
Public Protection Partnership Service Update and Q3 Report for 2025/26

Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	9 March 2026
Chair of Committee:	Councillor Tom McCann
Date JMB agreed report:	23 February 2026
Report Author:	Sean Murphy
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC

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 third quarter of 2025/26.

2. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Be **INFORMED** about the 2025/26 Q3 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
Financial:	<p>At the end of Quarter 3 the Service is forecasting that it will come in on budget subject to a small number of risk items related to vacancies.</p> <p>Further detail can be found at Section 5 below.</p>
Human Resource:	<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 extremely 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 where specialist Criminal Disclosure resource is engaged.</p>
Legal:	<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. This has been</p>

	<p>extended to Wokingham following the resolutions by all three Councils in the latter part of 2025.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<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 specialist operational 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 to balance the budget in year.</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 the new delivery model for food standards and an 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.</p> <p>To mitigate issues around recruitment 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>
<p>Property:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Policy:</p>	<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> <p>The revised service priorities were approved at the October 2024 JPPC meeting. The current Strategic Assessment was adopted at the June 2024 meeting.</p>

	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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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

Consultation and Engagement:	There is regular engagement with staff as well as senior officer and Member briefings in each of the authorities that form the PPP. An online team briefing took place on the 03 December 2025 and a whole team briefing has been arranged for the 26 th March 2026.
Other Options Considered:	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 3 (October to December) is set out in Appendix A to the report. At the December 2025 JPPC meeting Members agreed a limited set of measures to be attached to the quarterly reports. The full set of measures will continue to be collected by officers and will be circulated to members under separate cover. 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 three the service is predicting a zero outturn. This has been achieved by continuing to hold posts vacant and due to an increase in income in specialist areas such as financial investigations (where we have undertaken work for partners). This has balanced an in-year deficit of around £200K made up of the National Insurance increase, higher than expected cost of living increase and a decline in licensing income. This has been a serious challenge with posts being held vacant creating pressures within the service management team and for the Service Lead who has found himself managing a number of operational staff directly.
- 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. The statutory fees were consulted on, and the outcomes of that consultation were fed back to the two licensing committees. The fees were then recommended for approval to both budget council meetings.
- 5.3 We have successfully secured a further £75K to support ongoing investigations as well as £73K S31 grant for the implementation of the Renters Rights Act 2025.
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6. Human Resources

Recruitment

6.1 Since the December 2025 meeting the Service has successfully recruited to the following posts:

- A fixed term paralegal post in the Case Management Unit
- A part time Applications Officer in the Licensing Applications Team
- An Environmental Control Officer in the Housing Team
- A fixed term Underage Sales Enforcement Officer (grant funded)
- An Animal Health Warden Officer.
- An internal move of an ECO into the vacancy in EQ

6.2 In terms of recruitment, we are currently recruiting to these posts:

- A Senior Trading Standards Officer

6.3 In addition to the above the following posts are now vacant:

- Case Management Unit Strategic Manager (partially income funded)
- Principal Officer Investigations (partially grant funded)
- Team Leader in Partnership Team
- Senior Programme and Community Officer (grant funded)
- Housing Enforcement Officer
- Environmental Control Officer in TS and Community team
- Community Engagement Officer (crime prevention and victim support) (grant funded)

Training and Development

6.4 Two members of the PPP Team are enrolled and working towards their registration as Environmental Health Officers having successfully completed MSc's in Environment Health. They are now moving across the range of PPP areas to ensure they receive the experience needed for their portfolios.

6.5 A further two officers enrolled on the MsC programme in October 2025, and will expect to be in the same position in 2027.

6.6 Licensing Officers attended joint training with Thames Valley Police on Metal Crime Development. The training covered potential criminality surrounding the scrap metal industry.

6.7 The second of our Senior Trading Standards Officers has passed her Management ILM level 4 course.

6.8 One of our Level 6 Environmental Health Apprentice has completed her apprenticeship and one Level 6 Trading Standards Apprentices is entering the final phase of her apprenticeship. 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.

- 6.9 Conflict Resolution Training for the PPP's Management Team took place on the 13th November 2025 and Personal Safety Training was provided to all employees on the 21 January 2026. Stop Loans Sharks training was also attended by 32 Officers on the 29 January 2026.
- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 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.
- 6.12 The team is continuing to work closely with the Housing Needs teams at both Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire to ensure we are prepared for incoming tenancy changes and new enforcement powers from 1 May 2026 brought in by Renters Rights Act 2025.

7. ICT Update

- 7.1 A draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy is to be found elsewhere on this agenda.
- 7.2 In Q3 we trialled the use of AI in respect of our law database and found it to be a significant service enhancing tool. We are now looking at options around how longer term adoption could be funded.

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). The majority of the actions have been concluded.

9. Governance, Information Management and Communications

- 9.1 During Q3 Officers dealt with nine press enquiries, issued 19 press releases and published seven articles 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 also regularly provide articles to Bracknell Forest and Wokingham for their residents' newsletters too.
 - 9.3 In terms of social media activity Officers have supported a number of relevant national public campaigns including: Scam Awareness Week, Stoptober, Fake Toys Real Harms and Shop Safely Online.
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- 9.4 During Q3 the team dealt with a total of 134 Freedom of Information requests which took around 115 hours to process (54 in Bracknell Forest, 73 in West Berkshire and 7 for Wokingham Borough). The number of requests have almost doubled when compared to the same period in 2024/25 where 77 Fols were processed albeit that they took slightly less than the 128.25 hours in 2024/25 to process.
- 9.5 The team also processed 50 enquiries from Councillors and the local MPs during quarter 3 (BFC 32 and WBC 18, Wok 0). This represented a significant increase when compared to the 28 that were dealt with in the same period of the previous year.
- 9.6 In terms of complaints, the service received four complaints which equates to 0.16% of the 2540 service requests that the team has dealt with in Q3. Of these two were stage 1 complaints, one was a stage 2 complaint and one was an informal complaint. Of the four complaints received (1 in BFC and 3 in WBC) two were upheld in full and apologies were issued and two were not upheld, this included the stage 2 complaint. The number of complaints received has decreased when compared to the six that were received in the same period in 2024/25.
- 9.7 During Q3 the Service completed consultations on the statutory fees in both West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest Council. A new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy was adopted in West Berkshire albeit that work is still being undertaken on implementation dates and Bracknell Forest Council's Statement of Licensing Policy was reviewed and adopted during Q3 too.
- 9.8 The Team also supported seven public events across Bracknell Forest, and West Berkshire this quarter.

10. Building Safer Communities

- 10.1 The Communities Team received three public health funeral requests in Q3 and two of these funerals were completed in accordance with procedure and national guidance.
- 10.2 The Team received 122 requests regarding domestic noise nuisance, of these only seven cases remain open. Using soft skills and dialogue, many were dealt with in a collaborative manner finding a constructive resolution.
- 10.3 Pest control enforcement continues to keep the service busy and can be difficult and emotionally charged. Officers dealing with this area of work received 54 pest cases in quarter three, of which 13 remain open.
- 10.4 Other nuisance cases pertaining to odour, bonfires, light, and fumes have also been successfully managed by the officers. Only one of these cases remains open.
- 10.5 As part of the PPP collaborative working approach, members of the Community Team, Licencing Team, West Berks Waste Team, and TVP undertook an exercise to check Taxi's compliance and waste carrier and scrap metal licences. Three vehicles were found that did not have scrap metal licences and a fixed penalty notice was issued for not having the correct waste licence. A number of driving offences were also identified. On a positive note, four of the vehicles stopped were taxis and all were correctly licensed and insured.
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- 10.6 Last quarter, the report identified a pressure on kennelling in terms of capacity and budget. Officers are pleased to report that alternative arrangements for kennelling have been obtained, significantly reducing this budget pressure. Officers remain committed to rehoming stray and continue to work with charities and rescue centres to have dogs rehomed either on day eight or shortly thereafter.
- 10.7 The Licensing Team have undertaken 61 inspections of premises licensed under the Licensing and Gambling regime, two private Hire Operator inspections and one unlicensed Scrap Metal dealer have been undertaken during Q3. Officers have attended three joint operations with TVP, DVSA and Immigration. The Licensing Team have also revoked five Hackney and Private Hire Driver's licenses and suspended one Private Hire vehicle licence. There are currently four prosecutions being carried out (one for a dog breeder and three for Private Hire drivers). Licensing Officers are also recovering unpaid licence premises fees following receipt of information from the Finance Team.
- 10.8 Officers continue to attend pubwatch in both areas.
- 10.9 The following licensing panel/subcommittee meetings have taken place in Q3:

Type of Application	Applicant	Outcome
Bracknell Forest		
Vary a Premise Licence	The Vault, 19 High Street, Crowthorne, Bracknell, RG45 7AD	Granted subject to conditions
West Berkshire		
None		

- 10.10 During Q4 of 2025/26 to date the following applications have been heard:

Type of Application	Applicant	Outcome
Bracknell Forest		
None to date		
West Berkshire		
Review of a Premise Licence	The Gun, 142 Andover Road, Newbury, West Berkshire, RG14 6NE	TBC

Licensing Hearings Data for last three years.			
Authority	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 to date
Bracknell Forest	3	3 (and a further one was postponed)	5 (2 hearings were also postponed)
West Berkshire	8 (with a further five cancelled or adjourned after agenda publication)	1	3 (1 further hearing was cancelled)

11. Improved Living Environment

- 11.1 Over quarter three, the team completed 185 abandoned vehicle cases, for which they are responsible for enforcing within the Bracknell Forest area. Of these, six cars were removed by contractors. This is a good result, improving the local environment and giving residents back their parking spaces.
- 11.2 A Councillor led complaint prompted officers to work with tenants, utility suppliers, and the landlord to address a large-scale rat infestation in Bracknell. This resulted in significant changes to waste management arrangements, extensive drainage surveys and remedial works.
- 11.3 Working collaboratively, a new project to raise living standards in the private rented sector covering issues such as Energy Performance Certificates, safety of furnished lets, Minimum Energy Efficiency standards and ensuring business are complying with the Tenants Fees Act is underway. The project will see joint inspections and business advice being provided where appropriate. Following a desk top exercise to identify private rented sector properties that are failing the minimum standard, many have been removed from the list as they are no longer of non-compliance interest, but for the few that remain, officers are in contact with those landlords to work towards improvement. It is expected that the project will be completed by the end of the financial year.
- 11.4 The Service has issued 19 licenses for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Bracknell Forest and one in West Berkshire. Officers have started a programme of compliance checks on those HMO licenses issued with specific conditions to ensure all are up to current standards.
- 11.5 The team are continuing to follow up reports of properties that may be in use as houses in multiple occupation operating without a licence.
- 11.6 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.
- 11.7 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%)
WB Oct to Dec 2025	72	61	21 (34%)
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%)
BF Oct to Dec 2025	122	44	20 (45%)

- 11.8 The majority of the housing condition SRs relate to mould, leaks (both external and internal) and cold due to boilers not working or lack of insulation. Awaab's law was introduced at the end of October 2025 which requires social housing providers to respond to and rectify issues relating to damp and mould and urgent repair issues within specified timescales. Failure to comply allows the tenant to complain to the Ombudsman for investigation. Other hazards will be brought under this regime in due course. Registered social landlords are setting up procedures to be able to comply. It is likely that when their complaints procedures have improved that requests for our assistance will decrease.
- 11.9 There are also service requests relating to the procedural arrangements in the Electrical Safety regulations which were extended to social landlords from 1 November 2025. Landlords are required to notify local authorities of remedial action taken when the electrical installation is deemed unsatisfactory. This is at the point where work has been carried out to rectify the issue. We are also notified by letting agents where landlords or tenants have failed to allow timely compliance with the regulations.

12. Protecting Consumers from Fraud

- 12.1 Work by the teams dealing with scams and fraud have assessed and dealt with 38 fraud and scams related service requests.
- 12.2 As part of the awareness raising, officers have undertaken the following across Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham:
- four face to face presentations.
 - Delivered four seasonal campaigns including, Black Friday and Cyber Monday Scams, the Christmas Market Trader booking scam, 12 Scams of Christmas and supported National Adult Safeguarding Week and the Citizens Advice Annual Scams campaign.
 - Fitted four call blockers and undertaken a survey of our callblockers in circulation to ensure they are working correctly and are still needed. Unused units have been collected and wiped ready for re-use.
 - Dealt with one COMPASS matter referred to the service by the National Trading Standards Scams Team where a vulnerable resident was referred to the PPP.
 - Dealt with one [No Cold Calling Zone](#) (NCCZ) request.
- 12.3 The team have also been responding to intelligence received from other agencies alleging that local businesses are selling illicit tobacco. An operation was set up, and at the first premises visited the detection dog indicated and found two false/hidden cupboards full of cigarettes (7000) and hand rolling tobacco which was seized. An investigation is ongoing.
- 12.4 Fake Labubu dolls continue to be found in local retailers where they have been seized. Some of these have been sent for testing where they were found to contain banned chemicals. Investigations are ongoing.
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12.5 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 West Berkshire Council 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 in the process of carrying out test purchases across the PPP.

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 Q3 2025/26:

- The total detriment identified from victims in the PPP area is £959,709 (Bracknell Forest £106,801, Wokingham Borough £279,945, and West Berkshire £572,963). This represents a decrease on the £1,074,422 at the same period in 2024/25.
- The total money saved or recovered is £95,462.
- The total number of alleged incidents is 154 (31 Bracknell Forest, 65 Wokingham Borough and 58 West Berkshire) which is similar to the 153 cases reported up until the end of Q3 in the previous year.
- The average loss is £6,232 per victim. The average loss in Wokingham is £4,306, in Bracknell Forest £3,445 and in West Berkshire £9,879. The average loss has decreased compared to the 2024/25 when the average loss was £7,022.

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.

13. Reducing Harm in Young People

13.1 Following information received about toy safety, samples have been taken at some local convenience stores where they lacked the mandatory safety labelling, these have also been sent to the Public Analyst for testing. The service will act on the results once received.

13.2 The Age Restricted Products Enforcement officer has been undertaking many inspections in retail and other licensed premises to assess compliance with the relevant age restrictions. These have resulted in the highest number of investigations of this type in many years. In response to the considerable number of sales, the team are developing additional communications strategy and initiatives such as the responsible retailer scheme to try and bring down the failure rate. This is in line with the PPP delivery plan of Prevention, Intelligence and Enforcement (PIE). The scheme has now been launched, and the new UAS officer is in post.

13.3 During Q3 the following underage sales activity took place:

Vapes		Lottery		Alcohol		Knives		Tobacco	
Attempts	Sales								
6	1	0	0	8	2	11	2	0	0

14. Protection of the Environment

- 14.1 The Environmental Quality Team have been informed that a new cement batching plant was installed, and they have started the consultation on the requisite Environmental Permit.
- 14.2 This quarter there has been an increase in noise complaints relating to refurbishment of premises with new / additional refrigeration plant installed without planning permission.
- 14.3 **Single Use Vapes** - Trading Standards Team have been inspecting businesses for compliance with the single use vape ban. Those found in possession of single use vapes have been issued with Compliance notices. On revisits to date, all businesses have come into compliance. In addition, those not complying with the vape 'take back' scheme have been reported to Office for Product Safety and Standards for action.
- 14.4 **Air Quality** -. The Annual Status reports for all three partner authorities were all accepted by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Agreement was received from DEFRA to proceed with the consultation to revoke the Crowthorne Air Quality Management, and this is the subject of a separate report on this agenda. The consultation started before the end of Q3. The revised air quality monitoring programme across the three authorities was finalised to commence in January.
- 14.5 **Event Monitoring** – No proactive monitoring was required to take place during this quarter. Events for summer 2026 are being advertised and being checked.
- 14.6 **Planning Committees** - during Q3 officers have been involvement in one planning appeal (West Berkshire) and have attended multiple Planning Committee meetings as well as advising on some 141 planning applications.

Flytipping in Bracknell Forest.

- 14.7 During Quarter 3, the service dealt with 37 separate flytipping and/or litter reports for investigating.
- 14.8 There has been a recent increase in the types of commercial waste being dumped, most notably construction material from the roofing industry as well as several tonnes of clay soil. Officers have increased surveillance and attention in those areas and investigations are ongoing.
- 14.9 More widely, mobile and fixed CCTV has been installed in the areas identified as areas fly tipping is recurring and has been successful in capturing offenders. This technology includes the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and is helpful in the evidential gathering process. However, the weather has presented challenges in deployment of the mobile unit due to soft ground. Investigations are ongoing, and officers continue to work with colleagues within Parks and Countryside.
- 14.10 From a number of investigations taking place, it is becoming apparent that a high proportion of the larger waste fly tipping cases being investigated originate from outside of the Bracknell Forest area. For example, there has been a series of waste (containers) being dumped as well as a significant deposit of roofing material and appliances. The investigating officer is working with colleagues from other authorities as part of their work to identify those offenders.
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- 14.11 In addition to collaborative working with internal and external enforcement colleagues, the service continues to work with TVP intelligence team and the Roads Policing Team in an effort to locate offending vehicles transporting waste.
- 14.12 There are also local offenders using local sites for fly tipping, and where these have been identified, these have resulted in fixed penalty notices being issued. More serious offences are awaiting legal proceedings and the officer leading on this area of work will be putting in place a bid to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for additional funding to support additional CCTV purchases.

15. Protecting and Informing Consumers

- 15.1 In this quarter the Trading Standards service has triaged/assessed and dealt with 1146 service requests (not including food related service requests) across the three Local Authorities.

16. Promoting Animal Welfare

- 16.1 The service has successfully recruited an Animal Health Warden, who has now started. This will complement the animal health and welfare team delivering on animal welfare related functions, such as managing stray dogs, microchipping enforcement, ensuring a community support presence and in due course, the routine inspection of dog boarding establishments.
- 16.2 The Animal Health and Welfare Team continue to carry out routine inspections to livestock premises along with responding to alleged welfare complaints.
- 16.3 Animal feed officers have been out sampling dog chews from retailers / manufactures across the PPP area. This was part of a National Trading Standards Sampling project looking for the presence of Salmonella and labelling compliance. Results are expected from the Agriculture Analyst in Q4.
- 16.4 Following a spate of suspected bird flu deaths in wild swans along the Kennet and Avon canal, officers have put in place posters along the canal advising people on what to do should they find a dead swan. This has been in collaboration with emergency planning colleagues, the waste team, public health colleagues and the Kennet and Avon trust. Officers remain vigilant to any reports that may come in for this national issue. The avian flu lockdown rules for kept birds remains in place. Regular information from the Animal and Plant Health Agency is also shared on the Public Protection partnership's Facebook pages.

17. Safety in the Workplace

- 17.1 The service has dealt with 43 (16 in BFC and 27 WBC) health and safety at work service requests during Q3 and 40 (17 BFC and 23 WBC) workplace accidents were reported.
- 17.2 Cases of interest include: Investigation of a reported accident where a kitchen worker sustained scalding to their hand and arm. Complaints included injury to a supermarket worker allegedly caused by glass from a broken bottle and an allegation of unsafe removal of asbestos containing materials from a sports club building.
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- 17.3 The Safety Advisory Group have been notified about and considered the documentation provided in respect of 35 events in Bracknell Forest and 64 in West Berkshire taking place during this quarter.
- 17.4 Events for which safety management plans were reviewed and events monitored included firework displays, remembrance events, winter fairs, and Christmas events and in particular Lapland UK which attracts visitors from across the country. Event safety management plans were also reviewed for events taking place in early 2026 such as “Get Fit 2026, new year new you” initiatives which include canoeing events, marathons, and other activities encouraging participation in sports.

18. Safe and Healthy Food Chain

- 18.1 **Private Water Supplies** - Three new supplies have been confirmed in 2025 with all the Risk Assessments completed and seven re-risk assessments conducted. The single dwelling supply project continues to update our records. In Q3 the 2025 annual return to the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) was started. Detailed work with a very large supply continues following a temporary supply set up due to reservoir failures.
- 18.2 During this third quarter of the year, officers have been receiving results back from the sampling projects that took place in the second quarter.
- 18.3 August sampling involved buying soups to check for salt content. These results have all been returned, and although pleasing to find that there were no concerns with excess salt content, all nine failed due to labelling non-compliances. Fortunately, nothing too serious but it did mean additional work for officers having to refer the results onto the Primary Authority Trading Standards for the various manufacturers.
- 18.4 Two out of the three imported food results have also been returned, with one failure on labelling. The local authority responsible for the importer has been informed.
- 18.5 For September, officers were out and about sampling pizza toppings for both a regional and Food Standards Agency lead campaign. The results are now being returned but unfortunately so far, the majority have been reported back as unsatisfactory for labelling and composition purposes. This seems to have been the case across the region, and a co-ordinated response is planned.
- 18.6 October saw officers on the lookout for chocolate covered products, which were sent to our Public Analyst to check that the chocolate is really chocolate and in most cases it was. However, all had unsatisfactory labelling. Once again no serious issues were uncovered but officers spent valuable time referring these unsatisfactory labelling reports back to the relevant local authorities responsible for the labelling.
- 18.7 The last project of the year was once again focusing on allergen controls, and meat species in takeaways. This project has been conducted twice before. To ensure businesses are aware of their responsibilities the work started off with an education campaign with business guidance being sent to all relevant local food outlets. This was followed up by officers, posing as customers requesting for particularly described meals and free from certain allergens. The results should be back for the quarter 4 report.
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- 18.8 This is a significant concern, as once again a large number of samples have been assessed as unsatisfactory. It really highlights the importance of the work the PPP officers conduct, and reinforces the need for qualified, experienced officers to be undertaking sampling across the region.
- 18.9 Finally, the investigation into a local convenience store that was found to have sold dangerous vodka has been in court. The owner pleaded guilty and received a £9,000 fine. <https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/local-news/shopkeeper-fined-selling-fake-vodka-4206768>
- 18.10 The Service received 26 (17 BFC and 9 WBC) infectious disease notifications during Q3. This is a significant reduction when compared to the 158 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 significantly. Ten confirmed cases of Salmonella species were reported during this period with the remainder of reported cases being smaller numbers of other infectious diseases.
- 18.11 The service has dealt with 141 food hygiene service requests during Q3.
- 18.12 As we reach the three-quarter point of the inspection year for food hygiene premises, in terms of output the Authorised Officers have completed all 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 conducted where it is a high-risk premises.
- 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 at the end of March 2026. In terms of numbers the Service deals with, in the region of 1000 food hygiene inspections per year.
- 18.14 The governing body, The Food Standards Agency (FSA) , 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. PPP have submitted an action plan to the FSA detailing the steps to take to get the food hygiene inspections back on track. It includes works onto the 2026/27 inspection year.
- 18.15 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.
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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 79 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. There are a number of Crown court trials in 2026 starting with a four week trial in June, a six week trial in September and multiple trials of several days in October and November.
- 19.2 A significant number of matters are set for trial in 2026 (as set out above) but we are now starting to see listings for the latter part of 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 road traffic prosecutions of which there are 28 cases active.
- 19.3 The Accredited Financial Investigators have 28 active investigations: 24 pertaining to money laundering and three active confiscation proceedings in the Crown Court and one with the Court of Appeal. Of those cases 20 are for the PPP, four are Reading BC cases and three are for Oxfordshire Trading Standards.

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.

21. Appendices

- 21.1 Appendix A – Q3 Performance Data
- 21.2 Appendix B – Compliments
- 21.3 Appendix C - Activity by Authority
- 21.4 Appendix D – Update on Peer Review Recommendations

22. Background Papers:

- 22.1 None

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

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

Wards affected: All Wards

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