
Operational Approach to Fireworks

Committee considering report:	Licensing Committee
Date of Committee:	06 July 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Tom McCann
Date Head of Service agreed report:	09 June 2026
Report Author:	Moira Fraser
Forward Plan Ref:	LC

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To review the operational approach that is being taken towards fireworks by the Public Protection Partnership and to set out the powers delegated to the PPP to undertake enforcement activity in respect of the supply, storage, product safety and use of fireworks.
- 1.2 The document has been fully revised and restructured to improve clarity, readability, and flow, with additional detail provided where necessary to expand on and better explain the information presented.

2 Recommendations

The Licensing Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 **CONSIDER** the standardised operational approach already undertaken by the Public Protection Service in relation to fireworks across all three partner authorities.
- 2.2 **RECOMMEND** to the Joint Public Protection Committee at the October meeting that the revised approach be adopted subject to any changes agreed at this meeting.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications for the work set out in this report as it is considered business as usual activity.

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Legal:	The Operational Approach that is being proposed has been developed in accordance with the powers and legislation as set out in Section 3 (Legal and Regulatory Framework) of the document. The relevant statutory and regulatory regime governing the sale, storage, product safety, potential impact of the use of fireworks, and the Local Authority's powers and scope for enforcement of the same, are as set out within Appendix (A) to the report.
Risk Management:	The main risk of challenge for the PPP is that it could be seen to be acting Ultra Vires with regards to its powers.
Property:	There are no property implications associated with this report.
Policy:	There are no policy implications associated with this report.

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	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?		✓		Fireworks can have a disproportionate impact on certain groups protected under the Equality Act 2010, particularly disabled people (for example, those with sensory sensitivities, PTSD, or anxiety), older people, young children, and some faith or cultural groups whose religious observances may involve fireworks at specific times of year. If restrictions, licensing conditions, or enforcement are applied inflexibly, they could unintentionally disadvantage these groups or limit their ability to celebrate cultural or religious events. Conversely, a lack of control could also place protected groups at greater risk from noise, distress, or safety harms. The PPP therefore adopts an approach that is proportionate, evidence based, and takes into account differing needs.
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 recommendations in section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO ₂ .

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Health Impact:		✓		The PPP's approach to fireworks could have both positive and negative health and wellbeing impacts, depending on how it is applied. Tighter controls can improve wellbeing by reducing injuries, fires, and accidents, and by limiting noise and unpredictability that can cause distress for some people, including those with anxiety, PTSD, sensory sensitivities, older people, pets, and livestock owners. The approach is intended to strike a fair balance between reducing harm and allowing people to celebrate safely and enjoyably.
ICT Impact:		✓		There are no IT implications associated with this report.
Digital Services Impact:	✓			Once adopted this policy will be included on the key documents section of the PPP report. It can also be linked through to the West Berkshire Council Environment Health and Trading Standards web pages.
Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			The approach, if adopted, would contribute to Priority Area 5 - thriving communities by helping to set out the approach to fireworks which can, when used inappropriately, undermine residents' quality of life. It would also have a link to Priority Area 2: "A Fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all", because it will support legitimate businesses selling fireworks in accordance with the legislation.
Core Business:		✓		The work in this area would be considered business as usual.

Data Impact:		✓		Any complaints or communication received would be processed in accordance with the PPP's privacy statement .
Consultation and Engagement:	The Licensing Committees in Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire will be consulted on the document ahead of it being presented to the Joint Public Protection Committee.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 Public Protection Partnership officers are responsible for different aspects of fireworks sales, storage, licensing and use. Trading Standards Officers deal with fireworks being sold or supplied, making sure they are safe, sold to the right age groups, and meet legal standards. Environmental Health Officers look into complaints where fireworks may be causing a statutory noise nuisance. Licensing Officers are responsible for processing licences, advising on permitted events, and working with Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) for larger organised displays.
- 4.2 It is therefore appropriate for the Licensing and Safety Committee to consider the approach from a licensing point of view ahead of the document being presented to the Joint Public Protection Committee for adoption.
- 4.3 Firework legislation around retail supply exists primarily to prevent supply of inappropriate categories of fireworks to the general public, appropriate storage and to ensure age restrictions and signage requirements are met where fireworks are sold. The approach aligns with current legislation and does not introduce any requirements beyond those set out in statutory provisions.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The current approach to fireworks was adopted by the Joint Public Protection Committee in November 2021. It is therefore appropriate for the document to be reviewed to ensure that it is fit for purpose and encapsulates any changes to legislation and operational practices.
- 5.2 The proposed iteration of the document has resulted in a significant rewrite of the documentation albeit that the approach and sentiment remain unchanged. It is therefore not practical to include a 'key changes' section to this report.
- 5.3 The breadth of the legislation the PPP covers means that Officers are regularly involved in the regulations associated with fireworks. Aspects such as the supply of fireworks are carefully regulated from manufacturing through to point of sale. The predominant position of the legislation enforced involves protection of residents and businesses.
- 5.4 The PPP's involvement in fireworks falls into five main areas

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- Sale, Possession, and Use Restrictions.
 - Product Safety and Age Restrictions.
 - Storage and Explosives Licensing.
 - Noise and Statutory Nuisance.
 - Campaign and Social Media messages
- 5.5 Firework legislation around sales is predominantly to protect residents from purchasing inappropriate levels of explosive materials as well as ensuring age-appropriate sales take place and that retailers are storing fireworks safely. This work is usually undertaken by Trading Standards Officers.
- 5.6 The PPP works with organisers of organised fireworks displays through the Safety Advisory Group to ensure that appropriate controls are in place.
- 5.7 Local authorities issue licences for fireworks when someone wants to store, sell, or use large quantities of fireworks, or carry out a professional display, in a way that goes beyond what is allowed for the general public. This usually happens for organised events such as public firework displays, festivals, weddings, or commercial sales, where there are safety, noise, and public protection considerations.
- 5.8 The licence helps the council make sure the fireworks will be handled safely, stored securely, used at an appropriate location and time, and that risks to people, property, animals, and the environment are properly managed.
- 5.9 Licenced premises may also from time to time make use of fireworks. It should be noted that fireworks displays are not licensable activities. However, Officers will work with applicants to ensure controls are in place and will have regard to timings and locations if they are to be used.
- 5.10 Environment Health Officers may also be able to use powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 with regards to noise causing a statutory nuisance. This approach should be reasonable and proportionate.
- 5.11 Fireworks awareness will be raised through our Communications Plan and the PPP uses an intelligence led approach to shape messages when appropriate.
- 5.12 The Committee is asked to consider the updated document attached at Appendix A and propose any modifications ahead of the document being submitted to the October Joint Public Protection Committee for adoption and publication.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 The Operational Approach that is being proposed has been developed in accordance with the powers and legislation as set out in Appendix A. The Service therefore has a statutory duty to undertake this work on behalf of the partner authorities, and no alternative options have therefore been proposed.
- 6.2 The policy is compliant with relevant legislation and does not propose to impose any obligations exceeding statutory requirements.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Public Protection Partnership has a clear and established role in relation to fireworks across the full regulatory lifecycle, from product safety and lawful supply, through safe storage and explosives licensing, to managing noise complaints and supporting the safe delivery of organised displays. The existing operational approach, adopted in November 2021, is now due for review to ensure it remains fit for purpose, reflects any relevant legislative or operational developments, and presents a clear, accessible statement of how the Partnership will continue to act reasonably and proportionately in protecting residents, businesses and public safety.
- 7.2 The updated document represents a substantial rewrite to improve clarity while maintaining the underlying approach and intent, and it provides a consistent framework for co-ordinated action across Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Licensing functions. It is therefore appropriate for the Licensing and Safety Committee to consider the revised approach from a licensing perspective, propose any necessary amendments, and support progression of the final document for adoption and publication by the Joint Public Protection Committee in October.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A PPP Approach to Fireworks – Regulatory Management, Enforcement & Community Impact Policy 2026 - 2029

Background Papers:

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 Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

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Item is Urgent Key Decision

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Report is to note only

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Wards affected: All wards across the partner authorities

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