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# Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q2 Report for 2025/26

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Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	08 December 2025
Chair of Committee:	Councillor Tom McCann
Date JMB agreed report:	17 November 2025
Report Author:	Sean Murphy
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the performance of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) in line with the operating model and business plan and provide an update setting out performance during the second quarter of 2025/26.

## 2. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Be **INFORMED** about the 2025/26 Q2 data for the Public Protection Service set out in **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 Be **INFORMED** about the update on service delivery.

## 3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	<p>At the end of Quarter 2 the Service is forecasting that it will come in on budget.</p> <p>Further detail can be found at Section 5 below.</p>
<b>Human Resource:</b>	<p>The current vacancy information and recruitment activity is set out within the body of the report. See Section 6.</p> <p>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. The only agency resource outside of grant funded work has been in the areas of case management (vacancy / long term absence cover) and food safety inspections.</p>
<b>Legal:</b>	<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 that responsibility.</p>

	<p>The current governance arrangements with Wokingham Borough Council are managed through the Joint Management Board in accordance with the 2022 agreement. This will be revised once the new agreement is in place.</p>
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>JMB and the management team meet regularly to consider the risks for the delivery of the service.</p> <p>The current key risks relate to operational and management capacity due to the nature of vacancies across the service and the inability to recruit to critical posts including a strategic manager leading the case management unit, the Principal Officer for Investigations and senior Trading Standards Officer post.</p> <p>Officers are maintaining a high standard of delivery against the food hygiene and food standards programme. However, capacity issues within food hygiene and standards competency, alongside data cleansing, in-year additional inspection numbers (driven by a new delivery model for food standards and increase in number of food businesses opening) has meant that it is likely that the full programme for both areas will not be achieved in 2025/26. There are risks associated with intervention from the Food Standards Agency and these are articulated in paragraph 18.15</p> <p>To mitigate this, the service is continuing the 'grow your own' approach primarily through the apprenticeship route. It is expected there will be additional food standards and hygiene competent officers following qualification in 2026/27. Officers will take a risk-based approach in prioritising those premises that present the greatest risk to consumers.</p> <p>Due to the finite resource, management are taking a risk-based approach in all its activities ranging from routine interventions to criminal investigations. The service is also maintaining its approach as being intelligence led in dealing with reactive requests and prioritising of risk. This does create additional risk around the perceptions of the level of response which require management of those expectations.</p>
<b>Property:</b>	None
<b>Policy:</b>	<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>

	The revised service priorities were approved at the <a href="#">October 2024</a> JPPC meeting. The Strategic Assessment was adopted at the <a href="#">June 2024</a> meeting.			
	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 – no decisions being made
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		No implications - no decisions being made
Environmental Impact:		✓		No implications - no decisions being made
Health Impact:		✓		No implications - no decisions being made
ICT or Digital Services Impact:		✓		None
PPP Priorities:				The report will impact on the following PPP Priorities 1. Building Safer Communities 2. Improved Living Environment 3. Protecting Consumers from Fraud 4. Reducing Harm in Young People 5. Protecting and Informing Consumers 6. Protection of the Environment 7. Promoting Animal Welfare 8. Safety in the Workplace 9. Safe and Healthy Food Chain Business as Usual Activity is supported too.
Data Impact:		✓		None

<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	There is regular engagement with staff as well as senior officer and Member briefings in each of the authorities that form the PPP. A whole Team Away Day took place on the 21 October 2025, and a bi-weekly update is circulated to the Team by the Service Lead. This is in addition to the West Berkshire Council Place briefings and Let's Talk sessions and a wider public awareness and engagement programme delivered in line with the Community Engagement Strategy approved by this Committee.
<b>Other Options Considered:</b>	None. It is a requirement of the IAA to report on the performance of the service.

## 4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Joint Public Protection 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.
- 4.2 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. HR, ICT, Property and Legal. The report also provides the Committee with the current financial position and highlights any pressures arising in-year.
- 4.3 The key outturn measures of volume and data for Quarter 2 (July to September) is set out in Appendix A to the report. At the October JPPC meeting Members agreed that the Appendix will be circulated under separate cover to the Committee. Officers are working with the performance team to agree a set of measures to be included in the West Berkshire Corporate reporting process. A limited set of measures will be attached to the December JPPC quarter 2 report. 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. Finance

- 5.1 As at the end of quarter 2 the service is predicting that we will come in on budget. There is a separate report setting out the pressures associated with kennelling costs and potential solutions attached at Appendix E to this report.
  - 5.2 The proposed fees and charges were brought to the October JPPC meeting and were then presented to the BFC Licensing and Safety Committee on the 23 October and the WBC Licensing Committee on the 03 November 2025. There is a statutory requirement to consult on the Private Hire Operator, and Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle licence fees.
  - 5.3 In Bracknell Forest these fees were consulted on between the 29 October 2025 to 26 November 2025. The Council received one response to the consultation from the Bracknell Hackney Carriage Drivers Association objecting to the fees and requesting that the fees for the coming financial year be frozen at the current levels. The remainder of the fees will be consulted on as part of the annual budget setting process starting on the 17 December 2025.
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- 5.4 In West Berkshire the statutory consultation took place between the 06 November and the 04 December 2025. As of the 26 November Officers have received two sets of comments from residents. These comments do however relate to fares and not fees. As this agenda will be published before the end of that consultation a verbal update will be provided at the meeting.
- 5.5 If any objections are received during the statutory consultation they will be considered at the January licensing committee meetings in the partner authorities. The remainder of the fees will be agreed during the budget setting cycle of the partner authorities and will come into effect on the 01 April 2026.

## **6. Human Resources**

### **Recruitment**

- 6.1 Since the October 2025 meeting the Service has successfully recruited to the following posts:
- Senior Environmental Health Officer
  - Enforcement Officer Trading Standards
  - Two part time 0.8fte Licensing Applications Officers
  - Temporary Licensing Applications Lead
- 6.2 In terms of recruitment, we are currently recruiting to these posts:
- Senior Trading Standards Officer
  - Animal Health Warden
  - Enforcement Officer 12-month fixed term contract (grant funded)
  - Environmental Control Officer (Private Sector Housing)
  - Environmental Control Officer / Environmental Health Officer (Private sector Housing)
  - Environmental Control Officer – Environmental Quality / Protection
- 6.3 In addition to the above the following posts are now vacant:
- 1 FTE Team Leader in Partnership Team
  - 0.4 FTE Enforcement Officer – Trading Standards
  - 1 FTE Principal Officer Investigations
  - 1 FTE Strategic Manager – Case Management and Governance

### **Training and Development**

- 6.4 The Team are very proud of our two members of the Environmental Health Community Team who have graduated in their MSc's in Environmental Health. They should qualify as Environmental Health Officers in the next twelve months. A further two members of staff have been accepted and have started the MSc programme.
- 6.5 The Level 6 Environmental Health Apprentice is continuing to make good progress with her course. One of our Senior Trading Standards Officers is currently undertaking an ILM course through the apprenticeship programme. Two of our Level
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6 Trading Standards Apprentices are entering the final phase of their apprenticeship and four more have entered or will be entering the programme between October 2025 and March 2026. One of our Trainee Regulatory Services Officers has started his Level 6 Food Control training.

- 6.6 The Team are proud of Jim Brindley, a Trainee Regulatory Services Officers who received the Return to Learning Award at the recent West Berkshire Learner Achievement Awards held in early November.
- 6.7 An officer in the intelligence team has recently been accredited and authorised by the National Crime Agency to exercise the powers of a Financial Intelligence Officer.
- 6.8 Two Officers have successfully completed their Private Water Sampling accreditation for sampling, one a 36<sup>th</sup> month renewal and one 18-month update.
- 6.9 A whole team away day took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025. The session focussed on making better use of technology to expedite processes and improve customer experiences with a focus on artificial intelligence. A Service focussed AI strategy will be presented to this Committee in March 2026.
- 6.10 Regulation of Investigatory Powers training for Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire Senior Managers took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025. A follow up session for staff to consider the practical application of the September theoretical course took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025.
- 6.11 Conflict Resolution Training for the PPP's Management Team took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025.
- 6.12 Further safeguarding training is being provided for new staff into the service. This is a mandatory requirement for PPP staff as set out in the Training and Development Plan. All new members of staff will be required to undertake induction training in both West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest Council.
- 6.13 Safeguarding training for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers as well as Private Hire Operators is now being delivered in-house. We are exploring if Disability Awareness training could be delivered as a new income stream.
- 6.14 The new proposed Workforce Strategy and Training and Development Plan appear elsewhere on this agenda.

## **7. ICT Update**

- 7.1 Testing is ongoing in respect of the public facing portal of the Team's cloud based IT system. Some issues were discovered during the testing and officers are working with the provider to address these issues.
  - 7.2 The Service will be producing an AI and Digital Strategy which will focus on harnessing emerging technologies to drive innovation, improve service delivery, and enhance operational efficiency across the Service where it is appropriate to do so.
  - 7.3 In advance of the Strategy being produced Officers are looking at ways that technology can be used to assist them with streamlining their work processes. A presentation on using AI and digital solutions took place at the October Whole Team Away Day which will help to inform the strategy and signposted staff to opportunities
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they could already make use of. In addition the Training and Development Plan has capture the fact that opportunities will be sought to attend training sessions, webinars, or workshops on digital tools, data analytics, and AI to build practical understanding and strategic insight. Officers are in the process of implementing the use of minute taking technology into the service.

## **8. Update on the Peer Review Recommendations**

- 8.1 It was agreed at the June 2025 meeting that regular updates on progress being made with the Peer Review recommendations would be included in this report (See Appendix D)
- 8.2 A separate report on the future of the partnership arrangements is included elsewhere on this agenda. Work is underway on developing a Service Charter to address some of the staffing recommendations.

## **9. Governance, Information Management and Communications**

- 9.1 During Q2 Officers have dealt with six press enquiries, issued seven press releases and published one article on the website.
  - 9.2 The Principal Officer - Policy and Governance continues to work closely with West Berkshire, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough's Communication Teams and liaises with them on a regular basis regarding the PPP's campaigns. PPP press releases are shared for their distribution, as well as both continuing to share relevant posts on each other's social media platforms. The PPP also provides a weekly contribution to the West Berkshire Council Newsletter which is produced by the internal Communications Team and they have provided regular contributions to Out and About in Bracknell Forest too.
  - 9.3 In terms of social media activity Officers have supported a number of relevant national public campaigns including: courier fraud, holiday fraud and ticket scams around summer festivals. The Service has posted 87 posts on social media this quarter.
  - 9.4 During Q2 the team dealt with a total of 124 Freedom of Information requests which took around 156 hours to process (just over four weeks of officer time). The number of requests have increased when compared to the same period in 2024/25 where 98 Fols were processed and took significantly longer than the 92 hours to process. Fol responses are now being published online in Bracknell Forest.
  - 9.5 The team also processed 56 enquiries from Councillors and the local MPs during quarter 2 (BFC 31 and WBC 25). This represented a significant increase when compared to the 29 that were dealt with in the same period of the previous year.
  - 9.6 In terms of complaints, the service received 11 complaints which equates to 0.37% of the 2938 service requests that the team has dealt with in Q2. Of these ten were stage 1 complaints and one was a stage 2 complaint. Of the 11 complaints received (3 in BFC and 8 in WBC) one was upheld in full, seven were not upheld and three were upheld in part. The number of complaints received has increased when compared to the seven that were received in the same period in 2024/25. The service has, however, dealt with an additional 209 SRs this year when compared to 2024/25.
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- 9.7 During Q2 we completed the consultation on the Bracknell Forest Council Statement of Licensing Policy. The new Environment Health Housing Policy was agreed at the October JPPC meeting.
- 9.8 The Team also supported 23 public events across Bracknell Forest, and West Berkshire this quarter. This included several Summer of Fun Events across Bracknell Forest and the Lets Talk events being championed by West Berkshire Council. The Team also attended three events with Thames Valley Police to support the Safer Streets and Neighbourhood Events in both partner authorities.

## 10. Building Safer Communities

- 10.1 As part of the team's work supporting the identification and prevention of infectious diseases, the ongoing survey for invasive mosquitoes, led by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), ended in September. To date, no invasive mosquitoes have been identified within the PPP area.
- 10.2 Last quarter, the report identified a pressure on kennelling in terms of both staff capacity and budget. During Quarter 2, the service has seen the highest levels of kennelling needs this year due to an increase in the reporting of stray dogs. In response, officers have begun piloting a programme of short-term fostering for unclaimed dogs who exceed their seven-day statutory limit and that are awaiting transfer to a recognised rescue centre. Initial assessment of the numbers of dogs being reported in quarter 3 would suggest a slow-down and reduction in the number of dogs reported as straying. The team are currently recruiting to the vacant animal health warden role.
- 10.3 The Licensing Team have undertaken 89 inspections of premises licensed under the Licensing and Gambling regime during Q2. Officers have attended three joint operations with the Waste Team, Thames Valley Police and the Immigration Service. The Licensing Team have also licensed one previously unlicensed ice cream van in Q2. In addition one scrap metal collector licence application is being processed.
- 10.4 Officers continue to attend pubwatch in both areas.
- 10.5 Licensing Officers have also carried out inspections of Newbury Racecourse and the Heritage Live event at Englefield Estate.
- 10.6 The following licensing panel/subcommittee meetings have taken place in Q2:

Type of Application	Applicant	Outcome
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>		
New Premises Licence	Popeye's, 45 High Street, Bracknell, Bracknell Forest, RG12 1EA	Granted subject to conditions
New Premise Licence	Feta & Fig Limited, 3 Rectory Row, Bracknell, Bracknell Forest, RG12 7BN	The application was refused.



<b>West Berkshire</b>		
New Premises Licence	Best Buy Foods, 51 London Road, Newbury, West Berkshire, RG14 1JN	Granted subject to conditions

10.7 During Q3 of 2025/26 to date the following applications have been heard:

<b>Type of Application</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>		
Vary a Premise Licence	The Vault, 19 High Street, Crowthorne, Bracknell, RG45 7AD	Awaited
<b>West Berkshire</b>		
None to date		

<b>Licensing Hearings Data for last three years.</b>			
<b>Authority</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26 to date</b>
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>	3	3 (and a further one was postponed)	4 (2 hearings were also postponed)
<b>West Berkshire</b>	8 (with a further five cancelled or adjourned after agenda publication)	1	2 (1 further hearing was cancelled)

## 11. Improved Living Environment

- 11.1 We reported in quarter 1, that a new project to raise energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector had started. Following a desk top exercise to identify private rented sector property's that were failing the minimum energy efficiency standard (F-G on the EPC), many properties listed previously from the housing condition survey and national EPC database have been removed from the list of non-complaint properties.
- 11.2 For the few that remain, officers are in contact with those landlords to work towards improvement in raising standards, where it is possible to do so. It is expected that the project will be completed by the end of the calendar year, and plans are in place to ensure continuous review of the private rented sector properties' EPC rating due to the continual changes in the property market.
- 11.3 Officers have been involved with yet more hoarding cases. In one instance, the officer had to arrange for over 400 bags of rubbish to be removed from a property's rear garden. Officers also had to take the lead in dealing with a pest infestation and working with colleagues in adult social care to ensure ongoing engagement and funding for the household.

- 11.4 A second hoarder has been without basic sanitary provision as they had their water supply cut off. Working with their social worker, the officer was able to agree some clearance work and reinstate their water supply.
- 11.5 The Service has issued 19 licences for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Bracknell Forest and three in West Berkshire. Officers have started a programme of compliance checks on those HMO licences issued with specific conditions to ensure all are up to current standards.
- 11.6 The EH Housing Team have received complaints and queries regarding caravan sites across both areas and officers continue to ensure that all sites are compliant with licence conditions.
- 11.7 The Team have worked with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services on certain high rise building issues and are now progressing to work on the 11-18metre high residential buildings. They have also attended joint visits to takeaway premises with residential flats above that have a lack of fire separation.
- 11.8 In terms of service requests (SRs) relating to housing:

	Total request for service housing	Of these number of complaints regarding house condition	Of these number that were Registered Social Landlords
WB April to June 2024	90	71	32 (45%)
WB July to Sept 2024	68	59	21 (36%)
WB Oct to Dec 2024	92	62	31 (50%)
WB Jan to March 2025	84	56	29 (52%)
WB Apr to Jun 2025	61	37	19 (51%)
WB July to Sept 2025	60	33	12 (36%)
BF April to June 2024	78	49	20 (41%)
BF July to Sept 2024	87	55	25 (27%)
BF Oct to Dec 2024	95	69	35 (50%)
BF Jan to March 2025	86	51	29 (57%)
BF Apr to Jun 2025	54	21	7 (33%)
BF July to Sept 2025	74	41	7 (17%)

- 11.9 The majority of the housing condition SRs relate to leaks in the properties and other sources of damp and corresponding mould .The PPP have put in a funding bid to carry out an enhanced damp and mould pilot project that we hope to begin this winter. It will be working with GP surgeries to link the Service with patients who are suffering ill health as a result of damp and mould in their homes, who are not already known to the Team. In this way we hope to extend the PPP's reach and look at damp and mould issues across more properties with a view to improvement of conditions.

## 12. Protecting Consumers from Fraud

- 12.1 The UK's Tobacco Track and Trace system introduced in 2019 helps prevent the illegal trade in tobacco products by making it more difficult for smugglers and counterfeiters to operate. The team continue to collate intelligence received by external and internal partners which will be followed up with visits and the HMRC application downloaded to WBC phones will be used to scan tobacco products to verify whether they have a valid UID (alphanumeric code). Following meetings with tobacco leads in a neighbouring Authority, the team are preparing for test purchases across the PPP.

- 12.2 As is usual during the summer season, the team has seen challenges in staffing across the PPP. However, demand continues, and officers' reaction to those demands ensure that those service requests that present the greatest risks are investigated and resourced.

### **Scams and Fraud Victim Support**

- 12.3 The PPP have been successful in gaining a further three years' funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Partnership Fund, via the Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire's Community Safety Partnerships. Funding from Wokingham is still to be confirmed. The funding is being utilised to deliver fraud and scams victim support most notably to residents who fall short of Adult Social Care thresholds, however require support in signposting to appropriate services to prevent deterioration in capacity and the need for Adult Social Care intervention.
- 12.4 The West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board has set up a task and finish group focusing on preventing the financial exploitation of adults with care and support needs. The Senior Programme and Community Officer sits on this group on behalf of the PPP as lead for fraud and scams victim support in addition to being designated safeguarding officer.
- 12.5 During Q2 the scams team have achieved the following across Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham:
- Dealt with 31 Service Requests in respect of fraud and scams
  - Undertaken two presentations
  - Supported the set-up of one new No Cold Calling Zone

### **Unfair Trading and Fraud**

- 12.6 In terms of losses across the PPP area arising from unfair trading and fraud up to the end of Q2 2025/26:
- The total detriment identified from victims in the PPP area is £957,577 (Bracknell Forest £56,856, Wokingham £204,910 and West Berkshire £539,106). This represents a significant increase on the £604,068 at the same period in 2024/25.
  - The total money saved or recovered is £24,592.
  - The total number of alleged incidents is 105 (14 Bracknell Forest, 46 Wokingham and 45 West Berkshire) which is an increase when compared to the 90 in 2024/25.
  - The average loss is £9,119 per victim. The average loss in Wokingham is £4,454, in Bracknell Forest £4,061 and in West Berkshire £11,980. The average loss has increased compared to the 2024/25 average of £6,711.
- 12.7 It is worth noting that many investigations also identify victims outside the PPP area so the total figure under investigation at any one time is significantly higher.
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## **13. Reducing Harm in Young People**

### **Schools Work**

- 13.1 Two vaping presentations were delivered to West Berkshire Secondary schools at the beginning of July. Owing to end of term, summer holidays and the start of the new academic year, these are the only sessions undertaken within Q2. At the beginning of the academic year contact was made with all secondary and primary schools across West Berkshire setting out the offering in respect of alcohol, tobacco, vapes and scam presentations. The response from primary schools requesting vaping health harm awareness sessions for their year 5/6 pupils has been high; 17 primary schools have been or are currently in process of being booked in for the delivery of a presentation over the coming academic year.
- 13.2 Take up from secondary schools has been low to date, however officers are aware that there have been updates to the Department for Education's Relationships, Sex and Health Education guidance, which has increased the number and range of teaching resources available on these topics. There are also several free educational performances being commissioned through Public Health funding and the Community Alcohol Partnership focusing on tobacco, vaping and alcohol, that are due to be delivered across West Berkshire in the coming months.

### **Attitudinal Survey**

- 13.3 The attitudinal survey is due to 'go live' across West Berkshire secondary schools after October half term. This year the survey is also including questions on nicotine pouch use in addition to tobacco vapes and alcohol, owing to the national perceived emerging trend of nicotine pouch use amongst children.
- 13.4 This year a shorter survey is also going to be sent to all West Berkshire primary schools for completion by their year 5 and 6 pupils. It is hoped that this information will provide an understanding of when children start to engage in these health harm related behaviours, the drivers for partaking in these types of behaviours and their sources for obtaining these products. Furthermore, it may provide an evidence base for earlier intervention.

### **Tobacco Control Alliance**

- 13.5 The Berkshire West Tobacco Control Alliance meets on a six-weekly basis with representatives from West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham Public Health, Trading Standards, NHS, BOB ICB, pharmacies and local stop smoking service provider. The alliance's Tobacco Control Plan is a 'live' document that is routinely reviewed and amended. Through the alliance it has been agreed that advertising of our local stop smoking service provision will be prevalent on busses travelling between West Berkshire and Reading during October as part of the Stoptober Campaign.
- 13.6 The PPP's Senior Programme and Community Officer also represents West Berkshire at the Southeast Smokefree Alliance. A webpage 'Quit Together Live Better' [South East Smokefree Alliance – Quit Together Live Better](#) has been set up which directs residents who access it to their local stop smoking provision. A large in and out of home stop smoking marketing campaign has also been developed and agreed to 'go live' across the Southeast Regions during Stoptober, this will include
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ITVX pause adds and advertising of the Quit Together Live Better website on trains running across the Southeast.

- 13.7 The PPP's Senior Programme and Community Officer leads on the commissioning of West Berkshire Public Health's jointly commissioned Local Stop Smoking Service provision, in addition, ensures the effective spending of the Local Stop Smoking Service and Support Grant Funding. The outreach stop smoking service provision for routine and manual workers funded through the Local Stop Smoking Service and Support Grant funding commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> July. Within Q2 the service achieved 27 people setting a quit date, they have a target of achieving 252 people setting a quit date by 31<sup>st</sup> March. During Q2 they achieved one below their required trajectory, however at this stage, this is not a concern.
- 13.8 A Strategy Document in respect of West Berkshire Public Health's intention to jointly commission an Integrated Healthy Lifestyle Service with Reading Borough Council was completed by the PPP's Senior Programme and Community Officer and presented to and signed off by Procurement Board over the summer. A report will now be completed to go to through West Berkshire Council's internal governance meetings in January. The IHLS will include smoking cessation and weight management and is due to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2026.

### **Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP)**

- 13.9 The CAP's parental supply of alcohol initiative, for which West Berkshire have been chosen as a pilot area has been delayed owing to the CAP's commissioned marketing team having to rework their creative direction following feedback from the CAP coordinators of the pilot areas. It is not yet known when the next meeting of the steering committee will be taking place.
- 13.10 The Responsible Retailer Scheme documents have been sent to graphics to formalise. Once final documents are agreed these will be uploaded onto the PPP website. A communication strategy meeting is due to take place in October to discuss the launch of the scheme across the three partner authorities.

### **Age Restricted Products**

- 13.11 The age restricted products Enforcement officer has been undertaking many inspections in retail and other licensed premises to test compliance with the relevant age restrictions. These have resulted in the highest number of investigations of this type for the service in many years. Although it's disappointing that the percentage of failures it does demonstrate the need to conduct these operations. In response, the team are developing additional communications strategy to highlight awareness and introduce initiatives such as the responsible retailer scheme in an attempt and drive down the failure rate being seen. This is in line with the PPP delivery plan of Prevention, Intelligence and Enforcement (PIE).
- 13.12 There is currently a pool of volunteers aged between 15 and 16 and the team will be looking to recruit new volunteers over the coming months.
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13.13 During Q2 the following underage sales activity took place:

Vapes		Lottery		Alcohol		Knives		Tobacco	
Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales
11	4	0	0	8	2	12	2	12	2

## 14. Protection of the Environment

- 14.1 Q2 has also been exceptionally busy, with 50 reported incidents to investigate.
- 14.2 Fly tipping continues to be an issue around Bracknell Forest, with one significant fly tip reported in in Allsmoor Lane. Much work has been undertaken with partner agencies to identify road users potentially responsible which resulted in a suspect being interviewed. Following this evidence gathering, officers were able to rule them out. Further work continues with information disclosures on account details found within the waste, which has identified that the waste originated from the London SW15 area A casefile against the waste carrier is now being prepared for legal consideration.
- 14.3 Improving the environment in and around a location in Bracknell Forest has resulted a local housing provider being issued with a warning to stop using part of their land as a waste transfer station. For years, this has been an area fenced off on the grounds of the RSL property and used as a collection point for white goods that have been removed from their properties. In recent months there has been a significant increase in the number of units stored on this site.
- 14.4 Officers identified that there has been no risk assessment or regard to properties overlooking the site, owned and managed by the housing provider. They also did not hold a proper licence as a waste transfer station. Consequently, the association have now sourced a registered local waste company to remove their white goods from their properties and have decided not to store white goods at this site in future.
- 14.5 A six week placement of CCTV saw a very significant reduction in waste being left at Deepdale Community Glass recycling area.
- 14.6 Our Solar Powered CCTV trailer has been in place in Priestwood and it has been reported that this has had a significant impact on the reduction of incidents of ASB (drug dealing) as well as a reduction in fly tipping around the recycling units.
- 14.7 As reported previously, the banning of illegal single-use vapes came into force at the beginning of June. Implementation required training, the creation of penalty notices, new processes, templates and a production and consultation process on the enforcement guidance for the PPP.
- 14.8 Officers have visited the premises where information and shared intelligence suggests that these products were available for sale or stored and could be sold. During the summer, officers undertook 18 visits and issued 6 'notices of intent' to serve compliance notices. To date, all businesses revisited have been found to be compliant.
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- 14.9 Q2 has seen a variety of commercial nuisance complaints dealt with including the following:
- Low frequency noise investigation.
  - Noise monitoring of a refrigeration plant which resulted in an Abatement Notice being served.
  - Insect nuisance from a farm investigated.
  - Smoke from site clearance which resulted in an Abatement Notice being served.
  - Mediation instigated to deal with concerns relating to a noise emanating from an entertainment premise.
  - Successful investigation of a noise complaint relating to padel courts and no new complaints relating to outdoor swimming pool.
  - Petroleum storage site odour investigation conducted.
  - Officers identified a cement batching site operating without a Permit, application now received and consultation underway.
- 14.10 **Air Quality** - Appraisals have been received from DEFRA for the Air Quality Annual Status Reports for all 3 LAs (see separate report on this agenda) and progress is being made with drafting of the West Berkshire Council Air Quality Strategy.
- 14.11 **Event Monitoring** – undertaken for noise from five events to check compliance with their relevant Premise Licence conditions and Noise Management Plans. No breaches were found and no substantiated complaints were received.
- 14.12 **Planning Committees** have been attended, and positive feedback was received from the Council's barrister for the work around noise during a high profile planning appeal.

## 15. Protecting and Informing Consumers

- 15.1 In In this quarter the Trading Standards team has triaged/assessed and dealt with 1209 service requests (not including food related service requests) across PPP.
- 15.2 Nationally, counterfeit 'Labubu' dolls and 'Jelly Cat' toys have entered the marketplace, [TikTok Labubu trend exploited by criminals with dangerous fakes - BBC News](#). The service has been alerted by National Trading Standards and Officers visiting convenience stores whilst looking for banned single use vapes, are also assessing these products when displayed for sale as they are commonly sold from the same type of outlet. The team have identified a potential premises selling such products, and are currently following this up.
- 15.3 A port authority has notified the service of non-compliant electrical items entering the UK, destined for addresses within the PPP area. Officers are following this up and providing safety advice as appropriate.
- 15.4 It was reported last quarter, that officers were working with colleagues across other areas and disciplines as part of a faulty gas boiler parts seizure and investigation in Doncaster. The investigation is ongoing.
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- 15.5 Other cases of interest involving a batch of plug sockets has come to the attention of the service. This investigation relates to a product that is unsafe and a potential electrocution and/or fire hazard.

## **16. Promoting Animal Welfare**

- 16.1 Officers continue to undertake routine inspections for animal welfare on farms. To date, all inspections are on target with the 2025/26 plan.
- 16.2 Officers visited the Newbury Show in September. The officers identified issues with managing animal licensing and bio-security matters as well as food issues, such as labelling and allergen declaration (for human consumption) across a number of traders attending the event. Advice was given at the time of the event to the traders and officers are meeting with the event organisers as part of the debrief.

## **17. Safety in the Workplace**

- 17.1 The Team has dealt with 48 (19 in BFC and 29 WBC) health and safety at work service requests during Q2 and 37 (16 BFC and 21 WBC) workplace accidents were reported.
- 17.2 Cases of interest include: An ongoing investigation following an incident at a large warehouse where an employee fell from height sustaining injuries.
- 17.3 A member of the public raised concerns about electrical safety at a small independent retail store. An officer subsequently served a health and safety at work improvement notice requiring the employer to have the fixed electrical installation inspected for safety and have all necessary repairs carried out by a competent person.
- 17.4 The Safety Advisory Group have been notified about and considered the documentation provided in respect of 14 events in Bracknell Forest and 26 in West Berkshire taking place during this quarter.

## **18. Safe and Healthy Food Chain**

- 18.1 During quarter 2a total of 36 food related service requests have been handled by the officers responsible for delivering food standards safety work.
- 18.2 The first quarter saw the new food standards model coming into being, and officers have, up until the end of quarter 2, carried out 768 routine interventions and have taken 72 food standards related samples. All of which will inform the next intervention dates. Officers are also working on data cleansing as interventions progress and have uncovered data anomalies leading to around 500 additional interventions required for the year across the PPP. These will be risk assessed and managed with the resources available over time.
- 18.3 During this second quarter of the year, officers have been receiving results back from the sampling projects that took place in the first quarter of the year. In terms of the spirit sampling project 8 out of the 9 spirit samples were reported as satisfactory, with a referral on one.
- 18.4 Checks on undeclared milk as an allergen in cakes and confectionary were all satisfactory from an allergen point of view, however it was disappointing that 8 of
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the 9 samples still had labelling non-compliances. Officers therefore referred the labelling concerns to the manufacturers for action to be taken.

- 18.5 It was good to have 100% compliance on nutrition declaration checks on the yoghurts that were sampled, but again unfortunately all samples had labelling non-compliances. This is a real concern that so many are being reported as unsatisfactory and really does show the value of the officer's work, and the need for these sampling projects to be a regular part of Food Standards enforcement.
  - 18.6 The sample results from takeaways have also been returned with 8 out of 9 compliant for allergen controls and all were found to be declaring the correct meat species. Officers visited the one premise where the allergen issues had been reported as unsatisfactory and provided in-depth advice and guidance to the business, who's owner was very concerned and took on board all the advice provided.
  - 18.7 Whilst addressing all these non-compliances officers have also been out taking samples in July, August and September. July's sampling involved buying cooked ham which has been sent for testing for labelling compliance and that water content was being declared correctly. These results have since been received and once again labelling issues were uncovered and businesses advised.
  - 18.8 August sampling involved buying soups to check for salt content. The results are yet to be received. Officers have also been involved in national campaigns for the Food Standards Agency looking at imported soft drinks, tea, spices and dried fruits.
  - 18.9 September has meant visits to pizza restaurants to purchase samples of pizza toppings to check for labelling and composition requirements – this was also part of a regional campaign as well as part of work for the Food Standard Agency. Results are awaited.
  - 18.10 The investigation into a local convenience store that was found to have sold dangerous vodka is complete and awaiting legal review.
  - 18.11 The Service received 31 (8 BFC and 23 WBC) infectious disease notifications during Q2. This is a significant reduction when compared to the 187 during the same period last year. However, since the beginning of June 2025 the UKHSA has stopped reporting *Campylobacter* cases directly to local authorities and therefore the number of infectious disease notifications has reduced. The majority of cases reported now are in respect of *Salmonella* Enteritidis.
  - 18.12 As we reach the halfway point of the inspection year for food hygiene premises, in terms of output the Authorised Officers have completed all of the high-risk food inspections due in that period. However, Officers are still facing an issue with the number of unrated food premises. These premises are risk assessed when the registration is received, and inspections are carried out where it is high risk premise.
  - 18.13 The Service are not resourced to be able to inspect all new premises when they register and so are working through a backlog. The Service have been using casual Authorised Officers to do this however, due to funding restrictions their contracts will come to an end at the end of December. In terms of numbers the Service deals with, in the region of, 1000 food hygiene inspections per year.
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- 18.14 The issue stems in the main from a higher than expected number of food premises opening in this year so far that require inspection (figure up 30% on last year at this date) and the number of authorised officers in the team not being sufficient to meet the numbers of additional food inspections due to backlog that has been historical from Covid when inspections were suspended and officers redirected to the Covid response. In addition, incoming work such as a number of serious work-related accident investigations that are ongoing, and a high level of formal enforcement in food premises where serious risk is found is taking officer time away from inspection work.
- 18.15 The governing body, The Food Standards Agency, who are the regulators for food enforcement, have set out that all premises are required to be inspected by year end (31 March 2026). There is intense scrutiny in the service from the FSA. In previous years the FSA has given dispensations as they were aware of the issues of officers redeployed in Covid. The PPP is already in discussions with the FSA on the food hygiene programme, this can be escalated to targeted audits of the service and directives for achieving compliance with the Code of Practice. The FSA also publish results of audits and the ultimate sanction is that they take the service over from the Local Authority and the authority will then have to fund other bodies for the service to be carried out.
- 18.16 To date, to maximise inspection numbers officer time has been diverted from health and safety enforcement into food for the remainder of this inspection year, and we have increased one part time officer's hours to full time.
- 18.17 Going forward we have an officer who is currently in training as an authorised food officer and they should be qualified in the 2026/27 inspection year which will increase in house capacity for next year.
- 18.18 The specific risk of the food hygiene service not completing the targeted food inspections include unregulated food chain conditions resulting in a range of poor health outcomes extending from minor to loss of life. For example, cross contamination issues leading to food poisoning, pest issues in premises, poor hygiene and or cook/ cool practices, in addition to FSA sanctions.

## **19. Investigations and Case Management**

- 19.1 The Joint Case Management Unit continues to be busy working with new investigations commencing all the time across the PPP. Of these 47 are already in the case management / court system and most of the bigger more complex investigations are or are expected to be crown court disposals.
- 19.2 A significant number are set for trial in 2026 but unfortunately the team have had their first trial listed in 2027. In addition, as anticipated and mentioned in the last report, there has been a big increase in the number of cases submitted for e-cigarette, alcohol, offensive weapons and investigation prosecutions with the new officer dedicated to underage sales. The figure does not include a number of road traffic prosecutions which number 31 active. There is also an appeal against a sentence and confiscation order in the Court of Appeal in London.
- 19.3 The Investigations Team have eight cases going through the court process, four further cases are with Legal Services for a determination. There are also seven larger complex investigations ongoing.
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- 19.4 The Accredited Financial Investigators have 21 active cases: eight pertaining to confiscation of assets, 12 money laundering/fraud cases and one money laundering/counterfeit goods case. Of those cases 16 are for the PPP, three are Reading BC cases and two are for Oxfordshire Trading Standards.
- 19.5 In terms of recent cases, a ten week trial in the summer for advanced fee fraud resulted in a 4.5 year immediate custodial sentence. More can be found here: [21 November 2025 - Press Release - Advance fee fraudster sentenced to 4.5 years in prison. - Public Protection Partnership](#) . In addition there have been a number of under age sales cases, examples be found here: [10 October 2025 - Press Release- Retailers and Staff Fined for Selling Age-Restricted Products to Minors - Public Protection Partnership](#). We have also recieved a guilty plea on a counterfeit clothing case relating to sales at a car boot sale and that case will be sentenced in due course and finally a large number of road traffic cases and exaples can be found here: [28 October 2025 - Press Release - Driver fined for breach of weight restrictions - Offences under section 5 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 - Public Protection Partnership](#)

## 20. Concluding Observations

- 20.1 The report sets out a significant focus with respect to the priority areas. This is in addition to the large volume of other work undertaken on a day-to-day basis. There will inevitably need to be some re-prioritisation of other workstreams if we are going to continue to focus on the areas of highest risk and demand.
- 20.2 This continues to be an extremely busy period for the service. The work has covered a vast range of priority areas, and the balancing of priorities and risk has been a key focus whilst delivering savings to mitigate pressures. The Service would, as always, like to place on record our gratitude for the support of the partner authorities and for constructive oversight of this Committee.

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## 21. Appendices

- 21.1 Appendix A – Q2 Performance Data
- 21.2 Appendix B – Compliments
- 21.3 Appendix C - Activity by Authority
- 21.4 Appendix D – Update on Peer Review Recommendations
- 21.5 Appendix E – Kennelling Provision Briefing

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## 22. Background Papers:

- 22.1 None

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☒

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



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

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Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position.

☐

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months.

☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision

☐

Report is to note only

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**Wards affected:** All Wards

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