

**Worcestershire
Regulatory Services
Board (previously
Joint Committee)**

Thursday, 30th September, 2021

4.30 pm

Bromsgrove District Council,
Parkside, Market Street,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire,
B61 8ADA

AGENDA

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS**MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD****THURSDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021****AT 4.30 P.M.****PARKSIDE, MARKET STREET, BROMSGROVE, WORCESTERSHIRE, B61 8DA**

MEMBERS: Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor H. J. Jones
Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor A. D. Kent
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor J. Raine
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor T. Wells - Chairman
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor A. Fry
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor N. Nazir
Worcester City Council: Councillor J. Carver - Vice-Chairman
Worcester City Council: Councillor R. Udall
Wychavon District Council: Councillor D. Morris
Wychavon District Council: Councillor E. Stokes
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor P. Dyke
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor N. Martin

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 24th June 2021 (Pages 1 - 10)
4. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Revenue Monitoring April - June 2021 (Pages 11 - 18)
5. Activity & Performance Data - Quarter 1, 2021/2022 (Pages 19 - 56)
6. Information Report - WRS District Taxi Fees (Pages 57 - 62)
7. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

22nd September 2021

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Pauline Ross
Democratic Services Officer

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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Bromsgrove District Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant social distancing arrangements for holding face-to-face meetings at a local authority.

Please note that this is a public meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON

In advance of the Board meeting, Members are encouraged to consider taking a lateral flow test, which can be obtained for free from the NHS website. Should the test be positive for Covid-19 then the Member should not attend the meeting, should provide their apologies to the Democratic Services Officer and should self-isolate in accordance with national rules.

Members and officers are strongly encouraged to wear face masks during the meeting, unless exempt. Face masks should only be removed temporarily if the Councillor/ officer requires a sip of water and should be reapplied as soon as possible. Refreshments will not be provided by the venue, therefore Members and officers are encouraged to bring your own supply of water.

Hand sanitiser will be provided.

The meeting venue will be fully ventilated and Members and officers may need to consider wearing appropriate clothing in order to remain comfortable during proceedings.

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

Members of the public will still be able to access the meeting in person if they wish to do so. However, due to social distancing requirements to ensure the safety of participants during the Covid-19 pandemic there will be limited capacity and members of the public will be allowed access on a first come, first served basis. Members of the public in attendance are strongly encouraged to wear face-masks, to use the hand sanitiser that will be provided and will be required to sit in a socially distanced manner at the meeting. It should be noted that members of the public who choose to attend in person do so at their own risk.

In line with Government guidelines, any member of the public who has received a positive result in a Covid-19 test on the day of a meeting should not attend in person and should self-isolate in accordance with the national rules.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when the Board might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded.

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS**MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD****THURSDAY, 24TH JUNE 2021, AT 4.30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones, J. Raine, T. Wells, A. Fry, N. Nazir, J. Carver, S. Cronin (substituting for Councillor R. Udall), E. Stokes, A. Coleman (substituting for Councillor P. Dyke) and N. Martin

Officers: Mr. J. Howse, Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr. R. Keyte, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr M. Cox and Mrs. P. Ross

Partner Officers (via Microsoft Teams) – Mr. L. Griffiths, Worcester City Council, Mr. P. Merrick, Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council and Mr. M. Parker, Wyre Forest District Council

1/21

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor T. Wells, Malvern Hills District Council be elected Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

The Chairman opened the meeting by acknowledging that this was probably the first meeting that some Members may have attended in person in over 12 months. Members were advised that arrangements had been made to ensure that the meeting was held in accordance with social distancing requirements and Government guidance in respect of holding meetings at a physical location.

The Chairman suggested that Members and officers briefly introduced themselves.

2/21

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor J. Carver, Worcester City Council be elected Vice-Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

3/21

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

The following apologies for absence were received: -

Councillor A. D. Kent, Bromsgrove District Council, Councillor R. Udall, Worcester City Council, Councillor S. Cronin was in attendance as the substitute Member, Councillor D. Morris, Wychavon District Council and Councillor P. Dyke, Wyre Forest District Council, with Councillor A. Coleman in attendance as the substitute Member.

4/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5/21 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 11th February 2021, were submitted.

RESOLVED that minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 11th February 2021, be approved as a correct record.

6/21 **CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD 2020-2021 - REVIEW REPORT**

The Head of Regulatory Services informed Members that under the new legal agreement that came into effect on 1st April 2016, it was envisaged that the new operating arrangements for the partners would be reviewed at the end of 12 months to ensure that the arrangement was working. Officers and Members of the Board had felt that it was appropriate that this review was presented by the Chairman of the Board who oversaw this period.

In the absence of the previous Chairman, the newly elected Chairman briefly introduced the previous Chairman's report, which provided an overview of the highlights which the Board covered from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

The Chairman expressed his sincere thanks to Councillor H. Dyke, Wyre Forest District Council in her role as Chairman of the Board during 2020/2021.

RESOLVED that Members note the report.

7/21 **INFORMATION REPORT - FOOD SAFETY RECOVERY PLAN JUNE 2021**

Members received an Information Report on the Food Safety Recovery Plan.

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) introduced the report and in doing so informed the Board that, the six district councils were responsible for delivering official food safety controls and related activities in most food establishments in Worcestershire.

These control activities included inspections, audits, surveillance, sampling and other types of interventions such as projects and questionnaires.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, local authorities were expected to undertake all official controls and related activities prescribed in specific legislation and those contained within specific Food Standards Agency (FSA) guidance and Code of Practice.

At the beginning of the pandemic response the FSA suspended the routine food hygiene intervention programme in recognition of the challenges local regulatory services faced in protecting our communities from Covid-19. The suspension also reflected the changing business landscape, with many food businesses closing or changing operations due to the Covid control regime. WRS responded by continuing to target limited resources at the highest risk establishments while deferring planned interventions. This approach was extended by the FSA nationally until the end of June 2021.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendices A and B which detailed the two phases of the plan which would run from 1st July 2021 until April 2023 and beyond.

The plan focused on re-starting the regulatory delivery system in line with the Food Law Codes of Practice for the highest risk establishments while providing greater flexibility for lower risk establishments.

Members' attention was further drawn to the recovery roadmap detailed on page 20 of the main agenda report.

The Technical Manager, WRS stated that in common with all local authorities, the backlog of interventions across Worcestershire was very challenging in terms of number, but he would assure Members that throughout the pandemic officers had continued to address poor performing businesses, who would be starting from a very high base of 98% broadly compliant operations.

Officers would restart the planned interventions in as risk-based manner, focussing resources where they added the greatest value in providing safeguards for consumers and securing compliance. The FSA would closely monitor that food safety programmes were reinstated and brought up to date within the relevant timescales.

The service had requested an additional £25,000 from the 2020/2021 underspend to be carried forward in order to supplement the funding from Worcestershire County Council to support Phase 1 of the recovery plan. Food competent agency Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) were in short supply and £25,000 would buy around 17 weeks of competent officer time.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Regulatory Services informed the Board that, so that partners did not face any shocks, funding from Worcestershire County Council that pays for the EHOs embedded within the local outbreak response team would be used to pay for some additional capacity, but that may not cover all costs and the service needed to look at the extended period, so £25,000 was a reasonable contribution at this stage.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions with regard to new businesses and informed the Board that, new businesses had had a paper exercise to review their potential risk and non-compliance for a food safety rating, with virtual video inspections, as an initial approach, in order for new businesses to trade. These would be followed up with a proportion receiving a physical intervention during the next few months to test the veracity of the virtual approach. The vast majority had complied really well and officers were not anticipating any huge difficulties.

In response to some concerns raised by Members with regards to staff welfare during the pandemic and the increase in workload, the Head of Regulatory Services referred to the Staff Survey, which was detailed at Agenda Item 8, the WRS Annual Report 2020/2021.

The Head of Regulatory Services stated that a staff survey was carried out annually. 50 out of 68 staff had responded to the survey. Senior officers had, during the pandemic, communicated with staff regularly and had been very concerned to check staff welfare during the pandemic.

RESOLVED that the Information Report – Food Safety Recovery Plan, be noted and that Members use the contents of the information report provided in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

8/21

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

The Board considered a report which detailed the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Annual Report 2020/2021. The report covered the period from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

The Head of Regulatory Services informed the Board that under the Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement (SLA) the Board was required to receive the annual report at its annual meeting.

The Head of Regulatory Services highlighted that the global Covid-19 pandemic had required a significant resource input from WRS. This had meant that some areas of work were more limited during 2020/2021 and the Food Standards Agency had actually suspended the routine food hygiene programme, so figures for these premises were more limited this year and could not be compared to previous years.

In spite of this, performance had remained good. Food business compliance rates remained high. Taxi licence renewals had been dealt with in a reasonable time in the main. The taxi fleet appeared to be generally in good order, although with council and other garages being closed for a significant period of time and with some drivers/operators taking vehicles off the road for a period of time, it was impossible to compare this year with previous years.

Page 26 of the main agenda report detailed the main issues for complainants related to people.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints had been in place long enough now to establish good base-lines.

The Annual Report also gave a summary of the financial position, the key achievements and covered issues relating to human resources. There were also sections on risk management and equalities.

In response to Members questions with regard to compliments, the Head of Regulatory Services informed the Board that these related to officers and how they had handled people, issues and had supported businesses and advice offered. Officers first thoughts were 'How can I help you to comply / trade well'. Which was good for customers and businesses. Officers took a positive approach but would also use their legal powers where necessary. Interventions were seen as helpful. The quality of officers carrying out the work really drove those compliments.

In response to further questions, the Technical Services Manager, WRS, informed the Board that, the number of straying dogs was significantly down last year, which was likely due to the number of people working from home or on furlough and therefore around more for their pets. Plus, there were more people around who had helped reunite owners with their stray dogs.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Regulatory Services for the detailed Annual Report.

RESOLVED: that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2020/2021, be noted; and

- (a) that a copy of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2020/2021 be forwarded to the Chief Executive, Managing Director and Members of the six partner authorities.

9/21

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE
MONITORING APRIL - MARCH 2021 AND ANNUAL RETURN 2021/2022**

The Executive Director of Resources, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on page 73 of the main agenda report.

The Executive Director of Resources confirmed that the report covered the period April 2020 to March 2021 and also included the Annual Return 2021/2022.

The detailed revenue report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. This showed a final outturn refund of £148k, which represented 4.6% of the actual budget and was mainly due to:-

- A significant underspend on the stray dog contracts due to the service dealing with fewer straying incidents. Which was likely to be related to people working from home due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A number of aspects of planned expenditure also fell foul of the Covid-19 pandemic, e.g. purchase replacement vans.
- The deferment of some expenditure in licensing to help the trade manage financially during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Any grant funded expenditure was shown separate to the core service costs as this was not funded by the participating Councils.

As requested by the Board, Appendix 1 to the report, provided detailed explanations relating to the variances.

It was proposed that the £148k be allocated as follows:-

- I. To transfer to WRS Reserves:
 - £30k to purchase a stray dog van
 - £15k for DBS checks
 - £25k for Food Inspections
- II. The remaining £78k, be refunded back to partners as below:-

Bromsgrove District Council	£11,323
Malvern Hills District Council	£9,950
Redditch Borough Council	£13,636
Worcester City Council	£12,868
Wychavon District Council	£18,075
Wyre Forest District Council	£11,758

The refund to partners had taken into account the adjustments for the overspend on Pest Control and all other charges to partners.

All partners were advised of all recharges and refunds for completion of their statement of accounts.

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the WRS – Profit & Loss Report 2020/2021 and the reasons for variances.

The Executive Director of Resources explained that Appendices 2 and 3 were presented in a different way, they were now being presented on a statutory accounting basis.

The Executive Director of Resources responded to questions from Members and clarified that the S151 officer for the partnership had been made aware of the refunds to partners and was happy with those refunds.

RESOLVED that

- a) the final financial position for the period April 2020 to March 2021, be noted;
- b) that the transfers to WRS Reserves of £30k to purchase a dog warden van, £15k for DBS checks and £25k for Food Inspections, be approved; and
- c) the refund of £78k to the participating Councils, be approved as follows:-

Council	Refund from 2020/2021 £'000
Bromsgrove District Council	11
Malvern Hills District Council	10
Redditch Borough Council	14
Worcester City Council	13
Wychavon District Council	18
Wyre Forest District Council	12
Total	78

10/21

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTERS 1 TO 4, 2020/2021

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 for 2020/2021; and in doing so highlighted that, the final quarter of 2020/2021 featured a third lockdown, based on the same legal framework as the one for November, so not akin to lockdown 1 at the beginning of the financial year.

ACTIVITY DATA

As highlighted by the Head of Regulatory Services, WRS, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) had suspended the Food Hygiene inspection programme at the beginning of lockdown in March and this had continued throughout the year. The service was now planning to follow the FSA's roadmap back to normal food controls.

Even with the increase in reported issues during quarters 3 and 4, 2020/2021, it was relatively quiet for new Health and Safety interventions.

Although quarter 4 showed an increase in dog related complaints. overall, it was a quiet year for this work and the downward trend in stray dog numbers had continued.

The quarter 4 lockdown had led to a plateauing of license applications.

Following the drop in quarter 3, quarter 4 saw an increase in numbers of nuisance complaints despite the cold weather. A similar pattern in domestic nuisance reporting was seen during lockdown, so it was likely that people had experienced more issues at home than they would normally, as they would be at work. Approximately 43% of cases related to domestic noise, whilst 21% related to smoke nuisance.

COVID RELATED ACTIVITIES

Covid related enforcement activities continued through the quarter. EHO's embedded within the Local Outbreak Response Team had remained busy tackling business outbreaks and undertaking detailed backwards contact tracing exercises in areas with high case numbers.

PERFORMANCE

The Licensing and Support Services Manager explained that performance had been covered by the Head of Regulatory Services when he presented the WRS Annual Report 2020/2021 to Members of the Board, however, she was happy to answer any questions.

The Chairman expressed his thanks the Technical Services Manager, WRS, for the weekly Covid updates that he provided to Members of the Board, it was very informative and greatly appreciated.

Members took the opportunity to raise questions with regard to the varying taxi tariffs across the six districts. The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, commented that each district had a different fee structure.

It was agreed that the Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, would provide an Information Report on each district's taxi tariffs, licensing fee structure and the number of licenses held, to the next meeting of the Board.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank the Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 for 2020/2021, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

9

The meeting closed at 5.44 p.m.

Chairman

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WRS Board
30th September 2021

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – June 2021

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – June 2021
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-22 in relation to Bereavements

Council	Apr–June 21 Actual for Bereavements £000
Malvern Hills District Council	3
Worcester City Council	2
Bromsgrove District Council	2
Total	7

- 1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-22 in relation to three additional Technical Officers

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2021/22 Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2021/22 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2021/22 Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6	1	

Malvern Hills District Council	4	5	
Worcester City Council	5	2	30
Bromsgrove District Council	5	6	
Wychavon District Council	7	11	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	6	
Total	32	31	30

Contribution to Priorities

The robust financial management arrangements ensure the priorities of the service can be delivered effectively.

Introduction/Summary

This report presents the financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April – June 2021.

Background

The financial monitoring reports are presented to this meeting on a quarterly basis.

Report

The following reports are included for Board's Attention:

- Revenue Monitoring - April – June 21 – Appendix 1
- Income Breakdown - April – June 21 – Appendix 2

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1.. This shows a projected outturn 2021/22 of £3k refund to partners. It is appreciated this is an estimation to the year end based on following assumptions:-

- A number of employees are working on grant funded covid related work. This in incurring agency staff costs due to backfilling of these employees.
- If April to June 21 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be no overspend on this service. WRS officers will continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of recharges for 2021/22 as soon as possible.
- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – June 21 to be funded by partners. These costs are charged on an

as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge it is not possible to project a final outturn figure:-

Malvern Hills District Council	£3k
Worcester City Council	£2k
Bromsgrove District Council	£2k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – June 21
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.

Financial Implications

None other than those stated in the report

Sustainability

None as a direct result of this report

Contact Points

James Howse – james.howse@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Background Papers

Detailed financial business case

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WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2021/22

Total WRS June 21 / Period 3 - 21/22

Appendix 1

	Revised Full Year Budget 21-22	Revised Budget - Committed Apr - June 21	Expenditure Apr - June 21	Variance	Projected outturn	Projected Outturn Variance	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Direct Expenditure							
Employees							
Salary	2,968	735	659	-76	2,732	-236	Savings due to employees working on grant funded covid related work.
Agency Staff	0	0	62	62	237	237	Backfilling for employees working on LORT
Employee Insurance	25	6	6	0	25	0	
Sub-Total - Employees	2,993	741	727	-14	2,994	1	
Premises							
Rent / Hire of Premise	54	14	13	-1	54	0	
Cleaning	1	0	0	-0	1	0	
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sub-Total - Premises	55	14	13	-1	55	0	
Transport							
Vehicle Hire	13	3	2	-1	13	0	
Vehicle Fuel	8	2	1	-1	8	-1	
Road Fund Tax	1	0	0	-0	1	0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	1	1	0	5	0	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	1	0	-1	3	0	
Car Allowances	75	19	9	-9	72	-3	
Sub-Total - Transport	104	26	14	-12	101	-3	
Supplies and Services							
Furniture & Equipment	32	8	5	-3	32	1	
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	0	0	-0	2	-0	
Printing & Photocopying	17	4	5	1	17	0	
Postage	11	3	9	6	13	2	
ICT	40	10	17	7	53	13	
Telephones	21	5	4	-1	21	-0	
Training & Seminars	23	6	0	-6	23	0	
Insurance	20	5	5	0	20	0	
Third Party Payments	144	36	36	-0	144	0	£100k BDC hosting / £44k WFDC ICT hosting.
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	309	77	81	4	324	15	
Contractors							
Dog Warden	140	35	10	-25	110	-30	Due to reduction in dogs straying, OOH dog warden has been taken in house.
Pest Control	52	13	26	13	57	5	
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	65	16	22	5	67	2	
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	0	-1	3	0	
Water Safety	5	1	0	-1	5	-1	
Food Safety	1	0	0	-0	1	0	
Environmental Protection	12	3	11	9	22	10	Bereavement / Works in Default to be charged to relevant partners, offset in Income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	3	6	3	14	1	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	1	0	-1	5	-1	
Sub-Total	295	74	76	2	282	-13	
Income							
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-498	-117	-107	10	-502	-4	See Append 2
Sub-Total	-498	-117	-107	10	-502	-4	
Overall Total	3,257	814	804	-10	3,254	-3	

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2021/22

Appendix 2

Income from Partners	April to June 21
	£
Budget	814,313
Bereavement / Public Burials	6,748
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	0
Employee for Animal Activity - Apr - June 21	8,589
Employee for Income Generation - Apr - June 21	7,872
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Apr - June 21 - Worcs City	3,723
Reimbursement of costs - Zety Lted - Wyre Forest	4,697
	<u><u>845,942</u></u>
Grant Income	
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	0
	<u><u>0</u></u>
Other Income	
Stray Dog Income	8,925
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal & Admin Support	13,300
Planning Support Work	30,116
Contaminated Land Work	4,007
PPC Work	186
Primary Authority work	2,764
Screening / Compliance Review / Nox Tubes	186
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	1,118
Pest Control	1,177
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	9,735
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	338
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	3,614
	<u><u>75,466</u></u>
Total Income Apr - June 21	<u><u>921,408</u></u>
2021/22 Base Budget from Partners	-814,313
Total Income Excluding Budget	107,095

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WRS Board

Date: 30th September 2021

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 1 2021/22

Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the activity data in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.

Background

The detail of the report focuses on the first quarter of 2021/22 but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Contribution to Priorities

Board members have asked the service to provide data on activity levels to help reassure local members that WRS continues to address a range of issues in each partner area and more broadly across the county.

Report

Activity Data

The first quarter of 2021/22 saw the first real signs of stepping out of the Covid 19 control regime. March had seen the first very small steps with minor relaxations, but April onwards would see major changes impacting on both personal freedoms and the reduction of controls on business activities.

In April, we saw the re-opening of all retail premises and hospitality businesses were allowed to use their outside spaces to serve customers. This created the first real opportunity for these businesses to have customers on the premises for anything other than collection. A range of mainly outdoor attractions re-opened along with a number of lower risk services. May saw pubs having people back inside and a range of other indoor entertainment businesses like cinemas re-opening. However, all of the social distancing requirements remained in place, meaning that capacities continued to be limited. We were working towards 21st of June, when all of the remaining measures, including social distancing, would be relaxed if possible. As we now know, the final step to unlocking ended up being delayed as a precaution against rising case numbers, but this was just a slowing of progress to the point where the final controls we were



operating with were lifted.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) suspended the 'Food Hygiene inspection' programme at the beginning of lockdown in March 2020 and this continued throughout 2020/21 and into 2021/22. The service continued to follow as well as it could what the FSA, expected with a range of activities focused on the highest risk businesses and new entrants. In some cases, this was done alongside Covid control visits. Food complaints and enquiries was slightly up on Q4 last year, but only marginally. Numbers of interventions for the period were significantly up on the same period last year and approaching the year prior. This represents the beginnings of more engagement back with food businesses as we began to move out of the control regime. Of those 318 interventions, only 16 resulted in a score below 3 on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (the level required for a business to be deemed compliant,) and the majority of these were in the hospitality trades.

Q3 and 4 of 2020/21 saw an increase in accident reports under the Health and Safety at Work Act but Q1 this year saw this fall back to just below the trend line. This fall was, however, off-set by an increase in complaints and enquiries. This quarter also saw the courts passing sentence on the two high profile cases that featured in the recent Members Newsletter.

Numbers of strays reported in Q1 was up significantly on the previous quarter but the animals in question were mainly contained and easy to collect. The growth in dog ownership during the pandemic period has led to concerns of an increase in abandonment following returns to work and the unwinding of furlough should this lead to people losing their jobs. There is little positive evidence for this at this stage. Numbers of dog related queries remained on trend.

The number of licensing cases reported to WRS during Q1 represents an increase of 13% compared to the final quarter of last year. This increase is largely due to a rise in the volume of applications and registrations, with the volume of Temporary Event notices continuing to grow as pubs and other bodies looked to hold events as the control regime lessened. Approximately 57% of cases recorded were applications; with 29% relating to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles, and 17% relating to temporary events.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 121 complaints received during Q1, 28% related to taxis, 25% related to alcohol and entertainment and 16% related to animals.

The number of planning enquiries recorded by WRS during quarter one is an increase of 30% compared to the final quarter of last year. In keeping with previous quarters however, the nature of enquiries has remained relatively consistent. Approximately 92% were consultations, with Planning colleagues requiring support and some 50% of those related to contaminated land issues. A fifth of planning enquiries remain ones that are completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities. This shows that at least one of our income streams has remained positive during



the period.

The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during Q1 represents an increase of 19% compared to the final quarter of last year; but is consistent with seasonal variations encountered in previous years. Nuisance reports always increase as the weather improves. Approximately 41% of cases recorded related to domestic noise, whilst 13% related to smoke nuisance. Garden bonfires are commonplace in the early Spring as gardeners prepare for the year ahead and these are not always looked upon favourably by neighbours. Guidance on garden bonfires is signposted on the WRS website.

Noise from commercial premises (such as hospitality premises) was another prominent case type. This is likely to be partly down to the public having acclimatised to a somewhat quieter environment during the pandemic control period and the return of pubs and the night-time economy, particularly live music, has not been greeted favourably in all quarters.

Covid related activities

Covid related enforcement activities continued through the quarter. EHOs embedded within the Local Outbreak Response Team remained busy tackling business outbreaks and undertaking detailed backwards contact tracing exercises in areas with high case numbers. Covid related enforcement activities continued with officers regularly undertaking pro-active out of hours work in evenings and at weekends to check that the provisions of the various stages of the re-opening were being met by businesses. There was much good practice seen as most businesses tried to meet the requirements and officers were pleased to advise on making things work better. There was some evidence of people pushing the numbers who they could seat but this was understandable given where they had been for the previous 12 months.

Covid Advisors were out daily in most parts of the county but focusing on those areas where case numbers were highest. Board members continued to be included in the weekly email update on what was found and how this new team was dealing with the public, reminding them of what to do. Again, on average, over 500 businesses and over 1000 members of the public have been spoken to each week by the team.

Lost to follow-up, where we deal with the contact tracing of those who the national system had missed, was operating throughout the period, with demand reflecting the case levels in the county. Officers continued to work closely with district colleagues in a number of the Councils to door-knock those who did not reply to our local telephone calls and as local teams moved back onto their business as usual activities the team took over from those colleagues so work could continue. Fortunately, numbers reported to the police for not self-isolating remained relatively small throughout.



Performance

As always, reporting against the suite of indicators is more limited for the first quarter. The non-business customer measure at 71.3%, slightly down on the 74% last year and business customers is at 96.8%, still good but below last year. There were signs of weariness with the Covid rules during this quarter and an increase in expectation as re-opening commenced which could easily account for these small reductions. Bucking that trend slightly, the proportion of people who felt better equipped to address issues themselves in the future is marginally up at 69% from 68.2%. Overall, these figures suggest a maintenance of standards.

We report overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant businesses at this point in the year, without the district breakdown. 98.8% of businesses were graded 3 star to 5 star on the hygiene rating scheme but this is again based on a small sample as the Food Standards Agency roadmap back to normal food controls does not commence with formal visits until September.

Compliments outnumber complaints by around 4:1 (161:42) very similar to last year.

Staff sickness is at 0.87 days per FTE, which is above last year's figure for this period of 0.61 but very similar to the 0.85 days per FTE from the same period in 2019. It has to be remembered that many controls remained in place during quarter 1 in 2020 so, as we said at the time, this figure has to be considered exceptional. Hopefully this year's figure is another sign of us returning to more normal work and behaviour patterns. This figure again includes additional temporary staff taken on for pandemic response.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Appendix A: Activity Report (separate document)
 Appendix B: Performance indicators Table



Appendix B: Performance indicator table

Table of PIs 2020/21

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	71.3			
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	96.8			
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.8			
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.2			
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA		NA	
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide	6-monthly	NA		NA	
7 % of service	Quarterly	69			



	requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	NB: fig is cumulative				
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/ 12			
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.87			
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA		NA	
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA		NA	
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA		NA	
14	Cost of regulatory services per	Annually	NA	NA	NA	



head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)					
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Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2021-22



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Malvern
Hills
District
Council
www.malvern hills.gov.uk



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
making
a
difference
www.redditchbc.gov.uk



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Wyre Forest
District Council

Foreword

Welcome to the first activity data report for 2020/21.

I appreciate this always seems to come a little late as you will be reading this towards the end of quarter 2 but that is one of the unfortunate outcomes of delivering our meeting schedule in the way the legal agreement requires. So much has happened in the past 6 months and the first quarter saw the first real signs of stepping out of the covid control regime. March had seen the first very small steps with minor relaxations but April onwards would see major changes impacting on both personal freedoms and the reduction of controls on business activities.

April saw the re-opening of all retail premises and hospitality businesses were allowed to use their outside spaces to serve customers. A range of mainly outdoor attractions re-opened along with a number of lower risk services. May saw pubs having people back inside and a range of other indoor entertainment businesses like cinemas re-opening. However, all of the social distancing requirements remained in place, meaning that capacities continued to be limited. We were working towards 21st of June, when all of the remaining measures, including social distancing, would be relaxed if possible. As we now know, the final step to unlocking ended up being delayed as a precaution against rising case numbers, but this was just a slowing of progress to the point where the final controls we were operating with were lifted.

This has not meant businesses can now ignore covid 19. They still have to account for it in their Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 risk assessments, and more information of our findings will come in the Quarter 2 version of this report. But during Quarter 1, all of our covid work remained on-going, so enforcement of business restrictions and controls, the Covid Advisors remained out and about dealing with a range of issues and our embedded EHOs in the Local Outbreak Response team continued to deal with outbreaks in businesses and similar situations. We also continued to deliver the lost to follow-up work, looking at those who were positive cases who would not interact with NHS Test and Trace. Once again officers had to grapple with a changing control regime, with limited notice on announcements of whether the roadmap indicators had been met for the move to the next stage. Yet again, our flexibility allowed us to address these changes and support businesses in achieving the necessary transitions.

Business as usual work also had to be dealt with. Food complaints and enquiries went up during the period as they did for health and safety, but accident reports fell slightly. Stray dog numbers were up too. Licensing complaints and enquiries were comparable with previous quarters but applications began to climb as businesses looked to temporary events to help bring in additional income after months of limited activity. Nuisance complaints began their usual spring increase and noise complaints were similar to the busy Q1 last year. Complaints about accumulations and similar public health matters were fairly stable but domestic pest control requests were similar to Q1 last year and slightly above those of the year before

So another busy start to what will likely be a challenging year. We hope you find the report interesting and if you've any questions please do contact myself or one of the Management Team.

Simon Wilkes

On 28th May 2021 Oakland International Limited pleaded guilty to charges brought by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) acting on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The case, heard at Kidderminster Magistrates Court in front of District Judge Strongman, resulted in the company being fined £300,000. Costs were awarded in the sum of £40,300 and a victim surcharge of £120 was imposed. The case related to an accident involving staff members, one of whom was feared dead at the time after his neck was pinned between the two conveyor belts and rollers of a dual pick line. Thankfully, the victim has made a good recovery.

Food Safety

We have nearly 3,000 visits outstanding/due to end of March 2022, some 1,500 of them high risk. Due to Covid and nuisance demand food work has been primarily done by contractors (3 FTE). The pandemic has resulted in major recruitment difficulties countrywide finding 'competent' food officers (temporary or permanent). During the quarter officers completed 210 food inspections as we started our internal 'catch-up' programme. It should be noted that many premises had been subject to lockdown for most of the year. Many chose not to re-open when the first opportunity arose on 12 April due to lack of suitable outdoor space. The focus of visits has been on high-risk high-street premises, especially takeaways and new premises. The indications are that most premises have maintained standards although there does seem to be some slippage in attention to the high-profile topic of allergen management.

In order to target the poorest premises as part of our food recovery plan, Operation Corona Fries was launched during the first week of March 2021 and gained momentum in Q1. Four pairs of officers were tasked with inspecting premises for food hygiene, health and safety, COVID control measures and Licensing.

The premises identified for inspection were those food businesses with a food hygiene rating score of Level 2 and below. Intelligence had identified that there was a direct correlation between those poor performing food businesses and poor COVID control measures. Prior to inspections taking place officers were required to interrogate the inspection history of the premises, service requests, complaints, COVID surveillance visits, Intelligence Data Base and Licensing information. Further details on this highly effective project will be reported in Q2.

210 new premises registered during the period.

Export Certification

The impact of Brexit has brought increased requests for export certificates. The Food Lead Officer has been working closely with two major companies who regularly require certificates from WRS for ambient products. To date there have been no major customs issues partly because local authorities are not authorised nationally to deal with high risk meat and dairy products.

Primary Authority

We continue to maintain a good relationship with our four food PAs, the most active being Aspens whose main business is in school settings.

Worcestershire Works Well

The County initiative to support well-being in businesses is also resuming activity and is now in its 10th year. We continue to have four officers trained to provide advice to potential members and there were several meetings during the period enabling all partners to refocus on the revised standards required to apply for the Award.

Licensing

The Licensing Team saw an increase in the number of queries and applications this quarter. With the easing of lockdown restrictions, and people organising postponed events, TENs applications were one of the first increases; with queries around alcohol licensing and taxis also seeing an increase. The team has continued to support joint visits with the Community Environmental Health Team where appropriate, and where a statutory nuisance or anti-social behaviour has been identified at licensed premises.

There were two zoo inspections that took place this quarter and, although both required some follow up work, licences were issued at The Falconry Centre in Hagley and Little Owl Farm. Animal inspections have continued with more and more businesses starting to re-open as the economy starts to return to normal. Many inspections were put on hold as businesses remained closed during the pandemic, but catteries and riding schools, for example, have now started to reopen slowly. As part of our intelligence work in animal welfare and licensing, our Intelligence Officer concluded findings for an operation that the licensing team commissioned on illegal puppy breeding and related activities, such as nuisance and general welfare of dogs. During lockdown the prices of dogs increased and, throughout the country, there was a general issue around illegal puppy breeding so these findings will now be explored further in quarter two.

During May and June, the licensing team rolled out Members Training for new and existing members which was well received across all districts. Most of these sessions continued virtually with a view to returning to face to face training sessions next year, and an emphasis on the introduction of the new taxi standards.

As part of the Licensing Teams COVID related activities, quarter one saw some of the taxi delegated decisions starting to return back to the districts. I am confident others will return back when they are ready in quarter two. WRS has been happy to support this but understand that, with the new taxi standards being introduced in 2022, decisions must sit with Members unless districts decide otherwise through a formal process. The team has continued to support COVID work activities and has created a Night Time Economy Team to support the Licensing Team, Community Safety Teams and District Economic Recovery Teams with their aims and objectives for the re-opening of their town centres and the night time economy with the aim of meeting licensing objectives. This work has been strongly supported by West Mercia Police and we will continue to use intelligence to work more closely with partners going forward.

Technical Services

IT Development

As well as our normal day to day work, the first quarter of the financial year is always busy as we prepare and submit the majority of our government returns. Over this quarter we also moved the WRS website to a new, more modern content management system, which includes compliance with new accessibility legislation for public sector websites. During this period our host IT moved all our staff to a new Citrix desktop, and we are now using MS Office 365. We coincided this with a major upgrade to our back office database system, which also included a move to a new applications server. Also for this quarter and onwards we have been working closely with our host IT around cyber security issues, including working groups, staff training and security testing.

Our support work continued in this quarter to be focused on the many changes and demands brought on by the Covid pandemic, which have seen increased staffing levels, equipment and training needs.

COVID Advisors

At the beginning of the quarter, the country was in full lockdown, cases were decreasing, and we had 25 COVID Advisors present regularly in all districts including enhanced deployment in Worcester City Centre, Bromsgrove and Redditch Council areas following concerns raised by Incident Management Teams.

Throughout the quarter the team focus was assisting businesses and the general public in town centres and other areas of high footfall, supermarkets, schools, public transport hubs and takeaways. This also included parks, beauty spots and garden centres during fine weather and at busier times. Additionally deployment was targeted in wards with the highest levels of infection informed by latest available Public Health data.

The implementation of Step 2 of Government's roadmap on 12th April led to the reopening of many more businesses including outdoor hospitality, funfairs, destination locations such as West Midlands Safari Park and a significant increase in engagement with non-compliant businesses, particularly those in the close contact industry. On average the Advisors engaged with 130 businesses and 230+ members of the general public on a daily basis throughout the month.

In May, the team assisted with a film crew required to isolate at local hotels and events at the Birdbox and Drive-in cinema, Bromsgrove. The teams also assisted with Surge Testing in Redditch for the Beta variant by visiting businesses to encourage uptake and door knocking to encourage vaccinations at a mobile testing unit in Brickfields, Worcester. On average the Advisors engaged with 141 businesses and 166+ members of the general public on a daily basis throughout the month.

The numbers of COVID cases were on the rise in some districts by beginning of June and the Advisors assisted with an increasing number of events including Euro 2020 football matches shown in Pubs, cricket matches in Worcester and pop up vaccination centres requiring support. On average Advisors engaged with 125 businesses and 165+ members of the general public on a daily basis throughout the month. During this month the Team reduced to 19 personnel as a number took advantage of employment opportunities not available previously during lockdown.

Contact Tracing

We continue to undertake lost to follow up contact tracing for all the Districts and have moved to Local-4 in Redditch, Worcester and Malvern Hills which means, in those districts, all contact tracing work is undertaken by our contact tracing team.

Dog Wardens

The first quarter has been a little quieter than the end of last year, with the service having received contact in relation to 280 dog related matters; including enquiries for assistance or advice and complaints. We were successful in reuniting 198 dogs with their owners, and rehoming 30 with recognised animal rehoming charities. Unfortunately 3 dogs were found deceased. In addition we have looked after one client dog for an owner who has had an extended stay in hospital.

Air Quality

June saw the completion and submission of air quality reports for each partner to DEFRA. The Air quality Annual Status Report (ASR) provides a detailed summary as to the status of existing air quality and emerging problem areas/improvement in each authority area. Officers annualisation of air monitoring data confirmed that nitrogen dioxide levels were 20% less between 2019 and 2020 across all county areas compared with previous years' levels which is attributable to the reduction in traffic movements during the lockdown periods however this gain will be lost as we continue to emerge out of lockdown. In Wyre Forest officers will be installing and trialling a new type of air monitoring system that is being secured through S.106 monies provided by the Churchfields redevelopment which will provide real time emissions levels of Nitrogen dioxide and PM10 and PM2.5. This will complement the other continuous gas analyser located between Kidderminster and Stourport.

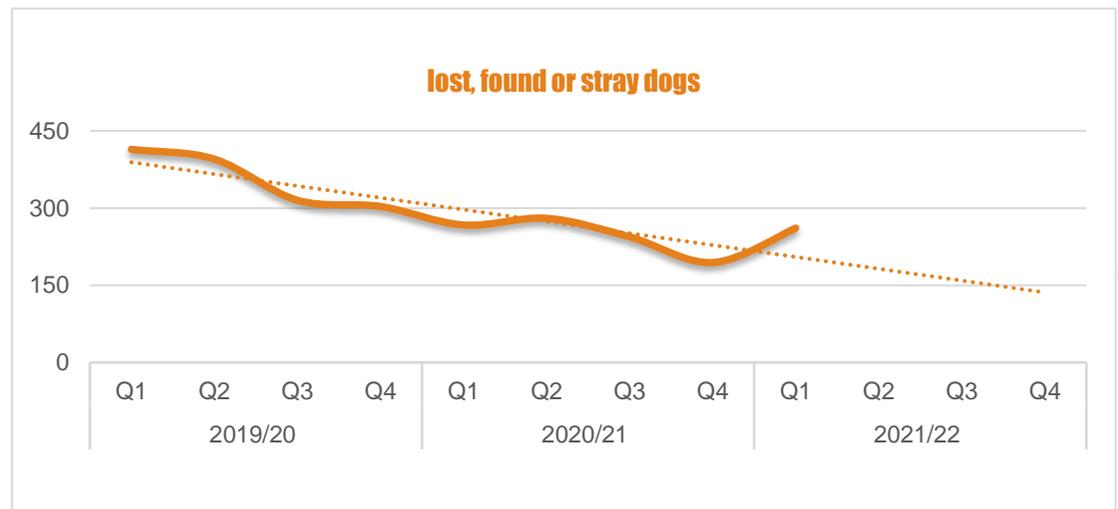
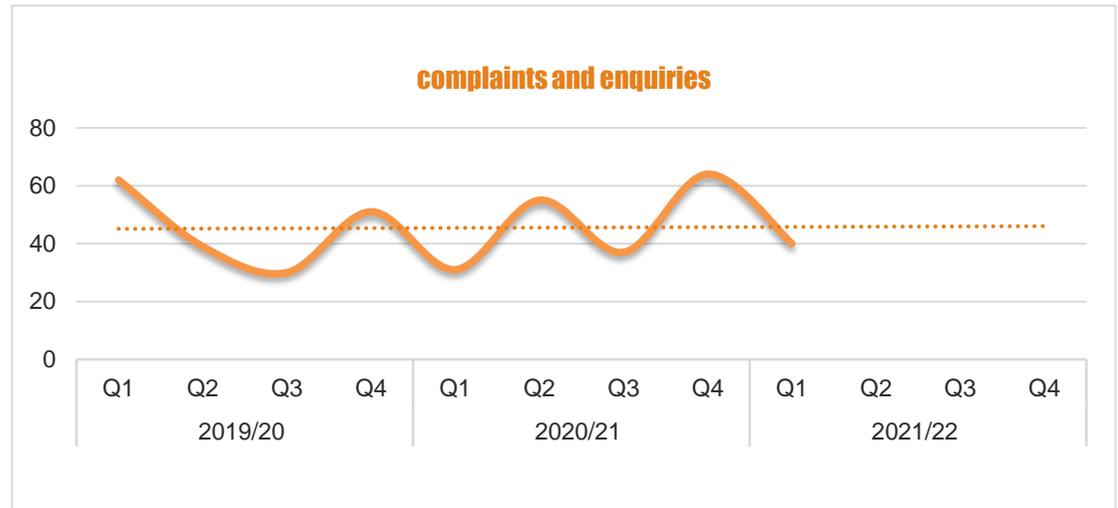
Contaminated Land

Worcester City Council has now passed over the contaminated land enforcement function to WRS who will also provide advice on contaminated land aspects of planning work to the planners. This function was previously undertaken by the planning department.

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to dog control. Types of cases recorded under this category include fouling and persistent straying, dangerous dogs and welfare. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of dogs recorded by WRS as lost, found or seen straying.

The number of stray or lost dogs reported to WRS during quarter one is an increase of 34% compared to the final quarter of last year. In keeping with previous quarters however, the nature of cases remains consistent with approximately 64% relating to 'contained' stray dogs. This means the dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Approximately 67% of stray dogs were returned to their owners, whilst 1% were rehomed.

In general terms, WRS receives a low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 28 complaints received during quarter one, 15 related to fouling and persistent straying, 10 related to dangerous dogs and 3 cases related to welfare.



Nationally DEFRA are in the process of revising a number of technical standards covering a range of manufacturing sectors that are governed by the permitting regime. These standards are normally set by the EU however post Brexit LA's have been requested to assist in developing new UK based standards. WRS currently have officers sitting on 3 of these technical panels providing their advice and experience.

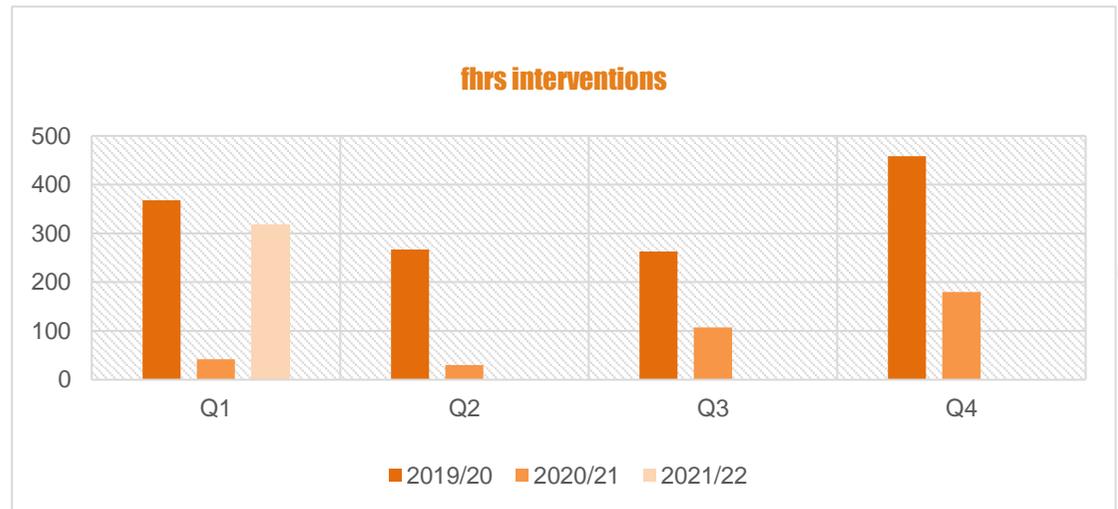
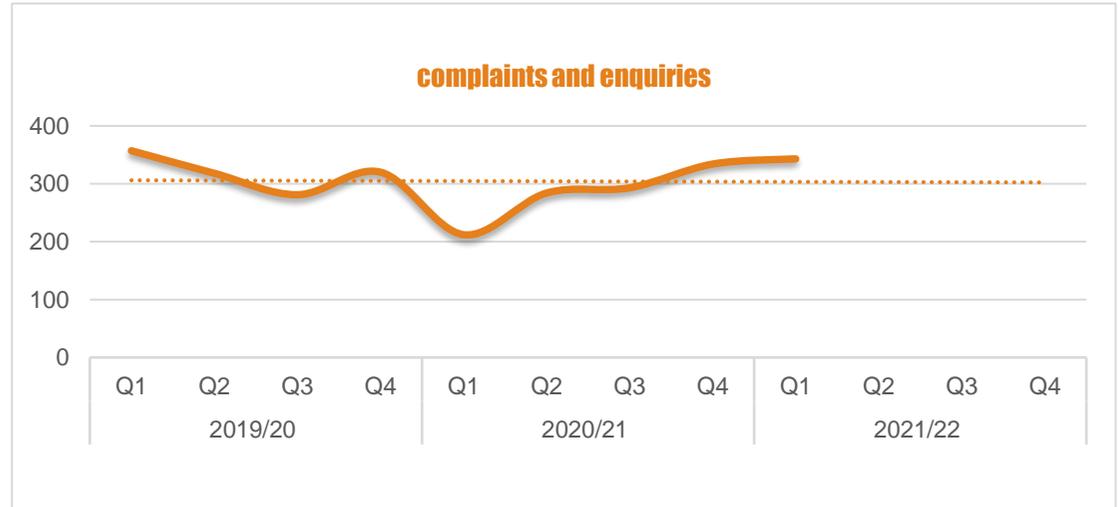
Locally we have remained busy with permitting over the first quarter and are engaged in a number of enforcement/non-compliance matters. Officers appreciate that it has been a difficult time for some sectors and are working with those who are cooperative to deliver compliance. However, some have eluded the permitting process and are being actively pursued for that reason. There have also been non-compliance matters in Gloucester where officers undertake this service on behalf of the City Council.

Our work on Primary authority continues into a 3rd successful year with Wineerberger Cemex. With Wienerberger we will be working to develop non abatement emission control techniques at their Hartlebury plant though the development of gas recirculation system. Initial R&D is proving that the system is working successfully, and this will long term reduce the companies use of natural resources and carbon footprint through the reduction in heat loss.

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to food safety. Types of cases recorded under this category include complaints about food products, hygiene of premises complaints and requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of interventions conducted by WRS at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, commonly known as FHRs.

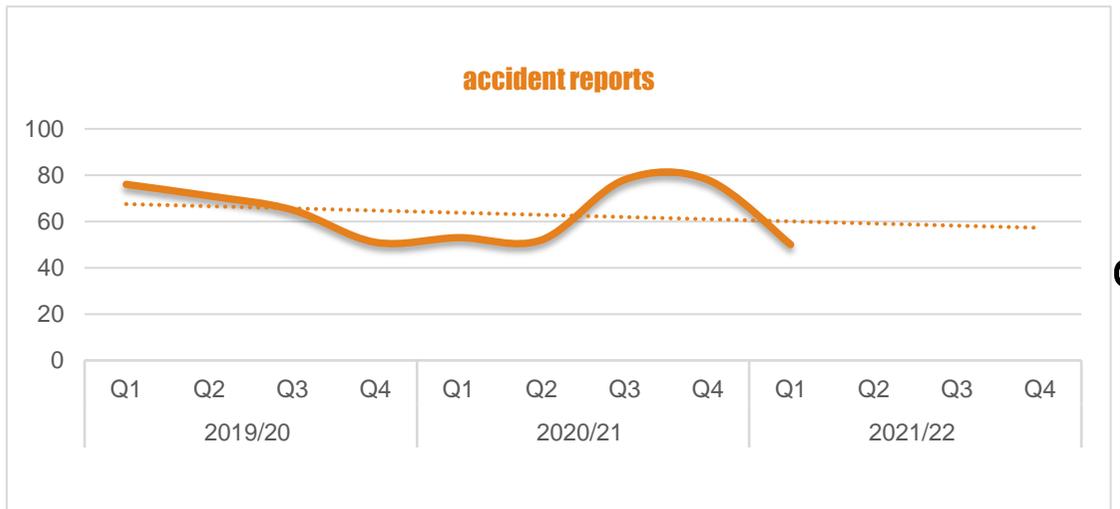
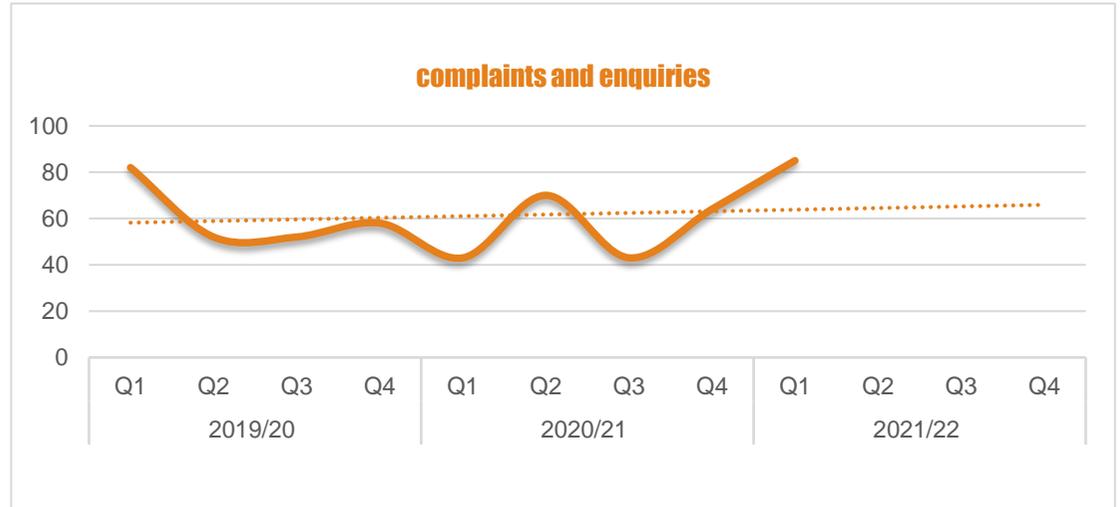
The number of food safety cases reported to WRS during one is broadly consistent with the final quarter of last year. Based on the 162 complaints recorded, 81% related to products purchased from food premises, whilst 19% related to hygiene standards and practices.

Of the 318 interventions conducted during quarter one at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRs), 16 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately 80% of these rating were issued to hospitality premises such as takeaways, restaurants and public houses.



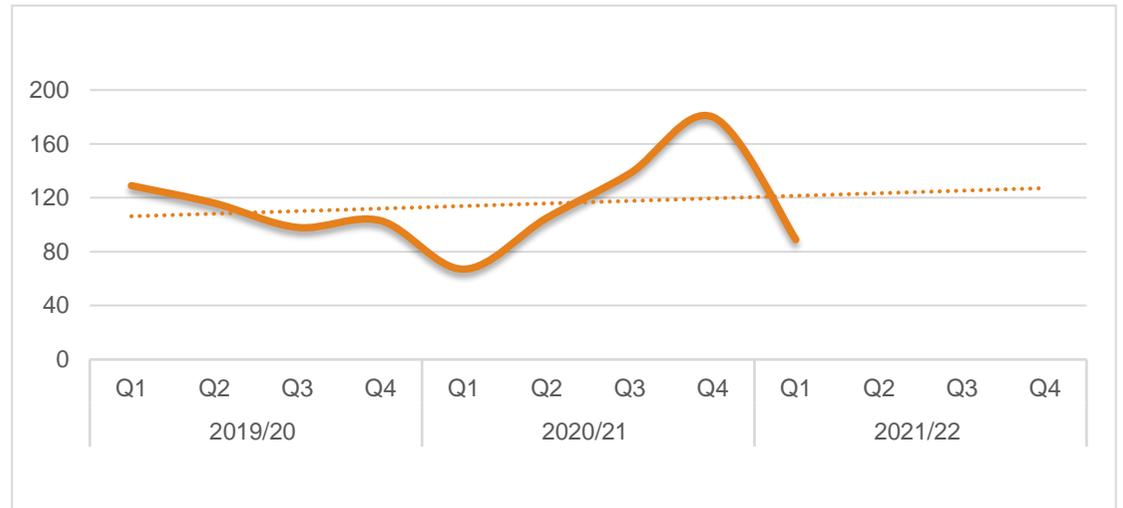
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

The number of health and safety cases reported to WRS during quarter one is broadly consistent with the final quarter of last year. Whilst there was a reduction in the number of accident report, this was offset by an increase in the number of complaint and enquiries. Appxoamtely 37% of cases werereports of accidents; with 35% relating to injuries where a worker is incapacitated for more than seven days. The remaining cases related to injuries to members of the public or to accidents where major injuries were sustained.



The chart (right) shows the number of information requests recorded by WRS over a three year period. Information requests relate to the following;

- Environmental Information Requests
- Freedom of Information Requests
- Requests for information under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation



The chart (top right) shows the number complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

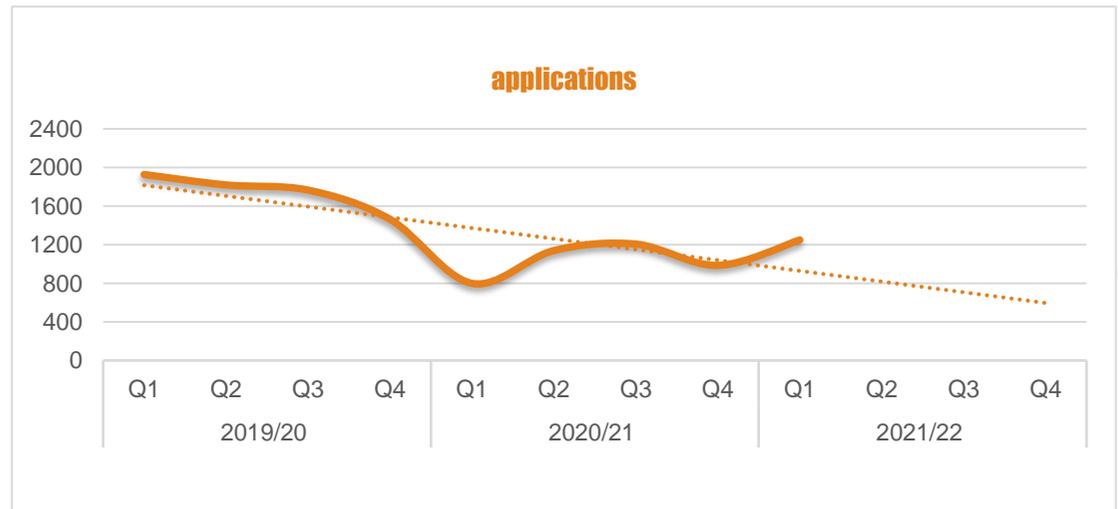
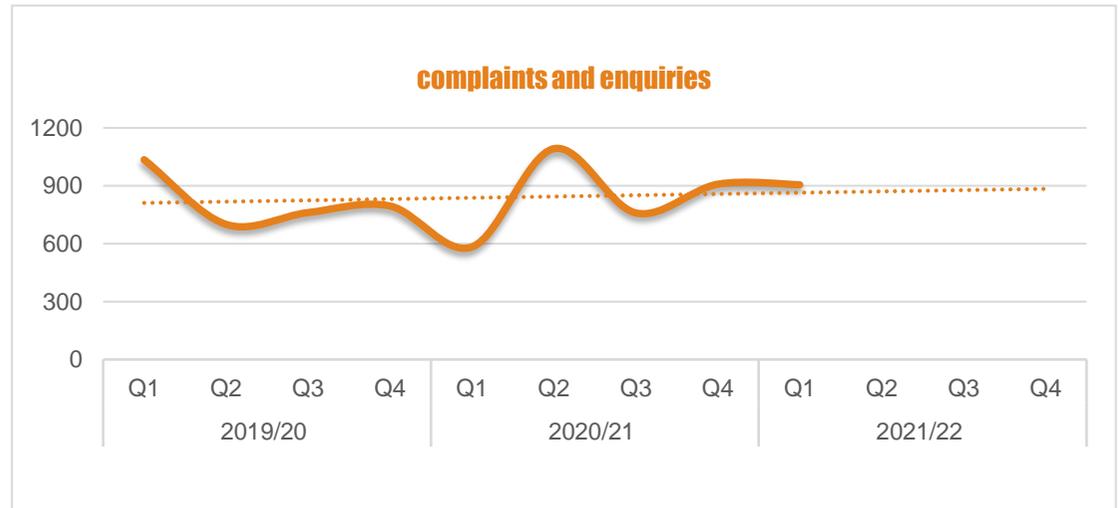
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

- Alcohol and entertainment (including gambling)
- Animals
- Caravans
- Scrap metal
- Sex establishments
- Skin piercing
- Street trading
- Taxis

Page 40

The number of licensing cases reported to WRS during quarter one is an increase of 13% compared to the final quarter of last year. This increase is largely due to arise in the volume of applications and registrations. Approximately 57% of cases recorded have been applications; with 29% relating to private hire and hackney carriage vehicles, and 17% relating to temporary events.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 121 complaints received during quarter one, 28% related to taxis, 25% related to alcohol and entertainment and 16% related to animals.



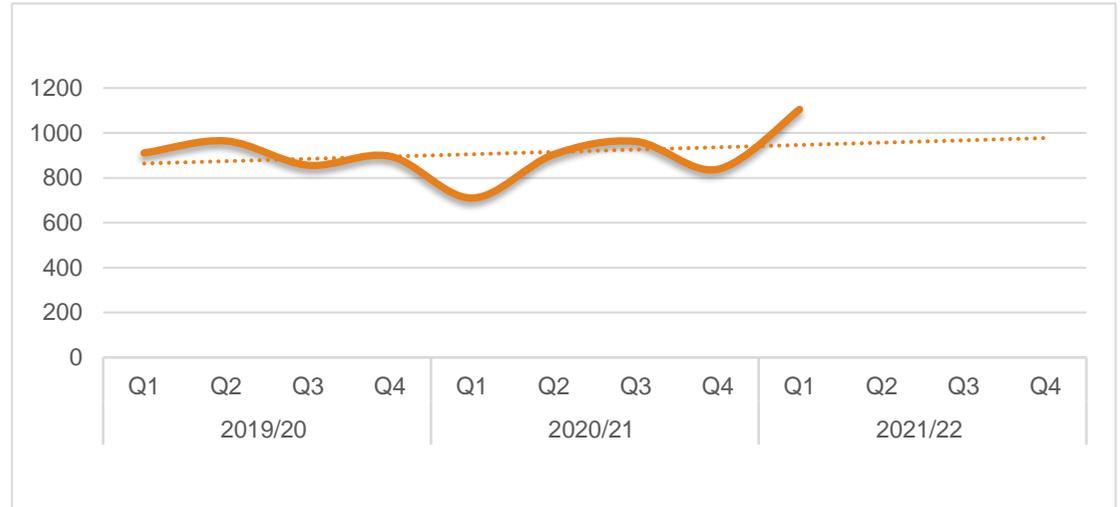
Page 44

Agenda Item 5

The chart (right) shows the number of planning enquiries completed by WRS over a three year period. The majority of these requests are consultations but can also include requests to discharge conditions.

Planning requests relate to the following;

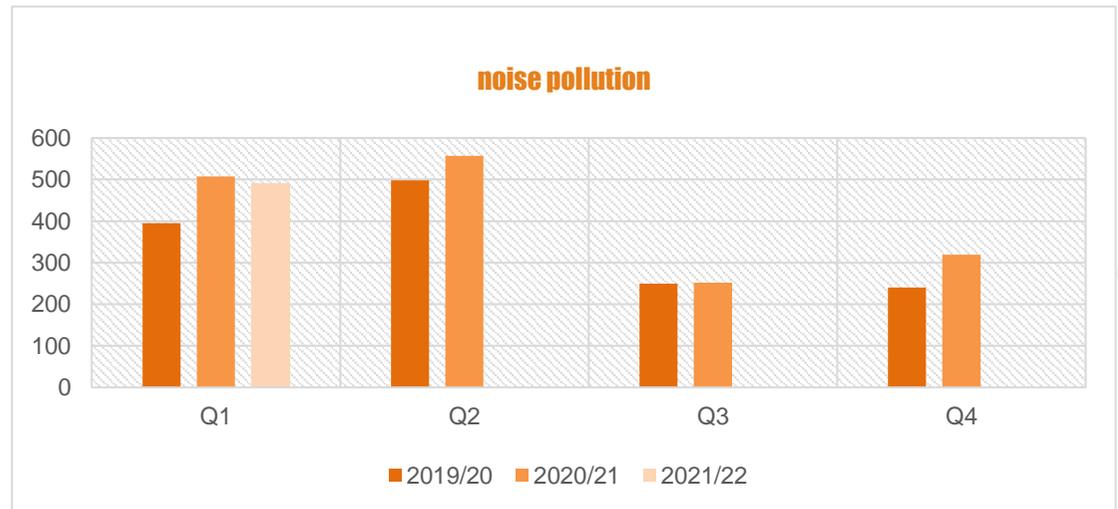
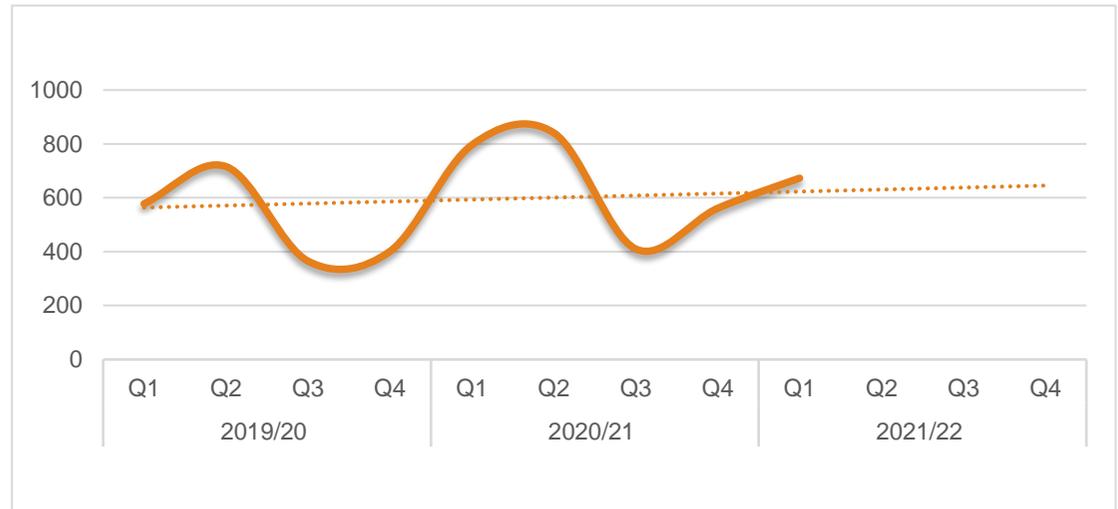
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies



The number of planning enquiries recorded by WRS during quarter one is an increase of 30% compared to the final quarter of last year. In keeping with previous quarters however, the nature of enquiries has remained relatively consistent. Approximately 92% were consultations, whilst 50% related to contaminated land. A fifth of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities. WRS has recently updated its technical guidance note for planning applicants, agents and consultants which ensures that developments are undertaken to the highest standards with regard to environmental protection and the delivery of sustainable and desirable homes for the County.

The chart (right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to pollution. Types of cases recorded under this category include contamination incidents, air pollution (smoke, fumes and gases), light pollution and noise pollution. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries relating to noise pollution.

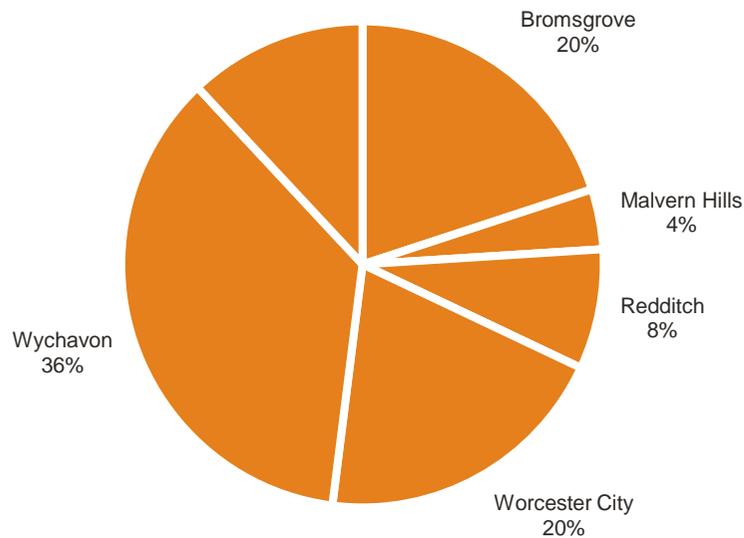
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during quarter one is an increase of 19% compared to the final quarter of last year; but is consistent with seasonal variations. Approximately 41% of cases recorded related to domestic noise, whilst 13% related to smoke nuisance. Noise from commercial premises (such as hospitality premises) was another prominent case type.



The table (right) shows the top 25 wards in Worcestershire with the highest case rate for noise pollution cases. It also shows the relative population and the number of cases recorded. The chart (below) shows the top 25 wards by district.

Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.

Page 43



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Marlbrook	5	2,890	1.73
Norton	6	3,707	1.62
Teme Valley	3	1,964	1.53
Eckington	4	2,669	1.50
Rainbow Hill	8	5,511	1.45
Arboretum	9	6,233	1.44
Barnt Green And Hopwood	4	2,981	1.34
Perryfields	2	1,501	1.33
Pinvin	4	3,105	1.29
Cathedral	15	11,763	1.28
Lickhill	3	2,438	1.23
Wyre Forest Rural	11	9,106	1.21
Elmley Castle And Somerville	3	2,499	1.20
Central (Redditch)	8	6,844	1.17
Bredon	3	2,651	1.13
Evesham South	6	5,423	1.11
Wribbenhall And Arley	6	5,444	1.10
Harvington And Norton	3	2,756	1.09
Fladbury	3	2,808	1.07
Lowes Hill	3	2,903	1.03
Gorse Hill	6	5,839	1.03
Batchley And Brockhill	9	8,783	1.02
Claines	8	8,076	0.99
Bretforton And Offenham	3	3,054	0.98
The Littletons	3	3,194	0.94

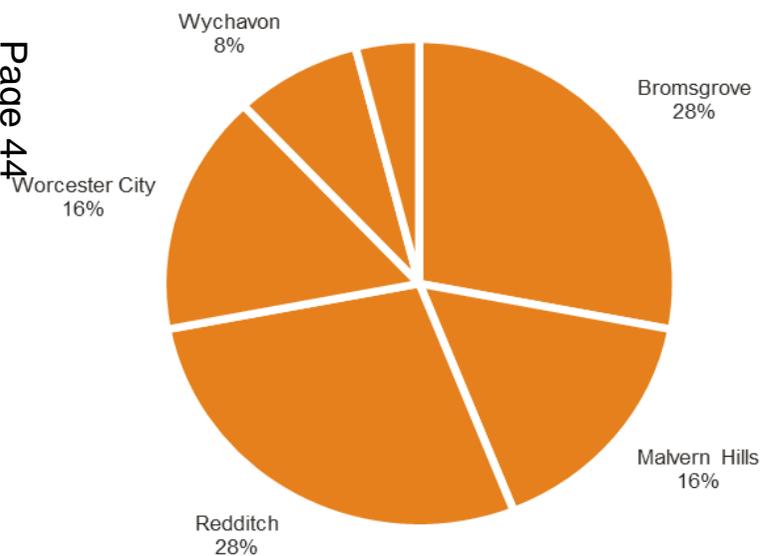
Page 47

Agenda Item 5

The table (right) shows the top 25 wards in Worcestershire with the highest case rate for noise pollution cases. It also shows the relative population and the number of cases recorded. The chart (below) shows the top 25 wards by district.

Note: Data shown on this page represents the 'year to date' and will continue to increase each quarter until the end of year report is published.

Page 44



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Wribbenhall And Arley	34	5,444	6.25
Perryfields	8	1,501	5.33
Abbey	31	6,620	4.68
Norton	17	3,707	4.59
Avoncroft	15	3,300	4.55
Lowes Hill	13	2,903	4.48
Warndon	25	5,669	4.41
Sanders Park	16	3,651	4.38
Charford	15	3,665	4.09
Central (Redditch)	28	6,844	4.09
Rubery South	12	2,984	4.02
Saint John	34	8,836	3.85
Lodge Park	21	5,591	3.76
Bedwardine	29	8,167	3.55
Chase	22	6,217	3.54
Lindridge	8	2,261	3.54
Greenlands	32	9,329	3.43
Winyates	28	8,184	3.42
Church Hill	27	8,062	3.35
Hallow	6	1,840	3.26
Gorse Hill	19	5,839	3.25
Crabbs Cross	18	5,647	3.19
Evesham South	17	5,423	3.13
Pickersleigh	20	6,397	3.13
Droitwich Central	8	2,621	3.05

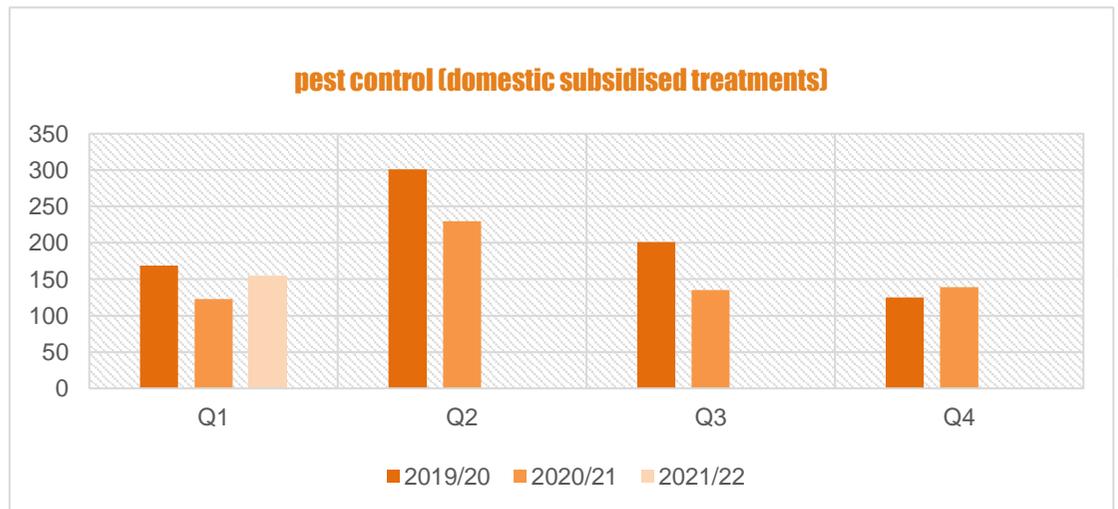
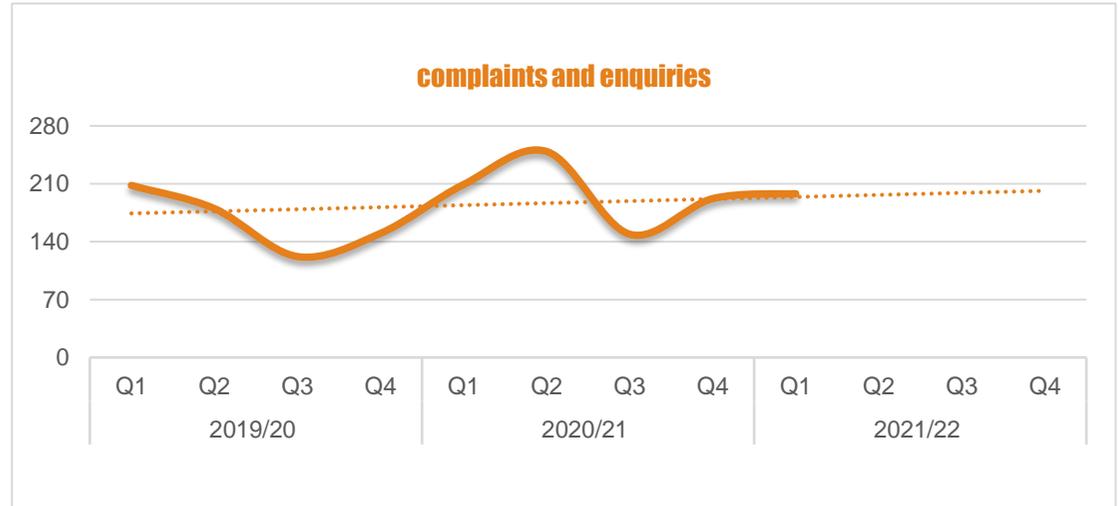
Page 48

Agenda Item 5

The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to public health. Types of cases recorded under this category include accumulations, public burials and pest control. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of subsidised pest control treatments have been carried out by contractors at domestic properties in three Worcestershire Districts (Bromsgrove, Redditch, Wychavon). Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wyre Forest do not offer a subsidised pest control service.

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during quarter one is broadly consistent with the final quarter of last year. Approximately 67% of cases related to pest control; whether enquiries about treatments for sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 27% of cases were complaints relating to accumulations at domestic or commercial properties.

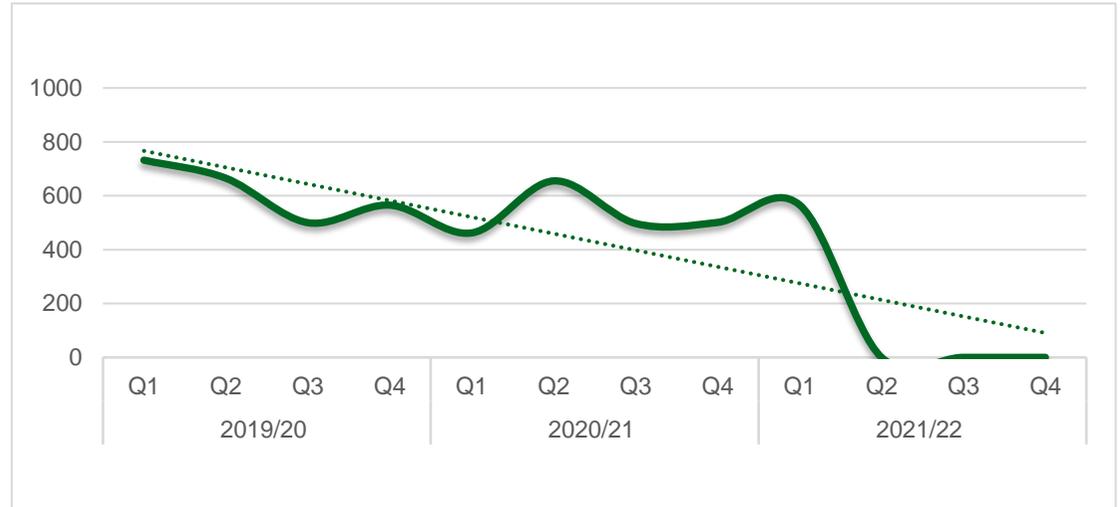
Of the 155 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter one, 78% were due to the presence of rats, 34% were in relation to properties located in the Wychavon district, 33% were in relation to the Redditch district and 23% were in relation to the Bromsgrove district.



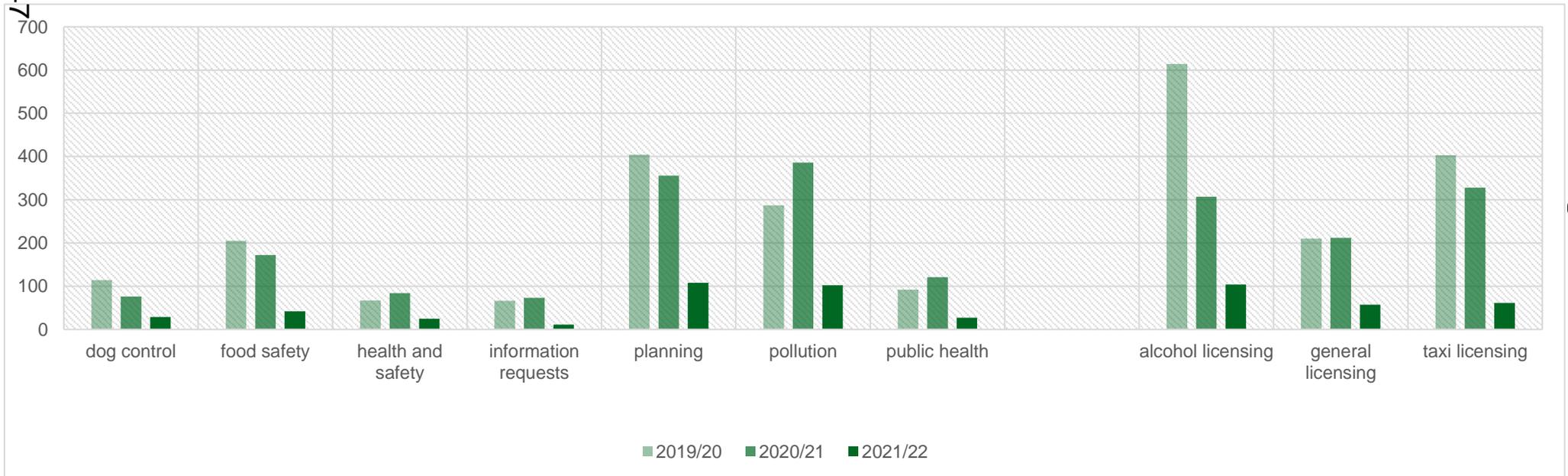
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The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Page 47

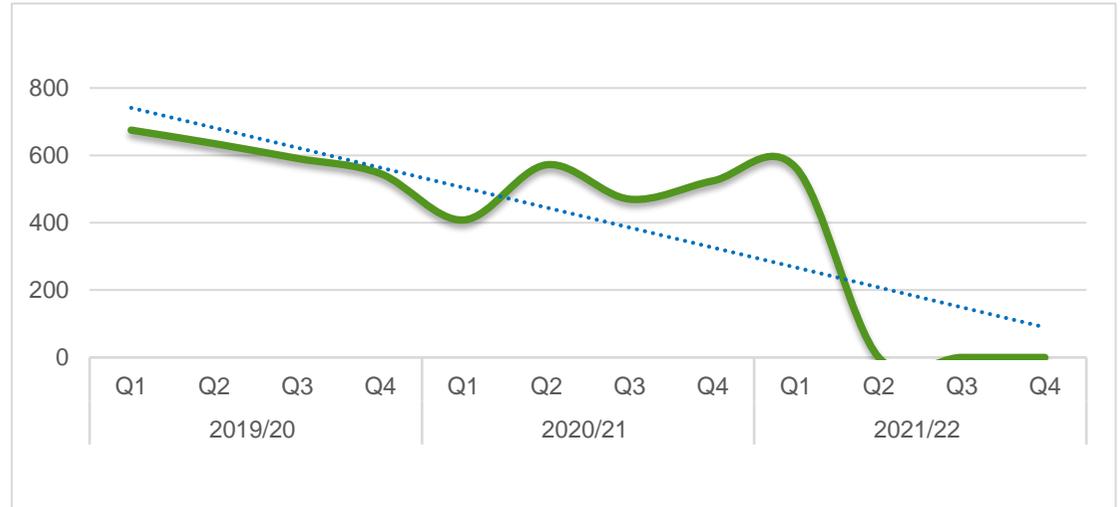


Page 51

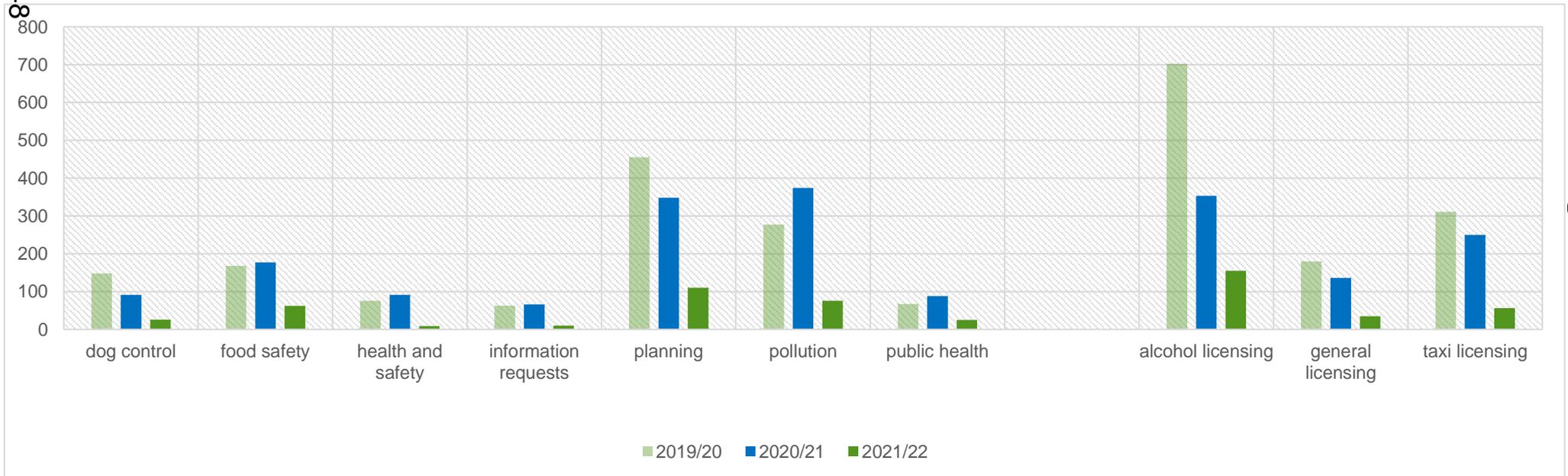
Agenda Item 5

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Page 48

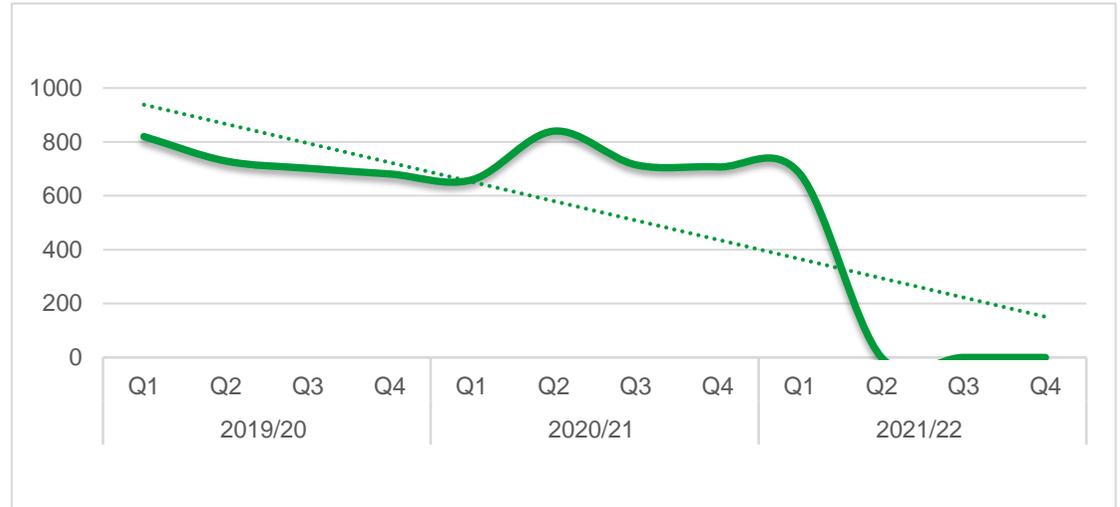


Page 52

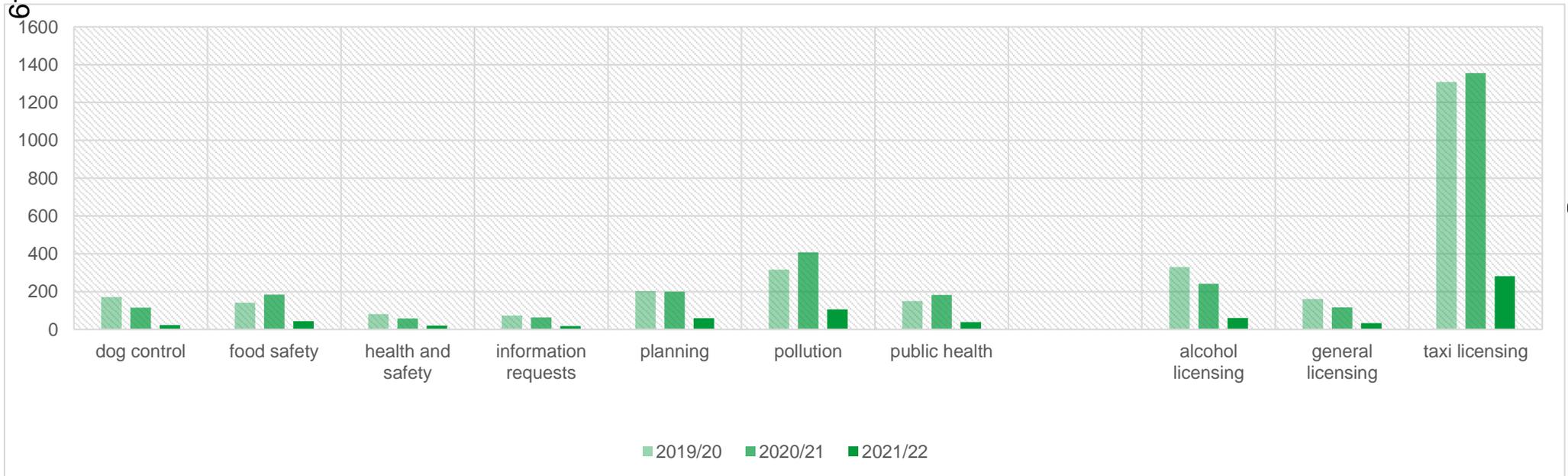
Agenda Item 5

The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Page 49

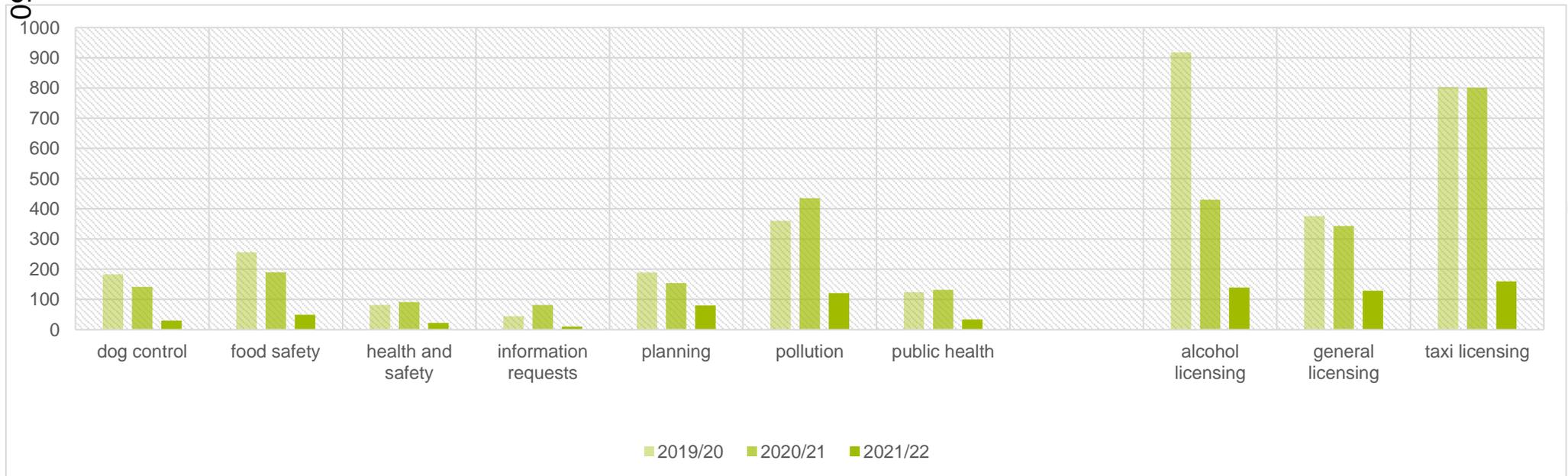
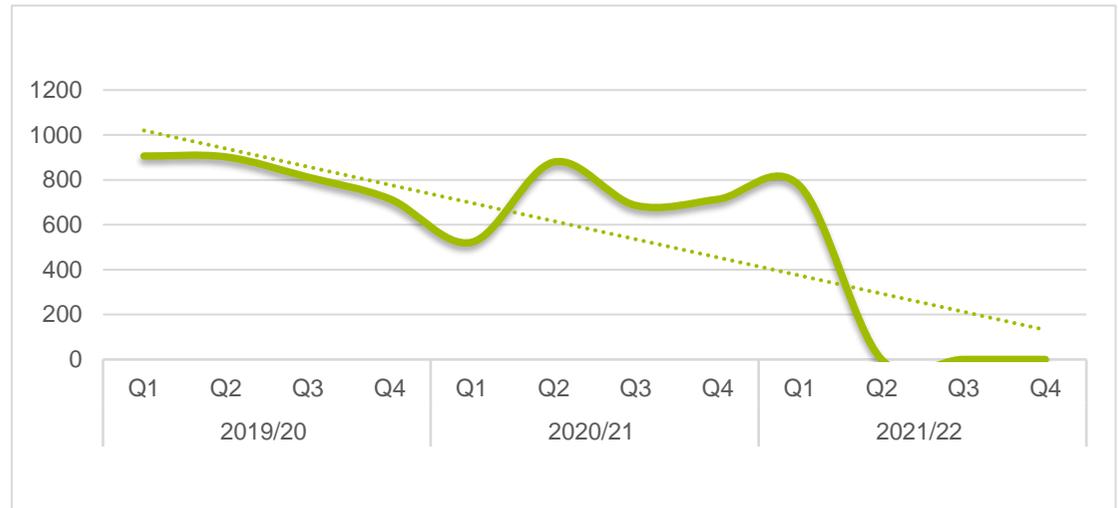


Page 53

Agenda Item 5

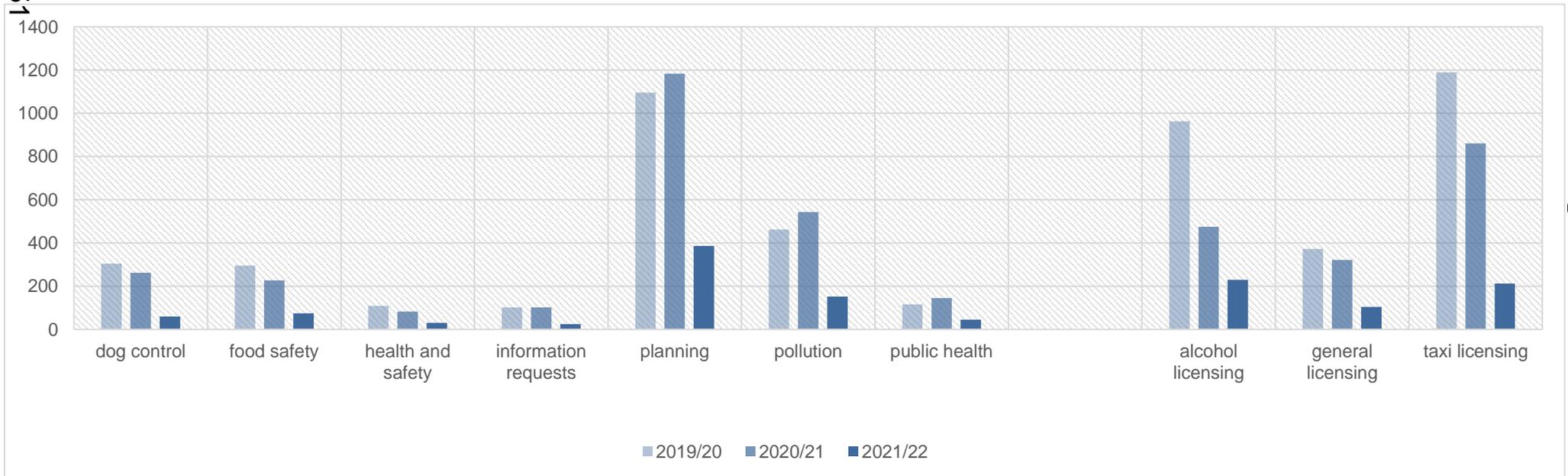
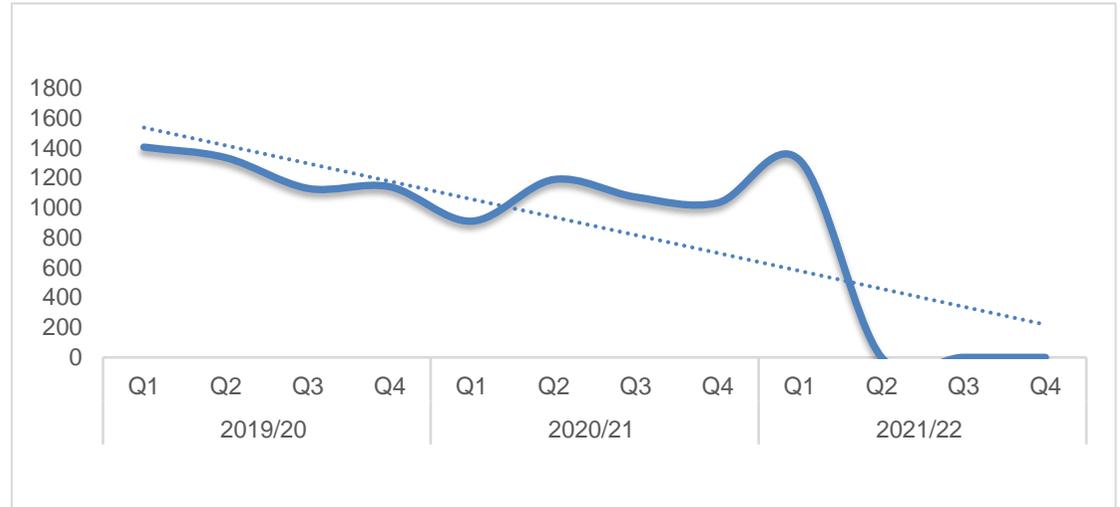
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



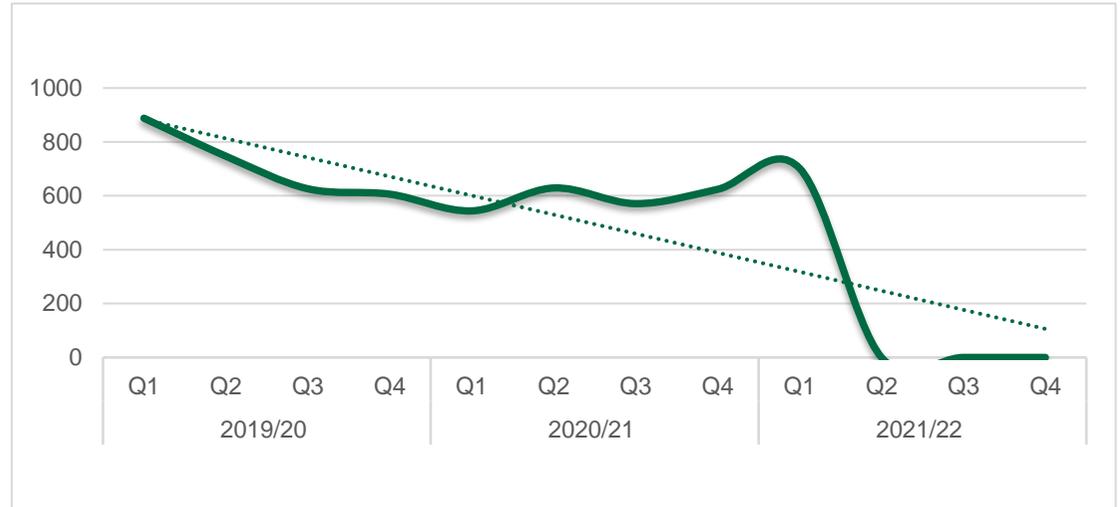
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.

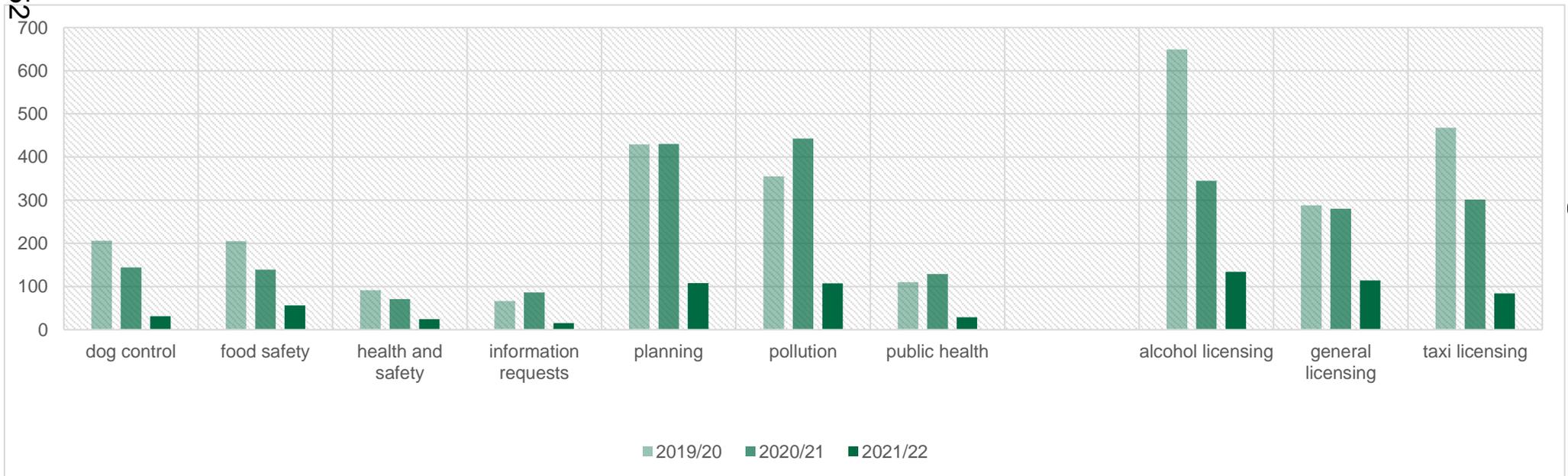


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figure for the current year is a cumulative total based on each of the reporting periods. This figure will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



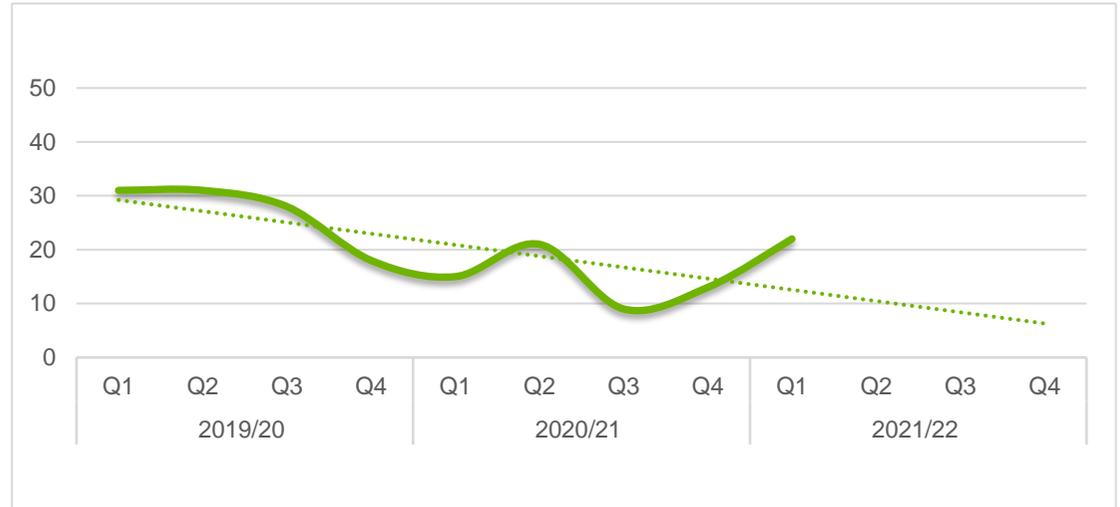
Page 52



Page 56

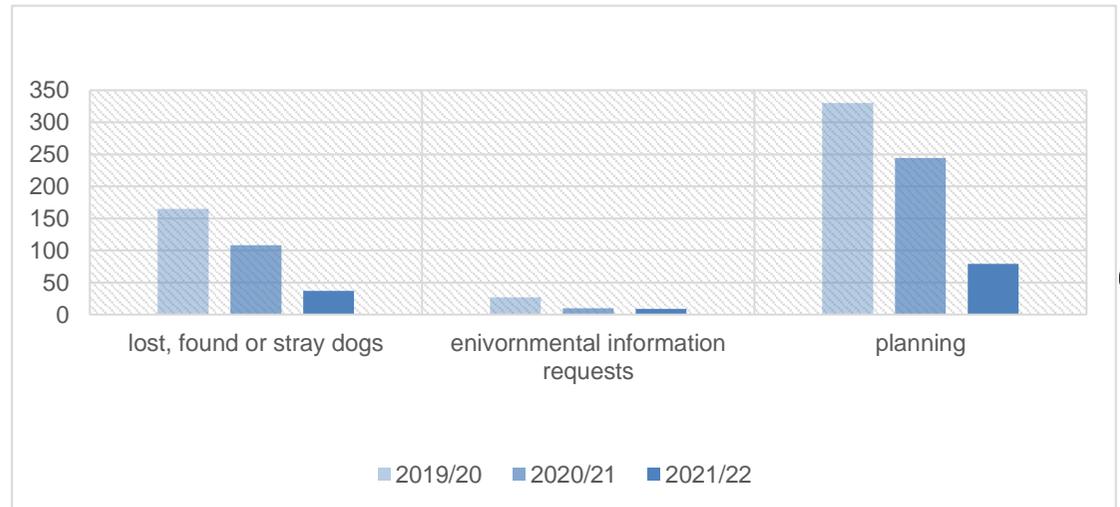
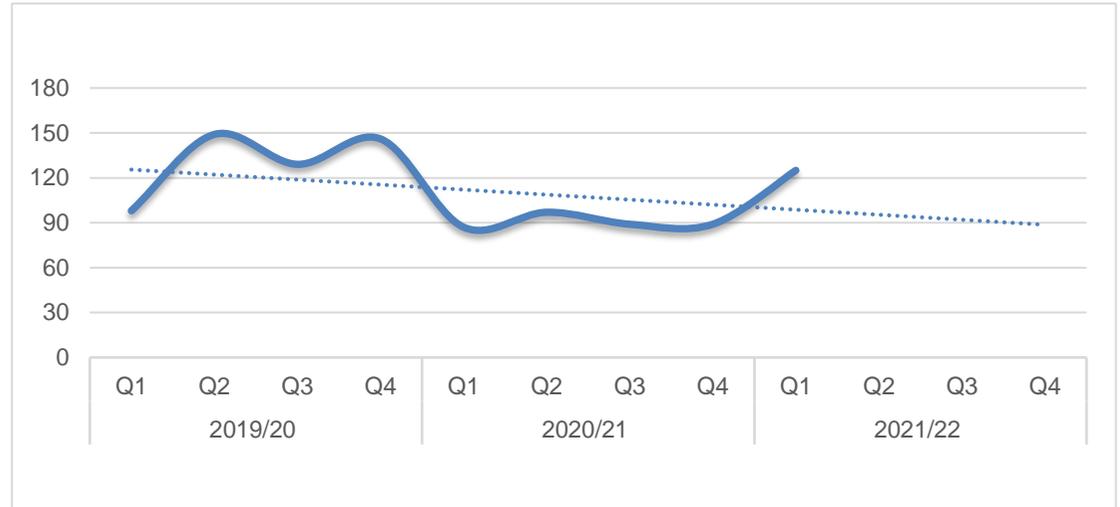
Agenda Item 5

The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Cheltenham Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually. There is concern however that, post lockdown, there will be an increase in the number of abandoned stray dogs as people go back to work and dogs display attachment issues. This is coupled with the inability of rehoming charities to allow prospective new owners access to view dogs available.

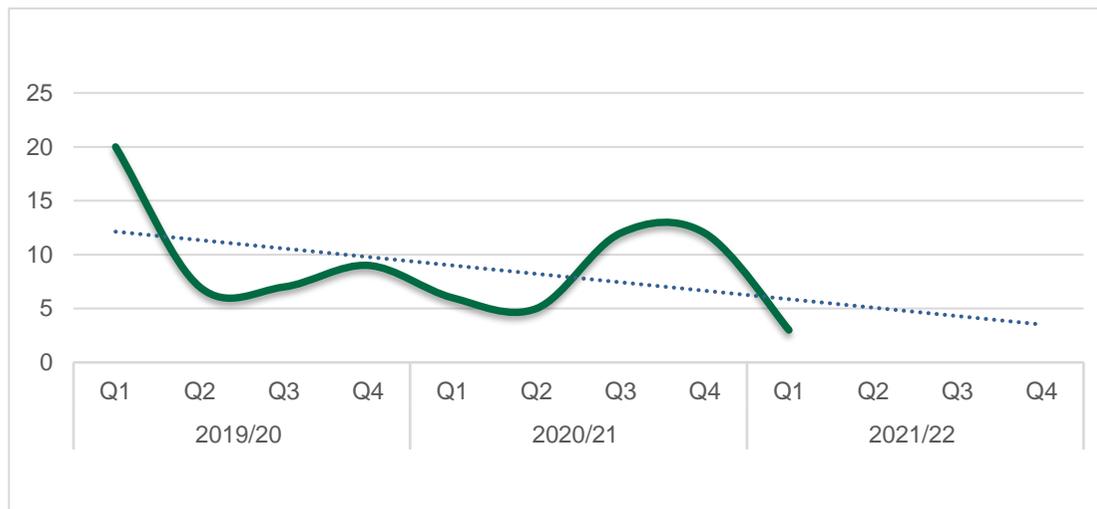


The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Gloucester City Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually. There is concern however that, post lockdown, there will be an increase in the number of abandoned stray dogs as people go back to work and dogs display attachment issues. This is coupled with the inability of rehoming charities to allow prospective new owners access to view dogs available.

Planning work undertaken on behalf of Gloucester City Council was notably higher during quarter one; with the number of consultations completed an increase of 54% compared to 2019/20 and 2020/21.

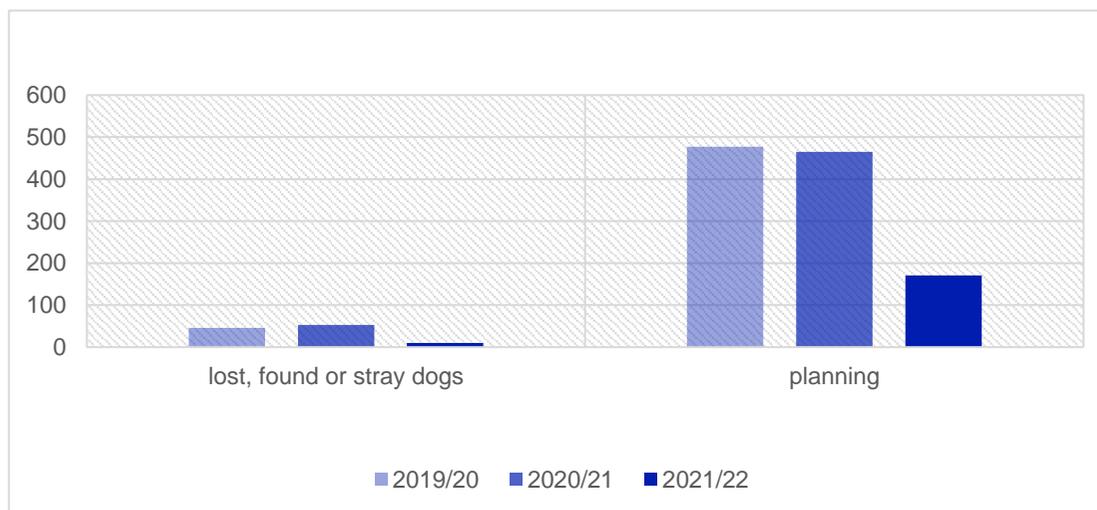
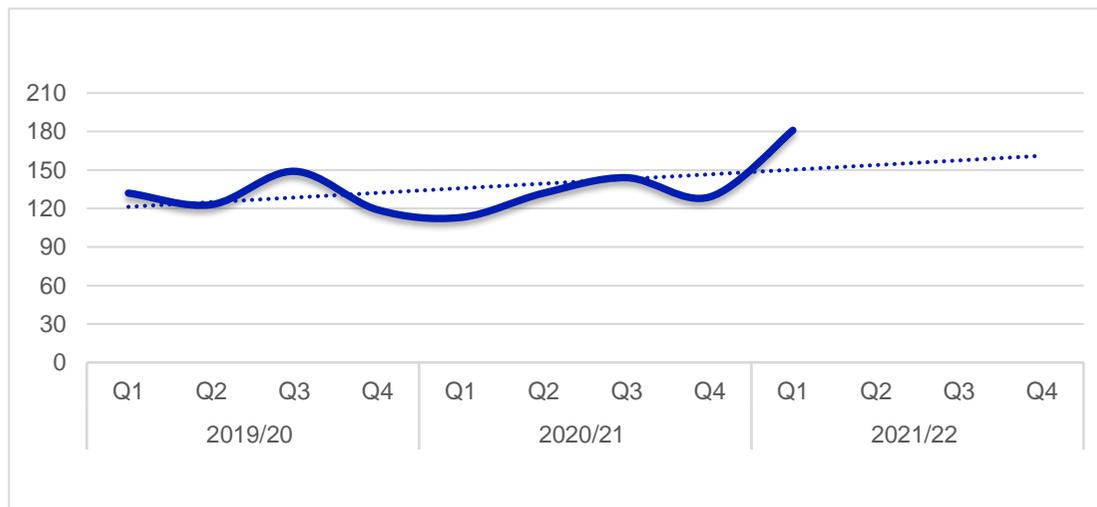


South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex sites. For a number of years now WRS has been asked to assist with this work focusing on the complex sites, so whilst numbers of referrals remain low, when presented they tend to be time consuming and complex. Work demand is dependant on resource availability at South Gloucestershire Council and, as a consequence, WRS is retained to undertake repeat work for them when this becomes an issue.



The dog control work undertaken for Tewkesbury Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Tewkesbury Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually. There is concern however that, post lockdown, there will be an increase in the number of abandoned stray dogs as people go back to work and dogs display attachment issues. This is coupled with the inability of rehoming charities to allow prospective new owners access to view dogs available.

Planning work undertaken on behalf of Tewkesbury Borough Council was notably higher during quarter one; with the number of consultations completed an increase of 38% and 60% compared to 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively.



Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

WRS Board: 30th September 2021

Information Report – Taxi Fees

Recommendation	Members are asked to note the report.
Introduction	<p>This report has been provided in response to a request from Members for information on the comparison of Taxi Fees across Worcestershire.</p> <p>In doing so and to help Members consideration of the matter, the report provides an outline of the National Picture and the fee structures for each district.</p>
Background	<p>As part of the legal agreement established with the formation of Worcestershire Regulatory Services, Licensing remains a reserved matter. As a reserved matter all policy decisions, income and fee setting remain the responsibility of each District Council. The WRS Board therefore has no role in licensing matters beyond ensuring that services delivered meet the requirements of each partner. Indeed, there are certain areas of licensing policy like alcohol and gambling where local authorities are specifically preventing from discharging their policy duties via a joint committee.</p> <p>It is the role of each District Council to review and set its licensing fees and charges on an annual basis. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Licensing and Support Services Manager works closely with each District Director and each Council's finance department in establishing accurate details of how much it costs each partner to deliver all elements of licensing activity from administration through to committee processes, to ensure that charges are as near as possible to full cost recovery for each partner.</p> <p>A copy of each Districts taxi fees and charges for 2021/22 can be found on each districts website page.</p> <p>Members should note that Alcohol and Entertainment (Licensing Act 2003) licensing fees are set nationally by Central Government. Gambling fees must fall within a range, also set by Government, for each type of license or permit. All other licensing fees must remain cost neutral in relation to service delivery.</p>
Report	<p><u>The National Picture</u></p> <p>There had been no update to Taxi and Private hire guidance since the Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Best Practice Guidance of 2010 until last year saw the publication of the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards. These are currently out for consultation in each district. This means that currently the requirements that licensing authorities set for the grant of a taxi or private hire driver, vehicle or operator licence vary considerably across all districts. This does not mean that</p>

the six councils do not expect the highest standards of drivers and their conduct, however, there are differences in delegation of decision making and some processes that mean there is not a uniform approach. This is particularly true in terms of vehicle licenses.

The national variance in fees and standards took on greater relevance following the introduction of the Deregulation Act 2015. Along with the use of digital technology, this has undoubtedly led to a radically new approach to running private hire businesses and has enabled a new era of cross-border hiring across the private hire industry. An operator can now subcontract a booking either to an operator licensed in another district or to one of their own offices in another district where they hold an operator's license. This allows an operator to license their private hire resources in one area but carry out work in other areas either by taking subcontracted work or subcontracting from one of their own licensed operator offices to the one where the drivers and vehicles are licensed.

This change in the law, alongside changes in technology has brought a new commercial edge to the taxi trade and created a threat to the traditional approach taken by some operators and particularly to the hackney carriage trade. With many people now running their lives through a mobile telephone, the convenience of booking a private hire pick-up, wherever they happen to be, can be seen as an improvement on walking to a rank and waiting for the next cab to be available.

Even prior to the Deregulation Act, it was already widely recognised that legislation governing taxi and private hire licensing was antiquated and not fit for purpose. This has been pointed out by the Law Commission but Government has not responded with new legislation.

Taken together, the impacts of the Deregulation Act, the new, technologically enabled business models used by some private hire operators and a lack of legislative reform, means that larger towns and particularly cities like Worcester with vibrant night time economies, have experienced an influx of private hire vehicles and drivers licensed by other local authorities, working in their districts. It is not within our gift to prevent these vehicles coming into each district as it is primary legislation that facilitates this activity; current legislation also does not allow any local authority to cap the number of private hire licenses it issues (this can only be applied to Hackneys). Obviously illegal plying for hire is something that the service will tackle, but the majority of vehicles observed are operating legitimately without the need to resort to such practices.

Variations in Local Process

The process to obtain a taxi or private hire driver licence varies slightly between districts. However, the pandemic has allowed WRS to better align and streamline the processes, which has been welcomed by drivers and operators across all districts. The service has encouraged applicants to:

- Apply online where possible or email applications into the team
- Attend a thorough ID/right to work/DBS check appointment
- Submit an enhanced DBS application
- Have DBS certificate and DVLA records checked against the relevant districts convictions policy, as certain convictions will result in an attendance at a Licensing Sub-Committee for a decision to refuse or proceed with their application,
- Knowledge and skills test where appropriate
- Obtain a Group II medical certificate (from their own GP or a GP with access to their full medical history)

All drivers have also been encouraged to sign up to the DBS update service to make maintaining updated records easier for all concerned.

We have two dedicated teams of officers that are split East (Redditch, Bromsgrove, Wychavon) and West (Worcester, Wyre Forest, Malvern) to maintain resilience and therefore allowing each officer to take part in proactive compliance and enforcement activity.

Vehicle Licences

There are two types of vehicle licence, a Hackney Carriage licence and a licence for Private Hire vehicles.

The main difference between the two types of vehicle is that a Hackney Carriage can be flagged down and can wait at designated taxi ranks whereas a Private Hire vehicle must be pre-booked by telephone or personal call.

The following table outlines a comparison of the headline fees charged by each district for vehicles, operators and drivers.

Table 1

Licence Type	BDC	RBC	WDC	WC	WFDC	MHDC
Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence	£248.00	£264.00	£236.00	£420.00	£430.00	£285.00
Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence RENEWAL				£360.00		
Private Hire Vehicle Licence	£230.00	£264.00	£213.00	£390.00	£430.00	£285.00
Private Hire Vehicle Licence RENEWAL				£330.00		
Temporary Replacement Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle (excluding plates and decals)					£108.00	
Private Hire Operator Licence (1 year)	£296.00	£167.00	£111.00	£260.00	£477.00	
Private Hire Operator Licence (3 year)(1 vehicle)		£402.00				£461.00
Private Hire Operator Licence (5 year)	£1,124.00	£637.00	£486.00	£990.00	£1,810.00	£730.00
Private hire operator licence (all durations) per additional vehicle		£17.00				£41.00
Private Hire Drivers Licence				£275.00		£256.00
Private Hire Drivers Licence (Renewal)				£115.00		
Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver Licence (1 year)	£97.00	£61.00	£124.00			
Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver Licence (1 year) RENEWAL			£92.00			
Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver Licence (3 year)	£233.00	£150.00	£324.00	£275.00	£426.00	
Hackney Carriage / Private Hire Driver Licence (3 year) RENEWAL			£245.00			
Dual Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licence (Initial Application) includes DBS check and DVLA check				£275.00		
Dual Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licence RENEWAL				£115.00		
Dual Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver Licence						£256.00

The table illustrates there are differences in both the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle fee across all districts.

Operator Licences

All districts offer a 5 year operating licence and five of the six offer a 1 year operating licence as an alternative. Two districts charge an additional fee for an operator to add a vehicle to their fleet. Currently Wychavon have the highest number of operators with Malvern and Redditch in second and third position.

Driver licences

Driver licenses tend to be either one year or three years in duration, and again fees vary depending on the authority. Some councils only offer a three-year license. The cost of dual driver

licenses also vary in cost from district to district.

What is included in each district's fee can vary from partner to partner, as to whether elements like vehicle testing and knowledge and skills tests are covered in the initial fee. For example, Malvern Hill's knowledge test fee is part of the licence fee and they only charge for re-takes, whereas an applicant for a license with Worcester City will take a knowledge test with Worcestershire County Council and pay for this separately. Vehicle testing is an area where we have worked with partners to achieve more consistency, working towards two tests for each vehicle per year. The vehicles travel significantly further than a domestic vehicle so tests can be seen as a safety requirement to ensure vehicles are well maintained given how far they travel. For vehicle testing you will note that Wyre Forest's fee includes two vehicle tests and renewal plates.

Licensing Numbers

The two Districts that historically and continue to maintain the highest number of licenses for taxis are Redditch and Wychavon. It is evident from looking at historical numbers this has been the case for many years. Table 2 shows a comparison of this year to date and a similar point in time last year.

Table 2

Number of Licenses - Sept 21						
Licence Type	BDC	RBC	MHDC	WC	WDC	WFDC
Dual Driver	124	138	64	342	104	222
Hackney Carriage Driver	1	133	0	0	0	0
Hackney Carriage Vehicle	98	184	31	46	71	0
Hackney Carriage Vehicle WAV	4	5	2	214	2	56
Private Hire Driver	12	231	83	0	275	0
Private Hire Operator	14	24	28	13	49	5
Private Hire Vehicle	16	209	56	32	192	72
Private Hire Vehicle WAV	1	28	19	24	58	0
TOTALS	270	952	283	671	751	355
Number of Licenses - Oct 20						
Licence Type	BDC	RBC	MHDC	WC	WDC	WFDC
Taxis - Dual Driver	130	139	69	364	109	225
Taxis - Hackney Carriage Driver	1	138	0	0	0	0
Taxis - Hackney Carriage Vehicle	106	185	38	256	82	61
Taxis - Private Hire Driver	15	244	65	2	296	0
Taxis - Private Hire Operator	14	22	25	11	51	5
Taxis - Private Hire Vehicle	24	269	64	57	271	72
Totals	290	997	261	690	809	363

Observations

There are clear variations in the way each district operates its taxi licensing policy and this contributes to the variation in fees across the six partners. In the absence of a universal approach to delegations, committee processes and what is included in the fee, WRS continues to work with the six partners to ensure that fees are not excessive and can be justified against the activity required by each regime.

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Contact Point

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