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# Public Protection Partnership Service Year End and Q4 Report for 2025/26

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Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	8 June 2026
Chair of Committee:	TBC
Date JMB agreed report:	18 May 2026
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 final quarter of 2025/26 and the year-end outturn.

## 2. Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Be **INFORMED** about the 2025/26 Q4 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>The year end position for the PPP Revenue Budget was an underspend of £21K.</p> <p>To achieve this outturn the Service has had to hold key vacancies throughout the year.</p> <p>Further detail can be found at Section 5 below.</p> <p>It should be noted that statutory licensing fees have not increased for a considerable period and, as nationally set fees, they have not kept pace with the rising costs of delivering the service. In addition, income from discretionary licensing fees is restricted to the relevant licensing regime and cannot be used to cross-subsidise other licensing functions. This has created an ongoing budget gap within the service, which has had to be mitigated through internal savings measures, including staff reorganisation and the removal of posts from the establishment, with a resulting reduction in capacity and resilience.</p>

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<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 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>
<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>
<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 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 the full programme for both areas has not been 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>The PPP continues to receive a growing number of new responsibilities arising from changes in legislation and government guidance. These requirements frequently create additional workstreams (including policy development, governance arrangements, assurance, reporting, enforcement responsibilities and implementation support) but are often introduced with little or no associated new burdens funding.</p> <p>This creates an ongoing capacity and resourcing risk for PPP, with the potential to impact delivery timescales, reduce flexibility to respond to emerging priorities, and increase the likelihood of backlog or delay in core business activities. If not actively managed through prioritisation and resource planning, there is a consequential risk of reduced compliance assurance, service pressure elsewhere, and potential reputational and financial impacts for the partner councils.</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> <p>The revised service priorities were approved at the <a href="#">October 2024</a> JPPC meeting. Proposed updates to the Strategic Assessment will be considered as a separate agenda item at this meeting.</p>			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> 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>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with		✓		No implications - no decisions being made

protected characteristics, including employees and service users?			
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		✓	No implications - no decisions being made
<b>Health Impact:</b>		✓	No implications - no decisions being made
<b>ICT or Digital Services Impact:</b>		✓	None
<b>PPP Priorities:</b>			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.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		✓	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. The next whole team briefing will take place on the 28 May 2026.		
<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 4 (January to March) is set out in **Appendix A** to the 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.
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- 4.4 As this report also serves as the year-end update, it includes some comparative data and additional commentary covering the full financial year. This approach allows Members to review performance in context, observe emerging trends, and assess progress over time.
- 4.5 Despite a challenging operating environment characterised by vacancies, increasing demand and ongoing resource constraints, the Public Protection Partnership has continued to perform strongly and, in many areas, to overachieve against expectations. Through effective prioritisation, agile deployment of staff and a clear focus on outcomes, the PPP has maintained high standards of service delivery and assurance, ensuring that statutory responsibilities continue to be met while responding to emerging risks and issues.
- 4.6 Importantly, this sustained performance has translated into tangible benefits for residents and businesses, and the Service has continued to invest in its staff as part of the 'grow our own ethos'. The PPP has continued to deliver positive results that protect communities, support safe and compliant trading, and help create conditions for a thriving local economy.

## **5. Finance**

- 5.1 The end of year position was an underspend of £21k. Therefore, within the KPI of management to within 1% of budget. Balancing the budget has proved to be challenging with an in-year deficit made up of the National Insurance increase, and higher than expected cost of living increase. To achieve this the Service has had to hold several vacancies open for significant lengths of time and conducting more cost recovery work on investigations and work for other Councils. This has had an impact on the ability to deliver certain aspects of the Service. The impact on staff who have been covering additional responsibilities also needs to be recognised. The financial position has also been assisted by an increase in income in specialist areas such as financial investigations (where we have undertaken work for partners).
- 5.2 The updated fees and charges proposals, based on an hourly rate of £74p/h agreed by JPPC in October 2025, and agreed at the partner authority budget setting meetings came into effect on the 01 April 2025. The Service has received a number of Freedom of Information Requests in respect of fees for home boarders, hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and income generated from fixed penalty notices.
- 5.3 A report providing a framework for discussion on the 2027/28 budget and fee proposals is included elsewhere on this agenda and will inform the Budget report which will be presented to the October 2026 JPPC meeting.

## **6. Human Resources**

### **Recruitment**

- 6.1 Since the March 2026 meeting the Service has successfully recruited to the following posts:
- Senior Programme and Community Officer (shared with West Berkshire Public Health)
  - Environmental Control Officer in EQ team appointed and started in March
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- 6.2 In terms of recruitment, we are currently recruiting to this post:
- A Senior Trading Standards Officer
- 6.3 In addition to the above the following posts are now vacant:
- Strategic Manager – Case Management and Governance
  - Principal Officer Investigations (partially grant funded)
  - Principal Officer – Housing
  - Team Leader in Partnership Team
  - Community Engagement Officer (crime prevention and victim support) (grant funded)
  - Licensing Applications Team Leader
  - Senior Environmental Control Officer – Housing
  - Environmental Control Officer – Community
  - Licensing Enforcement Officer
- 6.4 As we are now in the new financial year these posts will be released for recruitment.

### **Training and Development**

- 6.5 The start of the 2026 calendar year has been very busy in terms of enrolment, completion of and arranging new training for our staff. This supports the Services' ethos of growing our own and investing in our existing staff.
- 6.6 Two members of the PPP Team are enrolled and working towards their registration as Environmental Health Officers having successfully completed MsCs in Environment Health. They are now moving across the range of PPP areas to ensure they receive the experience needed for their portfolios.
- 6.7 A further two officers enrolled on the MsC programme in October 2025, and will expect to be in the same position in 2027.
- 6.8 One Level 6 Trading Standards Apprentices is entering the final phase of their apprenticeship. Four more have entered the programme between October 2025 and March 2026. One of the new Officers has started on the Level 4 Regulatory Compliance (Housing) Apprenticeship in March 2026.
- 6.9 One of our Trainee Regulatory Services Officers has completed their Level 6 Food Control training and achieved a distinction.
- 6.10 Our Level 6 Environmental Health Apprentice continues to make good progress with their course. One of our Environmental Control Officers has successfully completed their Sampling Accreditation Scheme to undertake Private Water Sampling work. Our Environmental Officer (Animal Health) has successfully completed their Animal Feed Qualification.
- 6.11 In accordance with the Service's Training and Development Plan a series of training events have been arranged to ensure that specific competencies are updated for relevant officers and more general training sessions to improve knowledge across the Service have also been arranged.
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- 6.12 The Service ran a Housing Health and Safety rating system course in conjunction with other local authorities in the region which trained one new member of staff and provided refresher training for another two staff members within PPP and enabled networking between local officers.
- 6.13 Training for the whole team on how the finance service works took place on the 21 May 2026. Case file preparation training for relevant staff will take place on the 17 June and training on how to undertake Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) interviews took place on the 25 March. A series of training events associated with the implementation of the Renters Right Act have also been set up with a two-day training event in April and additional training taking place in June and July.
- 6.14 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.
- 6.15 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.

## **7. ICT Update**

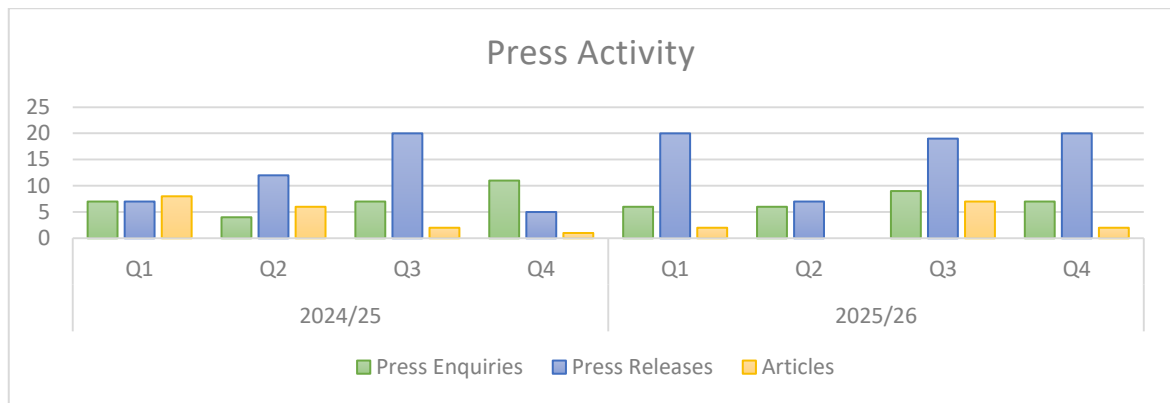
- 7.1 The three year AI and Digital Strategy was adopted at the March 2026 meeting. The Strategy will be subject to an annual review at JMB and any changes will be reported back through these quarterly reports.
- 7.2 West Berkshire Council is in the process of developing an AI Strategy and Governance arrangements and have asked that the introduction of any new AI technology be paused until they are in place.
- 7.3 The Service has however procured additional body worn camera technology and associated staff guidance on use has been produced and we have also bought new equipment for recording PACE (Police and Crime Evidence Act) interviews.
- 7.4 Officers will continue to identify opportunities for making use of AI and technology.

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

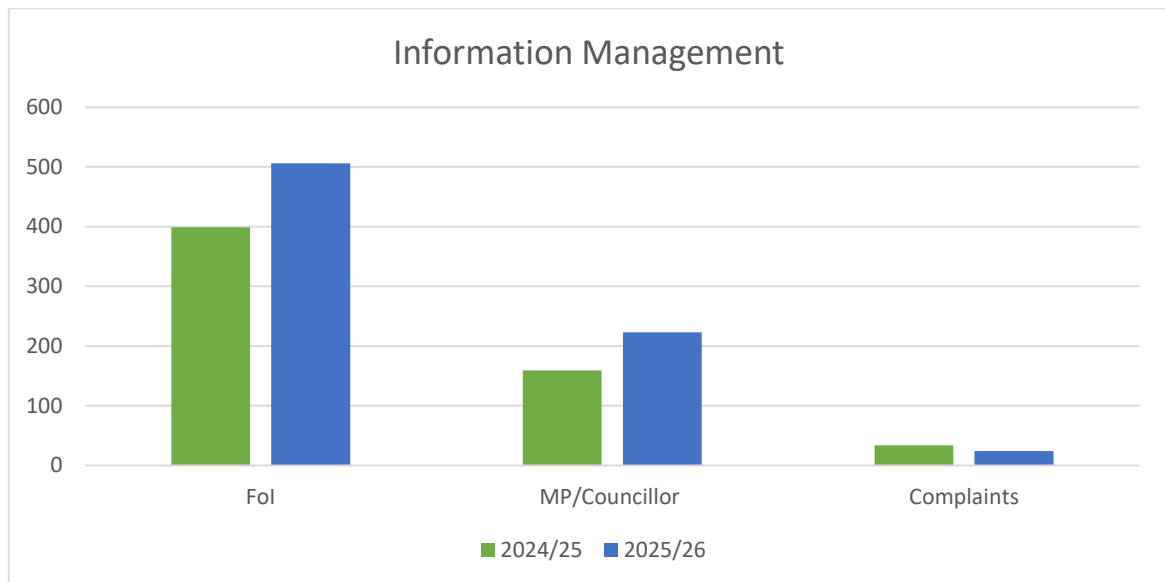
- 8.1 It was agreed at the June 2025 meeting that regular updates on progress being made with the Peer Review recommendations would be included in this report (See Appendix D). The majority of the actions have been concluded.

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

- 9.1 During Q4 Officers dealt with seven press enquiries, issued twenty press releases and published two articles on the website. Comparator data is set out below. The number of press enquiries in 2024/25 (29) and 2025/26 (28) were relatively constant. The number of press releases and articles published has increased from 61 in the previous year to 77 in this financial year.
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- 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. The PPP has also contributed articles on the animal warden, the Renters Rights Act and food hygiene scores for the current iteration of the West Berkshire Residents' Magazine.
- 9.3 In terms of social media activity Officers have supported a number of relevant national public campaigns including: Register my Appliance, Romance Scams and Avian Flu updates during quarter 4.
- 9.4 During Q4 the team dealt with a total of 115 Freedom of Information requests which took around 109 hours to process (58 in Bracknell Forest, 49 in West Berkshire and 8 for Wokingham Borough). The number of requests decreased slightly when compared to the same period in 2024/25 where 122 Fols were processed and took slightly less than the 139 hours in 2024/25 to process. Overall in 2025/26 the Team have dealt with 506 Fols (399 in previous year) which took 491 hours (or just over 13 weeks of officer time to process).
- 9.5 The team also processed 51 enquiries from Councillors and the local MPs during quarter 4 (BFC 18 and WBC 29, Wok 4). This represented a 19% increase when compared to the 43 that were dealt with in the same period of the previous year. In total the team dealt with 223 MP and Councillor queries this year which is a significant increase when compared to the 159 responded to in 2024/25. Officers are grateful for the intelligence gathering these queries provide.
- 9.6 In terms of complaints, the service received 5 complaints which equates to 0.18 % of the 2719 service requests that the team has dealt with in Q4. Of these three were stage 1 complaints and two were informal complaints. Of the complaints received (5 in WBC) one was upheld in part and an apology was issued and four were not upheld.
- 9.7 The number of complaints received has halved when compared to the ten that were received in the same period in 2024/25. In total the team received nine fewer complaints this year albeit that we dealt with 97 fewer service requests. (10,900 in 2025/26 and 10,997 in 2024/25)



9.8 During Q4 the Service started a consultation on Taxi Tariffs in Bracknell Forest and potential changes to the 'grandfather plates' element of the West Berkshire Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy.

9.9 The Team also supported four public events across Bracknell Forest, and West Berkshire this quarter.

9.10 The Service has reviewed the [Enforcement Policy](#) and no changes are required. The policy is imbedded in the Inter Authority Agreement and will be inserted into any revised agreements.

## 10. Building Safer Communities

10.1 The team undertook eight statutory public health funerals in Q4. These funerals were completed in accordance with procedure and national guidance.

10.2 The team received 102 requests regarding domestic noise nuisance, of these only 13 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 103 pest cases in quarter 4, of which 29 remain open.

10.4 Other nuisance cases pertaining to odour, bonfires, light and fumes have also been successfully managed by the officers with 53 service requests. Fourteen of these cases remain open.

10.5 Last quarter, the report identified a pressure on kennelling in terms of capacity and budget. We are pleased to report that alternative arrangements for kennelling have been obtained, bringing this pressure down significantly. Officers remain committed to rehoming and continue to work with charities and rescue centres to have dogs rehomed either on day 8 or shortly thereafter. With the new Animal Warden recruited and in place this reduces pressures on other team members, and in the quarter, there have been 61 requests relating to dogs including strays, fouling or dog on dog attacks.

- 10.6 The Licensing Team have undertaken 34 inspections of premises licensed under the Licensing and Gambling regimes, 11 vehicle checks and one unlicensed Scrap Metal dealer have been undertaken during Q4. Officers have attended six joint operations with TVP, DVSA and Immigration.
- 10.7 There are currently five prosecutions being carried out relating to unlicensed trading activity and 3 appeals. 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 Q4:

Type of Application	Applicant	Outcome
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>		
Street Trading Consent	Sandhurst Kebab, Yorktown Road, College Town, Sandhurst, Bracknell Forest	Application was refused.
<b>West Berkshire</b>		
Review Application	The Gun, 142 Andover Road, Newbury, RG14 6NE	Premise license amended to include the conditions agreed by the License Holder and the Home Office, and additional conditions attached by the Sub-Committee

- 10.10 During Q1 of 2026/27 to date the following applications have been heard/ were due to be heard:

Type of Application	Applicant	Outcome
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>		
New Premise Licence	Techfog, 12 High Street, Bracknell RG12 1LL	Cancelled following successful mediation. Additional conditions agreed with Applicant.
<b>West Berkshire</b>		
New Premise Licence	Benham Park House, Speen, Newbury, West Berkshire, RG20 8LU	Granted with conditions

- 10.11 Comparator data for the last three years is set out below:

10.12

Licensing Hearings Data for last three years.			
Authority	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Bracknell Forest</b>	3	3 (and a further one was postponed)	6 (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 Over quarter 4, the team completed 304 abandoned vehicle enquiries. Of these, two cars were removed by our contractors. This is a good result, improving the local environment and giving residents back their parking spaces.
- 11.2 52 fly tipping cases have been investigated in the quarter. The team have dealt with seven cases involving high hedges and 41 related to accumulations.
- 11.3 Working collaboratively, a new project to raise living standards in the private rented sector covering issues such as EPC 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.
- 11.4 The Renter Rights Act, in part, came into force on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The core purpose of the Act is to "level the playing field" between landlords and tenants, providing greater security, stability, and higher housing standards for over 11 million private renters.
- 11.5 We have and will continue to work collaboratively with Housing Teams across all 3 Local Authorities to agree which responsibilities lie with which team and to raise awareness so issues/complaints can be effectively and swiftly referred to the appropriate team for action.
- 11.6 The Service has issued ten licenses for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Bracknell Forest and four in West Berkshire.
- 11.7 The team successfully prosecuted a landlord for operating a licensable HMO in Bracknell Forest without having an HMO licence in place. They were fined £2557.
- 11.8 A complex joint investigation with West Berkshire Planning Enforcement has been undertaken relating to an unauthorised and unlicensed caravan site. The file has now been submitted.
- 11.9 Members of the Environmental Health Housing team attended a landlord forum in Bracknell Forest in March to update landlords on how they should be tackling damp and mould and the soon to be implemented Renters Rights Act.
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11.10 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%)
WB Jan to March 2026	89	65	28 (43%)
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%)
BF Jan to March 2026	133	55	16 (29%)

11.11 The majority of the housing condition SRs relate to mould, leaks (both external and internal) and cold due to boilers not working.

11.12 One of the large letting agents groups working across the area has updated their terms and conditions for landlords following our intervention and released landlords from contracts that were deemed to be unfair in situations where the landlord had taken back management of the property but the tenant was the one placed by the letting agent and the landlord was still contracted to pay a percentage of the rent to the agents.

## 12. Protecting Consumers from Fraud

### Scams and Fraud Victim Support

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 two seasonal campaigns including romance fraud and holiday fraud. In addition, supporting National Adult safeguarding week and the Citizens advice annual scams campaign.
- Fitted two call blockers and undertook a survey of our call-blockers in circulation to ensure they are working correctly and are still needed.
- Dealt with 2 No Cold Calling Zone (NCCZ) request.

12.3 The team have also been responding to intelligence received from the public and other agencies alleging that local businesses are selling illicit tobacco. Further operational exercises took place in March, with a detection dog finding significant quantities of concealed tobacco products in the two premises visited in Bracknell

Borough. Products were seized, including other products beyond tobacco and the investigation continues. More visits are planned across the financial year.

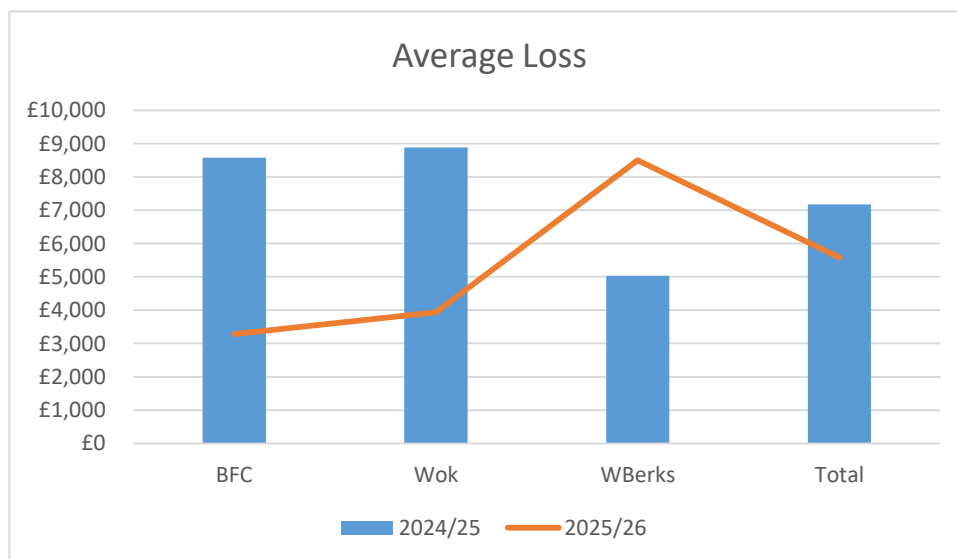
12.4 Fake Labubu dolls continue to be found in local retailers where they have been seized. Some of these have been sent for testing where they were found to contain banned chemicals. Investigations are ongoing.

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 work mobile phones which 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 further 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 at year end:

- The total detriment identified from victims in the PPP area is £1,093,540 (Bracknell Forest £128,020, Wokingham Borough £319,047, and West Berkshire £646,493). This represents a decrease on the £1,371,743 at the end of 2024/25.
- The total money saved or recovered is £111,412.
- The total number of alleged incidents for the year is 196 (39 Bracknell Forest, 81 Wokingham Borough and 76 West Berkshire) which is similar to the 191 cases reported at the previous year end.
- The average loss is £5,579 per victim. The average loss in Wokingham is £3,939, in Bracknell Forest £3,283 and in West Berkshire £8,506. The average loss has decreased compared to the 2024/25 when the average loss was £7,181.



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 The last quarter saw the final group of school visits to take place to raise awareness of the dangers of tobacco, vaping and alcohol misuse. The service workplan for 26/27 will be prepared following successful recruitment to the Senior Programme and Community Officer position.

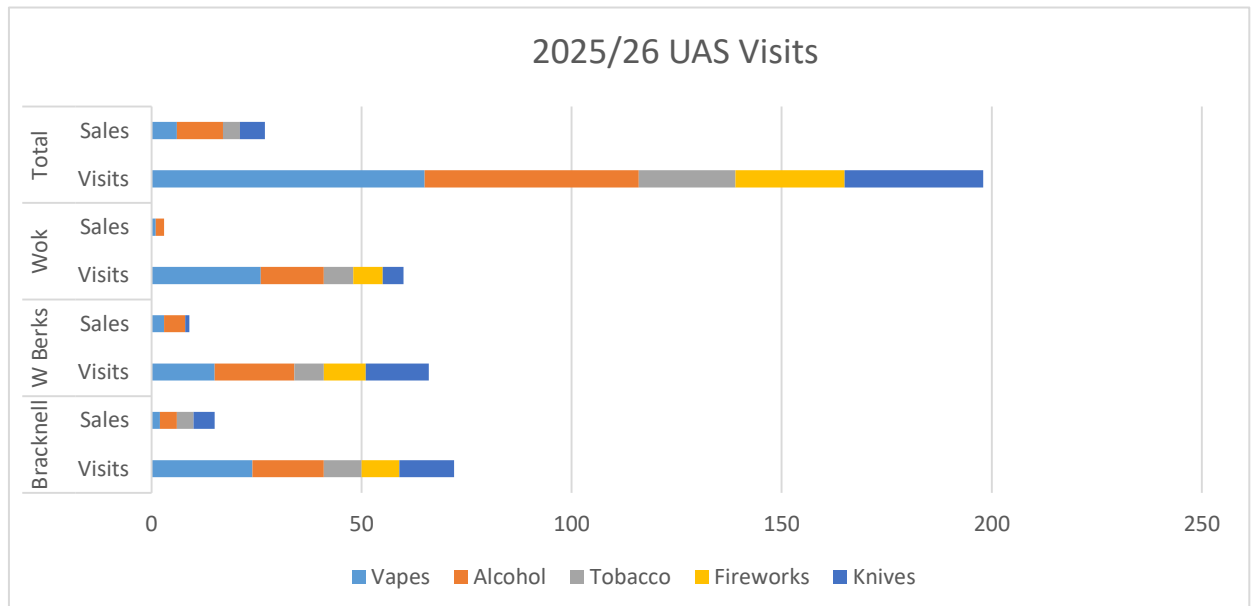
#### Age Restricted Products

13.2 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. The Service receives, and relies upon, information from multiple sources, which is collated to identify premises Officers are more likely to visit for the purpose of under aged sales.

13.3 These have resulted in the highest number of investigations of this type in many years, although disappointing that the percentage of failures is in the order of around 14% for 2025/26 (Vapes 9%, Alcohol 22%, Tobacco 17%, Fireworks 0% and Knives 18%). During 2025/26 5% of visits resulted in sales to our underage volunteers in Wokingham, 14% in West Berkshire and 21% in Bracknell Forest.

13.4 During Q4 the following underage sales activity took place:

Vapes		Lottery		Alcohol		Knives		Tobacco	
Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales	Attempts	Sales
16	0	0	0	23	4	0	0	11	2



13.5 In response, 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).

- 13.6 Officers attend meetings with colleagues and provide information to relevant teams in the partner authorities where intelligence about underage and non-compliant product sales is shared.

## 14. Protection of the Environment

- 14.1 **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 the Office for Product Safety and Standards for action.
- 14.2 **Air Quality** - The Crowthorne Air Quality Management Area Revocation consultation has been completed and is the subject of another report on this agenda. DEFRA has now approved the Bracknell Forest 2024 monitoring data and Annual Status Report – this was reported to the March 2026 JPPC meeting. The 2025 monitoring data is being bias corrected and reviewed in preparation for the Annual Status Reports to be submitted to DEFRA in Q2.
- 14.3 **Event Monitoring** – the events for the summer are being reviewed with contact with event organisers and requesting of Noise Management Plans. The monitoring schedule will be finalised during Q2.
- 14.4 **Planning Committees** - An increasing trend in noise complaints are being received where a premise has been altered / refurbished without planning permission or where planning permission conditions have not been fully complied with. One such case, a restaurant had installed extract ventilation not in accordance with the planning permission granted and an Abatement Notice was served. Another premise, a petrol filling station, had increased freezer and refrigeration plant without planning permission, an Abatement Notice was serviced and retrospective permission sought, which included a requirement for officers to attend at Planning Committee.
- 14.5 **Environmental Permitting** – One new application was received and the Permit issued. All inspections due in 2025/26 were completed. No major issues were found. The Petrol Vapour Recovery inspections were again carried out alongside the Petroleum Licensing inspection.
- 14.6 **Weight Restrictions** - During quarter 4, 83 observations took place, with 42 on Wokingham, 2 Bracknell Forest and 39 in West Berkshire.
- Fly-tipping in Bracknell Forest.**
- 14.7 During Quarter 4, figures are set out above within the priority of improved living environment and cases going forward are with case management unit.
- 14.8 The team have maintained regular reports for fly-tipping incidents to BFC waste team as part of their data gathering. The service continues to work alongside colleagues in preparing intelligence reports and focussing on areas where hotspots for fly-tipping occur. For example, deployment of mobile CCTV.
- 14.9 The service also applied for funding from OPCC for additional camera's but was unsuccessful on this occasion – we will try again in September. We are also working with West Berkshire Council to secure a new supplier to replace the smart wireless
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camera service. We did however receive funding support from Warfield Parish Council for which we are grateful.

## **15. Protecting and Informing Consumers**

- 15.1 In this quarter the Trading Standards team has triaged/assessed and dealt with 1064 service requests (not including food related service requests) across the 3 Local Authorities, relating to anything from car traders, and property management companies to businesses selling fakes and unsafe toys.
- 15.2 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.
- 15.3 One licensable premises, which was a trader of concern, was visited by officers and following discovery of illegal vapes and dangerous counterfeit vodka, a licensing review took place and the licence was revoked. In addition, a successful prosecution was concluded.
- 15.4 Work continues within the highest sector for complaints received by PPP within the car trade in providing business advice, enterprise act enforcement and increasing consumer confidence.
- 15.5 The Partnership Support Team logged a total of 15,124 emails and service requests over the 2025/26 financial year. This is in addition to answering telephone calls which come in directly from our customers. There have been issues with quantifying the calls and hopefully this will be something that can be reported next year.
- 15.6 In addition, the team have also covered the Animal Warden work for most of the year while the role was vacant.

## **16. Promoting Animal Welfare**

- 16.1 The service has successfully recruited to an Animal Health Warden as mentioned above. 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 During quarter 4 the team have dealt with 15 Animal Health service requests (2 Bracknell Forest, 4 Wokingham, 9 West Berkshire). In addition, they have dealt with eight animal feed enquiries (2 Bracknell Forest, 4 Wokingham, 2 West Berkshire).

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

- 17.1 The service has dealt with 63 ( 23 BFC and 40 WBC) health and safety at work service requests during Q4 and 36 (12 BFC and 24 WBC) workplace accidents were reported. The total figure of health and safety at work service requests was slightly less than the 69 for the same period in 2025. The total figure of reported workplace accidents was slightly higher than the 31 reported for the same period in 2025.
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- 17.2 Cases of interest include the service of a prohibition notice at a grocery store in West Berkshire that had rainwater penetrating through the roof and into the retail area close to electrical systems whilst they were trading. The business closed the store immediately and the roof was repaired the following day. A competent electrician subsequently certified that the electrical installation was safe and the prohibition notice was then withdrawn.
- 17.3 In this quarter, the Safety Advisory Group have been notified about and considered the documentation provided in respect of 4 events in Bracknell Forest and 12 in West Berkshire. One full SAG meeting was held and the attendees were the organisers of the summer live music series “On the Mount” at Wasing Estate and Newbury Racecourse presented details of their race days and summer evening events.
- 17.4 Events for which safety management plans were reviewed this quarter included South Hill Park Food and Music Festival, Bracknell Samaritans Run, Hungerford Football Club Beer and Music Festival and the “On the Mount” live music series at Wasing Estate.

## 18. Safe and Healthy Food Chain

- 18.1 **Private Water Supplies** – the 2025 annual returns were submitted on time to the Drinking Water Inspectorate. There are no supplies in Bracknell Forest and in West Berkshire there are 218 Regulation 9 and 10 supplies (commercial or providing a supply to two or more dwellings) and 133 untenanted single dwelling supplies. Work has continued in the quarter in reviewing the single dwelling supplies, some have now become commercial or have connected to mains water. In addition, one supply has now connected to mains, and five new supplies have been notified or found and require risk assessment.
- 18.2 The five yearly re risk assessment program progresses but due to workload pressures there is still some outstanding work which will need to be completed in 2026. The new Environmental Control Officer has joined the Environmental Quality team and has successfully completed the Sampling Accreditation Scheme training course and is beginning to take on some sampling work.
- 18.3 **Infectious Disease Notifications** - The Service received 17 (8 BFC and 9 WBC) infectious disease notifications during Q4. This is a significant reduction when compared to the 127 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. Three confirmed cases of Salmonella species were reported during this period with the remainder of reported cases being other infectious diseases including Cryptosporidiosis, Legionellosis, Giardiasis, Shigellosis and Hepatitis.
- 18.4 **Food Hygiene Requests** - The service has dealt with 165 food hygiene service requests during Q4 (60 BFC and 105 WBC). This is a small increase on the total figure of 158 for the same period in 2025.
- 18.5 **Food Sampling** – In November sampling involved buying kebabs to check for allergens and species took place. These results have all been returned, with five from eight failing due to species non-compliances with chicken or beef contained in products identified as lamb kebab. One sample also failed to declare milk as an allergen. This meant additional work for officers with having to refer the results onto
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the Primary Authority Trading Standards for the various manufacturers/suppliers and advice to retail outlet.

- 18.6 These examples highlight the importance of the work our officers carry out, and reinforces the need for qualified, experienced officers to be undertaking sampling across the region.
- 18.7 **Food Hygiene Inspections** - The service conducted 921 food safety inspections in 2025/26. There are still challenges relating to visiting all new food operators within the initial 28-day period but with an additional qualified officer this is expected to improve.
- 18.8 The Team undertook 100% of food hygiene inspections due in the highest inspection categories of 'A' risk to 'D' risk in the 2025/26 inspection year. In terms of the lowest risk group – 'E's' – the team were able to complete 66% of the target number. For these premises we are permitted by the Food Standards Agency Code of Practice to use alternate enforcement methods, this is the use of a questionnaire to see if the food premises remains at this risk category. We have sent the questionnaire to 100% of the premises and we will now be actively seeking returns from those who haven't responded.
- 18.9 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 to provide the service. PPP have submitted an action plan to the FSA detailing the steps to be taken to get the food hygiene inspections back on track. It includes works onto the 2026/27 inspection year.
- 18.10 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.
- 18.11 Several Board Members from the Food Standards Agency were hosted by the PPP on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026 to look at our work and the implementation of the food control framework in practice.

## 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 51 PPP cases 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 further 22 matters with West Berkshire Legal Services. Of these there are a number of Crown Court trials in 2026 starting with a six week trial in June, a four week trial in September and multiple trials of several days in October and November. The total number of
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Crown Court matters is anticipated at around twenty which takes a lot of management, oversight and co-ordination.

- 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. We expect to see further increases with the work on illicit tobacco and the implementation of the Renters Rights Act. The figure does not include road traffic prosecutions of which there are 28 cases active including two trials.
- 19.3 The Accredited Financial Investigators have 28 active investigations: Of these there are seventeen pertaining to money laundering, nine active confiscation proceedings in the Crown Court, one account freezing investigation and one active extradition case. One appeal was recently dismissed by the Court of Appeal (Single Judge). Of those cases twenty are for the PPP authorities, three are for Reading BC Trading Standards, one Reading Corporate Fraud, three Oxfordshire Trading Standards and one Wokingham planning.

## 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.
- 20.3 As always, the service is grateful for the support of the Committee and wider Member group long with statutory and internal partners, residents and businesses and of course colleagues in the Service for delivering these achievements.

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## 21. Appendices

- 21.1 Appendix A – Q4 Performance Data
- 21.2 Appendix B – Compliments
- 21.3 Appendix C - Activity by Authority
- 21.4 Appendix D – Update on Peer Review Recommendations

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## 22. Background Papers:

- 22.1 None
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**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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