

Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q3 Report for 2023/24

Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	11 March 2024
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Lee Dillon
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Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC4333

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the performance of the Public Protection Partnership in line with the operating model and business plan and provide an update setting out performance during the third quarter of 2023/24.

2 Recommendations

The Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTES** the 2023/24 Q3 performance for the Public Protection Service.
- 2.2 **NOTES** the Service Updates since the last meeting.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<p>The service is currently predicting an end of year budget outturn of zero. Although there is an underlying managed underspend (arising from vacancies and last year's carry forward) this is being deployed to offset in-year pressures faced by both Councils.</p> <p>The service is predicting an income shortfall of £95k in 2023/24. This is in the most part due to a fall in income in licensing (Street Trading, Premises Licences and Private Hire Operators). This is also being mitigated by vacancies in licensing and other areas of the service combined with reduced spend on agency staff.</p> <p>West Berkshire as host currently has strict financial controls in place where expenditure over £2K is considered by a panel.</p>

	<p>Work is underway to understand how this process applies to PPP expenditure where a significant part of spend relates to other authority and grant contributions.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>The combination of vacancies and restrictions on the use of agency staff has the risk of increasing pressure on existing staff and there is no doubt in some areas the staff and the service are under significant pressure. We are constantly reviewing the service to ensure that resource is targeted in high priority areas and areas where there is greater risk of detriment to residents. There is some very limited engagement of agency staff, but this is linked primarily to grant funded areas where there is not the resource to conduct the work e.g., level 3 investigation work and private sector housing work.</p> <p>A great deal of effort has gone into re-balancing the service through the delivery of a workforce strategy focussed on a ‘grow our own’ ethos by investing in apprenticeships, post graduate professional qualifications and post-entry training for both new and existing officers. This workforce strategy is underpinned by the Training and Development Plan.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) charges the Joint Public Protection Committee with the responsibility to oversee service delivery and performance including financial performance. This report discharges this responsibility. The governance arrangements with Wokingham are managed through Joint Management Board. Options are being considered around Wokingham’s alignment with JPPC.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>We will continue to manage risk in line with the prevailing situation and corporate policies. The service maintains both a strategic and operational risk register.</p> <p>The strategic risk register is regularly scrutinised by the Joint Management Board (JMB) which meets fortnightly. The JMB considers the red risk action plans at these meetings.</p> <p>The operational risk register is routinely monitored by the Principal Policy Officer Group with concerns being escalated to the Joint Management Team.</p> <p>The first critical risk currently facing the service is the failure to retain or recruit business critical staff which would result in the Service being unable to fulfil our statutory obligations. This risk is being managed through the carefully executed workforce strategy.</p>

	The second critical issue is a significant reduction in budget following Wokingham’s departure from PPP in respect of the loss of income.			
Property:	There are no direct property implications arising from this report although it is to be noted that the ‘Transformation Programme’ at West Berkshire is looking at rationalising the use of the estate. This may have an impact on the PPP use of Theale Gateway with some sharing of the building proposed on a trial basis.			
Policy:	<p>There are no direct policy implications arising from this paper. It should be noted that the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) places a responsibility on the Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) to determine service policies and priorities and to maintain oversight of performance. This report addresses that requirement.</p> <p>The revised service priorities were agreed at the March 2023 JPPC meeting. The Delivery Plan and Strategic Assessment will be discussed at June 2024 meeting which will assist with setting new priorities and monitoring progress against them whilst providing context about how the priorities are being delivered on a day-to-day basis.</p>			
	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 implications
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		No implications

<p>Environmental Impact:</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>It is anticipated that the revised ways of working will continue to deliver reductions in travel for the team.</p> <p>In addition, one of the aims of the Partnership is to deliver better outcomes for the environment and for residents of Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire.</p>
<p>Health Impact:</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>The proposals create no direct health impacts on staff. They do however set out progress against community-based health protection and improvement measures and initiatives.</p>
<p>ICT Impact:</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>The use of ICT on service delivery has been transformational. MS Teams continue to be employed in the day today running of the service.</p> <p>The JPPC will continue to meet in accordance with the decisions made by West Berkshire Council, as the host authority, about meeting arrangements. The Licensing Committees will be conducted under the meeting arrangements of their individual authorities.</p> <p>The Service will continue to make use of the website, and social media platforms to improve the customer journey and keep residents and businesses informed.</p>
<p>Digital Services Impact:</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>None – any updates to the PPP website are undertaken within existing resources.</p>

PPP Priorities:	✓			<p>This information sets out how the Service has maximised the use of resources to deliver against all the JPPC priorities as set out below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alcohol and Tobacco Harm Reduction 2. Animal Welfare 3. Cost of Living 4. Environmental Protection 5. Food Safety and Standards 6. Health and Safety Enforcement 7. Housing Standards in the Private Rental Sector 8. Impact of Nuisance on Residents and Communities 9. Improved Air Quality 10. Licensing 11. Nutrition and Childhood Obesity 12. Service Improvement 13. Tackling Fraud 14. Unsafe Consumer Goods
Core Business:	✓			<p>A lot of the activity within the Service constitutes Business as Usual Activity and performance is monitored through the set of indicators previously agreed by this Committee.</p>
Data Impact:		✓		<p>All activity in undertaken having regard to the PPP's Privacy Statement.</p>
Consultation and Engagement:	<p>There is regular engagement with staff as well as senior officer and Member briefings in each of the authorities that form the PPP.</p>			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Committee is mandated by the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) to keep under review the performance and activity of the Public Protection Service including the financial performance and outputs of the service. Throughout the year the Committee receives updates on aspects of performance and any emerging issues, achievements, and priorities. This report also sets out progress and risks in key strategic areas of the business i.e., Finance, HR, ICT, Property and Legal.
- 4.2 The summarised Quarter 3 (October to December) performance data is set out in **Appendix A** to the report.

- 4.3 The narrative in this report sets out the steps and interventions that the service performs across all partner authority areas to protect both residents and businesses.

5 Finances and Resources

- 5.1 As at the 29th February 2024 the Service is reporting a zero outturn which includes management of an estimated £95K shortfall in income which has arisen primarily in the licensing service.
- 5.2 The Service continues to seek access to grant funding. In the year to date the service has made successful grant funding applications exceeding £250K for level 2 and 3 investigations. These grants are used to fund costs for expert witnesses, staff costs, agency costs and legal costs.
- 5.3 The Service also accesses a range of public health funding relating to housing standards and links to health, tobacco and alcohol control including the development of Community Alcohol Partnerships. Other grant funding sources relate to supporting scam (fraud) victims with interventions to reduce the risk of harm and detriment. Some examples of this work can be found elsewhere in this report.
- 5.4 The Service has also recently been awarded a grant by DEFRA to undertake work on air quality in Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham. More information will be provided once the embargo has been lifted.

6 Customer Satisfaction Rates, FOI's etc.

- 6.1 The Service continues to explore ways to improve data capture on customer satisfaction for businesses and residents interacting with the service. All documentation issued by the service now has a QR code that links to a short on-line survey.
- 6.2 During Q3 52% (11/21) of respondents to these surveys confirmed that they were fairly, very or exceptionally satisfied with the service that they had received. This represents a significant drop when compared to the percentages for Q1 (87%) and Q2 (81%). In the year to date the satisfaction levels stand at 72% the target being 75%.
- 6.3 Officers are seeking to amend the way this data is captured to enable us to be able to undertake some cross correlation and also to be able to better understand why respondents have answered in the way they have in order to improve service delivery. Due to the nature of the Service, which often involves neighbour disputes etc, it is to be expected that not all service users will be satisfied with the service they have received. Changing the way the information is recorded will assist with interrogating the data to be able to allow for these situations.
- 6.4 While the Service is not complacent about customer satisfaction levels it should be noted that the ten respondents that indicated that they were not satisfied with the service amounted to less than 0.004% of the service requests dealt with this quarter. This information should also be viewed in the context of the compliments set out in Appendix B and the number of service complaints received.
- 6.5 During Q3 the team dealt with a total of 87 Freedom of Information requests which took around 53.5 hours to process. The number of requests increased by around 19% when

compared to the same period in 2022/23 where 73 Fols were processed. The number of FOIs processed in Q3 is slightly lower than the 89 processed in Q2. The team also processed 30 enquiries from Councillors and the local MPs. This represented a significant increase when compared to the 22 (32% increase) that were dealt with in Quarter 3 of the previous year.

6.6 The Information is broken down by authority below:

	BFC						PPP
	Q3 22/23	Q3 23/24	Q3 22/23	Q3 23/24	Q3 22/23	Q3 23/24	YTD 29/2/24
FOIs	32	51	39	34	2	2	331
MP/Cllr Queries	7	5	15	25	0	0	121
Complaints	0	0	5	1	0	0	17

6.7 One service complaint was processed in Q3. This figure is lower than the five received in the corresponding period in 2022/23. The response to the complaint, which related to concerns around reminders being issued for taxi licences, explained that it was not a requirement for the service to issue these reminders albeit that this was something that had previously been done. It was anticipated that once the public portal element of the new IT system was up and running these reminders would be generated automatically. Officers have now been able to resume issuing reminders manually in the interim.

6.8 Quarter 3 Data for Past 4 years (Wokingham Data Removed for Comparator Purposes). Data broken down by authority in the appendix.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Fols	106* (41 hrs)	71	78 (43.3hrs)	87 (66)
MP/Cllr Enquiries	20	16	22	37
Complaints	8	10	2	3

* there was a surge in Covid related Fols at this time.

Partner authority data is broken down in Appendix A

7 Human Resources

7.1 We currently have two vacancies in the PPP Housing team. The recruitment process to fill the vacant posts is underway. An officer from the Communities Team has been deployed into this Team to provide interim cover and is receiving the necessary training to ensure that the required competencies are in place. Additionally, one of the Apprentices has been moved into the team to provide additional resilience. A contractor has also been brought in to assist with providing temporary cover in this area.

7.2 As has been previously reported we continue to have vacancies in the Licensing Team. We are currently recruiting to the Lead Licensing Officer role as well as two Licensing Enforcement Officer roles. In addition, a vacancy in the Applications Team is also being recruited to. One of the apprentices has been moved into the Team to provide additional resilience and a different apprentice will be assisting with the animal licensing activity in the team. Apprentices are also assisting with some inspection work.

- 7.3 Unplanned sickness absence in the Commercial Team has meant that we are unlikely to complete the programmed food inspections on time. Internal arrangements are being put in place to provide some cover including the fourth apprentice being moved into this team to increase capacity for trained officers to undertake some of these inspections.
- 7.4 The Service's Lead Communication Officers left the Service in quarter 3 and a decision was made not to replace this role as part of the savings programme for 2024/25. The activity is now being undertaken in part by the Policy and Governance Manager with support from the Apprentices and the Community and Health Lead Officer.
- 7.5 Our apprentices have attended some peer sessions for apprentices arranged by Trading Standards South-East. Officers from CTS (and Licensing) have recently undertaken refresher training regarding hoarders and firework and pyrotechnics safety.
- 7.6 Two officers are going through their final assessments for Criminal Disclosure while others are still at earlier stages in completing this qualification.
- 7.7 In terms of wider training and development we have two officers studying the Level 6 Trading Standards qualification and one studying the Level 6 Environmental Health (EH) qualification. We also have one graduate EH trainee and two officers undertaking MSC's in EH. All four of our current Level 4 Apprentices are looking to qualify in the next six months. One of the apprentices is also undertaking a Level 3 Apprenticeship in Animal Welfare and one of them will be starting the Higher National Certificate in Food Safety in the autumn.

8 ICT

- 8.1 The new single system is largely fully operational with all data transferred. Work is underway to embed this with customers once the portal is fully operational. Damain James and the PPP Service Lead meet with the contractor monthly.

9 Property and Assets

- 9.1 The key property highlights are as follows:
- West Berkshire's ongoing transformation programme is looking at property. Theale Gateway is the home to many staff including all central teams such as licensing and customer delivery. It is proposed by West Berkshire that this becomes a shared facility on a limited basis with up to six desks allocated for non PPP staff. Should this transpire then any space used will be recharged corporately.

10 Operational Delivery – Measures of Volume

- 10.1 The key measures of volume data are set out in **Appendix A** to this report and the key highlights in terms of team activity is set out below.

11 Communication, Consultation and Engagement

- 11.1 During Q3:

Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q3 Report for 2023/24

- Officers have dealt with five press enquiries and the PPP has been mentioned in a significant volume of online articles.
- Officers have published 18 news articles.
- The service is currently working with a television production company to capture aspects of our work for future broadcast.
- As the Lead Communications Officer left the Service during Q3 there was an initial drop off in output while adjustments were made, and new skills were developed.

Target	2022/2023Outturn	Q3	Q2	Q1
Facebook – No of New Followers *	265	-6	57	47
Facebook – No of Posts	358	100	118	101
Twitter – No of New Followers	29	12	7	0
Twitter – No of Tweets	311	15	84	58
Website – No of Visits	88,872	19,017	24,150	22,307
Website – No of Articles	110	18	28	15

- During Q3 Officers undertook consultations on statutory licensing fees in both partner authorities and a report was produced on the consultation undertaken in respect of the ‘Knowledge Test’ in Bracknell Forest.
- The Policy and Governance Manager continues to work closely with West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest communication teams and liaises with them on a regular basis regarding our campaigns. We also share our press releases for their distribution, as well as both continuing to share relevant posts on each other’s social media platforms.
- During Q3, 12 presentations took place in schools across West Berkshire. All presentations delivered were regarding vaping education. Presentations in respect of alcohol harm reduction have been booked in by schools for the new year. The delivery of presentations to schools continues to be a highly sought after area of the work we do. In addition, two responsible retailer training sessions have been offered. This work is funded by Public Health.

11.2 Since launching the Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) as a West Berkshire wide initiative, the following activities have been undertaken during Q3:

- Work with Berkshire Youth CEO to discuss CAP and how we can work together on CAP funded projects.

- Distribution of CAP parent's guide leaflet through all secondary schools across West Berkshire along with the Youth Offending Team to provide to parents of pupils and service users.
- Provision of a list of all breweries across West Berkshire to enable CAP CiC to approach them to request additional funding for the West Berkshire CAP.
- Working with Newbury College regarding establishing a 'college CAP', this will include five projects across the remainder of the academic year and the development of 'Young Health Champions' within the college.
- Contact with all schools within West Berkshire advising of the alcohol presentations that can be undertaken to students by the team. We have schools booked in for presentations in the new year.
- Partnership working with colleagues in respect of setting up a Challenge 25 test purchasing operation.

11.3 The service also manages the Community Alcohol Partnership commissioned by Wokingham Borough Public Health Team.

11.4 Smokefree sidelines work which aims to abolish smoking and vaping at grass roots football is ongoing. Consideration is being given to opening up the initiative to other grass roots sports.

11.5 Communication in regard to the Smokefree Homes project, including the dangers of smoking, second hand smoke and where and how to get help to quit smoking regularly went out via the PPP social media platforms during Q3.

11.6 The Tobacco Control Alliance have started drafting the Tobacco Control Plan for 2024-2026.

11.7 During Q3 the PPP fitted eight call blockers, delivered eight training sessions or presentations on scams, directly supported 12 victims and retrieved over £38,000 for victims of fraud.

11.8 Thatcham Community Larder has continued to operate on a weekly basis throughout Q3, member numbers remain steady (circa 75). It continues to be a well utilised resource by residents within Thatcham, not just for the food provided but also the social interaction and advice and guidance that can be sought in respect of matters such as housing, debt management, scams, rogue traders and nutrition.

11.9 The electric blanket and portable heater safety campaign, funded by the Office of Product Safety Standards (OPSS), has continued during Q3 with leaflet drops across the partnership, communication on social media and presentations. The PPP have been successful in Q3 in securing funding for two further campaigns. The first funded by Electrical Safety First and working in conjunction with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service seeks to raise awareness of the dangers of electric bikes and electric scooters, and the second funded by OPSS seeks to educate and raise awareness of the dangers of button batteries. The delivery of these projects will take place during Q4.

12 Community and Trading Standards (including Customer Services)

12.1 The Trading Standards Service is delivered across Bracknell Forest, Wokingham and West Berkshire. The following is a summary of some of the work undertaken by the Community and Trading Standards Team:

- Over the last quarter officers have undertaken food standards inspections, and where any issues were identified, for example foreign labelling, sold beyond use-by dates, or poor allergen control, officers have advised the food business accordingly.
- A comprehensive food sampling programme is taking place this year. During November, officers visited 23 food premises to assess the (foreign) labelling of food e.g. American sweets, non-English ingredients, non-English product names etc.– this amounted to around 3000 products in those stores being inspected. There was overwhelming compliance for the majority, and for the minority of non-complaint premises/products, advice on labelling was given and products were removed from sale. During the rest of the quarter, officers sampled take away meals (for artificial colours), fish and chips (for species and acrylamide) as well as following up any failures accordingly. Results are still pending for all of Quarter 3 sampling.
- Trading Standards Officers continued to conduct a number of interviews under caution in relation to several non-compliant vapes seized during Operation Tanoak. Officers are now submitting case files for review for eleven premises. Of those eleven, four formal warning letters were sent to the relevant premises, which included business advice. The remaining seven are being reviewed by the Case Management Unit.
- Officers have also been test purchasing disposable vapes as part of a national project looking at market surveillance as part of Operation Joseph. Results have been provided by colleagues at Kent County Council Scientific Services. Of note are the number and reasons of failures including quantity of nicotine and total volume being different to that declared and well as labelling. A number of matters have been referred to the Medicine and Healthcare Regulatory Authority. This work has been funded nationally and we have been notified that we are to receive further grant funding for follow up work in this area.
- In response to a cluster of product safety notifications for children's toys, several samples were purchased and sent to an independent test house to check that the products met recognised standards. Results are still pending.
- In addition, officers have received unusual service requests as part of business as usual – building works and second-hand car related complaints continue to remain the most complained about business sectors. Officers are utilising provisions within the Enterprise Act 2002 as an alternative tool to protect consumer rights by obtaining undertakings by the trader not to trade in a detrimental manner towards consumers. Breach of this agreement can then be dealt with through the court system.
- Officers continue to work with partners to tackle fraud and scams, partners include, Thames Valley Police, HMRC, neighbouring Trading Standards departments by exchanging intelligence and information that can lead to victims receiving lost money

back via banking protocols, and jointly working to remove and prevent illegal traders from operating throughout the area.

- As part of general inspections over 40 explosives visits were undertaken on all premises registered to keep explosives (mainly fireworks) across the PPP area. Officers identified some minor issues relating to the conditions set by the licence around safe storage and quantity. Advice was provided about correct safe storage conditions, and licences varied to bring premises into compliance. This is an improvement on last year where two premises were found to have major breaches and were subsequently investigated for health and safety breaches.
- Visits concerning animal health and welfare, and animal feeding are ongoing.
- Nuisance complaints remain a significant element of service requests received by the team, and there are several ongoing investigations concerning noise from sources such as cockerels, domestic appliances, water pumps and human behaviour in addition to the usual nuisance of music. Quarter 3 produced around the same level of complaints; most of which are dealt with through officer dialogue.
- The service continues managing stray dog collection, and we are now prepared for the changes in legislation relating to XL Bully type dogs as well as the restricted availability of kennelling provision. The service has secured kennelling provisions for larger dogs, and the impact of the new legislation surrounding XL bullies has been minimal. The service has only needed to arrange collection of one suspected XL bully type dog since its introduction, which was rehomed via Battersea dog's home before then ban took effect. The work around XL Bullies was supported by a communications plan advising of the various deadlines as was requested at the last meeting.
- In addition, officers have completed 19 petroleum site inspections across the PPP.
- Underage sales exercises throughout quarter 3 included seven attempts to purchase fireworks by children with no sales, eleven attempts to purchase vapes with one sale and six attempts to purchase lottery scratch cards, with no sales.
- Finally, amongst the business-as-usual service requests, trading standards have had some interesting enquiries. For example, the service received a complaint about microbeads in cosmetics which officers are looking into as businesses are no longer able to sell rinse-off cosmetics and personal care products that contain microbeads.
- Also, an online seller on social media not delivery on clothes and jewellery. It is believed this might be a scam aimed at young girls. There are also a number of sellers of counterfeit goods identified in our area that are being investigated. In more traditional selling forums, complaints were received concerning out of date and mouldy food, as well as other allegations of the sale of takeaway food in polystyrene pots alleging contravention of the single used plastic ban.
- Businesses are also proactive in contacting the service. For example, a trader called to obtain advice over concerns that there were heavy metals present in jewellery

that was being sold and wanted advice on how to recall the products and a local food bank requested advice on the distribution of Calpol.

13 Commercial (Food Safety and Health and Safety)

- 13.1 The Commercial Team are still working through the food hygiene inspections that are due (and overdue as a result of Covid). In this quarter they carried out 120 Full Inspection/Audits of food premises.
- 13.2 Officers are prioritising higher risk premises although it is evident that some premises' standards have dropped as Officers are taking more formal action this year than in previous years. This is due to ongoing complications that the premises are facing post Covid and subsequent shutdowns and as a result of high running costs. Officers continue to work with businesses to ensure compliance. The PPP will ensure that the highest risk premises are inspected in this inspection year and will also prioritise unrated premises that are higher risk.
- 13.3 The team also dealt with 115 Food hygiene service requests from businesses and the public and 130 infectious disease notifications.
- 13.4 In terms of enforcement three premises voluntarily closed to carry out improvements. Further follow up visits were undertaken to ensure that the business operators had delivered the improvements required and there will further monitoring checks.
- 13.5 Officers also enforce the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. In this quarter we looked at 57 health and safety at work service requests, and in addition investigated 38 workplace accidents which were reported to the Service.
- 13.6 During routine food hygiene inspections officers also look for any matter of evident concern in relation to Health and Safety compliance. At a takeaway premises officers noted that the guarding was missing from a potato chipper machine and prohibited its use until it could be used safely. An accident using a machine such as this with no guard could result in a serious injury.
- 13.7 Formal action was also taken at a retail premises where a Health and Safety Improvement Notice was served due to overstocking and obstruction of aisles on the shop floor. The notice was issued as the store had failed to comply with the informal action proposed. Overstocking and obstruction of aisles can have a detrimental effect should the premises need to be evacuated, it also presented manual handling and items falling from height risks, in addition to making it difficult and unsafe for people navigating the shop.
- 13.8 The Commercial Team are also involved with event safety and the Safety Advisory Group. There was a review of event safety management plans and liaison with event organisers for 29 events in Bracknell Forest and 69 events in West Berkshire during Q3. In addition, a number of events were subject to officer validation/advisory visits.
- 13.9 Notable events during this quarter included; Lapland UK, Bracknell Forest (11/11/2023 to 24/12/2023), Lions Fireworks Newbury, Firework Extravaganza at Newbury Showground, Remembrance parades/events, Ladbroke's Winter Carnival and racing, Newbury Racecourse, Christmas lights switch on and Christmas fairs.

14 Licensing (Including Applications and Licensing Governance)

14.1 Ongoing recruitment issues for the team have been referenced elsewhere in the report.

14.2 During Quarter three Licensing Committee meetings took place in both authorities. Fees and Charges for 2024 were presented to both authorities and the outcome of the associated consultations were reported back to the meetings early in quarter 4. Finalised fees were prepared for consultation by both authorities at their annual budget meetings.

14.3 Bracknell Forest Council also adopted an updated Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy during quarter 3. West Berkshire Council adopted its updated Statement of Licensing Policy.

14.4 The following licensing panel/subcommittee meetings have taken place in Q3:

Type of Application	Applicant	Outcome
Bracknell Forest		
None		
West Berkshire		
New Premise Licence	Boxford Restaurant Ltd The Boxford, Roodhill, Boxford RG20 8DD	Approved with Conditions
New Premise Licence	Eng Retails Ltd Newbury Premier, 3 Monument Close, Essex Street, Newbury RG14 6QW	Approved with Conditions
New Premises Licence	Nigel Hopes Awberry Barn, Awberry Farm Beenham	Approved with Conditions
New Premise Licence	Let's Eat Trading Ltd Coriander Club, 98 Royal Avenue, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, RG31 4UT	Approved with Conditions

14.5 During Q4 to date one premise licence application and one personal licence application have been heard in Bracknell Forest. In West Berkshire two Sub-Committees have been set up to deal with applications for new premise licences.

Type of Application	Applicant	Outcome
Bracknell Forest		
New Premise Licence	Bracknell Local Store	Approved with Conditions
Personal Licence	Part II	Outcome Awaited
West Berkshire		
New Premise Licence	Reloaded Nightclub 7-9 Wharf Road Newbury	Approved with Conditions

New Premise Licence	Hungerford	Hearing yet to be held in Q1 of 2024/25

Licensing Hearings Data for last three years.			
Authority	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Bracknell Forest	0	2	2 to date
West Berkshire	6	0 (2 cancelled after agenda publication)	9 to date (with a further 6 cancelled or adjourned after agenda publication)

15 Environmental Health Housing

15.1 Table 1

	Total request for service housing	Of these number of complaints regarding house condition	Of these number that were Registered Social Landlords
WB July to September 2023	66	44	18 (41%)
WB October to December 2023	82	60	34 (57%)
BF July to September 2023	68	37	15 (41%)
BF October to December 2023	92	62	31 (50%)

15.2 As can be seen issues raised by tenants of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) constitute a significant percentage of the complaints. The team are working closely with the RSLs to keep the resource implications for PPP as low as possible and to attempt to resolve matters as quickly as possible for the tenants.

15.3 Service requests from EH Housing tenants remained high with the majority regarding damp and mould. This quarter would normally be the time that damp and mould cases rise, but, although we have seen a rise this quarter we have noted that the high level of damp and mould cases have not really receded since last year. It is an area that we continue to work with tenants and landlords on resolving. Advice to the public was promoted through a social media campaign in January.

- 15.4 In this quarter (and continuing in the next quarter) officers are carrying out the annual inspections of caravan park sites, this is to ensure the site is safe and that the conditions of the licence are being adhered to.
- 15.5 Officers are continuing their project looking at Commercial to Residential property conversions. This involves a proactive inspection of those properties (on a risk assessed basis). The project has identified a number of issues including, but not limited to, compartmentation, excess heat and water ingress into residential flats due to faulty/poorly maintained roofing. A report will be produced for the Committee on findings once the project is completed. The five buildings inspected to date equates to approximately 350 families.
- 15.6 As before, the team have experienced an increase in the need to progress cases to enforcement. Landlords are sharing cases of hardship due to the cost of living and rise in mortgage rates. The trend in disrepair being higher cost repair works such as roofing, central heating and building maintenance. One service request resulted in seven notices being served on a property to ensure that the works were carried out.

16 Environmental Quality

- 16.1 The team have continued to undertake work to protect the health and wellbeing of our residents through focused projects, planned inspections and responding to complaints particularly from noise from pubs this quarter.
- 16.2 Some key activity undertaken in Q3 has included:
- Review of Air Quality monitoring programmes.
 - DEFRA Air quality grant anti idling project extension to work to include more detailed studies in two locations in the three areas; and schools Nitrogen Dioxide project finished in January.
 - Further successful DEFRA air quality grant application submitted for PM2.5 and domestic burning behavioural change.
 - Consultation on revocation of Air Quality Management Areas AQMAs in Newbury Thatcham and Bracknell as agreed at JPPC and consultation exercise undertaken. The outcome is included in a separate report on this agenda.
 - Air Quality Action Plan AQAP development for Crowthorne – stakeholder meeting held, statutory consultation undertaken. Outcome included in a separate report on this agenda.
 - New Private Water Supplies (PWS) inspected and annual Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) Return prepared for PWS work.
 - Complaint work has included a number of complex commercial nuisance matters including noise from pubs/event venues / golf club / construction sites, industrial premise BS4142 assessment carried out and an abatement notice served.

- Inspections are continuing for Pollution Prevention Control with two thirds of the inspections completed that require inspection this financial year.

17 Investigations and Case Management

17.1 The Case Management Unit continues to be busy working on cases and providing advice across the PPP and to partner organisations. Currently the team have oversight of some 40 PPP criminal investigations (excluding a significant volume of road traffic matters). A number of these are at file stage or in the court system. New investigations are commencing all the time.

17.2 The National Crime Agency Accredited Financial Investigators are currently working on 12 investigations relating to money laundering and confiscation under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

17.3 The Investigations Team have approximately 10 ongoing complex investigations involving a significant number of suspects and large losses to the victims in some cases.

17.4 In terms of the Case Management Unit cases are continuing to be heard in both the Magistrates Court and the Crown Court however significant delays are still being encountered with trial listings in the Crown Court.

17.5 Some recent case examples are below –

- **Shopkeeper sentenced for unsafe storage of fireworks** - During the fireworks season, Trading Standards officers visited a premises store to carry out a routine check of the storage of fireworks. Officers found fireworks that were being stored dangerously with live electricity and highly flammable items. They also found rockets and other explosive fireworks which were not allowed to be stored as the explosive content was more than double that which was allowed under the licence.
- Trading Standards Officers had previously provided advice on numerous occasions which had not been acted on by the owner. The defendant was sentenced to pay total fines and costs amounting to £29,313.
- **Roofer convicted of fraud and consumer protection offences** - The Defendant offered roofing and guttering services. The case involved three consumers. The first paid a substantial deposit payment but the defendant failed to complete any work. The second and third complainants made payments in full, but the work completed by Mr Bell was significantly below the standard expected of a reasonably competent and diligent roofer.
- Following a two day trial at Reading Magistrates Court, the bench found the defendant guilty of two fraud offences and one of professional diligence under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008. Sentencing has been adjourned until April 2024.

17.6 The CMU team are also currently reviewing a number of cases that have come out of the work carried out by PPP in relation to vapes. Both cases involving vapes that are not compliant with the regulations and underage sales of vapes are being considered in order to determine the most appropriate course of action in each case.

18 Appendices

Appendix A –2023/24 Performance Framework

Appendix B - Service Compliments

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In: Yes: No:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Report is to note only | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Wards affected: All

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