

# DRAFT

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

## JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

### Minutes of the meeting held on

**MONDAY 12 JUNE 2023**

### **BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL, TIME SQUARE, MARKET STREET, BRACKNELL**

**Present:** Lee Dillon (Chairman), Phil Barnett (remotely), Kandy Jefferies (Vice-Chairman) and Guy Gillbe

**Also Present:** George Lawrence (Residential Team Leader), Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager), Eric Owens (Service Director - Development & Regulation), Clare Lawrence (Executive Director - Place), Alison Beynon (Solicitor), Suzanne McLaughlin (Senior Environmental Health Officer), Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Moira Fraser (Public Protection Partnership), Kevin Gibbs (Bracknell Forest Council) and Damian James (Bracknell Forest Council)

#### **PART I**

##### **1 Election of the Chairman**

**RESOLVED that** Councillor Lee Dillon of West Berkshire Council be elected as Chairman for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year.

The Committee observed a period of silence to reflect on the recent sad passing of the Deputy Mayoress of Reading, Councillor Colette Dennis.

##### **2 Appointment of the Vice Chairman**

**RESOLVED that** Councillor Kandy Jefferies of Bracknell Forest Council be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year.

##### **3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

##### **4 Outstanding Actions From Previous Meetings**

Item 1: Sean Murphy reported that the possibility of installing defibrillators alongside the water safety cabinets was raised with the West Berkshire Council Health and Wellbeing Board, who were content with the current coverage. However, there was consensus at the Water Safety Partnership meeting held on 30 January 2023 that defibrillators should be provided at locations with water safety cabinets. The issue would continue to be reviewed.

Item 2: Sean Murphy reported that elected Member oversight of regulations of investigatory powers would be covered in the Public Protection Partnership induction for both authorities. These induction sessions were being organised.

Item 3: Moira Fraser reported that the data on water safety incidents would be shared outside of the meeting.

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Item 4: Completed. Bracknell Forest Council had been included as an attendee of the Water Safety Partnership. Stephen Chown and Damian James would be invited to future meetings.

Item 5: Completed. Sean Murphy reported that updates had been made to the equality comments in the covering report of the West Berkshire Council Contaminated Land Strategy.

Item 6: Completed. It had been clarified that 'non-human receptors' in the Contaminated Land Strategy referred to animals, plants, rivers or property. An explanatory note was added to the Strategy prior to publication.

Item 7: The Committee would be updated on this matter in due course.

Item 8: Moira Fraser reported that updating the Houses of Multiple Occupancy information on the PPP website was a work in progress.

Item 9: Work in progress.

Item 10: Completed. Sean Murphy reported that changes had been made to the Strategic Assessment and the updated document had been published on the PPP website.

### 5 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Lee Dillon declared a personal interest during discussion of Agenda Item 9 by virtue of the fact that his father owned a public house in West Berkshire. He also declared that he was an employee of Sovereign Housing Association with responsibility for housing management. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate.

### 6 **Notice of Public Speaking and Questions**

No public questions were received.

### 7 **Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan was noted.

It was noted that the wording of the purpose for the item to elect the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the 2024/25 Municipal Year might need to be adjusted.

### 8 **Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q4 Outturn for 2022/23 (JPPC4194)**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 9) which updated the Committee on the work of the Service in Q4, the end of year performance outturn, and which sought authority to carry forward the revenue under-spend from 2022/23.

Sean Murphy introduced the report and its accompanying presentation, demonstrating what the Public Protection Partnership had been doing over the previous year. Sean Murphy set out that the Inter-Authority Agreement tasked the Committee with overseeing performance of the service, including financial performance, and how the service delivered against its key strategic objectives.

Sean Murphy noted that in the coming year he expected that there would still be issues arising within the service due to the cost of living crisis. For example, within Housing, landlords were experiencing affordability issues. In addition, a priority was embedding the single IT system and harnessing the efficiencies. Sean explained that some data was missing from the year end report as there had been some data transfer issues between the previous three systems and the single new system.

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Sean Murphy noted that the service struggled to recruit qualified officers, and were working with entry-level apprentices and developing existing officers.

Councillor Lee Dillon thanked Sean Murphy and officers for all their hard work over the past year. He also gave thanks for the detailed report and presentation, noting that it highlighted the many individual services and points of contact residents had with the service, and the need for the Partnership.

Councillor Guy Gillbe noted that staff recruitment was highlighted as a significant issue, and gave his support to the “grow your own” ethos within the service, but asked for further detail on the impact of the recruitment issues. Sean Murphy responded that, in the short term, the recruitment issues meant that the service had to use agency staff in areas such as Licensing and Private Sector Housing to provide cover in the absence of qualified officers. Non-qualified officers performed appropriate tasks and would become qualified in time.

Councillor Gillbe asked whether the service was offering a competitive recruitment package to people, with a comparable wage, and asked what could be improved. Sean Murphy responded that the salaries paid were in line with the average wages paid elsewhere, but that the main issue was a national shortage of qualified Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers. Sean Murphy highlighted that one Trading Standards Officer had been recruited in three years.

Councillor Gillbe asked what the issues with the IT system were, and how far the service was behind in installing the single system. Sean Murphy responded that the main issue was with data transfer and data matching which was a complex process. The service was 80-90% towards completing the transfer, but the last 10% was proving to be the most difficult. Sean Murphy was confident in the implementation that was chosen, as it moved a lot of the processes online and would be beneficial for customers.

Councillor Dillon noted that the customer service score was 80%, and asked what a realistic target for the next year would be. Sean Murphy responded that the customer service score was made up of three metrics; Trading Standards enquiries, Business inquiries, and Environmental Health and Licensing enquiries. Within the last year, the service had started to use QR codes to signpost people to data and to fill out satisfaction forms. Environmental Health was different from the other two metrics as it was often the subject of disputes, and not everybody could have a ‘winning’ experience. Sean Murphy stated that 80% was a good score, and highlighted that the number of complaints across the service had reduced to 13 in the last year (from approximately 8000 service requests). The needs of the high majority of residents were being met.

Councillor Dillon followed this by asking whether it was worth splitting the three metrics and setting individual targets for them to get a clearer performance picture. Sean Murphy responded that the information would be able to be broken down and looked at in further detail, and agreed to consider proposals in advance of the next meeting.

Councillor Kandy Jefferies noted that Community Engagement was talking to young people about the dangers of vaping, drugs and alcohol, and asked whether there was a focus on gas canisters and balloons as this had become an increasing concern. Sean Murphy responded that it had been looked at in the past, and seizures of items had taken place where the service had the evidence to do so to protect young people. Sean Murphy added that the legislative framework around nitrous oxide was not as clear, and the service had to prove that it was being used for intoxication, but the responsibility was on Councils to enforce it.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- The 2022/23 Q4 data for the Public Protection Service be noted.

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- The update on service delivery be noted.
- The Bracknell Forest Council/West Berkshire Council underspend of £148,000 be carried forward to the 2023/24 Financial Year.

### 9 **PPP Community Engagement Approach 2023/25 (JPPC4197)**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 10) which sought to review and, if appropriate, amend the approach to community engagement in light of any technological advances and procedural changes that could be used to enhance communication and engagement, and to ensure that the current plan reflected the newly agreed Priorities of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP).

Moira Fraser introduced the report, stating that the report considered the PPP's community engagement work over the next two years. Moira Fraser noted that the service had a number of priorities delivered through the PIE (Prevention, Intelligence and Enforcement) model, and that communication was a critical element in delivering the service. The primary aim was to prevent people from being harmed by keeping them informed, and raising issues of local importance or supporting national initiatives. There was a focus on intelligence gathering, as the service was intelligence-led, and ensuring that the community was willing to provide intelligence. There was also a focus on ensuring that enforcement action was taken with the aim of helping to deter future offending.

Moira Fraser concluded by advising that the Strategy was a living document and would welcome further feedback.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

- The report be noted.
- The PPP Communications and Engagement Strategy 2023 – 2025 be adopted.

### 10 **Update on the DEFRA Air Quality Grant (JPPC4308)**

The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 11) which provided Members with an update on the progress with the DEFRA Grant, including the Particulate Matter (PM2.5) at schools project.

Suzanne McLaughlin introduced the report, setting out that the application to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for £259,000 for air quality projects had been granted by the Department in 2020/21. The service had to meet a set criteria in order to apply, such as Air Quality Management Areas, of which there were two in West Berkshire, two in Bracknell Forest and three in Wokingham. The funding enabled the initiation of a number of projects, such as the Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5) project, which had shown that the concentration had not risen, but that there were issues at certain times of the week, and an anti-idling campaign. The PM2.5 project had begun within schools this term, but some schools had not taken up the offer.

A quarterly update was provided to DEFRA on the progress being made and this was attached as Appendix D to the report.

The Chairman asked what the Councils could do to encourage school participation in the PM2.5 project. Suzanne McLaughlin responded that they had aimed to go into school assemblies or classes, and where schools had declined the offer, a toolkit of resources had been provided to them.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

- Progress on the measures to improve air quality through the grant funded particulate programme be noted.

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- The ongoing work in this area and the drive to encourage behaviour change be endorsed.

### 11 JPPC Terms of Reference

The Committee considered its Terms of Reference (Agenda Item 12).

Sean Murphy introduced the report, stating that it was an annual process to bring the Terms of Reference to the Committee to consider recommending amendments to West Berkshire Council's full Council, as the Terms of Reference sat within its Constitution. Sean Murphy noted that the Terms of Reference could be brought back to a future meeting in recognition of the fact that all of its Members were new.

Councillor Guy Gillbe endorsed the call for a third Member to be appointed by each Council, noting that it widened the Committee's remit, and ensured continuity through each change of Administration. The Chairman concurred, stating that it allowed greater political balance, noting that the previous composition of the Committee was entirely Conservative Members. Sean Murphy set out that the proposed amendment was for the membership to consist of the Portfolio Holder responsible for Public Protection, as well as two Council representatives from each partner authority, and proposed that this change be referred back to each Council. The Committee agreed.

#### **RESOLVED that:**

- The Terms of Reference of the Joint Public Protection Committee be noted.
- The proposal for a third Member to be appointed to the Committee from both Councils be agreed.
- The proposed amendment to the Constitution be referred to West Berkshire Council's Full Council for approval. Subject to approval, the Inter Authority Agreement would be amended.

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

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....