

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on MONDAY 9 JUNE 2025

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

Present: Nick Allen (Bracknell Forest Council), Jeremy Cottam (West Berkshire Council), Iskandar Jefferies (Vice-Chairman, Bracknell Forest Council), Tom McCann (Chairman, West Berkshire Council) and Cherise Welch (Bracknell Forest Council)

Also Present: Councillor Lou Timlin (Wokingham Borough Council), Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager - Commercial), Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), April Peberdy (Service Director - Community Services), Moira Fraser (Principal Officer - Policy and Governance), Damian James (Bracknell Forest Council) and Sam Chiverton (Apprentice Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Howard Woollaston (West Berkshire Council)

PART I

1 Election of the Chairman

Councillor Tom McCann was elected Chairman for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

2 Appointment of the Vice Chairman

Councillor Iskander Jefferies was elected Vice-Chairman for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Outstanding Actions From Previous Meetings

Moira Fraser advised the data requested in respect of the annual vaping report was now being included in the annual report so this item could be closed.

5 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

6 Notice of Public Speaking and Questions

There were no public questions.

7 Forward Plan

The Special meeting that was due to take place in July had been brought forward to take place at the close of this meeting.

The JPPC Forward Plan was noted.

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Following a vote it was resolved that Standing Orders would be suspended to allow Councillor Lou Timlin from Wokingham Borough Council to participate in the debate and ask questions on any items in the agenda.

8 JPPC Terms of Reference

Moira Fraser noted that as this was the first meeting of the Municipal Year the Terms of Reference of the Committee were included on the agenda for information only.

Councillor Nick Allen noted that during the special meeting that would immediately follow the current meeting there would be a vote on an item that would change the membership of the Committee were it to be approved. He queried whether voting on the Terms of Reference meant that they were unable to be changed again for the next six months. Moira Fraser advised that this item was to note only and that the six month rule could be overridden where there was a material change of circumstances, as would be the case later in the year if the partner councils agreed to accept the proposed recommendations set out in the report that would be discussed at the special meeting.

Councillor Tom McCann queried the earliest date that this could be brought before the Council at West Berkshire. Moira Fraser advised that officers were exploring decision pathways and the earliest Council meeting was likely to be October but this had to be actioned and agreed across all three Councils. Councillor McCann requested that all Members be kept updated on the progress.

ACTION: Moira Fraser to circulate the pathway for the changes to the Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED THAT the current Terms of Reference of the Joint Public Protection Committee be noted.

9 Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q4 and Year End Report for 2024/25

Sean Murphy introduced the Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q4 and Year End Report for 2024/25. He informed the Committee 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 final quarter of 2024/25 and the year-end outturn. He also noted that the peer review had highlighted that the PPP's key performance indicators (KPIs) needed to be more meaningful and a set of proposed KPIs were therefore attached at Appendix D to the report.

Sean Murphy noted that an income shortfall of £179,000 had developed over a number of years. He noted the PPP had managed to achieve an end of year outturn position of a £129 underspend achieved largely by holding several vacancies open. He informed Members that the budget had been rebuilt, and unachievable income targets had been removed from the service. It was noted that a number of staff had achieved milestones in various training courses. He advised that a new website for the PPP had been launched which had seen an increased website viewership of 152,000 up from 87,000 the previous year.

Rosalynd Gater noted that a lot of work had been undertaken on improving the living environment. She advised that around 50% of the complaints that the housing service had received were about registered social landlords and that the main service requests they received were around damp and mould which were high all year round but particularly during the winter months. She advised that all of the caravan site visits had been carried out by the team. Rosalynd Gater noted that Officers had been using intelligence to target properties that they believed were acting as unlicensed Houses of

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Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) with the aim of taking them through either licensing or enforcement processes as appropriate.

Sean Murphy highlighted the figures in relation to doorstep crime, noting that the £1,371,743 that had been scammed from residents was only a portion of the money associated with those traders as they had often operated across multiple authority areas and many scams went unreported.

Sean Murphy advised an officer had been appointed to deal with age restricted products and as a result, since January 2025, there had been a significant increase in underage sales operations. He noted that across the authority, 1,137 food standards inspections had been carried out which had got the partnership back on track.

Rosalynd Gater advised that, in relation to food hygiene inspections, officers had spent the past few years trying to catch up from Covid and following a lot of work had managed to catch up on the high-risk sites. She noted that 93% of the outstanding Category D sites had received visits and 82% of the outstanding unrated sites had been inspected. She advised that over the forthcoming year, officers were hoping to get back to 100% of the outstanding sites having received visits.

Sean Murphy advised that the authority had 22 ongoing level two and three investigations, meaning investigations that crossed boundaries, with a further 22 going through the court system. He advised that the proceeds of crime team had a total of 19 active cases ongoing.

Moira Fraser noted that the peer review had suggested that existing KPIs and measures of volume needed a refresh so that they linked back better to the Corporate Plans across the partner authorities. Moira Fraser advised that the document intended to highlight links to these priorities and included a revised proposed set of KPIs as recommended by the peer review. Members needed to consider the proposed KPIs and identify any changes that they would like to make to the system.

Councillor Tom McCann queried how Members of the Committee would be able to report the work back to their Councils, he suggested that this be factored into the Key Performance Indicators. Councillor Iskander Jefferies agreed and advised that he was happy to deliver a report to his Council. Sean Murphy noted that this had been mentioned in the peer review, he noted that there were a number of proposals in the paper that were to be reviewed during the special meeting that was due to take place at the close of the regular meeting.

Councillor Nick Allen suggested the year end Q4 report was brought to the member authorities licensing committees.

Councillor Allen noted that the partnership had received funding for the two Level 6 Trading Standards Apprentices for four years and queried whether this meant that they were to be given four-year contracts. Sean Murphy advised that the funding was for a four-year period but over a four-year cycle there would be natural wastage as staff left the Service for these employees to slot into. He also noted that four years from the likely start date of the employees was likely to take the authority into October 2029 which was approximately when the proposed current Joint Partnership Agreement extension was due to end. He highlighted that through careful planning their team had always been able to hold jobs for staff at apprenticeship level.

Councillor Nick Allen highlighted the need for the statutory licensing fees to be increased and felt that licensing chairmen had to do everything possible to lobby Central Government. Councillor Jeremy Cottam advised that West Berkshire Council had written such a letter to Government. Sean Murphy agreed that an uplift in these fees based on historical inflation data would cover the income deficit faced by the partnership.

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Damian James advised that Bracknell Forest Council had allocated an additional £90,000 in order to balance the budget for 2024/25 with an additional £195,000 required for the 2025/26 financial year.

Councillor Cherise Welch queried how the team had been so successful in driving such significant additional traffic to the Partnership's website. Moira Fraser advised that the new website likely had some impact but felt that the team's persistent effort to put out communications directing members of the public to the website was key.

Councillor McCann queried whether Bracknell Forest Council felt as though the shared service was delivering good value for money. Councillor Iskander Jefferies advised that he felt the service was very valuable and only wished that they had the capacity to increase the service offering. Councillor Lou Timlin queried what provisions he would like to have added. Councillor Jefferies advised that 60% of all crime was now fraud related, and he wanted to see more investment put into tackling that.

ACTIONS:

- Portfolio Holders to deliver a report to their Council's to highlight the work done by the Public Protection Partnership.
- Q4 year-end report to be brought forward to member Council's Licensing Committees.

RESOLVED that:

- The Committee had been informed about the 2024/25 Q4 data for the Public Protection Service set out in Appendix A.
- The Committee had been informed about the update on service delivery.
- The revised Key Performance Indicators for the Service be agreed as set out in Appendix D.

10 PPP Communications and Engagement Plan 2025 to 2027

Moira Fraser introduced the PPP Communications and Engagement Plan 2025 to 2027 noting that the aim of this report was to review and update the existing strategy in line with the findings of the peer review. She noted that for the forthcoming year, officers were looking more at the engagement side of the strategy and not just the communications side. She also noted that officers were exploring ways that they could more fully engage with Members following the outcome of the peer review.

Sean Murphy advised that the Service had received funding to add an additional engagement officer role in the team. This had been funded from a joint application across the three authorities for Police and Crime Commissioner funding.

Councillor Nick Allen advised that he had heard from people who had lost out on money through a solar panel scheme promoted through the authorities. One of the companies the scheme recommended had lost their certification after they had taken the deposits from residents. He sought clarity on whether officers were aware and wanted assurance that there were protections in place for members of the public.

Sean Murphy highlighted that the partnership had dealt with a number of issues in the green energy sector. This included a recent large case that had been through the courts in which the defendants had received suspended prison sentences, and a significant sum of money had been recovered for clients. It was suggested that it was common for rogue traders to try and take advantage of people looking to do the right thing.

Damian James advised that the scheme that Bracknell Forest operated had been extended and that he had received no reports of issues from anybody using the scheme

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within Bracknell Forest. He would discuss the individual case with Councillor Allen outside of the meeting.

Councillor Tom McCann highlighted the importance of ensuring that the correct providers were being recommended to residents.

RESOLVED That:

- The Communications and Engagement Strategy for 2025/26 to 2027/28 be approved.
- Officers were endorsed to set up street level pop up events to engage with the public.

11 AOB

Before closing the meeting, Councillor Tom McCann stated that concerns had been raised and fed back to him about service provision and decisions from West Berkshire that affected the JPPC and officers who supplied these services in Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire Councils. The Leader of West Berkshire had undertaken that there would be no service change, officer movements or indeed any service re-evaluation coming through the system.

He also stated that should Wokingham wish to rejoin the JPPC formally they would be welcomed with open arms, and he hoped that this statement would mean that any misunderstandings or miscommunications were brought to a conclusion. He hoped that this clarification would assist Members with any discussions with their colleagues when considering the future of the Shared Service.

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

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature