

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 8 DECEMBER 2025

BRACKNELL FOREST COUNCIL, TIME SQUARE, MARKET STREET, BRACKNELL

Present: Tom McCann (Chairman), Iskandar Jefferies (Vice-Chairman), Nick Allen, Stephen Newton, Lou Timlin and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager - Commercial), George Lawrence (Team Manager - Residential), Sean Murphy (Service Lead - Public Protection), April Peberdy (Service Director - Community Services), Moira Fraser (Public Protection Partnership), Damian James (Bracknell Forest Council), Councillor Paul Bidwell (Present as Substitute for Councillor Stephen O'Regan) and Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager)

Apologies for absence: Councillor Stephen O'Regan

PART I

1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record 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.

It was confirmed that residents of Wokingham were eligible to submit questions at future meetings.

5 Forward Plan

The Chairman invited Members to consider the Forward Plan. It was confirmed that a budget discussion item had been scheduled for the June 2026 meeting, ensuring sufficient lead-in time for all three authorities. Officers advised that the Air Quality Report from DEFRA, relating to Bracknell Forest, had not been received and would therefore need to be added to the Forward Plan for the March 2026 meeting.

Members were encouraged to bring forward any further items they wished to see included on the Forward Plan.

Action:

- The Air Quality Report from DEFRA for Bracknell Forest would be added to the March 2026 meeting.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

6 Update on the PPP Shared Service Contract

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 7). The Public Protection Partnership Service was subjected to a Peer Review which concluded earlier in the year (2025). In line with the negotiations on the recommendations of the review, reports seeking authorisation for Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Councils to enter into a new three authority shared service agreement had been discussed, agreed and given effect at the Executive/Cabinet and Council meetings in all three authorities.

The report provided an update on the decisions made and progress to date in amending the governance arrangements and Inter Authority Agreements that supported and underpinned the Service.

Sean Murphy (Service Lead – Public Protection) referred back to the meeting held in June 2025, where Officers were instructed to take forward the recommendations of the Peer Review to set up a new agreement between the local authorities, including Wokingham Borough Council.

Officers noted that the recommendations from the Peer Review had been approved by the Executives and Cabinets of West Berkshire, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham, and subsequently by their Full Councils. Work was underway with Legal Teams across the three authorities to finalise a new agreement, to run until 31 March 2029, with completion anticipated early in 2026.

Members expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by officers to secure agreement across all three authorities.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted:

- The decisions taken by the Executive/Cabinet and Councils in the three partner authorities to enter into a new shared service agreement until the 31st March 2029 and that the agreement would include an exit clause based on a minimum of twelve months' notice to give effect to leaving the agreement on the 31st March in any given year.
- That West Berkshire Council continued to be the host authority to avoid significant short-term disruption.
- The decisions by the Executives/Cabinet and Councils in all three authorities to extend the delegation of relevant functions to the Joint Public Protection Committee until 31st March 2029.
- The decision that Wokingham Borough Council becomes a full Member of the Joint Public Protection Committee and the associated changes to the Terms of Reference of the Committee as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- That specified officers in each of the partner authorities be authorised to enter into the new Inter Authority Agreement.

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

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 8) which provided an update on the performance of the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) in line with the operating model and business plan, and which provided an update setting out performance during the second quarter of 2025/26.

Sean Murphy (Service Lead – Public Protection) advised that despite the financial challenges, the service was expected to end the year on budget. Officers had held certain posts open to maintain financial stability and had prioritised resource in high-risk

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areas, including food safety. Recruitment successes were reported across Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing.

Updates were provided on training initiatives, ICT developments, FOI volumes, and ongoing efforts to refine performance data presentation. Members were invited to give feedback on the emerging KPI format. The outcomes of statutory consultations on fees and charges were also presented, with objections received to taxi and private hire fees in Bracknell Forest but none in West Berkshire.

RESOLVED that the Committee had been informed about:

- The 2025/26 Q2 data for the Public Protection Service.
- The update on service delivery.

8 Air Quality Update 2025

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 9) which advised of the submission and results of the annual air quality reports for Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Councils. The reports were for the monitoring data calendar year 2024. The report also informed the Committee of the proposed consultation on the revocation of the Crowthorne Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

Rosalynd Gater (Team Manager – Commercial) presented the report. The Committee noted that pollutant levels continued to reduce across all three authorities, with the number of AQMAs having fallen from six to two. DEFRA had approved the revocation of the Crowthorne AQMA, subject to the required public consultation. Officers confirmed that while continuous monitoring would cease in the revoked area, diffusion-tube monitoring would continue across all districts.

Members raised questions regarding school participation and behaviour-change initiatives, and officers agreed to provide a written response.

The Committee considered the recommendations and agreed to commence consultation on the proposed revocation.

RESOLVED that:

- The content of the Air Quality Annual Status Reports be noted for Bracknell Forest Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council.
- The feedback from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) be noted on the reports.
- That consultation on the potential revocation of the Crowthorne AQMA be undertaken in accordance with the recommendations from DEFRA.
- The progress on the measures to improve air quality be noted.
- The ongoing and planned future measures to improve air quality be approved.

Action:

- Officers to conduct the statutory consultation and report the outcomes to the March 2026 JPPC meeting.

9 Update on Fraud and Unfair Trading

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 10) which provided an update on the work of the Public Protection Service in tackling fraud, unfair trading and financial abuse.

Sean Murphy (Service Lead – Public Protection) presented the annual report. The Committee noted that fraud remained a significant and evolving area of harm, with confirmed resident losses across the three authorities totalling £957,000 since April 2025.

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Officers continued to pursue both preventative and enforcement-led approaches, including engagement with vulnerable residents, proactive media communications, and close partnership working with Thames Valley Police and regional enforcement bodies.

A recent advanced-fee lettings fraud case had resulted in a 4.5-year custodial sentence. Officers emphasised the importance of victim reporting and Member engagement in raising awareness. Members discussed the potential for additional communications activity in community spaces during the Christmas period.

Action:

- Officers to explore opportunities for expanded public-awareness activity, including libraries, community hubs and high-footfall areas.

RESOLVED that:

- The Committee were informed about the contents of the report.
- The approach being taken to tackle fraud, unfair trading and financial abuse be approved.

10 Workforce Strategy 2026 - 2029

The Committee considered the report (Agenda Item 11) which provided an update on the Workforce Strategy following the review of the existing 2022-2025 Strategy. The report sought approval of the Training and Development Plan that underpinned the Workforce Strategy.

George Lawrence (Team Manager - Residential) presented the report. The Committee heard that the Service continued to benefit from its “grow-your-own” approach, with a number of apprentices and postgraduate trainees successfully qualifying during the year. The strategy set out formalised structures for training, role progression, succession planning and mentoring across the service.

Members suggested the addition of measurable milestones and annual tracking. Officers confirmed that updates would be incorporated into future reports, alongside a more detailed timeline to be added to the next quarterly update.

RESOLVED that:

- The Workforce Strategy 2026-2029 be approved together with the Training and Development Plan 2026-29.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and closed at 8.14pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature