Revenue Budget 2027/28 Including Proposed Fees and Charges Schedule

Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	12 October 2026
Chair of Committee:	Councillor Iskandar Jefferies
Date JMB agreed report:	21 September 2026
Report Author:	Stephanie Waterford
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To set out the Public Protection Partnership's (PPP) draft revenue budget for 2027/28 including discretionary fees and charges for 2027/28.

1.2 To seek approval of the draft budget and draft fees and charges schedule prior to submission to Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire Councils as part of their budget setting process in accordance with the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA).

1.3 To agree the figure for the basis of the recharge to Wokingham Borough Council with respect to the services shared with Wokingham Borough Council under the shared service agreement effective on the 1st April 2022.

2. Recommendations

The Committee:

2.1 **CONSIDERS** the draft revenue budget including the fees and charges set out in this report and Appendix A.

2.2 **RECOMMENDS** to partner Councils that the contributions set out in column three of the table at 5.23 form the basis of the 2027/28 net revenue budget contributions.

2.3 **RECOMMENDS** to partner Councils the fees and charges set out in Appendix A.

2.4 **APPROVES** the contribution request from Wokingham Borough Council to be as set out the table at paragraph 5.23

2.5 **AGREES** that the policy position in relation to monies received under the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) (which was approved at the October 2024 JPPC meeting) remains the policy to be applied to spend / allocation of any monies received under the scheme.

2.6 **AGREES** that the December meeting of this Committee will receive and update report on the outcome of deliberations on the proposed net revenue budget and proposed fees and charges.

3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The base budget requirement to fund the service is set out at 5.23 below. The fees and charges proposed are set out in Appendix A to this report. These are either statutory fees where any variance will have been set by law or discretionary fees. For the avoidance of doubt any grant funding received under the Proceeds of Crime Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme does not form part of the PPP revenue budget. This has previously been agreed by the Committee at the 14 March 2017 meeting and was re-affirmed at the October 2024 meeting. The base build has an assumption of 2.56% for pay award. This 26/27 build has taken the opportunity to review areas of historic pressures to realign budget in line with spend. Fees and Charges are forecasted to be uplifted by inflation + 2% with the hourly rate set at £79. Overall there has been a 6% uplift for the Public Protection Partnership compared to 26/27 Budgets.
Human Resource:	The base budget funding set out at 5.23 will be required to maintain the structure agreed at the October 2024 meeting.
Legal:	The IAA (Inter-Authority Agreement) that set up the Partnership effectively delegates responsibility for the strategic direction of the PPP to the Joint Public Protection Committee. The responsibilities of the committee are set out in Schedule 1 to the agreement. The IAA with Wokingham requires that we indicate the level of contribution required from Wokingham early enough for it to feed into their budget setting cycle. Included is the responsibility to propose a fee structure and annual budget to the partner Councils and agree any variations to the budget. The Committee also has the responsibility to set out to consider the agreed percentage figures for each authority. The agreement requires that these should be submitted by 30th November in the year preceding the effective implementation date or other such date agreed by the Councils. It remains at all times the responsibility of the partner Councils to set their own budgets including fees and charges having received the recommendation of the Committee. There are statutory consultation requirements associated with the fees and charges for hackney carriage and private hire

	drivers, vehicles and operators. These are set out in Sections 53 and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Any variations to these fees will be consulted on in accordance with the legislation and will be discussed at the licensing committees of the partner authorities prior to recommendations being made to the Budget Council meetings of the two authorities.			
Risk Management:	Any risks associated with the recommendations will be captured as part of regular Joint Management Board briefing process and will be escalated as per the IAA and Committee approved Business Plan. The service is currently carrying several red risks at Strategic and Operational levels. These primarily track back to staffing levels. The service is currently carrying 11.6 FTE vacancies including the Strategic Manager for the Joint Case Management Unit.			
Property:	There are no direct property implications arising from this report.			
Policy:	The Committee has responsibility for setting the strategic direction and policy of the PPP. This includes the maintenance of financial oversight to ensure sound financial management. More specifically the Committee has responsibility for recommending to the Councils a budget that meets its needs along with a proposal for fees and charges. Updates on the financial position are presented to the Committee as part of the quarterly performance monitoring regime.			
	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?		x		Where any decisions are made to change service provision individual impact assessments will be undertaken. There are currently no proposals to disinvest from any services already provided.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people		x		None

with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				
Environmental Impact:	X			The service plays a significant role in the protection of the environment including air quality, land contamination, planning considerations and enforcement of green energy claims. The proposals in this report if accepted will maintain capacity in this area.
Health Impact:	X			A significant number of the Partnership's Service Priorities relate to protecting and improving health. These included food safety and standards, health and safety, tackling fraud, air quality and private sector housing. If this activity continues to be funded there will be a continuing positive impact on the health of residents of and visitors to the partner authority areas.
ICT or Digital Services Impact:		X		None, albeit that the Service will continue to promote initiatives on its social media platforms and website.
PPP Priorities:				The report will impact on all the 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.
Data Impact:		X		This decision about budget setting will not have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects
Consultation and Engagement:	The fees for Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles and Private Hire operators will be subject to statutory consultation. The format for the consultation will be agreed by the individual licensing committees. The remainder of the fees and charges will be subjected to any budgetary consultation exercises undertaken by the partner authorities.			
Other Options Considered:	The Councils are currently still considering their wider revenue budgets for 2027/28. Should either of the Councils seek to disinvest in this area of service there is a methodology agreed (by JPPC) for doing so.			

4. Executive Summary

4.1 The Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) between the Councils sets out the functions that are delegated to the Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC) under the terms of the agreement. To deliver these functions for the Councils the Committee is required to allocate a budget on an annual basis for which the service will be held accountable by the JPPC.

4.2 The process for doing so is that a budget is proposed by the Committee along with a proposed schedule of fees and charges, usually at the October meeting. As part of this proposal, the total net revenue budget for the service is shared between the Councils in accordance with the agreed percentages. The budget proposals are required to be notified to the partner organisations by the 30th November each year.

4.3 At all times it remains the responsibility of the partner Councils to set their own budgets including fees and charges, having received the recommendation of the Committee. This report is being prepared in both the context of the in-year pressures and the fact that we are at an early stage in the 2027/28 budget setting cycle at a time of significant uncertainty and challenges.

4.4 This report sets out the allocations needed to maintain the current service / staffing levels.

4.5 The revenue budget and fees and charges are then subjected to the budgetary consultation and agreement processes of the individual authorities. Additionally, the proposed fees and charges for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and operators are subject to the consultation requirements in Sections 53 and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. Prior to statutory consultation the licensing fees and charges will be subject to consideration by the respective licensing committees prior to the commencement of the consultation. The Committees will then be asked to consider any responses early in the new year before recommending a final set of fees and charges to each Executive and Full Council.

4.6 In 2017 the Committee agreed the policy on the use of grants received under Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS). The policy was updated in October 2024 and the current iteration can be found here: the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme. These grants arise from post-conviction confiscation proceedings undertaken by the Service where serious offences have been committed. It is important to note that any such grants do not form part of the service revenue budget. It is to be noted that the policy specifically focuses on confiscation in the form of compensation for victims.

5. Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The funding arrangements for the service are set out in two Inter-Authority Agreements (IAA's). The agreement of the 6th January 2017 sets out the arrangements for the West Berkshire (WBDC) and Bracknell Forest (BFC) budget contributions and the fee setting processes. The IAA of the 1st July 2022 sets out the delivery arrangements for those services shared with Wokingham Borough Council.

5.2 Both agreements set out an array of statutory functions to be delivered jointly. In the case of Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire these include private sector housing,

nuisance, environmental protection, licensing, trading standards, case management, financial investigations, intelligence, food safety and standards and health and safety. In the case of the Wokingham IAA the services covered include trading standards, case management, financial investigations, and air quality.

5.3 The two IAAs also identify the key priority areas for the delivery of the services. In the case of the BFC and WBDC agreement these are community protection; protection and improving health; protection of the environment; supporting prosperity and economic growth and partnership working.

5.4 To discharge these functions, the partner councils are requested on an annual basis to allocate a budget to the Committee. That budget is proposed by the Committee along with a proposed schedule of fees and charges. In the case of BFC and WBDC the total net revenue budget for the service is then divided between the Councils in the agreed percentages. Those agreed percentages are based on workload split which is linked to a range of factors including population and number of businesses liable to regulatory activity.

5.5 The percentages for 2027/28 are as follows:

(a) Bracknell Forest 39.25%

(b) West Berkshire 60.75%

5.6 The IAA with Wokingham Borough Council is linked to their share of the costs of those services delivered on a shared basis across the three authorities as set out above.

Preparation of the 2027/28 Budget

5.7 The IAA sets the budget requirements of each authority based on the principle of 'agreed percentages'. The proposed percentage splits are set out in paragraph 5.5 above.

5.8 The net revenue budget for 2027/28 required if all of the pressures were met is set out in column 3 of the table at 5.23. This includes the Wokingham Council contribution. In preparing its recommended budget the Committee is required to consider the following matters:

- The previous expenditure of the PPP and the service levels achieved.
- Any proposals for the development of the PPP and the services it offers.
- Any material changes to the activities of the PPP.
- Any other matters relevant from time to time.
- Development and impact of any efficiencies that could lead to reduced costs, and
- Consider any investment required to realise these efficiencies.

5.9 The net revenue budget for 2027/28 has been calculated taking into account:

- Salary cost of living rises expected in 2027/28 and any additional impacts of 2028/29.
- Staff incremental points effective on 1st April 2027.
- Any pension and NI adjustments arising from the cost-of-living and other salary increases.

5.10 Any changes in year due to recruitment, staff qualification and progression or maternity leave cover etc. will be managed within the budget allocated by the Councils. Any new grades allocated due to progression will be funded from reduced expenditure elsewhere.

Budget Pressures and Mitigations

5.11 For 2025/26 the income budget was reprofiled and historically unachievable income targets were removed. This amounted to a target reduction of around £180K paid for by the deletion of the posts. Much of this deficit had been caused by the fact income targets had risen in line with inflation annually but the statutory fees for Licensing Act activities had not risen since 2005 meaning they were some 70% behind budget target. Other losses have arisen from taxi and private hire drivers and vehicle licence numbers decreasing as well as gambling moving to an on-line setting and establishments closing.

5.12 West Berkshire has commissioned a comprehensive review of fees and charges across the organisation. This highlighted areas of under recovery within the Licensing Service and made further recommendations for a full review of fees and charges across the PPP with a view to achieving a greater level of cost recovery. This review is in progress and is highly unlikely to be achieved in time for the budget and fee setting cycle. Any implications arising from this review will be brought to future meetings.

5.13 For the time being, fees and charges have been proposed in line with normal levels of CPI-linked increase of CPI+2%. However, it is important to note that the final CPI levels have not yet been set.

5.14 Q1 reported an underspend of circa £10k owing mainly to vacancies. There is an option to manage in-year pressures through vacancies, however this is likely to have an adverse impact on service delivery.

5.15 In addition to the general revenue there are a few ‘out of scope’ budgets relating to grant funded functions. These include scams and victim support, public health and investigations. Sources of funding include the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) via National Trading Standards Board and Trading Standards South-East, public health and community safety funds including Police and Crime Commissioner funding. These equate to around £250K in 2026/27. Where staff are engaged on this work their time is charged to these budgets.

Fees and Charges

5.16 Discretionary fees are set based on a calculation of time multiplied by the hourly rate. The hourly rate includes all service costs and support service recharges. The hourly rates set year on year were:

- 2018/19 - £55
- 2019/20 - £57
- 2020/21 - £57
- 2021/22 - £59
- 2022/23 - £64
- 2023/24 - £67
- 2024/25 - £67

- 2025/26 - £69
- 2026/27 - £74
- 2027/28 - £79

5.17 For the financial year 2027/28 the proposed hourly rate has been rounded to £79 p/h. This is an increase of approximately 6.8%. This rate is still being reviewed.

5.18 This hourly rate incorporates a range of factors including the wide variety of council support service costs, staffing and associated costs, democracy and governance, policy development, contracts, systems and the necessary training to maintain a competent workforce.

5.19 Over the last few years discretionary fees and charges have been reviewed and are now aligned across Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire to reflect the fact that licensing procedures and systems are largely similar. The West Berkshire fee and charges review will make further recommendations on fee levels once complete, and these will be presented in future reporting cycles.

5.20 Taxi and private hire vehicles and private hire operator fees are subject to statutory consultations which will be conducted in both areas should any change be agreed by the Councils. The nature of those consultations will be agreed by the relevant licensing committee but will include the publication of public notices and direct consultation of drivers, owners and operators.

5.21 Animal establishment fees now incorporate the costs of inspections conducted on our behalf by the City of London. At the time of writing next year's fees have not been notified but will be incorporated in due course. Any veterinary fees incurred as part of animal licensing will also be recharged at cost.

5.22 The fees and charges set by Regulation / Statute in the schedule are highlighted in green and are as of 01 September 2026. These will be adjusted in year as any variations are made to legislation. It should be noted that in respect of the Licensing Act 2003 fees have not been increased since 2005 and Gambling Act 2005 charges have not increased since 2007 which has been a significant contributor to the gap between costs and income. As stated above they are now over 70% behind inflation in the same period. There are no current plans that central government will increase these fees and there is an expectation that local authorities will continue to meet the shortfall in cost recovery.

Proposals

5.23 The proposed revenue budget for 2027/28 is as follows:

Authority	% Split	Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2027/28
Bracknell Forest	39.25%	£1,554,930
West Berkshire	60.75%	£2,406,670

Wokingham buy back contribution		£601,150
Total Budget 2027/28		**£4,562,750**

5.24 By way of comparison the 2026/27 budget is set out below:

Authority	% Split	Proposed Net Revenue Budget 2026/27
Bracknell Forest	39.5 %	£1,467,350
West Berkshire	60.5 %	£2,271,120
Wokingham buy back contribution		£567,290
Total Budget 2026/27		**£4,305,760**

5.25 Although the staff and budgets are hosted by West Berkshire Council it is important to note that these inflationary pressures would have been experienced by the individual partner Councils had the services been hosted individually including pension deficit contributions.

5.26 At the Committee meeting on the 7th November 2019 the Committee approved a methodology for local service reduction should any partner authority wish to propose this. The methodology recognised the nature of the partnership and the need to maintain 'agreed percentages' and cover the costs of shared resource with respect to core service delivery costs. Any disinvestment will be managed through this methodology.

5.27 The proposed fees and charges for 2027/28 are set out in Appendix A. As stated above the fees comprise both discretionary and statutory fees and charges. The discretionary fees are based on an hourly rate set at £79 p/h. The statutory fees are included for ease of reference and will be updated in line with any published amendments.

5.28 Statutory consultations for variations to taxi and private hire vehicles and private hire operator fees will be undertaken in accordance with Sections 53 and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme

5.29 The current iteration of the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme was updated in October 2024 to reflect relevant legislation and operating practices. Although any grant funding received under the Proceeds of Crime Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme does not form part of the PPP revenue budget it is a matter for the Committee to approve any allocations policy in line with the terms of the scheme.

6. Concluding Observations

6.1 It is a key responsibility for the Committee to recommend a revenue budget including a fees and charges structure. The Committee also has a responsibility to keep under review the budget and consider the outturn and any variance.

6.2 The Joint Management Board has considered the budget. Whilst it remains the view that the integrity of the PPP is best maintained by delivering any savings collectively as has happened in previous years the methodology is there to make local adjustments and local prioritisations of service.

6.3 The recommendations aim to meet the requirements of the IAA, the approved priorities plan and current indicated budget position of the partners.

6.4 Finally, in making the recommendations it is acknowledged that all three Councils are under severe financial constraints and it is possible that the proposals are not achievable. For this reason, an update report will be brought to the December meeting of the Committee.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix A – Proposed Fees and Charges 2027/28

8. Background Papers:

8.1 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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