

## **Appendix B – Case Management Unit Update**

### **Background**

- 1.1. Case management is a critical element of the investigation and litigation process. Robust systems to ensure probity in the investigation process are not only desirable but are required by the legal framework governing investigations. It is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of functions from the start to the end of the investigation and prosecution process including: file reviews, advice for investigating officers, review of applications for warrants, surveillance and expert witnesses and keeping under review legislative changes to ensure case and investigative process is fully compliant. It also encompasses very specialist areas of the investigative process including the obligations relating to 'disclosure'.
- 1.2. The Unit now undertakes case management and prosecution work on behalf of the following:
  - (a) Public Protection Partnership
  - (b) Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards and Fire & Rescue Service
  - (c) Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS).
- 1.3 The Authorities share a common purpose in that they are services with enforcement roles that have community protection at the heart of delivery, whether that be fire safety, food safety or rogue trading. For trading standards cross border-working is desirable as it is not unusual for offending to transcend borders and we share a significant border with Oxfordshire. For RBFRS the enforcement work around business premises and houses of multiple occupation or licensing matters share many aspects with the environmental health service.

### **Rationale**

- 2.1 The Case Management Unit was formed in 2018 when it was recognised that there are significant potential gains to be made by sharing knowledge, resources and systems in delivering case management services in partnership in order to provide advantages and economies of scale and deliver robust and flexible services.
- 2.2 The unit currently consists of four lawyers, one of whom manages the team, two accredited financial investigators, an administration assistant and also currently has the support of a temporary Paralegal role. One of the Lawyers is a Barrister and is therefore able to deal with both Magistrates Court matters and Crown Court hearings.
- 2.3 It is very desirable to have legal expertise available for investigators and the efficiency that is gained by getting direct access often leads to improved case turnaround time and minimises the need for management involvement, enabling them to concentrate on service development and resources oversight.

## **Work of the Unit**

3.1 The work of the unit since its formation in 2018 is summarised in the table below:

Number of PPP cases completed	55 (25 instructed to West Berks Legal)
Number of ongoing PPP cases	37 (12 instructed to West Berks Legal)
Total number of PPP Road Traffic Cases	171
Total amount of compensation awarded	£111,138
Total amount of fines issued through the Courts	£266,264
Total amount of custodial sentences	10.25 years
Total amount of suspended sentences	51 months
Total number of hours of unpaid work ordered	1020 hours
Total number of formal cautions issued	8
Total number of cases for OCC Trading Standards	18 Ongoing 16 Completed
Total number of cases for OCC Fire & Rescue Service	8 Ongoing 2 Completed
Total number of cases for Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service	3 Ongoing 7 Completed

## **Workload**

- 4.1 CMU remains very busy with a high level of competing demands. The team continue to prioritise the case load to ensure that deadlines are met and cases are progressed in a timely manner.
- 4.2 Covid19 has added additional pressures with a continually changing legislative position and a need for additional enforcement action. Between March and July 2020 only a limited number of cases were progressing through the Court system due to the national lockdown. These cases were then allocated new hearing dates from October through to December 2020 leaving a backlog of cases that the team continue to work through.
- 4.3 Jury trials in the Crown Court have seen significant delays due to the logistics of having a number of parties involved in a socially distanced way. The Courts have also prioritised urgent CPS cases which has further added to the delays in cases being listed.

## **Looking to the Future**

- 5.1 The work of the team continues to increase in order to accommodate the changing enforcement positions taken by the different Authorities.
- 5.2 Fire safety work is becoming a specialism of the team. This is an area in which there is an increase in work following high profile incidents such as the Grenfell

Tower incident which has meant that inspection and enforcement work has been put onto a much stronger footing.

- 5.3 It is anticipated that Covid19 will continue to bring additional work into the team as the national picture changes bringing with it further legislative change.