

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board

Thursday, 10th February, 2022

4.30pm

Bromsgrove District Council

Parkside Hall

Parkside

Bromsgrove

Worcestershire

B61 8DA

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS**MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD**

THURSDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2022

AT 4.30 P.M.

PARKSIDE HALL, PARKSIDE, MARKET STREET, BROMSGROVE,
WORCESTERSHIRE, B61 8DA

MEMBERS: Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor H. J. Jones
Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor P. Thomas
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 T. Rowley
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 18th November 2021 (Pages 1 - 14)
4. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Revenue Monitoring April to December 2021 (Pages 15 - 22)
5. Worcestershire Regulatory Services, Service Plan 2022/2023 (Pages 23 - 66)
6. Information Report - COVID Related Activity (Pages 67 - 68)
7. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Activity and Performance Data - Quarter 3, 2021 - 2022 (Pages 69 - 104)

8. Information Report - Food Safety Interventions: Post Pandemic Recovery Programme (Pages 105 - 110)
9. 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

27th January 2022

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

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Email: p.ross@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

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.

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 meetings, Members are strongly encouraged to take a lateral flow test on the day of the Board meeting, 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 must 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 for Members to use throughout the meeting.

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.

Members of the public will still be able to access meetings 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.

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER 2021, AT 4.30 P.M.

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

Officers: Mr. J. Howse (via Microsoft Teams), Mr. S. Wilkes, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr. D. Mellors, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox and Mrs. P. Ross

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

11/21

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Having received apologies from the Chairman and Vice-Chairman it was

RESOLVED that Councillor J. Raine, Malvern Hills District Council be elected Chairman for the meeting.

12/21

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

The following apologies for absence were received:-

Councillors A. D. Kent, Bromsgrove District Council and D. Morris, Wychavon District Council.

Councillors T. Wells, Malvern Hills District Council, J. Carver and R. Udall, Worcester City Council, P. Dyke, Wyre Forest District Council with Councillors M. Davies, Malvern Hills District Council, A. Ditta and S. Cronin, Worcester City Council and A. Coleman, Wyre Forest District Council, in attendance, respectively, as substitute Members.

13/21

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14/21

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 24th June 2021, were submitted.

RESOLVED that minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 24th June 2021, be approved as a correct record.

15/21

PREVIOUS AGENDA PAPERS 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

The Head of Regulatory Services reminded the Board that the scheduled meeting of the Board on 30th September was cancelled due to the fuel crisis being at its height at the time.

This cancellation caused no significant issues as there were no papers requiring discussion and a formal vote for decision; all reports were for noting.

Following on from the cancellation, the Head of Regulatory Services took the opportunity to email all Board Members regards the cancelling of the meeting; and also informed Board Members that, if they had any questions in relation to the papers, as detailed on the agenda issued, that officers would provide written responses which would then be circulated to all Board Members.

A paper would have been used to formally introduce the questions and answers into the Board's record of business, however, no questions were received.

The reports that would have been presented to Board Members on 30th September 2021, had been scheduled as background papers, with the agenda distributed for 18th November 2021.

Thus, enabling Board Members to address their contents and to ask any questions at the meeting scheduled for 18th November 2021.

Members were also asked to note that both the Activity Data Report and the Revenue Monitoring Report were snapshots of the position as at the end of June 2021 and that Members may feel that the contents were now of less relevance given that; the reports presented at today's meeting would address the financial position as at the end of September 2021 and the activity data for the second quarter of this financial year. However, officers were happy to take questions.

RESOLVED that the Board papers 30th September 2021 report be noted and that Members also note the relevant recommendations in each of the reports as detailed in the background papers as provided.

16/21

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE
MONITORING APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2021

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 pages 13 and 14 of the main agenda report.

The Executive Director of Resources confirmed that the report covered the period April September 2021.

The detailed revenue report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. This showed a projected outturn 2021/2022 of £48k refund to partners. It was appreciated that this was an estimation to the year end based on the following assumptions:-

- A number of employees were working on grant funded covid related work and a small amount of work in other grant related areas. This in incurring agency staff costs due to backfilling of these employees. However due to the difficulty of recruiting agency staff this was resulting in a savings within salaries.
- If April to Sept 21 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £30k. WRS officers would continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of final recharges for 2021/2022 as soon as possible. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners was:-

Redditch Borough Council	£11k
Wychavon District Council	£12k
Bromsgrove District Council	£7k

Appendix 1 to the report detailed the WRS – Profit & Loss Report 2021/2022 and the reasons for variances.

The Executive Director of Resources and the Technical Services Manager, WRS, responded to questions with regard to the underspend due to the number of stray dogs reducing.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to further questions with regard to the purchase of noise monitoring equipment and in doing so, explained that there was a need to ensure that noise monitoring equipment was calibrated and fit for purpose, if challenged in Court during any Statutory Nuisance cases.

RESOLVED that

- a) the final financial position for the period April to September 2021, be noted;
- a) partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-2022 in relation to Bereavements.

Council	Apr–Sept Actual Bereavements £000	21 for
Malvern Hills District Council	8	
Worcester City Council	2	
Bromsgrove District Council	2	
Total	12	

- b) partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-2022 in relation to Pest Control

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2021/22 Control £000	Pest
Redditch Borough Council	11	
Wychavon District Council	12	
Bromsgrove District Council	7	
Total	30	

- c) partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-2022 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	4	1	
Malvern Hills District Council	3	5	
Worcester City Council	4	2	68
Bromsgrove	4	6	

District Council			
Wychavon District Council	6	11	
Wyre Forest District Council	4	6	
Total	25	31	68

17/21

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGETS - 2022/2023 - 2024/2025

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 pages 21 to 23 of the main agenda report.

The budget helped each partner authority to set their Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Members were further informed that the following assumptions had been made in relation to the projections:

- 2% pay award across all staff for 2022/23 – 2024/25. This would be subject to the National Pay Negotiations that were ongoing and therefore the final position would reflect any formally agreed increases, the budget also included any employee entitled to an incremental increase.
- Increase in Rent of £7k.
- Increase in ICT Hosting of £15.5k.
- Increase in Support Hosting of £10k.
- Total partner contributions as detailed at Appendix 2.
- Income projections as included at Appendix 3.
- No inflationary increases in supplies and services, premises or transport.
- Pension back-funding would be paid by all partners.

The unavoidable salary pressures were not able to be met currently by WRS making additional income, therefore, an increase to partner funding would be required, as detailed on page 24 of the main agenda report.

With regard to the changes in rent, ICT and support hosting, it should be noted that officer representatives of each partner authority had met to check and challenge the reasonableness of the proposed increases. The increases were seen as modest increases.

These pressures were not able to be met currently by WRS, therefore, an increase to partner funding would be required, as detailed on page 25 of the main agenda report.

The Executive Director of Resources and the Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions from Members with regard to the revenue budget and partner percentage allocation calculations.

RECOMMENDED that partner authorities approve the following for 2022/2023:

- a) the 2022/2023 gross expenditure budget of £3,891k as shown in Appendix 1.
- b) the 2022/2023 income budget of 634k as shown in Appendix 1.
- c) the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2022/2023 onwards:

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	475	14.55
Malvern Hills District Council	418	13.03
Redditch Borough Council	572	17.53
Worcester City Council	540	16.54
Wychavon District	759	23.24
Wyre Forest District Council	493	15.11
Total	3,257	

- d) the additional partner liabilities for 2022/2023 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure:

Council	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	12
Malvern Hills District Council	11
Redditch Borough Council	14
Worcester City Council	13
Wychavon District Council	19

Wyre Forest District Council	12
Total	81

- e) the additional partner liabilities for 2022/2023 in relation to hosting costs:

Council	Increase in Rent £000	Increase in ICT Hosting £000	Increase in Support Hosting £000
Bromsgrove District Council	1	2	1
Malvern Hills District Council	1	2	1
Redditch Borough Council	1	3	2
Worcester City Council	1	3	2
Wychavon District Council	2	4	2
Wyre Forest District Council	1	2	2
Total	7	16	10

- f) Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2022/23 in relation to three Technical Officers:

Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	7	
Malvern Hills District Council	4	10	
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Worcester City Council	5	4	70

Wychavon District Council	8	10	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	5	
Total	33	38	70

18/21

INFORMATION REPORT - COVID RELATED ACTIVITY

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the Board with a detailed information report on Covid related activity.

Members were informed that WRS had been at the heart of the response to the Covid 19 pandemic. Initially, back in March 2020, the then Minister, Matt Hancock designated both Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers automatically as those responsible for enforcing business restrictions. This continued until July 2021 while controls remained in place under various iterations of regulations made under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.

A dedicated team was carved out of the Community Environmental Health division, supplemented with others from around the service to deliver controls on the ground, whilst the Trading Standards team focused its very small resource on scams, which grew massively and the issues around fake and non-compliant PPE entering the market.

As well as this, we embedded a group of Environmental Health Officers in the Local Outbreak Response team, where the skills they had for dealing with outbreaks like TB, Legionella and Food Poisoning, could be put to good use addressing issues that arose on business premises and generally providing support to what was bound to be a relatively inexperienced team built from scratch.

WRS also picked up responsibility for delivering a coordinated Covid Marshal scheme across the County, although given marshal sounds like someone with an enforcement role, we designated them Covid Advisors, to better fit their role. This led onto the service picking up responsibility for delivering “Lost to Follow-up” activity, attempting to contact those infected people who the national NHS Test and Trace service had failed to contact. This led to the service being asked to run the local contact tracing telephone system when Government decided it wanted to start handing responsibility down to local areas and allowing “lost to follow-up” to become directly integrated into this operation.

Finally, we have been able to appoint a part-time communications officer to help report on all of these activities and also to keep our day to day activities in the public eye.

The report covered the following areas in detail:

- Covid Advisors
- Contact Tracing and Lost to Follow Up
- Covid Business Enforcement (including Events and Large Capacity spaces.
- Local Outbreak Response Team.

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, drew Members' attention to the trial for one of the few cases for business non-compliance of the Covid regulations that ended up in Court, as detailed on page 38 of the main agenda report.

Members further referred to the conclusion of the Judge, that the Council was entirely right to issue the prohibition notices, with Members congratulating officers on their hard work.

Councillor E. Stokes, Wychavon District Council, requested that sincere thanks to regulatory services be recorded, for pursuing this case, which officers had tried to resolve before issuing the prohibition notices; and the positive conclusion made by District Judge Strongman. Officers were to be congratulated for their hard work.

The Chairman took the opportunity to express sincere thanks and admiration on behalf of the Board to all WRS officers.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions with regard to the recent bird flu (avian influenza) outbreak and in doing so, highlighted that wild birds were not regulated. There was no requirement or legal duty for district councils to become involved, only if dead birds were found on public land, but that a number of the districts were supporting residents by collecting dead birds for disposal. He added that dead wild waterfowl or other dead wild birds should be reported directly to DEFRA. The Head of Regulatory Services also explained that, when it came to domestic flocks of poultry, Avian influenza was a notifiable disease and therefore fell within the remit of the County Council's Trading Standards service that WRS manages on its behalf. Officers from the Trading Standards team had been involved with two bird flu outbreaks so far this Winter, one of which required some cross border working with Warwickshire County Council's officers. The Trading Standards team were visiting to check on flocks, within the 3 kilometre protection zone and would also have a role in enforcing movement controls in the 10 kilometre surveillance zone.

The work was particularly time consuming and this had meant that everyone in the team was helping.

Public Health England advice remained that avian influenza was primarily a disease of birds and the risk to the general public's health was very low.

RESOLVED that the Information Report – Covid related activity be noted, and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

19/21

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 2

The Head of Regulatory Services presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 2 for 2021/2022; and in doing so highlighted that the Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, had already covered the services Covid related activities during Agenda Item 7 (Minute No. 18/21).

The Head of Regulatory Services went through some of the key areas as follows:

ACTIVITY DATA

The second quarter of 2021/22 saw us leaving the Covid control regime completely with government replacing statutory controls with basic guidance on what business ought to do. Businesses were required to have regard to the advice given because of their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 but because the guidance was not statutory guidance under the ACT, officers were limited as to what they could now ask. As highlighted in the preamble above, details of this were covered in the Information Report – Covid related activities.

Quarter 2 saw the formal launch by the Food Standards Agency of its roadmap to restoring the provisions of the current food control regime. A timetable had been set that required councils to address businesses of a particular risk by a particular date, with April 2023 being set as the final date by which all relevant businesses would need to be visited by, (the lowest risk ones being left out of the re-start programme), and a new approach to food law enforcement would be introduced. The Agency was currently running pilots for Food Standards (Trading Standards function in Worcestershire,) and would be talking in more detail to unitary and district councils about a potential new approach in the oncoming months.

The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter two was an increase of 30% compared to quarter one. It was also a

notable increase compared to previous years. Approximately 37% of cases were reports of accidents; with 49% relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days. The remaining cases related to injuries to members of the public, accidents where major injuries were sustained and a single dangerous occurrence. Last year saw an increase in accidents, beginning in quarter 2 and running into quarter 3 before declining into quarter 4.

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during quarter two saw an increase of 4% compared to quarter one. A reduction in the number of complaints and enquiries was offset by a 19% increase in the number of applications.

The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during quarter two saw a reduction of 15% compared to quarter one, but was broadly consistent compared to previous years. Approximately 90% of enquiries were consultations, while 45% related to contaminated land. A fifth of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

In spite of the high workload, the Technical Services team had recently found time to update its technical guidance note for planning applicants, agents and consultants which ensured that developments were undertaken to the highest standards with regard to environmental protection and the delivery of sustainable and desirable homes across the County.

The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during quarter two saw an increase of 36% compared to quarter one. It was also a significant increase compared to previous years; but was consistent with seasonal variations. Approximately 35% of the cases related to domestic noise, whilst 26% related to noise from commercial premises (including hospitality premises). A further 14% of the cases related to smoke nuisance and the burning of domestic or commercial waste.

Noise featured strongly again and it now seemed reasonable to conclude that, whilst some noise was new, for example where some pubs were trying out live music for the first time, much of the increase was down to the public having acclimatised to a somewhat quieter environment during the pandemic.

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during quarter two saw an increase of 13% compared to quarter one. Approximately 60% of the cases related to pest control.

Of the 249 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter two, the largest proportion at 49% were due to the presence of wasps and overall 67% of treatments were in relation to properties located in the Wychavon or Redditch districts.

PERFORMANCE

The non-business customer measure at 63.5%, was significantly down on the last quarter and on the 74% out-turn from last year. Having reviewed the data, the falls had occurred against the questions relating to speed of response and speed of resolution. This was almost certainly linked to the backlog of nuisance work the team dealt with during the summer

In spite of attempts, it had proved impossible to bring in additional staff resource to support this work area as most of the agency Environmental Health resource was already committed to the pandemic response. Officers had explained the reasons for delays but clearly this had had a negative impact on perceptions of the service. Likewise, numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues was also down at 60.8%.

Business customer satisfaction remained good at 97.7%.

Overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses were at 98.6% and 1.4% respectively. This remained good and on a par with previous years. As highlighted previously, the focus currently was on those higher risk businesses that had historically had a low score.

Generally, compliments outnumber complaints by around 3 or 4 to 1 and so far this year there was difference (15:52). In this quarter, one complaint related to an animal licensing inspection of a premise, another related to a food business unhappy at its Food Hygiene rating, and some to the time taken to respond to nuisance issues. However, the other complaints had been about Covid Advisors and mainly the difficult job around establishing if someone was self-isolating when infected. Officers did try to be diplomatic when looking at this but obviously sometimes people got upset at the fact that someone had come to check, although this only occurred from a WRS perspective.

Performance on processing complete driver license renewals was at 100% for all authorities. This was great work by the team. Members should remember that officers were reliant on those applying with providing the required data necessary to process applications.

As ever, the number of defective vehicles found whilst potentially in service was relatively small at 13, which was a small proportion of the total fleet, which post Covid sat at 1435.

Members may have seen recent national press coverage regarding falls in the numbers of licensed drivers and vehicles on the road. Councils across Worcestershire had seen some falls in numbers of vehicles although not to the extent reported elsewhere. Looking back, the fall during the Covid pandemic was probably around 100 vehicles as numbers did fluctuate over time, with some variations between districts.

Staff sickness had increased from 0.9 days per FTE to 1.55 days per FTE cumulative for the year. A very minor IT glitch meant that these figures needed updating but in WRS's case the change had little impact.

The rate of noise complaints against population was 1.08.

The rate of hospitality businesses not upholding the 4 licensing objectives was 6.7%. This was significantly above the previous three years' figures at this point (4.3%, 4.9% and 2.8% respectively.) Whilst one or other district hitting above 8% at this point was not unusual, Redditch had a similar figure in 2020/21, it was unusual for the lowest district to be over 5%. In the previous 3 years this was 3%, 3.6% and 2.4% respectively. This again supported officer's anecdotal view that more premises were trying new things like live music to bring people in, combined with the fact that people had enjoyed the quiet that the pandemic controls had brought to their localities.

Income brought in during the first half of 2021/22 is £163,583, which was significantly up on last year at this point (£131,901). Hopefully this showed that we were starting to see more normality returned in the areas that generated our income streams.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, responded to questions with regard to Air Quality Management Areas.

The Chairman expressed his sincere thanks to officers for a very informative report.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 for 2021/2022, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

The meeting closed at 5.35 p.m.

Chairman

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WRS Board 10th February 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – December 2021

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – December 2021
- 1.2 Approve £20k transfer to WRS reserves towards purchase of dog warden van
- 1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-22 in relation to Bereavements

Council	Apr–Dec 21 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	2
Malvern Hills District Council	10
Redditch Borough Council	2
Worcester City Council	4
Wychavon District Council	1
Total	19

- 1.4 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-22 in relation to Pest Control

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2021/22 Pest Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	1
Redditch Borough Council	7



Wychavon District Council	8
Total	16

1.5 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
Bromsgrove District Council	4	7	
Malvern Hills District Council	3	5	
Redditch Borough Council	4	1	
Worcester City Council	4	2	68
Wychavon District Council	6	10	
Wyre Forest District Council	4	6	
Total	25	31	68

Contribution to Priorities

Introduction/Summary

Background

Report

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

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

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

The following reports are included for Joint Board's Attention:

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

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a projected outturn 2021/22 of £141k 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 and a small amount of work in other grant related areas. Agency staff costs are being incurred to backfilling of these employees, however due to the national shortage of suitable qualified staff, which creates difficulties in recruiting agency replacements, this is resulting in a significant saving within salaries.
- Officer Members of the Board have agreed to reserve a further £20k to the purchase of stray dog vans in 2022/23. This is due to further delays in the supply chain due to the international shortage of micro-chip components. Each partner authority contribution is:

Bromsgrove District Council	£3k
Malvern Hills District Council	£3k
Redditch Borough Council	£3k
Worcester City Council	£3k
Wychavon District Council	£5k
Wyre Forest District Council	£3k

- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – Dec 21 to be funded by partners. These costs are charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the nature of the activity, it is not possible to project a final outturn figure:

Bromsgrove District Council	£2k
Malvern Hills District Council	£10k
Redditch Borough Council	£2k
Worcester City Council	£4k
Wychavon District Council	£1k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- If April to Dec 21 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be an overspend on this service of £16k. WRS officers will continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of final recharges for 2021/22 as soon as possible. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners is:

Bromsgrove District Council	£1k
Redditch Borough Council	£7k
Wychavon District Council	£8k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – Dec 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

WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2021/22

Total WRS Dec 21 / Period 9 - 21/22

	Revised Full Year Budget 21-22	Revised Budget - Committed Apr - Dec 21	Expenditure Apr - Dec 21	Variance	Qtr 3 - Projected outturn	Qtr 3 - Projected Outturn Variance
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Direct Expenditure						
Employees						
Salary	2,968	2,226	1,849	-377	2,475	-492
Agency Staff	0	0	183	183	295	295
Employee Insurance	25	18	18	-0	25	0
Sub-Total - Employees	2,993	2,244	2,050	-194	2,795	-198
Premises						
Rent / Hire of Premise	54	41	40	-1	53	-1
Cleaning	1	1	0	-0	1	1
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sub-Total - Premises	55	41	40	-1	54	-1
Transport						
Vehicle Hire	13	9	9	0	13	0
Vehicle Fuel	8	6	3	-3	5	-3
Road Fund Tax	1	1	0	-0	0	-1
Vehicle Insurance	5	4	4	0	5	0
Vehicle Maintenance	3	2	1	-2	3	-1
Car Allowances	75	56	23	-33	36	-39
Sub-Total - Transport	105	78	40	-38	61	-43
Supplies and Services						
Furniture & Equipment	32	24	20	-4	67	35
Clothing, uniforms and laundry	2	1	1	-1	2	-0
Printing & Photocopying	17	13	13	-0	18	1
Postage	11	8	14	5	18	7
ICT	40	30	41	11	58	18
Telephones	21	16	11	-5	18	-3
Travel & Seminars	22	17	6	-11	30	8
Insurance	20	15	15	0	20	0
Third Party Payments	144	108	108	0	144	0
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	309	231	227	-5	374	65
Contractors						
Dog Warden	140	105	51	-54	68	-72
Pest Control	52	39	94	55	118	66
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	65	49	40	-8	49	-16
Other contractors/consultants	3	2	1	-1	2	-1
Water Safety	5	4	5	1	6	1
Food Safety	1	1	0	-1	1	0
Environmental Protection	12	9	29	20	31	19
Grants / Subscriptions	13	9	12	3	21	8
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	4	0	-4	6	0
Sub-Total	295	221	233	11	300	5
Income						
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-498	-374	-384	-10	-488	10
Sub-Total	-498	-374	-384	-10	-488	10
Additional Reserve						
Stray Dog Van	0	0	0	0	20	20
Sub-Total	0	0	0	0	20	20
Overall Total	3,257	2,443	2,206	-237	3,117	-141

Savings due to employees working on grant funded covid related work.

Backfilling for employees working on covid related work

Due to change in working patterns

Essential calibration on noise monitoring equipment.

Purchase of Noise Monitoring equipment to replace obsolete equipment greater than 10 years old.

£100k BDC hosting / £44k WFDC ICT hosting.

Underspend due to number of stray dogs reducing, relating to change in working conditions, numbers of stray dogs are beginning to increase

Additional costs relating to Gull Control & Pest Control which is charged to relevant partners and offset in the income line

Bereavement / Works in Default to be charged to relevant partners, offset in Income

See Append 2

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2021/22

Appendix 2

Income from Partners

April to Dec 21

	£
Budget	2,442,940
Pension Backfunding	21,899
Bereavement / Public Burials	18,741
Marlpool - Redditch	1,499
Pest Control Overspend - Bromsgrove, Wychavon & Redditch	11,900
Pest Control - Malvern	3,075
Employee for Animal Activity - Apr - Dec 21	26,525
Employee for Income Generation - Apr - Dec 21	18,480
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Apr - Dec 21 - Worcs City	55,214
Reimbursement of costs - Zety Ltd - Wyre Forest	4,697
	2,604,970

Grant Income

Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	9,550
	9,550

Other Income

Stray Dog Income	25,269
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal & Admin Support	39,900
Worcester County - Safety at Sports Grounds	15,000
Planning Support Work	68,797
Contaminated Land Work	16,634
PPC Work	3,355
Primary Authority work	4,021
Screening / Compliance Review / Nox Tubes	180
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	1,053
Pest Control	4,900
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	17,972
Licensing - Victorian Fayre / Pre-App Advice	1,935
Taxi Database	3,583
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	9,882
	212,481

Total Income Apr - Dec 21

2,827,001

2021/22 Base Budget from Partners

-2,442,940

Total Income Excluding Budget

384,061

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WRS Board

Date: 10th February 2022

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Service Plan 2022/23

Recommendations

That members of the Board:

- (i) Approve the WRS service plan for 2022/23
- (ii) They specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

Report

The Board signs off the service plan for WRS each year. The process helps to make members aware of what the service is proposing for the relevant financial year and provides a sign off that some central government bodies like to see in relation to service delivery plans e.g. the Food Standards Agency.

The plan follows very much the pattern of previous years and has an Executive Summary to pick up the main points. Last year's plan had to accommodate our activities in tackling the global pandemic as well as our day to day activities. At the time of writing, the country retains limited control measures, although it sounds like these will be ended shortly and possibly before this paper reaches WRS Board. Government was clear that it would only impose the Plan B controls for the minimum period it felt necessary and that we needed to see that living with Covid 19 as a fact of daily life would again be the norm going forward. Members were told in this report last year that the service was planning for some involvement in pandemic controls for the first quarter of 2021/22 but it seemed likely that could run well into quarter two as well. As it happened, there has been no time during the last financial year when WRS has not been involved in pandemic control activities and we have taken on additional roles as the year went on. With Government rolling its CONTAIN funding into 2022/3, we have to assume that the service will continue to have some involvement but it looks more likely that there will be a winding down of response activities during the year, with perhaps the need to respond to spikes in case numbers as they occur. So, yet again, flexibility will be necessary to reshape what is being delivered as the local environment changes during the new financial year.

Away from the pandemic, the service will continue to shape its work around the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by BEIS, as these provide a framework that allows WRS to have a golden thread back to the priorities of the six partners and also to link to the requirements of the various national bodies that oversee our work.

A range of high level activities are identified within the plan so that members will be aware of the general focus of activity. Below this will sit a number of team plans that will be used to drive the actual business activities.

The plan has been devised in the face of on-going financial uncertainty in local government generally. The long awaited Levelling-up White Paper has yet to appear and the sector continues to push for fairer funding settlements.

Working with businesses and other partners is a key theme for both generating income to mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes are delivered that match the priorities of partners and stakeholders. Delivery for other local authorities also remains a key income generation strategy, supported by work for the private sector and specific grant monies. Whilst much of our work for customers fell off during the initial period of the pandemic response, most of our long-standing customers have come back to us as well as some new ones in recent weeks. This makes us hopeful that this strategy will remain fruitful.

We will continue to use intelligence to drive the business forward and the embedding of this approach and its associated processes will continue.

The Risk Register has been updated to reflect the current position in areas like IT provision and development, staffing levels, and our reliance on contractual relationships for income. The threat from cyber-attack has become more real as the devastating consequences have been felt by colleagues in other local authorities elsewhere in the country. We will work closely with our ICT host, Wyre Forest DC, to limit the risk of this. Our long-standing investment in mobile and flexible working found us well-placed to deal with the need for home working and the majority of our activities are now enabled for this working pattern. However, our reliance on ICT provision to deliver this does increase our vulnerability to disruption.

As with previous years, members are asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This is to meet one of the recommendations of the auditors from the Food Standards Agency who visited the service in May 2017. They were keen that members have a better understanding of the demand in this service area when they authorised the plan for this and future years.

Members are asked to note the proposed numbers of inspections and similar activities proposed for the new financial year that will be undertaken to discharge the statutory duties of the 6 partners in relation to food control. As we have previously explained, the Food Standards Agency has laid down a road map that started in September 2021, laying down the details of the journey local services would go on as we move back to full food law enforcement. The current end-date for this process is April 2023, when the Agency tells us it is planning to bring in a new approach to local enforcement. We have explained to members that the service, like the majority of others, remains under pressure with other work and the lack of agency capacity nationally means that many authorities may struggle to hit the exact target asked. We will keep the board updated on progress as the year goes forward.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability

Contact Points

Background Papers

NA

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Service Plan 2020/21 including Risk Register

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Service Plan 2022/23

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Vision

"That Worcestershire is a healthy, safe and fair place to live, where businesses can thrive"

CONTENTS

	Page Number
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Operating Environment	5
Strategic Priorities	6
Purposes	7
Finance	7
Audit Arrangements	8
Activities and Outcome Measures	8
Performance Reporting	11
Structure	11
Training and Development of Multi-Functional Teams	12
Business Continuity	13
Local Enterprise Partnerships	13
Other Partnerships	13
Consultation/Engagement	14
Governance	14
Risks	15
Appendix A Structure Chart	16
Appendix B Regulatory Services Budget Table 2021/2022	17
Appendix C Performance Measures Relating to Outcomes	20
Appendix D Risk Register	32

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The plan broadly follows previous years, outlining how the service will operate over the following 12 months to deliver on both national and local priorities, some of which are highlighted in the plan, and indicating at a high level what activities the service will carry out to achieve or address those priorities and how success will be measured. The Service will enter 2022/23 with a total agreed budget from the district partners of £3.257M. This includes a budgetary uplift to cover a pay increase of up to 2% and the cost of increased pension contributions by the employer. It also includes funding for a number of posts for specific work either in a particular function or for a particular partner. Partners have recognised that there is a ceiling to the potential for income generation with the current officer capacity and that the fight against the pandemic will continue to limit the service's ability to bring in income from a wider range of sources in the immediate future. Hence, the uplift in budget is welcome.

Plans for 2021/22 recognised the on-going contribution of the service to the pandemic response, which has yet to relent fully. Indeed, as the year went on, whilst enforcement responsibilities declined as business restrictions were relaxed, the need for Covid Advisor support in various guises remained essential and the service took on the new responsibility of local contact tracing. It has to be said that none of this would have been possible without the financial support from Public Health colleagues at the County Council, and we hope that they continue to recognise our efforts in contributing to the response in 2022/23. During last year, the service kept the Board apprised of activities, both Covid related and business as usual work, as clearly the latter did not go away. Officers continued to develop the skills of juggling the various demands placed upon them. At the time of writing, Government has been clear that it thinks the current wave of infections can be ridden without the need for the introduction of further measures, but the on-going vaccination programme and the contact tracing demands due to high case numbers, continue to create significant demands for our service. Uncertainty over what the world will look like in the Spring remains, but Government has agreed to roll forward the current Covid grant funding into the new financial year, so we must assume WRS will continue to have at least some engagement with pandemic measures for a period of 2022/23 and we should plan for this.

The service will also continue to pursue work for other local authorities. It will be interesting to see whether the pandemic has increased appetites for our support and particularly what impact the "Levelling Up" White Paper has on the focus of councils in two-tier areas. In making decisions regarding service delivery, the service will continue to risk assess what it does taking into account the economic impacts and impacts on health and well-being. Whilst risk will remain a key criterion against which we deploy resources, intelligence will be a major contributor, especially in relation to issues which cut across our teams. By gathering data and understanding issues, rather than simply rushing out to deal with problems, we will focus resources on where they deliver the best outcomes, with better long term solutions. This was a key part of our response to the pandemic and will remain at the heart of service delivery moving forward.

Simon Wilkes
Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

James Howse
Executive Director of Resources Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the twelfth formal annual service plan to be produced by Worcestershire Regulatory Services and follows a similar format to the previous plans with an Executive Summary and details in appendices that follow on from the main commentary. The financial information covers the three-year accounting period 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25 however the operational detail reflects the planned activities that the service will undertake in 2022/23.

2021/22 was another very testing year for WRS in terms of responding to the pandemic whilst keeping things moving in the day job and continuing to deliver on income generation to support the budget. The service had to respond to the various changes in the regime of Covid business controls and maintained an embedded resource within the Local Outbreak Response Team, mainly focused on dealing with business outbreaks but also other activities. We continued to deliver the county wide programme of Covid Advisors and the Lost to Follow-up contact tracing of positive cases that the national system could not contact, which later transformed into us delivering local contact tracing and taking some of the initial calls instead of the national system.

Work from our usual local authority customers continued to come in, albeit at a slightly reduced level, and a number of our Primary Authority relationships that had been semi-dormant during the most stringent of pandemic controls began to come to life as businesses responded to the re-opening of the economy. It looks like all of our Primary Authority business have so far survived the pandemic and we hope to re-build our working relationships with them during the coming 12 months.

It is probably too early to say whether the experience of the past 2 years will lead to more local authorities seeking our support. The long-awaited Devolution White Paper that is now to be the Levelling Up White Paper is likely to shape local authority thinking in the coming few years. Whilst Government has been clear that re-organisation from the top down is not on the cards, some areas may see this as the only way forward and others may become more focused on co-operation within their county boundaries in two tier areas. Time will tell what impact this will have on our ability to generate income. One thing that didn't change during the pandemic was the need to investigate breaches of the law and a number of cases were put through to council legal departments. Full details of activity will be reported in the Annual Report to be produced at the end of May 2022 and reported to the Board in June.

The coming year is likely to be dominated by:

- The continuing response to the pandemic
- Following up on the Food Standards Agency's roadmap to recovery for food law enforcement,
- Trying to find innovative ways to tackle cross cutting issues,
- Seeking new, and maintaining existing, income streams to help support local delivery,
- The further development of the WRS website to better enable public interaction,

- Developing the self-service model further for wider service elements,
- Continuing to develop and review practical procedures to maintain resilience and the benefits from service elements such as Legal Support and the Intel Unit that provide operational support to both WRS and Trading Standards functions

The focus on income generation will be to target areas of greatest benefit in terms of economies of scale, the required resource intensity and income reward. It is important that only those opportunities meriting our focus are pursued as the scoping and drafting of tender documents are time consuming and onerous.

For existing partners, managers will continue to identify any changes that can be made to service delivery to either improve marginal efficiency or improve service. This is particularly relevant for areas of high demand such as planning referrals and areas of significant officer resource, such as long-standing complaints or enforcement action. This will require close working relationships to support and assist partner colleagues to ensure that we are all working as effectively as possible together. We will also continue to work with colleagues from various districts to see what functions might reasonably be added to the WRS platform to improve delivery and possibly deliver some savings through economies of scale. Such changes may not cover all partners but all partners need to agree if other partners wish to add functions to what WRS delivers on their behalf. We will also continue to engage with the County Council around its relationship with the partnership.

Page 36
The website is now built on an updated version of the software platform on which it operates. This has allowed us to improve the look of the system but we hope to also improve the functionality too. We will have further discussions with partners about whether payments may be enabled but this will have significant cost implications for the partners and it has been felt that, during the pandemic, there have been too many pressures on both staff time and local authority finances to give this serious thought.

2. OPERATING ENVIRONMENT: PESTELO Review

2.1 Political

The UK withdrawal from the European Union (EU), commonly known as 'Brexit', continues to be a significant factor in the political landscape. The UK officially left the EU on 31st January 2020 but remained in the EU single market and customs union during a twelve-month transition period. This period ended on 31st December 2020 however, whilst the UK and EU have been operating under a trade and cooperation agreement, there continues to be uncertainty as to how future trade will be conducted with EU member states. The agreement, for example, does not cover certain aspects of financial services or the exportation of food products¹. In addition, there are broader trade concerns as the UK seeks trade agreements with other nations.

¹https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/relations-non-eu-countries/relations-united-kingdom/eu-uk-trade-and-cooperation-agreement_en

Aside from trade, the future of the UK's laws is also uncertain, particularly where they originate from EU directives such as those relating to employment standards, environmental protection, and food safety. The UK Withdrawal Act 2018 effectively transferred EU laws onto the UK books, and gave ministers powers to amend laws using secondary legislation².

2.2 Economic

The impacts of Brexit, whilst uncertain, are forecast to be worse in the long run compared to the Coronavirus pandemic³. Recent forecasts suggest that leaving the EU will reduce the UK's potential gross domestic product (GDP) by 4%, whilst the pandemic would reduce GDP by a further 2%. A shrinking economy can result in lower wages, job losses, restricted access to credit, and general fear or uncertainty. Whilst this affects large and small businesses, the latter generally faces greater challenges due to a lack of cash reserves and working capital. From a short-term perspective, the impacts of Brexit have seen significant disruptions to supply chains caused by delays at ports and contributed to shortages of delivery drivers.

As the UK seeks post Brexit trade deals, particularly with countries outside the EU, food and drinks manufactures are seeking to export a greater volume of food and drink products. A greater volume of exports will result in a higher number of requests for export health certificates which are issued by local authorities to confirm that goods meet health requirements of the destination country.

The pandemic continues to pose additional financial uncertainty for businesses and consumers. The implementation of restrictions (such as national lockdowns), and the varying of those restrictions at times, or within different regions, meant that business sectors had to close and/or could only operate under certain conditions. The travel sector, for example has faced ongoing uncertainty due to border closures and countries having differing travel requirements. The hospitality and events industries were largely required cease trading or change their method of operation to trade outdoors or offer delivery services. Whilst businesses have been able to access financial support (e.g. the job retention scheme or business rates relief), this has failed to cover the full financial obligations of businesses and the level of support as varied by sector. Although many businesses will continue to trade, some will be forced to close or enter administration.

From a consumer perspective, the cost of living has continued to rise with inflation at its highest rate for ten years⁴. The rate of inflation impacts upon the cost of goods and services with, for example, household energy, petrol, used car, hotel, clothing, household goods, and raw material prices becoming more expensive in the past twelve months. In addition, the Food and Drink Federation has recently warned that consumers will

²<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/eu-withdrawal-act>

³<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59070020>

⁴<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59316544>

inevitably face higher food and drink prices if manufacturers are forced to absorb the cost of proposed Government policies during the few years⁵. Their report entitled “Eating into household budgets: The Government’s “recipe for food price inflation” states that the price of shopping per household could increase by more than £160 per year.

Economic uncertainties, whether caused by Brexit, the pandemic, or a rise in the cost of living may lead to businesses needing to provide cheaper alternatives or implement cost cutting measures. Both are of concern to regulatory bodies as they are more likely to result in non-compliances and fraud.

Whilst the above highlights economic uncertainty, there continues to be a drive for local development. The West Midlands Industrial Strategy aims to bring investment into the conurbation which, in turn, will influence developments in North Worcestershire and bring business opportunities to the County along the M42 corridor. Further developments are also likely following rail improvements such as the completion of Worcestershire Parkway and the ongoing HS2 project. Aside from commercial development, the drive for affordable housing remains a national priority. As district councils strive to reach housing targets, developments are being considered on available land, including brownfield and some greenfield sites. In addition, planning reforms continue to be discussed which aim to implement housing targets for local authorities, digitize the planning process, replace ‘Section 106 obligations’ with a national levy, and create a traffic light system for land classification⁶.

Any developments, whether commercial or residential, could impact upon the volume of planning enquiries received by WRS. Over a five-year period, there has been a 76% increase in the volume of planning enquiries referred to the service by planning departments. Whilst most cases have been received from Worcestershire authorities, approximately 1 in 5 enquiries has been undertaken on behalf of contract authorities including Gloucester City Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, and Mendip District Council. Approximately 90% of planning enquiries have been consultations, whilst 50% have related to contaminated land. Planning authorities are required to consider air quality, contaminated land, and nuisance.

2.3 Social

As outlined previously, there has been a well-documented increase in the number of households purchasing dogs during COVID restrictions. The price of certain breeds was reported to have double during the initial lockdown with dogs, on average, costing around £1,900. This led to a significant increase in the number of breeders, particularly unlicensed breeders, as people sought to supplement lost income and/or expand existing hobbies. The Dogs Trust are now reporting, however, that owners are reconsidering owning pet as their circumstances have changed following the easing of restrictions. This has resulted in a 35% increase in calls from people looking to ‘give up’ their dog⁷. Where dogs become

⁵<https://www.fdf.org.uk/fdf/news-media/press-releases/2021-press-releases/cost-of-government-regulation-will-mean-higher-food-prices-for-consumers>

⁶<https://www.homebuilding.co.uk/news/planning-reforms>

⁷<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58518892>

unwanted pets, this could lead to an increase in the number of stray dogs and/or the number of complaints about noise from barking dogs left unattended. In addition, the Dogs Trust also state there has been a 66% increase in puppies requiring assistance from their puppy pilot scheme which rehabilitates and rehomes dogs that have been seized (and quarantined) after being illegally imported into the country⁸. There has also been an increase in breeders offering to mutilate (ear cropping) puppies to follow a social media trend.

A study commissioned for the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) has found that, whilst diets are slowly changing, UK consumers are not meeting the standards required for a healthy diet. There have been reductions in salt, sugar, and red and processed meat consumption, but consumption of fruit, vegetables, and fibre, has shown little or no change⁹. The study also found that, although consumers continue to buy food from large supermarkets, other forms of retailer (e.g. mini supermarkets) and the online grocery market (vegetable boxes, Hello Fresh etc.) have increased in popularity. In terms of the 'out-of-home environment', there has been significant growth in the proportion of individuals eating out on a regular basis, whilst digital technology has contributed towards the expansion of online food delivery platforms such as Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats. As a final consideration, the study found that there has been an increase in the sale of ethical and sustainable products over the last ten years, including the consumption of plant-based meals. In addition, whilst consumers are concerned about food provenance and safety, this is dependent on the food group, and other factors such as price, availability, and quality. There are, however, more people choosing to adopt specific diets such as vegan or flexitarian.

Page 35

The Licensed Private Hire Car Association have stated that more than half of the licensed taxi drivers in the UK have not returned to the trade since the pandemic. This scale of loss has not been seen across the county but there has been a reduction. In some parts of the country, the shortage has prompted concerns of the safety of women, students, and night-time workers struggling to get home¹⁰ and several councils have responded by cutting the cost of a licence, whilst the Department for Transport has stated it plans to revise taxi licensing guidelines in 2022.

There has been a significant increase in the number of drink spiking incidents reported to Police forces across the UK in recent months. Whilst drink spiking is not directly investigated by WRS, the National Police Chief's Council state that most cases have involved young women and have taken place at licensed premises or private parties¹¹. There have been calls for drink covers, better training for night-life staff, and for more rigorous searches of clubbers. Campaigners have also called for dedicated welfare staff within venues to help people get home safely.

⁸https://www.dogstrust.org.uk/about-us/accounts-annual-reviews/annual-report/dt_annualreport2020_v21_final.pdf

⁹https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4300/RR4379/RAND_RR4379.pdf

¹⁰<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59158230>

¹¹<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/23/hundreds-of-uk-drink-spiking-reports-in-the-past-two-months>

2.4 Technological

The development of technology continues to play a significant role in modern society, with the UK previously identified as one of the most cyber-dependant economies of G20 member nations. Technology is increasingly used, therefore, to commit criminal offences. This poses a threat to local authorities who are often ill-equipped to investigate such matters; particularly where the offence relates to social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. This was emphasised several years ago when Government, as part of a wider strategy, created the National Trading Standards eCrime Team to monitor and investigate consumer and business frauds. Whilst the use of technology has not been significantly referenced previously, the most prominent offences enabled by technology relate to unlicensed or unregistered dog breeding, scrap metal, food, and taxi services advertising via websites or “buy and sell groups”. Facebook has also become a prominent place to report stray dogs, app-based private hire booking systems are becoming increasingly popular, and technology has been used during the pandemic to circulate anti-COVID rhetoric.

A recent study of shopping behaviour in the UK suggests that there has been strong shift towards online purchases in the past year¹². This shift has, of course, been driven by the pandemic and the need for consumers to restrict their movements to ‘essential journeys’. The study also suggests that shopping habits continue to be driven by convenience, home delivery and availability; whilst over third of consumers have completed a purchase via a mobile app. There has also been an increase in the proportion of consumers utilising a research-based approach prior to purchasing; however, this is largely driven by older consumers (persons aged 45 and above). Separate studies suggest that consumers would be more likely to shop for fresh and packaged food online in future due to the pandemic¹³, whilst the most prominent platforms to purchase from included the major supermarket chains¹⁴. As outlined above, there has also been significant expansion of online food delivery platforms.

Whilst technology poses a threat to local authorities, it also provides significant opportunities as WRS can promote its services and circulate guidance to wider audiences via its website and social media feeds. It can also operate more efficiently by accepting online payments, updating customers via public access, and referring complainants to more suitable organisations. In addition, the development of technology provides additional opportunities for the service, and its partners, to prevent, detect, and disrupt crime, whether through the sharing of intelligence or via tactical action.

¹²<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-gb/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/consumers-adapted-shopping-behaviour-covid>

¹³<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1232115/uk-shoppers-that-will-mostly-shop-online-by-category/>

¹⁴<https://www.statista.com/forecasts/870307/united-kingdom-top-online-stores-united-kingdom-ecommercedb>

2.5 Environmental

Local authorities have a responsibility to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas against national objectives. Where areas are unlikely to meet the objectives, they must be designated Air Quality Management Areas and action taken to work towards meeting the objectives. Whilst regulations refer to several pollutants, nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) are of primary concern and are commonly connected to combustion processes for fossil fuels such as vehicle exhaust emissions and industrial processes. The implementation of restrictions, particularly lockdowns and home working requirements are likely to have led to greatly improved air quality across the country during the periods when traffic was limited. Research has indicated that cities and large towns have experienced a 38% reduction in the level of NO₂ concentrations, whilst monitoring data within Worcestershire has also identified general improvements. Despite this, there continues to be areas of concern and seven air quality management areas remain in force across the county. Any changes to the status of areas, however, is dependent on reliable long-term data being available for assessment. This can only begin once public behaviour return to 'normal' (whatever that looks like in a post restriction environment). It is not known, for example, whether the levels of travel will return to those seen in 2019, or whether flexible working will mean more people continue to work from home. Air quality monitoring continues to be a significant factor in the planning and environmental permitting processes.

The AQMAs in Worcestershire include:

- Welch Gate, Bewdley
- Horsefair/Coventry Street, Kidderminster
- Lickey End, Bromsgrove
- Worcester Road, Bromsgrove
- Redditch Road, Bromsgrove
- Worcester Road, Wychbold
- Worcester City

The Office for Environmental Protection is a new public body which was legally created in November under the Environment Act 2021. It is due to be fully established early in 2022 and will review and report on government's progress in meeting environmental goals, monitor and report on the implementation of environmental law, advise government on proposed changes to the law, and investigate suspected failures to comply with environmental law by government and other public bodies¹⁵. From a WRS perspective, the latter would include compliance with national air quality objectives, so we will wait and see what impact the new body will have on local authority behaviours.

¹⁵<https://www.theoep.org.uk/what-we-do>

After 2020 was named one of the warmest, wettest, and sunniest years on record, scientists warned that extremes of weather will strike the UK more frequently. Due to the climate crisis, heatwaves are expected to become longer, hotter, and more frequent, whilst rainfall could become more variable and more extreme¹⁶. In recent years, the UK has seen storms which have resulted in record levels of flooding. More extreme weather could significantly impact upon the level of complaints received by WRS, particularly noise and smoke nuisance complaints as people spend more time outdoors.

2.6 Legal

Aside from laws resulting from EU directives and ongoing reforms to planning laws, there are limited legal changes currently in the pipeline that would significantly impact upon the functions undertaken by WRS.

The Government has launched reforms to the Human Rights Act which aim to respect common law traditions and strengthen the role of the UK Supreme Court, restore sharper focus on protecting fundamental rights, prevent the incremental expansion of rights without proper democratic oversight, and emphasise the role of responsibilities within the human rights framework¹⁷. In particular, the proposals seek to prevent abuses of the system by foreign criminals, and strike a proper balance between individuals' rights, personal responsibility, and the wider public interest. The proposals, however, commit to staying within the European Convention on Human Rights. It is not known what impact reforms will have on intelligence gathering processes with the right to privacy, for example, covered by Article 8 of the existing act.

New powers to crack down on puppy smuggling and increase protections for farm animals have been introduced by Government. The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill aims to address primates being kept as pets, dogs attacking or worrying livestock, the exportation of livestock, the importation of dogs, cats, and ferrets, and legislation connected to Zoos¹⁸. The bill follows additional legislation, which received royal assent during April 2021, which increased the maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences.

The Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Bill is a Private Member's Bill sponsored by Peter Gibson, Conservative MP for Darlington. It seeks to improve the safety of taxi passengers and address the issue of a driver obtaining a licence from one authority, after having their licence refused or revoked by a different authority¹⁹. The bill would mandate local licensing authorities to

¹⁶https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/climate-change-extreme-weather-uk-britain-future/?utm_source=paidsearch&utm_medium=ukgrant&utm_campaign=genericbrandname&gclid=EAlaIqObChMI99u8zezI9AIVDevCh06ugSYEAAAYASAAEgLSJ_D_BwE

¹⁷https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040409/human-rights-reform-consultation.pdf

¹⁸<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9229>

¹⁹<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9305>

record taxi licence refusals, revocations, and suspensions on a national database, which other authorities would be required to consult and seeks to build on previous legislation which led to the development of the NR3 Taxi Sanctions database hosted by NAFN.

2.7 Organisational

Local authorities are primarily funded thorough government grants, council tax, and business rates. Since its inception, the budget for WRS has comprised of contributions from its strategic partners, supported by income generated from various activities. This does not include Licensing income, which goes back to the partners and some income streams which were present before WRS was formed. Between 2016 and 2020, WRS was required to meet all increases in financial pressure through increased income generation and managed to achieve this. Several WRS partners however, and local authorities in general, continue to face financial challenges. This means that future budgets for the service are continually 'subject to potential change'. The on-going problem for WRS is to offset any future reductions through income generation, whilst being able to fulfil statutory responsibilities.

Worcestershire is a 'two-tier' area for local government, which means functions are divided between the county and district councils. In July 2021, Government produced a report entitled "Unitary local government" which considered proposals, rationales, and alternatives to local government restructuring²⁰. A recent leak in relation to the White paper on Levelling-up suggested that Government were planning, as part of that process, to move wholesale to unitary arrangements. Subsequent responses from Government indicated that this will not be the case and further steps to unitary arrangements will continue to require local unanimity.

The Intelligence Operating Model, and National Intelligence Model, have, at their centres, several key principles. These include clear and consistent tasking, adopting a problem-solving approach and taking evidence-based decisions. Whilst WRS has chosen to adopt the principles and the processes associated with intelligence-led enforcement, this continues to pose significant challenges. Decision makers, for example, are continuing to adjust to tasking and coordination requirements, whilst thinking more broadly about "knowns" and "unknowns". In addition, operational officers require further training to understand their role in an intelligence-led organisation, the importance of evaluating information, and concepts such as the problem analysis triangle (a crime requires an offender, a victim, and a location). The most significant challenge faced by the service, however, is how it becomes more proactive and less reactive. This is also connected to how the service utilises its intelligence capabilities to develop its understanding of the entities committing offences, any emerging threats, and any problem sectors.

²⁰<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9056/CBP-9056.pdf>

3. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The service continues to use the Priority Regulatory Outcomes for England for local authorities, developed by a previous incarnation of the Office for Product Safety and Standards as a framework to link its activities back to the priorities of the partners. These are outlined below:

1. support economic growth, especially in small businesses, by ensuring a fair, responsible and competitive trading environment
2. protect the environment for future generations including tackling the threats and impacts of climate change
3. improve quality of life and wellbeing by ensuring clean and safe neighbourhoods
4. help people to live healthier lives by preventing ill health and harm and promoting public health
5. ensure a safe, healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefit of consumers and the rural economy

All of our partners have priorities around supporting economic growth, protecting the environment, residents and neighbourhoods and improving health and well-being in communities. As long as our work meets one or more of the above aims, we know we are delivering what partners want.

Our Strategic Assessment, the key document that helps us determine priorities, has demonstrated that these 5 priorities also remain at the heart of what the data is saying we should focus on. It looks at a broad swathe of local, regional and national data to help identify the key issues to be tackled over a 2-year period, with an annual sense check to ensure the environment has not changed significantly. The priorities identified in the Strategic Assessment are reflected in the operational activities mentioned later in the plan.

Whilst the overall Council financial settlements for 2022/3 are slightly better than anticipated, our finance colleagues from a number of partners tell us they will be faced with a challenging financial situation for the foreseeable future. In the past this was addressed through transforming how things are done and generating income. We will look to support partners with this and encourage partners to consider what other enforcement related functions they might wish to consider operating under the WRS banner, where we might create economies of scale to assist with delivery and potentially reduce long term costs. Should further financial pressure be directed at savings from the existing WRS budget, we will need to prioritise what is delivered, to whom and how. To assist in this decision making, the service will continue to use 3 key criteria to consider when making decision on service provision:

- a) Are vulnerable people impacted?
- b) Are there Health and Well Being issues involved?
- c) Is there a positive/negative impact on economic activity?

We will also continue to develop our use of intelligence to support this. There remains a risk that demand which can no longer be met by WRS is simply re-directed to partners in other ways e.g. via complaints. At this stage, with the reductions we have seen so far, the risk of district partners facing challenges relating to whether or not they are meeting their statutory obligations are low and the position remains defensible.

4. PURPOSES

Following its Systems Thinking work, WRS adopted 3 purposes to underpin service delivery and provide a common thread to run through all of its functions.

1. Help me resolve my problem and stop it from happening to anyone else,
2. I want to assume everything is ok
3. Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same.

These purposes are expressed in terms that a customer (member of the public or a business,) might use, provide a focus for staff and were agreed by the previous Joint Committee. These purposes, combined with the priority outcomes encapsulate the Service's contribution to the wider community agenda, reflecting as they do the broad themes relevant to all partners.

5. FINANCE

A summary of the budget position for 2022/23 is shown at Appendix B, along with the proposed budgets for the following two years. A more detailed breakdown will be available to the Joint Board in its regular financial reports. Income levels are difficult to estimate but we have set ourselves income targets going forward in order to maintain a greater resilience than would otherwise be possible.

6. AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

The Internal Audit Service will be provided under the current arrangement by Worcester City Council to the Host Authority. The only audit during 2021/22 related to how we manage suspended taxi drivers. It resulted in minor changes to what we do. The participating authorities S151 Officers consider the Audit Plan of the Host to ensure adequate arrangements are in place. Changes to the level of funding mean that WRS accounts no longer need to be audited separately, so they will be done within the accounts of the host Authority and the Joint Board will be provided with relevant report information to give them the necessary assurances.

Where broad and in-depth scrutiny of the service is requested, member Authorities are requested by the legal agreement liaise about requests from their Overview and Scrutiny Committees and should use reasonable endeavours to agree joint scrutiny arrangements with a view to avoiding duplication of effort. Historically, WRS developed good working relationships with several of the partners' Overview and Scrutiny Committees, leading to the positive re-enforcement of performance in those areas.

The service's ability to provide bespoke support to individual partners is highlighted by the work done with task and finish groups of the City Council's Environmental Health and Licensing Committee, particularly the ones on Air Quality and the Taxi Strategy. Whilst the service could not support this kind of activity for all partners at the same time, we do hope to be able to offer this type of work more widely when it can be scheduled. Engaging with the City in this way and with projects like the future vision for Worcester has helped to build and maintain relationships with officers at the City Council and helped to highlight the important role of regulation when looking at wider, long term policy development.

7. ACTIVITIES & OUTCOME MEASURES

The service's IT system allows accurate reporting on activities. The service has continued to work with members to demonstrate the service's performance and the service's current core performance indicators are listed as Appendix C. Over time, with one or two notable exceptions, we have seen improvement or maintenance of most of these indicators, which we hope will continue in 2022/23. The non-business customer satisfaction figures improved in the run up to the pandemic but slipped last Summer when the sheer demand for nuisance and other complaint work simply outstripped supply so customers were less happy with how long it took us to get to them and to resolve issues where we could. Hopefully this will improve again once we come out of pandemic response and work will continue to try to better understand the issues and improve performance during the coming year.

The activities outlined below are examples of what is planned by the service. We believe that activity data combined with the core performance indicators will give Members the confidence that the Service continues to perform well, given the current financial constraints, and it continues to contribute to the wider local agenda. The approach is very much in line with Government thinking in terms of reducing burdens on and supporting local businesses, whilst tackling rogues who would ignore their responsibilities and criminals who use business as a model for generating criminal assets. It also addresses the significant demand that comes into the service as complaints/ service requests, covering a wide range of issues and concerns from residents, visitors, businesses and the other departments of partner authorities within Worcestershire.

There is a specific section for pandemic related activity but it is difficult to know specifically what will be asked of us and how this will impact on resources. Currently, we have dedicated capacity in the Local Outbreak Response Team undertaking a range of duties, we are delivering the Covid Advisor project county-wide and the local contact tracing system. We also still have a role in Covid business controls but our response has been limited as the current controls are fairly minimal and only have a significant impact on a relative small number of businesses. Having said this, we still have a commitment of around 12FTE from the existing WRS staffing cohort to pandemic controls and, whilst some of the activity will still be funded and allow the service to bring in additional capacity, there is very little competent agency capacity left and enforcement activity is unlikely to be funded from external sources.

As well as the table below, the Strategic Assessment has made a number of recommendations for activity which will form part of the detailed plan that will sit below this. The assessment is based on our more recent data and will cover us for the period 2022/23 to the end of 2023/24 on the assumption that there are no major emerging threats.

	OUTCOME	WHAT WE WILL DO	PURPOSE	NATIONAL PRIORITY	MEASURES
1	Response to the Covid 19 pandemic	<p>Provide enforcement capacity to tackle non-compliance with any control regime remaining in place</p> <p>Be part of the local Outbreak Response Team, focused on dealing with outbreaks on business premises and undertaking backwards contract tracing to establish infection patterns and causes within communities.</p> <p>To deliver elements of the Local Contact Tracing system and lost to follow-up activity to trace contacts of those infected</p>	<p>I want to assume everything is ok.</p> <p>Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same</p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of cases handled on behalf of the LORT leading to breaches Number of formal actions undertaken Number of formal warnings
2	Businesses are supported to become economically successful and compliant with the law (Pollution, H&S, Food Safety, Licensing)	<p>Provide businesses with advice and assistance using a range of channels.</p> <p>Conduct risk based/ intelligence-led interventions with businesses; targeting resources towards potentially non-compliant businesses.</p>	<p>I want to assume everything is ok.</p> <p>Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same</p>	1, 2, 3 and 5	<p>% food businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction</p> <p>% of food businesses scoring 0,1,2* at 1st April each year</p>

3	Ensuring that nuisance and other pollution related issues are tackled	<p>Respond to complaints and take appropriate action</p> <p>Provide relevant advice and information, available through a range of channels.</p>	<p>Help me to solve my problem and stop it from happening to anyone else</p> <p>Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same</p>	2, 3 and 4	<p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> <p>Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population</p>
4	Protecting the environment	Conduct risk based/ intelligence-	I want to assume everything	2 and 4	% permitted businesses broadly

	<p>and the public through monitoring air quality, and ensuring that contaminated land is suitable for development.</p> <p>Controlling environmental emissions leading to reduced environmental damage and better health</p>	<p>led interventions with businesses, especially permitted premises</p> <p>Air quality monitoring & responding to contaminated land issues</p> <p>Supporting the planning system</p>	is ok		<p>compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>Monitoring of the County-wide Air Quality strategy is delivered</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p>
5	Licensed premises cause no significant alcohol-fuelled crime/ disorder and ASB.	<p>Respond to complaints regarding alcohol and similar licensing related issues e.g. underage sales, breach of conditions, poor conduct of licence holders, etc.</p> <p>Provide businesses with advice and assistance</p> <p>Monthly alcohol profile to be shared with partners, reviewed and suitable work tasked</p>	<p>I want to assume everything is ok</p> <p>Help me to solve my problem and stop it from happening to anyone else</p> <p>Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same</p>	1 and 3	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives
6	<p>Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers Licence applications are processed in a timely manner and that all drivers and operators granted licenses meet the fit and proper test.</p> <p>Vehicles in use by the Taxi trades are fit whilst in service</p>	<p>Safeguard and ensure that all licence applications are processed in a timely manner and those granted meet the fit and proper test.</p> <p>Undertake a number of enforcement interventions to test compliance</p>	<p>I want to assume everything is ok</p> <p>Help me to solve my problem and stop it from happening to anyone else</p> <p>Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same</p>	1 and 3	<p>% of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days.</p> <p>Vehicles requiring work or taken off the road following intervention (Number and % of the total fleet.)</p>
7	Consumers able to make informed choices on where to eat or purchase food through published food hygiene ratings.	<p>Implement and promote the FHRS and publish hygiene ratings and accrediting those which improve health and wellbeing of their workforce.</p> <p>Incentivise maintaining star ratings</p>	<p>I want to assume everything is ok</p> <p>Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same</p>	4 and 5	<p>% businesses meeting purpose at first assessment/ inspection</p> <p>Number of 4* and 5* business signing up for the Healthy Eating Award</p>

		through the Healthy Eating Award and Triple 5 Award Support food exporters through the BREXIT process			
8	High levels of customer satisfaction	Respond to complaints and take appropriate action Building our ability to resolve issues or re-direct callers on their first contact with us Maintain a register of compliments and complaints with actions taken	I want to assume everything is ok Help me to solve my problem and stop it from happening to anyone else Help me trade well and ensure my competitors do the same	1, 2, 3 and 5	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction
9	Having engaged and satisfied staff who have the right skills, tools and support Page 45	Ensure necessary training is identified and delivered Undertake annual staff survey. Undertake annual staff performance reviews with regular feedback sessions from supervisors and managers	All officers must be able to undertake a range of activities that address our strategic priorities focusing on ensuring that the three purposes are met by/ for customers	1, 2, 3, 4 and 5	Staff sickness and absence at public sector national average or better % of staff who enjoy working for WRS
10	Maintained preparedness for response to emergencies, including disease outbreaks.	Maintain links with county-wide TCG. Take part in partner exercises to test plans, as appropriate Respond to disease notifications and outbreaks	I want to assume everything is ok	1 2, 3, 4 and 5	Disease response plans are maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis Business Continuity plans are maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis

The extract from the Strategic Assessment below identifies specific the following cross cutting priorities and recommended activities:

Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy

Whilst WRS will continue to investigate complaints, provide advice, process applications for alcohol licences, and conduct routine food hygiene interventions; it is recommended that the service considers the following activities during the coming year:

- Review allocation and investigative processes to ensure a collaborative and problem-solving approach is adopted for complaints relating to the night-time economy, and persistent offenders can be effectively identified and targeted
- Commission an intelligence product to assess prominent neighbourhoods, and continue to share intelligence with partner agencies who need to know and are able to act
- Conduct proactive monitoring of night-time economy businesses to assess the level of compliance and identify significant changes to methods of operation

Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs

Whilst WRS will continue to respond to reports of stray dogs, investigate complaints, and process applications for animal activity licences; it is recommended the service considers the following activities during the coming year:

- Ensure a collaborative and problem-solving approach is adopted to tackle problem entities (e.g. offering dog behaviour training to owners being served noise abatement notices due to their dog continually barking)
- Create and distribute, utilising physical and digital outlets, an “owners guide” which provides guidance in relation to buying, rehoming, and looking after a dog
- Undertake a promotional campaign in relation to microchipping, offering support to dog owners, with a view to introducing full enforcement of the microchipping regulations
- Commission an intelligence product to assess dog welfare incidents in North Worcestershire
- Repeat the proactive monitoring exercise to assess the level of breeding activity on prominent selling sites and the level of compliance

Promoting safe and clean communities

Whilst domestic activity is significantly influenced by dogs, noise from audio-visual equipment and smoke caused by the burning of domestic waste, mainly garden waste were prominent nuisances. Although WRS will continue to investigate complaints and offer self-help resources, it is recommended that materials are refreshed, and regular guidance issued to communities through varying channels. It is also recommended that an intelligence product is commissioned to assess nuisances in the most prominent districts (Redditch and Worcester City) and to further explore the connection to aspects of deprivation. The promotion of safe and clean communities also ties in with other functions, such as the continued assessment of air quality.

Supporting commercial businesses to operate safely and responsibly

Whilst WRS will continue to investigate complaints, provide advice, process applications, and conduct routine food hygiene interventions; it is recommended that the service considers the following activities during the coming year:

- Commission an intelligence product to explore the problematic non-food sectors connected to commercial nuisances and health and safety at work offences, and continue to share intelligence with partner agencies who need to know and are able to act
- Conduct proactive monitoring of commercial businesses and the taxi trade to assess the level of compliance and identify significant changes to methods of operation
- Review the recording practices associated with taxi licensing offences to facilitate the assessment of problematic locations

Supporting industry to operate safely and responsibly

In parallel with the previous priority recommendation, nuisances and health and safety at work offences were more prominent in non-food businesses which will include manufacturers, importers, and distributors. Such businesses are also higher risk from a food perspective (although they did not feature prominently within the analysis of food safety) and tie in with other functions such as Environmental Permitting. WRS will continue to investigate complaints, provide advice, and conduct routine interventions.

FOOD SERVICE DELIVERY

As has become the norm since the Food Standards Agency audit of the service in relation to the work done on behalf of Wyre Forest, the table below outlines the likely commitment to food law work in the coming year. Whilst the Agency had no significant concerns regarding what the service was doing, they felt that members should be more aware of what the service intended to deliver each year so that, when approving the service plan, members were also giving their approval to the level of commitment in relation to food law enforcement.

The pandemic led to the Agency deferring the majority of proactive work that would normally take place within food control, however, in the middle of last year they launched their roadmap to restoring the normal process for food law enforcement, with the end of this process in April 2023, when we are told that a new set of processes will be in place. The Agency has given local authorities this period to visit all of the relevant food businesses in its area following a timetable they have laid out starting with the highest risk businesses. The backlog of visits from the period when routine work was switched off is making this a challenging target to achieve and the service will look at the best ways to deliver this looking towards the end of the financial year. Initial estimates indicate around 2850 visits will be required to meet the timetable laid down by the Agency, excluding the lowest risk premises that can be dealt with by way of alternative enforcement approaches. Clearly this creates an issue but it is one that the majority of local services will find themselves with. The number of visits scheduled on the system is lower this year as many premises in categories C and D would have been due a visit this year (they have 18 months and 2 year visit intervals as the norm,) but because they were not visited during the period when visits were suspended, they sit in the backlog rather than having a scheduled visit.

As we said last year, the service normally commits 8-12 FTE between October and March to deliver the bulk of the food work programme each year, so an annualised equivalent of 4-6 FTE posts. At least this level of investment of capacity will be needed to achieve the Agency's desired outcome. Given the breadth of local authorities that will be in the same situation and the limited availability of agency staff, it seems likely that the Agency will have to compromise on some of its ask.

The table below is our best estimate currently of where we will be in terms of visits due and what we will be able to discharge with current resource based on the assumption that visits can be delivered normally from September onwards.

Element of Food plan	Visits that we will aim to complete
Estimated number of Food Hygiene visits scheduled for 2022/23 (based on the Food Hygiene rating system.)	790, of which about 517 will be in the higher risk bands A, B, C or D
Estimated number of premises scheduled for alternative approaches to inspection during 2022/23	750
Estimated number of new registrations/ unrated premises that will require inspection during 2022/23	750, of which about one-third will be low risk and can be dealt with by questionnaires
Estimated number of overdue premises assessed as requiring a visit during 2022/23	2055 from previous years plus those previously identified on the system that would otherwise have been picked up during 2020/21 onward but weren't due to Covid

These figures should give members a reasonable picture of the volume of pro-active food hygiene related activity that should take place during 2021/22, depending on the on-going impact of the pandemic.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Performance against outcomes will be reported to the WRS Board, quarterly, six-monthly or annually, depending on the individual measure. The IT platform enables the collection and analysis of data which is both accurate and robust and recent improvements in data extraction have increased the frequency with which a number of measures can be reported. The service's ability to provide activity data has continued to improve as the benefits of the IT platform have been implemented. Use of time recording to give a better understanding of how much it costs to undertake particular activities is continuing to be refined. Members participated in a session in October 2019 with officers, part of which was to consider the suite of current measures and it was agreed that no changes were required currently. These are listed as appendix C.

9. STRUCTURE

The WRS team's functions and management structure remain as follows:

- 1) The Community Environmental Health team provides Food Hygiene, Health and Safety at Work, Public Health and Nuisance functions using three teams. Three teams operate on a geographical split covering Redditch/ Bromsgrove, Wychavon/Malvern Hills, Worcester City/ Wyre Forest. The teams rotate around the three geographical areas on a quarterly basis so officers experience and become familiar with the whole county. The geographical teams are organised to reflect the balance of demand across the County. The legal support role also sits in this team as the majority of casework emanates from here.
- 2) The Technical Services team provides all environmental health support around planning matters, delivers IPPC inspection, Air Quality and Contaminated Land Regime work, manages the pest control contracts and directly delivers the Dog Wardens service. The internal IT support and system management roles, due to the complex technical nature of the work and the in-house first-contact team of Duty Officers also sit within this team.
- 3) The Licensing and Support Services unit delivers all WRS licensing administration and licensing enforcement, along with the wider in-house clerical/ administrative support that is required.
- 4) Business and Relationships Management: This role has been vacant for some time and managers are in discussion as to how best to redeploy this resource. Management capacity has been severely stretched by the pandemic so re-investing this in other supervisor capacity may well be helpful.

The arrangement has successfully provided the necessary management cover and support, as well as promoting income generation in many areas of the service, although the pandemic has stretched this to breaking point, hence the suggestion of installing additional capacity below.

The Trading Standards element has been retained in the structure chart as, since October 2016, the Community EH Manager and the Head of Regulatory Services have been providing management support to the Trading Standards team. This will continue into 2022/23 with the County Council being happy with the arrangement, although the Director of Public Health who is responsible for the team is keen to increase capacity further, which may mean it is necessary to appoint a full-time manager but with a continued close relationship with WRS and the Head of Service in particular. The support of management across the Trading Standard functions by WRS provides additional benefits with cross team working and knowledge, especially in areas of income generation and business support, to the benefit of both WRS partners and the County Council. The County Council last year asked the service to deliver the Safety at Sports Ground function and this will continue through 2022/23. WRS will also continue to deliver the petroleum licensing function for the County Council alongside the petrol vapour recovery work of the Environmental Permitting team.

10. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Changes to the legal framework occur reasonably frequently and the increased income generation work requires highly competent individuals. To maintain the competence of its staff, meet contractual obligations and ensure that the partner's statutory duties are correctly discharged, the service must maintain a training budget for its staff. Over the life of WRS this has been massively reduced reflecting the financial realities that the service faces and the service uses various approaches to ensure the money is spent wisely. Developing staff to ensure there are opportunities to plan succession is also essential.

In recent years, there has been a focus on enabling staff to work across the Environmental Health professional areas. Few officers only remain competent for one of the professional disciplines. This paid dividends in the pandemic response as it allowed us to move people into either directly servicing the pandemic response or to backfill that capacity in high demand areas like nuisance.

Within Licensing, the pandemic gave the opportunity to review administrative processes and reduce the burden of several paper systems. This has allowed officers to look proactively at enforcement across the districts and this will be a focus for the next 12 months. There are some disciplines within licensing that our competent qualified technical officers require training within such as caravan licensing and animal health and this will be the focus to ensure that no officer only has experience of just a single local licensing regime.

In pursuit of this, a competency framework for Technical Officers was developed and it will continue to be used with the aim of identifying training needs and developing the competency of officers more widely. Broader competencies will allow a wider range of people to deliver technical work and enable the service to tender for such contracts outside of the existing Partnership arrangements.

The size of the officer cohort in the service makes buying in trainers to deliver technical training to our teams economically viable for the service. A lot of aspects of professional practice and process are common across the enforcement professions so we can continue to offer this as an option to colleagues within Trading Standards and some of our neighbours where we have spaces available on the courses that we arrange. On-line and virtual training is now offered on a number of platforms, helping to manage costs and allowing officers to maintain competence in the absence of face to face courses.

11. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

There is no doubt that the Covid 19 pandemic has tested the business continuity plans of the service and it has risen to the challenges. The decision by the six districts to have a single Environmental Health service paid dividends in terms of the service's ability to balance pandemic controls with business as usual activities. It is doubtful that six separate services, subject to similar levels of financial reduction over the past 10 years could have responded as well as the shared service.

Business continuity plans for the service were developed and have been shared with the relevant Emergency Planning teams in the partner authorities. If the impact of the on-going financial constraints is that partners require reductions that are not currently envisaged, this will threaten our ability to maintain the full range of interventions across these functions whilst responding to large scale events and delivering contractual obligations. Priorities have therefore been established as part of the Business Continuity Planning process so the service is clear what will stop and what will continue in event of an emergency and how the service would respond to incidents such as the potential destruction of our office base or at least it temporarily being out of action. Additional consideration is required where reductions are suggested to ensure the impact on income generation is understood and this item is included in the current Risk Register. Cyber security is the major consideration currently with a number of high-profile attacks on local authorities that have caused chaos for the delivery of services and have resulted in the complete loss of a lot of data. We are working closely with Wyre Forest's IT team to ensure we limit the threat and are giving wider thought to contingency measures. Recent incidents suggest that temporarily we may need to return to full paper recording for a period before digital resource can be restored!

Despite Trading Standards returning to County Council control, the Community Environmental Health team and the Trading Standards and Animal Health unit will continue to work closely together to ensure that, in event of an emergency or capacity shortage, officers can support each other when necessary. Having the teams managed by the same Manager on a day to day basis, together under one roof and in one office space will continue to allow both teams to utilise pairs of hands, extra eyes and ears and boots on the ground, to tackle any incident or alteration to work demands that may require additional resource or a different workforce allocation. In event of a significant issue like an animal disease outbreak, the County Council has previously agreed that any support required from WRS staff will be paid for. The Trading Standards team has also engaged significantly more with Licensing as it has developed its work on illicit tobacco as a number of these premises are licensed.

12. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS

The service remains engaged with the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership with the aim of improving our relationships with local businesses and identifying their needs with a view to contributing to the growth of the local economy. Throughout the pandemic, the service has engaged with the "One Worcestershire" approach to recovery and business support, engaging with Economic Development colleagues as part of the recovery group. Things like the Business Charter for Regulators, launched during 2012, will continue to inform how we engage with the business community in Worcestershire and we hope that the LEP and others will continue to champion the service and our balanced approach to regulation and enforcement. We wait to see how government's "levelling up" agenda will interface with the LEP-led local Industrial Strategy. Previously, Government has seen this as a way of translating national policy on creating economic growth into local action and, where possible, we will look to support this.

13. OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

The service continues to need to work closely with a range of partners to deliver what is required against a number of agendas. The importance of the six local authority partners is recognised and we will continue to maintain our existing interfaces with other elements of these organisations e.g. Planning, Worcestershire Growth Hub, Economic Development teams, etc.

With the County Council having taken back direct control of Trading Standards functions, it has been essential to retain the strong links between both groups of staff. This is facilitated by the current co-location of teams, with Trading Standards and Animal Health continuing to occupy a section at Wyre Forest House for the foreseeable future. This is particularly relevant for the two Intelligence Officer posts that are split between the two organisations.

Customer demand will have a significant impact on the nature of our interactions with partners as we move the service forward. Close partnership working with a range of professional and community groups is essential to ensure deliver of the outcomes required by partners. Key partners for engagement include:

- West Mercia Police & West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Environment Agency
- The Health and Safety Executive
- Public Health England
- Local Partnership bodies e.g. Community Safety Partnerships, Safer Communities Board, Health and Well-being Board
- Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards
- Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service
- Citizens Advice Consumer Service, local Citizens Advice Bureaux and other 3rd sector organisations
- County Council Public Health team
- Regional Regulatory Partnerships and National Bodies (CIEH, MJAC, CEnEHMB, CEnTSA, CTSI, ACTSO, NTSB,).

Existing links to these bodies will be maintained. Additionally, to ensure WRS provides an attractive product for external clients, engagement with equivalent partners in other geographical regions will be pursued, which will include the collation/interpretation and review of intelligence data in such areas.

Locally, the service has made a good commitment to engaging with the agenda around organised crime. Serious Organised Crime groups are a key target for policing at regional and national level. Business premises are a good way of providing a vehicle for the laundering of money as are property purchases in general. Modern day slavery and other forms of exploitation are now part of what officers are asked to keep an eye out for

when visiting businesses. This goes well beyond what Trading Standards colleagues have traditionally dealt with in doorstep crime and scams and builds on the work of licensing colleagues in relation to addressing CSE. The service has seats at the Serious and Organised Crime Joint Actions Groups (SOCJAG,) in the county and regularly contributes to Multi-Agency Tasked Enforcement (MATES,) interventions with the police and other enforcement partners from various agencies.

14. CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

We will address national consultation on legislative change through the relevant professional channels. We will continue to engage local members in relation to local policy issues, especially around licensing matters. For general engagement with the wider community of elected members, we will provide a number of Member Newsletters per year covering the various activities that the service undertakes across the County. We will try to make this information specific to districts where it is relevant, to reassure members that our activities are seeking to protect everyone and support businesses across the whole of Worcestershire. It is hoped that the Activity Data reports that will continue to be provided to the WRS Board will provide elected members on the Board with sufficient information to also feedback to the wider membership in their respective authorities.

In terms of business engagement, we will continue to work with colleagues at Worcestershire LEP and Worcestershire Business Central on engaging with our business customers to improve our ability to address their needs. The approach outlined in our business charter will provide the basis for our interactions with the business community.

For members of the public, we will continue to survey customers who have used the service to look at how we dealt with their issues, not only from a satisfaction point of view, but also to see if they feel better equipped to deal with future problems. We will look at ways of making this more efficient using digital channels but previous experience showed a drastic fall in responses when this was used as the only route for getting feedback. For now, we will have to continue with a mixed model of paper surveys and digital feedback. Helping people to help themselves is at the heart of model of public service engagement we are pursuing and it is essential we move people down this route and reduce the expectation that we will always do it for them. This idea is now developing further with all partners signing up to the “digital first” concept that, where possible, initial contact with partners will always be via a digital channel rather than necessarily requiring either telephony or face-to-face interactions. The new format of the WRS website is being tailored to suit the various digital devices used to access services on-line.

15. GOVERNANCE

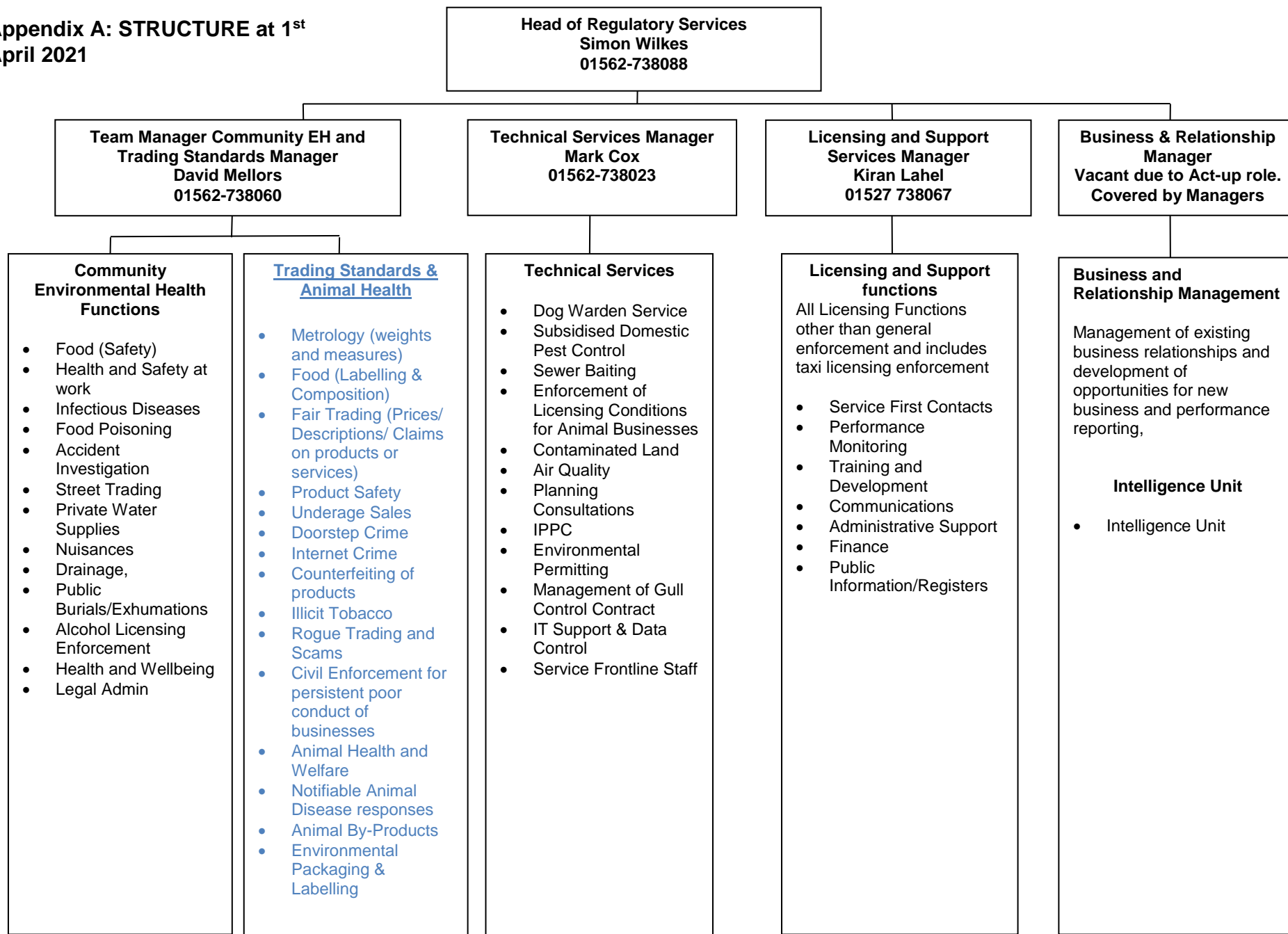
The current arrangements came into force on 1st April 2016 following the departure of the county Council from the formal partnership. The original legal agreement indicated that partners would pursue the shared services model for a period of at least 10 years. The 2016 agreement re-iterated this but it contains no formal end date. Officers have asked the Legal Officers from the partner councils to look at this and the view from the majority of Legal Officers is that review is not required and that the current agreement can, in theory continue in perpetuity. Officer members of

the Board will need to keep a watching brief on the service and perhaps look at reviews every few years to ensure the service is continuing to deliver.

16. RISKS

A copy of the current Risk Register is appended at Appendix D and has been reviewed and updated for this plan. The impact of the pandemic has created some risks around whether all customers will come back, but so far we have had positive news from most. The number of commercial contracts and obligations increases still carries risk, particularly where sub-contractors or skilled technical staff are involved. This recognises the wider geographical area that the service now covers and level of technical expertise that has to be maintained. The good news is that the pandemic has confirmed our preparedness for a number of the eventualities identified and we have been able to continue to function well in most work areas throughout.

**Appendix A: STRUCTURE at 1st
April 2021**



Appendix B: 3 years of budgets (figures in £000's)

Account description	Budget 2022 / 2023 £000's	Budget 2023 / 2024 £000's	Budget 2024 / 2025 £000's
Employees			
Monthly salaries	3,015	3,093	3,166
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	25	25	25
Employees' professional subscriptions	2	2	2
Sub-Total - Employees	3,044	3,122	3,195
Premises			
Rents	59	59	59
Room hire	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1
Sub-Total - Premises	62	62	62
Transport			
Vehicle repairs/maint'ce	3	3	3
Diesel fuel	8	8	8
Licences	1	1	1
Contract hire of vehicles	4	4	4
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5
Van Lease	9	9	9
Fares & Car Parking	5	5	5
Car allowances	70	70	70
Sub-Total - Transport	105	105	105
Supplies & Service			

Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	22	22	22
Materials	9	9	9
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2
Training fees	23	23	23
General insurances	19	19	19
Printing and stationery	17	17	17
Books and publications	2	2	2
Postage/packaging	11	11	11
ICT	55	55	55
Telephones	21	21	21
Taxi Tests	22	22	22
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26
Support service recharges	110	110	110
Support service recharges - ICT	60	60	60
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	397	397	397

	Budget 2022 / 2023 £000's	Budget 2023 / 2024 £000's	Budget 2024 / 2025 £000's
Contractors			
Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	266	229	229
Advertising (general)	5	5	5
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13
Sub-Total - Contractors	284	247	247
Total Expenditure Budget	3,891	3,932	4,005

Income

Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training /
Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc

-372**-372****-372**

Funding approved for unavoidable Salary Pressures

Sub-Total - Income	-372	-372	-372
Income to be approved - funded by partners			
Technical Officers	-141	-104	-106
Malvern Hills District Council - Pest Control	-8	-8	-8
Increase in Rent	-7	-7	-7
Increase in ICT	-16	-16	-16
Increase in Hosting Charges	-10	-10	-10
Unavoidable salary pressures	-81	-159	-230
Sub-Total - Income to be approved	-262	-303	-376
Total Income Budget	-634	-675	-748
DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET	3,257	3,257	3,257

22-23 Partner Percentages

Bromsgrove District Council	14.55%
Malvern Hills District Council	13.03%
Redditch Borough Council	17.53%
Worcester City Council	16.54%
Wychavon District Council	23.24%
Wyre Forest District Council	15.11%
Total	100.00%

Additional costs for posts for new or additional activities will be allocated using this formula unless the work is requested by either one partner or a group of partners, in which case the relevant partners will agree a formula for cost allocation.

The table below covers off the additional payments that are likely to flow from the current allocations of additional funding for the additional Technical Officer capacity required for a number of pieces of work and also to cover the salary and pension pressures going forward. The latter elements may need to be addressed on a year by year basis.

	Budget	Contribution Pest Control	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution
	2022 / 2023	2022 / 2023	2022 / 2023	2022 / 2023
Budget 2022 / 23	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	475		11	486
Malvern Hills District Council	418	8	15	440
Redditch Borough Council	572		7	579
Worcester City Council	540		80	620
Wychavon District Council	759		17	776
Wyre Forest District Council	493		10	503
Total	3,257	8	141	3,405
	Budget	Contribution Pest Control	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution
	2023 / 2024	2023 / 2024	2023 / 2024	2023 / 2024
Budget 2023 / 24	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	475		12	487
Malvern Hills District Council	418	8	15	441
Redditch Borough Council	572		8	580
Worcester City Council	540		40	580
Wychavon District Council	759		18	777
Wyre Forest District Council	493		10	503
Total	3,257	8	104	3,368
	Budget	Contribution Pest Control	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution
	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025
Budget 2024 / 25	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	475		12	487
Malvern Hills District Council	418	8	16	441
Redditch Borough Council	572		8	580
Worcester City Council	540		40	580
Wychavon District Council	759		19	778
Wyre Forest District Council	493		11	504
Total	3,257	8	106	3,371

Appendix C: Performance Measures Relating to Outcomes

	Measure	Reporting Frequency	Background
1	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly	Based on questionnaires send out to a significant number of members of the public who use the service.
2	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly	Based on questionnaires send out to a significant number of businesses inspected or otherwise contacted by the service.
3	% businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	Based on the proportion of businesses meeting the key purpose from a regulatory perspective i.e. food businesses produce safe food.
4	% of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	Based on proportion of businesses scoring 0 1 or 2 star on a national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme assessment (2 stars and below is deemed to be at risk of not producing safe food.)
5	% of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days.	6-monthly	Based on the proportion of drivers licence renewals issued within 5 working days of receipt of application. Note new applicants all require DBS checks and time frames for these fall outside of WRS control, hence they are not included.
6	% of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service	6-monthly	Percentage of vehicles stopped during enforcement exercises that are required to be removed from service for remedial work before being allowed to carry on operating.
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly	Based on questionnaires send out to a significant number of members of the public and businesses who have used the service.
8	Review of register of complaints and compliments	Quarterly	All are recorded Increasing compliments/ Reduced complaints

9	Staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly	Sickness recorded using host processes. The last figure obtained by the host's HR team was that the Public sector average was 8.75
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	Taken from the staff survey.
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	Indicator, linked to Crime & Disorder agenda, looking at performance of premises license holders and control on their activity.
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	Place indicator, potential link to quality of life and health and well-being.
13	Total income	6-monthly	Expressed as a % of the base district contributions to the revenue budget for this year
14	Cost of regulatory services per head of population	Annually	Will be total spend divided by the total population, based on the most recent mid-year estimate available at the time of publication. NB: Calculation will offset income against revenue budget to account for external income sources

Appendix D: Risk Register 2022/3

Risk Description	Consequences	When is this likely to happen	Current Position			Control measures
			Likelihood	Impact	Matrix RAG Status	
Loss of Data through IT failures	Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data.	On-going	Medium	High	Amber	Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC upgraded relevant systems including Windows. The service should be fully onto Office 365 by the turn of 2022/3, which will provide better access to a range of provisions including Microsoft Teams and Power BI. WFDC has also introduced a full range of training for cyber security in light of the increased risk of cyber terrorism and cyber-fraud. Business Continuity Plans are being redrafted with supporting systems in light of emerging threat
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required	On-going	Low	High	Green	The contract has been retendered and awarded through the CCS framework for a two-year term with a view to moving to a cloud based system via a tendering process at that point. The absence of significant funds for investment mitigates against a shift to a new product currently, so the service will continue with the existing provider until such time as the financial situation improves.
Effective and efficient Business Continuity arrangements in place	Disruption to service if e.g. Major Power failures or other reasons that access to Wyre Forest House is not possible.	On-going	Very Low	Medium	Green	The pandemic has shown that we were well prepared for the need to maximise working from home and now all staff, including some previously regarded as office based can now do this. Touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations. Managers can look at whether a reduction in space occupied is feasible once the end of pandemic controls is reached. Currently, with approximately double the normal staffing cohort, moving to a smaller footprint within Wyre Forest house would create risk. The service is also looking at bringing other functions in.

Maintain our capacity to achieve service delivery	Disruption to service e.g. Major staff sickness (e.g. flu pandemic) or Unable to recruit or retain suitably qualified staff.	On-going	Low	Medium	Amber	<p>The pandemic response has shown that the service was well-placed to respond and less than a handful of officers have themselves suffered the illness, with some of this resulting from household transmission from children. Consultants are available to provide short term cover and, whilst this worked well in peace-time to cover peak demand periods, the pandemic has revealed the limits to this type of capacity. These pressures will only be resolved in the longer term by local and central government investing in additional capacity and additional training to bring more people into the regulatory professions.</p> <p>Having taken on contracts with additional authorities the demand has increased and neighbouring authorities have lost the ability to assist with some technical specialisms. This is the double edged sword of effectively operating as a centre of excellence. Whilst we have good resource of our own, in event of an issue, there are limits to who we can ask for help. Regional and sub-regional groups are in place so can provide shared resources for local authorities if required.</p> <p>Effective training and development processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of staff. There is increased training budget pressure, reduced technical knowledge in neighbouring authorities and increased importance in maintaining heightened skills for contractual obligations and commercial edge.</p> <p>Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replacement kit may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share.</p>
Pest contractors cease operations.	Disruption to service. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Green	<p>The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This limits risk. The unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues.</p>

Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control	Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Medium	High	Amber	Various contracts have been tendered and are now in place but there are geographic restrictions and incomplete coverage of our commercial area. Resilience in some places is a potential issue as the charitable sector, particularly kennels come under more pressure.
Hosting support does not deliver necessary financial and HR support to ensure efficient management	Efficiency of management reduced; staffing issues remain unaddressed and performance suffers	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Whilst the new BDC finance system is now reasonably accessible for managers, there have been significant teething troubles with it but these have not got in the way of good probity and sensible budget management. Some workarounds remain in place in until issues are fully resolved. Support from our Technical Accountant remains excellent.
One or more partners continue to be under great financial pressure and may consider alternatives to the partnership to deliver their service	Creates reputational issues for remaining partners and increases the need to manage overheads. Difficulties in delivering highly varied levels of service	On-going	Medium	High	Amber	<p>New legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners have to move to contractual relationship but this is quite high before it kicks in (20%.) Leanness of organisation minimises overheads and focuses resource at the front line. The pandemic has shown us exactly how lean the organisation is and management capacity in particular has been very stretched with the additional work taken on.</p> <p>While the growth strategy continues to generate income to support partners, in recent years it has been necessary to ask partners for additional funds as pay increases in particular have outstripped the service's ability to grow. There remain limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Invest to save capacity has been committed by partners and this has achieved the necessary outcomes so far.</p> <p>The Levelling-up (Devolution) White Paper will give an indication of the future direction of travel for policy at a local level and should give an idea of what funding will look like in the future.</p>

Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes.	Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation.	On-going	Low	Medium	Green	Continued close working with BDC legal team and other partners who don't use BDC for advocacy limits risk. Technical and legal training days for staff support this too. There is however difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments as these are not reported in the EH press. Membership and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist.
Service provision complies with Government requirements	Adverse comments following audits e.g. FSA Intervention by Government bodies i.e. FSA, whilst highly unlikely, is damaging to reputation.	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Limited detail of what statutory minima are can make decision making difficult around minimum requirements. Whilst codes of practice help, they are only "to have regard to." LGA clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear Government cannot expect what it had previously. Service has developed systems that follow the principles of the requirements of bodies like FSA so can show some level of compliance but service isn't operating to the letter of the current Code. The Code is however currently going through major changes coming in for 2023/4. Environmental reporting for Local Air Quality Management, Pollution Prevention and Control and Private Water Supply Inspection reports to Defra and DWI have received positive responses with no issues of concern raised by these bodies.
Failure to deliver external contract work at the level expected by the business or local authority with whom we have the contract	Damage to reputation, loss of future income streams, financial impact of paying damages	On-going	Low	High	Green	Ensure contract negotiations are clear on performance criteria and these are clearly recorded in the final documentation. Monthly reviews against performance criteria. Select staff to ensure competence of those undertaking work outside Worcestershire. Maintain strong links with the customer's monitoring staff. Intervene early with corrective action

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WRS Board: 10th February 2022

Information Report – COVID related activity

Recommendation | **That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the information provided in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.**

Report | Members will recall an information report in November 2021 which explained the role WRS officers have in assisting the NHS in contacting people who have received positive Covid-19 test result (referred to as a 'case'). December saw a significant increase in positive cases which lead to a change in the process that was previously followed. All cases that receive a positive result are now sent emails and SMS messages inviting them to complete an online form. They are given a window of 8 hours to complete what is referred to as the digital journey. In the November report we explained that where a case fails to complete this information online the details are referred to WRS to start the tracing journey.

The need to recruit to the team of Contact Tracers continues, it has been an ongoing task because of the need to expand the team. Whilst it has been relatively successful possibly because of the ability to work remotely in the contact tracer role, we have lost some staff to permanent positions and we have struggled to recruit to the full cohort of 42 FTE contact tracers (currently 26 FTE made up of 38 tracers).

In December the rules around self-isolation were changed allowing any case to come out of isolation early providing they were able to produce a negative test result on day 6 and day 7, with tests being taken a minimum of 24 hours apart. This change has reduced the time available to complete contact tracing at local level.

As a countywide service you will note from the figure below around 90% of cases were successfully completed in the last 7 weeks of the year. The reduction in this rate in the last week (highlighted) reflects the sharp increase in positive cases, delays in results being processed leading to cases coming to the service later in the isolation period, the change in self isolation rules and the impact of the holiday season.

At times of extreme pressure, where an Authority feels that they do not have the capacity to meeting the incoming case numbers, there is a facility in place where the Local Authority is able to flow back cases to the National Team. Worcestershire remains far below the West Midlands average for having to use this last resort, with only 2% of cases being returned in the final week of December against 28% being return regionally. For all other weeks we were able to cope with the demand and had no flow backs

Overall Performance						
W/E date	Total Cases	Cases per 100k people	% International Arrival	Completion Rate	% Completed in 24 Hrs	Median Hrs Case Completion
29/12/2021	7,154	1,196	1%	68%	74%	11
22/12/2021	4,381	733	1%	87%	66%	14
15/12/2021	3,361	562	1%	91%	65%	12
08/12/2021	3,032	507	0%	91%	54%	16
01/12/2021	3,015	504	0%	89%	54%	16
24/11/2021	2,938	491	0%	90%	56%	15
17/11/2021	2,679	448	0%	91%	84%	9

The table below shows the percentage of cases completed by the method used to complete the digital journey. You will see that on average 33% of cases completed were done so at local level (i.e. by WRS), this compares with an average of 11% of cases being completed by National.

Channel Contribution Case completion distributed by channel					
W/E date	Self service	Of which Self-service whilst Local	Local	National	Non-completion
29/12/2021	44%	4%	15%	9%	32%
22/12/2021	47%	5%	27%	13%	13%
15/12/2021	39%	4%	32%	19%	9%
08/12/2021	38%	4%	41%	12%	9%
01/12/2021	36%	4%	41%	11%	12%
24/11/2021	35%	4%	43%	12%	10%
17/11/2021	37%	2%	34%	20%	9%
Average	39%	3.8%	33%	11%	13%

In November we reported that we undertook all tracing for Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City and Wychavon areas (known as Local-8 because they are received after the window of 8 hours each case has to complete the digital journey before they are chased to do so), but that we only undertook the local tracing for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest District areas after National have undertaken the initial calls for the first 48 hour period. Unfortunately, because of the impact of the Omicron variant and steep rise in cases following the Christmas period we returned to National making the calls for the first 48 hours before they come to WRS for all areas.

Case rates have dropped recently but not sufficiently for us to return to Local-8 tracing for the whole county (mid-January case rates for the county were 7092 requiring approximately 45 tracers on duty every day). Instead we are proposing look to go back to Local-8 for one of the Districts and increase that as we increase our tracing capacity.

Contact Details

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WRS Board

Date: 10th February 2022

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 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 third 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

Towards the end of the third quarter of 2021/22 we saw the introduction of the government's Plan B response to the increasing number of Covid cases, driven by the then novel Omicron strain. The advice to work from home if possible was re-iterated and most business premises were to require mask wearing indoors. The main obvious exemption to this was hospitality premises and further Covid pass requirements were introduced for night clubs and for a range of events.

Food hygiene work remained on-going as the team worked towards delivering the requirements of the Food Standards Agency's roadmap. The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 26% compared to the previous quarter, but an increase compared to previous years. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries including requests for advice or export health certificates. Based on the 350 complaints recorded, 81% related to products purchased from food premises, whilst 19% related to hygiene standards and practices. Of the 468 interventions conducted during quarter three at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 31 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately 74% of these ratings were issued to hospitality businesses.



The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 12% compared to the previous quarter, but is a marginal increase compared to previous years. Approximately 52% of cases were reports of accidents, with 40% relating to COVID outbreaks. A further 28% of accidents related to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days. The remaining cases related to injuries to members of the public, accidents where major injuries were sustained, and two dangerous occurrences.

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is an increase of 12% compared to the previous quarter, and consistent with the volume recorded during 2019/20. Approximately 70% of cases were applications and registrations; with 28% relating to taxi vehicle licences, 24% relating to temporary events, and 16% relating to taxi driver licences.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 135 complaints recorded during quarter three, 33% related to taxis, 24% related to street trading or amenities, and 16% related to animal licensing.

The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 14% compared to the previous quarter, and lower than previous years. Approximately 90% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 45% continued to relate to contaminated land. Just under a quarter of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 50% compared to the previous quarter, but consistent with seasonal variations. Approximately 60% of reported cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or from audio-visual equipment) continuing to be most prominent. A further 17% of reported cases related to smoke nuisances including the burning of domestic or commercial waste, mainly the former and mainly garden bonfires.

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 26% compared to the previous quarter, but a marginal increase compared to previous years. Approximately 65% of reported cases related to pest control; whether enquiries about treatments and sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 28% of cases were complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 249 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter three, approximately 60% were due to issues with rats. In addition, 75% were undertaken due to pests at properties in the Redditch and Wychavon districts.



Covid related activities**Contact Tracing and Lost to Follow-up**

This is covered in a separate paper for this meeting

Local Outbreak Response Team

A number of Environmental Health Officers remain embedded within the local outbreak response team. They continue to address potential business outbreaks and provide wider support to the LORT staff. Numbers of cases began to increase towards the end of the quarter but these tended to be a reflection of transmission within the community. There was no significant evidence of workplace transmission. A number of apparent outbreaks were linked to staff Christmas gatherings and similar away from the workplace.

Covid Enforcement

Officers continued to focus on the night time economy. When the Plan B controls came into force, officers made checks on the provision of signage by businesses advising of the requirement for customers to wear face coverings and there were good levels of compliance. Engagement began with sports grounds in relation to the potential impact of Covid pass controls on their supports and advice was provided to these and other outlets.

Events and similar

Officers continued to provide advice and support in relation to events. The Victorian market in the run up to Christmas in the centre of Worcester saw officers being deployed to look at a range of issues as has been the case for a number of years.

Performance

Quarter 3 is another more limited reporting period. The non-business customer measure at 62.5%, slipped slightly further and remains significantly down on the 74% out-turn from last year. Having reviewed the data, the falls continue to have occurred against the questions relating to speed of response and speed of resolution. This is almost certainly linked to the backlog of nuisance work the team was dealing with during the summer. In spite of attempts, it proved impossible to bring in additional staff resource to support this work area as most of the agency Environmental Health resource is already committed to the pandemic response. Officers have explained the reasons for delays but clearly this has had a negative impact on perceptions of the service. Likewise, numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues was also down at 50%.

Business customer satisfaction remains good at 97.9%.

Overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses were at 98.3% and 1.7% respectively. This remains good and on a par with previous years. As we have said above, the focus currently is on those higher risk businesses that have historically had a low score. Hence, the overall change is limited. As we said previously, a significant fall in these



measures would suggest our better performing businesses had let standards slip and we are not likely to know this until much further into the process of re-starting the inspection programme, assuming of course that this is the case. It may well be that such businesses have been able to maintain standards or will be able to re-establish them ahead of being visited.

The ratio of compliments to complaints remains good at 113 to 18. This quarter, complaints were less focused in one area than earlier in the year. We continue to receive complaints about re-ratings from food businesses as a proportion have slipped in terms of their controls, but none have so far been valid. One lady was unhappy that we could not assist from a legal perspective with a dispute between her and her landlord on a park home site. And there is the odd complaint about the "legalese" we sometimes have to use to explain Covid controls but that is in the nature of what we have to do when explaining the law. It is not always straight-forward. As was suggested in relation to customer satisfaction, a number relate to nuisance issues.

Staff sickness has increased from 1.55 days per FTE to 2.94 days per FTE cumulative for the year. The figures have virtually doubled but, given Covid case numbers during Q3 this is not a huge surprise. A small number of staff did end up catching Covid, they think from their school age children, and a number were too ill to work for a few days in spite of the vast majority being fully vaccinated. Current sickness levels are higher than last year (1.65,) but lower than the figures for 2019/20 (3.82,) and 2018/19 (3.26) at the same point in the year.

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	63.5%	62.5	
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	96.8	97.7	97.9	
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.8	Bromsgrove 99.6% Malvern Hills 98.8% Redditch 98.1% Worcester City 98.7% Wychavon 98.2% Wyre Forest 98.3% Worcestershire 98.6%	98.3	
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.2	Bromsgrove 0.4% Malvern Hills 1.2% Redditch 1.9% Worcester City 1.3% Wychavon 1.8% Wyre Forest 1.7% Worcestershire 1.4%	1.7	
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	100%	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	6-monthly	NA	13 = 0.91% of 1435 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 1 MHDC 0 RBC 7 WC 4 WDC 1	NA	



	fleet county-wide			WFDC 0		
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	69	60.8	50	
8	Review of register of complaints/ compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/ 12	15/52	18/113	
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.90 days per FTE	1.55 days per FTE	2.94 days per FTE	
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	Bromsgrove 5.2% Malvern Hills 5.6% Redditch 5.5% Worcester City 8.0% Wychavon 6.7% Wyre Forest 8.2% Worcestershire 6.7%	NA	
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.67 Malvern Hills 0.69 Redditch 1.23 Worcester City 1.55 Wychavon 1.05 Wyre Forest 1.15 Worcestershire 1.08	NA	
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£163,583, which is 5.42% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	



14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	



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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 third activity data report for 2021/22.

Christmas has come and gone, and the days are slowly getting longer, giving hints of spring to come as the first snowdrops and irises brighten the frosty winter mornings. Although the numbers of nuisance complaints fell during Q3 to the usual level, the peak in summer this year meant an extended period when there was a significant queue of issues waiting to be addressed. This again did not help our satisfaction figures and the team remained under pressure for an extended period.

Food safety complaints fell to normal levels during quarter 3 from their summer peak. The team were therefore able to get a good number of proactive visits done as part of our return to more normal food law activities. On general health and safety work, numbers of both complaints and enquiries fell after the peak in the summer, however accident reports continued on their upward trend and by the end of the quarter had reach a level similar to the peak last year.

In Licensing, complaints and enquiries had a slightly upward trend this quarter but still around the norm and following the trajectory line. Applications however remained us as the licensed trade sectors continued to try to make up for lost ground and income following relaxing of pandemic controls. Members should recall that plan B did not come into effect until towards the end of the quarter.

Technical Services, planning applications fell again, allowing more time for officers to focus on other activities and the volumes from earlier in the year. No doubt this will pick up in the spring. Also, work in dog control has remained steady but back up where they were 12 months ago with complaints/ enquiries similarly stable after a steep rise last year.

Throughout the period Covid work remained on-going. Our EHOs embedded in the Local Outbreak Response Team focused on business support. Covid compliance in the night time economy remained one of our priorities with plan B coming in, although much of the resource of our Covid Advisors was targeted to support pop-up vaccination clinics and doing the lost to follow-up activity of door knocking failed contacts. Finally, our local contact tracing team got busier and busier as case numbers increased with the dominant omicron variant.

So, yet another busy quarter for all of us. 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
Head of Regulatory Services

Community Environmental Health

In quarter three we entered an autumn/winter period that posed many challenges. Not just that of COVID-19 but the return of our normal winter infections such as Influenza and Norovirus. We therefore wrote out to our businesses informing them of how they could prepare for the forthcoming challenges and so reduce the impact on their operations. There would also be a wider knock-on effect in protecting the wider community against the adverse effects of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Many businesses were still being impacted with staff isolation as cases occurred in the workplace. Where these were linked with poor practices, the Local Outbreak Response Team within WRS Community Environmental Health Team intervened to help the business prevent or control the spread of infection. WRS officers also continued to carry out active monitoring programmes across all business sectors with the aim of providing advice to ensure safety. The period saw an escalation from education and encouragement to enforcement in respect of business Covid compliance as some businesses attempted to avoid the restrictions. Three Prohibition Notices were served following investigation and the team continued to work closely with the Police and Licensing colleagues to ensure licensed trade compliance.

WRS, supported by the partner legal team, were successful in seeing off an appeal against an Abatement Notice served on a major food distribution company and an Enforcement File was submitted in respect of a domestic noise nuisance in Worcester.

Licensing

The start of quarter three saw an increase in licensing applications and queries, with the volume similar to pre-covid levels and noticeably higher than this time last year. The team continues to take applications electronically therefore the level of complete applications being received continues to increase.

Licensing have continued to keep the emphasis this quarter on proactive enforcement and there have been two planned enforcement operations that took place in November. The first of these involved vehicle spot checks in Redditch, with the assistance of Crossgates depot, carrying out the required vehicle inspections. Officers gave ten vehicles notice to attend, and three out of the ten vehicles were presented with serious safety faults and were suspended. Faults included tyres worn, leaking brakes and fuel leaks. Four further vehicles were requested to be seen and these were all found to be free from major faults and compliant. On the same day, fourteen further unrequested vehicles were checked, and drivers spoken to if issues were found, but none were serious.

A further operation was carried out in the South of the County with WRS Licensing Officers conducting a joint hackney carriage and private hire vehicle/driver compliance check operation with West Mercia police. The exercise took place in Worcester City Centre with Officers being based from the ground floor of St Martins Gate Car park with prior approval.

The operation involved WRS Officers patrolling the City on foot, and also surrounding areas in a police patrol car, between 20:30 hours and midnight. The Officers patrolling the city centre identified a number of non-compliances, such as hackney carriage vehicles over-ranking on Foregate Street and drivers not wearing badges. A total of four hackney carriage drivers were issued with penalty points (under the WC HC&PH penalty point scheme). In addition to this, thirteen licensed hackney carriage vehicles were directed to St Martins Gate Car park for further inspection. On the whole the evening was a success with the majority of the drivers welcoming our efforts.

In December officers worked with partners and contributed to the success of the Victorian Fayre. Licensing officers were on hand to offer advice and guidance on all four days and worked with partners to ensure compliance levels were maintained.

Towards the end of quarter two, WRS appointed a Communications officer to provide wider engagement with partners and to promote the WRS brand and identity for businesses and residents. The positive feedback from partners has allowed WRS to reach out to a wider audience and communicate more of the positive work officers across WRS are doing across the County.

Night-time Economy Team

As part of our funded project work, the Night Time economy Team have been out every weekend and have carried out 226 visits in quarter three. These visits, which have been undertaken in conjunction with Environmental Health and West Mercia Police, have aimed to address problem premises or assess premises known to be trading in neighbourhoods with high infection rates. The changes in guidance on mandatory face coverings and covid passes towards the end of the quarter required the implementation of working passed 01:00 hours to ensure businesses were complying with the new rules. Overall compliance has been good and, with officers continuing to work every weekend assessing risk assessments where necessary, we hope this continues.

Technical Services

IT Development

During quarter three, our team has continued to respond to the IT support needs of the Service as it meets the many challenges and demands created by the pandemic response. During this time we have been working closely with our colleagues in Wyre Forest IT, and have helped to ensure all staff have the necessary equipment, access and training in IT to support them in their work roles.

As mentioned previously, a lot of work in quarter two had gone into planning and preparation for a program of upgrades and improvements to our back office systems. This third quarter was spent implementing these programs of upgrades and improvements, and this current program was completed by the end of the quarter. The aim of these is to ensure we always provide a reliable and resilient back office system to support all the staff who use it.

In addition, we have continued to provide Uniform support functions for other local authorities. We currently do this for Bromsgrove District Council's Planning department, and are about to do the same for Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health department.

Dog Wardens

The third quarter has remained steady, with the service having received contact in relation to over three hundred dog related matters (including enquiries for assistance or advice and complaints). WRS were successful in reuniting a high proportion of dogs with their owners, whilst rehoming the majority of others with recognised animal rehoming charities. Unfortunately, a puppy had to be put to sleep due to Leptospirosis. In addition, we have continued to look after two client dogs for owners who have had an extended stay in hospital, and a further three client dogs for owners that had been detained by the Police. WRS were also involved in a large handover of animals following a Police raid, and we were able to find new homes for two dogs and fourteen cats and kittens.

Contact Tracing

The third quarter saw a sharp rise in positive cases that required contact tracing, with an increase of 46% in the last week of December alone. Worcestershire has managed to maintain an overall average completion rate for cases of 91%, meaning that these cases had a successful trace with all details of contacts and places visited recorded, of this number 74% were completed within a 24 hours period. Of those that we were not able to complete 10.5% were reached but for varying reasons we were not able to fully complete the tracing call, examples of why this may be are the individual refusing to engage or inability to successfully identify all contacts, this is particularly relevant in school aged children. Unfortunately of those not traced, it was not possible to reach 15% of cases, this may be due to them being in hospital, providing incorrect contact details or them failing to respond to calls, emails and sms messages received. During December the rules on self-isolation were changed, which has reduced the window of time in which we are able to attempt to contact a case to complete a trace, this change highlights further the importance of making contact in a timely manner.

Air Quality

Following completion of traffic counts in Worcester City, work has commenced on the process of identifying the proportion of the traffic fleet that are the key contributors to elevated levels of pollution in specific areas of the city. Whilst it is obvious that the more polluting vehicles will be of concern, in some localities the make up of the traffic fleet may mean less polluting vehicles contribute more to the pollution levels. Once this is complete, work can begin on identifying the most effective action measures to resolve air quality. Elsewhere, work continues to install a continuous analyser in Wychbold and pollution monitoring equipment in Kidderminster.

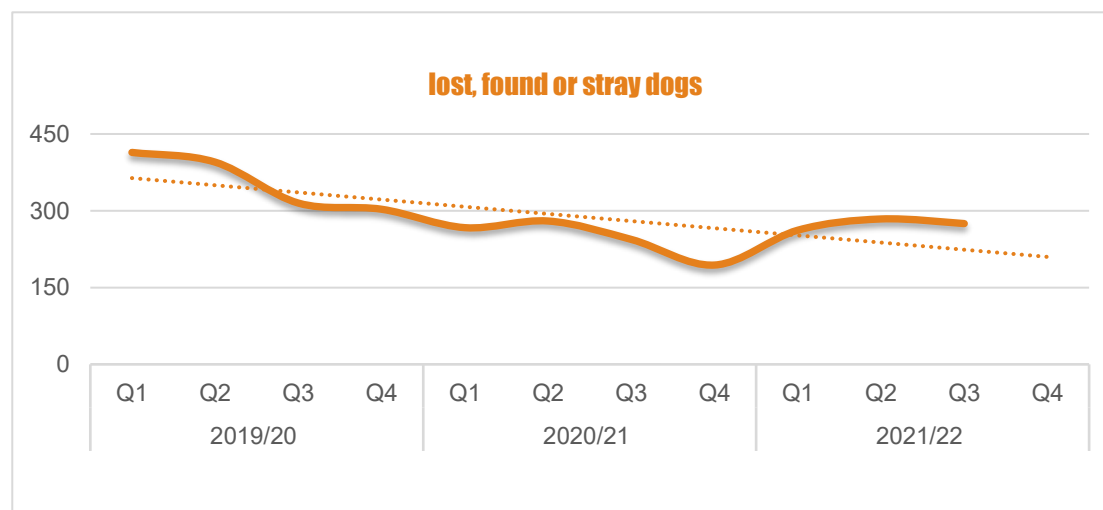
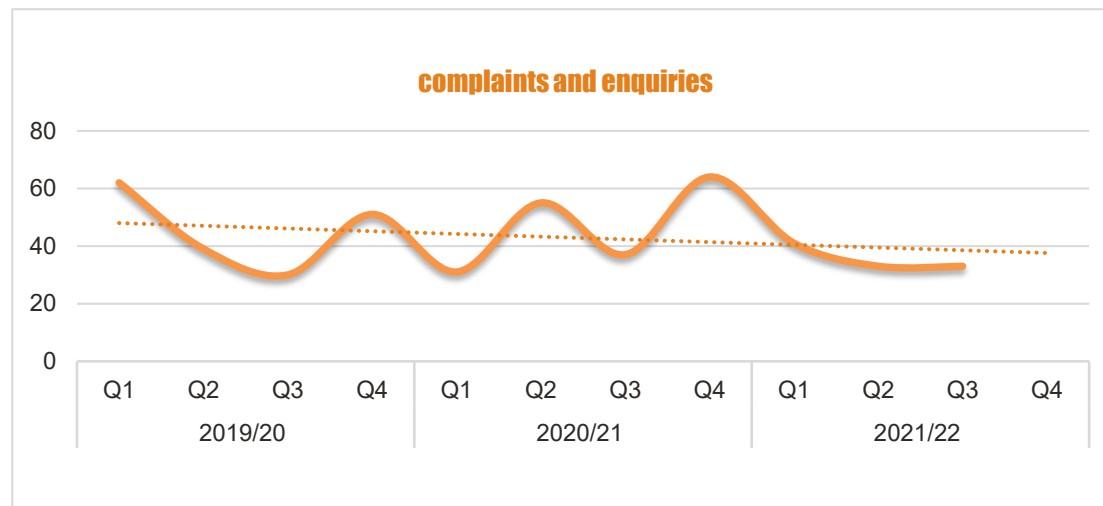
Contaminated Land

Update to follow.

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 recorded by WRS during quarter three is broadly consistent with the previous quarter, but a marginal increase compared to previous years. Approximately 63% of cases related to 'contained' stray dogs; which means that a dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Dogs were more likely to be returned to their owners, however, a higher proportion of dogs were rehomed between October and December.

In general terms, WRS receives a low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 20 complaints recorded during quarter three, 9 related to fouling and persistent straying, 7 related to dangerous dogs, and 4 related to welfare concerns.

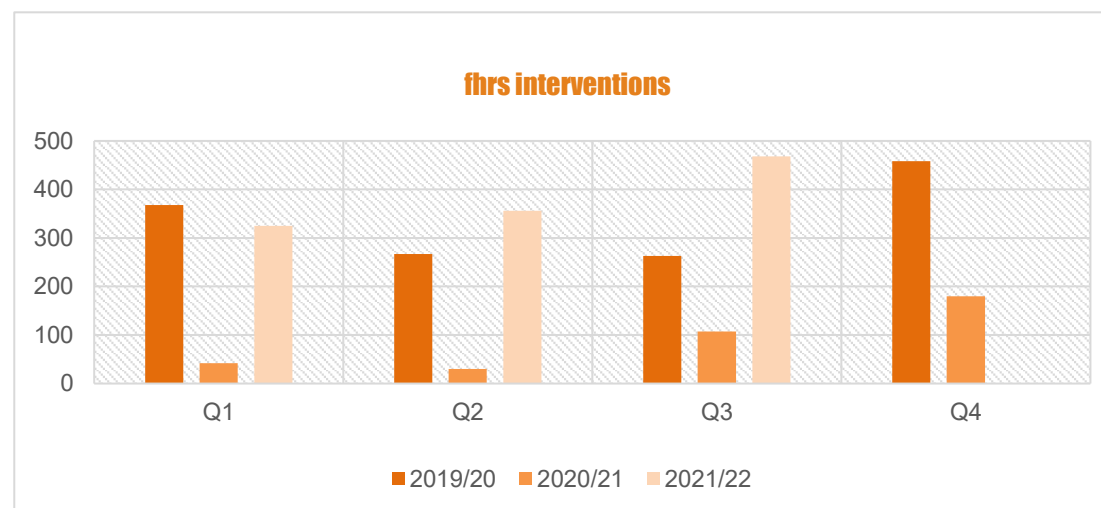
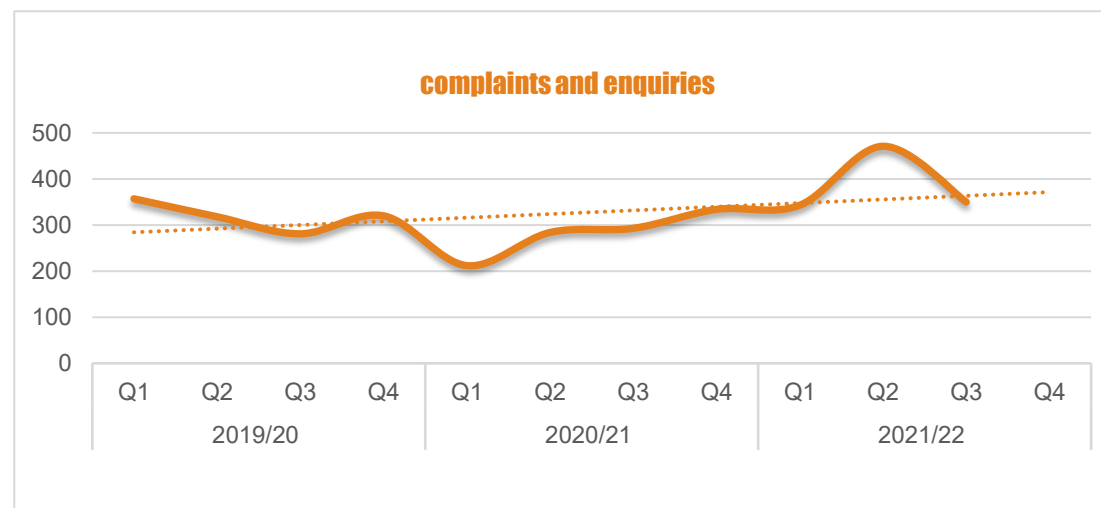


Updated to follow.

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.

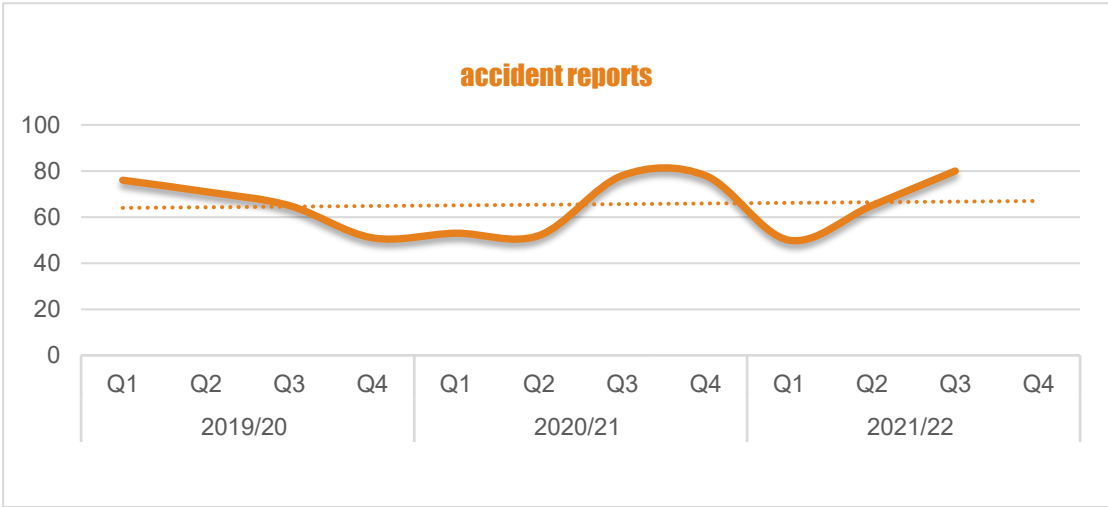
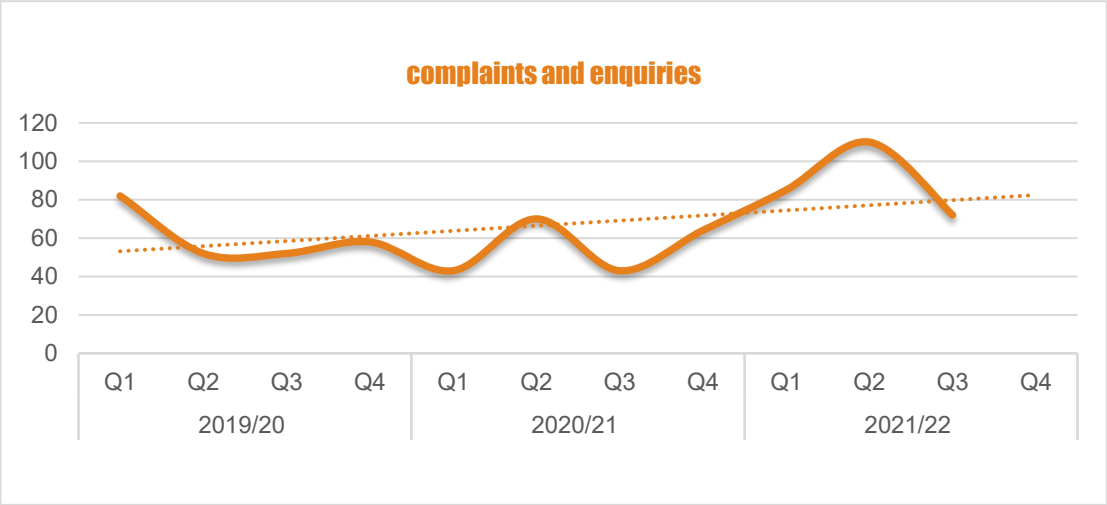
The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 26% compared to the previous quarter, but an increase compared to previous years. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries including requests for advice or export health certificates. Based on the 350 complaints recorded, 81% related to products purchased from food premises, whilst 19% related to hygiene standards and practices.

Of the 468 interventions conducted during quarter three at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 31 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately 74% of these ratings were issued to hospitality businesses.



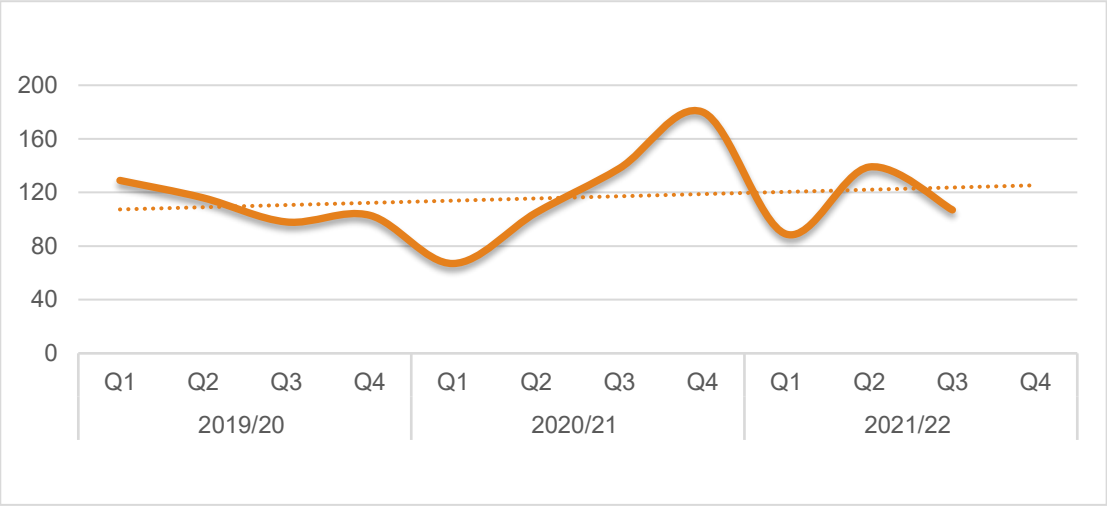
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 12% compared to the previous quarter, but is a marginal increase compared to previous years. Approximately 52% of cases were reports of accidents, with 40% relating to COVID outbreaks. A further 28% of accidents related to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days. The remaining cases related to injuries to members of the public, accidents where major injuries were sustained, and two dangerous occurrence.



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 (GDPR)



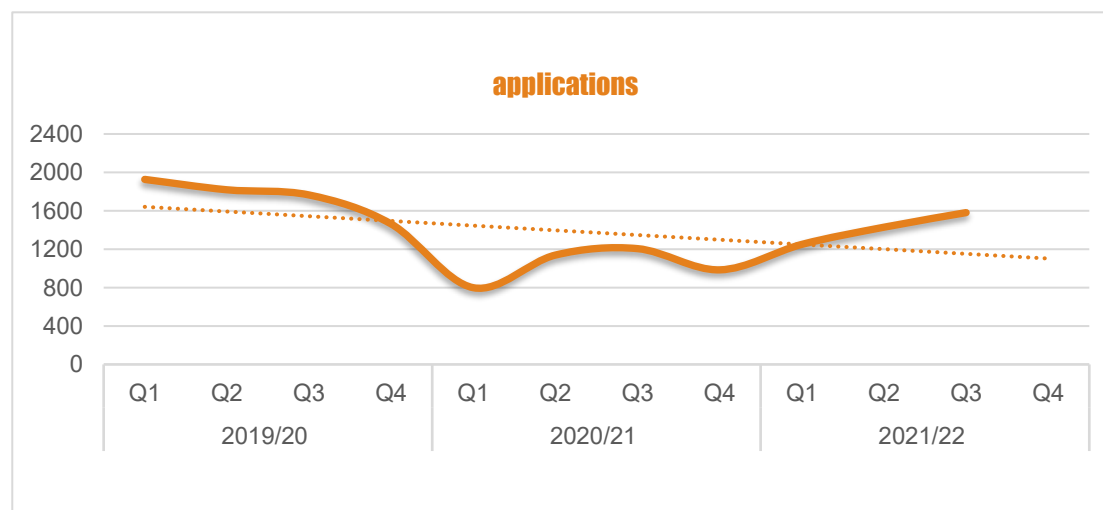
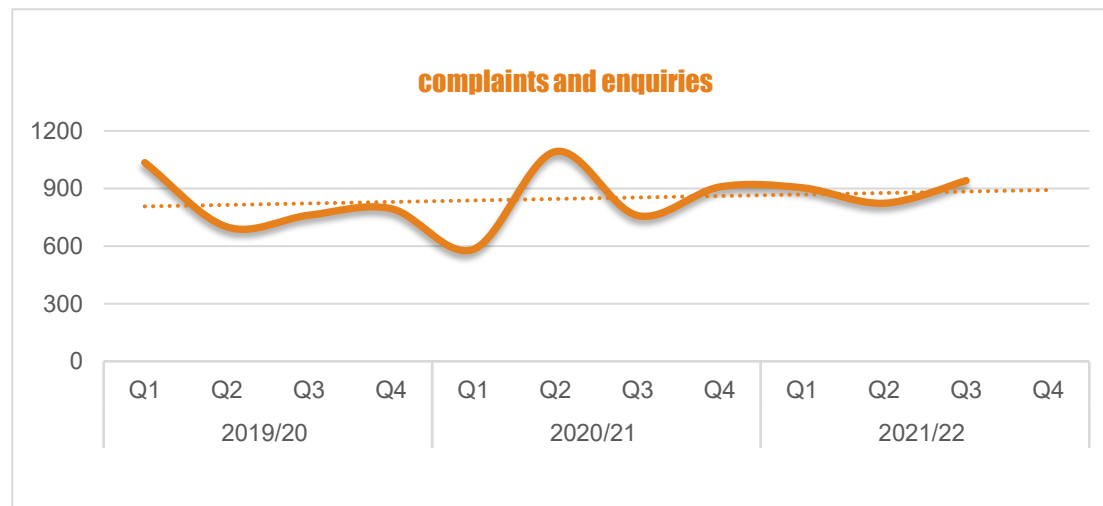
The chart (top right) shows the number complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to licensing. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of licensing applications.

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

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is an increase of 12% compared to the previous quarter, and consistent with the volume recorded during 2019/20. Approximately 70% of cases were applications and registrations; with 28% relating to taxi vehicle licences, 24% relating to temporary events, and 16% relating to taxi driver licences.

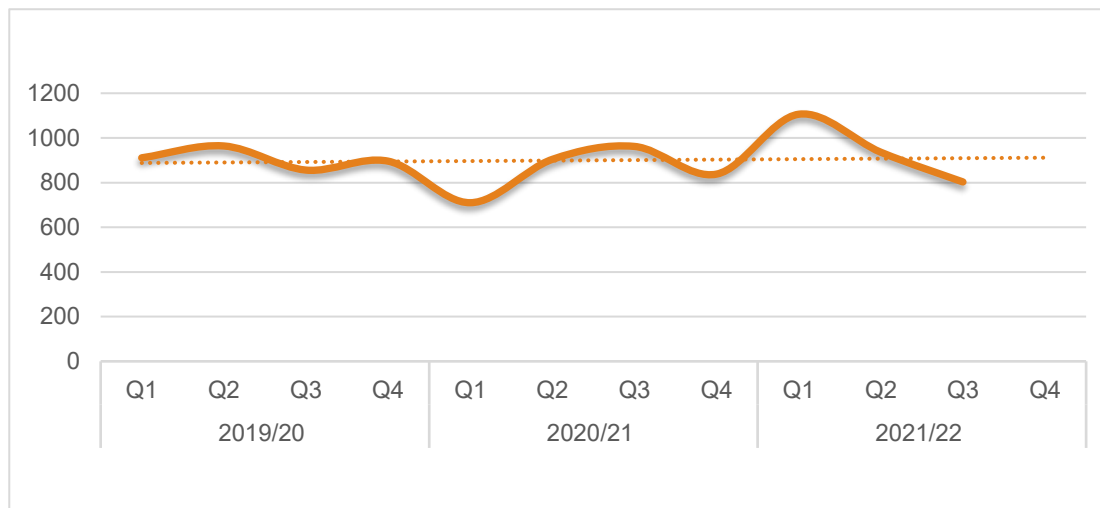
In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 135 complaints recorded during quarter three, 33% related to taxis, 24% related to street trading or amenities, and 16% related to animal licensing.



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;

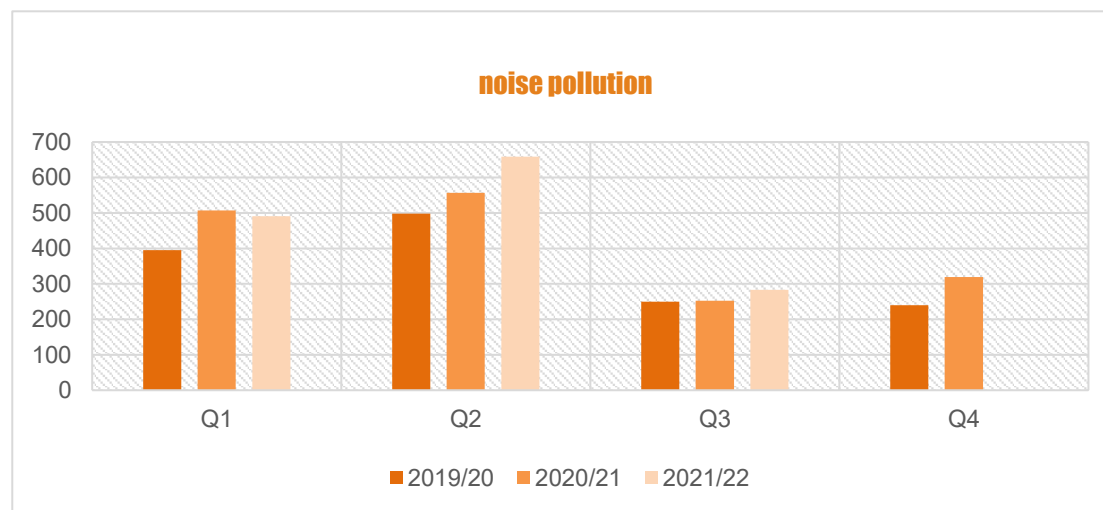
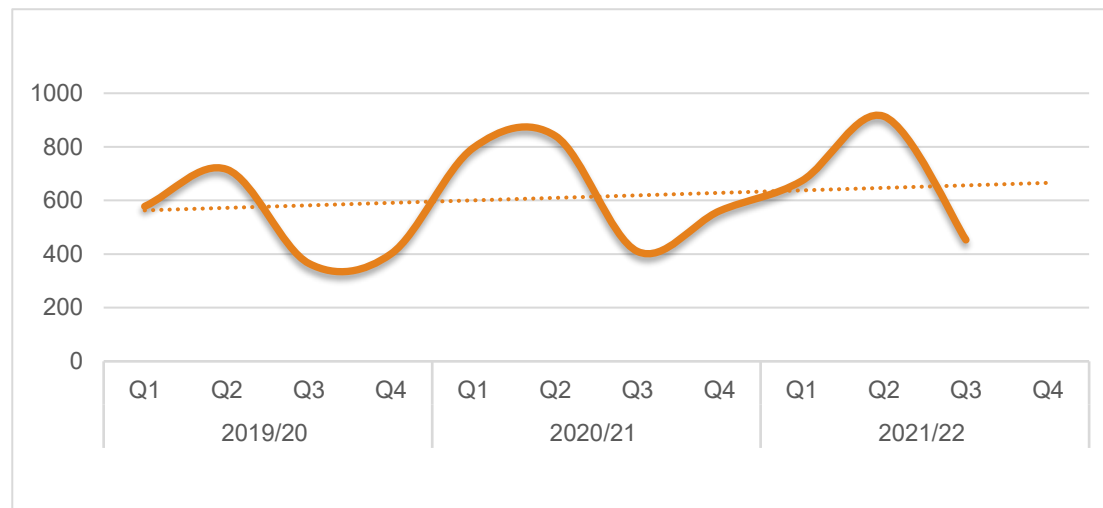
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies



The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 14% compared to the previous quarter, and lower than previous years. Approximately 90% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 45% continued to relate to contaminated land. Just under a quarter of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

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.

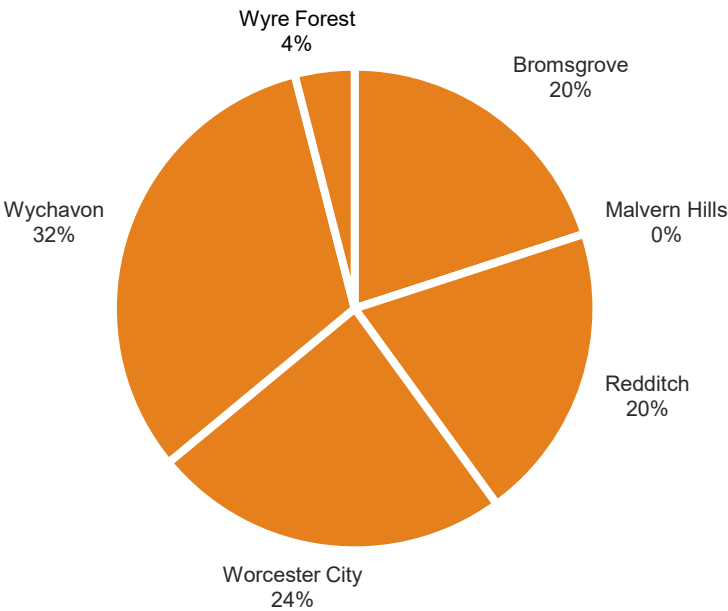
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 50% compared to the previous quarter, but consistent with seasonal variations. Approximately 60% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or from audio-visual equipment) continuing to be most prominent. A further 17% of cases related to smoke nuisances including the burning of domestic or commercial waste.



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 91



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Eckington	22	2,669	8.24
Bedwardine	35	8,167	4.29
Norton	15	3,707	4.05
Sanders Park	14	3,651	3.83
Pinvin	11	3,105	3.54
Arboretum	21	6,233	3.37
Claines	25	8,076	3.10
Rainbow Hill	17	5,511	3.08
Batchley And Brockhill	27	8,783	3.07
Cathedral	36	11,763	3.06
Avoncroft	10	3,300	3.03
Church Hill	23	8,062	2.85
Greenlands	26	9,329	2.79
Marlbrook	8	2,890	2.77
Drakes Broughton	7	2,577	2.72
Winyates	22	8,184	2.69
Mitton	27	10,047	2.69
Perryfields	4	1,501	2.66
Central (Redditch)	18	6,844	2.63
Harvington And Norton	7	2,756	2.54
Little Hampton	14	5,818	2.41
Evesham South	13	5,423	2.40
Lovett And North Claines	15	6,499	2.31
Warndon	13	5,669	2.29
Hartlebury	7	3,140	2.23

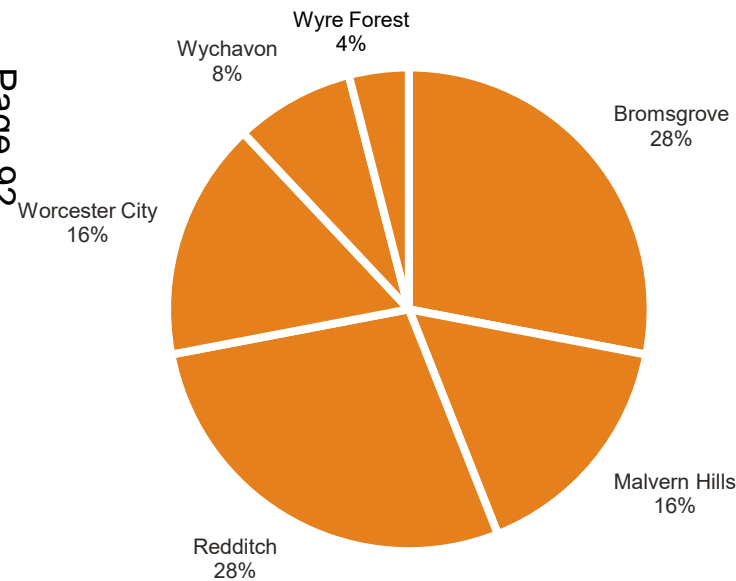
Page 95

Agenda Item 7

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 92



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

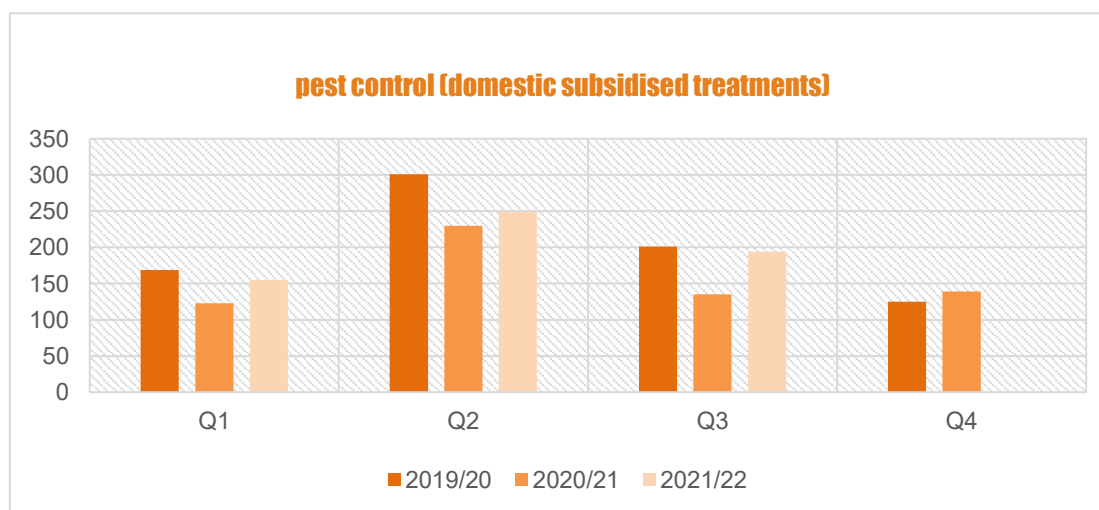
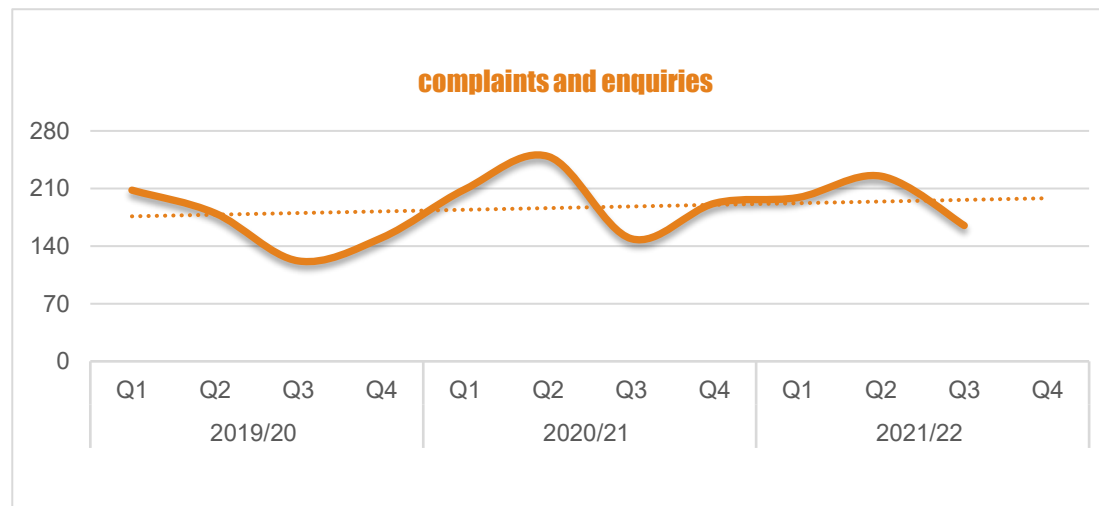
Page 96

Agenda Item 7

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 four Worcestershire Districts (Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wychavon). Worcester City and Wyre Forest do not offer a subsidised pest control service.

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during quarter three is a reduction of 26% compared to the previous quarter, but a marginal increase compared to previous years. Approximately 65% of cases related to pest control; whether enquiries about treatments and sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 28% of cases were complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

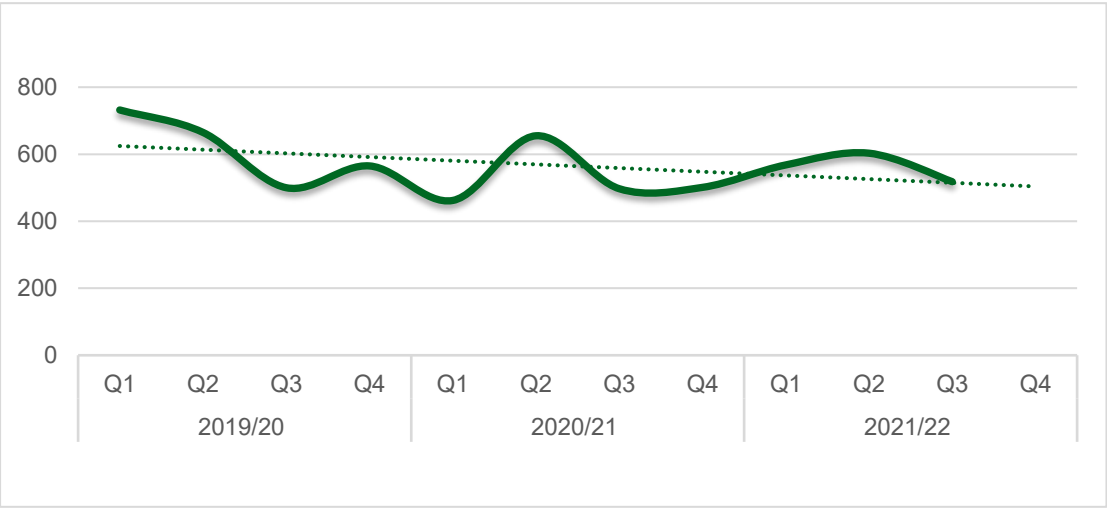
Of the 249 domestic treatments undertaken during quarter three, approximately 60% were due to issues with rats. In addition, 75% were undertaken due to pests at properties in the Redditch and Wychavon districts.



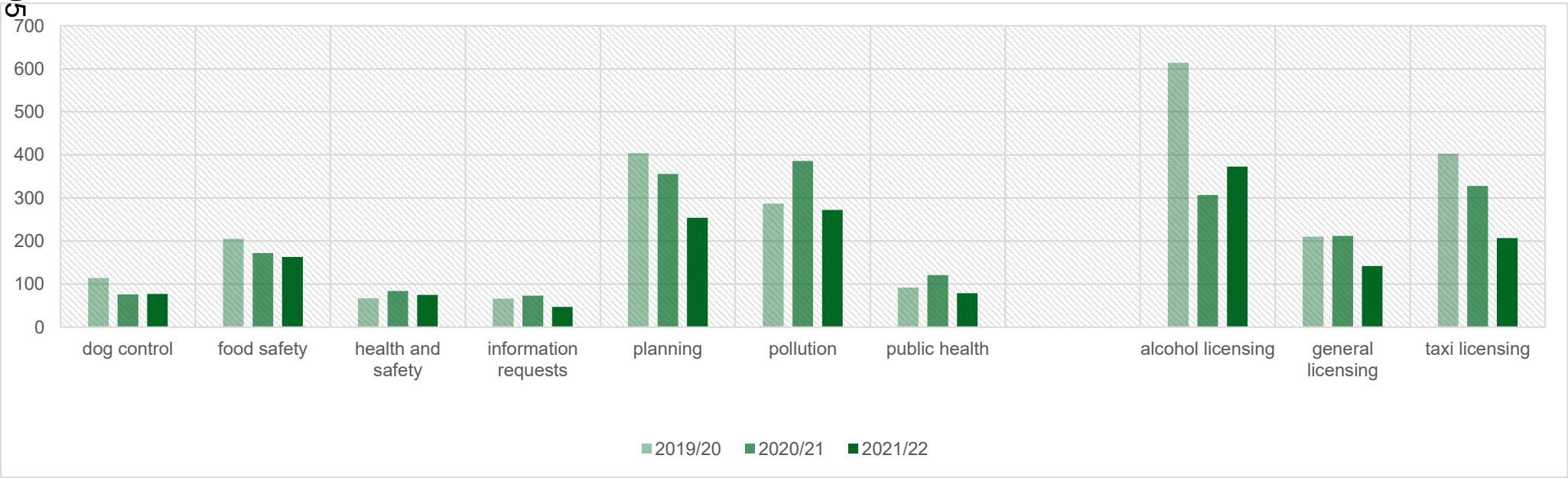
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The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

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 95

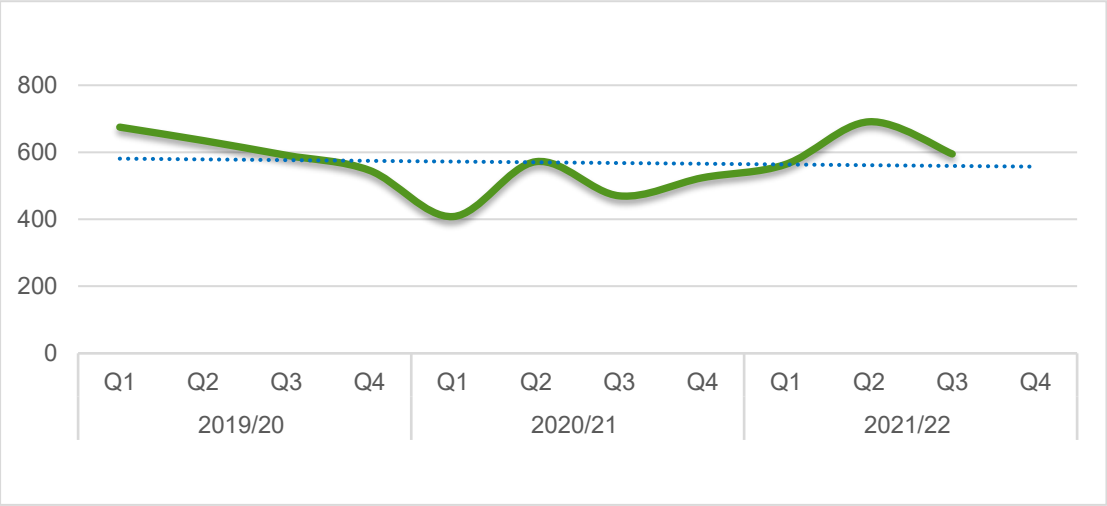


Page 99

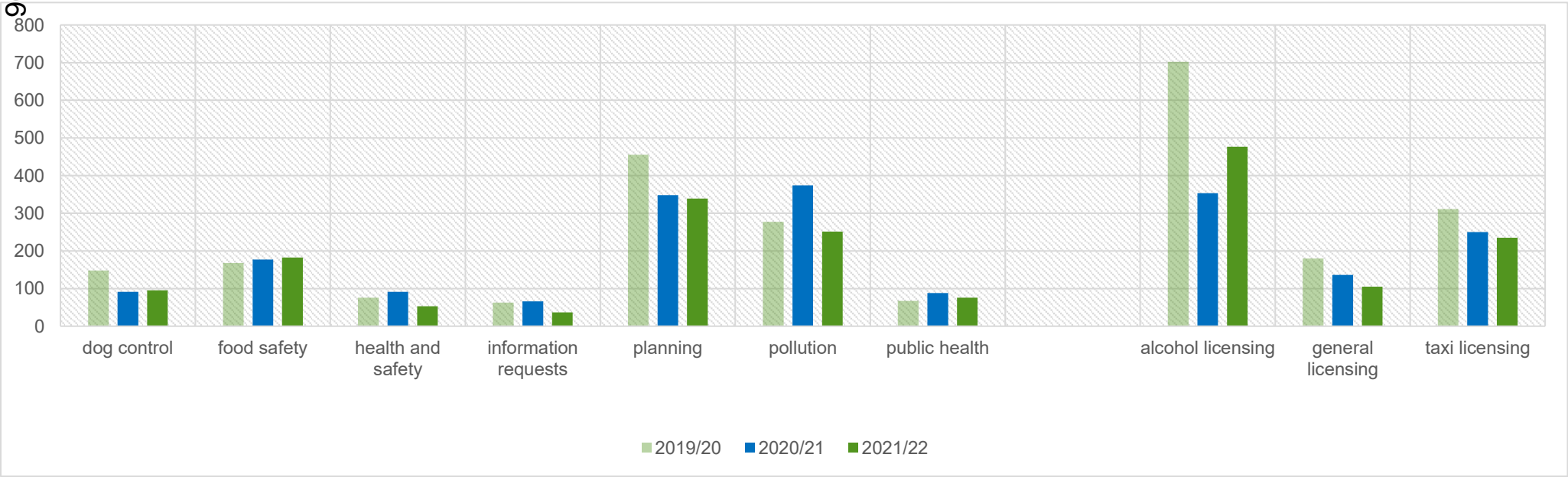
Agenda Item 7

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 96

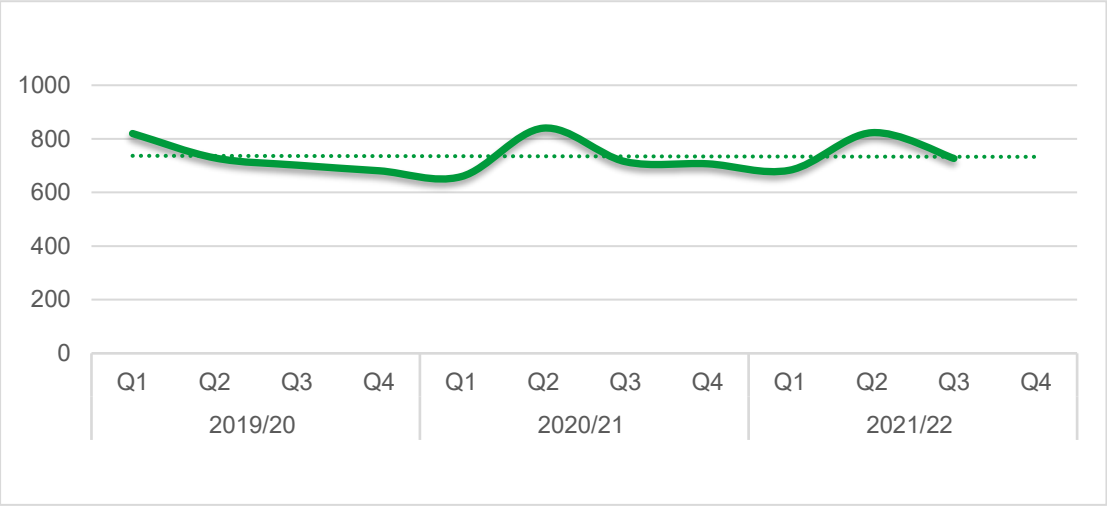


Page 100

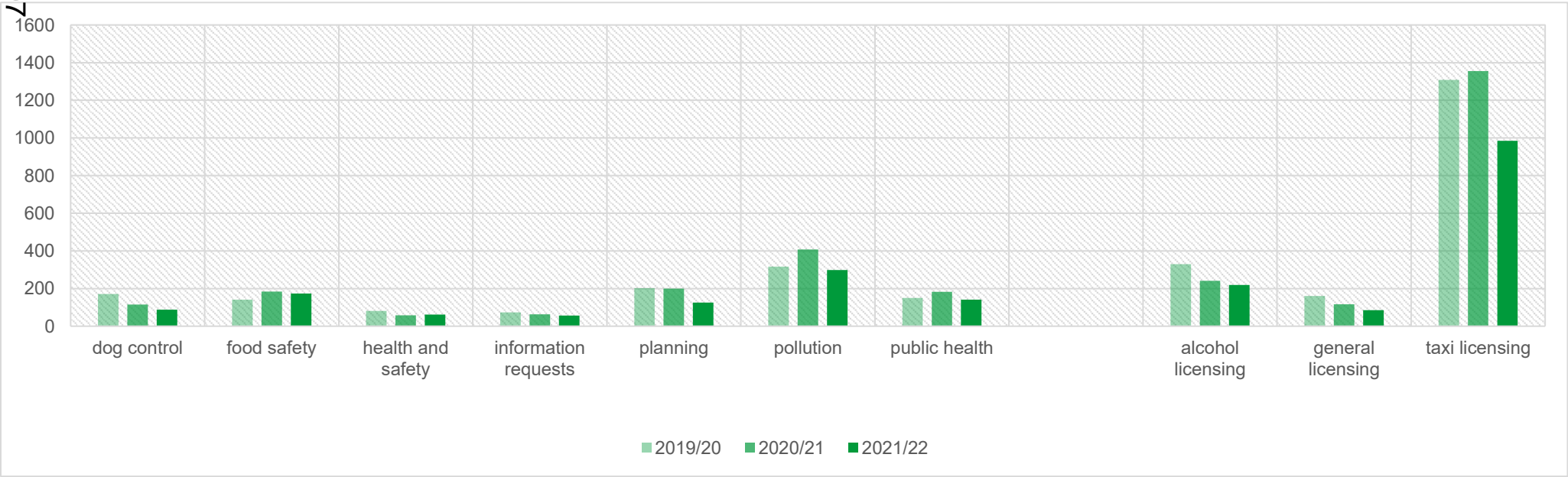
Agenda Item 7

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 97

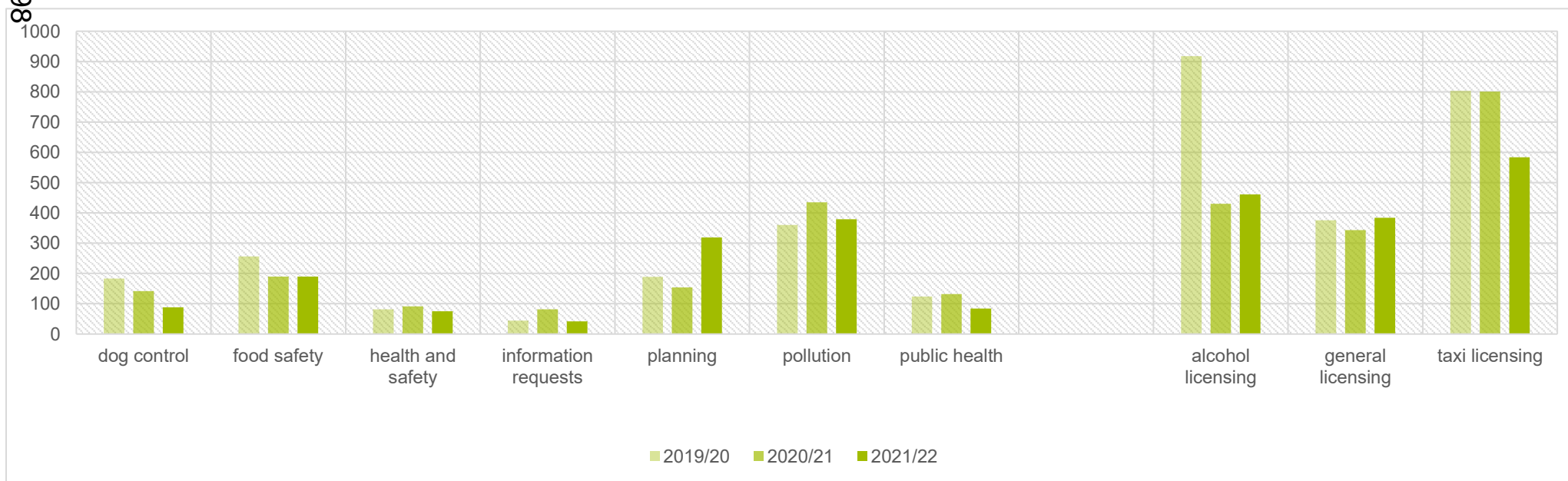
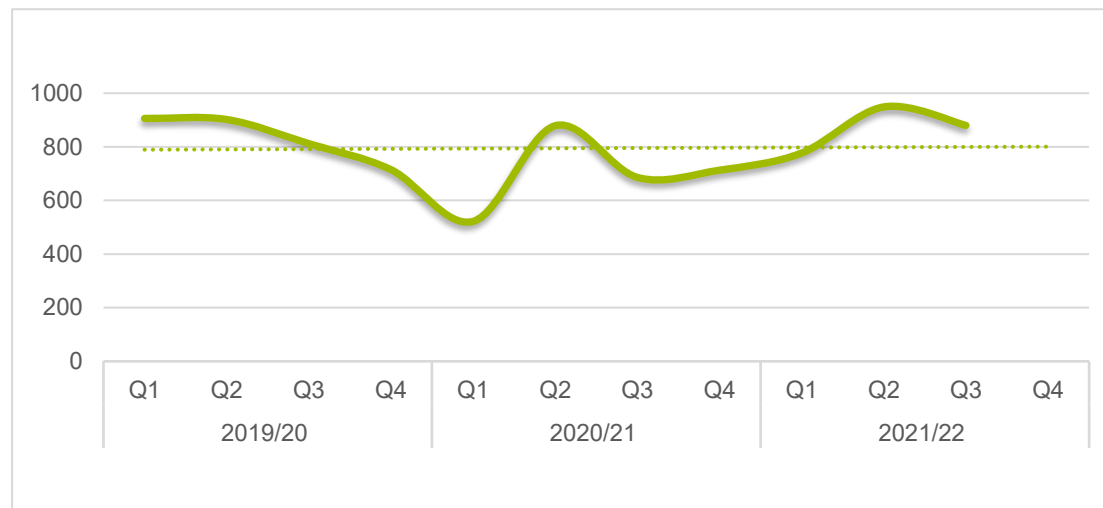


Page 101

Agenda Item 7

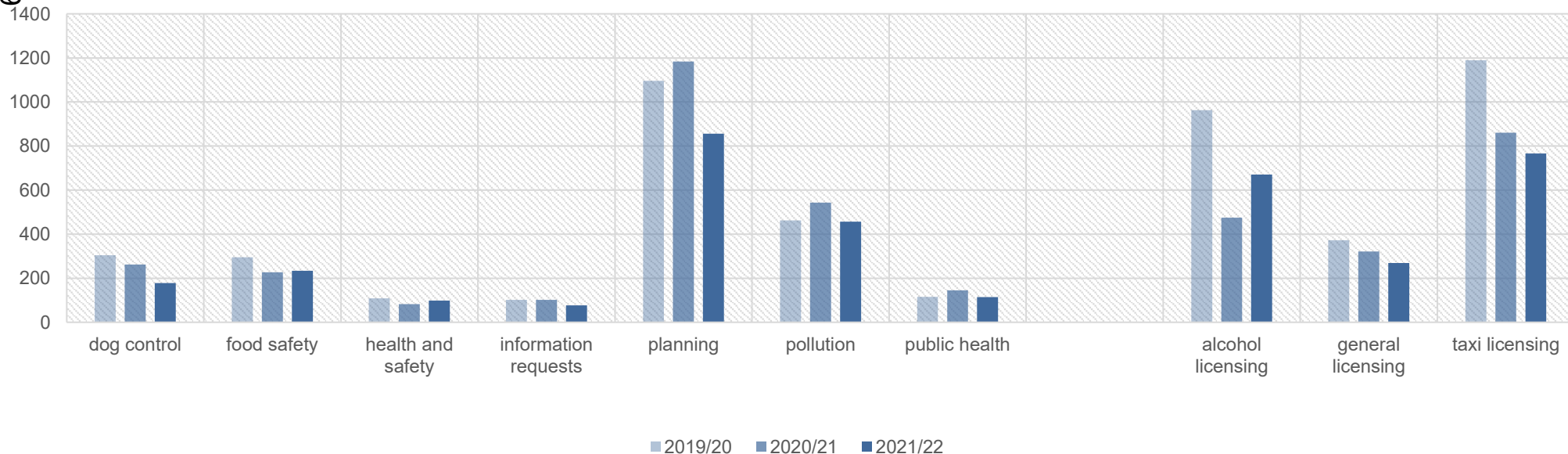
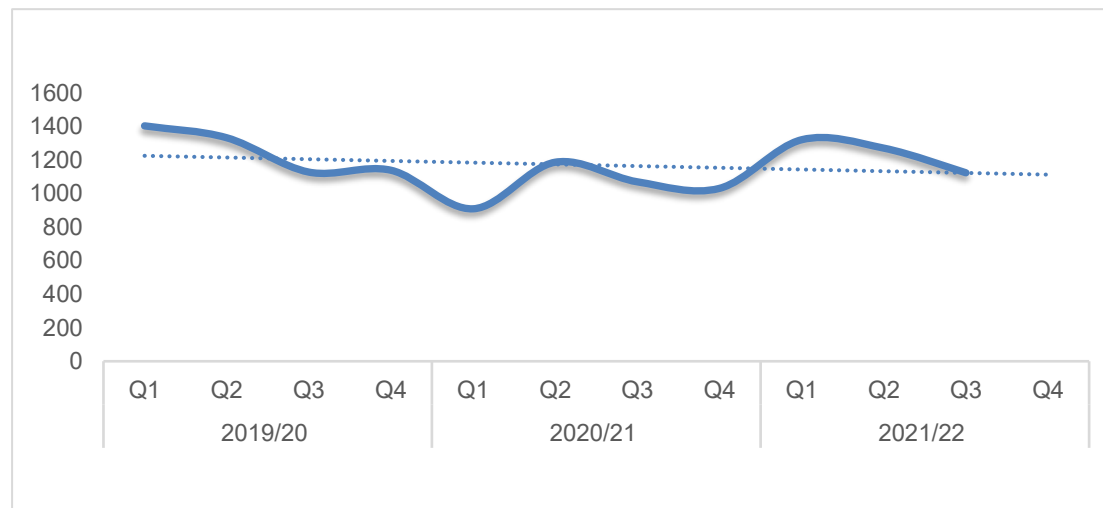
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

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.



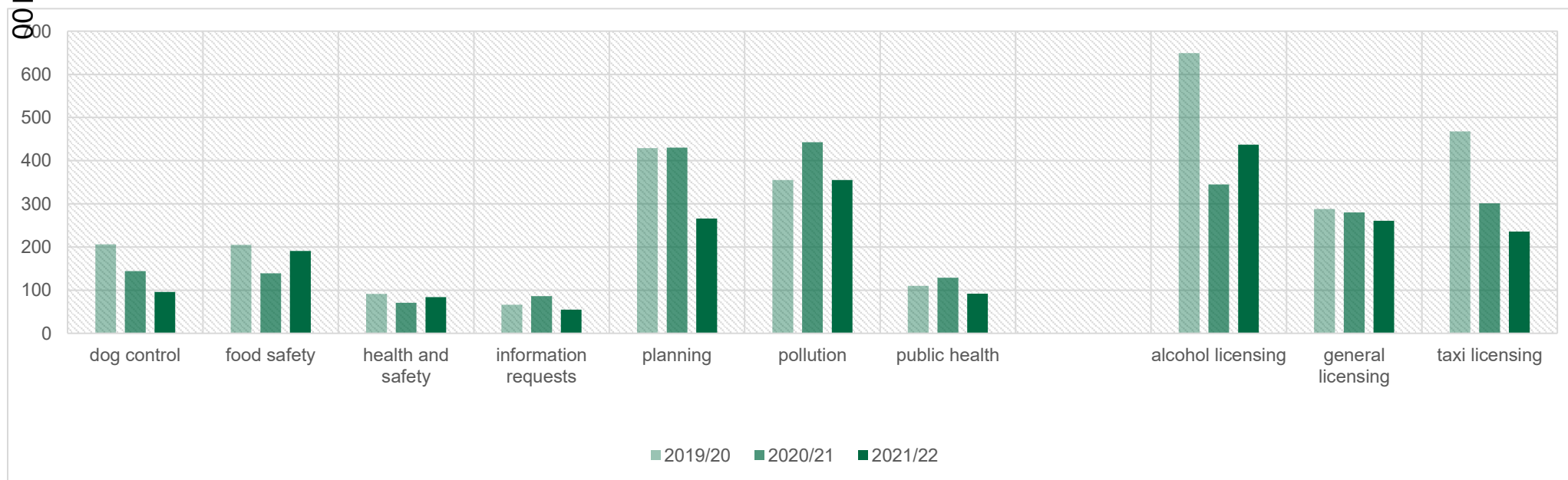
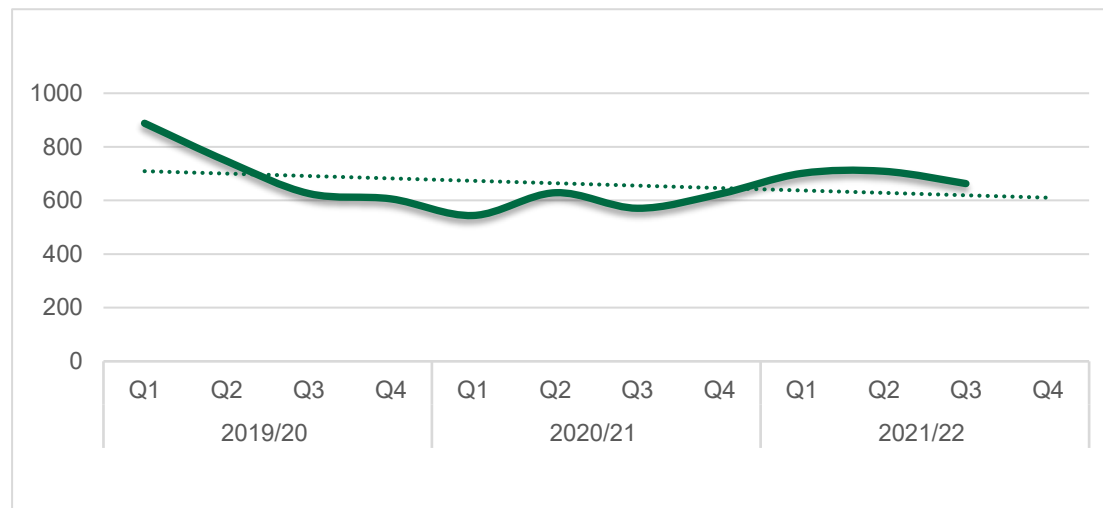
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

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.

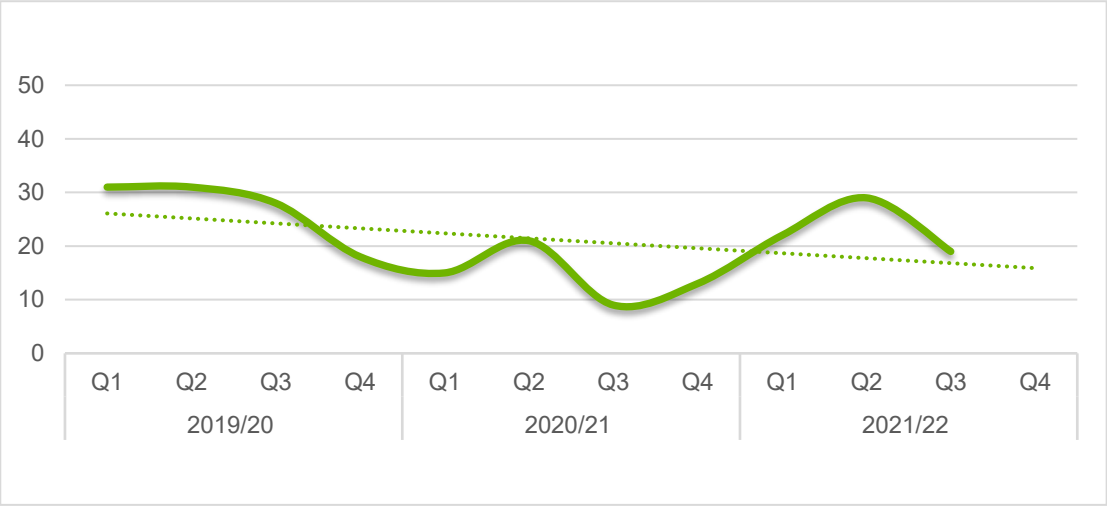


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

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.

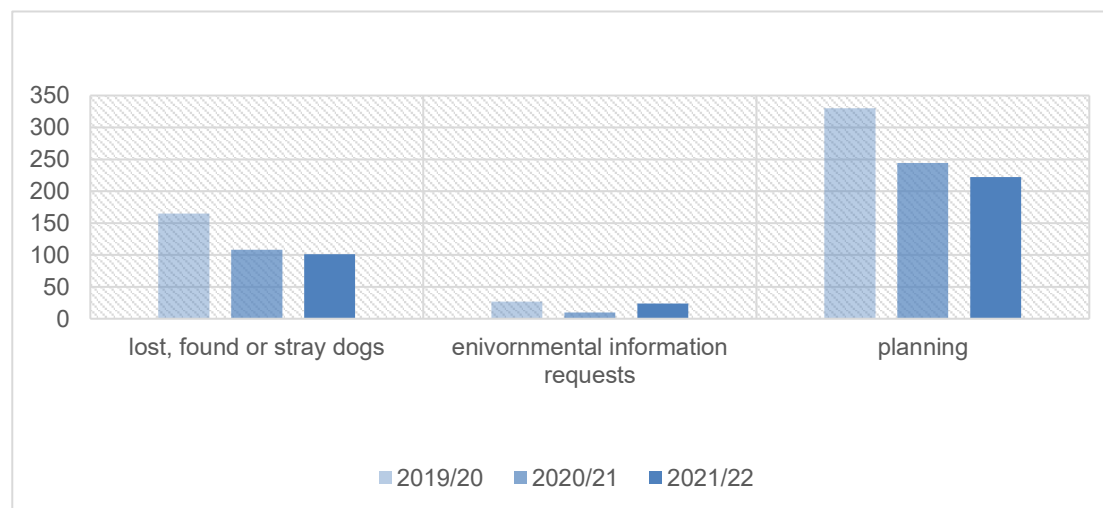
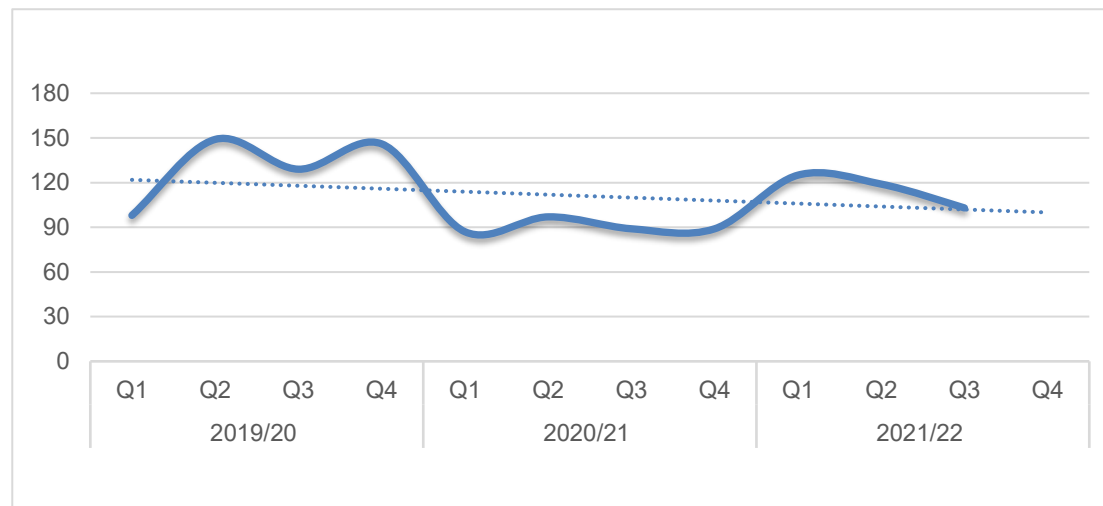


The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing 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.

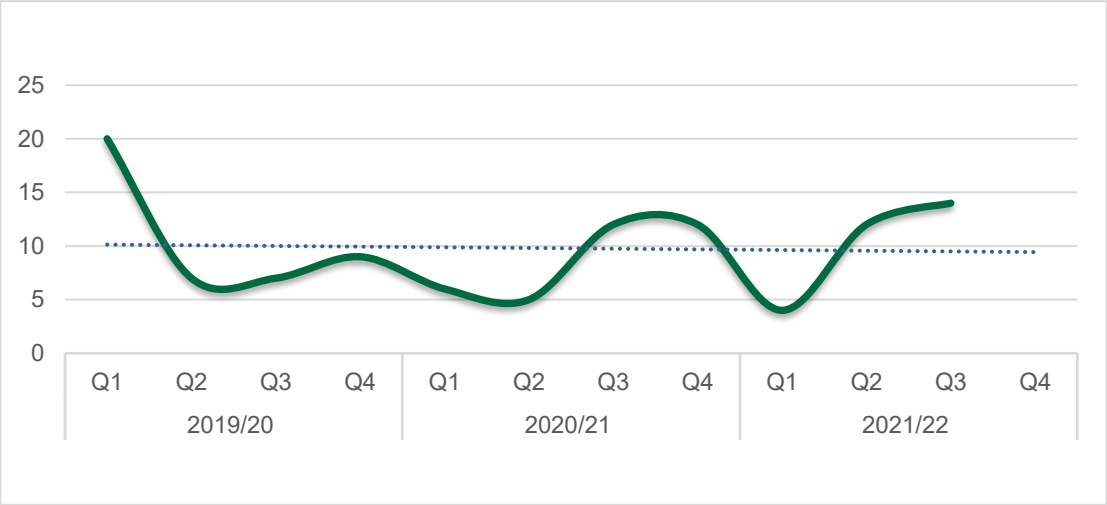


The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing 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.

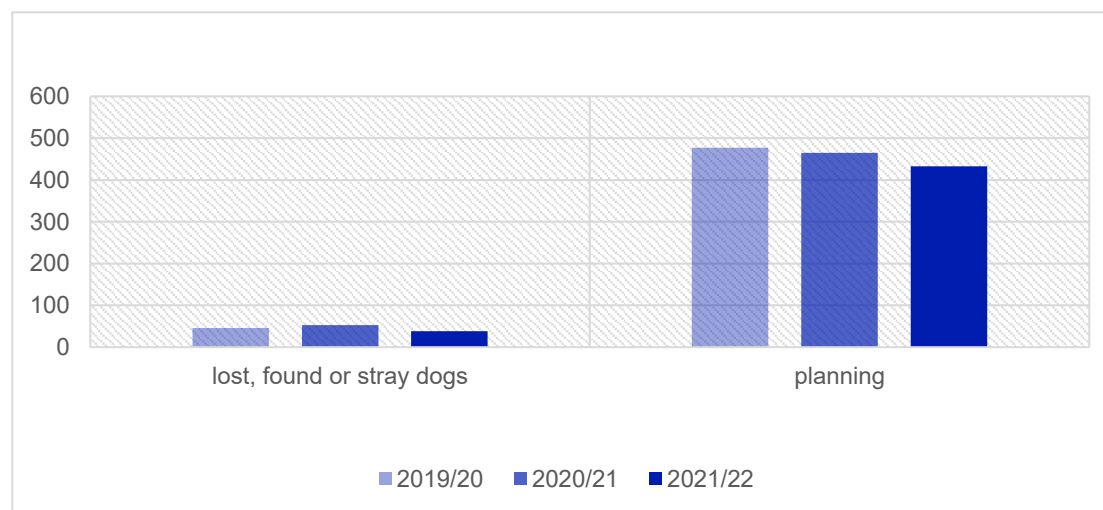
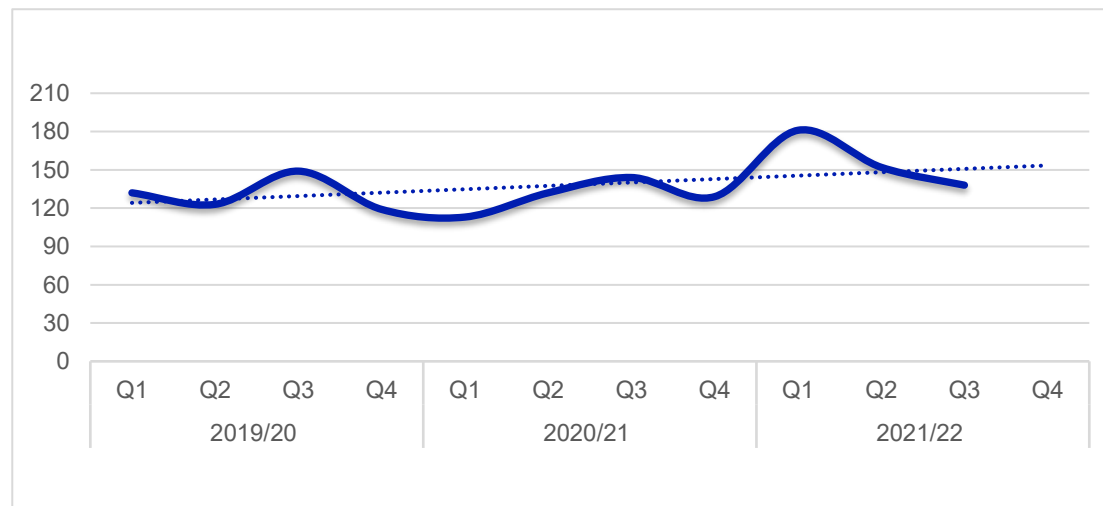


South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex 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.





WRS Board: 10th February 2022

Information Report – Food Safety Interventions: Post Pandemic Recovery Programme

Recommendation	That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the information provided in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.
Report	<p>During the peak of the Covid pandemic the Food Standards Agency (FSA) stopped the majority of food visits, although partners through WRS were required to monitor poor Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) businesses and deal with complaints. We entered a two-year recovery phase in August 2021. Every Local Authority has a long list of overdue inspections, the total across the county being nearly 3,000. We have now been set a clear programme by the FSA with priority on interventions at New Premises [NPR] and those with Level 0-Level 3 FHRS. As we have always had a high level of FHRS compliance, the numbers with previous low FHRS scores were <10% of our total. Officers have, therefore, been able to conduct a wide range of visits across all FHRS ratings.</p> <p>In reading this report, members should note that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - business compliance rates remain high with over 90% of business still scoring FHRS L3-L5 (Generally Compliant). - food inspection reports left by officers are not subject to Freedom of Information but are freely releasable on request under the FHRS Brand Standard (www.food.gov.uk/brandstandard) The number of such requests, particularly from the media, continues to rise. - where a business changes hands the previous rating immediately ceases. <p><u>Resources</u></p> <p>Food inspectors must meet the FSA Food Law Code of Practice Competency requirements. We have a reduced competent officer resource due to ongoing pandemic work combined with a national shortage of suitably qualified officers to recruit or work as contractors. We have been able to employ the equivalent of two FTE contractors but the shortage is likely to continue for the foreseeable future and will impact on our ability to undertake food work. We have, however, recently appointed two Regulatory Support Officers [RSO] who are being trained to support our Environmental Health Officers to do various work that does not require full food competency, e.g. sampling, FHRS sticker checks, assessing low risk premises.</p> <p><u>Changing Landscape</u></p> <p>An impact of the pandemic has been the increased importance to businesses of food ordering platforms, the best known being Just Eat, Uber and Deliveroo. Whilst there is still no legal requirement in England to display an FHRS rating certificate, getting a poor score means a</p>

WRS Board February 2022

business appears at a lower level on local platform listings. If a business scores a Level 0 then they will be immediately removed from the platform. This has led to an increased demand from businesses to get their long overdue rating. Our Food Lead Officer is also having to deal with more Appeals (within 21 days of rating) and Re-rating requests (£165 fee charged).

Visits Done

Even with limited resource, between June and December 2021 a pool of 8 FTE equivalent officers completed 1,049 inspections, a remarkable effort under the circumstances. 481 had no change in rating. Regrettably, we have found more premises with major non-compliances with drops in FHRS levels particularly in the independent sector. Whilst Food Business Operators are responsible in law for managing food safety, inevitably with the post pandemic pressures on hospitality some are becoming more 'aggressive' when they get a reduced score.

Table 1: Shows existing high risk premises where there has been a drop in FHRS levels

DOWN	D1 level	D2 levels	D3 levels	D4 levels
BDC	20	2		1
MHDC	5	1	1	1
RBC	11	2	1	
WCC	9	5	1	2
WDC	13	4	1	1
WFDC	12		1	1
Total	70	14	5	6

Table 2: Shows how New Premises have scored

NEW	FHRS 0	FHRS 1	FHRS2	FHRS	FHRS 4	FHRS 5
BDC				1	6	18
MHDC		5	1	2	9	28
RBC		3		6	4	16
WCC		3	3	9	7	38
WDC		4	1	8	8	47
WFDC	1	5	1	3	11	38
Total	1	20	6	29	45	185

Table 3: Shows premises that have improved their ratings

UP	FHRS 1 LEVEL	FHRS 2 LEVELS	FHRS 3 LEVELS
BDC	16	4	
MHDC	14		
RBC	10	2	2
WCC	6		1
WDC	12	4	
WFDC	13	2	
Total	71	12	3

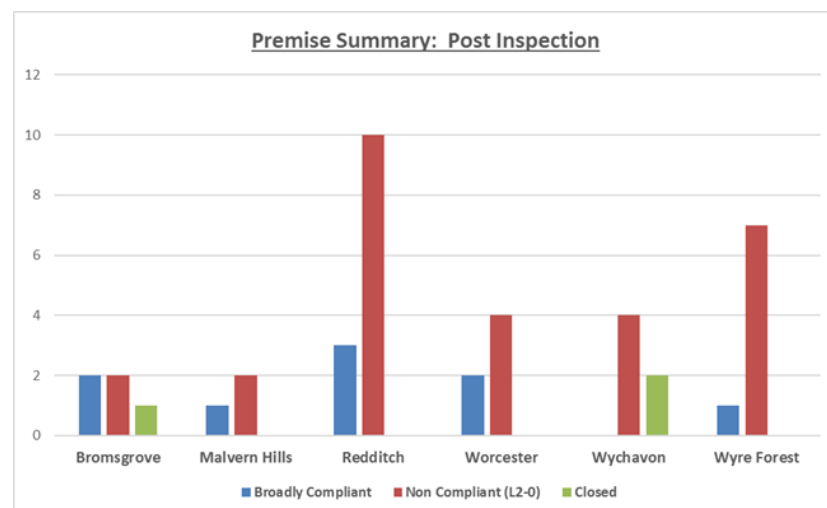
Sectoral Approach

The FSA Recovery Programme has changed to reflect our own approach to food work in that we are no longer being driven by inspection due dates but are able to be more intelligence and project led. This report now focuses on the outcome of several such projects.

New Premises: The pandemic has not stopped new businesses from registering and indeed we have received more in the last two years than in 2019, the last year before the pandemic struck. This has further added to the potential workloads of our already stretched teams.

District	2019	2020	2021
Bromsgrove	85	113	96
Malvern	69	120	125
Redditch	62	98	109
Worcester	115	154	166
Wychavon	137	189	211
Wyre Forest	106	128	140
Totals	574	802	847

We received more home-based registrations suggesting that people were trying to find alternative income streams during lockdown periods. The FSA provided funding last autumn for a risk prioritisation exercise of interventions at new premises. This work was done over a period of 6 weeks by training up some of our Covid Advisers to Level 2 Food Hygiene, providing a check list and getting them to make visits or phone calls. This resulted in some 30% of businesses being identified as no longer trading (double the pre- pandemic situation). Targeted follow up visits identified are now being completed by fully qualified Food Safety Officers, supported by our two RSO



Sampling:

Due to other operational pressures sampling over the last few years has been greatly reduced within WRS. In the autumn we were able to utilise spare capacity within the COVID Advisors (CAs) team to carry out a sampling programme. This involved training delivered by one of our experienced EHOs with Public Health England and a practical session based at Kidderminster Town Hall. The project is set to finish at the end of March this year.

The sampling programme being undertaken is part of a national survey. 211 environmental (work surfaces, sponges, cloths etc) and food samples have been taken from 57 premises at all FHRS levels across the county. Results from work done before Christmas demonstrates the value of such work with nearly 50% of all samples taken found to be unsatisfactory. Further advice/visits are now being given to premises about handwashing and general cleaning practice.

One final point to highlight is that our novel and innovative approach in organising and delivering this project attracted great interest from the EHO seconded to work on food hygiene and safety for the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Table 5: Shows the interim results

Premises FHRS level	Borderline	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Not Recorded	Total
1	1	5	6		12
2		2	2	1	5
3	1	28	37	3	69
4		8	18	1	27
5	3	26	56		85
NPR		4	7	2	13
Total	5	76	128	7	211

FHRS = Food Hygiene Rating Score or Star rating of the premises.

NPR represents new premises awaiting inspection

Satisfactory = No bacteriological concerns identified

Borderline = Bacteriological levels developing

Not Satisfactory = Bacteriological levels not acceptable

Not Recorded = error somewhere in process

Operation Revitalize:

In November 2021 we set up a programme of out of hours visits to existing takeaways and ethnic premises which do not open during the day. To date officers have completed 79 visits involving some 150 hours of work after 1800 hours.

The Board is asked to note that whilst Community Environmental Health (CEH) work is tasked through the CEH Management Team and Food Lead Helen Cameron, particular credit for the complex operational planning to complete the work and produce reports for Operational Corona Fries, Sampling and Operation Revitalise must go to EHO Isabel Moore and her considerable project management skills.

Low Risk Premises:

Although not a priority in the FSA Recovery Programme, throughout the pandemic the WRS Administration Team/Food Lead continued to send out self-assessment questionnaires to low risk retail, cakemakers, community centres, sports clubs, wet bars, etc which make up some 30% of our registered businesses. We continue to get a reasonable response and those that do not respond receive a follow up phone call and/or visit based on the potential food safety risk.

Allergens:

Without doubt one of the biggest challenges for businesses and food officers remains achieving allergen compliance. Businesses now have not only The Food Information Regulations 2014 requiring them to assess 14 specific allergens and ensure customers are aware of which foods contain them but also the new PPDS requiring pre-packed food for direct sale (Natasha's Law) to contain full allergen labelling which came into force on 1 October 2021. EHOs also assess businesses for the risk of cross contamination of food by allergens which can impact on their FHRs score. The major issue is not with larger businesses but with smaller independents who are still struggling to comply. Our work in this area is done in close partnership with our colleagues at County Trading Standards.

Contact Details

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