts' with respect to commercial premises as well as advising in other subject areas. To this end we have conducted a significant number of reviews following workplace outbreaks ranging from hospitality to retailers and warehousing and distribution to manufacturing settings. These reviews provide feedback to local public health teams to determine such factors as testing requirements as well as providing advice to businesses to reduce the risk of further spread or further outbreaks.
- Monitoring of compliance at commercial premises including provision of advice, advisory and compliance visits and following up public concerns. In November alone the service conducted over 500 such visits to ensure compliance with prevailing guidance and / or to ensure business opening and other restrictions were being complied with. This has led to the issuing of advice in a number of cases.
- Develop enforcement and implementation of enforcement procedures for new local powers relating to premises, events and public spaces and providing training for relevant staff within authorities and the Police. Liaison with the police and public health on implementation. This has resulted in a number of premises being advised to close or prohibition notices being issued with respect to matters such as street traders (kebab vans etc.) and other businesses trading outside permitted hours, car washes operating when on the closure list. In one case a £1000 fixed penalty was issued for a subsequent breach. Powers were also used to issue directions to one hospitality setting following an outbreak.
- Finally since the last report we have also set up our local contact tracing cell. Currently the service is funded to carry out local tracing in West Berkshire on a seven day basis and conducts local tracing for Wokingham and Bracknell at weekends. This has proved effective we are contacting most people referred to us where the national system haven't been able to obtain tracing and managing to obtain tracing data in over 60% of cases. In all cases advice and support is offered and where appropriate residents are referred to the relevant local support mechanisms such as community hubs.

2.4 **Events and Gatherings:** The regulations that permit gatherings are changing on a regular basis but outside (and in certain circumstances during national restrictions) permitted organisers are allowed to hold events / gatherings subject to the production of both satisfactory Health and Safety and Covid risk assessments.

- 2.5 We have been involved (through the Safety Advisory Group) in reviewing a large number of risk assessments. These have ranged from amateur sporting events to Remembrance Sunday events. At the time of writing the rules are set to change again as we move to Tier 2 restrictions and we are considering the limited number of events taking place in the run up to Christmas.
- 2.6 The new Tier 2 Regulations also permit admission to spectator sporting events on a limited basis (up to 2000 people or 50% capacity whichever is the lower). We are now working with a number of sporting venues such as local semi-professional football clubs and Newbury Racecourse to review risk assessments.
- 2.7 Once an event has been assessed there is also the policing of the event / gathering to ensure risk assessments are being complied with but also to provide confidence to attendees and residents as well as to get a picture of the event delivery to aid any outbreak investigation should one be needed. We have attended a number of events or pre-event visits since the last report. Where appropriate we have done so with partners such as the Police and Fire Service.
- 2.8 **Support for the Businesses:** The service plays a pivotal role in supporting local businesses by the provision of advice and compliance visits. These serve two purposes namely ensuring business compliance and secondly providing assurance to customers of those businesses that necessary steps are being taken to ensure their safety. It is though this that we seek to provide confidence in the system which is important to businesses and residents alike.

### **3.0 Performance Update**

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the PPP to provide the Joint Public Protection Committee with an overview of the performance of the service. The report (Appendix A) provides a summary of the information for both Q1 and Q2.
- 3.2 The report sets out the areas (as identified in the Covid19 updates provided) which have ceased or substantially reduced their activity. We have identified the likely year end position given that we have now gone through the second set of national restrictions.
- 3.3 The Joint Committee have already received substantive reports on the work of the PPP during Q1 and Q2 of this financial year and this report seeks to complement those reports with additional data and a number of indicators.
- 3.4 The performance summary report can be found at Appendix A to this report.
- 3.5 It should be noted that the service is developing a significant backlog of inspection work particularly around food premises and farms. This has been driven by a number of factors including business closures, national guidance to reduce visits and redeployment of staff to the Covid19 response effort. Whilst food enforcement work has never stopped it is being prioritised as follows:

Establishments where the local authority has identified potential public health/consumer protection concerns through proactive surveillance – this includes, for example, where such concerns are identified in relation to new businesses setting

up, businesses that have reopened after prolonged closure or businesses changing what they do, such as pubs providing takeaway food.

Establishments subject to ongoing formal enforcement action; and

Establishments overdue/due an enforcement revisit - unless the local authority is content from prior remote interaction with the business that that non-compliances have been rectified.

#### **4.0 Case Management Unit**

4.1 At its last meeting the Committee received a brief report on the work of the Joint Case Management Unit. As agreed we have brought forward further information to the Committee including an indication of workload since its inception in 2018. This can be found at Appendix B to this report.

#### **5.0 Communications**

5.1 Communication remains a key element of effective service delivery and is an important part of the delivery model which has a focus on prevention and intelligence gathering as well as enforcement. We use many channels to communicate including visits to businesses and residents, press releases, website and social media. We have also contributed to the corporate communication channels of all three councils.

5.2 New ways of communication are also being developed and during the pandemic we have organised around 10 on-line business briefings which have been attended by over 200 business and community participants. This is an area we are looking to develop with sector specific briefings on a whole range of matters. The service communication plan is being adopted to reflect this new way of working.

5.3 A range of communication channels have been deployed since the last update. These have included:

- Further staff briefing notes
- 1 further Members Bulletins (No6)
- PPP website – Update at Appendix D
- Social Media – Update at Appendix D
- News releases – available on PPP website  
[www.publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/news](http://www.publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/news)

#### **6.0 Service Development and Improvement**

6.1 Whilst the service has been responding to 'business as usual' and Covid demands, it continues with a number of key service development and improvement themes. More detail is provided in the Performance Report.

6.2 The single system database remains one of the highest priorities. The system is seen as key to service efficiency in a number of respects including reducing officer time accessing the existing three systems, cost savings, improved reporting and importantly allowing customer submissions to the service using a number of on-line forms along with integrated payment options. Procurement was completed in the summer and now work is underway to prepare data for transfer.

- 6.3 The service continue to find new ways to use of technology to provide support for residents and businesses. This includes the introduction of the 'noise app', the series of on-line business briefings and becoming equipped to produce licences across all three authorities through a centralised customer services team.
- 6.4 Finally, we continue to invest in training and development with a number of staff on Apprenticeships (our first Regulatory Compliance Officer (RCO) Apprentice has just passed their end point assessment) as well as two staff qualifying as professionally registered Environmental Health Officers this year. We are one of the leading authorities involved in the development of RCO2 higher level apprenticeship standard through our Lead Officer for Training and Development.

## **7.0 Concluding Comments**

7.1 As the report was being prepared we had just received the legislation that takes the whole PPP area into Tier 2 restrictions. We have already held discussions with delivery partners including the police, economic development and public health teams to look at service implementation in a manner that meets the law and balances support for the economy with health protection. The vaccination programme would appear close but the final months of 2020/21 are set to be very challenging for the service. Features include:

- Increased need for Covid compliance checks;
- Continued high levels of outbreak related enforcement and investigation work;
- Development of local tracing;
- Loss of income and challenges this will bring going forward; and
- Recovery of the service.

It is proposed to bring a further report to the Committee when it meets in February setting out in more detail the road to recovery.

## **8.0 Appendices**

**Appendix A** – Performance Report

**Appendix B** – Case Management Update

**Appendix C** – Website / Social Media Update