

DRAFT

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

JOINT PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on MONDAY 6 OCTOBER 2025

COUNCIL CHAMBER COUNCIL OFFICES MARKET STREET NEWBURY

Present: Tom McCann (Chairman), Iskandar Jefferies (Vice-Chairman), Nick Allen and Jeremy Cottam

Also Present: Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager - Commercial), George Lawrence (Team Manager - Residential), Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), April Peberdy (Service Director - Community Services), Deborah Vincent (Principal Officer), Moira Fraser (Public Protection Partnership), Damian James (Bracknell Forest Council), Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager), Thomas Radbourne (Meeting Host) and Councillor Lou Timlin (Wokingham Borough Council)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Cherise Welch and Councillor Howard Woollaston

PART I

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the two meetings held on 9 June 2025 were agreed as true and accurate records and signed by the Chairman.

2 Outstanding actions from previous meetings

It was noted that no actions remained outstanding.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4 Notice of Public Speaking and Questions

No public questions were received which related either to a general issue concerned with the work of the Public Protection Partnership or to an item on the agenda.

5 Forward Plan

Councillor Tom McCann introduced the item and outlined his view that the Forward Plan would benefit from greater ownership from Members of the Committee.

It was noted that the Forward Plan already captured the annual cycle of reports and the three yearly review of policies, but Councillor McCann asked Members to review the document and bring forward any suggestions for future items to the next meeting in December 2025. This would be facilitated by Officers. Moira Fraser (Principal Officer) added that Members were open to make contact with officers at any time to discuss items on/for the Forward Plan.

Action:

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- The Forward Plan would be circulated to Members with a request that they review the document and bring forward any suggestions for future items to the next meeting in December 2025.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

6 Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q1 Report for 2025/26

Members resolved to suspend standing orders to allow Councillor Lou Timlin, attending as a guest from Wokingham Borough Council, to ask questions on any of the agenda items.

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 7) which provided an update on the quarter one performance of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP), in line with the operating model and business plan.

Finance

A pressure of around £90k was reported. However, Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection) clarified that this was in fact closer to £200k as a result of unexpected costs arising from increases in National Insurance contributions and cost of living pressures.

Mitigation measures, mainly holding vacancies, were being taken to bring the budget back to a zero outturn in year.

It was clarified that there had been no response to date from Central Government in relation to a review of statutory fees. The assumption was therefore made that statutory fees would not be increased.

Recruitment

A number of posts had been recruited to as outlined in the report. This had enabled the Licensing Team to be fully staffed. Some posts did however remain vacant.

Training

Two trainees had achieved their qualifications and had become full members of the Service. This had enabled two new trainees to start their apprenticeships.

ICT

The Service was in the process of producing an AI and Digital Strategy and this was scheduled to be brought to Committee in March 2026. Efforts were ongoing to enhance the use of technology in different parts of the Service. This included responses to numerous Freedom of Information requests. Members felt it would be useful to publish responses to Freedom of Information requests so that this information could be accessed by residents.

Peer Review Recommendations

The revised Shared Service Agreement was scheduled for consideration at Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Councils during October and November 2025. This would include Wokingham being reintegrated into the governance arrangements at Member level by the date of the next Committee meeting.

Governance

Consultation was taking place on West Berkshire's Taxi Licensing Policy and Bracknell Forest's Statement of Licensing Policy.

Five complaints had been received by the Service. This equated to 0.18% of the service requests that had been received during the quarter.

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Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

It was noted that the number of KPIs had increased over time. They were last reviewed in March 2025. The KPIs did however need to be subject to regular review to accommodate changing priorities and changes to public policies. In light of this, Moira Fraser explained that proposals would be brought to the next meeting to improve the way that KPI information was presented to Members that would allow for greater scrutiny of key areas. The full data would continue to be collected as was currently the case and disseminated outside of the agenda packs.

Building Safer Communities

There was a pressure with kennelling provision, with a high demand for spaces and cost pressures. A report was being produced that would outline ways to try and address this.

Councillor Jeremy Cottam queried if many complaints had been received in relation to dangerous dogs. It was explained that currently, Enforcement Officers worked closely with the Police and with residents in investigating reports of dangerous dogs.

Sean Murphy explained that recruitment was planned of a dedicated post to lead on this work. The Service conducted a number of animal welfare duties and the resource would be pulled together into a single team.

Officers described the inspection regime for kennels. There was an initial inspection and this would determine the frequency of future inspections. However, should a complaint be received, then the kennels would be visited.

Reducing harm in young people

Action was being taken to rectify the increase in successful underage sales.

It was reported that the Community Alcohol Partnership had recently received an award for the work delivered with Newbury College to support young people.

Safe and Healthy Food Chain

A new Food Standards Delivery Model had been introduced. The need for additional inspections of premises had been identified.

Protection of the Environment

Feedback was awaited from DEFRA to the annual air quality reports that had been submitted. An update would be provided at December's meeting.

The auditing of private water supplies had been enhanced.

Protecting consumers from fraud

The number of cases of fraud had increased from a year ago.

However, officers had been successful in achieving a number of convictions.

Members were concerned should there be a gap in the provision of victim support, following an officer's recent retirement. Sean Murphy explained that Police and Crime Commissioner funding would enable the recruitment of a full time officer who would cover the PPP.

Councillor McCann gave thanks for the report and the wide range of work that had been undertaken.

Action:

- Proposals would be brought to the next meeting to improve the way that KPI information was presented to Members that would allow for greater scrutiny of key areas.

RESOLVED that the Committee were informed about:

- The 2025/26 Q1 data for the Public Protection Service as set out in Appendix A.
- The update on service delivery.

7 Revenue Budget 2026/27 including proposed Fees and Charges Schedule

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 8) which set out the Public Protection Partnership's (PPP) draft revenue budget for 2026/27, including discretionary fees and charges for 2026/27; which sought approval of the draft budget, and draft fees and charges schedule prior to submission to Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire Councils as part of their budget setting process (in accordance with the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA); and which sought agreement of the figure for the basis of the recharge to Wokingham Borough Council with respect to the services shared with Wokingham Borough Council under the shared service agreement effective on 1 April 2022.

Councillor Tom McCann opened the item by thanking officers for their extensive work on the budget, particularly when there were significant financial pressures to manage.

Councillor McCann highlighted the importance of ownership of the budget at a Member level across the PPP. As part of this he suggested that a discussion be scheduled at the Committee meeting in June 2026 to discuss budget setting across the three local authorities.

Councillor McCann also made reference to the very helpful monthly briefings he received from officers, as Portfolio Holder for this work in West Berkshire, and advised that he would be sharing the notes from these meetings with relevant Members.

Sean Murphy (Service Lead – Public Protection) presented the report. This was an annual item which was required to make recommendations to individual councils on the PPP budget by 30 November each year.

A largely standstill budget was recommended. However, after taking into account the in year pressures referred to earlier in the meeting and the need to accommodate these in 2026/27, the base budget was recommended to be increased by approximately 6%.

If the councils considered that the recommended budget was not affordable, then there would be a need for the PPP to revisit its recommendations.

Turning to fees and charges, the proposed hourly rate for 2026/27 was £74 (an increase of £5). The fees and charges would next be presented to the Licensing Committees of Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire Councils. This would be followed by a period of consultation, after which the fees and charges would return to the Licensing Committees prior to heading to Council meetings for approval.

A significant increase was noted for the inspection of animal establishments, the inspection fees for which were set by the City of London's Animal Health Service. However, as previously outlined at this meeting, it was the intention for the PPP to bring animal welfare activity in house and within a single team. The cost of conducting inspections would be recouped from the City of London.

Councillor Nick Allen queried how proposed membership changes could impact on fees and charges. Sean Murphy explained that Wokingham Borough Council were setting their own licensing fees and charges, but discussions were taking place to ensure alignment of fees and charges across the PPP where it was appropriate to do so. He added that the fees being proposed by the PPP were in a similar range to that being proposed in neighbouring authorities.

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Sean Murphy reiterated that the most significant budget pressure came as a result of the statutory fees. These fees should be far higher than was the case as some had not been uplifted in more than 20 years.

Actions:

- A discussion would be scheduled at the Committee meeting in June 2026 to discuss budget setting across the three local authorities.
- Notes from Portfolio Holder briefings would be shared with relevant Members.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- Had considered the draft revenue budget, including the fees and charges, set out in this report and within Appendix A.
- Would recommend to partner Councils that the contributions set out in column three of the table at 5.24 form the basis of the 2026/27 net revenue budget contributions.
- Would recommend to partner Councils the fees and charges set out in Appendix A.
- Approved the contribution request from Wokingham Borough Council as set out in the table at paragraph 5.24.
- Agreed that the policy position in relation to monies received under the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) (which was approved at the October 2024 JPPC meeting) would remain the policy to be applied to spend/allocate any monies received under the scheme.
- Agreed that the December meeting of this Committee would receive an update report on the outcome of deliberations on the proposed net revenue budget and proposed fees and charges.

8 Environmental Health Housing Policy 2025 - 2028

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 9) which provided an update on the work of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) within Environmental Health Sector Housing and which highlighted the high level priorities which the PPP would undertake over the next three years.

Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager – Commercial) presented the report and explained that the Environmental Health Sector Housing Policy was reviewed every three years. It outlined both current areas of work and future priorities. Areas of work included:

- Working to make improvements to housing that was in poor repair and/or in poor condition.
- Responding to reports of damp and mould, in particular over the colder months.
- Licensing of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs).
- Reviewing, with the Fire Authority and Building Control, the safety of cladding in tall buildings.
- Inspecting the quality of residential accommodation that had been converted from commercial buildings.

Sean Murphy (Service Lead – Public Protection) added that an aim of this reviewed document was to pull together all housing related activity of the service into a single Policy.

Councillor Tom McCann thanked officers for their ongoing work in this area.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

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- Noted the PPP’s role in relation to Housing.
- Approved the direction that the PPP were taking in Environmental Health Sector Housing.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 8.15pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature