

## Licensing Committee

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### **MINUTES OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2024 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Peter Hutton (Chairman), Cllr Allison Bucknell (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Steve Bucknell, Cllr Trevor Carbin, Cllr Sam Charleston, Cllr Kevin Daley, Cllr Andrew Davis, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Stewart Palmen (substitute), Cllr Tim Trimble and Cllr Robert Yuill

#### **Also Present:**

Frank Cain (Legal representative), John Carter (Head of Service – Public Protection), Claire Francis (Public Protection Manager – Community Protection), Tom Ince (Principal Compliance Officer), Jonathan McLaughlin (Legal representative), Stephen Melville (Safer Streets Co-Ordinator – OPCC) and Lisa Pullin (Democratic Services Officer)

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#### **1 Apologies and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Ruth Hopkinson and from Jason Salter (Head of Service – Passenger Transport Unit).

Cllr Stewart Palmen was substituting for Cllr Ruth Hopkinson.

#### **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023 were presented to the Committee.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

#### **3 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Claire Francis (Public Protection Manager – Community Protection), and Stephen Melville (Safer Streets Co-Ordinator – OPCC) to the meeting.

The Chairman highlighted that the Council had won the Environmental Campaign of the Year Award at the Keep Britain Tidy Awards for its work to reduce fly-tipping in the county at an awards ceremony in York on 29 February and congratulated the teams involved on behalf of the Committee.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **Public Participation**

No questions or statements had been submitted to the Committee from the public in advance of the meeting.

6 **Licensing Appeals Update**

There were no known Licensing Sub Committee appeals pending.

7 **Minutes of the Licensing Sub Committees**

The following minutes of the Licensing Sub Committee were approved:

**Western Area Licensing Sub Committee**

11.12.2023 Application for a Premises Licence, Asda Express, East Street Service Station, 80 East Street, Warminster

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting detailed above be approved and signed as a correct record.**

8 **Safer Streets Fund Update**

Stephen Melville (Safer Streets Co-Ordinator) from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner presented an overview of the Safer Streets Fund initiative and highlighted the following:

- The Safer Streets Fund launched in 2020 and the Government has invested £120 million through four rounds of funding. Round 5 launched in July 2024 and Police force areas were offered the opportunity to bid for up to £1 million to deliver a range of interventions. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's) were invited to submit up to three proposals for their areas, consulting relevant local authorities and other partners in their area. The proposals that were submitted were assessed by the Home Office to ensure they met the terms of the scheme;
- Stephen had been in post as the Safer Streets Co-Ordinator for 2 months now. It was not yet known if there would be a round 6 of funding with the pending general election and how a new government might want to fund such initiatives;
- Discussions with the Home Office began in August/September 2023 which had meant that there was a very short time frame to get out and gather evidence, and then submit the bids to the Home Office for approval. Just under £1 million was claimed for Wiltshire and Swindon, previous projects

could not be repeated. For round 5 there was a focus on neighbourhood crime – burglaries, robberies, vehicle theft, anti-social behaviour and tackling violence against women and girls, this was initially introduced in 2021 in response to the Sarah Everard case, and had continued through round 4 to into round 5;

- In December 2023, the Home Office notified that there would be reduction in the funding available which meant that each Police force area would have a reduction of £180,000 from the original allocation for the 2024/25 year. Consideration had to be given as to where this money could be saved and there was consultation with local authorities and partners to look at how the outcomes could still be met. The OPCC agreed to provide investment of £50k to cover some of the shortfall and to reduce the impact on providers and the intended outcomes of the funding. It was decided not to try and commission new services but to adapt existing projects with efforts to achieve outcomes but accepting that some impact on delivery would be inevitable;
- Project 1 included Night Time Economy (NTE) Wardens for Trowbridge and Salisbury from 8pm to 4am, CCTV in Chippenham and Salisbury and Community Action Initiatives for Swindon;

A Trowbridge Committee member asked about the stakeholder engagement that had been undertaken prior to this project as he felt that Trowbridge might have preferred funding towards CCTV. Stephen reported that he was not involved in the bid process so would not be able to advise on that. He further highlighted that the timescales were short and that funding was prescriptive to submit bids within a certain date. He assured the Committee that there would have been consultation with the local community and local authority. Crime data would also have been considered and he would be happy to follow this up to provide further information outside of the meeting with the member.

- It was explained that a NTE Warden would be a visible guardian presence providing support to service users of the night time economy primarily but not exclusively women. They were not to replace Street Pastors but were an extra layer of presence/support and they would look to develop partnerships with them and would be meeting with the neighbourhood policing teams. This service had been launched in Salisbury on 24 February with the start in Trowbridge to be confirmed and the relevant communications would be shared;

The Chairman recalled that there had been Taxi Marshalls in the past and asked if the taxi trade knew about the NTE Wardens and if there would be a link with them. Stephen reported that they were hopeful that this would be the case with the NTW Wardens being able to put any vulnerable females into a safe taxi to get them home and there would be communications around that too.

A Committee member commented that Salisbury had been successful with Street Pastors but expressed concern about back up/response times from the Police if this was required and cited some previous past experience of this.

Stephen commented that much of the work of the NTE Wardens was preventative with their hopefully being no need for Police intervention.

A Committee member commented that the Police response times had made improvements over the last 3 years. As Chair of the Police and Crime Panel he urged members not to criticise the Police without hard facts of response times and to be reassured that the PCC holds them to the fire on this.

A Committee member remarked that they were pleased to see more CCTV for Salisbury and asked about the locations. Stephen confirmed that there would be 4 mobile cameras and they were currently seeking permission for them to be sited in the hot spot areas and that they would be integrated into existing systems and shared with Town/City Councils.

- Project 2 included a sex worker outreach project in Swindon, a one off project to erect fencing around Salisbury Playhouse fire exit to prevent anti-social behaviour, target hardening with the Bobby Van in Chippenham, Salisbury and Swindon, Iprovefit – mentoring for young people in Wiltshire and Swindon and the introduction of Crimestoppers Zones in hotspot areas in Swindon;
- Project 3 was SMASH leading youth engagement sessions in Chippenham and Salisbury as a large number of anti-social behaviour nuisance and environmental offences are from those under age 25 and it was understood that youth workers have a key role to play in creating positive relations with young people and their communities;
- The funding for the projects could not be repeated each year, the initiative could be moved to cover another area but there could not be funding to continue the same thing in an area; and
- Updates on the progress of the round 5 funding as at February 2024 were shared.

A Committee member acknowledged the funding for NTE Wardens in Trowbridge and asked what would happen when the funding comes to an end and expressed concern that there had been no discussion with the Town Council who would have preferred funding for CCTV. Stephen reported that if this initiative was successful and a benefit for Trowbridge then different funding sources could be considered.

The Chairman asked what a 'good' outcome would look like and with who/where would that information be shared. Stephen reported that the outcomes would be shared with the Home Office and the partners involved with the project. There was quarterly reporting on all projects.

A Committee member expressed concern that it was too late to leave it until the end of the funding period (March 2025) to decide whether or not the projects should continue and how they would be funded. She felt that it would not be prudent for a project to end and then having to restart it – she asked if there

was project plan with recommendations going to the PCC as to whether the success criteria of the projects had/would be met. Stephen commented that a number of projects had been commissioned but that they didn't know what any future Government's response would be to Home Office recommendations. Stephen offered to provide updates outside of the meeting to those that wished to receive them.

The Committee member who is the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel empathised with the message from the meeting that there seemed to be a lack of coordination with the Safer Streets initiative and the city/town and parish councils and would raise this at the next meeting to see what could be done to improve this. However, he noted that the Home Office funding had to be agreed within a tight turnaround but felt it might have been easier to apply for funding with there being city/town/parish council input on the areas of concern in their areas too.

A Committee member asked about the Safe Spaces project as a safe place for vulnerable people to go to and asked if there was any way that something like that could be reinstated. John Carter (Head of Service – Public Protection) reported that the Safety at Nights Charter does cover certain aspects but acknowledged that this was not for children and those vulnerable during the daytime and whilst that used to come under his remit this was an issue yet to be addressed. Stephen Melville reported that the Safe Spaces still exist a lot during the day in Salisbury and that there were now the NTE Wardens who could look at reducing the risk for the vulnerable females particularly at night.

The Chairman thanked Stephen for his presentation and suggested that an update be provided to the Committee in six months' time.

Stephen offered the committee to contact him via email regarding the project processes etc and he would provide responses where he could - [stephen.melville@wiltshire.police.uk](mailto:stephen.melville@wiltshire.police.uk)

**Resolved: That the Committee**

- 1. Note the update on the Safer Streets Fund initiative.**
- 2. Receive a further update on the Safer Streets Fund initiative at their meeting in September 2024.**

**9 Update from the Passenger Transport Team**

Jason Salter (Head of Service – Passenger Transport Unit) was unable to attend the meeting but it was agreed that he would prepare an update to share with the Committee following the meeting.

*Post meeting note – Below is the update that was shared with the Committee members following the meeting:*

**Update from Passenger Transport**

- Wiltshire Council is currently able to fulfil all of its home to school transport contracts.
- During January 2024 we had 169 taxi / private hire providers registered through the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) with Passenger Transport to operate contracts on its behalf. We undertook an exercise to contact those operators (87) who are licensed with Wiltshire Council, but not registered with our Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). This resulted in a further 14 providers being on boarded.

## QRoutes

### What is QRoutes?

- QRoutes is a cost effective, cloud-based tool for planning SEND, mainstream school and adult social care transport. Planners can generate quality results in minutes, meaning provision can be re-optimised as and when requirements change.
- It helps finding the most efficient and cost-effective routes for transportation. Using advanced algorithms and data analysis this software minimizes travel distance, time, and fuel consumption. To determine the best sequence and pick up order, it involves analysing several factors, including distance, traffic, vehicle capacity, given maxim travel time, students' individual requirements, etc.
- This software provides not only operational planning but also valuable insights. By means of generated solutions or what-if scenarios, strategic decisions can be made based on valuable data presented in PowerBi.
- We have purchased an enhanced version this for a 2 year arrangements at £30k per annum

### Benefits of Using QRoutes

- Produces high quality results - better than "human planners", but taxi co-ordinators can use their expertise to improve results further.
- Transport Team can re-plan provision quickly throughout the year.
- Brings all coordinators up to the same high productivity level.
- Minimalizing the time, the planning team spent manually mapping out routes with Google Maps from hours to minutes thanks to the automation process the platform provides.
- By using QRoutes there is an assurance that we will always get the most effective output.
- The system captures data fed into it and produces information about the network you are providing so that you can see where it is performing well / not so well and take remedial action accordingly
- We have managed to turn off 8 taxi routes across the network with a saving of around £150k per annum

### Example of QRoutes potential

- Since January 2024, 2 schools in Salisbury (Salisbury Springfield South and Salisbury Pembroke Park) were merged and the new SAIL School was created on the site of the former Salisbury Police Station. - all students were moved to the new establishment. An additional 20 students were transported from other schools across the county.
- Challenges:
  - Limited numbers of taxi operators.
  - Limited numbers of available Passenger Assistants
  - Short period of time for preparation (since definite names of students were given and school start date).
  - High end students' needs joining this school.
- Goals:
  - Transport to be ready from day one.
  - Provide Passenger Assistants for each journey.
  - Keep number of journeys to the minimum considering students' individual needs and school's suggestions.
  - Minimizing cost implication to the council.
  - Creating journeys as efficient as possible.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee await and then note the update on behalf of the Passenger Transport Team.**

10 **Update from Taxi Licensing Team**

Tom Ince (Principal Compliance Officer) referred to the taxi licensing update that was circulated with the agenda and highlighted the following:

- The team had been busy since the last meeting in December 2023 with the processing of 21 new licence applications and 81 renewals during January 2024. They had been experiencing some delays with the DBS process for some drivers with enhanced checks taking from a week or so to months, although this was out of their control. With the quick return of a DBS check the turnaround of a driver being licenced could be a month which was positive;
- The changes to the requirements for tinted windows was implemented on 1 January 2024 following approval at the last meeting and this has been well received by the trade who had been lobbying for this change for some time;
- The team would be introducing the single licensing zone for hackney carriages in Wiltshire with effect from 1 April 2024. Recently published guidance from the Government supports the removal of smaller licensing zones and the creation of a single zone to cover an authority's area. This move would give more opportunities for work and cut the number of 'dead' miles;

- There had been some push back from drivers in the South area because this would mean that they would have to travel for their 6 monthly MOT vehicle checks to be carried out in Devizes. It had been agreed that it was not cost effective to operate the workshop in Salisbury and the other areas had had to travel to Devizes for their MOTs for the last two years. The workshop was available for vehicle inspections currently for 4 days a week, but this could be increased to 5 days a week if there was a demand for that;
- The team continued to proactively enforce the Council's policies in relation to taxi licensing by carrying out inspections at the taxi ranks and it was hoped that the recent staff sickness issues were now behind them so that there would be a visible presence at the ranks. The messages received from drivers included that footfall was down and the trade would not be viable without school contract work and that the night time economy had struggled since Covid; and
- The Government published best practice guidance in November 2023 and this places a lot of emphasis on accessibility to taxi ranks and taxi services and the team would be undertaking a rank review across Wiltshire's major towns to look at the level of accessibility, number of dropped kerbs, and shelters to wait in etc.

It was confirmed that the ranks would be assessed to see if they were in the right places and if alterations would need to be made for the installation of electric charging points – this would be a big challenge for the Council.

The Chairman asked Tom Ince to comment on the recent story in the press about a Chippenham resident being refused access to a taxi with his assistance dog. Tom reported that the Council's policy on this was clear and that it was unlawful for the driver not to carry the passenger and his assistance dog. The driver was unclear as the dog was not marked as an assistance dog and he was unclear on his requirements to carry an unmarked assistance dog. Following an investigation, it was recommended that there be clearer wording included in the Council's policy to explain what is expected of the drivers and that a disabled passenger does not have to prove that their dog is an assistance dog.

In response to a number of general questions from the Committee Members the following was clarified:

- Uber do not currently operate in Wiltshire but always (as well as any other operators) have the option to apply to do so;
- Regarding the review of accessibility of taxi ranks this would be carried out with Town and Parish Councils if they were looking to re-site the ranks as well as working with the Highways Team and they would also involve stakeholder groups and the Area Boards to get their feedback as to what they would want to see although they would not be able to make promises



about what could be achieved and there would also be a cost/benefit analysis; and

- The Council does not mandate the use of card payments and it is up to individuals/operators to decide if they take cards and cash as payment for fares.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee note the Taxi Licensing Team update.**

## 11 **Update from Public Protection Licensing Team**

John Carter (Head of Service – Public Protection) referred to the Public Protection Licensing Team update that was circulated with the agenda and highlighted the following:

- The licensing fees and charges for 2024/25 were confirmed at the Full Council meeting on 20 February 2024 – the fees under the Licensing Act 2023 are statutory and not subject to change unless the Government amend regulations permitting amendments. There were a number of locally set fees which were approved by Members, and these would all come into force from April 2024;
- Apologies to Members that the weekly updates of licensing applications had not been circulated since Linda Holland's departure at the end of November, but these had now been reinstated, being sent out by Technical Support Team;
- In January 2024 a letter had been received from the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire regarding local authorities licensing and planning functions and the differences between the two. The Government intended to further strengthen the Section 182 guidance by providing detailed advice on practical ways that local licensing and planning regimes can collaborate and to provide further support for applicants on the importance of early identification of potential difficulties across the two regimes when making a licensing application. When further details were published this would be shared with the Committee;
- The consultation for Martyn's law officially known as the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill was running from 5 February to 18 March 2024. The bill would impose requirements in relation to certain premises and events to increase their preparedness for, and protection from, a terrorist attack by requiring them to take proportionate steps, depending on the size and nature of the activities that take place at the premises – relevant updates would be provided to the Committee when available;
- One of Wiltshire's two zoos recently received their inspection with a secretary of state appointed inspector and licensing officers in attendance.

Dangerous Wild Animal Licences had been renewed using the conditions that were previously acknowledged by the Committee. Information was awaited on the impact of new legalisation for the Animals (Penalty Notices) Act 2022 and a primate licensing scheme under the Animal Welfare Act which was expected to come into force in 2026 subject to parliamentary processes;

- It became a criminal offence to sell, transfer, exchange, gift or advertise XL Bully dogs from 31 December 2023. The Council had not licensed any breeders for these types of dogs. The Licensing Officers and Dog Wardens were working closely with the Police to monitor the impact of these changes, with the Police leading on the identification of XL Bullies that should now be registered;
- A service wide restructure had been taking place for the Public Protection Service since late November which had resulted in significant management changes to the service including the licensing team which would deliver savings for the current and next financial year. Claire Francis had been appointed to a new post in structure as the Public Protection Manager for Community Protection with responsibility, amongst other things for the licensing team from 5 February. An Assistant Team Leader/Principal had also been recruited last week who had been promoted from the role of Licensing Officer. This would mean that there would be a review of the Officer areas and the Committee would be kept updated on any changes to these; *(A copy of the updated structure chart is attached as Appendix 1 to the Minutes)*
- The Public Protection Service would be moving to a new database from April 2024 called Arcus Global. This had been a long term project and would open up opportunities to speed up how applicants apply for licenses and start to automate some of the licensing processes; and
- The Local Government Association had produced a range of tips and advice sheets for members of their Council's licensing committees which they may find helpful – [Licensing committee: councillor tip sheets hub | Local Government Association](#).

In response to a number of general questions from the Committee Members the following was clarified:

- Suitable licensing training and induction guidance would be considered for the new Councillors following elections due in May 2025 with clarity on the differences between the determination of licensing and planning applications;
- The team would be working towards the ability to look at current and previous licenses online with the new Arcus system, but this would not be in place from April 2024 – there was scope for many developments which

would be added in time with them determining which areas would have the most interest initially; and

- A Councillor briefing note that would also be shared with Town and Parish Councils would be prepared to explain what was needed in terms of licensing for events and members were encouraged to share this with their constituents and to point them in the right direction if they had local knowledge of planned events.

**Resolved:**

**That the Committee note the update on behalf of the Public Protection Licensing Team.**

**Appendix 1 to Minutes - Public Protection Service Structure Chart**

12 **Wiltshire Council's Statement of Licensing Policy**

Claire Francis (Public Protection Manager – Community Protection) referred to the report which sought to inform the committee of the need to review, consult and adopt a new statement of Licensing Policy by November 2024 and to seek the Committee's approval to commence the consultation process. Claire then highlighted the following:

- The Council's current statement of licensing policy came into effect in November 2019 and the Council would need to be in a position to formally adopt a revised policy by 9 November 2024; and
- The first draft of the policy had been prepared with the list of the planned changes detailed at appendix 2 to the report which mostly related to legislation and guidance changes over the last few years. The public consultation would run for 6 weeks, and the policy must be consulted on with specific stakeholders listed in the Home Office guidance which would include licence holders, Police, Fire and Rescue, businesses and residents of the area. The Council would also include city/town/parish councils and area boards. The feedback would be collected via an online survey to make it easier to make comments and to analyse results, there would also be paper copies too. The findings from the consultation would be shared with the Committee at their next meeting in June.

In response to a number of general questions from the Committee Members the following was clarified:

- The Chambers of Commerce could also be sent the information about the consultation; and
- Officers would review paragraph 2.4 of the draft policy (Door supervisors/stewards) in relation to what/when DBS checks would be required.

Frank Cain (Legal Advisor) suggested that the second paragraph in section 1.1 of the draft policy be amended to read as follows to provide clarity:

This statement of licensing policy will be kept under review throughout its period of validity and amended as considered necessary. Any **material** amendments will be subject to consultation.

**Resolved: That the Licensing Committee**

- 1. Instruct Officers to carry out a 6 week consultation process on the proposed Statement of Licensing Policy for 2024-2029.**
- 2. Notes that at the next meeting in June 2024, the Committee will be required to further consider recommending the finalised statement of Licensing Policy to Full Council for adoption.**

**13 Dates of Future Committee Meetings**

Members noted the future meetings of the Licensing Committee, all to commence at 10.30am.

The Chairman reported that the date for the June meeting would be pushed back and Committee would be advised of the new date as soon as possible.

*Post meeting note – Next meeting will be held on 17 June 2024*  
16 September 2024  
2 December 2024.

**14 Urgent Items**

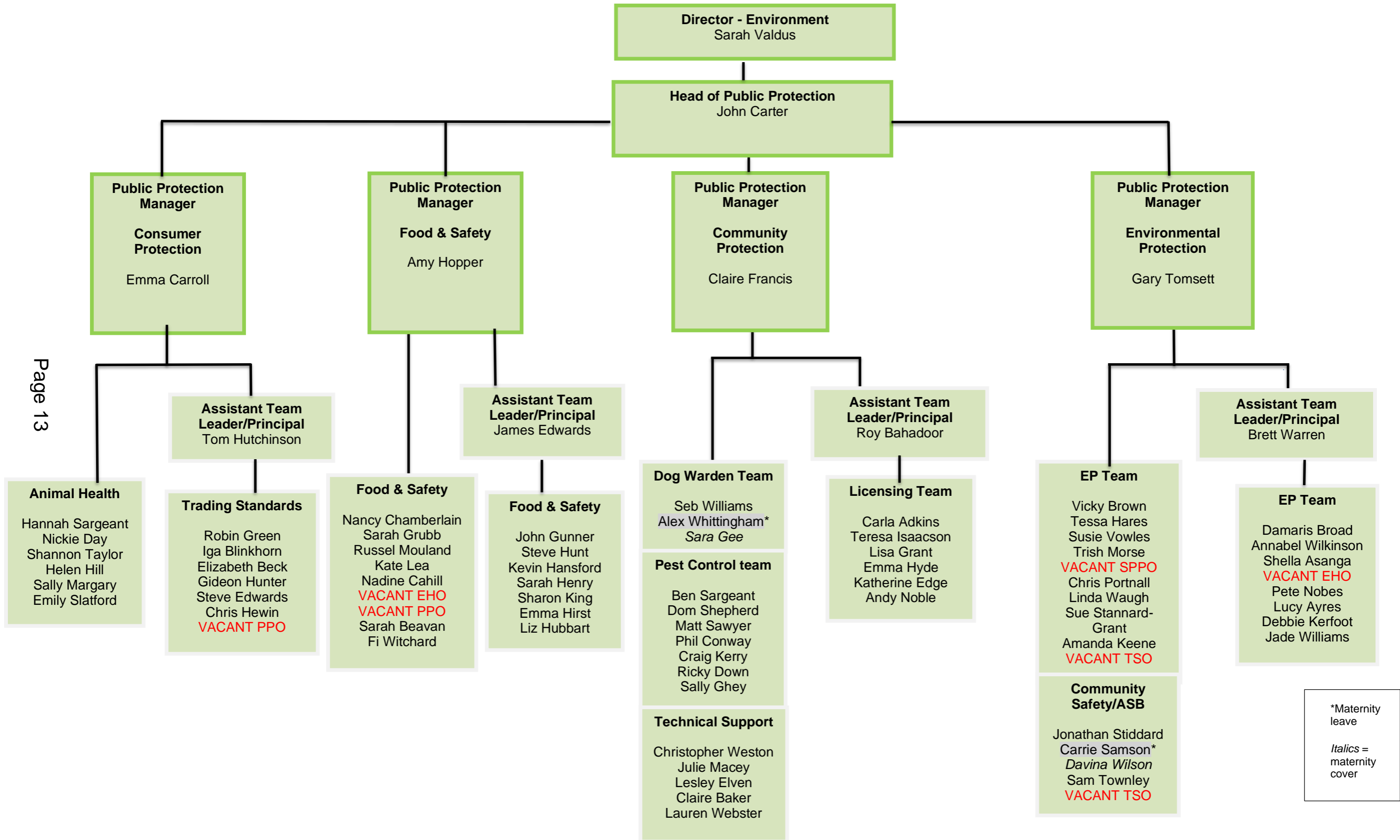
There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 - 11.50 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Lisa Pullin of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713015, e-mail [lisa.pullin@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.pullin@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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# Public Protection Service (February 2024)



\*Maternity leave  
*Italics* = maternity cover

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