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Meeting of West Berkshire District Council

Thursday 15 October 2026

Summons and Agenda

West Berkshire Council

To: All Members of the Council

You are requested to attend a meeting of
WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
to be held in the
COUNCIL OFFICES, MARKET STREET, NEWBURY
on
Thursday 15 October 2026
at **7.00pm**



Sarah Clarke
Executive Director – Resources
West Berkshire District Council

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 7 October 2026

AGENDA

Part I

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

   To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any). **(Pages 7 - 8)**

2. **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

   The Chairman to report on functions attended since the last meeting and other matters of interest to Members. **(Pages 9 - 10)**

3. **MINUTES**

   The Chairman to sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 July 2026. **(Pages 11 - 24)**

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To remind Members of the need to record the existence and nature of any personal, disclosable pecuniary or other registrable interests in items on the agenda, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct. **(Pages 25 - 26)**

5. **PETITIONS**

Petitions may be presented to Council. These will normally be referred to the appropriate body without discussion. **(Pages 27 - 28)**

6. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution. **(Pages 29 - 30)**

7. **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

The Council to agree any changes to the membership of Committees. **(Pages 31 - 32)**

8. **MOTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

That Council is informed about the following responses a Motions which had been presented to previous Council meetings **(Pages 33 - 34)**:

- That Councillor Jeff Brook's Motion on Automatic Fire Suppression Systems was heard at the Executive meeting on 2 July 2026.
- That Councillor Nick Carter's Motion on the Council's response to the Basingstoke and Deane's Local Plan was actioned via letter on 2 September 2026.

9. **UPDATES FROM COMMITTEES**

That Council is informed about the meetings held since the last ordinary meeting of Council. The minutes of these meetings will be available on the Council's website. **(Pages 35 - 36)**

A) The Audit and Risk Committee met on 28 July 2026 and 29 September 2026.

B) The District Planning Committee has not met.

C) The Joint Public Protection Committee met on 12 October 2026.

D) The Licensing Committee met on 7 September 2026.

E) The Personnel and Standards Committee has not met.

F) The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee met on 30 July 2026.

G) The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee met on 14 September 2026 and 29 September 2026.

H) The Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee met on 15 September 2026 and 22 September 2026.

I) The Health and Wellbeing Board met on 24 September 2026.

10. **PLANNING COMMITTEE AND NATIONAL SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Purpose: To approve amendments to the Council's Constitution to: a) Implement the National Scheme of Delegation for planning functions, as introduced under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and given effect by the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026; b) Establish a single Planning Committee to replace District Planning Committee, Eastern Area Planning Committee and Western Area Planning Committee; and c) Implement other minor amendments to the Constitution relating to Planning. **(Pages 37 - 116)**

11. **YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2026/2027**

Purpose: To provide Council with oversight of the annual Youth Justice Plan for 2026/2027 which is submitted to the Youth Justice Board. The Youth Justice Support Team is a statutory service with contributions from partners including Police, Probation and Health, as such the plan has been formed in conjunction with those partners and been through a consultation process with the Youth Justice Management Board. **(Pages 117 - 192)**

12. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

To receive any Motions submitted in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution. **(Pages 193 - 196)**

13. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by Members of the Council in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution. **(Pages 197 - 198)**

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Stephen Chard on telephone 01635 519778.

Council – 15 October 2026

Item 1 – Apologies for Absence

Verbal Item

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Item 2 – Chairman's Remarks

Verbal Item

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 3 – Minutes

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of Council held on:

- 16 July 2026

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DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

THURSDAY 16 JULY 2026

Councillors Present: Stephanie Steevenson (Chairman), Martha Vickers (Vice-Chairman) Adrian Abbs, Antony Amirtharaj, Phil Barnett, Dennis Benneyworth, Jeff Brooks, Billy Drummond, Nick Carter, Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Iain Cottingham, Laura Coyle, Carolyne Culver, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Clive Hooker, Owen Jeffery, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, Ross Mackinnon, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Tom McCann, Biyi Oloko, Justin Pemberton, Christopher Read, Matt Shakespeare, Richard Somner, Joanne Stewart, Clive Taylor, Tony Vickers, and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Joseph Holmes (Chief Executive), Paul Coe (Executive Director for Adult Social Care), AnnMarie Dodds (Executive Director for Children and Family Services), Shannon Coleman-Slaughter (Service Director for Finance, Property & Procurement and S151 Officer), Laura Callan (Interim Service Director for Development and Housing), Nicola Thomas (Deputy Monitoring Officer and Service Lead for Legal and Democratic Services), Honorary Alderman Gordon Lundie

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Erik Pattenden, Councillor Martin Colston, Councillor Vicky Poole (Attending Online), Councillor Alan Macro, Councillor Jeremy Cottam, Councillor Paul Dick, Councillor Janine Lewis, Councillor Louise Sturgess, Councillor Dominic Boeck, Honorary Alderman Hilary Cole, Honorary Alderman Graham Jones, Honorary Alderman Adrian Edwards, Honorary Alderman Anthony Stansfeld, Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles, Honorary Alderman Tony Linden, Honorary Alderman Rick Jones, Honorary Alderman Paul Bryant, Honorary Alderman Graham Bridgman, Honorary Alderman Graham Pask

PART I

1. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported that she had attended 17 different events since being elected as Chairman at the Annual Meeting of Council on 14 May 2026. Specifically, she highlighted her attendance at multiple citizenship ceremonies, the Supported Internship Graduation Ceremony held by Amazon, the Learning Disability Week awards, and the Lord Lieutenants Summer Reception.

The Vice-Chairman also attended a number of events since the last ordinary Council meeting, including the Thatcham Freedom of the Town Parade, the Read to the Beat Summer Reading Challenge launch event, the Rank-and-File Theatre Showcase, and the Castle School Expansion Opening.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jeff Brooks, also notified Council about the progress of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Earlier in the day, the Government announced that they had chosen a three unitary council model for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, meaning that a new Ridgeway Council would be established from 2028 and cover the areas of West Berkshire Council and most of South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils. A Northern Oxfordshire and Greater Oxford Council would also be established.

Although the two unitary option was preferred by West Berkshire Council, the Leader indicated that this three unitary model was still a positive outcome, as Ridgeway would be better placed to meet the rising demand and cost pressures that existed in Local

Government. The Leader also confirmed that the request from Reading Borough Council to change the eastern boundary of West Berkshire had been rejected. This was welcome news and reflected the views of residents throughout the consultation process.

Councillor Brooks indicated that many important decisions would be taking place over the next 21 months, but that the transition would be well managed, and West Berkshire services would continue to be delivered while the new Council was being created. This new Council would be ambitious, innovative, and financially strong, delivering excellent services for its residents.

2. Minutes

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Stephanie Steevenson and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"That the Minutes of the Annual meeting of Council held on 14 May 2026 were approved as a true and correct record subject to the correction of the name 'Lambourn' and were signed by the Chairman."

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Stephanie Steevenson and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"That the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 14 May 2026 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman."

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. Petitions

There were no petitions presented to Council.

5. Public Questions

Details of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: Q&As.

It was agreed that questions B and H in the name of John Gotelee would receive a written response, given that he was unable to attend the meeting.

6. Membership of Committees

There were no proposed changes to the membership of Committees.

7. Motions from Previous Meetings

Council was informed about the responses to the following Motions:

- That Councillor Adrian Abbs' Motion on the experimental traffic order for Newbury Town Centre was heard at the Executive Meeting on 21 May 2026.
- That Councillor David Marsh's Motion requesting a review of the ethical investment policy relating to the Council and Berkshire Pension Fund was also heard at the Executive Meeting on 21 May 2026.

8. Updates from Committees

Council noted the meetings that had been held since the last ordinary meeting of Council as laid out in Agenda Item 9.

9. Annual Scrutiny Report 2025/26

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2025/26.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Carolyne Culver and seconded by Councillor Martha Vickers:

"That Council be informed of the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2025/26."

Councillor Culver introduced the report and highlighted that the Council's Scrutiny functions were divided into three committees over the past year, allowing for more opportunity to go into more detail into a greater range of topics. Transparency and accountability were at the heart of scrutiny as they needed to be able to provide an independent challenge to the Executive. In 2025/26, the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee had produced two task and finish reports, one about the proposed Sports Hub and the other on project management. They also scrutinised many different areas in finance and transformation. Councillor Culver also highlighted that more work would be done on scrutinising water utilities and affordable housing provision, particularly in rural areas.

Members thanked the Chairman of all three Scrutiny Committees for their work, as well as the Officers and young people co-optees on the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for their questions and insight.

Some Members questioned the Administration's commitment to scrutiny given the limits they had put on opposition Members questions during Executive meetings. However, the Leader informed Council that the current administration had introduced a new Scrutiny Committee and appointed opposition Chairman to two of those Committees, so it had a proven commitment to scrutiny at the Council.

On call-ins, it was noted that the Executive Forward Plan did not always include a lot of information about upcoming reports. Therefore, the Chairman of these Committees reserved the right to conduct post-decision scrutiny. A point about meeting timetabling was also noted as there had been a number of occasions where there were only a few days between a Scrutiny meeting and the Executive meeting where a decision was going to be made. In order to provide more time for the Executive to consider any recommendations from Scrutiny, it was suggested that the gap between these two meetings be increased.

The Executive was also encouraged to use Scrutiny as a way to test out new ideas and to get them more involved in the budget making process, especially given the Council's financial position and the new local government settlement. In addition, as there had been a motion sent to scrutiny for their input, more clarity about the remit of the committees in this regard was requested. Finally, a point was made that the recommendations from Scrutiny should be tracked so that Members and residents could easily see what happened to the recommendations, and if they were adopted by the Executive, whether they had been implemented.

Members also suggested that the new Scrutiny arrangements in Ridgeway should take these learning points on in order to make them as effective as possible. A final such learning point would be for the allowing of public questions to be submitted to these meetings.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendation.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

10. Health and Wellbeing Board Annual Report 2025/26

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 11) concerning the Health and Wellbeing Board's Annual Report for 2025/26.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Nigel Foot and seconded by Councillor Patrick Clark:

"That Council be informed of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and its partners during 2025/26."

Councillor Foot introduced the report and highlighted that the Board was changed following a Local Government Association (LGA) peer review, allowing it to be nimbler and take more actions. That work had been implemented and involved three main strategic areas: ensuring the best possible start in life, adult and children's mental health, and healthy neighbourhoods.

It was also noted that Health Watch, an independent body representing users of health services, would cease their responsibilities over the next year and that its work would be transferring to the Integrated Care Board. Councillor Foot thanked them for their valuable contributions and noted that there was a lot of work already planned for 2026/27.

Members noted the changes to the Board, welcoming the new roles it had taken on following the peer review, now essentially becoming a type of scrutiny body for the Council. It was also highlighted that public and Member questions were allowed during Board meetings and Members wanted to publicise these options and encourage their uptake.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendation.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

11. Monitoring Officer's Annual Report 25/26 and Governance Statement

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 12) concerning the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report for 2025/26 and Governance Statement.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Vicky Poole and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks: "That Council be informed of the contents of the report which will be circulated to all Parish and Town Councils in the District for information."

Councillor Poole introduced the report and highlighted that standards remained high across the district, with only 17 complaints being received, the majority resulting in no further action or informal resolutions. The role of the independent members and parish council representatives were also emphasised, and Councillor Poole thanked them for their work. The declarations of gifts and hospitality recorded in the register, published as part of the report, was also highlighted as a way the Council was promoting transparency and accountability.

It was noted that West Berkshire Council had historically not suffered from poor Member conduct, albeit there was a spike in complaints received before the last election in 2023. There was a general desire for this not to be repeated in the follow-up to the election in 2027.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to note the recommendation.

12. Community Governance Review Request

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 13) concerning a Community Governance Review Request.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Vicky Poole and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"That Council:

A) Proceed with a CGR of the parishes of Lambourn and Shaw-cum-Donnington, in accordance with the requirements of the 2007 Act and associated guidance as described in this report;

B) Approve the terms of reference in respect of the community governance review, including the proposed timetable, as set out in Appendix A and Appendix B to this report;

C) Delegate authority to the Service Lead – Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Governance and Commercialisation and relevant Ward Members to consider and approve draft proposals following initial consultation;

D) Delegate authority to Service Lead- Legal and Democratic Services to approve minor amendments and/ or typographical amendments pertaining to the final recommendations prior to submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission, save for the power to make substantive amendments which is delegated to be undertaken in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Governance and Commercialisation and relevant Ward Members;

E) Delegate authority to Service Lead – Legal and Democratic Services to exercise powers under the 2007 Act in relation to the CGR."

Councillor Poole introduced the report and highlighted that the proposed review followed a request from both Councils. Specifically, Lambourn had asked to reduce their Councillors in order to improve their ability to recruit and retain new Members and Shaw-cum-Donnington had asked for it so that their boundaries could reflect the increase in the number of developments that had been built out in the area.

This was not a formal petition, but it was recommended that West Berkshire Council proceed with the review. Council noted that the proposed review process would include a consultation with interested stakeholders and that the final proposal would come back to Council for final approval and that this was currently targeted for the Council meeting on 26 November 2026.

Members also noted that the Council had resolved to conduct a full District wide community governance review before the last election, in 2023, but that it had not proceeded due to its resource implications. Parishes were also encouraged to merge or work more closely with others, as well as taken on more responsibilities, as Local Government Reorganisation would enable them to have a much more significant local role.

Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

13. Constitution Changes

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 14) concerning proposed changes to the Council's Constitution.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Vicky Poole and seconded by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"That Council approve the following changes to the Constitution:

A) Part 11 Scheme of Delegation be updated in accordance with the changes detailed in Appendix A to the report to reflect the changes to Senior Management within West Berkshire Council and guidance.

B) Part 5 – Executive Rules Key decision threshold be affirmed at £500,000 but that social care placements should be excluded from key decisions as set out in Appendix C to the report.

C) Task Group guidance (Appendix F) be formally added to the Constitution by amending Part 6 para 3.4 with the addition of: *3.4.3.3 shall adhere to the Task Group guidance appended*.

D) Deletion of Health and Wellbeing Board sub-bodies that have been dissolved or no longer meet in public."

Councillor Poole introduced the report and highlighted that the Constitution Review Task Group (CRTG) had been tasked with ensuring that the constitution was fit for purpose. The proposed changes would enable the decision-making arrangements to reflect current arrangements and practice as well as making delegations clearer and updating the rules around key decision thresholds. Councillor Poole also noted that there were minor amendments proposed by the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee to the Task Group Guidelines which were intended to improve effective decision making. On the details of the recommendations by Scrutiny Committee, Members noted that they proposed that Task and Finish Groups would be given the right to change the list of witnesses they could call and also to remove the recommendation for the Executive to use SMART targets. This was proposed as it was not considered to be appropriate to specify that level of detail.

With the agreement of the Chairman and Proposer and Seconder of the Motion, the task group guidance amendment proposed by the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee was accepted as a minor amendment.

Council was informed that the CRTG had been through the entire Constitution, and their work would likely change substantially with the announcement of the new Ridgeway Council. Overall, as Council were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations as reflected with the minor amendment.

The Motion with the minor amendment was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

14. 2026-2027 Council Strategy Refresh

Council considered a report (Agenda Item 15) concerning the 2026-27 Council Strategy Refresh.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Heather Codling:

"That Council approve the refresh of the Council Strategy for 2026-27, to include an additional, cross-cutting strategic priority of Financial Resilience."

Councillor Brooks introduced the report and highlighted that Administration had completed 54 items from the current Strategy, including the introduction of a simplified job application process, the review of the Community Infrastructure Levy customer journey, and the adoption of a new pothole strategy. He believed that the Strategy needed to be refreshed as some items had to be removed and to better reflect the Council's current position. Members also noted that a delivery plan for the proposed Strategy items would be presented soon. Given the Ridgeway announcement, Councillor Brooks also emphasised that the Council should continue to be bold and ambitious for as long as possible.

AMENDMENT: Proposed by Councillor Adrian Abbs and seconded by Councillor David Marsh:

“That Appendix A be amended to include, under "A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire", the measure:

> "Report to Council on the deliverability, timescale and funding options for a new Community Sports Stadium at Faraday Road (31/03/2027)"."

Councillor Abbs spoke to the amendment and highlighted that, although it was a commitment of the Administration, as the Council had received a number of questions relating to the provision of football at Faraday Road, adopting the amendment would formalise the reporting arrangements of this project and would ensure residents were in the loop about its progress.

The Amendment was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

Council returned to debate the Substantive Motion.

It was highlighted that the Playing Pitch Strategy and Council Strategy had been operating independently, which could be leading to resident confusion, and it was proposed that they could be better joined up. The Leader also confirmed to Members that the 3g pitch at Faraday Road would be going to the Executive when it was ready.

Members highlighted that the document contained contradictory elements, such as with the references to the delivery plan and the Town Centre Masterplan. In addition, some Members took issue with the presentation of the refresh at this point in the Council term, only nine months out from the planned election. It was suggested that this had been done for party political reasons. Also, several points were made about the targets that were presented.

In response to the targets that had been removed, some Members argued that the Administration should not have included any targets that were beyond their ability to control, such as the rate of school academisation. On the targets that had their deadlines pushed back due to a changing implementation schedule, some Members believed that this was a way of extending their deadlines without saying they had been missed. In addition, some concern was raised about the limited climate and ecological emergency section. However, in response Council was informed that there had been significant progress on the climate and ecological goals of the Council and that this was presented in the Environment Strategy. Some of these achievements included the record recycling rates and the reduction of emissions – down 20 percent on previous years.

Council also noted that this would likely be the last refresh of the West Berkshire Strategy as the elections in May 2027 would be for the Ridgeway Council, with the West Berkshire Council term being extended by a year. Overall, as the majority of Members were satisfied with the report, they agreed to approve the recommendations.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

15. Notices of Motion

Adjournment of meeting: Proposed by Councillor Stephanie Steevenson and Seconded by Councillor Martha Vickers.

RESOLVED: In accordance with the Council’s Constitution, Part 3, point 19.1.2, the Council supported the motion to hold a short adjournment.

The Council reconvened and considered the under-mentioned Motion (of which Agenda Item 16(a) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor David Marsh relating to ending of the use of the chemical weedkiller glyphosate.

The Chairman informed Council that the Motion would not be debated. In accordance with Procedure Rule 12.6.1, it would be referred to the Executive for consideration without debate as the subject matter fell within their remit. Councillor David Marsh raised a point of order, requesting this decision be reconsidered due to a perceived lack of consistency in which Motions were referred and which ones were debated. However, the Chairman confirmed that, as this Motion fell within the remit of the Executive, it should be referred to the decision-making body responsible for those functions.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor David Marsh and seconded by Councillor Carolyne Culver:

> *"**Ending the use of the chemical weedkiller glyphosate***
>
> *Council notes that:*
>
> *The chemical weedkiller glyphosate, which has been designated a "probable carcinogen" by the World Health Organisation, is a threat to both human health and the natural world.*
>
> *Glyphosate residues are found in our food, in our tap water, and in our bodies. It is devastating for wildlife, killing bees and other insects while stripping away food and shelter for birds and mammals, and polluting our rivers.*
>
> *Many local authorities have banned or are phasing out the use of glyphosate based pesticides on public land. Lee Dillon, MP for Newbury, is one of 35 MPs to sign Commons Early Day Motion 607, Pesticides in Public Spaces, which commends more than 100 local authorities across the UK that have either ended or significantly reduced their use of pesticides, and calls on more councils to do so.*
>
> *The MPs also express support for the Plant Protection Products (Prohibition on Public Sector Use) Bill, tabled by Sian Berry MP in May 2026, which would introduce a national phase-out of pesticide use in public spaces.*
>
> *However, many councils and other public authorities still use pesticides to manage unwanted vegetation. In 2024, 354 tonnes of pesticides were sprayed by councils across our towns and cities in the UK. Residues have been found in more than half the playgrounds analysed by Pesticide Action Network UK.*
>
> *The Soil Association and an increasing number of growers, conservation groups, and wildlife charities, which are supported by many thousands of our residents, are calling for a complete nationwide ban when the government reviews its glyphosate licences in December 2026.*
>
> *Council therefore resolves:*
>
> 1. *To commit to end the use of glyphosate-based herbicides and pesticides on land owned or managed by West Berkshire Council, due to the associated risks and potential damage to human and animal health.*
> 2. *This policy to be phased over 24 months in to allow the exploration and trialling of alternatives to the use of herbicides in public spaces and an alternative method for removing weeds from the highway.*
> 3. *To alert residents of West Berkshire to the health and environmental risks associated with glyphosate (used in widely available weedkillers).*

4. *To promote to residents the benefits of pollinator-friendly gardens and green spaces where insects such as bees and butterflies can thrive"*

Councillor Marsh introduced the motion and highlighted that Glyphosate was a threat to human health and the natural world and had been designated as a probable carcinogen by the World Health Organisation in 2015. Residues had been found in bread, tap water, and human bodies, and Members noted that exposure to the chemical was linked to reproductive defects, developmental disorders, and cancers.

Usage of the chemical had risen 1,000 per cent since 1990, despite the findings that there was no accepted safe level of exposure. More than 100 local authorities had already banned or were phasing out its usage on public land and the Newbury MP had also signed the early day motion in the House of Commons commending councils for doing this. However, it was still widely used and in 2024, 354 tonnes had been sprayed by councils. West Berkshire Council had reduced its reliance on the chemical. The Countryside team only used small amounts, which could be eliminated. However, its use by the Highways team was more significant, and thus more difficult to eliminate. For this reason, the Motion proposed a two-year period to phase in alternatives.

The relevant Portfolio Holder, Councillor Stuart Gourley, responded to the Motion, informing Council that the Administration would respond fully after getting officer input. He also informed Members that the Council kept pesticide and herbicide usage to a minimum.

The chemical was mainly used in two areas, public highways and in parks and countryside, however, this was generally limited to areas where alternatives were not effective or proportionate. Councillor Gourley also noted that there were a number of case studies from across the country with varying degrees of success, and so he welcomed the proposal.

The Council then considered the under-mentioned Motion (of which Agenda Item 16(b) refers) submitted in the name of Councillor Nick Carter relating to developments proposed in the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Local Plan consultation which adjoin West Berkshire, and a proposed West Berkshire Council response.

The Chairman informed Council that should the Motion be proposed and seconded, then it would be debated in order to facilitate the discharge of business in accordance with Procedure Rule 12.6.3.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Nick Carter and seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines:

That the Council:

"Response to Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan

This Council notes that:

- *Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation includes a proposed allocation of approximately 350 dwellings at Land at West End Farm, Mortimer West End.*
- *This site would function in practice as an extension of Stratfield Mortimer, a settlement within West Berkshire, and would rely substantially on West Berkshire infrastructure and services, including healthcare, education, transport, utilities and environmental assets.*

- *West Berkshire Council, ward members, parish councils and residents have submitted detailed representations raising concerns regarding cross boundary infrastructure capacity, deliverability, environmental constraints, and consistency with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's stated spatial strategy.*
- *The proposed level of development at Mortimer West End would represent a significant population increase relative to the size and infrastructure capacity of Stratfield Mortimer.*
- *There is currently no clear, funded and agreed mechanism demonstrating how cross-boundary infrastructure impacts would be mitigated or how West Berkshire services would be protected from additional pressure.*
- *Questions have been raised regarding the consistent application of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's own site selection methodology, settlement hierarchy principles and strategic constraints — including the treatment of AWE emergency-planning constraints and cross-boundary infrastructure reliance — when compared with other candidate sites within the borough.*

The Council appreciates the positive engagement that has taken place with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to date.

Notwithstanding that, this Council believes that:

- *Development immediately adjacent to the West Berkshire boundary must be infrastructure-led and supported by robust, proportionate and transparent evidence.*
- *West Berkshire residents should not experience degradation of healthcare access, school capacity, transport safety, wastewater performance or environmental quality as a consequence of an adjacent Council's Local Plan.*
- *Cross-boundary sites must be subject to the same transparent and consistent application of settlement hierarchy principles, infrastructure tests and environmental constraints as sites located within Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's own defined service centres.*

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. *Formally write to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council requesting:*
    - *Clear evidence of how cross-boundary infrastructure impacts will be assessed, funded and delivered prior to allocation at Regulation 19.*
    - *Publication of any site-specific transport, healthcare, wastewater and environmental capacity assessments relevant to West Berkshire residents.*
    - *Clarification of how the Council's site selection methodology and spatial strategy criteria have been applied consistently across all candidate sites, including the treatment of AWE emergency-planning constraints, settlement hierarchy principles and cross-boundary infrastructure reliance.*
2. *Seek formal engagement with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and relevant infrastructure providers to ensure that West Berkshire's interests are fully represented in ongoing plan preparation.*

3. *Request that no future allocation adjoining West Berkshire by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council should proceed unless and until proportionate, deliverable and secured mitigation is evidenced for impacts falling within West Berkshire.*
4. *Continue to support residents and parish councils in ensuring that cross boundary impacts are properly considered through the Local Plan process."*

Councillor Carter introduced the motion and highlighted that it was a response to development on West End Farm which was located just over the border from West Berkshire, inside Basingstoke and Deane. This development would essentially form an extension of Mortimer West End. As it was located some distance from the railway station, and had no continuous active travel routes, the lack of clarity about the necessary infrastructure that would be needed for the additional 350 homes was raised as a concern. In addition, this housing figure was noted as being one fifth of the current residential population.

As he believed that it would not function as a self-contained settlement, Councillor Carter stressed the importance of the infrastructure delivery for the site. This infrastructure was requested to be costed and proven to be sustainable. In addition, the adopted Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan had not accounted for this site as it was outside the Plan area. Council debated the motion but agreed to the importance of working with Basingstoke and Deane's Members and Officers constructively in order to solve any infrastructure problems. However, some Members were sceptical of the Motion as they noted that these conversations had already been ongoing for a long period of time, and that the period for consultation responses (called the Regulation 18 stage) was over. In response however, it was generally agreed that the Motion would be an effective way of formalising the Council's position on the proposed development and demonstrating to residents that they were working to address their concerns.

Overall, as Council was satisfied with the Motion as proposed, they agreed to approve the recommendation. The Motion was put to the vote and declared **CARRIED**.

16. Members' Questions

Continuation of meeting: Proposed by Councillor Stephanie Steevenson and Seconded by Councillor Howard Woollaston.

RESOLVED: In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Part 3, point 10.8, the Council supported the motion that the remaining business could be concluded by 10.30pm, and therefore that the meeting would proceed with the agenda item.

Details of the public and Member question and answer sessions are available from the following link: Q&As.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 10.28pm)

CHAIRMAN ……

Date of Signature ……

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 4 – Declarations of Interest

Verbal Item

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 6 – Public Questions

To Follow

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 7 – Membership of Committees

Verbal Item

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 8 – Motions from previous meetings

Verbal Item

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 9 – Updates from Committees

Verbal Item

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Planning Committee and National Scheme of Delegation

Committee considering report:	Council
Date of Committee:	15 October 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Denise Gaines
Date Head of Service agreed report:	25 August 2026
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	21 September 2026
Report Author:	Bob Dray (Interim Service Lead – Planning)

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report asks Council to approve amendments to the Council's Constitution to:

(a) Implement the National Scheme of Delegation for planning functions, as introduced under the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and given effect by the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.

(b) Establish a single Planning Committee to replace District Planning Committee, Eastern Area Planning Committee and Western Area Planning Committee.

(c) Implement other minor amendments to the Constitution relating to Planning.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Replace Section 8 (Service Director – Development and Housing) of the Scheme of Delegation in Part 11 of the Constitution with the changes shown in Appendix A to implement the National Scheme of Delegation and ensure the amended Constitution is in accordance with the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.

2.2 Amend Part 6.8 Appendix Planning Committees with the changes shown in Appendix B to replace the existing three committee structure with a single Planning committee.

2.3 Delegate to the Monitoring Officer to make any minor substantive changes to the Constitution they deem necessary to ensure the Council's planning delegation arrangement comply with the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. This delegated authority is provided that any such changes are the

minimum necessary to ensure compliance, and subject to the amendments being ratified by Full Council as soon as practicable.

2.4 Endorse a review of the new arrangements by the Service Lead for responsibility for planning between 6 and 12 months following implementation.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Planning committees involve a significant level of resource, predominantly by way of officer time. The increased levels of delegation are expected to significantly reduce the number of planning applications that are determined by planning committee. Consequently, part of these proposals is to replace the current planning committee structure with a single planning committee. The implementation of the national scheme of delegation would use existing system and software, and so no other significant costs are anticipated in this respect. There is a need for additional training for members and officers, and for public communications regarding the changes. However, it is anticipated that these can be accommodated within existing resources. No additional budget has been secured to implement these changes. If the National Scheme of Delegation is not implemented locally, it would not be legally possible to determine some planning applications, which could lead to appeals against non-determination (with costs) or judicial reviews, both of which have significant financial implications.
Human Resource:	In the short-term, the implementation is resource intensive. Taking a longer perspective, it is anticipated that the reduction in committee workload will result in a net more efficient use of human resources.
Legal:	The Council is under a statutory duty to have regard to the guidance and to operate the national scheme of delegation and committee arrangements required by the 2025 Regulations from 31st October 2026.

	Failure to amend the Constitution, or a committee decision taken in breach of the Regulations, would be liable to legal challenge by way of judicial review and could be quashed. It is therefore essential to make changes to the Constitution to ensure that the Council can continue to fulfil its legal obligations under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and other associated legislation. Planning law commentators have identified potential areas of challenge associated with the new national scheme of delegation, including the interpretation and application of the gateway tests. These are general risks applying to all local planning authorities and so there is no direct mitigation. The proposals do, however, include proposed clauses to enable the Monitoring Officer to make emergency changes to the Constitution if necessary to ensure compliance with the 2026 Regulations. This will help mitigate the risks associated with introducing a new regime at pace, and will enable to the Council to adapt should new case law and guidance materialise in the early stages of nationwide implementation. Proposals prepared in collaboration with Sharon Armour (Legal Services Manager). Consultation with Nicola Thomas (Service Lead – Legal and Democratic) and Sarah Clarke (Monitoring Officer).
Risk Management:	The principal risks of not approving the recommendations are: 1. The Council being unable to progress the determination of a significant number of applications until changes are made. These would occur where an unamended Constitution does not give delegated authority to officers, but the referral to committee would be contrary to the Regulations. 2. Avoidable delays in the determination of planning applications, and increased risk of appeals against non-determination with associated costs. 3. Legal challenge to committee decisions and reputational harm from non-compliance with a statutory framework.
Property:	No material implications.

Policy:	The National Scheme of Delegation is a legislative change enacted by Government as part of wider planning reforms, which is supported by published statutory guidance. These changes relate to how planning functions are delegated within local planning authorities, but otherwise the legal and policy framework for decision-makers remains unchanged. Planning law continues to require planning decisions to be made in accordance with the development plan (e.g. local plan and neighbourhood plans) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. These specific reforms do not alter the National Planning Policy Framework (revised separately on 17th August 2026), or any local planning policies.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		No, the National Scheme of Delegation has been subject to EqIA through the legislative process. The changes are procedural and apply equally to all applicants and residents. The proposals in this report are to make the necessary changes to implement these into the Council's constitution. There is not considered to be any material impact on inequality from these proposals. Every planning decision must have due regard to the Equality Act and this is not proposed to change. The number of planning committees is not considered have any material impact on inequality from these proposals. The changes are procedural and apply equally to all applicants and residents.

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		No, the National Scheme of Delegation has been subject to EqIA through the legislative process. The changes are procedural and apply equally to all applicants and residents. The proposals in this report are to make the necessary changes to implement these into the Council's constitution. It is not considered that this decision would affect persons with protected characteristics in any materially different way. Every planning decision must have due regard to the Equality Act and this is not proposed to change. The number of planning committees is not considered that this decision would affect persons with protected characteristics in any materially different way. The changes are procedural and apply equally to all applicants and residents.
Environmental Impact:		✓		The changes are procedural and do not have a direct environmental impact. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This will not change under the National Scheme of Delegation or a single planning committee. The development plan will maintain the same policies in relation to environmental protection.
Health Impact:		✓		The changes are procedural and do not have a direct health impact. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This will not change under the National Scheme of Delegation or a single planning committee. The development plan will maintain the same policies in relation to public health and the built environment.

ICT Impact:		✓		The changes will be implemented using the existing case management system. Where changes are required, it is anticipated that these can be made in-house.
Digital Services Impact:		✓		These are procedural changes with no direct impact on Digital Services. However, where appropriate, process design will seek to prioritise digital solutions (for example, any forms for members to flag applications for consideration).
Council Strategy Priorities:		✓		The recommendations are not brought forward to support any of the Council's strategic priorities, rather the recommendations relates to business as usual in that they are ensuring planning functions continue in accordance with the legislative framework.
Core Business:	✓			The implementation of the National Scheme of Delegation is required to continue business as usual planning functions, predominantly the determination of planning applications.
Data Impact:		✓		No additional data would be routinely collected as part of the new processes.

Consultation and Engagement:	The recommendations in this report have been prepared in collaboration between the Service Lead – Planning (Chief Planning Officer), Development Manager and Legal Services Manager. There has also been engagement with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Service Director (Development and Housing), Development Management Team Leaders, Service Lead – Democratic and Legal, the Executive Director – Place, and the Executive Director – Resources (Monitoring Officer).

	In addition, it is recognised that this is a substantial change to the way in which planning decision are determined, and therefore the following early engagement has also taken place: • Briefing note for Constitution Review Task Group • Early update email circulated to all members • Early update email circulated to all parish and town councils • Topic at annual member planning training (September 2026) In recognition of upcoming local government reform, officers have also liaised with colleagues at South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse ("South and Vale") Councils to ensure implementation proposals are aligned as much as possible.

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report is brought because the Council is required to update its Constitution to implement the National Scheme of Delegation for planning functions. The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 come into force on 31st October 2026 and will require certain planning functions to be discharged by officers, with other applications only capable of being referred to committee where the statutory gateway tests and local referral arrangements are satisfied.

4.2 The report proposes to:

(a) Replace the existing planning delegation provisions in the Constitution with updated wording that reflects the National Scheme of Delegation.

(b) Delegate all Schedule 1 applications to officers, as required by the Regulations, and delegate a number of other application types that are technical in nature.

(c) Introduce a local triage process for Schedule 2 and own-interest applications, recognising that this is the main area where there is the ability for local discretion. The process would filter which applications are considered by the nominated member and nominated officer, rather than requiring every Schedule 2 application to be reviewed. It would broadly use existing local committee triggers as the starting point, including officer referral, Planning Committee Chairman referral, ward member flagging, own-interest applications and major development, while excluding application types that are proposed to remain fully delegated.

(d) Replace the existing District Planning Committee, Eastern Area Planning Committee and Western Area Planning Committee with a single Planning Committee, reflecting the expected reduction in committee workload.

(e) Delegate limited authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary minor amendments to ensure compliance during implementation, subject to ratification by Full Council as soon as practicable.

(f) Endorse a review of the new arrangements between 6 and 12 months after implementation.

4.3 Approval of the recommendations is necessary to ensure the Council can continue to determine planning applications lawfully and efficiently once the new statutory framework comes into force. The proposed arrangements provide a proportionate local implementation of the Regulations, maintain appropriate democratic oversight for qualifying applications, reduce avoidable committee workload, and include safeguards through Monitoring Officer delegation and post-implementation review.

5 Introduction

5.1 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 introduced a new statutory framework requiring all local planning authorities in England to adopt a National Scheme of Delegation for planning functions, alongside a maximum size limit for planning committees.

5.2 The Government has stated that these reforms are intended to provide greater clarity, consistency and certainty in planning decision-making across England, to ensure that planning committees focus on key proposals that matter to an area, and to enable more routine and policy-compliant applications to be determined by professional planning officers.

5.3 The new requirements are given effect by the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. The Regulations were made on 15th July 2026 and come into force on 31st October 2026. From that date, the Council will be legally required to determine certain categories of planning application under officer delegated authority, and to operate a statutory 'gateway test' before certain other applications may be referred to committee. The Council's current Constitution does not reflect these requirements and must be amended before commencement.

5.4 This is a mandatory legislative change. The Council has discretion over some elements of local implementation – for example, committee structure and size within the statutory maximum, and internal process design. The Council does not have discretion over whether to comply with the core statutory framework. It is therefore essential the Constitution is amended, and internal processes revised, prior to the commencement date on 31st October 2026.

6 Overview of the National Scheme of Delegation

6.1 This section gives an overview of the new National Scheme of Delegation, as set out in legislation and guidance (Appendix C). A Member Briefing Note from the Planning Advisory Service (Local Government Association) is included in Appendix D. The following section sets out how it is proposed to implement the National Scheme of Delegation at West Berkshire.

6.2 The National Scheme of Delegation sets out two schedules to determine which applications must be delegated to officers, and those which may be referred to planning committee subject to the statutory 'gateway tests':

(a) Schedule 1 sets out the list of types of applications that **must in all circumstances be delegated to officers**.

(b) Schedule 2 sets out the list of types of applications that **may be referred to a committee subject to the circumstances** set out in the Regulations and must be delegated to an officer where those circumstances have not been met.

6.3 In determining whether a committee referral is made for a Schedule 2 application, the presumption should be that decisions are delegated to officers and only exceptionally be referred to committee. At a minimum, at least one of the following statutory criteria (the "**gateway tests**") must be met for a referral to committee to be considered to meet that threshold:

(a) where the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

(b) where the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.

6.4 The decision to refer to committee is made by agreement between a nominated member (e.g. Committee Chairmen) and a nominated officer (e.g. Chief Planning Officer). This decision must be made having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (see Appendix C), and the overriding presumption is that the applications listed in Schedule 2 will be delegated to officers and only exceptionally referred to committee.

Schedule 1 applications

6.5 The table below lists all application types that are listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. These are the types of applications that **must in all circumstances be delegated to officers**. Some of these application types are already 'fully delegated' under the Council's pre-existing Scheme of Delegation. For comparison, the table also identifies those which are currently subject to call-in and those which are always delegated currently.

Proposed Schedule 1 functions that must always be delegated under the National Scheme of Delegation.	**Available to call-in (before changes)**	**Always delegated (before changes)**
Householder development (a) an application for planning permission for development for an existing dwellinghouse, or development within the curtilage of such a dwellinghouse for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse, or (b) an application for any consent, agreement or approval required by or under a planning permission, development order or local development order in relation to such development.	✓	
Minor commercial development (a) an application for planning permission for development of an existing building or part of a building currently in use for any of the purposes falling within Part A of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or (b) an application for any consent, agreement or approval required by or under a planning permission, development order or local development order in relation to such development, where such an application does not include a change of use, a change to the number of units in a building, or development that is not wholly at ground floor level or that would increase the gross internal area of a building.	✓	
Minor residential development (a) an application for planning permission for development that— (i) includes only dwellings and development for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of dwellings, (ii) comprises at least one but not more than nine dwellings, and	✓	

(iii) is to be carried out on a site having an area smaller than 0.5 hectares; (b) an application for planning permission for development (other than excluded flat development) of a building containing flats, or development within the curtilage of such a building, for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the flats or any of the flats; or (c) an application for any consent, agreement or approval required by or under a planning permission, development order or local development order for development within paragraph (a) or (b).		
Reserved matters approvals in respect of an outline application other than a large outline permission. ("large outline permission" means an outline planning permission which permits development involving either or both of— (a) the provision of 500 or more dwellings; (b) the provision of a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 square metres or more.)	✓	
Discharge of conditions (applications under Article 27(1) of Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)		✓
Prior approval for permitted development rights, or an application for determination as to whether prior approval is required (applications under Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015)		✓
Permission in principle (as referred to in section 58A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	✓	
Where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, **requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation** (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)		✓
Where local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, **modification or discharge of**	✓	

a planning obligation (applications under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)		
Non-material amendments to planning permission or permission in principle (applications under section 96A(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)		✓
Certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development (under section 191(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)		✓
Certificates of lawfulness of proposed used or development (under section 192(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)		✓
Biodiversity gain plan (duty to approve under paragraph 14 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)		✓
Certificates of appropriate alternative development (applications under section 17 of the Land Compensation Act 1961)	✓	

Schedule 2 applications

6.6 Schedule 2 covers applications that may be considered by Planning Committee, but only if the statutory gateway tests and any local arrangements are met. These are detailed in the statutory guidance (Appendix C), but in summary are:

(a) planning applications that are not covered by Schedule 1;

(b) planning applications that would normally be Schedule 1, but are linked to listed building consent or changes to conditions on listed building consent;

(c) applications to change or remove conditions from an earlier Schedule 2 planning permission;

(d) retrospective planning applications, where the development has already taken place;

(e) reserved matters applications that relate to a large outline planning permission[1];

(f) requests to change or remove a planning obligation, where the obligation is linked to a Schedule 2 application;

(g) formal applications to change or remove a planning obligation, where the obligation is linked to a Schedule 2 application;

[1] "large outline permission" means an outline planning permission which permits development involving either or both of (a) the provision of 500 or more dwellings; (b) the provision of a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 square metres or more.

(h) applications for listed building consent;

(i) applications to change or remove conditions on listed building consent;

(j) applications for advertisement consent; and

(k) applications for consent to carry out works to trees protected by tree preservation orders.

Own-interest applications

6.7 The new scheme recognises that there may be cases where, in the interests of transparency and public accountability, it may be appropriate for some 'own-interest applications' to be referred to planning committee without the need for consideration of the 'gateway tests'. Accordingly, the nominated member and officer may also refer the following types of application to committee:

(a) Made by the Council, or on Council-owned land

(b) Made by elected councillors or members of staff

Local implementation and triage system

6.8 Government guidance says the Council does not need to review every Schedule 2 or own-interest application for possible referral to Planning Committee. The Council can therefore use a local triage process to decide which applications should be considered by the nominated member and officer.

6.9 Under the proposed approach, only applications with a realistic prospect of meeting the statutory gateway tests, or raising relevant own-interest issues, would be considered for possible referral. The Council may also decide that some Schedule 2 application types should always be determined by officers. If the nominated member and officer do not both agree to refer an application to Planning Committee, it must be determined by officers.

Councillor and public involvement in planning decisions

6.10 The National Scheme of Delegation does not make any changes to the ability for residents, business, town/parish councils and other interested parties to make comments on planning applications. Any such comments will continue to be taken into account in determining planning applications where they raise material planning considerations.

6.11 Although the route to planning committee will now be governed by the new Regulations, ward councillors remain an important voice in the planning process. They may continue to represent the views of residents, businesses and parish councils, and provide relevant local knowledge. Councillors may make representations on planning applications, which will similarly be taken into account where they raise material planning considerations.

6.12 Where a Schedule 2 application is referred to Planning Committee, the speaking rights for town/parish councils, objectors, supporters, applicants/agents and ward members will remain unaffected.

7 Implementation Proposals for the National Scheme of Delegation

7.1 This section sets out the proposals for implementing the National Scheme of Delegation in West Berkshire.

Continuity with South and Vale

7.2 In the context of local government reorganisation (notwithstanding the current pause and review by Government), officers have liaised with colleagues at South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils in order to maximise alignment where possible. South and Vale each have their own planning committees, similarly with a meeting each month.

7.3 A Special Council of the Vale of White Horse District Council and a Special Council of South Oxfordshire District Council on 24th September 2026 will consider constitution amendments relating to the National Scheme of Delegation. The proposals at South and Vale similarly give local ward members the ability to make a "Gateway Referral Request", which is equivalent to what is being proposed in this report.

Amendments to Constitution

7.4 Appendix A includes the full text of the proposed changes to the Constitution required to implement the National Scheme of Delegation. It is proposed to replace Section 8 of the Constitution's Scheme of Delegation, which sets out the delegations to the Service Director – Development and Housing.

7.5 The responsibilities for Planning and Housing have been disaggregated for clarity, but no substantive changes are proposed to the Housing delegations. These are replicated in Section 8.2.

7.6 The Planning delegation have been rewritten in Section 8.1 to reflect the National Scheme of Delegation. The following is a summary of these changes, some of which are elaborated below:

(a) Similar to the existing arrangements, all planning matters are delegated to the Service Director and Service Lead with responsibility for Planning, and to the Chief Planning Officer, and the provisions set out the conditions and limitations.

(b) The Chief Planning Officer is delegated authority to produce and maintain a document nominating the nominated member, nominated officer and their substitutes. An example Nominations Document is included at Appendix F.

(c) All applications listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations are delegated to officers. This is a direct requirement of the Regulations.

(d) The amendments identify several application types (in addition to Schedule 1 applications) that are delegated to officers.

(e) Sets out arrangements for Planning Committee to consider Schedule 2 applications which are referred to committee by the nominated member and nominated officer. The clauses repeat key legal parameters set out in the Regulations.

(f) A local triage system is set out which determines which applications are considered by the nominated member and nominated officer for referral to Planning Committee.

(g) Sets out provisions to ensure that there is no inappropriate lobbying of the nominated member and nominated officer in whether to refer an application to Planning Committee. These terms do not prevent a ward member from making representations to support their flagging of applications for consideration.

(h) Sets out provisions to enable the Monitoring Officer to make necessary amendments to the Constitution to ensure its terms of compliant with the Regulations upon implementation.

Nominated Member and Nominated Officer

7.7 As with the current arrangements, the proposed constitution amendments give delegated authority to the Service Director and Service Lead with responsibility for Planning.

7.8 Under the proposals, the Chief Planning Officer (Service Lead) will produce and maintain a document that identifies the nominated member, nominated officer and their substitutes, as required by the Regulations. In accordance with best practice, this document sits outside the Constitution so that it can be updated as necessary without reverting to Full Council on every occasion. Multiple nominations are included to ensure there are no single points of failure.

7.9 Ordinarily, it is anticipated that the nominated member would be the Planning Committee Chairman. The Vice Chairman would be a substitute, together with any other identified member.

7.10 Ordinarily, it is anticipated that the nominated officer would be the Chief Planning Officer (Service Lead), with the Development Manager, Service Director and Executive Director as substitutes.

Application process

7.11 The internal process is an operational matter that falls outside the recommendations of this report. However, for awareness, each application would be dealt with as follows

(a) **Initial screening**: At validation stage, each application will be registered as either a Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 application. Thereafter, any Schedule 1 application will proceed to be determined under delegated authority, but Schedule 2 applications will be subject to additional steps.

(b) **Schedule 2 triage**: Similar to how current committee triggers operate, the Planning Service will introduce measures to ensure that any application meeting the triage conditions set out in the proposed triage system are referred to the nominated member and officer (or their substitutes).

(c) **Gateway tests**: The Nominated Member and Officer will meet on a regular basis. They will consider all applications which have been triaged for assessment against the 'gateway tests'. They will decide whether the triaged applications can be referred to committee, or are to be determined under delegated authority. The Regulations require that this decision must be made having regard to the Government's statutory guidance. A record will be made of each decision, including reasons. Occasionally, it may be necessary to revisit these decisions within the process if the circumstances change, but most decisions about committee referral will be made at a point where consultation has concluded so that all parties have certainty on the process that will be followed.

(d) **Application report**: Every application report – delegated and committee – will include a statement setting out the outcome of the screening, triage and gateway tests.

7.12 It should be noted that the law and policies that guide decision making outcomes on planning applications is not changing. Planning law continues to require that all planning decisions are made in accordance with the development plan (e.g. local plan and neighbourhood plans) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. These changes do not affect the National Planning Policy Framework, the adopted Local Plan, or any other planning policy document.

Schedule 1 and other 'triaged out' applications

7.13 The constitution amendments stipulate that any application listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations will be delegated to officers for decision. See list at paragraph 6.6.

7.14 Councils may also identify other application types that are always delegated to officers, in addition to those listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations. This may be where, for example, existing schemes of delegation delegate applications that are not specifically listed in Schedule 1.

7.15 The following application types are included within Schedule 2 of the Regulations, but it is considered appropriate to 'triage/carve out' such that they are always delegated.

Application type	**Justification**
Applications for the **variation or discharge of conditions of listed building consent** (under section 19 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)	The Council's current scheme of delegation stipulates that all discharge of conditions applications are always delegated. Conditions on listed building consents are normally technical considerations. For example, details of joinery, method statements, window details,

Applications for **advertisement consent** (under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007)	Advertisement consents are subject to limited considerations – local amenity and public safety – which are normally technical in nature. Many local planning authorities delegate these applications.
Applications for **consent under tree preservation orders** (under regulation 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012)	Applications specialist knowledge of tree biology, physiology, pests and diseases etc. which can affect their health, as well as current Arboricultural management practice. In particular "5 Day Notices" must be determined urgently where a protected tree is thought to pose an immediate risk to people or property. Hedgerow notifications are determined against various schedules of specific ecological, landscape, or historical criteria; and these again are entirely technical assessments requiring specialist Archaeological and Ecological determination.
Applications for **screening and scoping opinions** under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.	The Council's current scheme of delegation stipulates that all EIA screening and scoping opinions are always delegated. These are technical determinations.

Triage process for Schedule 2 applications

7.16 The triage process for Schedule 2 applications is the area in which the Council has the greatest degree of discretion in how the national scheme of delegation in implemented.

7.17 The guidance is clear that, the overriding presumption is that the functions listed in Schedule 2 will be delegated to officers. In determining whether a referral is made, the presumption should be that decisions are delegated to officers and only exceptionally be referred to committee. This encourages a robust triaging process that filters out the majority of applications, thereby making the referral process as efficient as possible, and avoiding raising expectations of a committee referral if that would be inconsistent with the Regulations.

7.18 The proposals seek to largely replicate the Council's existing scheme of delegation as the foundations for the new triaging process. It is considered that the similarities with the existing arrangements will assist the Council in the initial implementation.

7.19 The table below summarises the applications which would be triaged for consideration by the nominated member and officer. Whilst largely repurposing existing committee triggers as a triage process, the following should be noted:

(a) The level of objection would not trigger referral in of itself. This is because any committee referral must be made on planning reasons, and so it would likely raise public expectations if every application with (for example) 10+ objections would be subject to a committee decision. This does not change the fact that all representations that raise material planning considerations are taken into account. Moreover, the ward member would still be able to flag an application to the nominated member and officer if they believed it may pass the statutory tests.

(b) All major applications would automatically be considered by the nominated member and officer due to their increased propensity to pass the gateway tests.

7.20 It is proposed that the triage process is reviewed between 6-12 months after implementation to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Appendix A Paragraph	**Trigger for the panel to consider whether the application should be referred to planning committee**	**Comments**
8.1.10(a)	Officer referral	Nominated senior planning officers in the Planning Service would be able to refer an application for consideration by the panel.
8.1.9(b)	Planning Committee Chairman referral	The Planning Committee Chairman may themselves make a referral to the panel.
8.1.9(c)	Flagged for consideration by the Ward Member	Any ward member may flag any application in their ward (or adjacent ward) to the nominated member and officer. They may also make representations to accompany their request. This would be comparable to existing call-in arrangements, but instead directed to the nominated member and officer for further consideration. A ward member would have four weeks from the validation of the application to flag it to the nominated member and officer via any form made available by the Planning Service.

8.1.10(d)a	Application made by WBC, or where the land is owned by WBC.	As an 'own-interest application' these can be referred to committee without passing the gateway tests. It is proposed to replicate the existing scheme of delegation.
8.1.10(d) b/c/d	Applications made by members of staff (Planning, linked to Planning, or Executive Leadership)	As an 'own-interest application' these can be referred to committee without passing the gateway tests. It is proposed to replicate the existing scheme of delegation. To be proportionate, this is proposed to be limited to members of staff in the Planning Service, any member of staff who has a direct involvement in the planning application process (e.g. consultees, legal officers), and the Council's Executive Leadership Team. It is not necessary to extend this to members of staff in unconnected services (e.g. social care workers) as they do not have any connection with the process.
8.1.10(d)e	Application made by elected WBC councillor.	As an 'own-interest application' these can be referred to committee without passing the gateway tests. It is proposed the panel will consider all such cases (i.e. not subject to any conditions).
8.1.10(e)	Applications for major development, as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.	Greater propensity for application to pass the statutory gateway tests.

Referral to Planning Committee

7.21 Upon implementation a regular operational meeting will be established. This will be attended by the nominated member, nominated member, their substitutes and (where necessary) a legal advisor. It will be an operational decision when it meets, but it is envisioned in would typically meet on a fortnightly basis.

7.22 The nominated member and officer (or substitutes) will consider all applications identified through the local triage process, and decide whether any application should be referred to Planning Committee. For each application considered a record will be made of the referral decision and the reasons why the application was, or was not, referred.

7.23 It is important to highlight that the Regulations legally require the nominated member and officer to make their decision having regard to the statutory guidance issued by Government. This is an area which it is anticipated could be subject to legal challenge, and therefore the constitution amendments include clauses to prevent lobbying of the nominated member and officer.

7.24 Any application referred by the nominated member and officer will proceed to Planning Committee for determination in the normal manner. Any application not referred will proceed under delegated authority. The application report for each application will include a note stating:

(a) Whether the application is Schedule 1 or 2;

(b) For Schedule 2 applications, whether it was triaged to be considered by the nominated member and officer;

(c) For any triaged application, the reasons for either a delegated or committee decision.

Provisions for consequential amendments

7.25 The proposals amount to a substantial change in the way planning decisions are delegated and referred to planning committee. There has been limited time between the making of the final regulations and the implementation date. Consequently, there is a risk that – following implementation – minor amendments may be required to address unforeseen issues. This is particularly the case where these changes are being made nationwide, so such issues may arise through legal challenges across the country.

7.26 To mitigate this risk, it is proposed that the Monitoring Officer is delegated the authority to make any substantive changes to the Constitution that are in their opinion necessary to ensure the Council's Constitution fully aligns with the Regulations. Where any changes are necessary, a report will be brought to Full Council for permanent ratification of the changes are the earliest practical opportunity.

7.27 This is reflected in paragraph 8.1.16 of the proposed amendments.

Future review

7.28 This is one of the most substantial planning reforms that has taken place in recent years, and it introduces a fundamentally different approach to how local planning authority functions are delegated. The Regulations were made in July 2026 and come into effect on 31st October 2026, leaving limited time to prepare for implementation.

7.29 The proposals have been carefully considered and prepared. Officers have followed all available statutory and industry guidance, and have attended workshops run by the

Planning Advisory Service including representatives of planning authorities across England.

7.30 Nevertheless, it is considered good practice with such a substantial procedural change that it is subject to a review between 6 and 12 months. Recommendations are made accordingly.

8 Single Planning Committee

8.1 In light of the National Scheme of Delegation, it is proposed to replace District Planning Committee, Eastern Area Planning Committee and Western Area Planning Committee with a single Planning Committee. This would reflect the anticipated reduced committee workload.

8.2 Appendix E sets out the existing committee arrangements and data on workload over recent years.

8.3 Running a planning committee is resource intensive, predominantly in terms of officer time. A meeting will normally be staffed by a lead planning officer, legal officer, clerk, Zoom host, 1-3 planning case officers, and normally at least one consultee officer. The preparatory work involved significant planning officer time (especially for the lead officer), and technical officer support. Planning committees also require committee members to commit large amounts of time. As such, ensuring the committee structure is as efficient as possible is important in terms of making effective use of resources and public expenditure.

8.4 The committee data from recent years (Appendix E) indicates that a single planning committee would be a more efficient and effective structure. Combining the responsibilities of EAPC and WAPC would result in less cancellations, and a more consistent throughput where currently there are often imbalances between the committee (one with limited business, another with a backlog).

8.5 The National Scheme of Delegation is expected to significantly reduce the number of applications which are referred to planning committee. It is therefore recommended that the three existing committees are replaced with a single planning committee.

8.6 The benefits of a single planning committee, meeting monthly, would be:

(a) Reflects the anticipated workload for planning committees under the National Scheme of Delegation.

(b) Enables more consistency with agenda items, avoiding the imbalances that arise with multiple committees. In turn this should lead to less cancellations.

(c) More efficient use of resources, particularly officer and member time, which in turn minimises public expenditure.

(d) A single planning committee would enable membership selection from all councillors. This would help minimise disadvantages to minority group members in terms of selecting substitutions.

(e) A single planning committee for West Berkshire would be better aligned with future Local Government Reorganisation.

(f) Reducing the number of planning committees is being considered by other councils in light of the National Scheme of Delegation.

8.7 A single district-wide planning committee risks reducing local knowledge or representation. However, it is considered that the number of members that would sit on a single Planning Committee would still allow strong representation and local knowledge. It should also be noted that the committee procedure remains unchanged, and the ward member(s) would still be able to make representations direct to Planning Committee.

8.8 On balance, it is considered that the benefits of a single Planning Committee support the proposed change.

8.9 It is proposed that the new Planning Committee comprises 11 members. This replicates the size of District Planning Committee, as opposed to the smaller sub-committees that comprises nine members. This number is within the maximum statutory limit of 13 established by the new Regulations.

9 Other planning constitution amendments

9.1 The following minor amendments are also proposed to the Constitution.

Substitute Members of Planning Committees

9.2 The Constitution sets out the membership arrangements for the Planning Committees to ensure that their composition reflects the Council's overall political balance. Each Area Planning Committee comprises nine Members drawn from the wards within its geographic remit.

9.3 Under the Council's current political make up, the Minority Group has three Members representing wards in the western area, but only one Member representing wards in the eastern area. As a result, the Constitution allocates a single Minority Group Member to the Eastern Area Planning Committee.

9.4 Paragraph 4.2 currently limits substitute Members to those belonging to the same political group as the Member they are substituting for. In the present circumstances, this means that the Minority Group Member on the Eastern Area Planning Committee is unable to appoint a substitute at all.

9.5 In the most extreme scenario, this could result in a meeting being unable to proceed due to the committee not being quorate. It is important to emphasise that planning decisions must be made solely on relevant planning grounds and not on political considerations. This provides a strong rationale for amending the Constitution to ensure the committee can function effectively regardless of political group distribution.

9.6 It is therefore proposed that Section 4 of Part 6.8 - Appendix: Planning Committees be amended to allow a Substitute Member from any party on occasions where a selection cannot be made from the same party.

Member Planning Training

9.7 The Development Management Audit has included the following recommendation:

> *"We recommend that, as per the LGA good practice guidance 'Probity in Planning', councillors (i.e. the Planning Committees) should visit or review a sample of implemented planning permissions to assess the quality of the decisions and the development, ideally on an annual or more frequent basis. The Code of Conduct for Planning should be revised accordingly."*

9.8 The Planning Service intend to incorporate this action into the annual Member Planning Training. The Code of Conduct for Planning has now been incorporated into of Part 6.8 - Appendix: Planning Committees. To fulfil the full recommendations of the audit, it is proposed to make an addition to Section 4 of Part 6.8 - Appendix: Planning Committees.

10 Other options considered

National Scheme of Delegation

10.2 The National Scheme of Delegation is being implemented nationwide by the 2026 Regulations. All local planning authority decisions are bound by these Regulations, and therefore there is no alternative which involves not implementing the National Scheme of Delegation.

10.3 The proposals have been drafted in line with the statutory guidance published by Government, and with industry guidance produced by the Planning Officers Society and the Planning Advisory Service (part of the Local Government Association). As the proposals adopt a national scheme, these is limited scope to vary the substance of the drafting.

10.4 The main area of local discretion is in the triaging process. Consideration has been given to a more robust triaging process that filters out more applications from being considered by the nominated member and officer, reflecting the Government's statutory advice that it is the presumption that most Schedule 2 applications will be delegated to officers and only exceptionally will an application be referred to committee. However, given that this a new scheme that is being implemented for the first time nationwide, it is considered appropriate to propose a more relaxed triage process. It is, however, proposed to review the arrangements following implementation, whereby this can be given further consideration.

Single Planning Committee

10.5 Consideration has been given to not making changes to the existing committee structure. However, given the anticipated reduction in planning committee caseload, the costs associated with running each planning committee, and the Council's financial

position, it is not considered a financially sound approach to run multiple planning committees under the National Scheme of Delegation.

Other planning constitution amendments

10.6 The alternative option would be to retain the existing substitute and training arrangements, but this would not address the risks set out in this report, nor address the recommendations of the Development Management Audit.

11 Conclusion

11.1 The recommendations in this report are necessary to ensure that the Council's Constitution is updated before the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 come into force. From that date, the Council must operate the National Scheme of Delegation and cannot continue to rely on existing local arrangements where these are inconsistent with the statutory framework.

11.2 The proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation will enable the Council to continue determining planning applications lawfully and efficiently, while preserving committee consideration for those Schedule 2 and own-interest applications that meet the statutory requirements for referral. The proposed triage arrangements provide a proportionate local process which reflects the Regulations, Government guidance and the Council's existing approach to committee referrals.

11.3 Replacing the existing three planning committees with a single Planning Committee is recommended because the National Scheme of Delegation is expected to reduce committee workload significantly. A single committee is therefore a more efficient and proportionate structure, making better use of officer and member time, reducing avoidable cancellations and providing a consistent district-wide approach.

11.4 The proposed delegated authority for the Monitoring Officer and the planned review after implementation provide appropriate safeguards during the transition to the new regime. For these reasons, the recommendations at paragraph 2 are proposed as the most appropriate way to secure legal compliance, maintain service continuity and ensure the Council's planning decision-making arrangements remain effective and proportionate.

12 Appendices

Appendix A – Amendments to Scheme of Delegation

Appendix B – Amendments to Planning Committee Appendix

Appendix C – Government Statutory Guidance

Appendix D – PAS Member Briefing Note

Appendix E – Existing Planning Committee Arrangements

Appendix F – Example Nominations Document

Background Papers:

- Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025
- Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026
- Statutory guidance – Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities in England

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☒

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☒

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position: ☒

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Wards affected: All

Officer details:

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Appendix A

Amendments to Scheme of Delegation

8. Service Director (Development and Housing)

8.1 Planning

8.1.1
Subject to the exceptions and conditions set out in this Scheme of Delegation, all planning matters and functions that the Council are responsible for as Local Planning Authority (as defined by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) are delegated to the Service Director and Service Lead with responsibility for Planning, and to the Chief Planning Officer.

8.1.2
The Chief Planning Officer shall produce and maintain a document for the purposes of Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 that clearly sets out:

a) the member of the authority who acts as the Nominated Member;

b) one or more members of the authority who act as a substitute for the Nominated Member;

c) the officer of the authority who acts as the Nominated Officer; and

d) one or more officers of the authority who act as a substitute for the Nominated Officer.

8.1.3
With respect to 8.1.2 (a) and (b) different members can be nominated for different purposes. With respect to 8.1.2 (c) and (d) different officers can be nominated for different purposes. These should also be set out in the document where appropriate.

8.1.4
The following planning matters and functions must be determined by **Full Council**:

a) To submit a Development Plan Document for examination
b) To adopt a Development Plan Document
c) To submit a draft Charging Schedule for examination
d) To approve or withdraw a Charging Schedule

8.1.5
The following planning matters and functions must be determined by the **Executive**:

a) To consult on a Local Development Framework Document
b) To adopt a Supplementary Planning Document, the Local Development Scheme or the Statement of Community Involvement
c) To approve the Authority Monitoring Report
d) To authorise a Neighbourhood Plan to be put to referendum
e) To agree that a Neighbourhood Plan be Made
f) To designate a Conservation Area

8.1.6
Those applications listed in **Schedule 1** of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (or any revisions/replacement of these Regulations) shall be determined by an officer with delegated authority in all circumstances.

8.1.7
In addition to those applications listed in Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026, the following applications shall be **determined by an officer with delegated authority** in all circumstances:

(a) Applications for the variation or discharge of conditions of listed building consent (under section 19 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)
(b) Applications for advertisement consent (under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007)
(c) Applications for consent under tree preservation orders (under regulation 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012)
(d) Applications for screening and scoping opinions under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
(e) Applications for works to trees or woodlands subject to a Tree Preservation Order under Regulation 16 of The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012.
(f) Notifications for tree works to trees within a Conservation Area under section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
(g) Notifications where a tree is thought to present an immediate risk of serious harm, under Regulation 15 of The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012.
(h) Notifications under Regulation 5 of The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 for the remove of qualifying hedges.

8.1.8
The following planning matters and functions must be determined by **Planning Committee**:

a) Those applications listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (or any revisions/replacement of these Regulations) that the Nominated Member and the Nominated Officer agree that referral to and determination by Planning Committee is necessary.
b) An Own-Interest Application, as defined in the Regulations, that the Nominated Member and the Nominated Officer agree that referral to and determination by Planning Committee is necessary.
c) Any other planning matter that an officer of the authority with delegated powers considers that referral to and determination by Planning Committee is necessary.

8.1.9
The Nominated Member (or substitute) and Nominated Officer (or substitute) – herein collectively referred to as the "**Nominated Persons**" – may refer an application to Planning Committee for determination if:

(a) It is an application not listed in Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 and the Nominated Persons consider the conditions of paragraph 8.1.10 are met; or

(b) It is an ‘own-interest’ application as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026, and the Committee Referral Panel considers it prudent to do so in the interests of transparency.

8.1.10
The Nominated Persons will consider an application for referral to Planning Committee where any of the following conditions apply:

(a) The Service Director/Service Lead with responsibility for Planning, the Development Manager, or a Development Management Team Manager refer an application to the Nominated Persons;

(b) The Planning Committee Chairman refers an application to the Nominated Persons;

(c) The application is flagged to the Nominated Persons by a Member for the Ward to which the application relates, or a Member for a Ward adjoining the Ward to which the application relates, and that member:

    a. Has provided a planning reason for flagging the application for consideration; and

    b. Has completed the any form made available for flagging the application, and submitted it within the deadline published by the Planning Service, this date being four weeks from the date the application is published as valid;

(d) The application is made (whether or not jointly with any other person) by or on behalf of:

    a. West Berkshire Council, or where the land in question is owned by the Council;

    b. A member of staff of the Planning Service;

    c. A member of staff who works directly with the Planning Service;

    d. A member of staff who is part of the executive leadership team;

    e. An elected member of the Council;

(e) The application is defined as major development in terms of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

8.1.11
The Nominated Persons may refer an application to Planning Committee if in their view it raises:

(a) One or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area, or

(b) One or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

8.1.12
In considering whether to make a referral, the Nominated Persons must:

(a) Comply with the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (or any revisions/replacement of these Regulations); and

(b) Have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

8.1.13
Where the Nominated Persons do not agree on whether the refer an application to Planning Committee, the application must be determined by an officer with delegated authority.

8.1.14
The Nominated Persons may:

(a) Make a preliminary decision about committee referral which is subject to their future review;

(b) Re-consider a committee referral decision (for example, if materially new information arises);

(c) Make a decision about committee referral that is subject to conditions (for example, the resolution of a technical matter);

8.1.15
A record shall be made of all decisions by the Nominated Persons.

8.1.16
Any member or officer making a referral to the Nominated Persons may give planning reasons for doing so when making their referral. However, when exercising their powers under the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (or any revisions/replacement of these Regulations) and this Scheme of Delegation, the Nominated Persons shall not be lobbied to use make a particular decision, including by members or officers of the Council. Any such lobbying that is received should be reported to the Monitoring Officer, who will deal with it as appropriate.

8.1.17
The provisions in Section 8.1 implement the National Scheme of Delegation introduced by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 that comes into effect on 31st October 2026. Recognising that this is a new national scheme, the Council's Monitoring Officer is delegated the authority to make any substantive changes to Section 8.1, and any consequential amendments in the wider Constitution, deemed necessary to ensure the Council's compliance with the Act and Regulations. This delegated authority is provided that any such changes are the minimum necessary to ensure compliance, and subject to the amendments being ratified by Full Council as soon as practicable.

8.2 Housing

8.2.1
Subject to the exceptions and conditions set out in this Scheme of Delegation, all housing matters and functions that the Council are responsible for as Local Housing Authority (as defined by the Housing Act 1985) are delegated to the Service Director and Service Lead with responsibility for Housing.

Traveller Sites

8.2.2
To commission professional services in relation to traveller and gypsy sites

8.2.3
To undertake an assessment of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers residing in or resorting to the district and to prepare a strategy in respect of meeting those needs, in accordance with the Housing Act 2004

8.2.4
To apply annual increases to charges on gypsy sites in line with the rent increases applied by West Berkshire Council managing the site to its own tenants.

Housing

8.2.5
To publish an allocations scheme and develop policies to offer choice to applicants in the allocation of housing

8.2.6
To exercise the duties conferred on the Council in relation to homelessness.

8.2.7
To promote energy efficient homes including administering grants for energy efficiency

8.2.8
To give grants and loans for the repair / improvement of housing in accordance with national guidance and locally published policies.

8.2.9
To award mandatory, and where appropriate discretionary, Disabled Facilities Grants for the purpose of aids and adaptations for eligible people, in accordance with national guidance and local published policies.

8.2.10
To act as a Director of the Flexible Homes Improvement Limited, on behalf of West Berkshire Council, for the purpose of administering loans for the repair / improvement of housing within the Flexible Home Improvement Loans sub-region

8.2.11
To approve discretionary grants and loans as exceptions to the adopted Housing Grants & Loans Policy

8.2.12
To offer grants for the improvement and/or repair of housing.

8.2.13
To determine applications for Housing Association Grant with regard to the purchase of properties in the second-hand market for occupation by homeless families in accordance with the special homelessness initiative subject to the contribution on any one unit not exceeding £50,000.

8.2.14
Determination of application for individual DIYSO Housing Association Grant.

8.2.15
Implementing rent reviews in accordance with valuers' instructions.

8.2.16
Carry out repairs to units of temporary accommodation.

8.2.17
Repurchase of ex-Council House Stock in Rural Areas.

8.2.18
To approve exceptions to the application of the local connection criteria for homes subject to s.19 of the Housing Act 1980 and s.157 of the Housing Act 1985

8.2.19
To develop and implement strategies to bring empty homes back into use, including the use of empty Dwelling Management Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders.

8.2.20
To make use of planning and housing powers to address poor housing.

8.2.21
Service of Notice to Quit on tenants of Council dwellings. Allocation of pitches on Council owned caravan sites.

8.2.22
Decisions on all matters relating to the Council's conditions of tenancy in relation to the Council's statutory housing function.

8.2.23
Assessing current and future need for affordable housing and demand for market housing.

Appendix B

Amendments to Planning Committee Appendix

Part 6.8 - Appendix: Planning Committees

1. Preamble

- **1.1** Part 3 (Meeting Procedure Rules) and Part 6 (Council Bodies) set out the rules and procedures that apply to all of the Council's Bodies and Sub-Bodies.
- **1.2** If there is any conflict between the wording of Parts 3 and 6 and this Appendix, this Appendix will prevail.

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2. Role and Conduct of Councillors and Officers

- **2.1** Councillors and Officers have different, but complementary, roles in the planning process and it is important that an open, respectful and transparent relationship is developed based upon mutual trust and understanding of each other's positions. It is important for the overall standing of the Council that they work as an effective team.
- **2.2** Members of the Planning Committee have different roles to those of other Councillors. Councillors who are members of the Planning Committee determine the more significant and contentious planning applications received by the Council. In doing so, these Councillors and nominated substitutes perform a quasi-judicial role and are required to consider all planning proposals against the wider public interest.
- **2.3** When considering planning applications, Councillors need to ensure that only material planning considerations are taken into account. In reaching a decision, Councillors should ensure they understand, consider and take account of the relevant material considerations connected with the application and should not favour any person, group or locality or put themselves in a position where they may appear to do so. In order to ensure that decisions are taken on planning grounds and are sound it is incumbent on all Planning Committee Members to give full consideration to reports prepared by Officers and familiarise themselves with all relevant national planning policy and guidance (including the National Planning Policy Framework), Development Plan policies and other material considerations well in advance of the consideration of a development proposal at the Planning Committee itself.
- **2.4** Planning Committee Members must take steps to ensure that in their discharge of their Planning Committee duties the distinction between this role and their role as Ward Members is constantly made clear. If Members wish to act in the latter capacity they must make that clear at the outset.

- **2.5** Officers are employed by the Council. Instructions may only be given to Officers by the Council, its Executive or a Committee or by way of delegated powers. Officers involved in the processing and determination of Planning matters must act in accordance with the Officers Code of Conduct (see paragraph 13.5 of Part 13 of the Constitution) and with the relevant sections of the Royal Town Planning Institute's Code of Professional Conduct and any other applicable guidance. Officers are required to act impartially at all times in determining applications and providing advice at the Planning Committee. Officers will be expected to conduct themselves in all they say and do in a manner which totally preserves this position of impartiality.
- **2.6** It is not appropriate for Councillors to direct, or seek to influence, Officers to determine an application in a particular way. A Councillor must not use improperly their position as a Member to confer on, or secure for himself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage.
- **2.7** Councillors must not favour, or discriminate against, any person, company, group or locality nor put themselves in a position where they appear to do so.

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3. Establishment

- **3.1** The Council is a Local Planning Authority ("LPA") and has established a Planning Committee ~~and two Area Planning Committees (the Eastern Area Planning Committee and the Western Area Planning Committee).~~
- ~~**3.2** The Eastern Area Committee covers the following Wards:~~
    - ~~Aldermaston;~~
    - ~~Basildon;~~
    - ~~Bradfield;~~
    - ~~Bucklebury;~~
    - ~~Burghfield and Mortimer;~~
    - ~~Pangbourne;~~
    - ~~Thatcham Central;~~
    - ~~Thatcham Colthrop and Crookham;~~
    - ~~Thatcham North East;~~
    - ~~Thatcham West;~~
    - ~~Theale;~~
    - ~~Tilehurst Birch Copse;~~
    - ~~Tilehurst South and Holybrook;~~
    - ~~Tilehurst and Purley.~~
- ~~**3.3** The Western Area Committee covers the following Wards:~~
    - ~~Chieveley and Cold Ash;~~
    - ~~Downlands;~~
    - ~~Hungerford and Kintbury;~~
    - ~~Lambourn;~~
    - ~~Newbury Central;~~
    - ~~Newbury Clay Hill;~~
    - ~~Newbury Greenham;~~
    - ~~Newbury Speen;~~
    - ~~Newbury Wash Common;~~

- ~~Ridgeway.~~

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4. Membership

- **4.1** ~~Each Area~~ The Planning Committee shall consist of ~~nine~~ 11 Members drawn across the District ~~from the Wards covered by the committee~~ and reflecting the political balance of the Council.
- ~~**4.2** Each Area Planning Committee shall also have Substitute Members drawn from the Wards covered by the committee, but to sit a Substitute Member must be a Member of the same political group as the Member they are substituting for.~~
- ~~**4.3** The District Planning Committee shall consist of 11 Members reflecting the political balance of the Council - the Portfolio Member responsible for Planning plus five Members from each of the Area Planning Committees.~~
- **4.2** The Chair of the Planning Committee shall be elected at Annual Meeting of the Body (Part 3 Meeting Rules para 4.1.3) and shall not be the Executive Member responsible for Planning.
- **4.4 3** The ~~District~~ Planning Committee shall also have Substitute Members, but to sit a Substitute Member must be a Member of the same political group ~~and of the same Area~~ ~~Planning Committee~~ as the Member they are substituting for (unless there are no Substitute Members of the same political group allocated to the Committee, in which case a Substitute Member may be from one of the other political groups).
- **4.5** Before serving on any Planning Committee, each Committee Member or Substitute Member must receive such formal training (and refresher training) in the planning system as the Service Director with responsibility for Planning shall determine in consultation with the Portfolio holder with responsibility for Planning. The training shall include visits, or a review of sample implemented planning permissions, to assess the quality of the decisions and the development, ideally on an annual or more frequent basis.

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5. Scope of Role - Statutory

- **5.1** Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows an LPA to arrange for the discharge any of its functions by a committee, sub-committee, or an officer or by any other local authority.
- **5.2** The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is the principal statutory instrument for the determination of planning applications and associated casework. The planning application process is also governed by various other Acts of Parliament, Regulations, Orders, and Directions. Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with a with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and other associated planning legislation.

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6. Scope of Role - Planning Principles

- **6.1** To the extent that Development Plan policies are material to an application for planning permission the decision must be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 - these provisions also apply to appeals).
- **6.2** The Development Plan is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the Development Plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.
- **6.3** A material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question. The scope of what can constitute a material consideration is very wide. However, in general planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, so the protection of purely private interests will not normally be material considerations.
- **6.4** Law makes a clear distinction between the question of whether something is a material consideration and the weight which it is to be given. Whether a particular consideration is material will depend on the circumstances of the case and is ultimately a decision for the courts. Provided regard is had to all material considerations, it is for the decision maker to decide what weight is to be give to the material considerations in each case, and (subject to the test of reasonableness) the courts will not get involved in the question of weight.
- **6.5** Any application which constitutes a departure to the Development Plan, in the terms of the legislation, must be advertised as such. If such an application is to be approved the material considerations leading to this conclusion must be clearly identified.

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7. Scope of Role - ~~Area~~ Planning Committee

- **7.1** ~~Each Area~~ The Planning Committee will consider applications for planning permission and other Development Management casework where the Scheme of Delegation requires a committee decision ~~and the application site is within the Ward covered by that Committee (refer to Section 3).~~

~~8. Scope of Role - District Planning Committee~~

- ~~**8.1** The District Planning Committee will consider, on behalf of the Council, applications for planning permission and other Development Management casework where:~~

- ~~**8.1.1** The Chairman of an Area Planning Committee determines it is appropriate for the decision to be made by the District Planning Committee, rather than the Area Planning Committee.~~
- ~~**8.1.2** an Area Planning Committee has referred the application to the District Planning Committee for determination following a majority vote;~~
- ~~**8.1.3** an Area Planning Committee has considered the application but the Service Director or Service Lead with responsibility for Planning, or the Development Manager, has determined that the decision:~~
    - ~~**8.1.3.1** has a possible conflict with a policy that would undermine the Development Plan; or~~
    - ~~**8.1.3.2** is of a district wide public interest; or~~
    - ~~**8.1.3.3** there is a possibility for claims for significant costs against the Council.~~

- ~~**8.2** Where a decision of an Area Planning Committee has been referred to the District Planning Committee as above, that decision shall not take effect until the District Planning Committee has considered it.~~

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9. Committee Site Visits

- **9.1** Where deemed necessary, by the Chairman of ~~the relevant~~ the Planning Committee and Development Manager, Committee Site Visits may be conducted to enable Planning Committee Members to view application proposals in context, and to inform their assessment of the impact of a proposal on the application site and surrounding area. Committee Site Visits are not to be used to debate the merits of the application.
- **9.2** A Committee site visit is a formal meeting of the relevant committee and the same rules apply to chairing it as apply to a Meeting.
- **9.3** Committee site visits should be by those Planning Committee Members able to attend, with Officer assistance. Others attending (ward members, town or parish council representatives, applicant/agent, supporters, and objectors) do so at the discretion of the Meeting Chairman. At the direction of the Meeting Chairman, other attendees may ask Members to observe specific aspects of the site and its surroundings, or ask for clarification of factual matters, but must not express opinions or other representations regarding the merits of the application.

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10. Planning Committee Briefings

- **10.1** On occasions it may be appropriate for officers, applicants, or prospective applicants, to give a presentation to Planning Committee at an earlier stage before the application is considered by the Planning Committee for a decision. This gives an opportunity for applicants to explain their

development proposals and/or to provide an opportunity for Members to raise questions in connection with the proposals.

- **10.2** When considering a request for a briefing, the complexity of the proposal should be considered. Planning Committee briefings should be restricted to more complex proposals.
- **10.3** The Chairman of the Planning Committee must approve any request for a briefing in consultation with the Development Manager and the Monitoring Officer, or their representatives.
- **10.4** To avoid any perception of influence it is advisable that any briefing must take place at least three weeks before the meeting of the Planning Committee that will hear the application. Briefings should avoid discussion, although questions of clarification are appropriate. The Chairman of the Committee will manage the briefing. Officers will be present to record proceedings and answer any questions of clarification.
- **10.5** Consideration should be given to inviting Ward Members, Parish Council representatives and other interested parties.

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11. Discussions before Decision is made

- **11.1** Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to enter into discussions and negotiations which can bring about improvements that can make an application acceptable, and thereby potentially speed up the planning process. Such pre-application discussions will normally take place at Officer level and Members shall wherever possible refer requests by applicants and third parties for such advice to Officers. If Members become involved in such discussions they should make it clear that their views are personal and provisional and they may wish to make a record of the discussion.
- **11.2** All Councillors have a role to play in helping consultation between their constituents and developers. Such consultation can be a huge benefit to all parties but can easily be seen as part of a lobbying process by the applicant if care is not taken. Planning Committee Members in particular must be careful to adhere to the rules regarding predetermination and predisposition.
- **11.3** This section covers any discussions taking place before a decision is made not simply prior to the application being submitted. It does not affect discussions between Councillors and Officers nor does it impact on any pre-application planning advice provided by Officers under the adopted policy.
- **11.5** Planning advice given by Officers should be consistent, based on the Development Plan and material considerations.
- **11.6** The Councillor's role is to feedback responses from the community. If invited to attend pre-committee discussions, all Councillors should speak first to the Planning Officer handling the application.
- **11.7** If such a meeting is held, a written note should be made of the meeting, particularly if contentious. Where the meeting includes a Planning Committee Member, at least one Officer should attend any such meetings and a follow up letter from the Councillor is advisable summarising the discussion.
- **11.8** If an Officer is unable to attend and the meeting has to go ahead the Councillor should make written notes and forward a copy of these to the

Development Manager as soon as possible. This is also advisable for all Councillors who are not a member of the relevant planning committee.

- **11.9** All Councillors should also note that potentially contentious telephone discussions should also be recorded in writing, preferably immediately after the conversation so recollection is fresh and should be reported to the Monitoring Officer.
- **11.10** Where a meeting concerns a major development, it is preferable that the meeting takes place on Council premises with Officers present and notes of discussions are made.
- **11.11** At all times Planning Committee Members should be mindful of general rules regarding predetermination.

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12. Lobbying

- **12.1** It is recognised that lobbying is a normal and perfectly legitimate element of the process of considering planning applications. If a Councillor, who is not on the Planning Committee to determine an application, wishes to support a particular viewpoint then that Councillor has a right to appear at the relevant Planning Committee and seek permission to address the meeting provided that they have registered to speak in accordance with paragraph 16 below.
- **12.2** It is, however, important that Councillors protect their impartiality and integrity in planning matters. Planning Committee Members will not breach the Code by listening to or receiving viewpoints from residents or other interested parties provided that they make it clear that they are keeping an open mind. However expressing an intention to vote one way or another before a Planning Committee meeting would prejudice impartiality and potentially open the Council to challenge.

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13. Ward Members

- **13.1** Ward Members have a central role in helping to represent the views of local people and other stakeholders at both pre-application and planning application stage. Ward Members bring strong community leadership, extensive local knowledge and an up-to-date understanding of current issues.
- **13.2** Planning Officers have to act impartially at all times, but will provide support and advice to Ward Members on planning matters in order for them to play this community leadership role. Ward Members should not direct, or seek to influence, Officers' to make a particular decision.

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14. Only One Forum

- **14.1** Members of the District Council may consider applications at parish level and form a view on the basis of evidence available at that time. At district

level they may consider the same application but, with additional information and advice from Officers, may well change their mind.

- **14.2** At district level, Councillors may also be members of ~~both the Area~~ Planning Committee ~~and the District Planning Committee (DPC)~~. At Planning Committee they may consider the same application but, with additional information and advice from Officers, may well change their mind.
- **14.3** It is suggested that Councillors who sit at parish or town level~~, or~~ and consider an application at ~~both the Area~~ Planning Committee ~~and DPC~~, indicate to the meeting that while they have a personal interest by way of their membership of the Parish/Town Council ~~/ Area Planning Committee~~ as a Councillor, any comments made at the previous meeting(s) are made in relation to the information before them at that meeting. Councillors are not pre-judging the matter and will want to consider carefully all material likely to be available at whichever level the application is being considered. When the matter is considered by a Planning Committee for the District, the Councillor will weigh up all the information at that time and consider the matter afresh.

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15. Planning Applications by Councillors, Officers or the Council

- **15.1** These can, by their very nature, arouse suspicions of impropriety. It is vital they are handled in a way that ensures there are no grounds for accusations of favouritism.
- **15.2** If it is a Council application it will be treated in the same way as a private developer. The same administrative process, including consultation, should be carried out in relation to the Council's own planning applications, and that they should be determined against the same policy background. Decisions must be made strictly on planning merits and without regard to any financial or other gain that may accrue to the Council if the development is permitted. It is important that the Council is seen to be treating such applications on an equal footing with all other applications as well as actually doing so.
- **15.3** If the application is made by an Officer within the Planning Service, or another Service or Officer that works closely with Planning, the Planning Service Lead or Development Manager (as appropriate) shall take reasonable steps to ensure there are no grounds for accusation of favouritism. This could include the application being dealt with by a Planning Officer in another team. Where the determination is made under delegated authority, the Officer exercising delegated authority should do so in consultation with the Monitoring Officer.
- **15.4** If it is a Councillor application they are entitled to speak to Officers both prior to and at Committee in the same way as any member of the public. They will have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should refer Member Code of Conduct [Part 13 Constitution]. However, they shall not seek improperly to influence the decision and shall play no part in the debate itself as a Councillor nor be able to vote.
- **15.5** The Council's Monitoring Officer shall be informed of all applications by Councillors and Officers and will register such applications.

- **15.6** The Scheme of Delegation provides stricter terms for applications by Planning or senior staff, or by Councillors to be considered by Committee ~~where recommended for approval.~~

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16. Meeting Procedure - Registering to Speak

- **16.1** Members of the groups below may address the Committee during consideration of any application (but only provided that they have first registered to speak as set out below):
    - **16.1.1** Parish/Town Council representative(s);
    - **16.1.2** Adjoining Parish/Town Council representative(s);
    - **16.1.3** Objectors;
    - **16.1.4** Supporters;
    - **16.1.5** Applicant or their agent.
- **16.2** Apart from the applicant or their agent, applications to speak must be by persons or on behalf of bodies that have made written representations on an application as part of the consultation process.
- **16.3** The deadline to register to speak at a Meeting is 16:00 on the last working day before the Meeting. Requests must be made to the Planning Service in writing to the given address (preferably by email) and an acknowledgement from the Planning Service received.
- **16.4** Those registering to speak must provide:
    - the name of the person wishing to speak;
    - a contact telephone number;
    - the application they wish to speak on;
    - the capacity in which they are registering.
    - Whether they are attending in person or remotely via video conferencing
- **16.5** Persons registering to speak should also confirm if they are willing for the Council to share their contact details with other speakers so that arrangements can be made to nominate a spokesperson if necessary.

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17. Meeting Procedure - Representations and Time Limits

- **17.1** In addition to those listed above, and further to the Meeting Rules of Procedure, the Ward Councillor(s) shall be entitled to speak on any application affecting their Ward.
- **17.2** Further, when the Committee considers an application affecting more than one Ward, the Chairman, with the agreement of the Committee, may allow additional speakers from the relevant Ward(s).
- **17.3** The total time allowed for speeches in respect of each of the groups of speakers shall not exceed five minutes or such longer period as the Meeting Chairman may allow with the consent of the Committee.

- **17.4** Where more than one person is entitled or has registered to speak in any of the groups of speakers, the five minute period shall be shared between them. In such circumstances, speakers are encouraged to appoint a spokesperson, but if no spokesperson is nominated, the speakers will be heard in the order in which they have registered until the five minute period has elapsed.
- **17.5** Where there is more than one Ward Councillor speaking:
    - **17.5.1** where they each seek the same outcome, they will share a speaking time of five minutes;
    - **17.5.2** where they seek a fundamentally different outcome, each speaker or group will be allowed five minutes.
- **17.6** When there is a linked application (for example, in the case of linked applications for planning permission and listed building consent on the same property), they will generally be treated as one agenda item such that speakers may only speak once.
- **17.7** material on the planning file that a speaker wishes to refer to must be highlighted or provided to the Planning Officers at least five clear working days before the Meeting (Local Authorities (Access to Meetings and Documents) (Period of Notice) (England) Order 2002). Officers will facilitate reasonable requests to display requested plans, photographs, or supporting documents which are on the planning file and have been requested in advance of the meeting, but this will not include presentations slides.
- **17.8** No new material may be produced or referred to at the Meeting unless lodged under 17.7.
- **17.9** The Committee may only ask those speaking for clarification of points raised. Members may not ask any other questions, nor may they elicit information that the speaker may have omitted.

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18. Meeting Procedure - Order of Representations etc

- **18.1** The following procedure shall apply in respect of each item as relevant in the circumstances (but the Meeting Chairman may change the order at their discretion, or invite any representative to clarify a factual issue at any time):
    - **18.1.1** introduction of item by Officers;
    - **18.1.2** representations by Parish/Town Council representative(s);
    - **18.1.3** Members' questions to Parish/Town Council representative(s);
    - **18.1.4** representations by Adjoining Parish/Town Council representative(s) (where agreed by the Meeting Chairman);
    - **18.1.5** Members' questions to Adjoining Parish/Town Council representative(s);
    - **18.1.6** representations by objector(s);
    - **18.1.7** Members' questions to objector(s);
    - **18.1.8** representations by supporter(s);
    - **18.1.9** Members' questions to supporter(s);
    - **18.1.10** representations by applicant or agent;
    - **18.1.11** Members' questions to applicant or agent;

    - **18.1.12** representations by Adjoining Ward Councillor(s);
    - **18.1.13** Members' questions to Adjoining Ward Councillor(s);
    - **18.1.14** representations by Ward Councillor(s);
    - **18.1.15** Members' questions to Ward Councillor(s);
    - **18.1.16** Members' questions to Officers.
- **18.2** Questions raised as part of the above process may only seek to clarify a statement made and not to introduce new business.

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19. Meeting Procedure - Debate and Decision

- **19.1** Once all submissions and questions have been dealt with, Committee Members shall then debate the application.
- **19.2** For the avoidance of doubt, subject to the Councillors' Code of Conduct, Ward Councillors on Planning Committees may take part in the debate and/or vote on an application affecting their Ward.
- **19.3** After a reasonable period of debate, a Member of the Committee may propose that the Committee approve, refuse, defer or reference up to District Planning Committee an application before it (a "Proposal"), and:
- **19.4** Where the Proposal is for approval, the Proposing Member may adopt the planning conditions and/or obligations suggested by Officers, or they may vary, remove or add conditions (with reasons) which they consider justified on planning grounds. They may also elect to delegate to Officers to determine appropriate conditions/obligations. Where the Proposal to approve is contrary to Officer recommendation, it is advisable that the Proposing Member states their reasons for this.
- **19.5** Refusal reasons suggested by Officers (where in accordance with Officer recommendation), or they may vary, remove or add reasons which they consider justified on planning grounds. Where the Proposal is contrary to, or at variance with, the Officer recommendation, the Proposing Member must give full clear reasons for their Proposal.
- **19.6** Where the Proposal is for deferring or referencing to District Planning Committee, the Proposing Member must give reasons.
- **19.7** Any Proposal must be formally seconded to proceed.
- **19.8** At any stage of the debate any Committee Member (including the Proposer and Seconder) may:
    - **19.8.1** seek Officers' guidance as to the wording of a Proposal or Condition or a reason for refusal or any other issue affecting the matter being considered;
    - **19.8.2** propose an amendment to a Proposal (eg adding a fresh Condition or a fresh reason for refusal) and, if the Proposer and Seconder agree, the Proposal shall be amended accordingly.
- **19.9** The making of a Proposal shall not necessarily halt debate - the Meeting Chairman shall decide when the debate has concluded and when a vote is to be taken.
- **19.10** Once the Meeting Chairman decides that the debate has concluded they will:
    - **19.10.1** seek a Proposal if none has yet been put; and
    - **19.10.2** put the Proposal to the vote; and

- **19.10.3** if the Proposal is not carried, seek (an) alternative Proposal(s), such that the application before the meeting is determined.
- **19.10.4** notwithstanding Part 3 Meeting Rules para 11.7, a Proposal may be repeated in a Planning Committee following further debate.

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20. The Role of the Chairman

- **20.1** Agenda management is vital to the smooth running of the meetings. The Chairman is key to this. Each Chairman will discuss with the appropriate Democratic, Legal and Planning Officer before the Committee the items on the agenda and will query, where necessary, matters referred up and site visits called.
- **20.2** The rules of debate as set out in **Part 3** Meeting Rules para 16.1, 16.2 shall apply.
- **20.3** If there are equal numbers of votes for and against the Chairman will have a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Chairman exercises their vote.

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21. Implementing Planning Committee Decisions

- **21.1** Where an application has been decided by Planning Committee, Officers will implement the Planning Committee's decision by coordinating the completion of any outstanding tasks (e.g. legal agreements or technical matters delegated to officers) and issuing the decision notice.
- **21.2** The Development Manager has delegated authority to make minor amendments to committee decisions, in consultation with the Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Committee. This authority can be exercised before or after the decision notice is issued.

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22. Appeals and Legal Challenges

- **22.1** In the event that planning permission is refused, either under delegated powers conferred on the Development Manager or by the Planning Committee, an applicant may exercise their right of appeal. Planning decisions may also be subject to Judicial Review or other legal proceedings.
- **22.2** Officers will organise and generally appear as witnesses at planning appeals and other proceedings on behalf of the Council. In some circumstances (such as where specialist evidence is required) it may be necessary to appoint Counsel or Consultants to appear for the Council.
- **22.3** In giving evidence, Officers will present the best possible case on behalf of the Council while complying with the Royal Town Planning Institute ("RTPI") Code of Professional Conduct. This Code requires that Planning

Officers who are members of the Institute do not make statements purporting to be their own, but which are contrary to their bona fide professional opinion.

- **22.4** Members can have an important role to play in appeals and may, within set deadlines, make written representations to the Inspector and may also appear at informal hearings or as a witness at public inquiries. In doing so they should state whether they are acting in their local Ward Member capacity or, representing the Council's case.
- **22.5** From time to time a Planning Committee will disagree with professional advice given by the Officers and may decide to determine an application contrary to that advice. Where there is a subsequent appeal and Planning Officers are unable to defend decisions on appeal (due to requirements of the professional conduct rules of the RTPI) it may be appropriate for Members of the Committee to attend any subsequent appeal hearing, and if necessary, to give evidence in support of the Council's decision. Planning and Legal Officers will support Members attending or wishing to make representation at appeals and advise them on preparing and delivering evidence on behalf of the Council.
- **22.6** Planning decisions are decisions made by the Council. It is therefore not normally appropriate for an elected Member to support an appellant at Appeal. If Members have concerns about delegated applications, the appropriate course of action is to call in the application to Planning Committee for determination.
- **22.7** If an appeal is lodged before determination by a planning committee (a "non-determination appeal"), the Council is no longer the decision maker, but it will have an opportunity to provide its position on the appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. Where Inspectorate timescales permit, reasonable efforts will be made to bring the application to committee to adopt a position on the appeal. Where Inspectorate timescales do not permit, the Development Manager will exercise delegated authority to adopt a position for the appeal, subject to consultation with the relevant Committee Chairman (or Vice Chairman in their absence).
- **22.8** During the appeal process, there may be occasions where an immediate decision is required regarding the Council's position (for example, new evidence on a material consideration). Where Inspectorate timescales permit, reasonable efforts will be made to bring the application to committee to adopt a position on the appeal. Where Inspectorate timescales do not permit, the Development Manager will exercise delegated authority on the specific matter, subject to consultation with the relevant Committee Chairman (or Vice Chairman in their absence).

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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Statutory guidance

Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities in England

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Applies to England

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Introduction

1. This guidance supports local planning authorities in England in implementing the provisions in sections 319ZZC to 319ZZF of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/part/XV/crossheading/england-discharge-of-functions-of-local-planning-authority) (introduced through section 54 of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025) and the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (the Regulations). These sections relate to the national scheme of delegation of planning functions and the size of planning committees.

2. Sections 319ZZC to 319ZZE of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 apply to all local planning authorities except development corporations, Homes and Communities Agency, National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority. They also apply to mineral planning authorities where they exist (excluding those which are National Park Authorities).

3. As required by section 319ZZE(4) and (5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, local planning authorities must have regard to this guidance in operating or making arrangements required under the Regulations.

4. For the avoidance of doubt, where local planning authorities do not comply with the Regulations from the date they come into force (31 October 2026) and their planning committees make decisions on applications which must be delegated officers, those decisions may be subject to judicial review by anyone aggrieved by the decision. This may lead to the quashing of the decision.

National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions

5. The government's aim behind the national scheme of delegation is to ensure that there is greater clarity and consistency about the role of planning committees in planning decision making. Committees should focus on the key proposals that matter to an area, enabling other, often more minor and technical, decisions to be made by planning officers.

6. Section 319ZZC of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 gives the Secretary of State the power to set out which functions of a local planning authority should be delegated to planning officers for a decision and which should instead go to a planning committee or sub-committee.

7. The Secretary of State has exercised this power through the Regulations. These Regulations set out the following general approach to decision making:

- where applications fall under Schedule 1 decisions must be delegated to officers under regulation 4
- where applications fall under Schedule 2, there is a presumption under regulation 5 that decisions are delegated to officers unless the nominated officer and nominated member agree the application should be referred to a planning committee or sub-committee for determination and that it meets at least one of the criteria in regulation 5(3)

8. There is further specific provision under regulation 6 for own-interest applications i.e. an application made (whether or not jointly with any other person) by the authority or an officer or member of the authority or an application where the authority or any of its members or officers has an interest, to support transparency and propriety. These applications can be referred to a planning committee or sub-committee for determination if the nominated officer and nominated member of the planning committee agree. Where a planning function is not listed in either Schedule 1 or 2, it is for the local planning authority to decide whether it should be delegated to an officer or referred to a committee or sub-committee for a decision (as part of its local constitution).

9. Under the national scheme of delegation, current practices set out in local authority constitutions, such as the power for ward councillors to require cases to be called in for committee consideration or having trigger points for referral to committee if a certain number of objections is reached, will not be possible. Local authorities will need to amend their constitutions to align with the national scheme of delegation. Failure to do so may make decisions on whether to delegate applications to officers or refer them to committees for determination liable to judicial review.

Consideration for referral to committee

10. For the purposes of considering referral of applications to committee:

a. the nominated officer should be the Chief Planning Officer or equivalent officer who has extensive professional planning experience. However, local planning authorities will also need to ensure they have other senior planning officers who can provide cover if needed to avoid any unnecessary delays in the referral process (or where there is an own interest application and the Chief Planning Officer or equivalent officer has an interest it).

b. the nominated member should be the chair of the planning committee or, where such a role does not exist, the vice chair or equivalent member. As in the case of nominated officers, the authority will need to ensure there are arrangements in place for other members to cover should the nominated member not be available (or where there is an own interest application and the nominated member has an interest in it).

11. Where local planning authorities have more than one planning committee, they may nominate different officers or members for each committee.

12. It is for individual local planning authorities to put in place their own arrangements for how the consideration of cases for referral to committee will operate in practice.

13. It is not a requirement of the national scheme of delegation that nominated officers and nominated members consider all Schedule 2 applications or all own-interest applications for potential referral to committee. Local planning authorities may, through their constitutions, decide which Schedule 2 or own-interest applications need to be considered for referral. The regulations provide for the option for Schedule 2 applications to be considered for committee against the gateway test but do not require all schedule 2 applications to be considered – they will otherwise be delegated to officer.

14. Where local planning authorities anticipate that there may be a significant number of Schedule 2 or own-interest applications which may need to be considered for referral to committee they may wish to put in place a triage system to ensure that the nominated officer and nominated member of the committee are not overwhelmed and to avoid any unnecessary delays in planning decision making.

15. Nominated officers and nominated members should make every effort to reach agreement on which cases should be referred to committee. However, where agreement is not possible, the case must be determined by officers in accordance with regulation 5(2) or regulation 6(3).

16. Further best practice advice is available from the Planning Advisory Service on the referral of applications to committee.

Schedule 1 functions

17. Schedule 1 of the Regulations sets out all the functions which must be delegated to officers for a decision (unless it is an own-interest application). These include a number of categories of applications for planning permission for:

- householder development (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)
- minor commercial development (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)
- minor residential development which is defined in the Regulations as:
  - development that includes only dwellings and development for the purposes incidental to the enjoyment of dwellings, comprises at least one but not more than nine dwellings, and is to be carried out on a site having an area smaller than 0.5 hectares
  - development of a building containing flats, or development within the curtilage of such a building, for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the flats or any of them but excludes development in respect of a building containing flats, or development within the curtilage of such a building, that involves either or both of a change of use or change to the number of flats
  - an application for any consent, agreement or approval required by or under a planning permission, development order or local development order for development within paragraph (a) or (b)

18. It also contains a range of other planning consents:

- to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached) in respect of which the previous planning permission was a Schedule 1 planning permission (applications under section 73(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- reserved matters approval in respect of an outline planning permission other than a large outline phase permission (i.e. one which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 square metres or more) (applications under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)
- discharge of conditions (applications under Article 27(1) of Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

- prior approval for permitted development rights (applications under Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015)
- permission in principle (as referred to in section 58A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- where local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, modification or discharge of a planning obligation (applications under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- non-material changes to planning permission or permission in principle (applications under section 96A(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development (under section 191(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- certificates of lawfulness of proposed used or development (under section 192(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- certificates of lawfulness for proposed works to listed buildings (under section 26H of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)
- biodiversity gain plan (duty to approve under paragraph 14 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- certificates of appropriate alternative development (applications under section 17 of the Land Compensation Act 1961)

19. However, applications which would otherwise fall under Schedule 1, will fall within Schedule 2 where:

- a local authority considers that the application for planning permission is connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent
- the application is made under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Schedule 2 functions

20. The functions which fall within Schedule 2 of the Regulations are:

- applications for planning permission which are not householder, minor commercial or minor residential applications
- applications for planning permission which would otherwise fall into Schedule 1 but are connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent
- applications to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached in respect of which the previous planning permission was a Schedule 2 planning permission (under section 73(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- applications for development which has already been carried out (under section 73A(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- where it is related to a large outline planning permission, applications for reserved matters approvals (under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)
- where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, application for modification or discharge of a planning obligation (under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)
- applications for listed building consent (under section 10 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)
- applications for the variation or discharge of conditions of listed building consent (under section 19 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)
- applications for advertisement consent (under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007)
- applications for consent under tree preservation orders (under regulation 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012)
- applications to which paragraph 19 above apply

21. The overriding presumption is that the applications listed in Schedule 2 will be delegated to officers. An application can be referred to a committee or sub-committee only where:

a. at least one of the criteria in regulation 5(3) is met **or** it is an own-interest application (regulation 6); **and**

b. the nominated officer and nominated member of the planning committee agree to the referral

Criteria which must be met before a case can be considered for referral under regulation 5

22. In determining whether a referral under regulation 5 is made, the presumption should be that decisions are delegated to officers and only exceptionally be referred to committee. At a minimum, at least one of the following statutory criteria must be met for a referral to committee to be considered to meet that threshold:

A. where the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area

B. where the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations

23. Applications for development which do not raise a significant planning matter can only be referred to the committee under criterion A if they raise a significant economic, social or environmental issue for the local area. It is for the nominated officer and member to assess whether the development proposal raises any such issue, providing an opportunity for local democratic oversight where necessary. What constitutes ‘significant’ will vary depending on the local area but examples could include:

- an application for outline planning permission for a large multi-phase residential development allocated in the local plan
- an application for planning permission for change of use of a community shop in a rural area
- an application for planning permission or listed building consent for changes to a notable listed building in a town centre

24. For the purpose of criterion B, the following circumstances are unlikely to raise a significant planning matter:

- where the application for development broadly complies with a detailed site allocation and other relevant policies set out in a local or neighbourhood plan and national decision making policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Significant planning matters may arise if new material considerations are raised by the application
- where a specific planning matter (e.g. highways or flood risk) was initially raised by a statutory consultee as a concern, but the development proposal has been modified to make it acceptable in the view of the statutory consultee (unless the nominated officer has compelling reasons to consider otherwise)

Own-interest applications

25. Applications which are made (whether or not jointly with any other person) by the authority or an officer or member of the authority or it is an application where, in the view of the nominated officer and nominated member, the authority or any of its members or officers has an interest, are own-interest applications dealt with under regulation 6. We recognise that there may be cases where, in the interests of transparency and public accountability, it may be appropriate for some such applications whether they are in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 to be referred to a planning committee or sub-committee. Where the nominated officer and nominated member agree, they can be referred to the committee without the need for consideration of the criteria set out in regulation 5(3). Where no such referral has been made, they must be determined by an officer.

26. Under regulation 10 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, where a local planning authority is determining its own application for planning permission, it must not be determined by a committee, sub-committee or officer responsible for the management of the building or land to which the application relates. In addition to this restriction, where a planning application is made by a nominated officer or nominated member of the authority or they have an interest in it , in the interests of propriety, they should not be involved in the decision on whether to refer it to committee or not.

Treatment of reserved matters applications

27. We recognise that outline planning permission can be granted for largescale multi-phase development which can take place over many years. As such each related reserved matters application can represent substantial development in its own right and cover more issues of substance, for example, the provision of on site community infrastructure , which may, in exceptional circumstances, merit committee scrutiny. For this reason, we have distinguished between those reserved matters approval applications which relate to large outline planning permissions and those which do not, with the former being placed in Schedule 2 and the latter in Schedule 1.

28. A large outline planning permission for the purpose of these regulations is an outline planning permission which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 square

metres or more. A reserved matters application for such development must meet the criteria set out under regulation 5(3) for a committee to consider it.

29. When considering reserved matters approval applications which fall into Schedule 2 against the criteria in regulation 5(3), nominated officers and nominated members should only have regard to matters which are directly relevant to the reserved matters application before them.

Treatment of section 106 decisions

30. Specific provision has not been made for section 106 agreements themselves in the regulations. This is because, most of the time, appropriate section 106 planning obligations will be considered as part of the application process. In other cases, they can be entered into unilaterally by the landowner so there is no real ‘function’ for the local planning authority. We recognise that there may occasionally be section 106 planning obligations which are agreed outside of the context of a planning application but we consider that, in these cases, the decision on whether it should be delegated to officers or referred to committee should be left to the discretion of the local authority.

31. Where a local planning authority considers a section 106 agreement is connected to an application falling into either Schedule 1 or Schedule 2, and agreement is being sought to amend or discharge the planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990), the function of agreeing to amend or discharge the obligation should fall into the same schedule as the related application. This same approach applies to applications to modify or discharge an obligation under section 106A(3).

Treatment of special control applications

32. Applications for listed building consent, advertisement consent and consent under tree preservation orders are included in Schedule 2. In most cases, these types of application will not raise issues which would merit committee scrutiny. The presumption, therefore, is that decisions should be delegated to officers and only exceptionally referred to committee.

33. Whether such an application meets the criteria in regulation 5(3) will depend on the particular circumstances but an example could include where there are proposals for a change of use and works to a prominent listed building which makes an important contribution to a town centre.

Transparency and reporting

34. As a minimum, the local planning authority should keep a record of the cases the nominated officer and nominated member have considered for referral to committee, the outcome of their consideration and the reasons for their decision. They should report this to the planning committee on a regular basis and make it available on their website.

Size of committees

35. Regulation 7 provides for the number of members on a planning committee or sub-committee to be no more than 13. This is a maximum figure to accommodate local planning authorities where members are from multiple political parties. Local planning authorities should consider whether a smaller number of members would be more appropriate in their area to support effective decision making.

OGL

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Member Briefing: Planning Committee Reforms

August 2026

v2

What is PAS?

*PAS exists to support local planning authorities to provide **efficient and effective** planning services, **drive improvement** and **respond to and deliver changes** in the planning system.*

Planning Committee Reforms: Why are they changing

Government aims for the reforms

- address **variation and inconsistencies** across the country
- tackle **inefficiencies and delays**
- ensure **good quality decision making** and
- empower planning professionals and members to **make sound decisions**

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025

- **power to delegate decisions** (i.e. national scheme of delegation),
- **power to control the size & composition of committees** and
- **power to mandate training for members**

Planning Committee Reforms: When & what is changing

Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026

- Draft **regulations laid 1 June 2026**
- **Regulations** come **into force 31 October 2026**
- **Statutory review** by **31 October 2028**

Statutory changes introduce:

- A **national scheme of delegation**
  - Schedule 1 applications are to be decided by officers, and
  - Schedule 2 applications can go if they meet a criteria at a "gateway test"
- A **new 'gateway test'** applied by the nominated officer and member for Schedule 2 applications
- Having no more than **13 members of a planning committee**

What does this mean?(1)

As of 31st October 2026:

- Local authorities can only have **13 members on a planning committee**
- The **national scheme of delegation creates two types of applications**
    - Schedule 1 applications (minor applications) – which **must be decided by officers**, and
    - Schedule 2 applications (everything else) - can go to committee if they meet a criteria set out in the regulations (Reg 5(2)); an application raises either: a) one or more issues of **economic, social or environmental significance to the local area**, or
        b) one or more **significant planning matters**.
- This decision is called a **"gateway test"** and is made by of a nominated officer and member agree for the application to proceed to committee

What does this mean? (2)

- It is not expected that **all Schedule 2 applications will go to the "gateway test"** or that all applications will pass the "gateway test" to go to committee.
- It is for **each authority to decide** which:
  - **Schedule 2 application types can go to "gateway test",** and
  - which applications **trigger the "significance" test to go to committee**
- Local Authorities can set their own designation with Schedule 2 applications, in their constitutions, as to how this will work in practice – this is described as "triaging" of schedule 2 applications

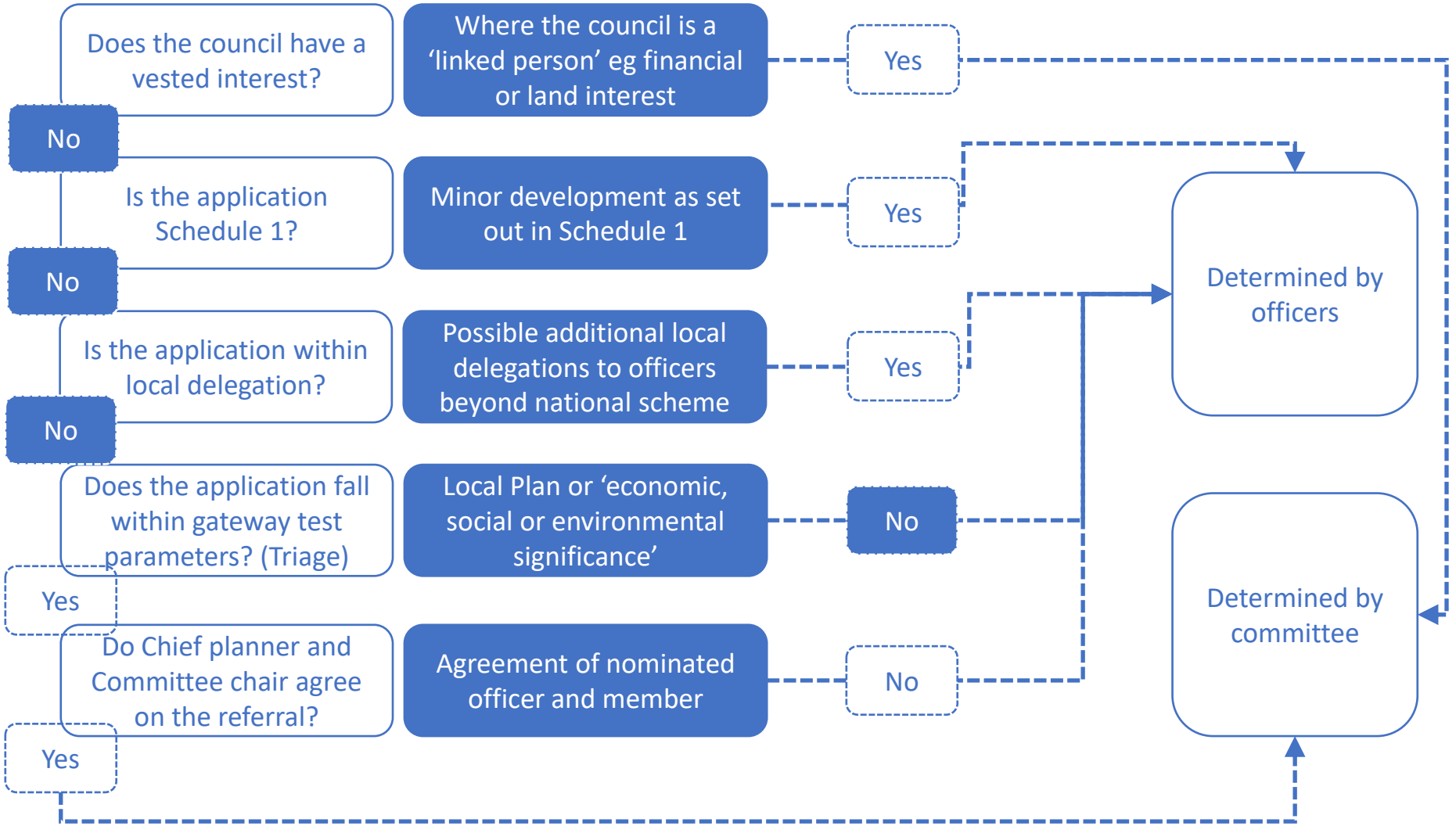
- Councils should be keeping a record (and publishing it) of the cases taken through this test, and the outcome and the reasons.

Schedule 1 & Schedule 2 applications

Schedule 1: decisions must be made by officers	Schedule 2: decisions presumed to be made by officers but could go to committee
'minor commercial' relates to use: classes A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5 changes of use are **not** included under minor commercial	Anything not under Schedule 1
'minor residential' applications includes only dwellings and development for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of dwellings	Reserved matters – only Schedule 2 if meets 'large outline' definition
S73 applications to vary or remove conditions are now in the same schedule as the "original" application	

Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 applications that the council considers to have a vested interest in ie financial or land interest or a "linked person" ie council employee or close relative or associate, may also be called to the "gateway test" and committee.

What this looks like



The Gateway Test

At least one of the criteria (a) and (b) must be met for a Schedule 2 application to be referred to committee:

a) ***one or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area****, or*

b) ***one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations***

It is for the local authority to decide in their area what constitutes "significant" in criteria a) & b) but the guidance does some highlight examples that could be considered

Statutory guidance examples criteria a) significant economic, social or environmental issues :

Would **likely** be:

- Outline planning permission for a large multi-phase residential development
- Change of use from a community shop in rural area
- Planning permission or listed building consent for changes to a notable listed building in a town centre

Statutory guidance examples criteria b) significant planning matter:

What they are **unlikely** to be:

- Application in broad compliance with allocation and local policy and NPPF
- Where planning matter eg highways or flood risk was raised by statutory consultee but the application has been suitably amended to address it.

How this impacts your role as a councillor

Key points to note as a councillor are:

- **Understand** that **all 'minor development'** (Schedule 1 applications) will now **always be decided by officers**
- **Understand your council's local arrangements** for Schedule 2 and the '**gateway test**', so that you can **advise your communities** and **make representations** on whether decision should be **referred to Planning Committee**
- **Continue** to provide **views and representations** as part of **planning policy** and **Local Plan development**

Additionally, for Planning Committee members:

- Note Committee decision will **only be required for referred applications**
- Anticipate **potential change in workload** for Planning Committee

These changes do not alter the planning balance that planning decisions are made with

For councils to consider

In implementing these changes councils will want to consider:

- the impact of the regulations on your present committee:
  - **will the limit of 13 committee members** affect the committee and amend accordingly?
  - **does the council need to alter how it presently "triages" applications to committee;** no Schedule 1 applications, only the "significant" applications from Sch 2, is it seeing 7 or less applications per session?
- **How robust do 'gateway test' arrangements for the committee to be seeing what is "significant" for your authority need to be?**
- **Managing transition before the 31st Oct**
- **Informing members, community engagement and applicants of the changes**
- **How to make the new decision-making process clear and transparent**
- **Workload planning at "gateway" and committee process**

What councils need to do

Before 31 October 2026, all councils will need to:

- **Review the council's present approach to applications** going to committee and the impact of the regulations will have
- **Ensure awareness of regulations and guidance** with members, key officers and other interested parties
- **Establish a system and schedule** to apply to the **'gateway test'** locally
- **Amend the council constitution** so it complies with the national scheme of delegation and limits which Schedule 2 applications reach the "gateway test" if appropriate

Further PAS Resources



PAS website here for FAQs, recordings and presentations



PAS best practice guidance:

1. How to amend your constitution;
2. The gateway test; and
3. Material to train your members



PAS residential courses for Planning Committee Chairs @ Warwick University 10-11 October 2026 and 19-20 January 2027

Further information

Further information is available at: https://www.local.gov.uk/pas

To understand how these changes are being implemented locally, you should contact your council's planning team.

References

The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (June 2026)

Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities in England - GOV.UK (June 2026)

Reform of planning committees: technical consultation - GOV.UK (May 2025)

PAS 2026 Events | Local Government Association (April-May 2026)

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Appendix E

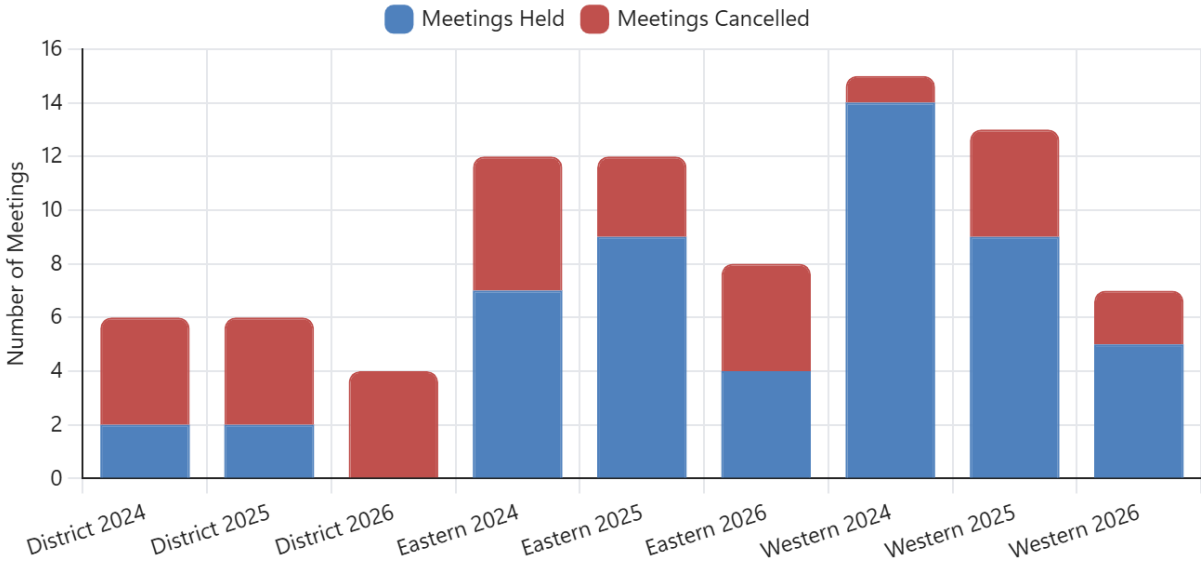
Existing Planning Committee Arrangements

1. The Council currently has three planning committees, with the following responsibilities.

Committee	Terms of Reference (summarised)
Eastern Area Planning Committee (EAPC)	Consider planning applications and other Development Management casework where the Scheme of Delegation requires a committee decision for application sites within the following Wards: • Aldermaston; • Basildon; • Bradfield; • Bucklebury; • Burghfield and Mortimer; • Pangbourne; • Thatcham Central; • Thatcham Colthrop and Crookham; • Thatcham North East; • Thatcham West; • Theale; • Tilehurst Birch Copse; • Tilehurst South and Holybrook; • Tilehurst and Purley.
Western Area Planning Committee (WAPC)	Consider planning applications and other Development Management casework where the Scheme of Delegation requires a committee decision for application sites within the following Wards: • Chieveley and Cold Ash; • Downlands; • Hungerford and Kintbury; • Lambourn; • Newbury Central; • Newbury Clay Hill; • Newbury Greenham; • Newbury Speen; • Newbury Wash Common; • Ridgeway.
District Planning Committee (DPC)	Consider planning applications and other Development Management casework where: • The Chairman of an Area Planning Committee determines it is appropriate for the decision to be made by DPC rather than the Area Planning Committee. • An Area Planning Committee has referred the application to the District Planning Committee for determination. • An Area Planning Committee has considered the application but the Service Director or Service Lead with responsibility for Planning, or the Development Manager, has determined that the decision: ○ has a possible conflict with a policy that would undermine the Development Plan; or ○ is of a district wide public interest; or ○ there is a possibility for claims for significant costs against the Council. Where a decision of an Area Planning Committee has been referred to DPC, that decision shall not take effect until the DPC has considered it.

2. The table below sets out the business considered by each of the committees over the past three years.

Committee	Year	Meetings Held	Meetings Cancelled	Total Items Considered	Average Items per Held Meeting
District	2024	2	4	2	1.00
	2025	2	4	2	1.00
	2026	0	4	0	N/A
Eastern	2024	7	5	14	2.00
	2025	9	3	15	1.67
	2026	4	4	7	1.75
Western	2024	14	1	40	2.86
	2025	9	4	19	2.11
	2026	5	2	12	2.40



3. The above data shows:
    a. WAPC had the highest number of meetings held across the last three years, particularly in 2024 (14 meetings held, 1 cancelled).
    b. EAPC maintained a relatively consistent programme, although cancellations increased in some years.
    c. DPC has a very high cancellation rate relative to meetings held, with no held meetings recorded in 2026 to date.

4. Of the applications considered at planning committee meetings between 2024 and 2026, some 30 applications would be Schedule 1 applications and therefore delegated decisions under the National Scheme of Delegation.

5. Between 2019 and 2026, 85% (142 of 168) of WAPC applications, and 77% (83 of 108) of EAPC applications have been decided by committee in accordance with officer recommendation.

6. By way of comparison with other councils, a Planning Advisory Service (PAS) national survey of planning committees, undertaken across more than 120 English councils in 2024/25. PAS reported that:

a. around 75% of responding councils have a single planning committee, meet monthly, have 4 or fewer items per meeting, and meetings typically last less than 3 hours.
b. 79% of councils have just a single committee and when they have more than one then this is very often a Strategic Developments Committee (51%).
c. Over half (around 53%) of Planning Committees have 9-12 members. Outliers included one council with 23 members and another with only 5 members.
d. Most councils (85%) have monthly meetings, most of these meetings are between 1 and 3 hours in duration and usually have been 2 and 4 items in total.

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THIS IS A DRAFT VERSION AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE DOCUMENT THAT WILL BE ISSUED UPON AMENDMENT TO THE SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Appointment of Nominated Members and Officers for Planning Committee

Version:	1
Date:	16th October 2026

1. Purpose

1.1 This document is produced under paragraph 8.1.2 of the Scheme of Delegation (Part 11 of the Council's Constitution) for the purposes of Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. It sets out:

a) the member of the authority who acts as the Nominated Member;

b) one or more members of the authority who act as a substitute for the Nominated Member;

c) the officer of the authority who acts as the Nominated Officer; and

d) one or more officers of the authority who act as a substitute for the Nominated Officer.

1.2 This version supersedes any previous versions numbers from an earlier date.

2. Nominated Member

2.1 The Nominated Member for Planning Committee is the elected Chairman of Planning Committee, unless the Planning Committee resolves to nominate another member by majority vote.

2.2 Until a Chairman is elected at the first meeting of the Planning Committee, the Nominated Member is:

a) The Chairman of Eastern Area Planning Committee for any applications in the eastern parishes;

b) The Chairman of the Western Area Planning Committee for any applications in the western parishes.

3. Substitute Nominated Member(s)

3.1 The following councillors are substitutes for the Nominated Member of Planning Committee, unless the Planning Committee resolves to nominate additional member(s) by majority vote:

a) The Elected Vice Chairman of Planning Committee

b) The Executive Member with responsibility for Planning

3.2 Until a Vice Chairman is elected at the first meeting of the Planning Committee, the following councillors are also substitutes for the Nominated Member:

a) The Vice Chairman of Eastern Area Planning Committee for any applications in the eastern parishes;

b) The Vice Chairman for the Western Area Planning Committee for any applications in the western parishes.

4. Nominated Officer

4.1 The Nominated Officer for Planning Committee is Debra Inston, Interim Development Manager

5. Substitute Nominated Officer(s)

5.1 The following officers are substitutes for the Nominated Officer of Planning Committee:

a) Bob Dray, Interim Service Lead - Planning

b) Laura Callan, Interim Service Director – Development and Housing

6. Signed



Bob Dray

Interim Service Lead – Planning (Chief Planning Officer)

DRAFT

Agenda Item 11.

Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027

Committee considering report:	Council
Date of Committee:	15 October 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Heather Codling
Report Author:	Dave Wraight
Forward Plan Ref:	CCIL

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide Council with oversight of the annual Youth Justice Plan for 2026/2027 which is submitted to the Youth Justice Board. The Youth Justice Support Team is a statutory service with contributions from partners including Police, Probation and Health, as such the plan has been formed in conjunction with those partners and been through a consultation process with the Youth Justice Management Board.

2 Recommendation

2.1 Council is requested to agree and formally endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The Youth Justice Support Team has funding from a number of sources including the Local Authority (£477,872), Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (£81,443), Probation (£44,040), Youth Justice Board (£194,346) and payments in kind through seconded staff from Police (£63,146) and Health (£75,739).
Human Resource:	The Youth Justice Support Team contains employees of the Local Authority alongside seconded staff from other agencies all co-located forming a multi-agency team to provide youth justice services as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, a staffing chart is found in the appendices of the Youth Justice Plan.
Legal:	Section 40 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provides a duty on the local authority after consultation with relevant person and

	bodies to formulate and implement a plan setting out how youth justice services are to be provided and funding and how the youth offending teams are to be composed and funded, how they operate and what functions they are to carry out. In addition, there is statutory guidance Youth Justice Plans: guidance for Youth Justice services dated March 2026. This sets out the minimum information required in our plan.
Risk Management:	The Youth Justice Support Team have responsibilities to supervise and manage children who pose a risk of causing serious harm and risk of reoffending in the community. The team work in partnership with Thames Valley Police and other partners to manage and mitigate those risks utilising risk management frameworks including Risk Management Forum and MAPPA.
Property:	The Youth Justice Support Team is based at Merchant House.
Policy:	The Youth Justice Plan outline is determined by the Youth Justice Board in their guidance to provide national consistency.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	X			The Youth Justice Plan explores disproportionality in the youth justice system and proposes measures that seek to monitor and address those areas of over representation.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			The Youth Justice Plan explores disproportionality in the youth justice system and proposes measures that seek to monitor and address those areas of over representation.
Environmental Impact:		X		No specific environmental impact
Health Impact:	X			The seconded health staff provide a service to children who often do not access health care, therefore this approach enhances their access to health services and improved health outcomes
ICT Impact:		X		No specific ICT impact
Digital Services Impact:		X		No specific Digital Services Impact
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			The Youth Justice plan supports two of the Councils strategic priorities: A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all and Thriving communities with a strong local voice.

Core Business:	X			The Youth Justice Plan interfaces with a number of council focuses as contained in the Prevention Approach, Building Communities Together plan, Health and Wellbeing Plan and Serious Violence Plan
Data Impact:		X		No specific data impact

Consultation and Engagement:	The Youth Justice Plan has been created in consultation with children, young people and parents who use Youth Justice services. Staff and volunteers at the YJST have contributed to the plan. The Youth Justice Management Board have been involved I shaping the priorities – the partnership includes the statutory partners Police, Health, Probation and others including the voluntary sector.

4 Executive Summary

4.1 Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services. Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, in consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how youth justice services in the area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out. The plan should address how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.

4.2 The Youth Justice Plan is attached as Appendix B. The plan has been produced in consultation with a wide number of stakeholders and with the partnership oversight groups Youth Justice Management Board. It has been formulated using the Youth Justice Board guidance 2026/2027 to ensure compliance.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The Annual Youth Justice Plan serves as a roadmap, guiding the efforts of the partnership to support children, young people and their parents to maximise their life chances away from the criminal justice system. The Youth Justice partnership have a strong track record of working collaboratively to address issues in the community and create opportunities for children and young people to thrive.

Background

5.2 West Berkshire's Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) has reported another year of strong performance, innovation and partnership working, delivering positive outcomes for children, families, victims and communities while maintaining some of the lowest

levels of youth offending and custody in the region. The latest annual Youth Justice Plan highlights a service that continues to place children and families at the heart of its work, successfully preventing many young people from entering the formal justice system and supporting those who do to build safer, more positive futures.

5.3 The achievements outlined in this year's plan are a reflection of the dedication, skill and commitment of the staff, volunteers and partners across education, health, police, probation, social care and the voluntary sector. West Berkshire YJST continues to demonstrate that early intervention, strong relationships and a Child First approach can deliver real and lasting change for children, families and communities.

5.4 West Berkshire continues to maintain exceptionally low levels of children entering the formal youth justice system. The First Time Entrant rate remains significantly below both national and regional averages, demonstrating the success of prevention and diversionary initiatives designed to intervene early and avoid unnecessary criminalisation of children. The service has also maintained excellent outcomes in relation to custody, with no custodial sentences imposed during the reporting period. This achievement reflects the partnership's commitment to delivering effective community-based interventions and supporting children to remain connected to their families, education and communities wherever possible. Importantly, local reoffending rates remain below national figures, with fewer children going on to commit further offences and those who do generally committing fewer offences than seen nationally.

5.5 A key success of the past year has been the expansion of prevention and diversion programmes that intervene before offending behaviour becomes entrenched. The Ministry of Justice funded Turnaround programme has supported children at an earlier stage of need, with 62 children fully engaging in interventions. Of those supported, only four subsequently committed a further offence within twelve months of programme completion, demonstrating the effectiveness of early help and preventative support. Similarly, Operation Deter Youth enabled rapid engagement with 68 children following arrest, providing immediate support and helping divert children away from further involvement in the justice system. The innovative Youth Diversionary Programme also successfully diverted 24 children away from becoming first-time entrants to the youth justice system through structured intervention and deferred prosecution arrangements.

5.6 The YJST has continued to focus on helping children develop confidence, skills and aspirations beyond offending behaviour. During the year:

- 21 AQA awards were achieved by children participating in YJST activities.
- Several young people secured college placements and apprenticeships.
- Children participated in art exhibitions and nationally recognised creative programmes.
- Ten children submitted work to the Koestler Awards, with one receiving special recognition and having their work displayed in London and Oxford.
- Children benefited from first aid training, life skills development, cooking sessions and positive activities designed to strengthen resilience and social skills.

5.7 These achievements demonstrate the service's commitment to building strengths, developing positive identities and creating opportunities for children to succeed.

5.8 The report identifies partnership working as one of West Berkshire's greatest strengths. Close collaboration between children's social care, education, health services, Thames Valley Police, probation, schools, safeguarding partnerships and voluntary sector organisations has enabled more coordinated support for children and families. The Youth Justice Management Board has also strengthened its governance arrangements, increasing scrutiny, challenge and strategic leadership while ensuring youth justice remains connected to wider safeguarding and community safety priorities.

5.9 Feedback from children and parents remains overwhelmingly positive. Children consistently report feeling listened to, respected and supported, while parents highlight improvements in family relationships, communication and behaviour. The service received 67 formal feedback questionnaires during the year, helping to shape ongoing service improvements and ensuring that children's voices remain central to decision-making.

5.10 While celebrating significant success, the Youth Justice Partnership recognises that some challenges remain. The Youth Justice Management Board has identified several priority areas for development during 2026/27:

5.11 Education and Inclusion - Too many children involved in youth justice continue to experience disrupted education, poor attendance, exclusion and barriers linked to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The partnership will strengthen school-based interventions, improve access to education, training and employment, and develop earlier identification and support pathways for children with SEND.

5.12 Prevention and Early Intervention - Building on successful programmes such as Turnaround, Focused Diversion and Operation Deter Youth, the service will further strengthen early intervention pathways and continue reducing the number of children entering the formal justice system.

5.13 Knife Possession and Serious Violence - Although overall serious youth violence remains low, the service has seen an increase in knife possession offences. In response, West Berkshire is implementing a robust multi-agency strategy focused on swift intervention, safeguarding, education and evidence-based support, fully aligned with new national guidance.

5.14 Victims and Restorative Justice - The partnership aims to increase victim engagement, strengthen restorative approaches and ensure all victims receive timely, high-quality support and information about their rights.

5.15 The Youth Justice Support Team enters 2026/27 from a position of strength, supported by committed staff, dedicated volunteers and strong multi-agency partnerships. By maintaining a clear focus on prevention, education, safeguarding and inclusion, the service remains determined to improve outcomes for children while keeping communities safe.

Proposals

5.16 The Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027 has been discussed and endorsed by the Youth Justice Management Board. It is proposed that members agree the Youth Justice Plan.

6 Other options considered

6.1 The youth justice plan could be rejected and rewritten, however, this course of action is not recommended given the wide consultation and engagement that has already taken place in the development and creation of the attached plan.

7 Conclusion

7.1 It is recommended that Council agree and formally endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

8.2 Appendix B —– Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027

Subject to Call-In:.

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☒

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position: ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

Officer details:

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Appendix A

West Berkshire Council
Equity Impact Assessment

TEMPLATE

March 2023

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Section 4: Review.....16

Equity Impact Assessment

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	People Directorate, Childrens Services, Youth Justice Support Team
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Members are requested to agree and formally endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2026/2027.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	It is a new plan, replacing the Youth Justice Plan for 2025/2026
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	Each Local Authority area partnership has a duty to produce an annual youth Justice plan that will identify how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending. The Youth Justice plan does not seek to bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage groups or individuals. The plan recognises where there is over representation of certain groups in the youth justice system and seeks to address that disproportionality and over representation.
Completed By	Dave Wraight
Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	06/07/2026

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.	Local authority partnerships have a statutory duty to submit a youth justice plan relating to their provision of youth justice services (YJSs). Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sets out the youth justice partnership's responsibilities in producing a plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, in consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out how YJSs in their area are to be provided and funded, how they will operate, and what functions will be carried out. The plan should address the functions assigned to a YJS, including how services will prevent offending behaviour and reduce reoffending.
Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.	It is proposed members agree and endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2026/27 alongside the existing agreement of the Youth Justice Management Board. The Youth Justice Plan sets out in detail the specific actions that will be taken during the course of the year.
Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our	The Youth Justice Support Team sought the views of children, volunteers, staff, Youth Justice Management Board and partner agencies in the production of the YJ plan. Each child receiving an intervention and every volunteer were asked their views using a 'what should the team be doing in 2026/27' questionnaire. They rated their top 5 areas and there was a box to add additional suggestions. The comments, feedback and priorities have been incorporated into the plan to give it shape and direction. There is a large amount of data used to shape the plan including demographic information, cohort profile information and data relating to offending all of which have been used to form the basis of the plan.

ability to deliver our climate commitments.	
Alternatives considered / rejected Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.	The plan has been through a number of iterations and been refined following feedback from the different partners and stakeholders. The option of not doing a plan would place the Local Authority Partnership in breach of its duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and therefore has not been considered.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	☐	☒	☐	The plan seeks to appropriately divert children aged 10-17 years old away from the criminal justice system.		Service Lead, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Board
Disability	☒	☐	☐				
Gender Reassignment	☒	☐	☐				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	☒	☐	☐				
Pregnancy & Maternity	☒	☐	☐				
Race	☐	☒	☐	The plan outlines the work to monitor and address racial disproportionality in the justice system		Service Lead, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Board

Sex	☐	☒	☐	The plan recognises proportionately more female children in the YJ system locally than nationally and seeks to tailor responses accordingly		Service Lead, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Board
Sexual Orientation	☒	☐	☐				
Religion or Belief	☒	☐	☐				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	**No Impact**	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Description of impact**	**Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts**	**Action owner** (*Job Title, Organisation)	**Timescale and monitoring arrangements**
Rural communities	☒	☐	☐				
Areas of deprivation	☐	☒	☐	It is recognised that proportionately more children in the justice system come from areas of deprivation therefore the plan		Service Lead, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				seeks to address issues of poverty, education and employment			Management Board
Displaced communities	☐	☒	☐	There are more children from the GRT community than others therefore specific work is undertaken to address this overrepresentation		Service Lead, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Board
Care experienced people	☐	☒	☐	Children in care are over represented In the Justice system, protocols and practices are in place to divert them and reduce the impact. Children in care go on to become Care Leavers.		Service Lead, YJST	Quarterly Performance Monitoring at YJ Management Board
The Armed Forces Community	☒	☐	☐				

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	
Person Responsible for Review	
Authorised By	

EDI employee related EQiA's should now be sent to Human Resources hrenquiries@westberks.gov.uk

WEST BERKSHIRE YJST Youth Justice Support Team

Youth Justice Plan 2026-2027

Youth Justice Plan

Service	West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team
Service Lead	Dave Wraight
Chair of YJS Board	AnnMarie Dodds

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Introduction

The West Berkshire Youth Justice Plan sets out how partners across the district will work collectively to prevent children from entering the justice system, reduce reoffending, and support children and families to achieve positive, sustainable outcomes. It provides a transparent account of our local context, our performance, and our shared priorities for the year ahead, in line with national Youth Justice Board (YJB) guidance and statutory responsibilities.

West Berkshire continues to experience comparatively low volumes of children entering the youth justice system, reflecting the strength of our early identification, diversionary, and relationship-based approaches. However, the data also highlights persistent inequalities in outcomes for certain groups of children and a high level of complexity among those who do come to the attention of the Youth Justice Support Team (YJST). Many have experienced trauma, adversity, unmet health and learning needs, and exclusion from education. This plan therefore focuses not only on numbers, but on impact, equity and quality of practice.

Our work is firmly rooted in the Child First principle promoted by the YJB, which recognises children in the justice system as children first and foremost. In West Berkshire, this means responding to children's behaviour through a trauma-informed, strengths-based lens; building on their capability; and working in partnership with families and communities to address the underlying causes of harm. We are committed to ensuring children are treated with fairness, dignity and respect, and that statutory intervention is a proportionate, last resort.

Delivering effective youth justice outcomes relies on strong, accountable partnership working. The West Berkshire Youth Justice Partnership brings together children's social care, education, health, police, probation and voluntary sector partners, all of whom play a vital role in reducing risk, promoting safety and supporting desistance. This plan reinforces our commitment to shared ownership of outcomes, continuous learning, and effective governance through scrutiny and challenge.

Over the past year, the partnership has continued to prioritise prevention and diversion, improvements in assessment and intervention quality, and reducing disproportionality. We have also focused on strengthening the child and family voice, improving access to education and mental health support. These priorities reflect both local need and national expectations, including preparation for inspection.

Above all, this plan reaffirms our ambition for every child in West Berkshire to feel safe, supported and hopeful about their future. It sets out our progress to date, identifies areas for further development, and outlines deliberate, evidence-informed actions for the year ahead. Through this shared commitment, we will continue to build a youth justice system that responds effectively to harm, tackles inequality, and supports children to build lives free from offending.

Vision and strategy

The West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) is committed to delivering an ambitious, child-centred youth justice system that promotes safety, fairness and positive life chances for all children. Our strategic approach is grounded in prevention, equity and strong partnership working, with a clear focus on reducing harm, addressing inequality and supporting children to thrive within their families and communities.

Our vision is delivered through the following strategic commitments:

- Prevention and early identification
  We work proactively across the wider Council, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Safeguarding Children Partnership to identify and respond to risk factors associated with poor outcomes, including offending, at the earliest possible stage. By ensuring timely access to high-quality, evidence-informed support, we aim to prevent unnecessary justice system involvement and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

- 'Child First' Approach
  We are committed to placing children at the heart of decisions, recognising them as individuals with unique strengths, needs, and potential, and ensuring their voices are central to shaping the support they receive. Through a consistent focus on relationships, participation, and positive development, we will work collaboratively to promote wellbeing, reduce harm, and enable every child to thrive and achieve their full potential. Our practice is relationship-based, trauma-informed and strengths-focused, supporting children to build resilience, develop confidence and shape positive futures as valued members of society.

- Equity and fairness
  We are committed to addressing and reducing disproportionality at every stage of the youth justice process. We strive to ensure that all children are treated fairly, consistently and with dignity, regardless of their background, identity or lived experience, and that services are responsive to individual need.

- Diversion and minimal intervention
  We champion early intervention, prevention and diversion, promoting a childhood free from unnecessary statutory involvement. Wherever safe and appropriate, we seek to reduce the criminogenic impact of formal justice processes and support children to engage in positive, pro-social opportunities within their communities.

- Family-focused support
  We recognise the vital role that parents and carers play in supporting positive change. Working alongside partner agencies, we aim to strengthen multi-agency support for families, ensuring they are equipped with the tools, guidance and confidence needed to build strong relationships and positively influence their children's behaviour.

- Participation and lived experience
  Children's voices and lived experiences are integral to the design, delivery and evaluation of our services. We are committed to meaningful participation, ensuring children and their carers are actively involved in decisions that affect them and that services promote inclusion, engagement and a sense of belonging.

- Restorative and community-wide responsibility
  We work closely with the Community Safety Partnership, local Courts, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Local Criminal Justice Board to uphold victims' rights, protect communities and build public confidence in a youth justice system that is fair, restorative and proportionate.

- Strengths, desistance and long-term outcomes
  We focus on identifying and nurturing children's strengths, interests and aspirations, supporting the development of a positive, pro-social identity. Our ultimate aim is to support long-term desistance, reduce victimisation and contribute to safer, stronger communities across West Berkshire.

Governance, leadership, and partnership arrangements

The West Berkshire Youth Justice Management Board provides strategic leadership, governance and accountability for the delivery of youth justice services across the district. It brings together senior representatives from key statutory partners, including children's services, police, health, education, probation and the voluntary sector, ensuring shared ownership of outcomes for children, victims and communities. The Youth Justice

Management Board has strong links with the Community Safety Partnership, giving a formal update to the partnership at each of their meetings on matters relating to children in the justice system and pertinent matters relating to children and community safety. The Board sets the strategic direction of the Youth Justice Support Team (YJST), approves the annual Youth Justice Plan, and ensures local practice is aligned with national policy, statutory guidance and the Youth Justice Board's Child First principles.

Through effective scrutiny and performance oversight, the Management Board monitors outcomes, risks and emerging trends, holding partners to account for the quality and impact of their contributions. It provides challenge and support to drive continuous improvement, address disproportionality, and ensure resources are deployed effectively to meet identified need. The Board also plays a critical role in managing safeguarding responsibilities, responding to inspection findings, and strengthening partnership arrangements. By fostering strong collaboration and shared responsibility, the Youth Justice Management Board ensures that West Berkshire's youth justice system remains proportionate, trauma-informed and focused on achieving positive, sustainable change for children and families.

The Youth Justice Management Board meets quarterly, chaired by the Director of Children's Services with core agenda items that address performance, finances, staffing, action plans, safeguarding and public protection. During the last year the YJ Management Board received the following additional reports and presentations by team members:

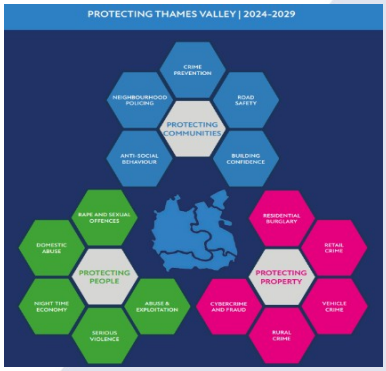
- Youth Survey – implications on crime and safety
- Violence Prevention Partnership Update
- Turnaround Activity Sessions
- Fight for Fitness Report
- Victim learning from inspections
- Victim Information to YJST (YOT1's)
- Focused Diversion Update
- Youth Justice Action Plan 2025/26
- YJST to Probation Transition
- YJ Feedback Report
- Half Term Activity Report
- Prevention letters report
- Effectiveness of Diversion Report
- Probation Secondments
- APIS Audit Report
- Analysis of Drug Diversion Scheme
- HMIP Narrative
- Victim Audit Findings

Each of these reports and consequent recommendations are considered by the YJST Management Board, with the YJST Manager held to account for the delivery of the actions. This is also an opportunity for team members to receive direct feedback from the Management Board and strengthen the relationship between both.

Line management of the YJST sits with the Service Director of Children's Social Care, the YJST Service Lead is a member of the Leadership Team within Children's Service, also being responsible for managing Family Hubs and Early Help partnership services and co-chairing EMRAC (Exploitation, Missing Risk Assessment Conference). The YJST Service Lead is a member of the Community Safety Partnership and with line management in Children's Service enables the YJST to be strategically positioned in the most appropriate place.



The priorities set out in the **West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023–2027** provide a strong foundation for the Youth Justice Plan. In particular, the commitments to creating a fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all and to sustaining thriving communities with a strong local voice directly align with the aims of the Youth Justice Support Team (YJST). These priorities emphasise early support for vulnerable children and families, reducing escalation into statutory services, improving access to mental health support, preventing homelessness, and achieving positive educational outcomes. The Youth Justice Plan is fully embedded within this strategic framework, contributing to community wellbeing, social inclusion and long-term resilience for children, families and neighbourhoods.



Prevention of offending and reoffending remains central to the YJST partnership approach and is closely aligned with wider Thames Valley and criminal justice system priorities. The Youth Justice Plan links directly to the Police and Crime Plan 2024–2029, which focuses on protecting communities, preventing harm and addressing serious violence, with a clear emphasis on early intervention, particularly in education settings. The work of the YJST also supports the objectives of the Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), including improving services for victims and witnesses, increasing public confidence in the criminal justice system, and reducing reoffending. Many of these objectives are delivered through partnership actions that have a direct impact on children and young people.

Governance and accountability are delivered through well-established links with local and regional partnership structures, ensuring that youth justice priorities are fully integrated within wider community safety and criminal justice arrangements. At a local level, the Youth Justice Management Board maintains a formal reporting relationship with the Community Safety Partnership, contributing to the development and delivery of shared strategies. Performance against agreed actions is subject to regular monitoring, with exception reporting used to identify risk, support oversight and drive continuous improvement. Operationally, the YJST maintains strong engagement with Thames Valley Police partnership forums—including Tasking, Tactical Coordination Group (TTCG), Knife Crime and Serious Violence groups, and Mini-MAPS—enabling a coordinated, timely response to safeguarding risks, local crime issues and emerging patterns in anti-social behaviour.

This integrated approach extends across the regional criminal justice landscape. The YJST Service Lead represents West Berkshire at the Berkshire Local Criminal Justice Group, the Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), while Youth Justice Service managers collectively contribute to LCJB sub-groups to ensure consistency and collaboration across the area. West Berkshire provides strategic leadership within this structure, including chairing the LCJB Children's Board alongside wider representation across MAPPA Strategic Groups, Disproportionality Boards and Out of Court Disposal Scrutiny Panels. Strong links with the judiciary are maintained through the Youth Court User Group and direct magistracy representation on the Youth Justice Management Board, supporting open dialogue and shared understanding across the system.

In addition, YJST managers are active contributors to a wide range of key multi-agency forums, including EMRAC, Life Chances meetings for children in care, the Children and Young People Voluntary Sector network and the Young Persons Housing Panel, as well as the Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group and Child Exploitation Strategic Group. Through this comprehensive partnership engagement, the YJST ensures that the needs of children who offend remain visible and influential within both criminal justice and children's services planning, enabling the partnership to shape and respond effectively to local priorities.

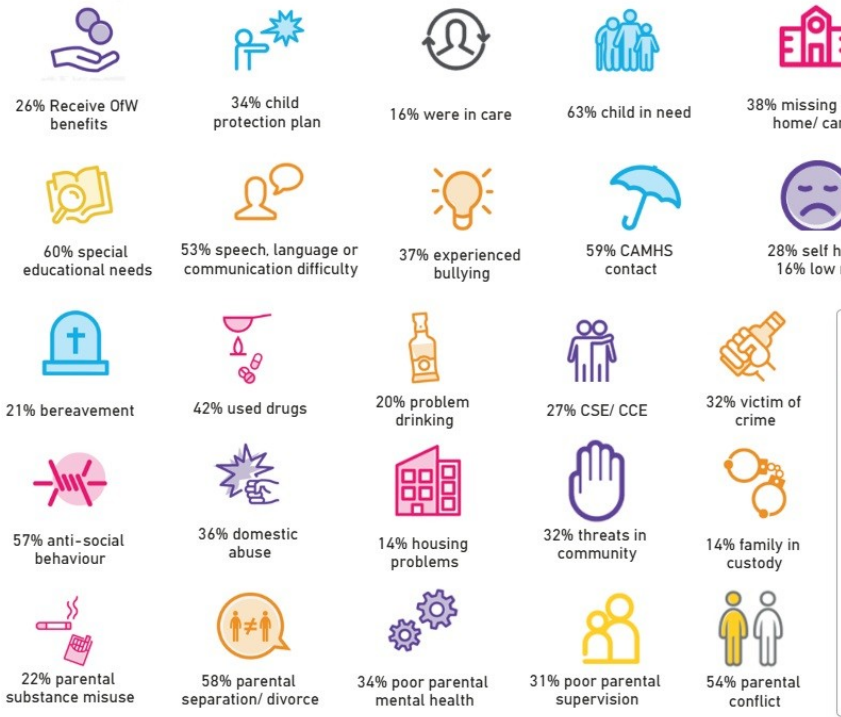
In terms of staffing the YJST has the following:

- Service Lead
- Operational Manager
- Assistant Team Manager
- Two social work posts one at senior level
- Two YJ Officer posts
- YJ Focused Diversion Youth Worker (Fixed Term)
- YJ Op Deter Youth Worker (Fixed Term)
- Restorative Justice Officer
- Information Analyst 0.6 fte
- Probation Link Officer 0.7 fte
- YJ Education Officer 0.8 fte
- Seconded Police Officer 0.8 fte
- CAMHS Health and Justice Physical Health Nurse 0.27 fte
- CAMHS Health and Justice Advanced Mental Health Professional 0.33 fte
- CAMHS Health and Justice Speech and Language Therapist 0.2 fte
- Business Support Assistant
- Business Support Officer

The YJST comprises of full time and part time staff, 13 female staff and 5 male staff. All the staff who hold cases have been trained in Universal Safeguarding, Child First principles, Child Exploitation, ACE's, Trauma Informed Practice, Assessment Planning and Intervention (APIS), Prevent and Restorative Justice. A comprehensive and ongoing training programme is in place to ensure continued professional development for the staff group.

Local context – West Berkshire

Profile of the Community Resolution, Turnaround and Prevention Cohort



Key changes:

	Prev		Current
Receive OfW benefits	54%	↓	26%
Poor parental mental health	56%	↓	34%
Parental substance misuse	34%	↓	22%
Parental separation/ divorce	74%	↓	58%
Housing problems	31%	↓	14%
Domestic abuse	56%	↓	36%
Child in need	82%	↓	63%
CAMHS contact	74%	↓	59%
ASD	23%	↑	35%
ADHD	26%	↑	39%

Children in Cohort: 79

Profile of the Substantive Disposals Cohort



Key changes:

	Prev		Current
CAMHS contact	87%	↓	36%
CSE/ CCE	67%	↓	46%
Experienced bullying	47%	↓	7%
Family in custody	47%	↓	10%
Low mood	47%	↓	14%
Poor parental mental health	67%	↓	42%
Self harmed	53%	↓	31%
Special educational needs	80%	↓	57%
Speech, language or communication difficulty	87%	↓	43%
Were in care	40%	↓	7%

Children in Cohort: 14

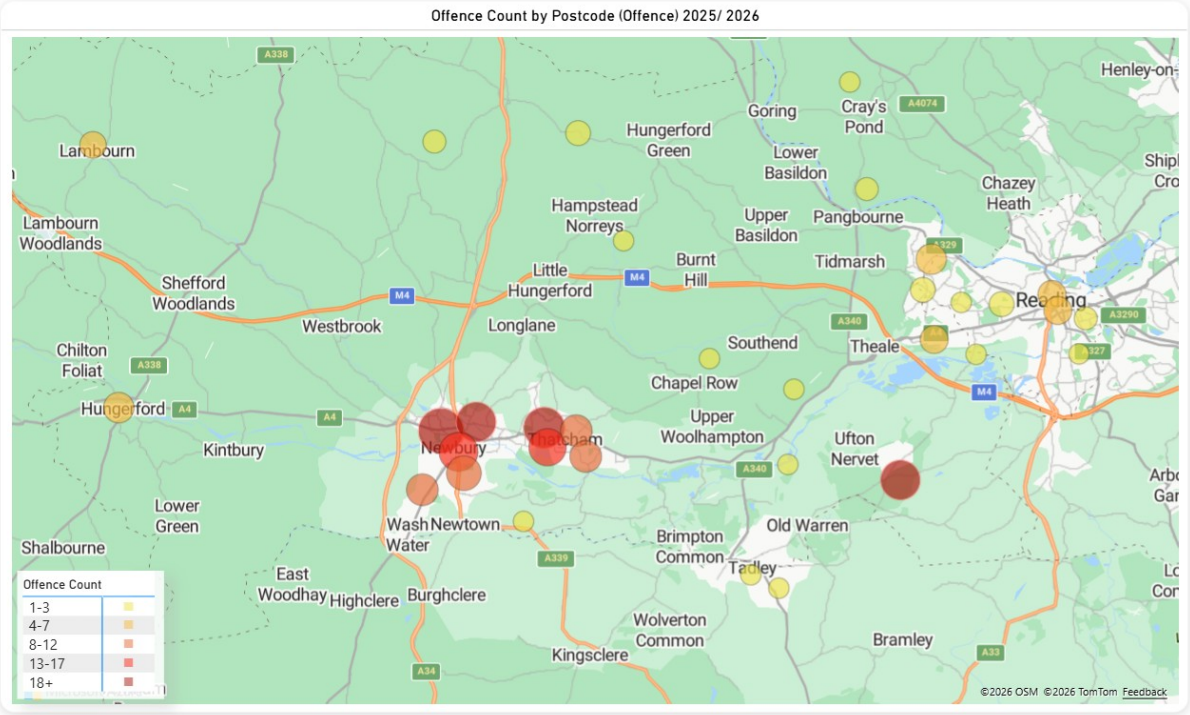
Progress on previous plan:

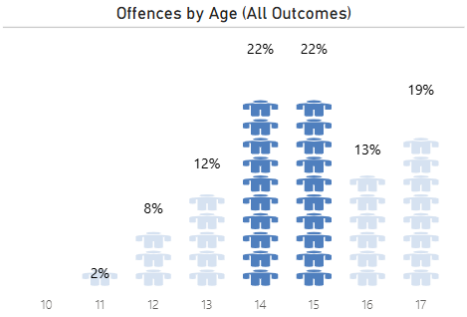
The Youth Justice Plan for last year set out a number of targets to be carried out across the partnership, these were pulled together in one action plan. There were 42 target set in last year's plan. The Service Lead provides an update on the actions which is overseen and scrutinised by the YJ Management Board.

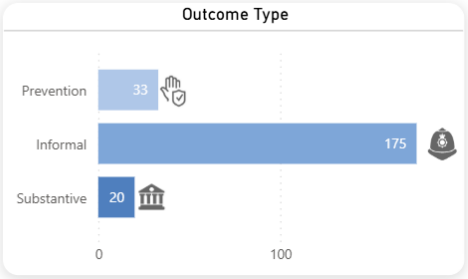
Key achievements of the last year have been;

- Implementation of YDP (Outcome 22) interventions. In addition, the outcomes for children who worked with ACT Now and Turnaround and were reflected in positive outcomes
- Additional resource from OPCC for Focused Diversion – developing early support within schools and developing partnership with the voluntary sector
- Further development and understanding of joint decision-making panels and working in a multi-disciplinary way for better outcomes for children
- Team training/learning events have continued to develop team cohesion - sexual health and sleep, development of language and the influence of parental input on language development, vicarious trauma, AIM3 training
- APIS audit and exit strategies, helping to develop our practice with ensuring that children and families have ongoing support and thinking about this right at the start of interventions
- Partnership working – continues to be a real strength to increase support to children, families and victims
- Parenting provision strengthened with the West Berkshire Parenting coordinator and facilitator observing a group and further training in the team planned. 34 parents attended WIC group and two parents were supported individually
- Continued reflective forums and used time within to explore teams' thoughts around changes in practise, like sharing of PDAT assessments
- YJ nurse administered 15 missing vaccinations to young people of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio, Meningitis ACWY and MMR
- In addition to these vaccines offered a flu vaccination clinic
- Cooking and games sessions to encourage engagement and pro-social skills
- Screening and health assessment to identify unmet health needs
- Update information board in office on relevant topics e.g. sexual health, vaccinations, summer safety, water safety
- Volunteers evening training on the development of language
- Magistrates Training on the importance of reasonable adjustments and communication profiles
- A number of children has secured future college placement and found apprenticeships
- 21 AQA awards following YJST sessions – first aid, baking, etc to include recognised achievements by children
- Art exhibition – Children engaged with different art to create a 3-day exhibition
- Koestler award – 10 children submitted art work, one child received special recognition and had their art work displayed in London and Oxford.

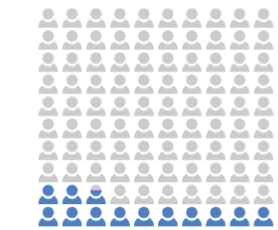
Performance over the previous Year:

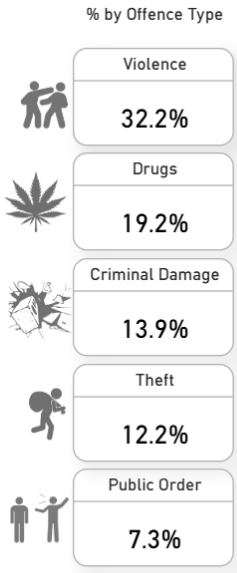












In 2025, the number of children receiving either an informal or substantive outcome increased by 3.6%, from 167 in 2024 to 173. This returns to the level last seen in 2022. The increase reflects a 5.9% rise in children receiving an informal outcome (to 161), while the number receiving substantive outcomes continued to fall, decreasing by 22.7% from 22 in 2024 to 17 in 2025.

Of the 17 children receiving a substantive outcome, 13 were First Time Entrants (FTEs) to the youth justice system. Of these, 9 had previously received an informal outcome, compared with 6 of 14 in 2024. Overall, the number of children receiving either a first informal or first substantive outcome (First Time Offenders) remained stable at 122, although this represents a slightly lower proportion of the cohort (71% in 2025 compared with 75% in 2024).

The number of offences resulting in a substantive outcome decreased by 14, to 33 in 2025. In contrast, offences leading to a Community Resolution increased by 8.2%, from 196 in 2024 to 212 in 2025.

Offence Type

In 2025, the most prevalent offences leading to either a substantive outcome or a Community Resolution were:

- **Violence against the Person: 32.2% (79 offences)**
- **Drugs: 19.2% (47 offences)**
- **Criminal Damage: 13.9% (34 offences)**
- **Theft and Handling: 12.2% (30 offences)**

Violence Against the Person remains the most prevalent offence category, although the number of offences decreased by 14.1%, from 92 in 2024 to 79 in 2025. Over the same period, the number of children committing violent offences increased slightly, from 68 to 70. As a result, the average number of violent offences per child decreased from 1.4 in 2024 to 1.1 in 2025.

- Of the 79 offences, 77 were assessed at YJB gravity level 3 and 2 at level 5
- Assault by beating and common assault together accounted for 77.2% of all violent offences
- The proportion of offences resulting in a substantive outcome has reduced to 11.4%, compared with 28.0% in 2024 and 33.3% in 2023
- Ten children received an outcome for possession of a knife or sharp pointed article in a public place, with one additional child receiving an outcome for threatening a person with a knife or sharp pointed article. This compares with three similar offences in 2024. Three of these offences occurred on school premises. In terms of outcomes, two resulted in a Community Resolution, five in a Deferred Prosecution Outcome, and four in a substantive out-of-court outcome.

Drug offences continued to represent a significant proportion of offending in 2025, with 47 offences recorded (19.2% of all offences), compared with 44 offences (18.1%) in 2024. Although the number of offences remained similar, there are indications that offence seriousness reduced during the year. Most offences (89.4%) related to possession of a Class B drug (gravity 2), with a further 5 offences (10.6%) involving possession of a Class A drug (gravity 3). All but one offence resulted in an informal outcome. This compares with 2024,

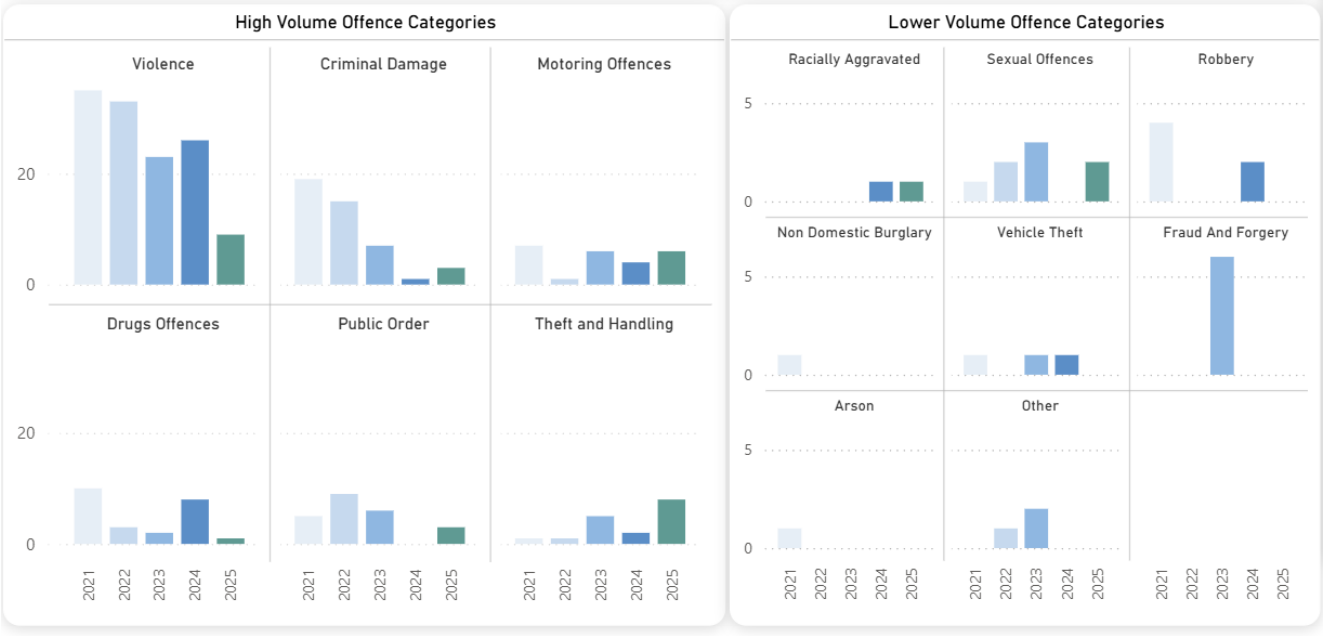
when a higher proportion of offences were assessed at greater severity, including 34.1% at gravity 3 and 6.8% at gravity 6, with 8 offences resulting in a substantive outcome.

Criminal damage remains one of the most frequent offences committed by children, although the number of offences has remained stable, with 29 children committing 34 offences compared to 35 offences in 2024. Three of the offences led to a substantive outcome, 2 of which were linked to more serious offences.

Theft and handling offences increased from 23 in 2024 to 30 in 2025, while the number of children committing these offences has decreased from 22 to 19. One child was responsible for 8 of the 30 offences and received a Community Resolution, followed by a Youth Caution.

To summarise, there is a continued increase in children receiving an informal outcome (5.9%) alongside a more rapid decline in children receiving a substantive outcome (-22.7%). Overall offence levels remained stable. Combined with a small increase in the number of offenders, this resulted in a slight reduction in offences per offender, from 1.5 to 1.4. Please refer to Graphs 1 and 1A.

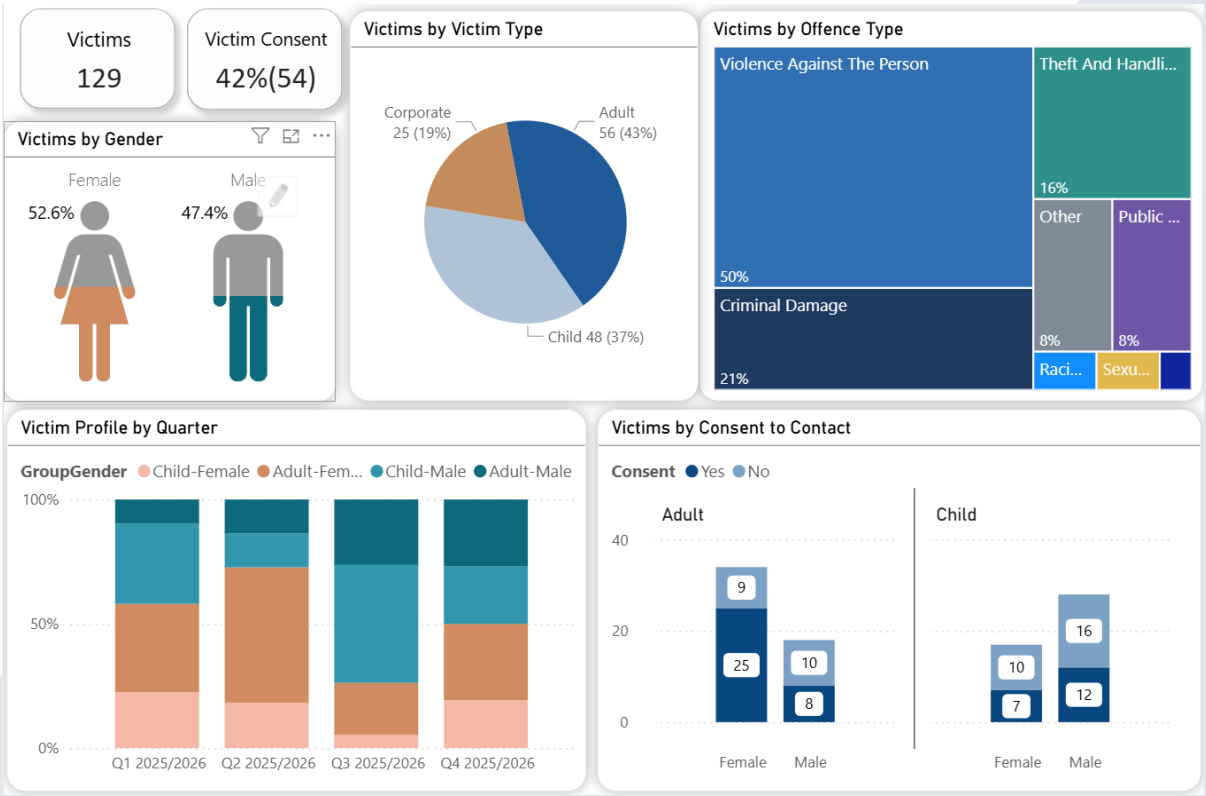
Graph 1 - Number of Offences by Children Leading to a Substantive Outcome by Offence Type
2021 to 2025



Graph 1A - Number of Offences by Children Leading to a Substantive Outcome/ Community Resolution by Offence Type 2021 to 2025



Victims Identified for Child Outcomes in 2025/2026



- 129 victims were identified during 2025/26. Of these, 54 (42%) consented to contact from the Youth Justice Support Team.
- Adult victims accounted for 43% (56) of identified victims, children 37% (48) and corporate victims 19% (25).
- Of individual victims (adults and children), 52.6% were female and 47.4% were male.
- Of those victims were gender and age were identifiable, adult females represented the largest victim group 35% (34), followed by male children 28.9% (28), adult males 18.6% (18) and female children 17.5% (17).
- Adult females had the highest rate of consent to contact (73.5%). Consent rates for other victim groups were lower: adult males 44.4%, male children 42.9% and female children 41.2%. Overall, 63% of adult victims consented to contact compared with 42% of child victims.
- Violence Against the Person was the most common offence category, accounting for 64 victims (49.6%), followed by Criminal Damage 27 (20.9%) and Theft and Handling Stolen Goods 20 (15.5%).

Children Committing Crime

The number of children entering the youth justice system increased from 167 in 2024 to 173 in 2025.

Boys:

In 2025, 124 boys committed 181 offences, representing increases of 6% and 7.1% respectively. This returns to the same peak level seen in 2022. In line with the overall pattern of offending, the proportion of offences leading to a substantive outcome continues to decline, with substantive offences accounting for 13.8% (25 offences) of all offending compared with 19.5% (33 offences) in 2024. The average number of offences by male offender has increased by a small margin to 1.5. A total of 90 boys were first time offenders, including 10 First Time Entrants, of which 6 had previously received a Community Resolution.

- While Violence Against the Person remains the most common offence type for boys, accounting for 26.5% of all offences, the number of offences decreased by 20%, from 60 in 2024 to 48 in 2025. Of these offences, 4 (8.3%) resulted in a substantive outcome, compared with 14 (23.0%) in 2024. All but one offence was assessed at gravity level 3, with one offence at level 5 for possession of an offensive weapon. This offence resulted in a deferred prosecution (Outcome 22).

- The level of drugs offences has remained stable at 40. However, outcome types indicate that the seriousness of offending has declined with only 1 offence resulting in a substantive outcome compared with 8 in 2024.

- There has been an increase in theft and handling offences for boys, rising from 10 offences in 2024 to 23 in 2025 and now accounting for 12.7% of male offending. The

number of boys has increased by a smaller amount, resulting in a higher number of theft offences per child.

Girls:

- The number of female offenders remains stable, decreasing slightly from 50 in 2024 to 49 in 2025. Females account for 28.3% of the overall offending cohort compared to 29.9% in 2024. Of the 64 offences committed by girls, 8 (12.5%) resulted in a substantive outcome compared with 14 (18.9%) in 2024. A lower proportion of females committed multiple offences, contributing to a decline in the average number of offences by girls from 1.5 to 1.3. First Time Entrants remains at 3, all of which had previously received an informal outcome. First Time Offenders decreased marginally from 35 to 32.

- The proportion of violent offences by girls has increased from 43.2% in 2024 to 48.4 in 2025, although the number of offences has remained stable at 31, compared with 32 in the previous year. Alongside an increase in the number of girls committing violent offences from 23 to 28, this suggests that fewer girls are committing multiple violent offences.

- The number of offences across the remaining offence types are small so changes may not indicate trend. There has been a small increase in Drugs offences (7) while Theft and Handling and Public Order have decreased to 7 and 5 respectively. There are now 7 offences categorised as other, 6 of which relate to malicious communications.

Age:

- The peak age for offending (informal or substantive outcome) is 14 to 15. In total, 78 children in this age group committed 110 offences, accounting for 44.8% of all offending. This is broadly similar to 2024 (76 children, 109 offences), although the proportion of 14-year-olds has increased by 14.6%.

- Offending among younger children (10 to 12) has continued to decline, with offences reducing from 36 in 2024 to 26 in 2025. In contrast, both the number of children and offences within the 17-year-old age group have increased, to 34 and 46 respectively, now accounting for 18.8% of all offending compared with 11.1% in 2024.

- The peak age for offences resulting in a substantive outcome is now 14, compared with 15 in the previous year. The distribution of informal outcomes remains broadly consistent, with a peak at age 15 and an increased proportion of 17-year-olds in 2025.

- For boys, the peak age of offending is 14, with 28 boys committing 46 offences, representing 25.4% of male offending. Of the 34 children in the 17-year-old age group, 28 were boys, increasing from 18 in 2024.

- For girls, the peak age of offending is 15, with 16 girls committing 18 offences.

- The youngest age at which offending occurred was 11 for boys (5 children) and 12 for girls (6 children).

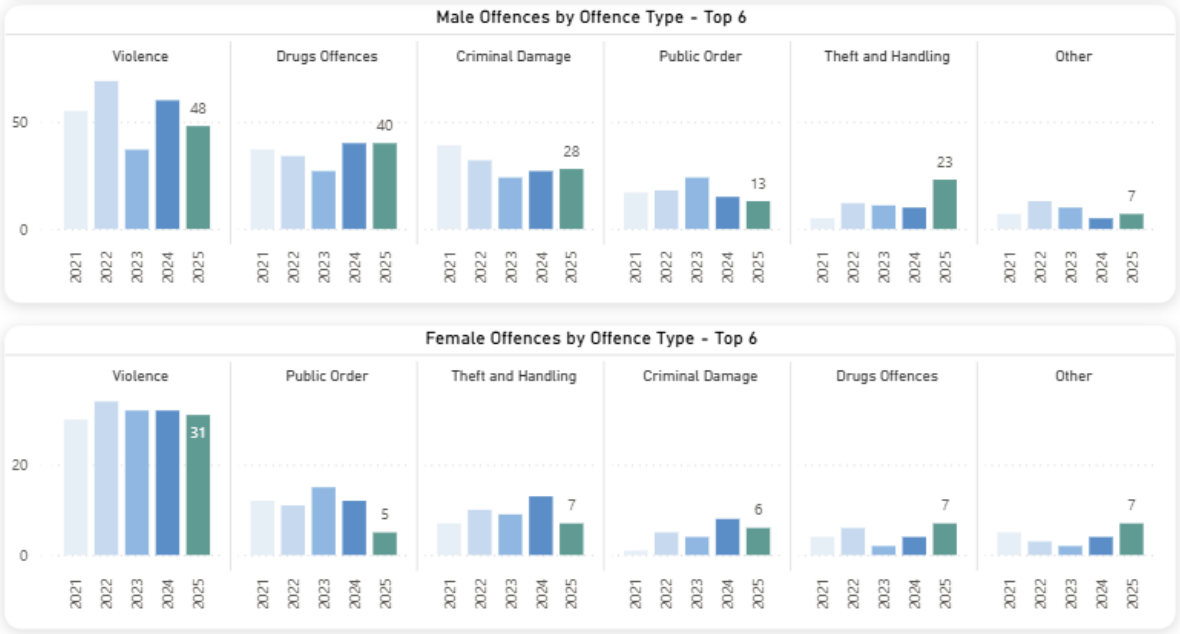
- Violent offences were recorded across all age groups except age 10. Among girls, offending is relatively evenly distributed between ages 12 and 16, with between 5 and 7 offences per age group. In contrast, offending among boys peaks at age 15, with 13 boys committing 17 offences.

The detailed demographic information combined with the offence type data and the profile date enables the youth Justice Support Team to target intervention and support in a more effective manner understanding the cohort better.



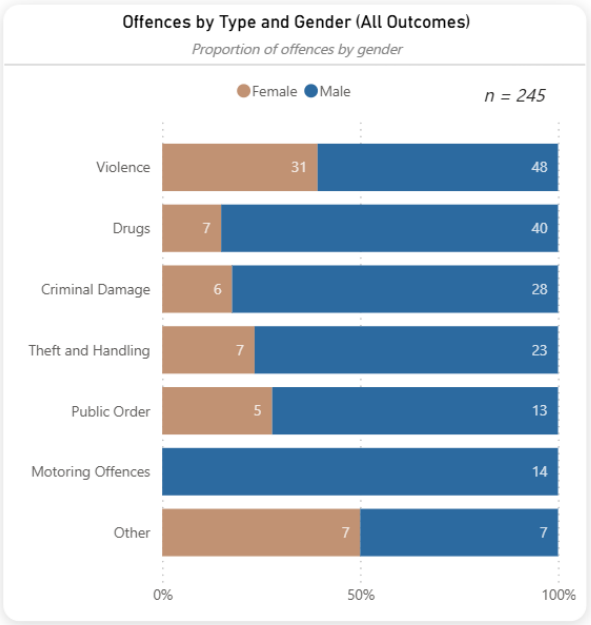
Work with girls has been developed in response to a clear rise in violent offences by adolescent females, with a focus on improving understanding and tailoring interventions to their specific needs. This work centres on adopting gender-responsive and trauma-informed approaches, including staff training on female pathways to violence, sharing learning with police and partner agencies, and embedding reflective case discussions. There is also a commitment to analysing local cohort data to better understand risk factors, strengthening risk assessment and case formulation processes, and improving safety planning. In addition, the service has expanded targeted interventions and resources for girls—drawing on national best practice forums—while maintaining ongoing collaboration across services to ensure responses remain evidence-based and effective.

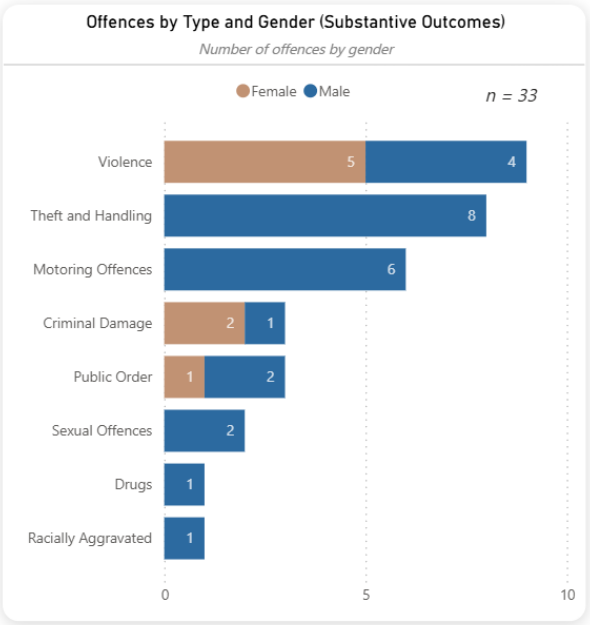
Graph 2A - Offence Counts by Type and Gender (Substantive Outcome/ Community Resolution) 2021 to 2025



Offence Count by Type and Gender (All Outcomes) 2025

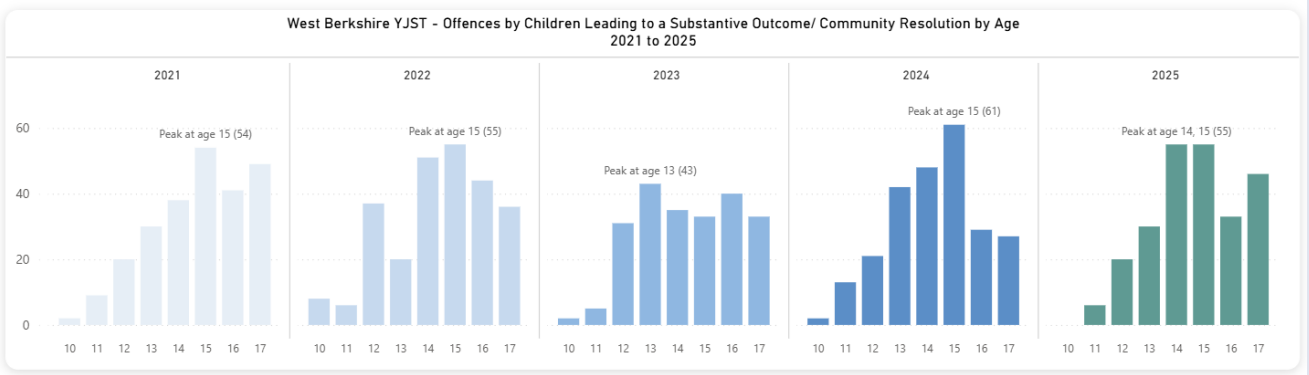
Gender YJB Category - Chart	Female Previous Year	Female Current Year	Female Change	Male Previous Year	Male Current Year	Male Change	Total Previous Year	Total Current Year	Total Change
Violence	32	31	▼ 1	60	48	▼ 12	**92**	**79**	**▼ 13**
Drugs	4	7	▲ 3	40	40		**44**	**47**	**▲ 3**
Criminal Damage	8	6	▼ 2	27	28	▲ 1	**35**	**34**	**▼ 1**
Theft and Handling	13	7	▼ 6	10	23	▲ 13	**23**	**30**	**▲ 7**
Public Order	12	5	▼ 7	15	13	▼ 2	**27**	**18**	**▼ 9**
Motoring Offences				4	14	▲ 10	**4**	**14**	**▲ 10**
Other	4	7	▲ 3	5	7	▲ 2	**9**	**14**	**▲ 5**
Sexual Offences				1	3	▲ 2	**1**	**3**	**▲ 2**
Racially Aggravated				1	2	▲ 1	**1**	**2**	**▲ 1**
Vehicle Theft	1		▼ 1	2	2		**3**	**2**	**▼ 1**
Arson					1	▲ 1		**1**	**▲ 1**
Fraud And Forgery		1	▲ 1					**1**	**▲ 1**

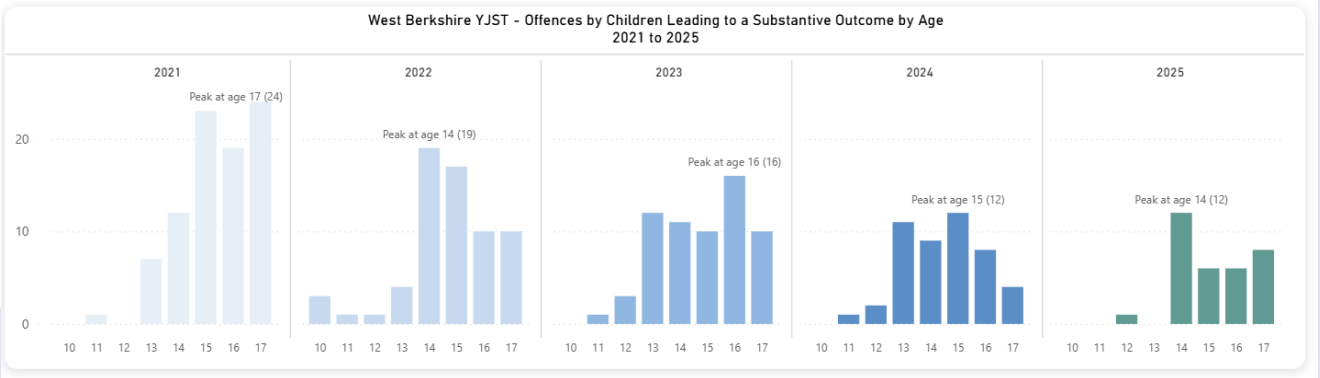




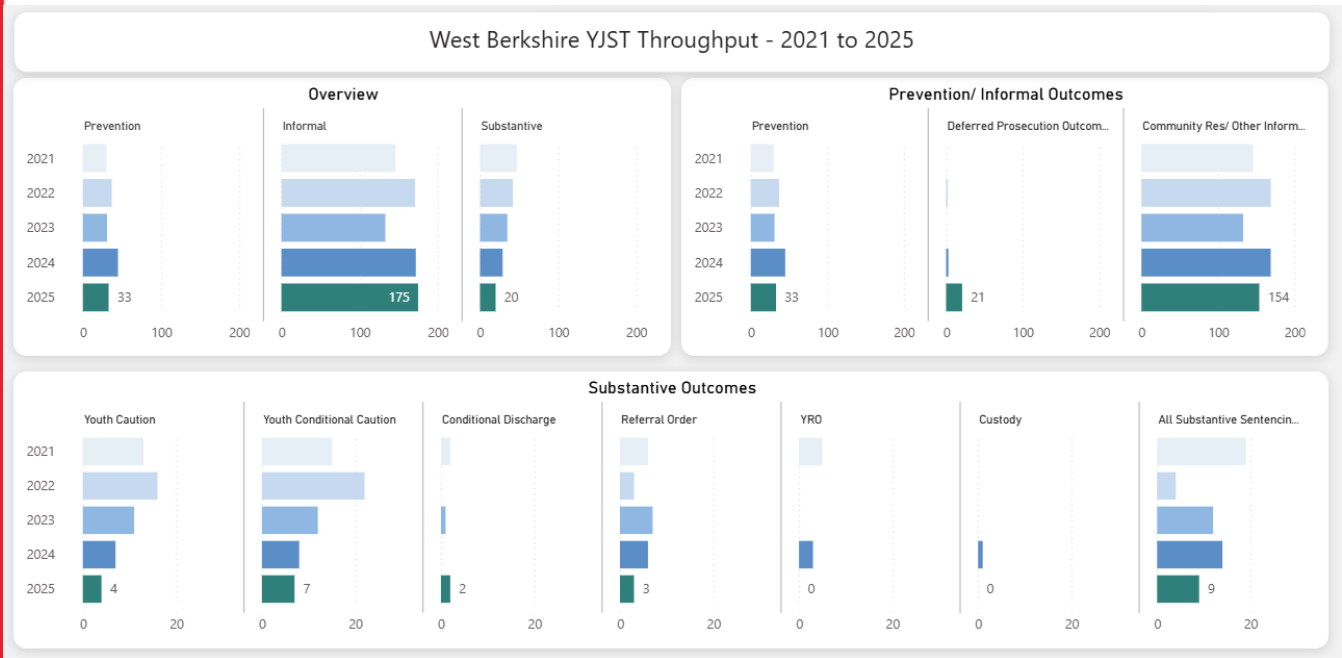
N.B. Categories with low volumes should be interpreted with caution.

Offence Count by Age 2021-2025:





Throughput 2021-2025:



Risks and Issues 2026–2027

Challenges, risks and emerging issues will continue to be monitored through the quarterly Youth Justice Management Board, with mitigation actions tracked and reviewed throughout the year. Key risks for 2026–2027 include:

- Education, attendance and inclusion

High levels of school suspension, exclusion, persistent non-attendance and the lack of 16+ options remain a factor linked to offending and reoffending. Children known to the YJST are disproportionately affected by unmet SEND, mental health needs and disrupted educational placements. Continued pressure on education inclusion services may limit timely access to suitable provision, increasing the risk of criminal exploitation, escalation and poorer long-term outcomes.

- Complexity of need and safeguarding risk

Children entering or known to the youth justice system continue to present with high levels of complexity, including trauma, adverse childhood experiences, neurodiversity, mental health needs and exposure to exploitation. There is a risk that universal and specialist services may not always be able to respond at pace, particularly during periods of transition, requiring robust multi-agency coordination and escalation routes.

- Disproportionality and changing cohort profile

The proportion of girls entering the youth justice system in West Berkshire remains above national averages, presenting risks if services are not sufficiently tailored to gender-specific pathways, harm experienced and safeguarding needs. There is also an ongoing risk of

disproportionality for children with SEND or from marginalised backgrounds if assessment, diversion and intervention pathways are not consistently equitable.

- Workforce capacity and professional expertise

Recruitment and retention challenges across the partnership including probation, health and education continue to pose a risk to service continuity and specialist input. The HMIP recommendation to secure a seconded Probation Officer remains a challenge with increasing reliance on mitigations, however the YJST has directly employed a qualified Probation Officer. Any loss of experienced staff or specialist skills could impact assessment quality and risk management.

- System reform and structural change

Proposed local government reorganisation, regional devolution, health reorganisation, Youth Justice reforms and ongoing Children's Services reforms present both opportunity and risk. Clear governance, role clarity and shared thresholds will be essential to ensure children known to or at risk of entering the youth justice system receive the right support at the right time without service gaps or duplication.

Child First:

The work of the YJST is unpinned by the national Youth Justice Board (YJB) Child First Principles which are set out below:

As children	Prioritise the best interests of children and recognising their particular needs, capacities, rights and potential. All work is child-focused, developmentally informed, acknowledges structural barriers and meets responsibilities towards children.
Building pro-social identity	Promote children's individual strengths and capacities to develop their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.
Collaborating with children	Encourage children's active participation, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is a meaningful collaboration with children and their carers.
Diverting from stigma	Promote a childhood removed from the justice system, using pre-emptive prevention, diversion and minimal intervention. All work minimises criminogenic stigma from contact with the system.

Source: PowerPoint Presentation (yjresourcehub.uk)

Voice of the child/feedback:

The YJST seeks ways to support children to provide feedback about the service they receive at the YJST and we support children working with the YJST to engage in wider forums/opportunities to have their voices heard. These include:

- Children and their parents are invited to provide feedback in reviews of their intervention, their views on the service lead to changes in the intervention delivery and any themes are considered to change wider service delivery.

- All children who work with the YJST, and their parents are invited to complete a confidential questionnaire at the end of their intervention and the Service Lead reviews all of these and makes changes to services if required – last year a total of 67 questionnaire's (40 children and 27 parent) were received. An annual report is written for the YJ Management Board that captures that feedback. Feedback from children and parents highlights consistent themes of strong relationships with workers, feeling listened to and respected, improved emotional regulation, better understanding of consequences, and positive changes in behaviour, school engagement and family relationships. In response, the service has reinforced its relational and trauma-informed practice, maintained and strengthened multi-agency specialist input, continued to provide practical support such as transport and flexible arrangements, reviewed feedback tools to ensure they are meaningful, and committed to further improving access to complaints and expanding opportunities (including for victims) to share feedback to inform ongoing service development
- Activity groups take place on a regular basis with the opportunity for in-depth exploration of topics with a group of children and subsequent actions taken
- All children are informed of the complaints process at the start of the intervention, and sign to say that this has occurred
- All parents completing parenting courses with the YJST provide feedback on their experience of the group work
- All victims of crime involving children in the YJST are asked for feedback on services provided by the YJST, particularly restorative interventions
- A biannual Youth Survey was conducted in 2025 with over 5000 responses from children attending West Berkshire secondary schools – questions about crime, community safety and areas of priority were highlighted in that survey, these have been used to shape priorities, perspectives and provision.

Resources and Services

The YJST is funded from a variety of sources, the Secretary of State under their power in section 41 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 has the power to make grants to local authorities for the purposes of the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services. There are certain grant conditions attached to this funding, West Berkshire YJST complies with all the conditions as set out in the grant conditions documents.

The YJST uses the Local Authority funding, Youth Justice Grant, partner contributions and available additional grants to deliver youth justice services with the aim of reducing the number of children in the youth justice system and preventing further offending.

The YJST is active in seeking to use other funding beyond the core funding to extend the opportunities to support and engage with children at an appropriate time. These opportunities include:

Turnaround – funding from the Ministry of Justice is secure until March 2029 and aims to provide early intervention and support to children at risk of entering the criminal justice system, helping them address underlying issues and prevent future offending.

Operation Deter Youth (Act Now) – has funding in place from the Home Office via the OPCC until March 2028. Operation Deter Youth is designed to reduce serious youth violence by providing rapid, targeted support to children aged 10–17 who are arrested for eligible offences. The initiative focuses on swift engagement—often within 90 minutes of custody notification—followed by timely home visits and a voluntary, strengths-based intervention plan tailored to each young person's needs, with services delivered seven days a week. By offering coordinated support across areas such as emotional wellbeing, education, family relationships, and awareness of crime and its consequences, the programme aims to divert children away from further offending and minimise their involvement in the criminal justice system through proactive, preventative action.

Focused Diversion - funding is in place from the Violence Prevention Partnership until March 2027. Focused Diversion is a voluntary early-intervention programme for children aged 10–15 who are at risk of involvement in serious violence, with a strong emphasis on improving education outcomes. It brings together a coordinated multi-agency approach—linking education, police, youth justice, health, and children's services—to identify risk early and provide tailored support. Referrals are triaged through a single pathway and reviewed by JDMP, which oversees eligibility and monitors' progress. Children receive a mentoring programme focused on improving attendance, behaviour, emotional wellbeing, and engagement in positive activities, alongside support for families. The model aims to reduce suspensions, police contact, and risk-taking behaviours while strengthening resilience and long-term engagement in education and community life.

Prevention Programme – funding is in place through the OPCC until March 2028. Prevention letters create a route for Thames Valley Police to notify the YJST of low-level anti-social and nuisance behaviour among children aged 10–17 before it escalates into criminal activity. Working in partnership with Thames Valley Police, the programme uses "prevention letters" to identify children whose behaviour is causing concern but has not reached a criminal threshold, triggering timely support from the Youth Justice Support Team. Through home visits, tailored assessments, one-to-one sessions, and parenting support, the programme works collaboratively with children and their families to understand underlying causes, build resilience, and promote positive behaviour. By diverting children away from formal justice processes and strengthening family support systems, the programme aims to reduce first-time offending, improve community confidence, and create safer neighbourhoods through sustained, preventative action.

YJ Management Board Development:

The governance arrangements for youth justice in West Berkshire have evolved to strengthen clarity, focus and accountability. Historically, the Youth Justice Management Board and the Community Safety Partnership operated as a single Building Communities Together

Partnership, enabling a coordinated strategic approach to crime and disorder, with the Youth Justice Management Group functioning as an operational sub-group. Following a governance review in 2025, this structure was revised, and the formal grouping was dissolved. In its place, a dedicated Youth Justice Management Board was established, chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services and comprising senior representation from key partners. Despite this separation, strong alignment has been maintained: both the Executive Director of Children's Services and the Youth Justice Service Lead remain members of the Community Safety Partnership, with a standing agenda item to ensure ongoing connectivity and shared oversight of youth justice matters.

The Youth Justice Management Board holds responsibility for the strategic governance of the Youth Justice Support Team, ensuring effective partnership leadership and the delivery of high-quality services for children and victims. New Board members receive a structured induction led by the Service Lead, supported by a comprehensive induction pack outlining roles, responsibilities and expectations. Over the past year, the Board has maintained oversight through regular performance, partnership and activity reports, supported by briefings from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) on the national Oversight Framework and forthcoming policy developments. This has enabled members to build their understanding of both local performance and the wider national context. During the Youth Justice Management Board meetings time has been created to enable board members to deepen their understanding of the cohort of children in the Youth Justice system, explore the performance data with the analyst and extend their understand of the work of the YJST.

Recognising the importance of strong and active system leadership, a dedicated Board development session was held in 2026. This focused on strengthening members' confidence and effectiveness by moving beyond passive engagement to a more active, impact-driven approach. The session supported members to better understand their individual and organisational roles, exercise influence appropriately and provide constructive challenge in line with YJB and HMIP expectations. Through reflective discussion, members explored their agency strengths, decision-making authority and any internal barriers affecting outcomes for children. Further development work is planned for 2026/27, with input from the YJB regional advisor to provide tailored support and continue to strengthen the Board's role, function and effectiveness.

Workforce Development:

Workforce development is recognised as a critical priority within the Youth Justice Support Team (YJST), reflecting the principle that staff are its most valuable asset. As such, a strong emphasis is placed on recruitment, induction, ongoing training and retention. The YJST adopts a holistic approach to workforce development across individual, operational and strategic levels. At an individual level, annual appraisals support the identification of professional development needs and ensure compliance with registration requirements, such as those for social workers. Operationally, a structured programme of learning activities is in place throughout the year to support reflective practice and continuous improvement. This includes reflective forums, learning from audits and the benchmarking of national reports, enabling

the team to enhance practice and outcomes for children, families and victims. At a strategic level, engagement with national and partnership developments supports service evolution, including the continued embedding of Child First principles and alignment with emerging policy.

The training programme for 2026/27 builds on the knowledge, experience and development activity of previous years. Over the past year, staff have accessed a range of bespoke training designed to strengthen practice, including development of the prevention and diversion assessment tool and associated quality assurance processes, Appropriate Adult and MAPPA refresher training, health-led learning, AIM3 intervention training, the Youth Justice Effective Practice Certificate, as well as training in cognitive bias and police leadership. Looking ahead, the training plan will focus on key areas including parenting support, improving the quality and consistency of pre-decision assessments, restorative justice, and responding to changes within the youth justice system. This will be complemented by learning drawn from HMIP inspections and national publications to ensure practice remains current and evidence informed. In addition, the YJST actively contributes to workforce development beyond the service by offering training and development opportunities to partner agencies, supporting a shared understanding and consistent approach to working with children across the youth justice system.

Knife Possession Response

Knife crime remains a national and local priority, with over 50,000 recorded knife offences nationally and locally there has been an increase in knife possession offences. The Government have a commitment to halve knife crime over the coming decade. The Government's 2026 guidance requires a step-change in how agencies respond to children found in possession of knives, emphasising a response that is: swift, robust, evidence-based and thorough

The Youth Justice Plan sets out how West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team and partners will deliver against these expectations and comply with the national expectations, within a Child First framework, prioritising prevention, safeguarding, and desistance. West Berkshire YJST identifies knife crime and serious youth violence as a strategic priority due to: The significant safeguarding risks posed to children (both victims and those involved) Links to exploitation, trauma, and extra-familial harm and the ongoing opportunity to offer early intervention and prevention.

We will deliver a multi-agency, child-centred response, aligned to statutory guidance and local safeguarding arrangements. Our key partners in this endeavour include Thames Valley Police, Children's Social Care, Education providers and schools, Health services (including Liaison and Diversion and CAMHS), Community Safety Partnership, EMRAC, Voluntary and community sector organisations. All partners contribute to a shared responsibility for prevention, early identification and intervention, consistent with Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Swift Response: Police will notify YJST of all knife possession offences within one working day. This takes place through Operation Deter Youth and the PIC sheets which detail all children arrested in the previous 24 hours. There is a daily spreadsheet of voluntary interviews by TVP which is examined to identify any weapon offences and the YJST contact all children within one day to offer support.

YJST will prioritise assessment and ensure intervention begins within a maximum of four weeks. Locally, due to Operation Deter, the first home visit aims to take place within 48 hours with the assessment and intervention commencing at that point. Joint decision-making panels will ensure timely and consistent outcomes for all decision making involving children and knife offences.

Robust Decision-Making: We will ensure all knife possession cases receive an intervention plan, as required by Government guidance. The outcomes will include; Youth Conditional Caution (the default expectation), Youth Deferred Prosecution (in certain circumstances, where appropriate to avoid criminalisation), Charge (for gravity 5 offences or repeat offending).

We will not use community resolutions or simple cautions, in line with national expectations. Decision-making will use the NPCC Child Gravity Matrix, be informed by full multi-agency information sharing and explicitly consider disproportionality and equality impacts.

Evidence-Based Interventions: All interventions will be based on a holistic assessment of the child's needs and risks, address underlying drivers such as trauma, exploitation, peer influence, school exclusion, mental health etc. The guidance is explicit that generic knife awareness programmes alone are not effective and should not be used. Our approach is bespoke to each child and their unique circumstances and using a child first lens, trauma-informed practice, cognitive and behavioural interventions, family-based work, education and re-engagement support, safety planning and harm minimisation.

Thorough Oversight and Compliance: All intervention plans will include clear expectations, non-compliance will result in immediate review and opportunity to reengage, escalation, including potential prosecution if required. The Thame Valley Scrutiny panels will have oversight of the decision making appropriateness of knife crime decisions.

The Youth Justice Management Board will provide strategic oversight of knife crime response, ensure partnership accountability, receive performance and qualitative data on compliance with national knife crime guidance and maintain a record of any departures from national guidance, with clear rationale.

We recognise that children involved in knife possession are often victims of exploitation, experiencing trauma or adversity and at risk of serious harm themselves. Our approach will recognise the safeguarding concerns, assess for extra-familial harm, including criminal exploitation and ensure access to specialist support. This aligns with the Child First principle

of prioritising children's needs, strengths and rights, while promoting positive identity and desistance.

We will continue to strengthen prevention through targeted interventions using local data to identify children at risk of violence, partnership with schools, early help and social care services to keep children safe and use diversion where appropriate. We will work with partners to ensure earlier identification of vulnerability and community-based support.

We will ensure our staff are equipped to respond effectively through training and briefings on knife crime legislation and guidance, trauma-informed practice, exploitation and contextual safeguarding. In addition, we provide reflective supervision to support complex casework.

We will monitor the timeliness of referrals and interventions, the type and appropriateness of outcomes, the reoffending rates for knife-related cases and the engagement and completion of intervention plans. The Youth Justice Management Board will provide strategic oversight of knife crime response, monitor compliance with national guidance, ensure partnership accountability and maintain a record of any departures from national guidance, with clear rationale.

Evidence-based practice, Evaluation and Innovation:

West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) is a relatively small service and, as such, does not routinely attract large-scale external evaluations or randomised control trials typically associated with academic research. Despite this, the service remains committed to embedding evidence-based practice and has actively contributed to a range of local and regional pilots, alongside developing innovative approaches grounded in practice insight and emerging research.

A key example is the **Focused Diversion Youth Navigator Mentorship programme**, in which the YJST participated as part of a wider study. The findings demonstrated that the model is both feasible and acceptable, successfully engaging children aged 10–15 who are at risk of disengagement from education, exploitation or offending but who do not meet thresholds for specialist intervention. The evaluation highlighted that unmet emotional and mental health needs are often underlying drivers of behaviour, and that early, relational mentoring can positively influence school engagement and reduce the likelihood of involvement in crime.

Alongside this, the YJST has developed a number of practical, needs-led innovations to address health inequalities and improve engagement. The introduction and refinement of health packs, led by the YJST nurse, responded to both research on oral health inequalities and direct findings from health assessments. These packs include dental care resources and guidance, recognising the wider impact of oral health on overall physical and emotional wellbeing. Complementing this, the introduction of food hampers ensures that children attending sessions have access to basic nutrition, with provision available both on site and in

the community. This initiative reflects an understanding of the barriers some children face and supports consistent engagement with interventions.

The team has also strengthened its focus on life skills and positive development through first aid training, delivered collaboratively by the YJ Police Officer and nurse. This offer is available to all children and is formally recognised through AQA accreditation, supporting both skill development and achievement.

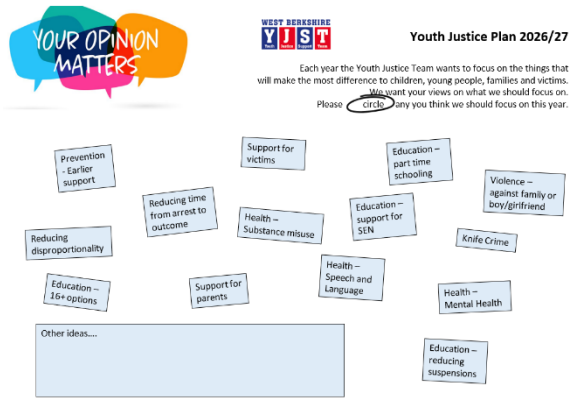
In response to identified communication needs, the Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) has led the development of communication passports and associated resources. Staff have received training to produce and utilise these tools, supported by a speech, language and communication (SLC) resource pack available to all practitioners. This approach enhances the team's ability to tailor interventions to individual communication needs while enabling the SaLT to focus more directly on specialist interventions.

Collectively, these areas of practice demonstrate the YJST's commitment to innovation, continuous learning and the application of evidence in a way that is proportionate to the size of the service, while remaining responsive to the needs of children and families.

Strategic Priorities for the coming year

The Youth Justice Management Board undertook a review of strategic priorities through a dedicated workshop, recognising that outcomes for children in the youth justice system are shaped by a wide range of factors extending beyond the Youth Justice Support Team (YJST). This includes developments across education, health, social care and wider safeguarding systems, such as SEND reforms, the Attendance is Everyone's Business agenda, Family Help reforms and the development of Risk Outside the Home Conferences. While these areas sit outside direct youth justice governance, their impact on children within the system is significant. In response, the Board considered performance data, intelligence, stakeholder feedback and emerging risks to establish a clear and coherent set of priorities, creating a strong 'golden thread' linking strategic intent, delivery and outcomes.

Through this process, three key areas were identified for focused improvement. Firstly, education was highlighted as a critical priority, with an emphasis on improving access, strengthening pathways into appropriate education, training and employment, addressing barriers to inclusion and ensuring earlier identification and support for children with SEND. Secondly, the Board prioritised early identification, prevention and intervention, recognising the importance of timely responses, reducing delays within the justice process and ensuring clear, consistent pathways to support services. Thirdly, there was a clear focus on victim support, including strengthening engagement and consent processes, improving awareness of victims' rights and widening access to consistent, high-quality support.



The development of these priorities was informed not only by strategic analysis but also by the voices of children and volunteers. Children engaged with the YJST, alongside volunteers supporting delivery, were invited to identify their own priorities for the coming year. There was strong alignment between these perspectives and those of the Management Board, with education and timeliness—particularly reducing the time from arrest to sentence—emerging as shared priorities. Children also identified knife crime as a key concern, reflecting local data showing an increase in possession offences. Volunteers reinforced these themes and, drawing on their experience as Referral Order Panel members, highlighted additional areas of importance including parental support, the impact of social media and substance misuse.

Taking account of this combined insight, the YJST has identified a set of locally driven priorities, aligned with national Youth Justice Board expectations but tailored to local need.

These partnership priorities are:

- **Education and Inclusion:** Ensuring all children have timely access to appropriate education or training through inclusive pathways, early identification and support for SEND, and proactive removal of barriers to engagement and participation.
- **Prevention and Diversion:** Strengthening early identification of need, delivering timely interventions to prevent escalation, improving the timeliness of investigations and ensuring clear, consistent access to support services.
- **Knife Possession and Serious Violence:** Delivering a swift, robust, evidence-based and child-centred multi-agency response, prioritising prevention, safeguarding and early intervention, while maintaining consistent decision-making and strong oversight in line with national guidance.
- **Victims and Restorative Justice:** Ensuring victims are fully informed of their rights, able to provide informed consent and supported through accessible, consistent and high-quality services delivered through clear and well-publicised pathways.

Together, these priorities reflect a coherent, partnership-led approach, grounded in evidence, shaped by lived experience and focused on improving outcomes for children, victims and communities.

Standards for children

There has been no recent national requirement to complete a formal self-assessment against the Standards for Youth Justice Services, the most recent assessment having focused on Standard 2: work in court. However, the publication of the Youth Justice Board's national audit report in February 2025 has provided valuable insight into practice in this area. The findings emphasise the importance of ensuring children experience fair treatment and receive appropriate support throughout court proceedings, while also identifying areas for improvement in the quality of their experience. In response, the Assistant Team Manager has undertaken regular observations of court practice over the past year, reinforcing a commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of delivery.

Alongside this, the Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) maintains a robust programme of internal audit activity. Each year, a series of audits is undertaken to assess practice against the Standards for Children, HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) expectations and relevant codes of practice. Findings from these audits are formally reported and presented to the Youth Justice Management Board, where they are subject to scrutiny and oversight, with agreed actions monitored through to completion.

The Youth Justice Plan action plan sets out the programme of internal audits for the coming year, ensuring a continued focus on quality assurance, accountability and ongoing service improvement.

Service Development

There have been no recent HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspections or critical learning reviews requiring specific service development. However, the Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) has continued to proactively strengthen practice through partnership innovation and contribution to wider system improvements.

Over the past year, the YJST has worked closely with Thames Valley Police to pilot the Youth Diversionary Programme (YDP), a child-centred deferred prosecution model designed to test a structured diversion approach prior to potential wider adoption. The model enables appropriate cases to be managed through targeted intervention while retaining the option of prosecution where conditions are not met, aligning with emerging national guidance (Outcome 23). The pilot has been evaluated positively, with no reported victim complaints, and reflects the broader national direction toward deferred prosecution approaches. Learning from the pilot has emphasised the importance of consistent decision-making through the application of the gravity matrix, clearer use of terminology and alignment with evolving national policy. The findings are currently being considered by the Chief Officer group, with a shared expectation among partners that the model will transition into business-as-usual delivery.

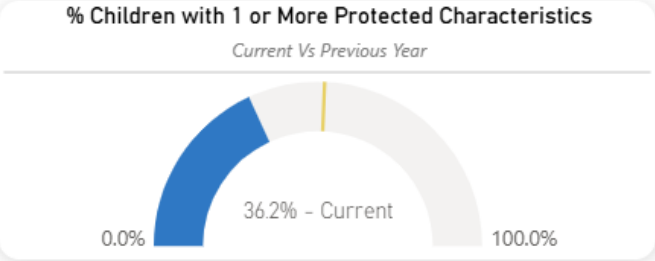
In parallel, the YJST has contributed to the refresh of the Thames Valley Police Safer Schools Partnership Framework, working alongside the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

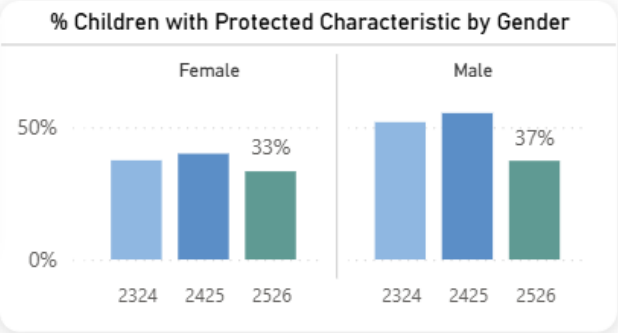
(OPCC) and Thames Valley Police. The framework establishes a collaborative approach between policing, schools and partners to improve safety, prevent crime and support children and young people. It promotes early intervention, diversion and education, while strengthening relationships between schools and local policing. Dedicated Schools Officers provide a visible and consistent presence, supporting schools while maintaining clear boundaries around safeguarding and disciplinary responsibilities. The framework emphasises prevention, effective information sharing and age-appropriate education, supported by OPCC initiatives such as the Crime Education Hub, alongside clear and proportionate processes for managing incidents and safeguarding concerns.

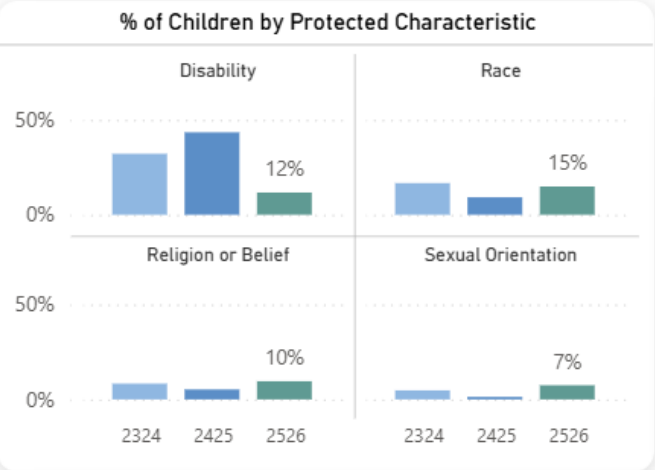
The YJST has also worked with the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) to address delays within the youth justice system, recognising that timeliness is critical to achieving effective outcomes for children. Reducing the time from offence to outcome strengthens the link between behaviour and consequence, improves engagement and increases the effectiveness of interventions. Conversely, delays can contribute to anxiety, disengagement and an increased risk of reoffending, while disrupting education, family stability and support networks. Timely processes also benefit victims and enhance the quality of professional assessments by ensuring that circumstances remain current. As part of this work, improvements have included the development of police data dashboards to increase visibility of child investigations, work on statutory time limits, pilot activity to accelerate early investigative stages, and ongoing regional monitoring of timeliness. Collectively, these developments demonstrate a continued commitment to system improvement, partnership working and delivering more effective outcomes for children and communities.

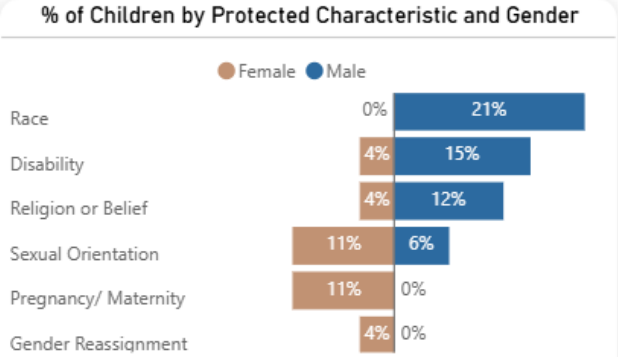
National Priority areas and KPIs:

Children from group which are over- represented:









Children with Protected Characteristics by Gender

GENDER	Female			Male			Total		
Characteristic	#	%	Total	#	%	Total	#	%	Total
Disability	1	3.7%	27	10	14.9%	67	**11**	**11.7%**	**94**
Gender Reassignment	1	3.7%	27			67	**1**	**1.1%**	**94**
Pregnancy/ Maternity	3	11.1%	27			67	**3**	**3.2%**	**94**
Race			27	14	20.9%	67	**14**	**14.9%**	**94**
Religion or Belief	1	3.7%	27	8	11.9%	67	**9**	**9.6%**	**94**
Sexual Orientation	3	11.1%	27	4	6.0%	67	**7**	**7.4%**	**94**
Total	**9**	**33.3%**	**27**	**25**	**37.3%**	**67**	**34**	**36.2%**	**94**

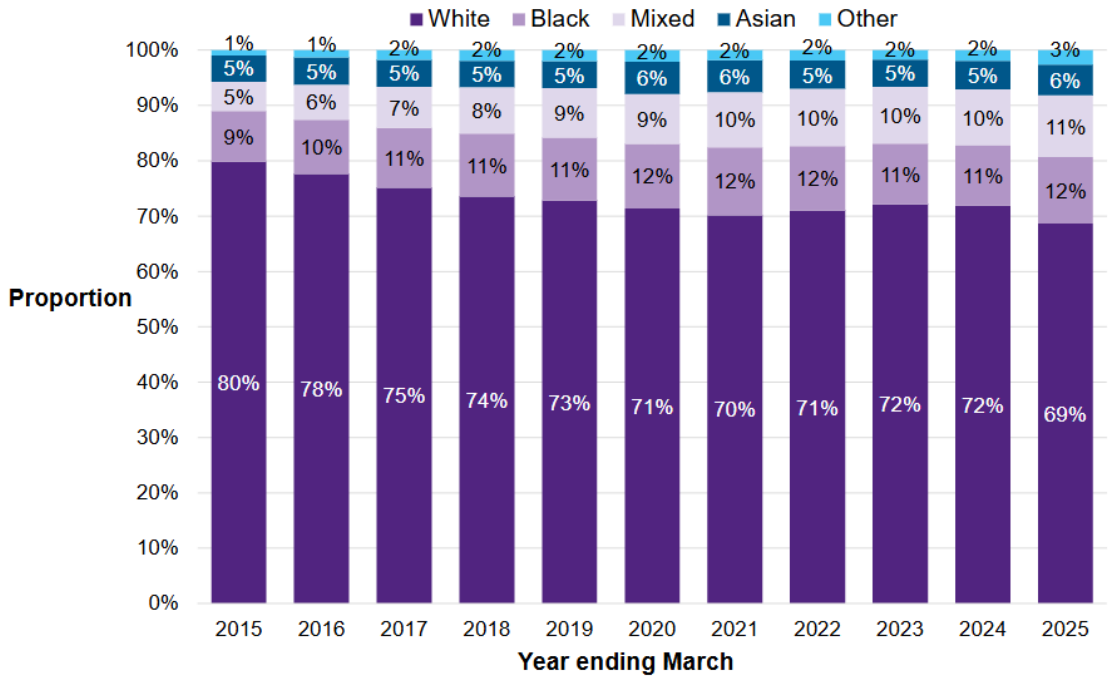
The YJST monitor the caseload of children involved with the YJST in addition to those who have come into contact with the police through other reasons for example stop and search or children who are excluded. Where areas of over representation or disproportionality are identified, the YJST partnership seeks to understand the drivers for this over representation and address those with those who have the power to make changes.

There were 22 children from a GRT/ethnic minority background who committed 37 offences representing 12.7% of the offending population and 15.1% of all offences committed respectively. Of the 37 offences committed, 24.3% resulted in a substantive outcome,

compared with 11.5% of offences committed by children from a white background. In terms of seriousness of offending, 64.9% of offences committed by children from a GRT/ethnic minority background are categorised with gravity 3 or above compared with 54.3% for children from a white background. The annual school census for secondary schools showed that the proportion of GRT/ethnic minority pupils in the general West Berkshire secondary population was 15.7% in 2024. The GRT/ethnic minority population is therefore marginally underrepresented in the youth justice system in West Berkshire.

Statistics produced by the Youth Justice Board show that 32% of **children receiving a caution or sentence** in England and Wales in 2025 were of ethnic minority. This compares to 11.8% of children in West Berkshire in 2025. Of note this uses the Ethnicity 5+1 groupings which classifies children from a GRT background as white. See graph below.

Proportion of children receiving a caution or sentence by ethnicity, England and Wales, years ending March 2015 to 2025



In 2025, there was a small decrease in the proportion of females receiving either an informal or substantive outcome, from 29.9% to 28.3%. Of these, a slightly higher proportion received a caution or sentence compared with 2024 (23.5% compared with 22.7%). This remains above the national average of 14% in 2025, which has decreased from 15% in 2024.

- In 2025/26, 94 children engaged with an intervention with the Youth Justice Service (YJST). Of these, 34 children (36.2%) were identified as having one or more protected characteristics. This is lower than in previous years (51.3% in 2024/25 and 46.4% in 2022/23).

- Males were slightly more likely to be identified as having a protected characteristic than females (37% compared with 33%), although the gap has narrowed from the previous year, when 55.4% of males and 40.0% of females were identified.

- Race is now the most commonly recorded protected characteristic (14.9%), increasing from 9.2% in 2024/25. All identified children were male, representing just over one in five males (20.9%).

- Almost one in ten children (9.6%) are identified as having religion or belief as a protected characteristic.

- The proportion of children identified with disability has decreased significantly, from 43.4% in 2024/25 to 11.7% in 2025/26. Boys remain more likely than girls to be identified with disability (15% compared with 4%).

- Among girls, 11.1% are identified with sexual orientation as a protected characteristic, increasing from 5% in 2024/25. There are now also boys identified within this group (6%), although numbers remain small and may not indicate a trend.

- For the first time since monitoring of protected characteristics commenced, children with pregnancy or maternity needs have been identified (11.1%).

Policing

The West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team operates within the Berkshire West Local Command Unit (LCU), with the seconded Youth Justice Police Officer managed through the Harm Reduction Unit (HRU). Strong and well-established relationships exist with police colleagues across all ranks within Newbury and the wider LCU, supporting effective joint working across a range of priorities. This includes close collaboration with HRU officers overseeing children at risk of exploitation, Neighbourhood Policing Team sergeants contributing to anti-social behaviour forums, and inspectors and chief inspectors providing leadership across knife crime and wider partnership activity.

Partnership working has continued to strengthen over the past year, particularly through the development of the Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP), which now includes wider representation from children's services and education. The panel is chaired and recorded by a Thames Valley Police decision-maker, supporting consistency and accountability within out-of-court decision-making. In addition, the Criminal Justice Sergeant has played an active role on the Youth Justice Management Board, leading improvements in the early identification of victims and strengthening processes to ensure that victim consent is clearly recorded. Changes to YOT1 documentation, requiring the Officer in Charge to formally capture this information, are already demonstrating positive early impact.

Strategic links between policing and youth justice are further reinforced through the involvement of senior police leaders. The Service Lead maintains direct engagement with the LCU Chief Inspector and Superintendent, both of whom are invited to participate in the

Management Board. The Service Lead also contributes at a wider strategic level through the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), including chairing the LCJB Children's Board and participating in the Out of Court Resolution (OOCR) Scrutiny Panel, ensuring that West Berkshire is well-represented across the regional landscape.

This partnership approach is characterised by a number of key strengths. There is strong engagement at a local level, underpinned by a shared commitment to joint problem-solving for both individual children and wider community issues. Additional support has been secured through OPCC grant funding to address anti-social behaviour and prevent offending, while the continued development of joint OOCR decision-making panels has strengthened partnership working and contributed to improved outcomes for children.

However, there are emerging challenges that require careful management. The capacity of the seconded Youth Justice Police Officer has reduced under the LCU structure, with their placement within the HRU impacting direct communication with traditional supervisory lines. In addition, the transition from a Safeguarding Officer role to a School's Officer model has reduced the level of support available for the Positive Intervention Programme (PiP) within schools. These factors present risks to delivery and will require ongoing partnership attention to ensure that strong operational links and preventative activity are maintained.

FTEs per 100,000 10–17-year-olds: Outturn Jan 24 – Dec 24 = 79, Outturn Jan 25 – Dec 25 (latest figures) = 78

A first-time entrant (FTE) is a child receiving a formal police or court disposal for the first time, thus entering the youth justice system. A First Time Offender (FTO) is a child who receives either a first informal or substantive outcome within the period.

The YJST in conjunction with the Thames Valley Police introduced a prevention scheme in September 2018 enabling the police to identify children who displayed behaviour below a criminal threshold but that without support may become a first-time entrant. In addition, a Drug Diversion Scheme was launched in West Berkshire to direct children caught in possession of illegal drugs to a substance misuse service that can educate, treat and support those children rather than use the formal criminal justice system.

At a national level, the FTE measure is expressed as a rate per 100,000 10–17-year-olds. The most recent measure for January 2025 to December 2025 is 78, a small decrease from 79 in the previous year. This is significantly lower than the national (155) and regional (126) although these have declined at a higher rate. There has been a small increase in First time Offenders, rising by 5% from 120 in 2024/25 to 126 in 2025/26.

Quarterly data (including four-quarter moving averages) indicates that FTE volumes remain low, with no significant spikes. The FTO moving average has remained relatively stable from Q3 2024/25 to the latest quarter.

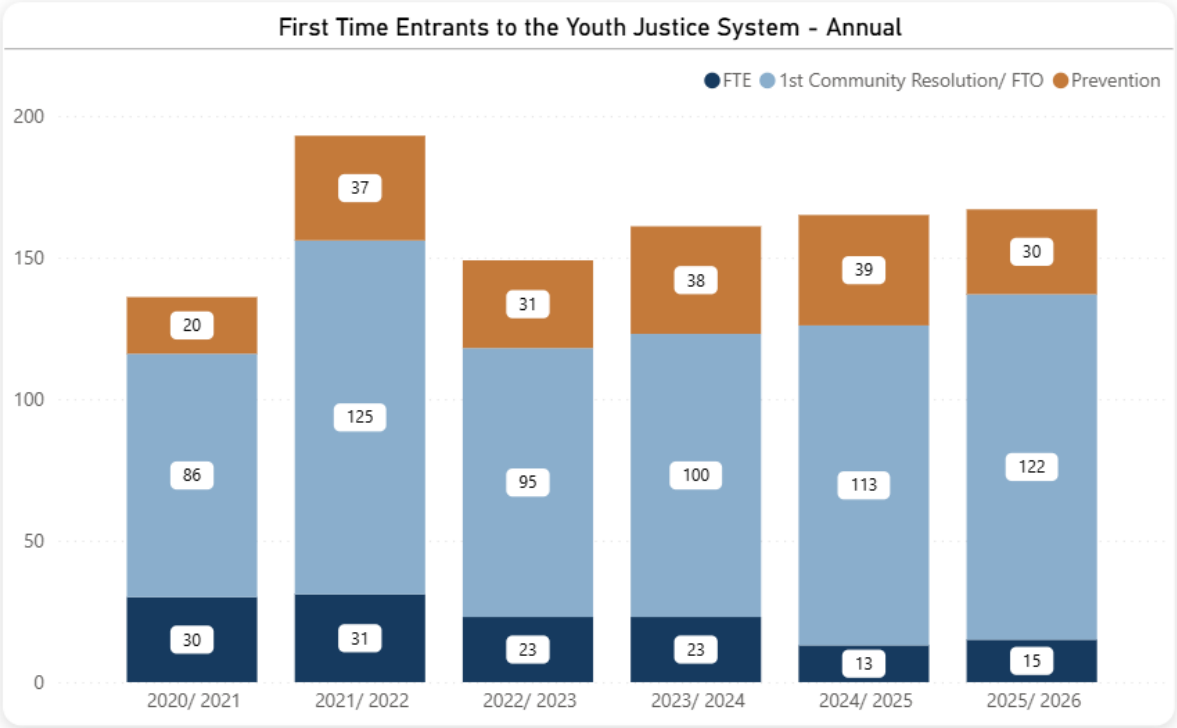
FTE (First Time Entrants)

- In 2025/26 there were 15 FTEs, a small increase from 13 in 2024/25.
- 73.3% (11 of 15) had previously received an informal outcome, compared to 46.2% (6 of 13) in 2024/25.
- 53.3% (8 of 15) received a court outcome, compared to 15.4% (2 of 13) in the previous year.
    - Out-of-court disposals: 7 (2 Youth Cautions, 5 Youth Conditional Cautions)
    - Court outcomes: 5 Referral Orders and 3 Conditional Discharges
- The peak age for becoming an FTE is 16 compared to 14 in the previous year.
- The number of girls increased from 1 to 3, which is more in line with previous reporting years
- 3 children are from a GRT/ethnic minority background, which is consistent with the previous period.
- Violence continues to be the most common offence type, accounting for 35.7 % of all FTE offences.
- Two children committed 6 sexual offences receiving a Youth Conditional Caution and a Referral Order. Motoring offences accounted for 6 offences committed by 2 children, both resulting in Conditional Discharges.

FTO (First Time Offenders)

- In 2025/26, there were 126 FTOs, an increase of 5% from 120 in the previous period.
- 27.8% (35) of children receiving a first outcome are girls compared to 26.7% (32) in 2024/25.
- The peak age for becoming a FTO is 15 (23%). This is representative of boys (23.1%) For girls, offending is more evenly distributed, with between 7 and 9 children in each age group between 13 and 15.
- The proportion of children from a GRT/ethnic minority background has declined from 17.5% (21 children) in 2024/25 to 11.1% (14 children) in the current period.
- Violence (42.7%), Criminal Damage (15.3%) and drugs (14.7%) are the most common offence types. Among girls, 60% of first offences relate to violence, compared to 36.4% for boys. This compares with 41.2% and 33.9% respectively in 2024/25.

First Time Entrant and First Time Offender Analysis:

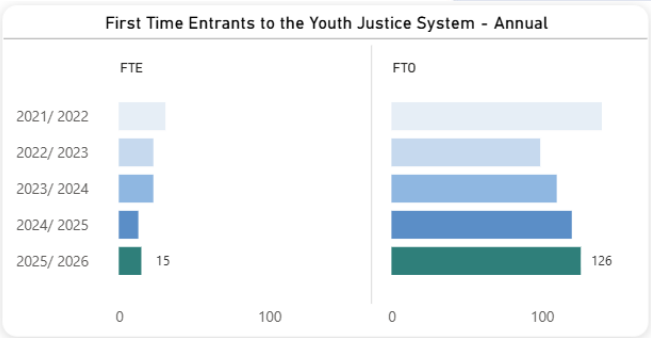


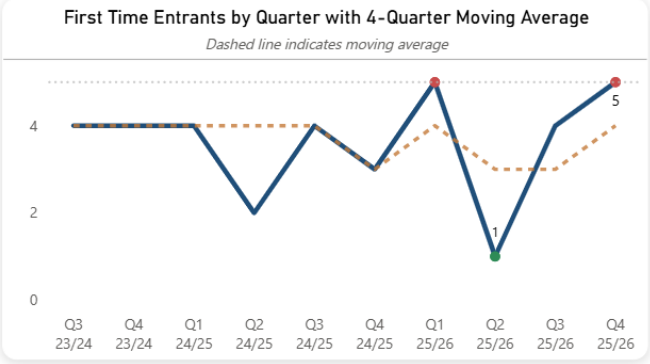
Definitions and coverage

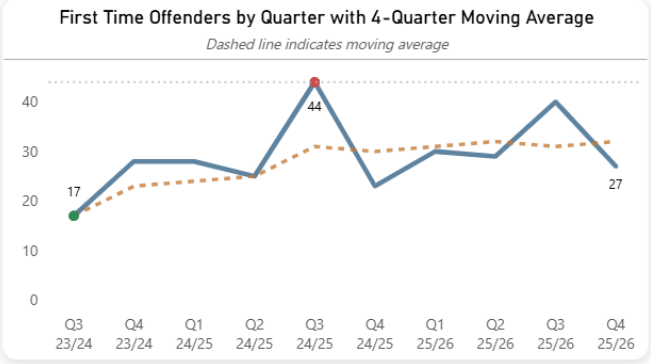
First Time Entrants (FTE)
Children who receive their **first substantive outcome** within the period.

First Time Offenders (FTO)
Children who receive a **first informal or substantive outcome** within the period.

Measure coverage
Counts the first informal outcome, caution or court sentence given to children aged **10–17 (inclusive)**, based on the **date of arrest** or **date of first court hearing**, depending on outcome type.



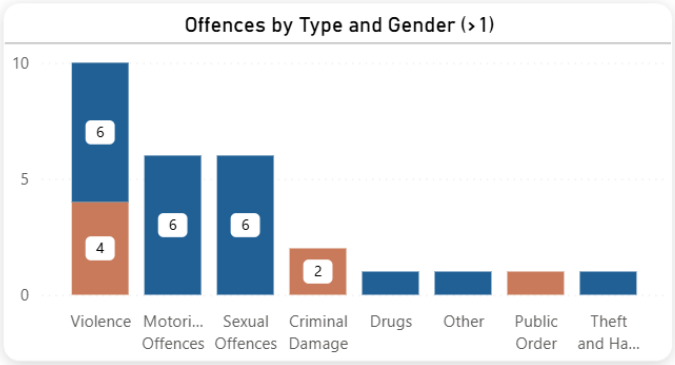


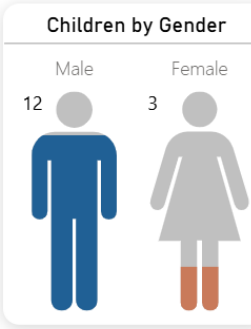


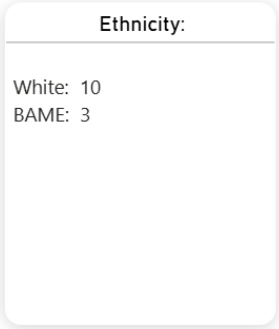
WEST BERKSHIRE YJST Youth Justice Support Team

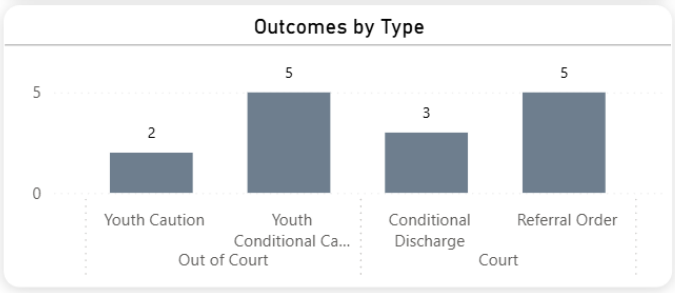
First Time Entrants Summary 2025:

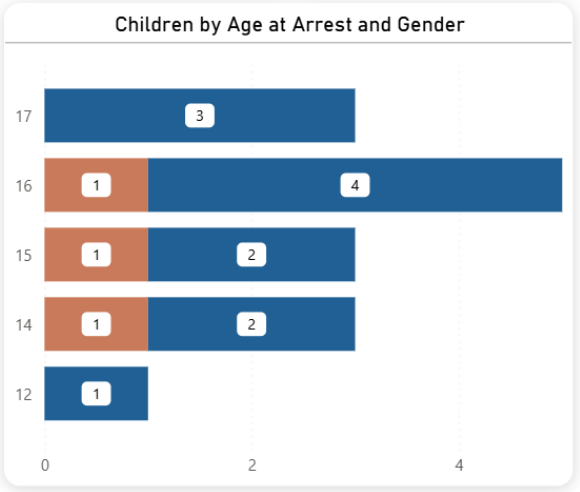
#Children	#Outcomes	Previous CR	#Offences
15	15	11	28





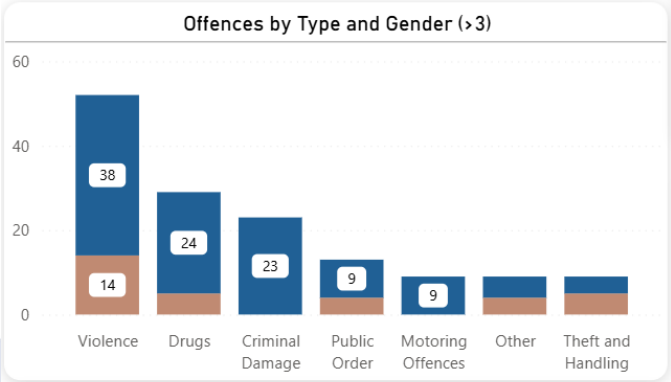


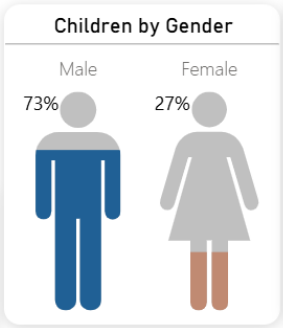


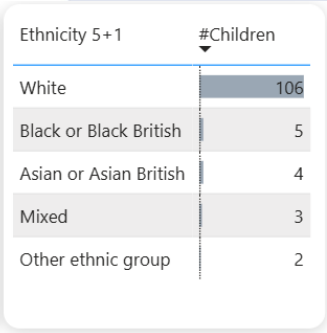


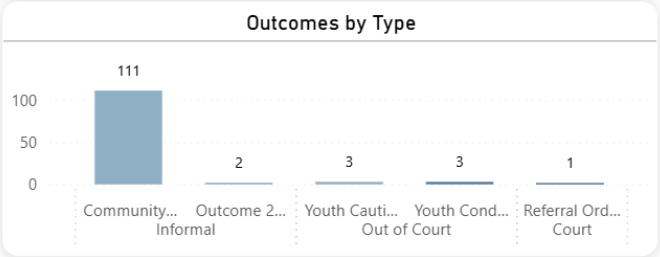
First Time Offenders Summary 2025:

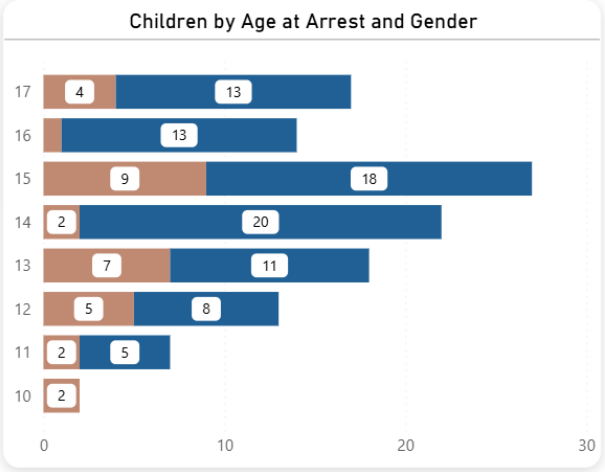
#Children	#Outcomes	#Offences
120	120	147











Reoffending

The Ministry of Justice publishes reoffending data at both local and national levels. The data is derived from Police National Computer (PNC) data and includes children in care from other local authorities who are placed within our area. A reduction in the number of First Time Entrants has led to a smaller reoffending cohort, which can result in greater year-on-year volatility in reported rates.

Reoffending is measured and published in two ways:

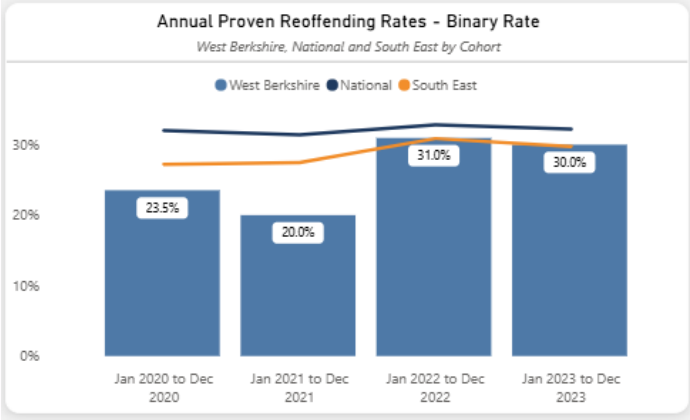
- **Binary rate**: the proportion of young people in the cohort who commit a further offence within 12 months.
- **Frequency rate:** the average number of reoffences committed by the cohort within 12 months.

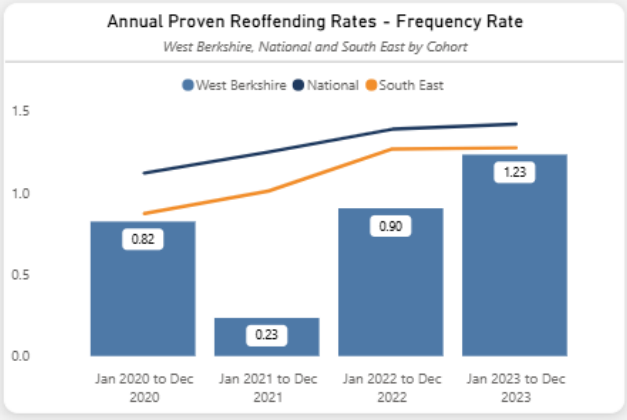
The annual measure is calculated using a weighted average, dividing the total number of reoffenders across four quarters by the total number of offenders in the same four-quarter period.

Reoffending Outturn

The binary reoffending rate decreased from 31.0% for the January 2022 to December 2022 cohort to 30.0% for the January 2023 to December 2023 cohort. This is lower than the national rate of 32.2% and broadly in line with the South East rate of 29.7%.

The frequency rate increased slightly in the January 2023 to December 2023 cohort, with reoffences per reoffender rising from 0.90 to 1.23. Despite this increase, the local figure remains below both the national rate of 1.42 and the South East rate of 1.28.





Prevention

The Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) continues to work collaboratively with partner agencies to prevent children from entering the youth justice system, with a strong emphasis on early intervention and proportionate responses to low-level concerns. One key mechanism is the use of Prevention letters issued by Thames Valley Police. These are triggered by behaviours such as anti-social or nuisance activity, or incidents that do not meet the evidential threshold for formal action but may, cumulatively, impact on communities. When identified, a Prevention letter is hand-delivered to parents, outlining concerns and advising that the YJST will make contact. A referral is simultaneously made to the YJST, where a worker is allocated to undertake a home visit and assess the need for support and intervention.

During the reporting period, 30 Prevention letters were issued. Of these, 10 children engaged with a prevention programme, while 34 parents accessed parenting support, demonstrating a positive level of family engagement and reinforcing the importance of working with parents and carers to address emerging behaviours at an early stage.

Prevention activity is further strengthened through partnership work with secondary schools and the Thames Valley Police safeguarding team via the Positive Intervention Programme (PiP). This programme targets children who have committed offences within a school setting but are not subject to formal criminal justice proceedings, or where behavioural concerns risk escalation, including potential exclusion. Children referred to PiP are allocated a worker, either from the Schools Officer role or the YJST, who delivers one-to-one interventions within the school environment to address behaviour and support continued engagement in education.

Between April 2025 and the end of the 2025/26 period, 14 children were referred to PiP, alongside a group session focused on sexually harmful behaviour and relevant legislation. Engagement levels varied, with two children not engaging and five partially engaging with the intervention. Two children went on to reoffend within three months of involvement. In relation to educational outcomes, one child was permanently excluded prior to intervention commencing; however, no further exclusions have occurred following PiP involvement. A small number of cases were unable to progress due to factors such as out-of-area transfer or school refusal.

While PiP continues to demonstrate value as a preventative approach, capacity constraints have impacted delivery during the year. As a result, further work is planned to strengthen this area, ensuring that early intervention within schools remains a key component of the partnership's broader prevention strategy.

Turnaround:

The Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) has been delivering the Turnaround programme since receiving Ministry of Justice funding in December 2022. Initially established as a three-year initiative, the programme provides a voluntary, early help offer based on assessment and intervention, focusing on children's individual needs and family context. Its aim is to de-escalate behaviour at the earliest opportunity and support children to move away from

pathways into the youth justice system. Due to its success at a national level, the programme has been extended for an additional year, albeit with reduced funding.

Since its introduction, Turnaround has enabled the YJST to engage children at a much earlier stage, including at the point of arrest where they may have been released under investigation or on conditional bail. It also provides a referral pathway from children's services in cases where police have attended an incident but taken no further formal action. This has strengthened the ability of the partnership to intervene proactively and provide timely, preventative support.

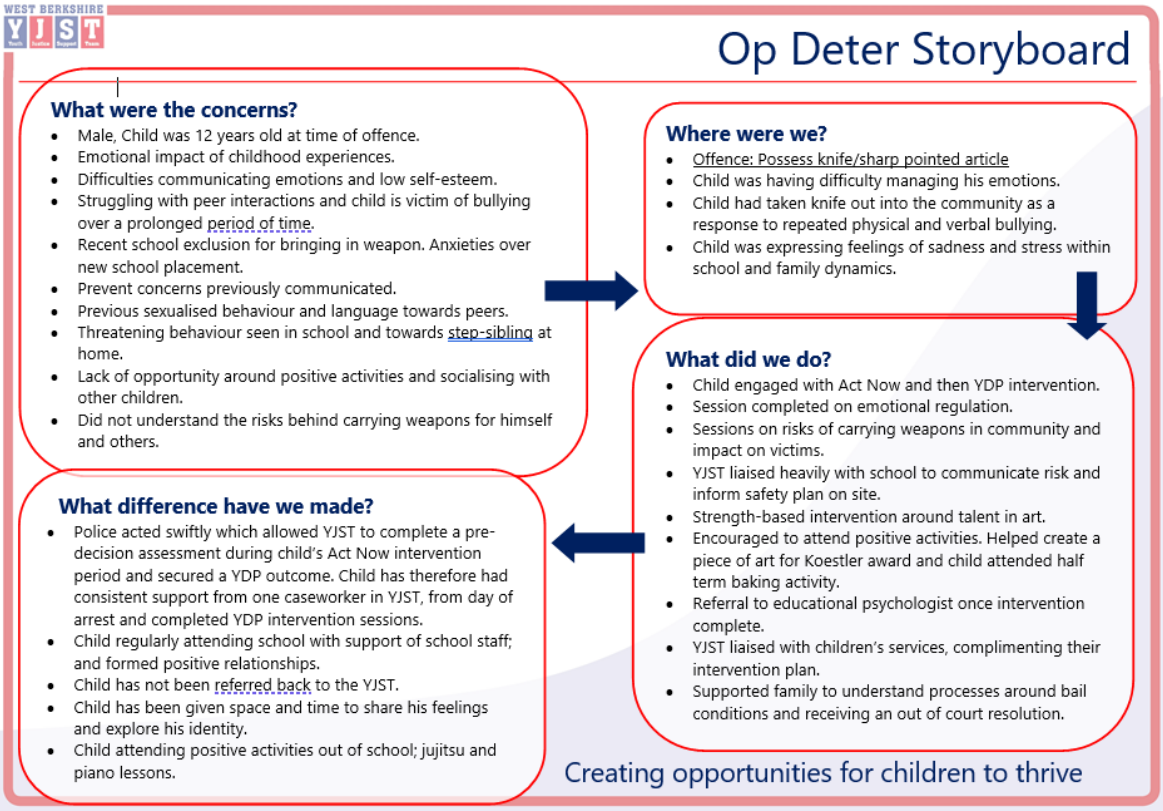
To date, 62 children have fully engaged with Turnaround interventions at this early stage. Outcomes indicate a positive impact, with only four children committing a further offence within 12 months of closure. This suggests that the programme is effective in supporting early desistance and reducing the likelihood of progression into further offending.

Operation Deter Youth:

Operation Deter Youth (formerly Act Now) was initially introduced as a one-year pilot, funded by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), to address serious youth violence across the Thames Valley. Following its success, the programme has secured continued funding for a further year, reflecting its positive impact and value as an early intervention model.

During 2025/26, the programme enabled the deployment of a dedicated Youth Worker to respond rapidly to children in police custody, with a target response time of within 90 minutes. This provision operated seven days a week, between 9am and 10pm, ensuring timely engagement at a critical point of contact. Over the course of the year, the service engaged with 68 children at the point of arrest, providing immediate support and facilitating early assessment and intervention.

Early engagement through Operation Deter Youth has demonstrated clear benefits in improving outcomes for children. By intervening at the earliest stage, the programme strengthens the opportunity to divert children away from further involvement in the criminal justice system. Evidence from case tracking, including individual case studies, highlights that this approach has supported positive outcomes, with some children successfully diverted through pathways such as the Youth Diversionary Programme (Outcome 22).



Diversion:

Diversion remains a key component of the partnership approach, ensuring that children are supported to avoid unnecessary entry into the formal criminal justice system wherever appropriate. Thames Valley Police utilise Community Resolutions as an informal disposal for low-level offending, typically issued by frontline officers. These are intended for children and young people with no previous formal disposals, with officers checking police systems to confirm eligibility. Where a child has previously received a Community Resolution, decision-making is escalated and determined jointly between the Thames Valley Police Youth Justice Unit and the YJST through the Joint Decision-Making Panel (JDMP). Between April 2024 and March 2025, a total of 152 Community Resolutions were issued, reflecting continued use of informal outcomes to divert children away from formal processes.

In addition to Community Resolutions, Thames Valley Police and Youth Justice partners have been piloting the use of deferred cautions under Outcome code 22, delivered locally through the Youth Diversionary Programme (YDP). This 12-month pilot has enabled children to engage in structured, assessment-led interventions as an alternative to immediate formal prosecution, with all decisions overseen through the JDMP following YJST assessment and recommendation. During the year, 24 YDP outcomes were issued, successfully diverting these children from becoming First Time Entrants to the youth justice system. While the programme continues to operate, Youth Justice Services across the Thames Valley are awaiting the final evaluation report to determine its longer-term future and potential for wider implementation.

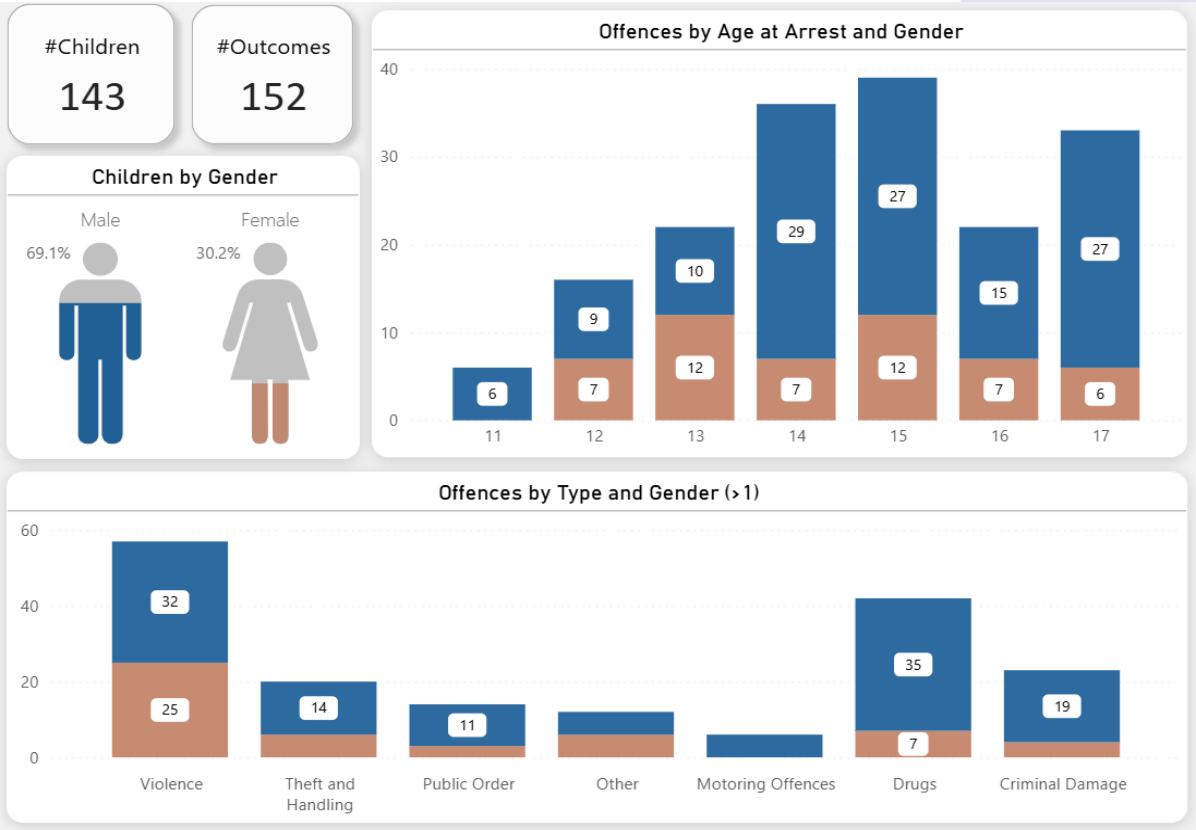
Robust governance and oversight of out-of-court decisions are maintained through regional scrutiny arrangements. The YJST Service Lead represents West Berkshire on the Thames Valley Out of Court Scrutiny Panel, which reviews the appropriateness and consistency of disposal decisions. The YJST Senior Social Worker acts as the local decision-maker and has presented West Berkshire cases to the panel, including in April 2026. All outcomes reviewed through this process were endorsed, providing assurance regarding the quality and consistency of decision-making within West Berkshire and reinforcing confidence in the effectiveness of the JDMP.

Focused Diversion

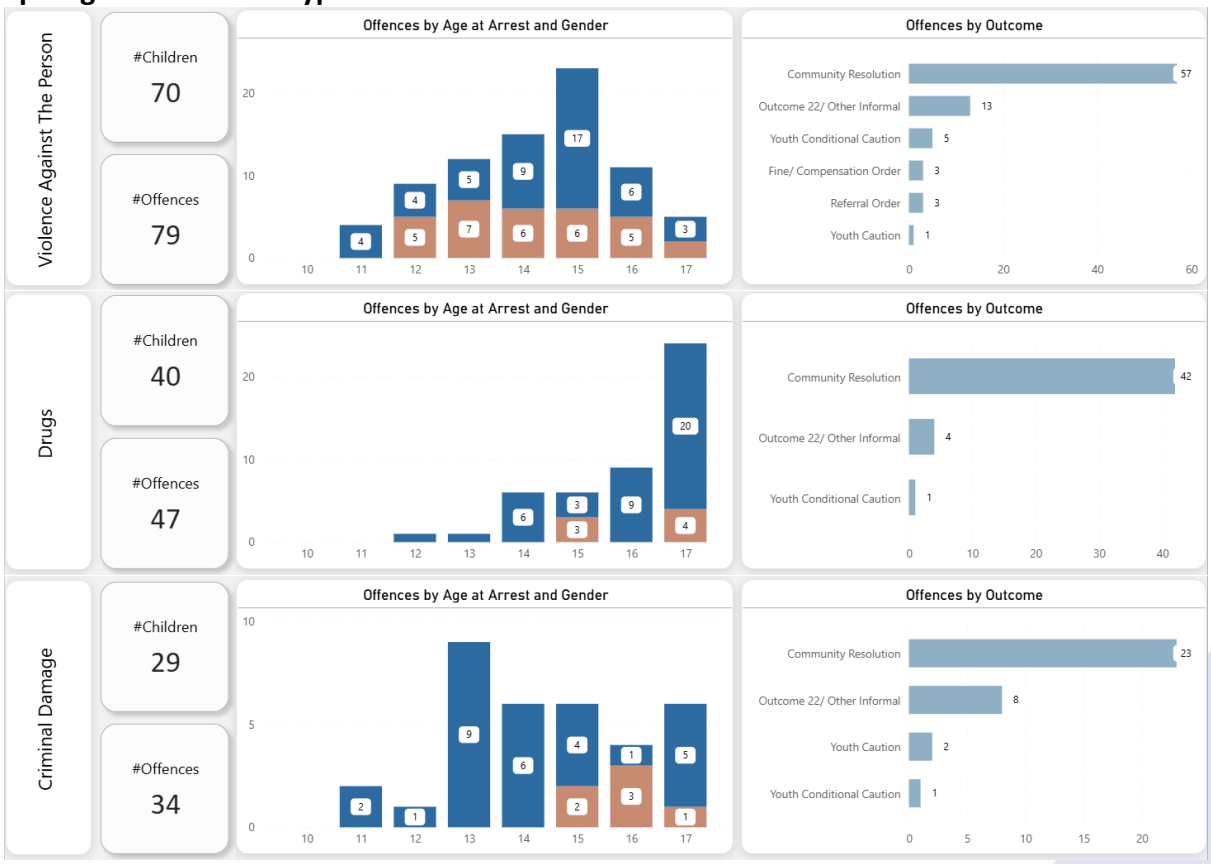
The Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) has been actively involved in the delivery and evaluation of the Focused Diversion Youth Navigator Mentorship programme. Findings from this study demonstrate that the model is both feasible and acceptable, successfully engaging children aged 10–15 who are at risk of school disengagement, exploitation or offending but who do not meet thresholds for specialist intervention. The evaluation highlights that unmet emotional and mental health needs are often key drivers of behavioural difficulties, and that early, relationship-based mentoring can play a significant role in improving school engagement and reducing the risk of involvement in crime.

Building on these positive findings, the programme has secured funding for a further year. During this period, the YJST will continue to embed and develop the model locally, with a particular focus on strengthening links with education. This will include enhancing the Positive Intervention Programme (PiP), further integrating early intervention support within school settings and ensuring that children at risk receive timely, coordinated and effective support.

Spotlight on Community Resolutions

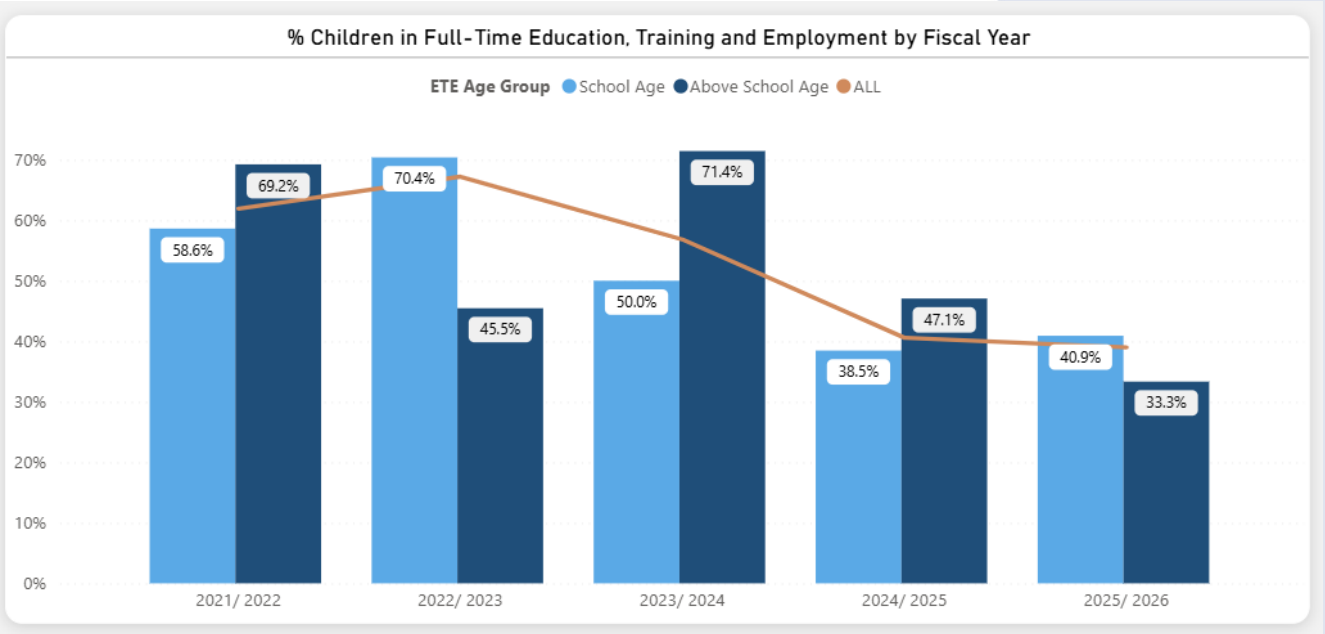


Spotlight on Offence Types:



Education:

Children in Full-Time Education, Training and Employment (All Outcomes):



33.3% of children completing a substantive intervention were in full time education or employment at the end of their order. This increases to 39% when including informal interventions.

The Prevention Intervention Programme (PIP) is now embedded within schools. There have been good links made with key leaders within schools to promote this approach and information is sent regularly to ensure schools remain aware of the support on offer. However, due to recent capacity issues there have been a reduction in promoting PiP with schools so there has been a reduction in service. The Newly appointed YJ Education Officer will be focusing on developing this offer with schools.

The YJST is a centre for AQAs, providing the opportunity for children to gain certificate of achievements where relevant and beneficial. This year Twenty-one children were awarded AQA awards.

Restorative Justice and Victims:

West Berkshire Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) is committed to delivering a high-quality, victim-focused service that aligns with HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) standards. These standards emphasise the importance of timely contact, clear communication, meaningful opportunities for engagement and ensuring that the victim's voice is central to assessment and intervention planning.

The Restorative Justice Officer plays a key role in achieving this by leading the delivery of restorative interventions and reparation activity. This ensures that victims are offered appropriate opportunities to engage in processes that promote accountability, reparation and emotional resolution. Restorative justice is fully embedded within the service and is a standing agenda item at fortnightly team meetings, supporting ongoing reflection, shared learning and the consistent application of victim-centred practice.

A structured two-stage approach to victim contact is in place to ensure timely and effective engagement. Initial contact is made by letter, which includes information about the service and the Victims' Code of Practice, followed by a telephone call approximately one week later. This approach has improved engagement, with increased response rates following the telephone follow-up.

The YJST provides a flexible and responsive range of support tailored to individual need. This includes facilitating victim impact statements to inform work with children who have caused harm, offering letters of explanation, and enabling participation in shuttle mediation or face-to-face restorative meetings where appropriate. These processes are carefully prepared and managed to ensure that participation is safe and constructive. For victims under 18, additional one-to-one interventions are available, focusing on protective behaviours and personal safety. Throughout all stages of involvement, victims receive regular updates to ensure they remain informed and supported. Upon case closure, victims are provided with information about local support services to ensure continuity of care, alongside a closing letter and feedback form to capture their experience and inform service development.

Quality assurance is maintained through a robust programme of audit activity. In addition to routine case audits, a dedicated victim-focused audit was undertaken in February 2026. This reviewed 16 cases drawn from 144 YOT1s where a victim had been identified between January 2025 and January 2026. Of these, 52 victims consented to contact, and all were approached by the Restorative Justice Officer. Seventeen victims engaged with the service. The audit examined ten cases where victims received support and six cases where victims initially consented but later disengaged, providing valuable insight into engagement and practice.

To further strengthen quality and consistency, a monthly victim audit process has been introduced, with two assessments reviewed to ensure that victim-related information is accurately recorded and that the victim's voice, impact and opportunities for restorative engagement are clearly reflected within assessments.

An important aspect of delivery is the contribution of trained volunteers. The Restorative Justice Officer coordinates, trains and supports a cohort of nine volunteers who play an active role in service delivery, including participation in Referral Order panels. This is supported through quarterly volunteer evenings, providing opportunities for training, service updates and reflective discussion. This structured approach supports the sustainability and development of restorative practice, while ensuring high-quality outcomes for both victims and children.

Referral Orders:

Referral Orders in West Berkshire are delivered through a well-established volunteer model, with trained community volunteers chairing panels in a restorative and child-focused manner. The YJST currently benefits from a stable cohort of nine experienced volunteers, all of whom have contributed to this work over a number of years, bringing consistency, knowledge and strong community engagement to the process.

In line with a Child First approach, panels are designed to actively involve the child, ensuring their voice is central to discussions. There is a clear emphasis on recognising strengths, encouraging participation and supporting children to take meaningful ownership of their actions and future plans when agreeing their Referral Order contract. This approach promotes accountability while also supporting positive identity development and engagement.

Total number of RO starting April 2025				
Initial Panels	Review	Breach	Extension	Final
6	4	0	0	2

Following each panel, feedback is routinely gathered from both panel members and the child. This reflective process enables the service to continuously review and improve practice, informing ongoing volunteer development and enhancing the quality of delivery. It also ensures that the experience for children and their families remains responsive, constructive and focused on achieving positive outcomes.

Feedback from children –

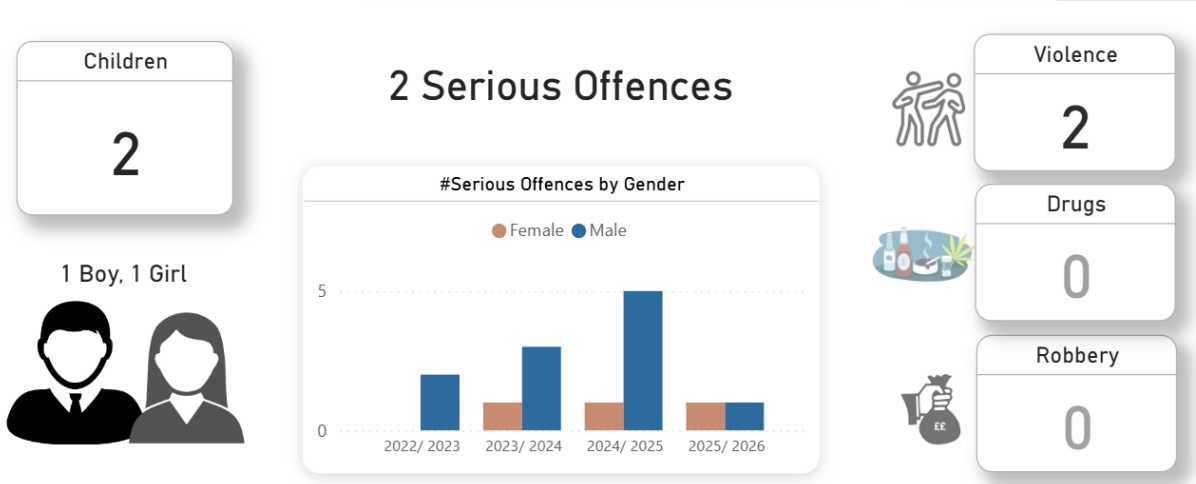
- The panel members were friendly / made me feel more comfortable
- They listened to me
- They didn't ask too many questions – which was better for me
- I got the opportunity to talk about what happened
- I didn't have to go into too much detail – which was good.

Feedback from Panel members –

- We have plenty of time in the premeeting – so can ask the case worker questions
- The red folder helps us to know what support is available for the young people
- The recent GRT training really helped us to understand the young person's needs
- The young person engaged well – mum was supportive

Serious Youth Violence, exploitation and contextual safeguarding:

It is important to recognise that the national KPI measure for serious youth violence differs from the Thames Valley Police locally agreed definition and data collection approach, and therefore comparisons should be interpreted with caution. Within West Berkshire, the overall incidence of serious youth violence remains low. During 2025/26, two children were responsible for two violent offences, both resulting in community outcomes. This represents a reduction from 2024/25; however, given the small cohort size, figures are likely to fluctuate year on year.



Outcome Type by Gender

Outcome for Reporting	Female	Male	Total
Deferred Prosecution Outcome 22	0	1	1
Youth Caution	1	0	1
Total	**1**	**1**	**2**

Serious Offences by Fiscal Year

FY	Serious Violence	All Offences	% All Offences
2020/ 2021	4	216	1.9%
2021/ 2022	0	272	0.0%
2022/ 2023	2	215	0.9%
2023/ 2024	4	224	1.8%
2024/ 2025	6	246	2.4%
2025/ 2026	2	248	0.8%

During the same period, one child was sentenced for serious sexual offending and received a Community Order. In response to the level of risk and need identified, Children's Services secured a specialist long-term therapeutic placement to support rehabilitation and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. This child is managed under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Level 1, Category 1, ensuring appropriate multi-agency oversight.

Assessment and risk management are central to the YJST's approach. AssetPlus/PDAT is used to assess both the risk that children present to others and their own vulnerability. Managing and reducing risk to others is a core focus of partnership work, with all children assessed as presenting high or very high safety concerns reviewed through monthly multi-agency case planning forums, chaired by the Operational Manager. This ensures coordinated oversight, effective information sharing and consistent risk management across agencies.

The Safety and Wellbeing element of AssetPlus/PDAT also assesses vulnerability, including exposure to sexual and criminal exploitation. Where concerns are identified, a screening tool is completed and submitted to the Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (EMRAC) via the Operational Manager, enabling a timely and coordinated safeguarding response.

The YJST complies with the mandatory requirement to report serious incidents in line with Youth Justice Board criteria. Following a serious incident notification during 2025/26, consideration was given to undertaking a critical learning review. As the child involved was not previously known to the service, it was determined that a local review was not required.

The Youth Justice Support Team (YJST) is committed to playing an active and integral role in delivering the Serious Violence Duty, working collaboratively across the partnership to prevent and respond to harm. The team is an active member of the Serious Violence Reduction Steering Group and works closely with the Community Safety Partnership to implement local requirements. Strong operational links are maintained with Thames Valley Police and wider partners through regular engagement in key forums, including the Local Command Unit (LCU) Knife Crime Meeting and the Tactical Partnership for Serious Organised Crime.

This partnership approach is reinforced through consistent participation in a wide range of multi-agency meetings. The Operational Manager attends EMRAC, Tactical Coordination Group (TTCG) meetings, Mini-MAPS (anti-social behaviour), LCU Knife Crime forums and Serious Organised Crime meetings. This ensures effective intelligence sharing across agencies and enables the YJST to proactively direct resources towards emerging risks and issues impacting community safety. At an operational level, the YJ Police Officer plays a key role in monitoring real-time information, reviewing alert system notifications for all open YJST cases alongside daily LCU briefings, and escalating concerns promptly to the Operational Manager to ensure timely and coordinated responses.

Safeguarding and the identification of exploitation risks remain central to the team's practice. The Operational Manager ensures that all staff receive regular and up-to-date training in

safeguarding, child exploitation, Prevent and County Lines, maintaining a high level of professional awareness and capability. The Service Lead co-chairs the Exploitation and Missing Risk Assessment Conference (EMRAC), with the Operational Manager also attending to support effective information sharing for children known to the YJST. In addition, the team contributes to the multi-agency Channel Panel where required. Over the past year, the YJST has maintained full engagement with statutory safeguarding processes, attending all relevant Child Protection Initial and Review Conferences to ensure that children's risks are appropriately identified, managed and reviewed within a multi-agency framework.

Detention in Police Custody:

Detention arrangements for children in police custody are subject to robust multi-agency oversight across Thames Valley. A bi-monthly Children in Custody meeting, facilitated by Thames Valley Police and chaired by the Chief Inspector responsible for custody suites, brings together partners including Youth Justice Services, Emergency Duty Services, Children's Social Care, information officers and the Appropriate Adult coordinator. This forum reviews all cases involving children entering custody, including decisions relating to detention, remand or release, with a focus on identifying trends, ensuring consistency and promoting good practice. Particular attention is given to compliance with Section 38(6) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, alongside oversight of the availability and effectiveness of Appropriate Adult provision across the region.

At a local level, West Berkshire YJST maintains a duty system of trained staff to provide Appropriate Adult support during office hours, with additional coverage provided by the Emergency Duty Team outside of these times. The Service Lead and seconded Police Officer also play a key role in workforce development, delivering training to both internal staff and external providers, including independent children's homes, to ensure a consistent understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and best practice when supporting children in custody. Refresher training for Appropriate Adults has been delivered over the past year, and local guidance is reviewed and updated every three years, or sooner where there are changes in policy, to ensure practice remains current and compliant.

Use of custody and constructive resettlement (including remand):

The data published by the Youth Justice Board uses a custody rate per 1,000 10–17-year-olds in West Berkshire. With no custodial sentences given during the period, the outturn for Jan 2025 – Dec 2025 is 0. This compares to a regional rate of 0.03 and a national rate of 0.09, both decreasing from the previous period.

Custodial sentences	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

The remand grant allocation for 2025/26 was £0. Costs per bednight for the same period are as follows:

Secure Children's Homes – £968
Secure Training Centres – £941
Young Offender Institutions - £353
Secure School - £859

One child was remanded to a Secure Training Centre for 18 nights for sexual offences. The child was moved to specialist Residential Care unit and received a 12-month Referral Order alongside a Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

A further child was remanded to Local Authority Accommodation with Conditions. The child received a 12-month Referral Order.

Working with families:
Engagement with parents and carers is a central element of the Youth Justice Support Team's (YJST) approach. All case-holding practitioners make early contact with parents, either during police custody visits or through home visits, ensuring that support is offered from the outset. During these initial interactions, parents are provided with information, guidance and reassurance to help them better understand how to support their child and respond to emerging behaviours.

All parents are offered access to targeted parenting support, primarily through the "Who's in Charge" (WIC) eight-week programme, which is designed to strengthen parenting skills, improve relationships and build confidence in managing challenging behaviour. In addition to group provision, there are opportunities for parents to receive tailored one-to-one support from parenting workers where this is more appropriate to their needs.

During 2025/26, 34 parents engaged with the WIC programme, with a further two parents receiving individual support. This reflects a strong level of engagement and demonstrates the value placed on working alongside families to achieve sustainable outcomes for children.

Action Plan for 2026-27

The team's priorities are outlined in the following action plan.

Education and Inclusion:

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Reduce the numbers of children suspended from school and improve re-engagement pathways	• Develop a clear route for Focused Diversion and Positive intervention Programme (PIP) • Create a referral form and processes for the service • Promote the new service with school leaders • Review process and amend • Report on service to YJ Management Board	YJ Education Officer and Operational Manager YJ Education Officer	June 2026 June 2026 November 2026 April 26
Children to have improved access to education, training or employment and action taken for those children who are unable to access full time provision	• Clear KPI recording of all children open to YJST • Overview of the ETE figures at the YJST/Education meeting • Partnership plan/actions to meet individual children's needs progressed	YJ Education Officer YJ Education Officer YJST/ETE group	monthly data cleaning Termly Termly
All children to receive recognition for their achievements	• Transfer AQA Award assessor to new YJ Education Officer • Monthly reviews and submission of children's evidence	Operational Manager YJ Education Officer	June 2026 Monthly
Children's attendance improves and the number of children on partial timetables reduces.	• Strengthen the multi-agency education panel to address persistent absence, educational packages and inclusion among YJST involved children	YJ Education Officer / Operational Manager / Service Lead Inclusion	Termly
Children with SEND are identified early and receive appropriate, tailored support to avoid	• Utilise routine screening for SEND at the earliest contact point and strengthen joint working with education, health, and SEND services to ensure timely assessments and provision	SEND reform workstream	September 2026

Barriers to participation in post school education are reduced, leading to improved engagement and attendance in post 16 education	• Develop and support multi-agency plans to address individual barriers and provide targeted support to sustain access, engagement and retention at post 16 education/training options	Post 16 advisor / YJ Education Officer	Quarterly
Increase attendance at school thus reducing the likelihood of children offending	• Support the Education Attendance working group in seeking to increase attendance of severely absent pupils	Education Attendance working Group	Quarterly

Prevention and Diversion:

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
The YJST to present pre-decision assessments that are accurate and consistent to improve outcomes for children	• Review and update the pre-decision assessment form. • Deliver a workshop with all pre-decision authors	Senior Social Worker	July 2026 Sept 2026
A reduction in the number of children coming to the attention of the police for offending at school.	• Increase school-based interventions through the Positive Intervention Programme (PIP) for children in a school setting	YJ Education Officer / YJ Police Officer	October 2026
Support the reduction in criminalisation of children by reducing first time entrants	• Maintain and strengthen the Joint Decision-Making Panels (JDMP) using the gravity matrix to ensure fair and consistent out-of-court decisions through embedding new guidance and facilitating practice observation and reflection.	Operational Manager/ Senior Social Worker	December 2026
Children are prevented from entering the criminal justice system	• Enhance the Focused Diversion mentoring opportunities for children in school who can be prevented from entering the criminal justice system	YJ Youth Worker	October 2026
Anti-social behaviour and nuisance behaviour is reduced in West Berkshire	• Prevention letters are promoted to frontline TVP police officers	YJ Police Officer	Quarterly

	• Support for staff to increase voluntary engagement in prevention opportunities	Operational Manager	November 2026

Knife Possession and Serious Violence:

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Meet the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty and reduce serious violence among children	• Collaborate with the BCT Team and OPCC in the development of Prevention partnership and Young Futures Prevention Hub	BCT Team, YJ Managers and SV Coordinator	January 2027
Ensure that the assessment and management of risk is of high quality and protects the public	• Undertake an audit addressing the assessment and management of risk, reporting findings to the YJST Management Group	Operational Manager	December 2026
YJST is compliant with the knife crime guidance 2026	• Police notification to YJST within 1 working day • YJST deliver Op Deter Program • First home visit within - 48 hours delivered through Op Deter processes • Intervention begins within four weeks delivered through Op Deter processes • Mandatory intervention plans for all knife offences • JDMP to ensure that only appropriate outcomes are used	TVP YJ Youth Worker YJST Operational Manager	May 2026
Strengthen practice and understanding of risk management within the Youth Justice Service context	• Review the recommendations of the Southport review • Incorporate learning from the Southport enquiry and other relevant case reviews into risk management practice	Operational Manager/ Probation Link Worker	July 2026 September 2026

Victims and Restorative Justice:

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Victims of Youth Crime will receive excellent services	• Benchmark YJST victim work against HMIP inspection findings and report to the management meetings	ATM	Throughout 2026/2027
Victim of crime work is of the highest quality	• Undertake and audit of restorative justice practices to identify quality and victim satisfaction	ATM/RJO	January 2026
Increased number of YOT1 notifications with completed victim consent	• Provide briefing to TVP front line officers highlighting the importance of YOT1 victim completion • Monitor the YOT1 victim completion rates across Thames Valley	LCJB Victim and Witness subgroup	Termly
The views, needs and concerns of victims of crime are appropriately captured in PDAT assessments	• Undertake a Dip Audit on victim elements of PDAT assessments to address any quality issues.	Victim Worker	February 2027

Reducing reoffending - enhancing life choices

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Interventions with children are effective and make a difference.	• Two intervention sharing workshops • Refresh intervention resource list • match resources against the YEF toolkit and report the impact	ATM	July 2026 and January 2027 August 2026 and February 2027 March 2027
Reduced time from offence to disposal thus increasing engagement and capacity for positive change	• Support the work of the LCJB Childrens group to address the timeliness issue across the system • Support the work of TVP in piloting enhanced	LCJB Childrens Group TVP YJ Unit	Termly

	investigation processes and dashboards		
Interventions with children are effective and make a difference.	• Support YJ staff to use evaluated evidence based practice through the YEF toolkit, YJB Resources Hub and What Works Centre.	Operational Manager & ATM	July 2026
Bespoke offence specific interventions are effective at changing behaviour	• Monitor and evaluate the use the Virtual Reality Headsets when addressing specific behaviours.	SYV Coordinator	March 2027
Turnaround scheme is effective at reducing reoffending	• YJ Information Officer to be involved in the national impact evaluation of Turnaround	Information officer and MOJ	Quarterly
YJS requirement for the provision of Appropriate Adults is suitable and meets high standards	• Monitor and report on the use of Appropriate Adults and any use of PACE 1984 Section 38(6) transfers	Children in Custody meeting / Service Lead	Quarterly

Safeguarding, vulnerabilities and well being

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
All children to have access and information about leisure activities and support services to increase wellbeing.	• Update the positive activities booklet and promote those activities among young people.	YJST Case managers	Termly
Ensure that the assessment and management of safety and wellbeing is of high quality and protects the public	• Undertake an audit addressing the assessment and management of safety and wellbeing, reporting findings to the YJST Management Board	Operational Manager	December 2026
Children and parents are aware of risks associated with criminal and sexual exploitation and where help is available	• Promote the 'Risking it all' performances in schools and for parents, enhancing knowledge and pathways for support	Wellbeing coordinator in schools	February 2027
Children are screened for any concerns of exploitation or grooming	• Maintain the professional development of staff regarding child exploitation, use of the	Operational Manager	October 2026 / February 2027

	indicator tool and EMRAC pathways through briefings		

Health

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
Communication passports are used effectively to support children's engagement and participation	• Continue to embed and evaluate the use of communication passports and tools for children with speech and language needs	Speech and Language Therapist	September 2026
Health needs of children are identified and responded to in a timely and clinically informed manner	• Health and Justice staff to operate a clinic model enabling YJST staff to highlight children who need assessment and intervention from a health worker	Health and Justice Staff	Weekly
Children are equipped to respond when first aid is required	• Deliver basic First Aid training as a first responder to children	YJST Nurse/ YJ Police Officer	Termly
YJST to work with children in a trauma informed manner	• Staff refresher training on the Trauma Recovery Model to be delivered	Mental Health Worker	January 2027

Strengths based approach

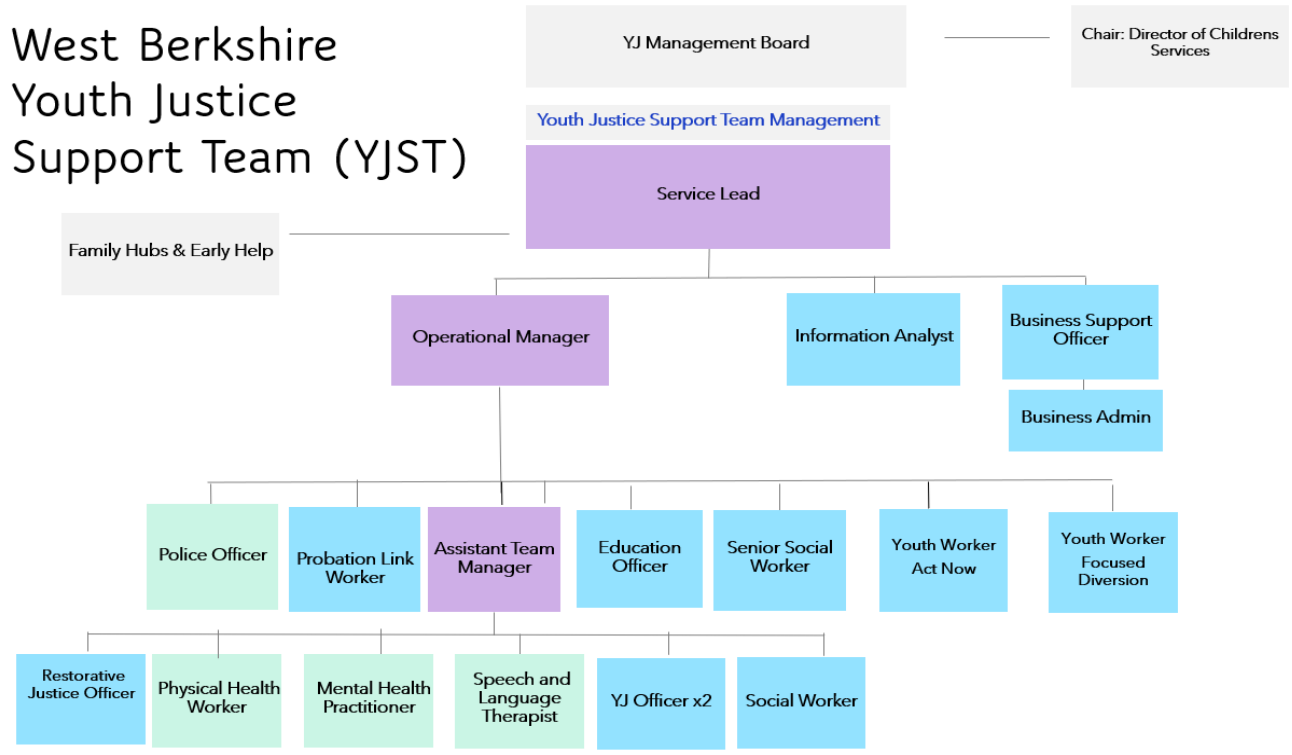
Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
The YJST will have specific champion and specialist roles to strengthen support and services to Children, parents and victims	• Review and refresh to role descriptions • Every team member has the opportunity to promote/champion an	ATM	October 2026 November 2026

	area of practice within the team meetings		
Parents to receive parenting guidance and support from the initial contact with YJST	• Review parenting information and resources • Deliver a workshop with all practitioners' intervening with families to increase their skills	Senior Social Worker	August 2026 October 2026
YJST practice is continually developing and improving	• Review and benchmark YJST Practice against recently published research and thematic HMIP inspection findings	YJST Managers	Quarterly
YJST practice is continually developing and improving through the use of feedback	• Annual feedback report to the Management Group to consider changes to service provision.	Service Lead	January 2027
Parents are supported and equipped to parent their children	• Expand access to parenting programmes like "Who's in Charge", STOP parenting through promotion on the digital platform	Parenting coordinator / Senior Social worker	September 2026

Responding to cohort – diversity and disproportionality

Outcome sought	Action	By Whom	By When
YJST staff are culturally competent when working with children from diverse communities	• Deliver culturally competent briefings for staff to better support children from GRT and ethnic minority backgrounds	Diversity Champion/ Operational Manager	November 2026
YJST delivers targeted work in light of the cohort of children that are open.	• Conduct regular disproportionality monitoring to identify over-represented groups and inform targeted interventions	Information Officer	Quarterly
Understand the experiences and views of children in West Berkshire including issues of crime and safety	• Undertake the a Youth Survey among secondary schools to elicit their views	Health and Wellbeing coordinator in schools and Service Lead	February 2027

Appendix One:



The YJST consists of 14 female staff and 5 male staff. 18 White British, 1 Black Caribbean, 2 members of staff have disabilities.

Appendix two

Acronyms

AIM3 – Assessment model for harmful sexual behaviour
APIS – Assessment, Planning, Intervention and Supervision
ASB – Anti-Social Behaviour
ASSET Plus – Youth Justice Assessment Tool
CAMHS – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
EMRAC – Exploitation, Missing Risk Assessment Conference
ETE – Education, Training and Employment
FTE – First Time Entrant
FTO – First Time Offender
GRT – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller
HMIP – HM Inspectorate of Probation
HRU – Harm Reduction Unit
JDMP – Joint Decision-Making Panel
KPI / KPIs – Key Performance Indicator(s)
LCJB – Local Criminal Justice Board
LCU – Local Command Unit
MAPPA – Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MiniMAPS – Multi-agency Anti-Social Behaviour and problem-solving meeting
MOJ – Ministry of Justice
OOCR – Out of Court Resolution
OPCC – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
PACE – Police and Criminal Evidence Act
PDAT – Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool
PiP / PIP – Positive Intervention Programme
PNC – Police National Computer
SaLT – Speech and Language Therapist
SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLC – Speech, Language and Communication
TTCG – Tactical Coordination Group
TVP – Thames Valley Police
WIC – "Who's in Charge" parenting programme
YDP – Youth Diversionary Programme
YEF – Youth Endowment Fund
YJ – Youth Justice
YJS – Youth Justice Service
YJST – Youth Justice Support Team
YJB – Youth Justice Board
YOT1 – Youth Offending notification document

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Item 12: Notices of Motion

Motions submitted for debate at the Council meeting on the 15 October 2026

(a) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Tony Vickers:

Protecting UK Farming

Council notes:

This Council thanks DEFRA for the recently announced extra support for English farming but recognises:

- That farming is the backbone of the West Berkshire rural economy, directly sustaining around 1,000 jobs, supporting some 10,000 more and generating significant (circa £50million per annum) economic value annually while providing a critical service by putting food on the tables of the county's residents;
- That farming is central to our district's cultural identity and that this shared heritage unites Berkshire with our Ridgeway neighbours and the rest of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape;
- That farming is an industry which this Council is proud to support;
- That food security is both a national priority and a local responsibility, thus West Berkshire's farming community can play a key role in ensuring local communities have access to locally grown, affordable and nutritious food, particularly for households experiencing food poverty;
- That farmers and rural landowners in West Berkshire are custodians of the vast majority of our District's natural landscape and operate to some of the highest environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards in the world - with more than half engaged in agri-environmental schemes - and that it is important they are not placed at a competitive disadvantage by imports produced to standards that would not be permitted for domestic producers. The Council supports the principle that food imported into the United Kingdom should meet standards equivalent to those required of British farmers.
- That the decisions farmers make in our countryside can significantly mitigate the impacts of climate change, in particular by conserving and improving soil depth and quality and the special biodiversity supported by it on our chalk downlands.
- That likewise the decisions farmers make in our countryside can help protect our waterways and countryside from pollution by runoff.
- Concerns raised by farming organisations regarding the impact of changes to inheritance tax arrangements, agricultural support schemes and post-Brexit trade agreements.
- That there is an opportunity to strengthen ties between farmers, rural communities and local organisations including this Council, to build a more

resilient local food system that works for residents and supports the long-term sustainability of farming.

Council resolves:

1. To engage with farmers, rural communities and businesses across the West Berkshire area and report back within 12 months on the issues identified and any actions the Council could take to support the sustainability of the rural economy.
2. To request that the Executive review the support currently provided by the Council for farmers' markets, local food producers and the rural economy, and identify opportunities to strengthen that support through economic development, tourism, skills and apprenticeship initiatives.
3. To request that the Executive consider opportunities to increase the use and promotion of locally produced food through Council services, partnerships and community initiatives, including through the development or expansion of Farm to Fork and similar programmes where appropriate.
4. To support and promote Open Farm Sunday and other initiatives that connect farmers with schools, food banks and community organisations to strengthen food security and improve public understanding of farming and food production across Berkshire.
5. To request that the Executive investigate opportunities and support the founding of community-supported agriculture schemes and local food partnerships that give residents a direct relationship with farms.
6. To request that the Executive work with farmers to develop initiatives that enable them to contribute surplus produce to those most in need, reducing food waste while supporting households facing food poverty.
7. To support farmers to develop initiatives to protect the countryside and waterways to minimise environmental impacts and protect waterways from pollution and runoff
8. To write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs expressing the Council's support for maintaining high environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards in food production and for ensuring that British farmers are not undercut by imported food produced to lower standards.

(b) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Carolyne Culver:

<u>Cool Spaces for Summer 2027</u>

Council notes:

- There were several heat waves in 2026, resulting in unnecessary excess deaths. This trend is likely to continue in the future.
- During the cost-of-living crisis several ‘warm spaces’ were established across the district.

- Many of these warm spaces have evolved into community cafes which continue to operate to this day.
- Based on UK Health Security Agency advice, WBC issues alerts and comprehensive advice to Members and residents during periods of excessive heat or cold.

Council resolves to request that the Executive:

1. Investigate the establishment of 'cool spaces' across West Berkshire in preparation for summer 2027.
2. Identify council owned properties that could be made available and which can be advertised as cool spaces during periods of extreme heat, subject to operational feasibility and available resources.
3. Work proactively with stakeholders across the district to identify spaces that they own, manage or hire, which the council could help advertise as cool spaces.
4. Consider how existing Council communication channels can be used to widely advertise these cool spaces to the public.
5. Report back to the Executive and Members on the proposed arrangements before 1 May 2027

(c) The following Motion has been submitted in the name of Councillor Carolyne Culver:

<u>Questions at Scrutiny</u>

Council notes:

- 30 minutes is allocated for public questions at Council and Executive.
- Members of the public are allowed to submit questions to the new Highways Improvement Group.
- There is no provision for a public questions agenda item at our scrutiny meetings. Currently we must suspend standing orders to allow members of the public to speak.
- Many other councils allow a public questions agenda item at their scrutiny meetings.

Council resolves:

1. To allow time for a public questions agenda item at scrutiny meetings.
2. Public questions must relate to the meeting's agenda items or the committee's work programme, to ensure that the relevant Members and officers are on hand to respond.
3. That the relevant Members and officers consult with the three chairs of scrutiny about the details of how this can be implemented.

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Council – 15 October 2026

Item 13 – Member Questions

To Follow

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