JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on MONDAY 8 JUNE 2026 BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL, TIME SQUARE, MARKET STREET, BRACKNELL

Present: Iskandar Jefferies (Chairman), Lou Timlin (Vice-Chairman), Nick Allen, Jeremy Cottam, Pauline Jorgensen, Tom McCann, Stephen Newton, Patrick Smith and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager - Commercial), George Lawrence (Team Manager - Residential), Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), April Peberdy (Service Director - Community Services), Suzanne McLaughlin (Senior Environmental Health Officer), Moira Fraser (Public Protection Partnership), Damian James (Bracknell Forest Council) and Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager)

PART I

1 Election of the Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Iskander Jefferies of Bracknell Forest Council be elected as Chairman of the Joint Public Protection Committee for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

2 Appointment of the Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Lou Timlin of Wokingham Borough Council be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Joint Public Protection Committee for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Outstanding actions from previous meetings

Members noted the update on the actions arising from previous meetings.

5 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

6 Notice of Public Speaking and Questions

No public questions were received.

7 Forward Plan

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

8 Public Protection Partnership Service Year End and Q4 Report for 2025/26

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 9) which informed Members of the performance of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP), in line with the operating model and business plan, during the final quarter of 2025/26 and the year-end outturn.

Sean Murphy (Service Lead – Public Protection) introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The year-end budget position was an underspend of £21k. This met the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to be within 1% variance of the budget. This had been achieved as a result of taking mitigating actions, including holding several vacancies open for significant lengths of time. However, vacancies were no longer being held open and recruitment activity was being undertaken, at different stages, for each of the vacant posts listed within the report. Officers were commended for their efforts in managing the budget.
- The update on the responses to the Peer Review recommendations was provided in Appendix D. The vast majority of these had been concluded.
- 77 press releases and articles had been issued by the PPP within the past year (an increase on the previous year).
- 506 Freedom of Information requests were responded to during 2025/26, a significant increase on the previous year. A significant amount of officer time had been utilised in responding to these requests. It was clarified that the FoIs covered a number of themes, these included taxi licensing, actions relating to vapes, and enforcement activity. The risk of AI generated FoI requests was highlighted as a concern by the Chairman.
- The number of FoIs were much lower for Wokingham as the numbers in this report only related to FoIs received for shared services provided by the PPP.
- Enquiries from Councillors and local MPs were welcomed as they provided useful intelligence.
- The number of complaints received by the PPP had seen a decrease.
- Eight statutory public health funerals were arranged in Q4.
- The number of pest control enforcement and enquiries were currently high.
- Recently held Licensing Sub-Committees were highlighted as were those being considered within Q1 of 2026/27.
- The Renter Rights Act came into force on 1 May 2026, the main purpose of which was to provide greater security, stability and higher housing standards for private renters. The PPP was working closely and sharing training with Housing Teams in all three partner authorities, to ensure the requirements of the Act were being implemented.
- A landlord had been successfully prosecuted for operating a licensable HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) without holding the necessary licence.
- The total detriment identified from victims of unfair trading and fraud across the PPP area was £1,093,540, arising from 196 alleged incidents. This was a decrease on the £1,371,743 for 2024/25. The total money saved or recovered was £111,142.

- 921 food hygiene inspections were conducted in 2025/26. 100% of inspections took place for the highest category of cases. The Food Standards Agency had commended the service for its work in this area.
- 51 PPP cases were being progressed through the case management/court system, many of which were expected to be Crown Court disposals. There were also a number of active investigations.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen made reference to unlicensed HMOs and queried how these were being identified. In response, officers explained that information often came via residents reporting an issue. Intelligence could also come from PPP officers or officers working in other Council service areas. Information on the number of residents at an address could also be accessed.

Councillor Lou Timlin referred to risk management and queried the areas of particular concern for officers. Sean Murphy acknowledged that resources were tight in some areas of activity where workload was seeing an increase. It was the expectation that the Renter Rights Act could have implications on workloads.

It was noted that Members had previously provided the PPP with priority areas to be focused upon and this exercise would be repeated at the Committee meeting in October 2027. An updated Strategic Assessment would be brought to the October 2026 meeting which would include current data and horizon scanning.

Councillor Nick Allen queried the impact from lobbying the Government on the ability to increase statutory fees and charges. Moira Fraser advised that a response had yet to be received. She was aware that Government were looking at revising fees for gambling establishments, but this would have minimal impact on the PPP given the number of venues. Councillor Allen suggested that Government should again be lobbied on this matter.

Discussion then turned to fly tipping concerns. Councillor Allen queried the deployment of CCTV cameras in identifying offenders. Sean Murphy agreed to confirm the number of cameras currently deployed and their locations. He explained that further cameras were being procured to help manage this issue.

Councillor Iskander Jefferies explained that fees for fly tipping had been raised to the maximum amount possible in Bracknell Forest Council. Parish Councils had also shown willingness to provide/help to procure CCTV cameras and this had potential in other areas in order to increase coverage.

Councillor Jefferies then sought further information on the amounts defrauded from victims across the PPP. Specifically, he queried why the amount for West Berkshire was much higher than in Bracknell Forest or Wokingham. Sean Murphy felt this could be due to the demography of West Berkshire containing a higher number of older residents. The vast majority of victims were elderly residents who were targeted by criminals. Efforts were made to help safeguard residents and support those who had been a victim of fraud and/or unfair trading. The relatively small number of cases could however have an impact on averages.

Councillor Allen noted that these amounts were higher in Bracknell Forest and Wokingham in the previous financial year and queried the reasoning for that. Sean Murphy explained that in some instances it was unfortunately the case that substantial sums of money were stolen from individual victims.

Councillor Jefferies highlighted the need to raise awareness with residents, for instance through clubs and support groups that could be attended by older residents. In response, it was explained that grant funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner had enabled a greater focus on such activity. Moira Fraser explained that the PPP's Community

Officer did seek to share information as widely as possible, such as through presentations at support and community groups. Information was also made available to vulnerable residents and their carers. It would be useful to be made aware of other groups and clubs that the officer could attend.

Councillor Jefferies then queried if there was an issue with the operation of shared kitchens and the impact these could be having on food/hygiene safety. Rosalynd Gater explained that some firms were operating kitchens in this way and useful intelligence was being received to help identify them. Further intelligence, such as that provided by Councillor Jefferies, would be very welcome. Sean Murphy felt that this area could be identified as a future priority area for the PPP.

RESOLVED that priority areas for the PPP would be discussed at the meeting in October 2027. This could include action in relation to the operation of shared kitchens.

RESOLVED that Sean Murphy would confirm the number of CCTV cameras currently deployed and their locations.

RESOLVED that the Committee had been informed about:

- The 2025/26 Q4 data for the Public Protection Service.
- The update on service delivery.

9 Crowthorne Air Quality Management Area Revocation Update

The Committee were informed that the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) revocation for Crowthorne had progressed to the draft order for approval of intention stage following the completion of the consultation process (Agenda Item 10).

Suzanne McLaughlin introduced the report. She explained that following the report to the Committee in December 2025, the statutory consultation had taken place for the AQMA revocation.

A total of five responses were received to the consultation. DEFRA were in agreement with the revocation and the Parish Council had raised no objection. Some concerns had been raised in relation to impacts on pollution from traffic, these had been responded to.

The revocation of the AQMA was therefore proposed, this was positive news for Bracknell Forest and was a reflection of the significant reduction in pollution levels in the area. Revocation would mean there would be no AQMAs in place for Bracknell Forest and the next step would be the production of an AQMA Strategy.

Councillor Iskander Jefferies welcomed this positive news for Bracknell Forest.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen queried the reason behind an increased pollution level on Bracknell Road when generally pollution levels were decreasing. Suzanne McLaughlin acknowledged that there had been a slight increase, however this was within accepted levels. She pointed out that this could be a result of short term increases to traffic flow or be affected by weather conditions. The location would be subject to ongoing monitoring to establish, where possible, the cause.

Councillor Jeremy Cottam referred to air quality monitoring in Thatcham which had found that nitrous oxide levels continued to reduce in the area. However, he was concerned as planning permission was being sought for an automated warehouse that would bring with it a vast increase in traffic movements. Ongoing monitoring of pollution levels was therefore so important across the Partnership area to measure the impacts of developments and roadworks. Officers confirmed that monitoring was ongoing and took place on a monthly basis.

RESOLVED that the AQMA for Crowthorne be revoked.

10 Pre-budget setting discussion

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 11) which set out the framework for a discussion on the budget ahead of the JPPC budget meeting in October 2026.

Moira Fraser referred to the Committee discussion of the budget in October 2025 where wider involvement in the budget setting process was requested by Members. This had also been recommended by the peer review. This would provide an opportunity for the Committee to discuss the methodology and timescale for setting and approving the Public Protection Partnership (PPP's) budget.

Moira Fraser added that West Berkshire Council had employed an external consultant to conduct a review of all its fees and charges, this would include the PPP.

Councillor Tom McCann explained that he requested greater Member involvement in budget setting during his time as the Committee's Chairman. He felt it was important for the Committee to have greater ownership of the budget across the PPP area.

Councillor McCann added the view that, where possible, flexibility in the setting of fees and charges should be considered to help manage budgets and deliver services. It was however noted by Councillor Nick Allen that such flexibility was limited as fees and charges were restricted to covering the costs of service provision.

RESOLVED that:

- The timeframes and methodology that underpin the budget and fee setting process be noted.
- Requests from the partner authorities with regard to the 2027/28 budget, and fees and charges had been considered.

11 JPPC Terms of Reference

The Committee noted its Terms of Reference (Agenda 12) as this was the first meeting of the new Municipal Year.

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

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

CHAIRMAN …….

Date of Signature …….