



Berkshire West

Independent Advisory Group (IAG)

Providing independent community advice to Thames Valley Police (TVP)





Leadership Messages

Sulayman Munier

- It's hard to believe we've already hit the one-year mark since the Berkshire West Independent Advisory Group (IAG) was formed. Following the shift in Thames Valley Police's structure across Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire, our mission was clear from day one: to make sure the community's voice isn't just heard but listened to.
- At its heart, this group is about trust and transparency. We aren't here to simply "check a box", we're here to be a critical friend to the police, ensuring that local concerns - whether it's anti-social behaviour, drug-related crime, or how policing is done on our streets - are addressed with honesty and local insight.
- Our first priority was building a team that actually looks and feels like the communities we represent. I feel incredibly lucky to work alongside such a diverse and experienced group of people. We bring a massive range of life experiences and professional backgrounds to the table, which has led to some of the most constructive, and refreshingly honest discussions I've been part of.



Leadership Messages

Sulayman Munier

I want to say a huge thank you to our members. Your commitment to understanding the complexities of policing, while never losing sight of what matters to our communities and neighbours, has been vital. Together, we've tackled some heavy topics over the last twelve months, including:

- National and international tensions and their impact on our local streets.
- Serious violence, including knife crime and drug-related issues.
- Police powers, such as the use of Section 60 stop-and-search.
- New technology, like Live Facial Recognition and how it affects our privacy.



Leadership Messages

Sulayman Munier

- I also want to acknowledge the senior leadership at Thames Valley Police. It's one thing to have a meeting; it's another to have officers from the top brass to those on the frontline show up, listen and provide real answers and feedback. Their willingness to be transparent about new strategies and sensitive operations has been a huge step in building the confidence our community deserves.
- Thank you for your continued support as we work to make Berkshire West a safer, more cohesive place for everyone.



A message from Chief Superintendent Felicity Parker

I'd like to express my appreciation to the Berkshire West IAG for their ongoing dedication and the thoughtful challenge they bring to our work. The IAG is an incredibly important forum, offering perspectives that help us enhance our services, address community issues, and strengthen trust and confidence across Berkshire West. Their contributions have shaped our priorities and decision-making and continue to provide a crucial link in understanding the views and experiences of our communities.

A member of the IAG – Sarah Greenall was recognised in a Berkshire West Commendation Ceremony for her ongoing commitment to supporting local communities and work as a Volunteer for over 12 years. A huge congratulations from the IAG.





About the Berkshire West Independent Advisory Group

The Berkshire West Independent Advisory Group (BW-IAG) has a membership of individuals who act as a conduit to maintain an effective and continuous engagement between local communities and the Thames Valley Police. They volunteer their time, knowledge and skills to support Thames Valley Police by sharing independent community insight, providing honest feedback and helping the police identify areas where improvements or clearer explanations are needed. Members bring a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, cultures and perspectives and act as a “critical friend,” helping the police understand how decisions, actions and policies may impact communities differently. Furthermore, Members receives regular briefings and updates on TVP’s Policy and operational initiatives which they disseminate to their local communities. The IAG Chair can escalate key messages from the IAG to the Chairpersons forum and with TVP senior leadership via TVP’s Trust & Confidence governance structures.



Meetings & membership

- Four meetings during 2025/26
- Average attendance: 14 members
- TVP representation: Average 3 per meeting
- Membership as of 31st March 2026 = 27
- The first IAG met at the newly opened Reading Police Station at Atlantic House, providing a new and exciting launch
- BW-IAG is privileged to have good membership from all three local districts in Berkshire West region - Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire and a well-balanced representation of male and female, different age groups from young to senior citizens and people from variety of ethnic, cultural and professional backgrounds. The majority have specific responsibilities or represent a strand of representation such as the disabled or rural community.





What we focused on



Review of Section 60 authorisation

- **11th February 2026:** Updates on Youth IAG, refugee community concerns and hate crime trends, Facial recognition and IAG WhatsApp group.
- **26th November 2025:** Discussions on the Race Action Plan, trust and confidence strategies, and the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).
- **3rd September 2025:** Discussions on Palestine Action Protests, community impact, and policing of Freshers' Week at Reading University.
- **14th May 2025:** Review of IAG member expectations and role clarity, community tension updates, and rural community discussions.



Local Command Unit Development and Policing Model

- Review of the first year of the new Berkshire West Local Command Unit
- Focusing on the integration of three local police areas into the LCU, particularly the balance between serving our Urban and Rural communities
- Positive news about increased Government funding being used to increase number of officers and their deployment in neighbourhood and retail areas





Policing and Community Engagement

- IAG members have deep local connection and use IAG information as part of their interaction with local communities, using their community contacts, Faith platforms, social media and TVP invited to various events.
- BW-IAG new WhatsApp group for members to identify and discuss local issues in different areas/ communities and to receive regular updates on critical developments from TVP which could be shared with the wider communities.
- Support provided to staff and residents of Asylum Hotel in Wokingham.
- Ongoing support for international students at Reading University and briefing them on the support, available advice and reporting routes.
- Facial Recognition Technology and its accuracy issues and potential bias toward certain minority groups.





Stop & Search Disproportionality

- Regular review of disproportionality affecting Black/other minority communities.
- Commitment from Senior TVP leadership to improved recording, narrative reporting and scrutiny.
- Improved scrutiny of Section 60 decision-making, allowing officers to conduct searches without individual reasonable suspicion. Section 60 remains an exceptional measure used only when there is a clear risk of violence. Any new authorisation is shared with IAG chair at the earliest opportunity to ensure transparency and public reassurance





Use of Policing Powers to Support Rural Communities

- Providing updates and policing response to hare coursing, targeted patrolling and operations to identify and prosecute offenders.
- The support from Rural Crime Task Force and supported by Neighbourhood teams and specialised PCSOs provides dedicated assistance to support farming and isolated communities
- Commitment from police to support the farming community – the use of WhatsApp groups, 4x4 intelligence and Prevention to enhance visibility and response.
- Rural crime trends remain a standing item on the IAG agenda, ensuring that community concerns are consistently reviewed and acted upon.
- IAG interest in under-reporting and continuity across the year.





What we heard from the Community





Key Themes

- Welcomed the TVP new Trust and Confidence strategy.
- Positive feedback about significant reduction in serious crimes such as murder, drug and knife crime and S 60 use.
- Ongoing concerns about young people being perpetrator and victims of knife crime and drug use in and its impact on families and wider society
- Police Officers are engaged with local councillors, community and faith leaders at various levels.
- Positive comments have been made to several members on increased police officer visibility through expanded neighbourhood teams.
- Travellers' community in West Berkshire area – some concern around a new site being opened. Assured community engagement continuing.



Fear of extremism and hate crime

- Anxiety across communities that overseas tensions could spill over locally.
- Fear of crime, protests and threat to community cohesion driven by national and social media narratives and recent surge in flag displays across the UK.
- National and international events creating a rise in hate crime including anti-migrant/asylum seeker attacks and propaganda causing community tensions including the focus on local responses to asylum seeker hotels.
- Reassurance provided about preparedness, monitoring and steps to counter misinformation.
- The IAG heavily supports and encourages members to challenge the hate narrative and encourage communities to report all hate crime, even with national debate around non crime hate incidents.
- The IAG recognised the increase in hate crime locally and acknowledged planned scrutiny of hate crime across Newbury, Reading and Wokingham.



Feedback to Trust & Confidence Board & Responses

- Emphasis on speed and clarity of police communications during sensitive incidents.
- Facial Recognition - Members welcomed a briefing on retrospective and live facial recognition and emphasised the importance of strong governance, transparency and clear public communication; confirming their role as independent reviewers rather than endorsers of the technology.
- Concern around the future of the Race Action Plan and the new Trust and Confidence Boards ability to reach Ethnic minorities, assured this will be addressed.



Key Messages for the Community

- Significant reduction in the use of s60 throughout Berkshire West.
- New government funding has provided uplift in neighbourhood policing. Dedicated unit focused on Retail Crime and support for retail staff.
- Reassurance for communities that TVP is continuously monitoring the situation concerning national and international events and are prioritizing visibility and reassurance for local communities.
- People asked to support accurate narratives and challenge misinformation.
- Encourage everyone to report all incidents to the Police using various channels.





Reflections on how the panel is working

What worked well:

Member Paul Adkins offered to give presentation on how to engage with your communities and would be interested in obtaining input from members (MECC training shared).

What we will improve:

Looking ahead, the IAG will focus on deepening our roots with community and faith groups, improving how hate incidents are reported to ensure everyone feels safe, demystifying police data and supporting neighbourhood policing that feels visible and connected. We have a desire for more accessible engagement opportunities (e.g. pop ups, community-based contact rather than formal settings) and have proposed a review of the locations, accessibility and frequency of 'Have your say' meetings and wider faith-based outreach.



Areas of Future Focus

IAG Cycle	Proposed Areas of Focus
May 2026	TVP Trust & Confidence Strategy delivery plans and launch of LCU T&C Board
July 2026	Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan; Neighbourhood priority setting and progress
Sept 2026	Neighbourhood Engagement Plan; update on Trust & Confidence sentiment survey
Dec 2026	ASB Action plan; T&C Strategy delivery updates



How to get involved

For any enquiries relating to our Independent Advisory Group please contact:
scrutiny@thamesvalley.police.uk.

We are committed to supporting members' learning and development through training and informal learning sessions and seek your valuable input to help shape and improve what and how services are delivered to our communities.

Next meetings planned:

- 13th May,
- 15th July,
- 30th September and
- 9th December