

---

## Public Protection Partnership Shared Service Agreement

---

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	27 November 2025
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Tom McCann
<b>Report Author:</b>	Sean Murphy
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	C4536

---

### 1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Public Protection Partnership Service was subjected to a peer review which concluded earlier in the year. In line with the negotiations on the recommendations of the review, the report seeks authorisation for West Berkshire Council to enter into a new three authority shared service agreement with Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council until the 31st March 2029 and that Wokingham Borough Council becomes a full Member of the Joint Public Protection Committee and all other governance arrangements.

### 2 Recommendations

That the Executive approves the following recommendations following the peer review:

- 2.1 West Berkshire Council enters into a new three authority shared service agreement with Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council until the 31st March 2029.
- 2.2 That the Executive delegates its public protection related functions to the Joint Public Protection Committee until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029.
- 2.3 That the agreement includes an exit clause based on a minimum of twelve months' notice to give effect to leaving the agreement on the 31<sup>st</sup> March in any given year.
- 2.4 West Berkshire Council continues to be the host authority.
- 2.5 That the Service Lead for Public Protection in conjunction with the Service Lead for Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to enter into this agreement.
- 2.6 Wokingham Borough Council becomes a full Member of the Joint Public Protection Committee and all other governance arrangements and that the terms be based on those set out in the original shared service agreement of the 6th January 2017.
- 2.7 That the Executive recommends to full Council that the Terms of Reference and relevant sections of the Constitution (Part 3.1 Appendix JPPC and Part 6.5 Council Bodies

Rules) be amended to reflect the revised Governance arrangements set out in recommendation 2.6 above.

### 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	<p>The agreements will be amended within existing budgets and there are no budgetary implications associated with the production of this report.</p> <p>The peer review team 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.</p> <p>The critical mass delivered by the shared service allows for it to access significant amounts of grant funding (currently around £400K per annum) as well as share cost bases with other authorities outside of the PPP e.g. financial investigation work, complex investigations, case management functions and other specialist functions such as animal feeding stuffs.</p> <p>In addition to the potential loss of grant funding it is estimated that an injection of around £250K would be needed to re-instate a stand-alone in-house service if operational capacity was not to be lost. This includes management costs of around £200K (including re-instating the Service Lead role), ICT costs and other licensing costs or around £50K.</p>
<b>Human Resource:</b>	<p>This report was drafted within existing resources. Support is being sought from colleagues in the legal team to draft the revised agreements.</p> <p>West Berkshire will remain the employing and administrative authority under the proposals.</p> <p>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 basis of the proposed shared service arrangements are delegations of both Executive and Council functions to a Joint</p>

## Public Protection Partnership Shared Service Agreement

	<p>Committee and the basis for employment of the staff is Section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972 which allows a local authority to enter into an agreement with another Council for the placing at the disposal of the latter for the purposes of their functions. This is in line with the existing arrangements.</p> <p>The current Inter Authority Agreement that underpins the service are due to expire in January 2027. The existing agreement with Wokingham ends on the same date. It is proposed that the partner authorities (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council) enter into a new three authority agreement until the 31st March 2029. It is proposed that the agreement include an exit clause based on a minimum of twelve months' notice.</p>			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>A full peer review of the service been conducted to provide assurance and confidence around the quality and level of shared service provided to ensure residents are receiving a comprehensive public protection service.</p> <p>There would be the potential for significant financial costs should disaggregation of the service take place at the end of the current agreements in January 2027.</p> <p>In addition, 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>Property:</b>	<p>There is no property implications associated with this report. The Service will continue to operate out of the Theale Gateway Office as well the office buildings of the partner authorities.</p>			
<b>Policy:</b>	<p>There are no direct policy implications arising from this report.</p>			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				

## Public Protection Partnership Shared Service Agreement

<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		Full EQiA was conducted when shared arrangements/contract was entered into in 2017 and remains valid.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		See above
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		✓		This decision will not have any direct environmental impact.
<b>Health Impact:</b>		✓		This decision will not have any direct health impact.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		✓		There are no IT implications associated with this report.
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		✓		There are no digital services impacts associated with this decision albeit that the online iteration of the Constitution will need updating should full Council approve the changes to it..
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	✓			Services we are proud of by continuing to support our customers through ongoing delivery of the Public Protection Partnership Service Plans.
<b>Core Business:</b>		✓		There will be no changes to the way services are delivered to our customers under the new agreements.
<b>Data Impact:</b>				The proposal will not have any impact on our data subjects.

<b>Consultation Engagement:</b>	<b>and</b>	<p>Variations of this report have been considered and agreed by the Cabinet/Executive in <a href="#">Bracknell Forest</a> and <a href="#">Wokingham Borough</a> Councils.</p> <p>Further iterations will be considered at Full Council in both authorities too.</p> <p>All Member of all three authorities and all PPP staff were consulted during the peer review.</p>
---------------------------------	------------	---

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) is a shared service delivering Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards functions on behalf of two authorities (Partners), Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council. It also currently shares a range of services with Wokingham Borough Council including trading standards, financial investigations, intelligence functions, animal health and welfare and case management work and the technical delivery of air quality monitoring and reporting.
- 4.2 The Service is underpinned by two Inter Authority Agreements (IAAs), one with Bracknell Forest Council and a separate agreement signed in 2022 with Wokingham Borough Council. The current agreements are due to expire in January 2027. The IAAs require a review of the Service prior to the end date for the current agreements. A peer review was therefore conducted between October 2024 and January 2025.
- 4.3 The review team 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. The review made a series of recommendations for all three partner authorities (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Councils) to consider including renewing the current agreements.
- 4.4 Due to the ongoing uncertainties arising from local government reorganisation, it is proposed to effectively extend the current arrangements until March 2029 rather than the ten years proposed by the review team.
- 4.5 In line with the recommendations of the review, the report seeks authorisation for West Berkshire Council to enter into a new three authority shared service agreement with Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council until the 31st March 2029 and that Wokingham Borough Council becomes a full Member of the Joint Public Protection Committee and all other governance arrangements.

## 5 Supporting Information

### Introduction

- 5.1 The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) is a shared service delivering Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards functions on behalf of two authorities (Partners), Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council.
- 5.2 It also currently shares a range of services with Wokingham Borough Council including trading standards, financial investigations, intelligence functions, specialist litigation, animal health and welfare and case management work and the technical delivery of air quality monitoring and reporting.
- 5.3 The vision of the Service is to protect and support residents and legitimate businesses through the successful use of information and intelligence, delivering safe and healthy neighbourhoods. The nature of the shared service means that it has greater resilience and robustness to cope with unforeseen challenges such as disease outbreaks or large-scale investigations.
- 5.4 West Berkshire Council signed up to the current shared service agreement in [January 2017](#) and since that time the shared service arrangement has served its residents well and the Service has become well established within this Council and within the partner authorities. It has met all the aims of the [original business case](#) including significant cost savings, resilience, critical mass and the ability to develop specialisms. There are parts of the Service, particularly around trading standards, investigations, case management and specialisms such as financial investigations that simply would not ever be viable to deliver at single unitary authority level. Beyond this the whole of the Service has benefited from critical mass.
- 5.5 The 2017 arrangements changed in 2022 when Wokingham Borough Council left the original agreement and the Committee governance arrangements. They did however enter into a new shared service arrangement for those functions set out above. The basis of the arrangement was delegation of the operational functions to the service management and oversight of the delivery through the Joint Management Board on which they remained.
- 5.6 The Inter Authority Agreements that underpin the Service require a review of the Service prior to the end date for the current agreements. 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.
- 5.7 The existing shared service arrangements are due to end on the 8th January 2027. Additionally, the 2022 agreement between Wokingham Borough and the Partnership for the commissioned services ends on the same day.

### Peer Review

- 5.8 A peer review of the existing Public Protect Partnership arrangements was undertaken between October 2024 and January 2025. The review team concluded that the current 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. The review made a series of recommendations for all three partner authorities (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Councils) to consider. A full summary of the findings of the review can be found here: [Peer Review Recommendations](#)

- 5.9 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 how, notably, it had evaluated and identified the priority areas through its Strategic Assessment.
- 5.10 In terms of areas for improvement the team suggested that Wokingham Borough Council should be permitted to rejoin the governance arrangements at member level and Wokingham Borough Council members and officers have indicated that they wish to do so. The review also recommended that until such time Wokingham members should be able to attend JPPC and contribute to issues for services that it shares with the other two councils. Which they have been doing.
- 5.11 This Service is currently governed through a Joint Management Board attended by nominated Lead Officers from each of the Partner Authorities (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Councils) as well as officers from the PPP.
- 5.12 The Joint Public Protection Committee was established to oversee the strategic leadership of the PPP, and it currently comprises three members from Bracknell Forest Council and three from West Berkshire Council. West Berkshire Council is the host authority for the PPP, and it is therefore governed under the host authority's constitution and meeting procedures.
- 5.13 The review made a series of recommendations for the partner authorities to consider most notably 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.
- 5.14 However, during the course of 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 Council 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.
- 5.15 Given the uncertainty caused by local government reorganisation the partners, whilst acknowledging that a ten-year agreement is desirable considered that 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 (January 2027). The second proposal is that the partner councils seek to enter into an agreement for a shorter term with an option to extend and the insertion of appropriate exit clauses to deal with any eventuality. After a series of discussions led by the Service Lead the preferred position of all three Councils is to sign



## **Public Protection Partnership Shared Service Agreement**

a new agreement until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029 which allows for a much clearer picture to emerge.

- 5.16 The Cabinet/Executive at both Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council have considered and agreed to enter into a new three authority agreement until the 31st March 2029. They have also agreed that the partners should not wait for the expiry of the existing agreements but enter into the new arrangement as soon as practically possible.
- 5.17 All three councils will also be considering elements of the proposal at their full Council meetings at the end of November 2025. If agreed Wokingham will rejoin the Committee at the December meeting of the Joint Public Protection Committee.

### **Proposals**

- 5.18 It is therefore proposed that the Executive consider the recommendations as set out in Section 2 of this report. These include entering into a new three authority agreement with Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council until the 31st March 2029. While full Council must agree the constitutional changes it is recommended that the Executive endorses the proposals set out below.

### **Proposed Governance Arrangements**

- 5.19 The basis of the governance arrangements will be that each Executive and each Council will delegate the public protection functions to the Joint Public Protection Committee. The Committee will then have full responsibility for setting priorities, overseeing policy development and holding the service to account for performance including financial performance. There will also be a Joint Management Board consisting of a Senior Manager from each partner authority who will be responsible for ensuring the direction set by the Committee is implemented. Finally, there will be the service management team who will oversee the day-to-day operational delivery of the service and through whom all staff engaged on service delivery will be accountable to the Board and the Committee.
- 5.20 Arrangements of this type inevitably mean that ownership for policy setting and oversight is shared, and each authority will have their own arrangements for ensuring oversight of the service from corporate perspective.
- 5.21 It is also proposed that the terms of reference of the Joint Public Protection Committee, and the associated sections of the Constitution (Part 3.1 Appendix JPPC and Part 6.5 Council Bodies Rules) be amended as follows to amend the Membership of the Committee:

### **Membership**

The JPPC shall comprise of ~~six~~ **nine** [insert] Members, three from each of BFC, WBC **and Wokingham Borough Council** [insert] as follows:

- 4.1.1 The Executive/Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Protection Services (appointed by the Leader of the respective council);



- 4.1.2 Two additional Members (appointed by each Council at its respective Annual Meeting or in the event of a vacancy) reflecting the political balance of the individual Council.

### Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The JPPC shall appoint one of its Members to be Chairman ~~and one to be Vice Chairman~~ of the JPPC on an annual basis (or in the event of a vacancy) ~~at the first meeting of the Municipal Year. who shall continue in office until their successor becomes entitled to act.~~

~~The Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship of the JPPC shall rotate between the Councils on an annual basis, with each post being held by a different Council.~~

[insert]

### Quorum

The quorum of a Meeting shall be ~~two~~ **three** [insert].

At least one Executive Member from each Council must be present for the meeting to be quorate.

- 5.22 The functions of the Council and Executive that will not be delegated to the Committee include setting of fees and charges, determining any revenue and capital budget allocation for the provision of the service and all licensing functions. The latter will remain Council functions discharged through the Licensing Committee.

## 6 Other options considered

- 6.1 Not to renew the partnership. This was discounted given the efficiencies and greater service resilience resulting from being in the partnership.
- 6.2 The savings from shared services arise from sharing the costs of management as well as systems such as ICT and subscriptions such as legal subscriptions etc. In addition, the critical mass that the shared service provides allows for it to access significant amounts of grant funding (currently around £400K per annum) as well as share cost bases with other authorities outside of the PPP e.g. financial investigation work, complex investigations, case management functions and other specialist functions such as animal feeding stuffs.
- 6.3 It is estimated that an injection of around £250-£300K would be needed to re-instate a stand-alone in-house service if operational capacity was not to be lost. This includes management costs of around £200K (including re-instating the Service Lead role), ICT costs and other licensing costs or around £50K and then lost grant income would need to be factored in. There will also likely be capital / project costs associated with system and data migration and set up and revenue programme costs associated with managing the disaggregation. More importantly all of the benefits arising from the original business case would be lost.
- 6.4 In addition, 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. Should reorganisation ultimately effect BFC this would mean the staff going through this process twice in quick succession. The timing of this extension allows for a much clearer picture and set of options to emerge.

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The Peer Review concluded that the PPP has and continues to be “effective in providing statutory regulatory services to protect residents whilst also delivering efficiencies and greater service resilience. The service has also been successful in securing significant income from both external and internal partners to protect both residents and local businesses. The service is performing well and delivering high quality outcomes for residents and business across the three partner councils.
- 7.2 Members across all three councils that participated in peer review survey recognised “the importance of the service and appreciate how it affects the lives of residents whilst also supporting local council priorities.”
- 7.3 The review also established that “There was no desire from any partner to withdraw any services from the partnership and indeed there was a recognition that withdrawal and working independently would increase costs, reduce available expertise and undermine service resilience.”
- 7.4 There are significant efficiencies to be gained from sharing management costs which allow for more resource to be focussed on operational delivery. There are also the non-financial tangible benefits that the Peer Review identified had been delivered including critical mass, flexibility, expertise, focus and non-staffing related cost effectiveness e.g. IT contracts and subscriptions etc. There is also the access to attract large amounts of grant funding that an individual authority may be unable to do. The alternate to this arrangement is disaggregation that could come at significant cost and instability. Previous experience from the 2022 disaggregation indicates the short terms costs could be significant, and recurring costs could be in the order of £250K if current levels of operational delivery are to be maintained. It could also mean staff are subject to two reorganisations under two years.
- 7.5 It is therefore proposed that the recommendations as set out in Section 2 be adopted and the governance arrangements will be those outlined in 5.19 to 5.22 above.
- 7.6 Should these proposals be approved Council will be asked to extend the delegations of its functions to the Joint Public Protection Committee until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029 and to agree any associated changes to the constitution.

## **8 Appendices**

None

---

### **Background Papers:**

---

[Peer Review Recommendations](#)

[PPP Strategic Assessment 2024-27](#)

[14 October 2025 Report to Bracknell Forest Council Cabinet Meeting](#)

[16 October 2025 Report to Wokingham Borough Council Executive Meeting](#)

**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 one of the Council's Scrutiny Committees or associated Task Groups within the preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

**Wards affected:** All

**Officer details:**

Name: Sean Murphy  
Job Title: Service Lead: Public Protection  
Tel No: 01635 519840  
E-mail: sean.murphy@westberks.gov.uk

---