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# Public Protection Partnership – Shared Service Proposals

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Committee considering report:	Special Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	9 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Chair of Committee:	tbc
Date JMB agreed report:	19 May 2025
Report Author:	Sean Murphy
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the implementation of the Peer Review Recommendations and set out proposals for the future of the Shared Public Protection Service following the Peer Review.

## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 **ACCEPTS** the update on the Peer Review Recommendations.
- 2.2 **APPROVES** that the following recommendations be made to partner authorities:
- That Wokingham Borough Council becomes a full Member of the Joint Public Protection Committee and all other governance arrangements and terms are those set out in the original shared service agreement of the 6th January 2017.
  - The partners enter into a new three authority agreement until the 31st March 2029.
  - That the agreement includes an exit clause based on a minimum of twelve months' notice.
  - That in line with the recommendations of the Peer Review the host authority should remain with West Berkshire to avoid significant short-term disruption.
  - That the partners should not wait for the expiry of the existing agreements but enter into the new arrangement as soon as practically possible.

## 3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no additional financial implications arising from the adoption of the proposals in this report.

	<p>There would however be the potential for significant financial implications should disaggregation of the service take place at the end of the current agreements in January 2027. This would be as a result of the reversal of the existing economies of scale that produced the savings in the original business case. There would also be financial costs associated with the disaggregation of the shared ICT database both in terms of capital and revenue.</p> <p>There would be no additional cost for the parties based on the recommendations set out above. However, there may be potential savings should more functions be delegated to the Committee by the partners.</p>
<b>Human Resource:</b>	<p>There are no direct HR implications of adopting the recommendations set out in the report as officers are already employed within the shared service. However, a decision to disaggregate the service would require a protracted HR process including full consultation with staff followed by TUPE transfer to individual partner authorities. The disruption will inevitably lead to the loss of some staff through retirement or seeking alternative roles. This may exacerbate the resource / skill challenges that will potentially arise from the loss of economies of scale.</p>
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>The Inter Authority Agreements that underpin the service require a review of the Service prior to the end date for the current agreements (January 2027). The IAAs also set out timeframes for the disaggregation of the Service should any of the partner authorities decide not to recommission the current services.</p> <p>The report sets out recommendations on future arrangements for consideration by the Committee.</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>There are significant risks arising from the disaggregation of the service if not conducted carefully. These include risks associated with staffing loss, legal risk and legacy liabilities with a long lag time in areas such as prosecutions. There are also systems risks, the most significant of which would be the disaggregation of the existing single system database.</p> <p>Planning will take time if these risks are going to be effectively managed.</p> <p>There is a risk that, should the recommendations not be adopted by partner authorities that one or more partners may not wish to continue with the arrangements post January 2027.</p>
<b>Property:</b>	<p>The PPP currently operates primarily from Theale Gateway with all new staff being based there from appointment. In the event of disaggregation this facility would be returned to West Berkshire Council.</p>

<b>Policy:</b>	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 advise the Councils with respect to the shared service arrangements.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equity Impact Assessment:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		It is anticipated that the recommendations set out in the peer review should provide benefits for all residents, businesses and staff.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		See above
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		x		
<b>Health Impact:</b>		x		
<b>ICT or Digital Services Impact:</b>		x		
<b>PPP Priorities:</b>				<p>The report will impact on all the PPP Priorities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building Safer Communities</li> <li>2. Improved Living Environment</li> <li>3. Protecting Consumers from Fraud</li> <li>4. Reducing Harm in Young People</li> <li>5. Protecting and Informing Consumers</li> <li>6. Protection of the Environment</li> <li>7. Promoting Animal Welfare</li> <li>8. Safety in the Workplace</li> <li>9. Safe and Healthy Food Chain</li> </ol> <p>Business as Usual Activity is supported too.</p>
<b>Data Impact:</b>		x		

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Members from all three authorities as well as all PPP staff have been consulted as part of the peer review.
<b>Other Options Considered:</b>	None. It is a requirement of the IAAs that a review be undertaken.

## 4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 The current shared service arrangements that underpin the Public Protection Partnership are due to end in January 2027. Under the terms of the partnership agreement, before the expiry of the current arrangements, the Joint Committee is required to consider whether or not to recommend continuation of the partnership arrangements, and any variations that may be needed. To support this an external peer review was commissioned and took place between October 2025 and January 2025.
- 4.2 This review helped the Joint Management Board to make evidence-based recommendations which are set out in this report. Should the Committee agree the recommendations set out or other such recommendations as it may determine, it will be for the partner authorities to make their own determination of acceptance or otherwise and partners will need to take reports through their own governance structures in terms of continuance of the partnership. The outcome will be reported back to the October JPPC meeting.
- 4.3 Finally, it is proposed that there should be an accelerated timetable to provide certainty and to allow Wokingham Borough Council to be represented on the Committee as soon as possible to help shape the future of the service.

## 5. Background

- 5.1 At its meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025 the Committee received an [update report](#) on the findings of the internal audit of financial controls and the Peer Review. Members will recall that the peer review focussed on four main areas:
- Governance Arrangements,
  - Inputs and Support,
  - Outputs, Outcomes and Value for Money and
  - Options for the Future.
- 5.2 Since the review a number of actions have already been implemented with respect to the recommendations, and these can be summarised as follows:

### Governance Arrangements

- Wokingham Borough Council left the partnership on the 31 March 2022 and immediately re-entered into a new agreement for a range of shared services including Case Management, Trading Standards and Air Quality work on the 01 April 2022. The revised Inter Authority Agreement with Wokingham included revised governance arrangements through the Joint Management Board which meant that Wokingham no longer had a seat on the Joint Public Protection Committee.

- Wokingham have, however, had a standing invitation to all JPPC meetings and standing orders are suspended to allow the relevant Executive Member to speak and contribute to discussions on the services that they directly commission from the PPP albeit that they cannot vote.
- Revised governance arrangements are proposed in this report.

### **Engagement of other Members including Scrutiny functions**

- The Quarter 4 Report will be circulated to all Members across the three authorities and going forward all service update reports will be circulated to all Members.
- Officers are looking to introduce a series of targeted information bulletins focussing on areas of high public interest e.g. fraud, environmental protection, PPP health related functions, new legislation e.g. Tobacco and Vaping and Renters Rights Acts etc.
- All Members are encouraged to follow the PPP social media account and sign up for our news releases.
- Officers have attended both Bracknell Forest and Wokingham's Scrutiny Committees focussing on the outcome of the Peer Review.

### **Outputs, Outcomes and Value for Money**

- A proposed set of revised Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is elsewhere on this agenda.
- The presentation of these KPIs will be linked to the three partner authorities' corporate priorities.
- The breakdown of budget contributions would have to reflect the worsening budget position of Local Government.
- The current chargeable hourly rates for services to be fundamentally reviewed ahead of fee proposals being presented to the Committee in October 2025.
- Further work to be carried out with regard to benchmarking of Trading Standards costs via the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers.
- The updated Communication Strategy sets out new routes to communication with residents including regular street level pop-up stands to mirror those adopted by Thames Valley Police who the Service will be seeking to work alongside.

### **Inputs and Support**

- Staff representatives are being brought together to review the key outcomes of the staff survey. The first meeting will take place on the 21 May 2025.
- Access cards for staff at Market Street Office are being provided.

- Space to work together at Times Square Office has been confirmed.
- The discussion with the staff reference group around resources and workflow will help inform future proposals on structure / functions assigned to teams.
- The Service has lead contacts in key support functions including HR, legal and finance.

## **Workforce Strategy**

- A section on succession planning and leadership development to be included in the Workforce Strategy when it comes to the October JPPC meeting.
- New corporate appraisal process to be incorporated into the performance management process with more focus on behaviours and values.

4.3 Officers will be producing a comprehensive update and an action plan for all outstanding matters for the Committee in October and this will be included in each quarterly report.

## **6. Proposals**

- 6.1 The existing shared service arrangements end on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2027. As previously advised the Peer Review was instigated as a requirement of the agreement and to inform the partner councils on options for the future.
- 6.2 The headline finding from the review was that the shared service arrangements had met the original business case outcomes including resilience, reduction in overhead costs, greater access to develop expertise and economies of scale. The Review praised the policy framework that sat around the service and in particular how it had evaluated and identified the priority areas through the [PPP Strategic Assessment 2024-2027.pdf](#)
- 6.3 The Review did however raise questions about the effectiveness and equity of the governance arrangements in the absence of Wokingham from the Joint Public Protection Committee whilst acknowledging that the original decision to leave the governance was made by the previous administration at Wokingham Borough Council. It went on to recommend that Wokingham rejoin the governance arrangements and Wokingham Borough Council have indicated that they wish to do so.
- 6.4 The Review also recommended that, in light of its findings, the partner Councils should seek to enter into a new three-way agreement incorporating the revised governance arrangements for a period of ten years.
- 6.5 However, during the Review the government announced its proposals for devolution and local government reorganisation. This included seeking to build a unitary authority structure for the whole of England based on a proposed minimum authority size of around 500K population. This would be overlaid with a series of strategic authorities. There is no plan to look at existing unitary councils within the lifetime of this parliament. However West Berkshire have submitted a proposal to government to merge with two Oxfordshire District Councils as an option for the unitary solution for Oxfordshire which

is currently a two-tier administrative area. At the time of writing we are still awaiting feedback from government on the Ridgeway Council proposals.

- 6.6 Given the uncertainty caused by local government reorganisation the partners, whilst acknowledging that a ten-year agreement is desirable, there is too much uncertainty at this time to enter into such an agreement. This left two feasible alternatives. The first being that the shared service arrangements end on the expiry of the current agreements or secondly that the partner councils seek to enter into an agreement for a shorter term with an option to extend and appropriate exit clauses to deal with any eventuality.
- 6.7 JMB, in considering the outcome of the review, accepted that as the partnership delivers a range of services for Wokingham it is reasonable for them to expect to have influence over the decision-making processes at a member level.
- 6.8 As set out in the financial implications there would be significant financial implications for all partners should disaggregation of the service take place at the end of the current agreements. This would be due to the reversal of the existing economies of scale and there would be financial costs associated with the disaggregation of the shared ICT database both in terms of capital and revenue.
- 6.9 Some of the other key benefits of the Service identified both by staff and Members during the review process is that in terms of staffing the shared Service provides additional resilience, access to expertise and specialisms and reduces costs by reducing duplication and sharing, all of which would be lost should the recommendations not be agreed.
- 6.10 It is therefore proposed that the Committee adopts the recommendations set out in section 2 above.

## **7. Concluding Observations**

- 7.1 The review team have concluded that the Service is focussed and effective in providing statutory regulatory services to protect residents. It also concluded that as a shared service it is delivering efficiencies and greater service resilience than individual authorities would be able to achieve.
  - 7.2 There was a desire indicated by the existing partners to extend the arrangements for a further ten years. However, with the uncertainty this is not practical at this time.
  - 7.3 In the circumstances the Committee is invited to conclude that the recommendations set out in Section 2 above offer the most appropriate option at this time and will provide certainty for the partners and staff within the service.
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## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 None
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## **9. Background Papers: None**

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**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

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



**Wards affected:** All Wards

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