PPP AI and Digital Strategy 2026 - 2029

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:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To set out the proposed strategy that the Shared Service will implement to harness emerging technologies to drive innovation, improve service delivery, and enhance operational efficiency across the Service where it is appropriate to do so.

2. Recommendations

The Committee:

2.1 **APPROVES** the Artificial Intelligence and Digital Strategy 2026 - 2029 subject to any changes agreed at the meeting.

3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	This strategy has been developed within existing budgets. Where funding is required for the introduction of new technology or systems it will be met from within existing budgets or applications for transformation or grant funding will be submitted as appropriate.
Human Resource:	AI and improved digital technology will change how work is done across the Service, and its introduction will require skills development, and responsible use. Clear communication, ethical safeguards, and strong employee engagement will be essential to support staff through change to protect their wellbeing and maintain trust. Updated policies, proactive workforce planning, and a focus on digital capability will help ensure the organisation remains resilient and attractive to talent as AI adoption grows.
Legal:	Where an AI system is using or collecting personal data, it will fall within the scope of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018).

Risk Management:	There are a number of Risks Associated with AI Usage and the Strategy attempts to set out how these risks will be mitigated. Risks include: 1. Bias and Discrimination AI systems can unintentionally reproduce or amplify biases. 2. Lack of Transparency ("Black Box" Risk) Many AI models do not provide clear explanations for how they reach decisions, making oversight, accountability, and challenge processes more difficult. 3. Data Privacy and Security AI relies on large volumes of data, increasing the risk of data breaches, inappropriate access, or misuse of personal information. 4. Inaccurate or Unreliable Outputs AI tools may produce incorrect, outdated, or fabricated information ("hallucinations"). If not properly checked, these errors can undermine trust or lead to poor decisions. 5. Over-reliance on Automation Heavy dependence on AI can erode human skills, reduce situational awareness, or lead to inappropriate automation of decisions that require human judgement. 6. Workforce Impact and Resistance AI introduction can create uncertainty, job-change anxiety, or fears of replacement, potentially affecting morale, engagement, and wellbeing. 7. Ethical and Legal Compliance Risks Incorrect or irresponsible use of AI may breach regulations (e.g., data protection), ethical expectations, or sector-specific standards. 8. Reputational Risk High-profile misuse or AI-driven errors can negatively affect public trust and organisational credibility.
Property:	There are no property implications arising from this report.
Policy:	This Policy will be aligned with the PPP's Workforce Strategy and Training and Development Plan and the West Berkshire Council Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) – Policy and Guidance. It will also take into consideration West Berkshire Council's IT, Information Management and Data Protection Policies as well as the AI Policies of the partner authorities.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed		✔		AI systems can unintentionally reproduce or amplify biases.

		✔		All decisions, policies and documents produced using AI will have human oversight. Staff will be required to check outputs and if the AI result looks wrong, staff should question and correct it.
decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?				
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✔		See above
Environmental Impact:		✔		The Service acknowledges the environmental impact of AI, particularly its high energy consumption, and is committed to ensuring AI adoption aligns with the climate change strategies of the partner authorities. Wherever possible the Service will select energy-efficient AI tools, use low-energy computing processes where possible, to minimise the carbon footprint and demonstrate responsible technology use. The use of technology may result in a reduction in travel movements for officers.
Health Impact:		✔		Adopting an AI Strategy can affect employee health by increasing stress, uncertainty and cognitive load, while potentially intensifying workloads and digital fatigue; however, strong communication, ethical controls, training and human-centred design can mitigate these risks, and when implemented responsibly. AI and digital technology can also reduce repetitive tasks and support a healthier, more balanced working environment.
ICT or Digital Services Impact:				As set out in the strategy.
PPP Priorities:				The Strategy will underpin all the PPP's priorities as well as business as usual activities. ▪ Building Safer Communities ▪ Improved Living Environment ▪ Protecting Consumers from Fraud ▪ Reducing Harm in Young People ▪ Protection of the Environment

				▪ Protecting & Informing Consumers ▪ Promoting Animal Welfare ▪ Safety in the Workplace ▪ Safer Food Chain
Data Impact:				All data processed and held by the PPP is kept safely and securely within our IT systems. We do not disclose any data to a third party without telling the party or unless legally required to do so. This includes data that we use to communicate and engage with residents, businesses and stakeholders. All data accessed as part of consultation work is managed in accordance with our privacy statement.
Consultation and Engagement:				The Joint Management Board (JMB) will be consulted on the Plan. The Strategy has been sent to the IT Teams in the partner authorities for consideration and comment.
Other Options Considered:				Not to have a strategy in place. This was discounted as the JPPC have requested that a policy be drafted for adoption.

4. Background

4.1 This AI Strategy has been developed at the request of the Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) and sets out a three-year framework for how the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) will responsibly adopt Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies to enhance service delivery. The strategy supports the PPP's core mission of protecting residents, supporting legitimate businesses, and delivering safe, healthy neighbourhoods by enabling smarter working, improved data use, and more accessible, digital-first public services.

4.2 The document outlines guiding principles for ethical, transparent and resident focused use of AI, including strong governance, fairness, inclusivity, environmental responsibility and workforce empowerment. It recognises both the opportunities and risks associated with AI, particularly in public protection settings where decisions can directly affect safety, wellbeing and rights of our residents and legitimate businesses. To mitigate these risks, the strategy emphasises human oversight, robust data governance, transparency in AI-generated content and full compliance with legal and policy obligations including the Human Rights Act 1998 and Data Protection Act 2018 and associated regulations.

4.3 Bracknell Forest Council adopted an AI Strategy in 2024 and has existing governance arrangements in place for overseeing this area of work. The Strategy proposes making use of these governance arrangements whilst the corporate strategy in West Berkshire is finalised. Procurement of technology will however be undertaken in conjunction with West Berkshire Council's IT Team.

4.4 The strategy highlights current and emerging technologies already in use or under consideration such as Microsoft Copilot, LexisNexis Protégé, mobile inspection tools,

and planned digital applications to streamline fieldwork and reporting. It outlines the Service's commitment to innovation where it offers measurable public benefit. It also sets out the ongoing need for staff training and development to ensure officers can use AI safely, confidently and effectively.

4.5 Given the rapid pace of technological change, the strategy is intended as a living document, subject to continuous review, with an annual review to be undertaken by the Joint Management Board to ensure that it remain fit for purpose and regulatory complaint. Members will be advised of any amendments through the quarterly performance reports. The strategy will be brought back to the March 2029 JPPC meeting for a full review.

5. Concluding Observations

5.1 Artificial Intelligence has emerged as one of the most influential issues of our time. It presents both opportunity for efficiency and time saving but also a threat if used inappropriately. Many organisations are grappling with this challenge. The key is to have a clear framework, governance structure and policy position and a robust approach to implementation and oversight without stifling innovation.

5.2 The Strategy has been drafted at the request of the JPPC. Officers have sought input from colleagues in the partner authorities. It will be a living document subject to ongoing review given the ever-changing nature of IT and available technology. Regular updates will be presented to the Committee through service update reports.

6. Appendices

Appendix A – PPP AI And Digital Strategy 2026 - 2029

7. Background Papers:

7.1 None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒   No: ☐

Wards affected: All Wards

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