

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on MONDAY 7 OCTOBER 2024 COUNCIL CHAMBER COUNCIL OFFICES MARKET STREET NEWBURY

Present: Nick Allen, Jeremy Cottam, Justin Pemberton and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: George Lawrence (Team Manager - Residential), Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), April Peberdy (Service Director - Communities), Moira Fraser (Public Protection Partnership), Damian James (Bracknell Forest Council), Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Sam Chiverton (Apprentice Democratic Services Officer) and Narinder Brar (Wokingham Borough Council)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Iskandar Jefferies and Councillor Cherise Welch

PART I

1 Appointment of Chairman for this meeting

As the Chairman, Councillor Iskandar Jefferies, had given his apologies for absence, and without a Vice-Chairman, it was resolved that Councillor Justin Pemberton be elected as Chairman for this meeting.

It was also noted that the meeting was not quorate and it was agreed that Members would consider the items but no votes could be taken.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024 were noted by the Committee. They would be considered for approval at the next meeting.

3 Outstanding Issues From Previous Meetings

Moira Fraser (Principal Officer – Policy & Governance) gave an update on the outstanding action points from previous meetings:

Item 1 – Water Safety Partnership Annual Report – The 2024/25 annual report was scheduled for Committee in March 2025.

Item 2 – Young People and Vaping – this would be provided at the Committee meeting in March 2025.

Item 3 – Q1 Performance Report – this action had been completed and would therefore be removed from the actions arising log.

4 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

5 Notice of Public Speaking and Questions

No public questions were received which related either to a general issue concerned with the work of the Public Protection Partnership or to an item on the agenda.

6 Forward Plan



The Forward Plan was noted.

7 Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q1 Report for 2024/25 (JPPC4618)

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 8) which informed Members of the performance of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) in line with the operating model and business plan, and provided an update setting out performance during the first quarter of 2024/25.

Sean Murphy (Service Lead – Public Protection) explained that the different sections of the report aligned with the PPP's priorities.

Finances and Resources

Sean Murphy reported that this had been a challenging year financially and it had been necessary for the income shortfall to be reprofiled into 2025/26. A balanced outturn was however forecast. A pressure bid had been submitted to Bracknell Forest Council.

Human Resources

Budget pressures had resulted in some recruitment being postponed. However, the recruitment process had commenced in order to fill two management positions. Further posts had been successfully recruited to and other areas of recruitment were ongoing.

Action had commenced to recruit to the vacancies listed in paragraph 6.4 of the report.

All four Level 4 Apprentices had passed their examinations. Level 6 training was in progress. This was positive in terms of having qualified staff for the future.

Governance

The statutory Feed and Food Standards Controls Service Plan had been signed off for 2024/25.

The Peer Review of the shared service arrangement had commenced. The Peer Review Team had met with the Joint Management Board and would meet with Committee Members.

Questions

Councillor Howard Woollaston was very pleased to note the excellent progress being made by the Apprentices and raised the importance of doing all possible to retain them.

Sean Murphy concurred with that statement and added that two of the Level 4 Apprentices had been recruited into permanent roles. Level 4 Apprentices received training across many different areas enabling them to be generalists who could work across the PPP.

Moira Fraser (Principal Officer – Policy and Governance) explained that officers were able to progress through career graded posts as a way of aiding retention.

Sean Murphy added that it was the intention, budget permitting, to recruit more apprentices as part of the 'grow your own' ethos set out in the workforce planning strategy.

Where possible, officers were supported to develop themselves and progress within the team.

Councillor Justin Pemberton asked for further detail on the work of the PPP in tackling unfair trading and fraud. Sean Murphy explained that the focus was on prevention, gathering intelligence and enforcement work. A report on this area of work would be brought to the December 2024 meeting.

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE - 7 OCTOBER 2024 - MINUTES

A significant amount of resource was put into supporting victims and helping them recoup their money. The sum of money reported as lost totalled £604k across the three local authorities in the first six months of the 2024/25 financial year. Victims were often vulnerable and/or older residents. In response, officers had conducted direct interventions and challenged perpetrators. This work had, to date, recouped £183k. A number of investigations were ongoing in this area and officers worked closely with the Police in gathering intelligence.

Councillor Jeremy Cottam queried the work that took place to ensure that food establishments took the necessary steps to protect customers with food allergies, i.e. nut allergies.

Sean Murphy outlined the comprehensive work undertaken. Inspections included sampling and ensuring adherence to food standard requirements. This was a high area of risk and was therefore a priority area.

Councillor Nick Allen queried if there was an issue across the PPP with establishments presenting a false food standards/safety rating following concerning reports of establishments doing so in other areas of the country. Sean Murphy reported that this would form part of the PPP's inspection regime. It would be an offence, under Trading Standards legislation, to present an incorrect rating.

Councillor Pemberton asked if additional resource needed to be directed to working with unlicensed Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). Sean Murphy explained that a desktop Housing Conditions Survey had recently been conducted and the responses from that were being worked through. Officers worked with HMOs and action had been taken in cases where issues had been identified in licensed HMOs or where unlicensed HMOs were identified. This would continue to be an area of priority moving forward and the Committee would be updated on progress.

The Committee noted:

- The 2024/25 Q1 data for the Public Protection Service.
- The update on service delivery.

8 Public Protection Priorities 2025 - 2028 (JPPC4619)

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 9) which provided an update on the priority setting process.

The Committee approved the Strategic Assessment for 2024/27 at its previous meeting in June 2024. Discussions had since been held with Members and priority areas had been carefully considered. Government priorities added to these considerations.

A scoring mechanism had been used to assess areas of risk in order to inform priority setting. The MoRiLE methodology was used (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement). The scoring was used to identify the level of harm, its likelihood and from there the capacity/capability to respond. The following priority areas were proposed, many of which were common across the Public Protection Partnership:

- Private Sector Housing
- Food Safety and Standards
- Protecting consumers from unfair trading and fraud
- Community matters
- Protection of young people and communities
- Environmental crime (Bracknell Forest priority)

The Committee noted:

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE - 7 OCTOBER 2024 - MINUTES

- The outcome of the priority setting process with partner Councils.

Decisions on the use of the MoRiLE methodology and the priorities were deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

9 Revenue Budget 2025/26 including proposed Fees and Charges Schedule (JPPC4620)

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 10) which set out the Public Protection Partnership's draft revenue budget for 2025/26, including discretionary fees and charges for 2025/26.

Sean Murphy repeated that it had been necessary to reprofile some of the income received by the PPP. It was unlikely that this would be recouped.

The Committee's role with this report was to propose a budget to the individual Councils based on a percentage split. The proposed budget for 2025/26, including the percentage split, was outlined in the below table. The split of approximately 60/40 (West Berkshire/Bracknell Forest) was based on a number of different factors.

Authority	% Split	Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2025/26
Bracknell Forest	39.25%	£1,361,360
West Berkshire	60.75%	£2,107,080
Wokingham	-	£526,310
Total Budget 2024/25	100%	£3,994,750

Mr Murphy clarified that grant funding received from the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme did not form part of the revenue budget. The purpose of the scheme was primarily to seek compensation to be returned to victims and to reiterate that crime should not pay.

A 3% uplift was proposed on discretionary fees for 2025/26, but this could be adjusted prior to the fees being set. A consultation process would be undertaken within Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire in relation to these proposals, and would align with the wider budget consultation process of both local authorities.

Damian James (Assistant Director – Contract Services) referred to Appendix A to the report which identified discretionary fees and statutory fees which were set by Government. The statutory fees had not been increased since 2011.

Councillor Nick Allen queried whether Executive Members on the Committee should write to the Government Minister to lobby for an uplift to these fees.

Councillor Jeremy Cottam (Chairman of West Berkshire Council's Licensing Committee) advised that he would shortly be proposing a Motion to a West Berkshire Council meeting asking that Central Government be lobbied on this matter. This was a step that could also be taken by Bracknell Forest and indeed local authorities across Berkshire.

Sean Murphy advised that an inflationary calculation had been undertaken which identified a considerable shortfall as a result of no uplift since 2011. An appropriate level of uplift would significantly assist with budgetary pressures.

Councillor Howard Woollaston queried whether economies of scale could be achieved by working with other local authorities. Damian James confirmed that this was being explored and active discussions were ongoing with other local authorities. Councillor Justin Pemberton supported this approach.

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE - 7 OCTOBER 2024 - MINUTES

Sean Murphy confirmed, in response to a query from Councillor Cottam, that registration fees for hairdressers would be charged in both Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire.

Licence fees for taxi drivers took account of the cost of holding training for drivers. This included safeguarding and disability awareness training. This training was a mandatory requirement before a licence was issued.

The potential to hold in-house training was being explored.

The Committee noted:

- That the draft revenue budget, including the fees and charges, had been considered.
- The pressures set out in columns four and five in the table at paragraph 5.27.

Recommendations requiring a decision from the Committee were deferred to the next meeting.

10 PPP Nuisance Policy 2024 - 2027 (JPPC4451)

The Committee considered the Nuisance Policy for 2024-2027 (Agenda Item 11). The purpose of the Policy was to set a framework that would help the PPP ensure the continuation of a consistent and transparent approach to both reactive and proactive work on nuisance issues.

The Policy would form part of the suite of key policies used by the PPP to deliver its services.

Members were asked to consider the consultation comments received on the draft policy and changes proposed as a result.

Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager – Commercial) explained that the Policy reflected the feedback received where appropriate. Its primary aim was to provide greater clarity to residents on the approaches that could be taken in responding to statutory nuisance concerns.

Moira Fraser advised that the consultation was well publicised, with press releases issued, social media posts, information on local authority websites and direct contact with individuals on the Community Panel. Officers were delighted with the level of response, which was higher than for many consultation exercises. This was felt to be due to the level of concern held by residents when it came to noise related issues.

Sean Murphy added that service requests were high in relation to nuisance issues. This was understandable as nuisance concerns could have a significant impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.

The Committee noted that:

- The responses received during the consultation and officers' comments on those responses had been considered.

Recommendations requiring a decision from the Committee were deferred to the next meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 8.05pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature