

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board

Thursday, 23rd June, 2022
4.30 pm

Bromsgrove District Council
Parkside Suite
Parkside
Bromsgrove
B61 8DA

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

THURSDAY 23RD JUNE 2022

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor H. J. Jones
Bromsgrove District Council: Councillor P.L. Thomas
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor J. Raine
Malvern Hills District Council: Councillor B. Nielsen
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor S. Khan
Redditch Borough Council: Councillor N. Nazir
Worcester City Council: Councillor S. Cronin
Worcester City Council: Councillor C. Mitchell
Wychavon District Council: Councillor D. Morris
Wychavon District Council: Councillor T. Rowley
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor N. Martin
Wyre Forest District Council: Councillor L. Whitehouse

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman
2. Election of Vice-Chairman
3. Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
4. 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.
5. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 10th February 2022 (Pages 1 - 12)
6. Worcestershire Regulatory Services - Annual Report 2021/2022 (Pages 13 - 64)
7. Worcestershire Regulatory Services - Revenue Monitoring April - March 2022 & Annual Return (Pages 65 - 78)
8. Activity & Performance Data Report Q1 to 4 (Pages 79 - 128)

9. Information Report - Night Time Economy (Pages 129 - 132)
10. 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

15th June 2022

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

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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

At the current time, seating at the meeting will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants.

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

Members and Officers who still have access to lateral flow tests (LFTs) are encouraged to take a test on the day of the meeting. Meeting attendees who do not have access to LFTs are encouraged not to attend a Committee if they have if they have common cold symptoms or any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

Whilst the Council acknowledges that it is no longer a legal requirement to wear face coverings, we would really appreciate if those attending a meeting in person would consider wearing a face covering throughout the meeting unless they are exempt or speaking.

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 be able to access the meeting if they wish to do so. Seating will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants. Whilst the Council acknowledges that it is no longer a legal requirement to wear face coverings, it would be really appreciated if members of the public who attend the meeting in person would consider wearing a face covering throughout the meeting unless they are exempt. It should be noted that members of the public who choose to attend in person do so at their own risk.

Members of the public who still have access to lateral flow tests (LFTs) are encouraged to take a test on the day of the meeting. Meeting attendees who do not have access to LFTs are encouraged not to attend the meeting if they have any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY 2022, AT 4.36 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P.L. Thomas, J. Raine, T. Wells (Chairman), A. Fry, J. Carver (Vice-Chairman), D. Morris, T. Rowley and A. Coleman (substituting for Councillor P. Dyke)

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

Partner Officers: Mr. L. Griffiths, Worcester City Council, Mr. I. Miller, Wyre Forest District Council (via Microsoft Teams) and Mr. I. Edwards, Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council

20/21

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

The following apologies for absence were received:-

Councillors H. J. Jones Bromsgrove District Council and R. Udall, Worcester City Council, P. Dyke, Wyre Forest District Council with A. Coleman, Wyre Forest District Council, in attendance, as the substitute Member.

It was noted that apologies were also received from Councillor S. Cronin, Worcester City Council, who was due to attend the meeting as the substitute Member for Councillor R. Udall, Worcester City Council.

21/21

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22/21

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 18th November 2021, were submitted.

As noted in the minutes, Councillor J. Raine, Malvern Hills District Council was in the Chair for this meeting, as Vice-Chairman of the Board.

RESOLVED that minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 18th November 2021, be approved as a correct record.

23/21

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE
MONITORING APRIL TO DECEMBER 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 15 and 16 of the main agenda report.

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

The detailed revenue report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. This showed a projected outturn 2021/2022 of £141k 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. Agency staff costs were being incurred to backfilling of these employees. However, due to the national shortage of suitable qualified staff, which had created difficulties in recruiting agency replacements; this had resulted in a significant saving within salaries.
- Officer Members of the Board had agreed to reserve a further £20k for the purchase of stray dog vans in 2022/2023. This was due to further delays in the supply chain due to the international shortage of micro-chip components. Each partner authority's contribution was as follows: -

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 was the actual bereavement costs April to December 2021 to be funded by partners. These costs were charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the activity, it was 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

- If April to December 2021 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on

this service of £16k. WRS officers would continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of the final recharges for 2021/2022 as soon as possible. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners was: -

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

Appendix 2 to the report shows details of the income achieved by WRS during April to December 2021.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to brief questions with regard to bereavement costs and highlighted that WRS officers had a good working relationship with suppliers of funeral services to ensure that only reasonable costs were incurred.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to further questions with regard to the dog warden vans, and in doing so explained that officers had carried out a lot of work looking at electric vans, their battery life and mileage capacity. WRS carried out dog warden work for other authorities including Gloucester City, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury, so a vast area to cover, hence officers felt that electric vehicles did not currently have sufficient range for efficient use in this role. However, officers would continue to look at other less polluting vehicles.

RESOLVED that

- a) the final financial position for the period April to December 2021, be noted;
- b) the £20k transfer to WRS reserves towards the purchase of a dog warden van, be approved;
- c) partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2021-2022 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

- d) 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

- e) 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
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

24/21

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES, SERVICE PLAN 2022/2023

The Board considered the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Service Plan 2022/2023.

The Head of Regulatory Services introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations, as detailed on page 23 of the main agenda report.

The Board signed off on the service plan for WRS each year. The process helped to make Members aware of what the service was proposing for the relevant financial year and provided a sign off that some central government bodies liked to see in relation to service delivery plans e.g., the Food Standards Agency.

The plan followed very much the pattern of previous years and had an Executive Summary to pick up the main points. Last year's plan had to accommodate WRS activities in tackling the global pandemic as well as day to day activities. At the time of writing this report, the country retained limited control measures. However, the Government announced that Plan B measures would end on 26th January 2022 and compulsory self-isolation for people with Covid on 24th March 2022. We needed to see that living with Covid 19 was a fact of daily.

Away from the pandemic, the service would continue to shape its work around the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), as these provided a framework that allowed WRS to have a golden thread back to the priorities of the six partner authorities and also to link to the requirements of the various national bodies that oversaw the work of WRS.

A range of high-level activities had been identified within the plan so that Members would be aware of the general focus of activity. Below this would sit a number of team plans that would be used to drive the actual business activities.

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

Working with businesses and other partners was a key theme for both generating income to mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes were delivered that matched the priorities of partners and stakeholders. Delivery for other local authorities also remained a key income generation strategy, supported by work for the private sector and specific grant monies. Whilst much of our work for customers had fallen

off during the initial period of the pandemic response, most of our long-standing customers had come back to WRS, with some new ones in recent weeks.

WRS would continue to use intelligence to drive the business forward and the embedding of this approach and its associated processes would 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 had become more real as the devastating consequences had been felt by colleagues in other local authorities elsewhere in the country. WRS would work closely with our ICT host, Wyre Forest District Council, to limit the risk.

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 were now enabled for this working pattern. However, our reliance on ICT provision to deliver this did increase our vulnerability to disruption.

As with previous years, Members were asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This was 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 had a better understanding of the demand in this service area when they authorised the plan for this and future years.

Members were asked to note the proposed numbers of inspections and similar activities proposed for the new financial year that would be undertaken to discharge the statutory duties of the six partner authorities in relation to food control.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions from Members with regard to including WRS expectations in future Service Plans, and in doing so highlighted that; since 2011 the systems thinking process tended to move against targets, the FSA code did give an indication of the expectations of local authorities.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Plan for 2022/2023, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- b) Members specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

25/21

INFORMATION REPORT - COVID RELATED ACTIVITY

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the Board with a detailed updated information report on Covid related activity, following on from the previous Covid related activity report presented to the Board at the meeting held on 18th November 2021.

The report presented in November 2021 explained the role WRS officers had in assisting the NHS with contacting people who had received a positive Covid-19 test result. December saw a significant increase in positive cases which led to a change in the process that had been followed previously.

All cases that received a positive result were now sent emails and SMS messages which invited them to complete an online form. They were given a window of 8 hours to complete what was referred to as the digital journey.

The need to recruit to the team of Contact Tracers continued, it was an ongoing task because of the need to expand the team.

Since 9th February 2022 the number of cases to complete had significantly dropped, people were seeing it as less of a priority due to the Government's announcement in respect of Covid 19 measures coming to an end on 26th January 2022 and compulsory self-isolation for people with Covid on 24th March 2022.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, responded to questions from Members with regard to Contract Tracers. Members were informed that staff would be redeployed within the next 5 months. Due to recruitment issues internally, officers would look to employ temporary staff, as they were skilled to take on roles which had proved difficult to recruit into. There was a skills matrix of officers, so it would be a case of aligning people up to the roles available, this was being done in conjunction with Public Health. Worcestershire County Council.

In response to the concerns raised by Members with regard to people still reporting Covid cases, the Head of Regulatory Services indicated that this would be a matter for the County Council Public Health team and the Communications Unit at County Hall. However, he assured Members that currently people would be encouraged to continue to report Covid cases, so that officers could keep an eye on the number of reported cases.

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.

26/21

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 3, 2021 - 2022

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services briefly presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 3 for 2021/2022; and in doing so highlighted drew Members' attention to the following key points: -

ACTIVITY DATA

Towards the end of the third quarter of 2021/2022, 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.

Food Hygiene work remained on-going as the team worked towards delivering the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) roadmap.

The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during quarter three was a reduction of 12% compared to the previous quarter, but it was a marginal increase compared to previous years.

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during quarter three saw an increase of 12% compared to the previous quarter, and consistent with the volume recorded during 2019/2020.

The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during quarter three saw a reduction of 14% compared to the previous quarter, and lower than previous years.

The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during quarter three saw a reduction of 50% compared to the previous quarter, but consistent with seasonal variations.

COVID RELATED ACTIVITIES

It was noted that this item was covered in detail during Agenda Item No. 6, Minute Number 25/12.

Local Outbreak Response Team

A number of Environmental Health Officers remained embedded within the local outbreak response team.

Covid Enforcement

Officers continued to focus on night-time economy. When the Government's 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 had been the case for a number of years.

PERFORMANCE

Quarter 3 was another more limited reporting period. The non-business customer measure at 62.5%, slipped slightly further and remained significantly down on the 74% out-turn from last year. Having reviewed the data, the falls continued to have 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

Business customer satisfaction remained good at 97.9%.

Overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses were at 98.3% and 1.7% respectively. This remained good and on a par with previous years.

The ratio of compliments to complaints remained good at 113 to 18.

Staff sickness had increased from 1.55 days per FTE to 2.94 days per FTE cumulative for the year. The figures had virtually doubled but, given Covid case numbers during quarter 3 this was not a huge surprise.

The Head of Regulatory Services responded to questions with regard to the numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues being down at 50%. Members were briefly informed that this had been a measure for a while and that it fitted in with the six council's desire to enable people to deal with their own issues without the need for officer interventions. The WRS website was redesigned in order to provide advice for residents to enable and encourage residents to try and resolve issues for themselves, where relevant. Environmental Health officers would intervene, if necessary, but the idea was to equip residents in the first instance to try and resolve any issues themselves. Many people responded positively to being approached in a friendly way by a neighbour, rather than being approached officially by officers knocking on their doors.

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

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 for 2021/2022, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

27/21

INFORMATION REPORT - FOOD SAFETY INTERVENTIONS: POST PANDEMIC RECOVERY PROGRAMME

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Board with a detailed information report on Food Safety Interventions: Post Pandemic Recovery Programme.

Members were informed that, as previously reported, that during the peak of the Covid pandemic the Food Standards Agency (FSA) had stopped the majority of food visits, although partners through WRS were required to monitor poor Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) businesses and to deal with complaints. WRS entered a two-year recovery phase in August 2021. Every local authority had a long list of overdue inspections, the total across the county being nearly 3,000. WRS had now been set a clear programme by the FSA with priority on interventions at New Premises (NPR) and those with Level 1 – Level 3 FHRS. WRS have always had a high level of FHRS compliance, the numbers with previous low FHRS scores were < 10% of our total.

Even with limited resources, between June and December 2021 a pool of 8 FTE officers completed 1,049 inspections, a remarkable effort under the circumstances. 481 had no change in rating. Regrettably, officers found more premises with major non-compliances with drops in FHRS levels particularly in the independent sector. With further resources needed, the service was intelligence led, with high-risk businesses targeted.

Members' attention was drawn to the Tables as detailed on pages 106 and 107 of the main agenda report.

Members were further reassured that officers were finding the right premises to bring back up to compliance and that officers had the tools to deal with non-complaint premises that were consistently poorly managed. Officers would provide support where needed but would also issue food hygiene improvement notices, enforcement notices and closure powers if there was a risk to public health.

The Head of Regulatory Services further commented that good publicity had made members of the public fully aware of the Food Hygiene Rating system (Scores on the doors) and members of the public now looked for premises with high ratings, therefore low rating premises would look to improve their scores.

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, WRS, responded to questions with regard to food poisoning and reassured Members that officers would investigate any local outbreaks and if a member of the public visited their GP with any food poisoning related illness, their GP would also report it.

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, WRS, briefly responded to further questions in respect of food delivery drivers and vehicles.

RESOLVED that the Information Report – Food Safety Interventions: Post Pandemic Recovery Programme 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 5.47 p.m.

Chairman

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WRS Board

Date: 23rd June 2022

Title: Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2021/2

Recommendation

That the Board note the Annual Report for 2021/22 and agree that a copy be forwarded to each Chief Executive of the 6 partner authorities and to the wider elected member base in their areas.

Contribution to Priorities

Not applicable

Summary

Under the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement, the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Finance Officer for the host authority, Bromsgrove District Council, are required to submit to the Joint Board an annual report that covers the performance of the shared service and provides a summary of the finances. This report covers the period from 1st April 2021 to 31 March 2022. If endorsed by the Joint Board, a copy will be forwarded to each Chief Executive of each member authority and the authors would request that members use their usual channels within their authorities to distribute the report to the wider elected member cohort.

Report

Under Clause 11 of Part 1 of the Shared Services Partnership Agreement, the Joint Board is required to receive a report at its annual meeting which will be held no later than 30 June. The report covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. The annual report is co-signed by the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Financial Officer for the Host Authority as required by the legal agreement.

The report covers the performance of the service for that period, both in terms of KPIs and highlights of activity, a short summary activity report appearing at Appendix 5. This has been reduced somewhat as the Committee receives a separate Activity Data report, which covers these aspects in much more detail. Some detail of the performance indicators has also been covered in the Activity Data Report.



Last year continued to be dominated by the global Covid 19 pandemic, which required a significant resource input from WRS. The service took on several new work-streams to support pandemic response and delivered these well. This has however, meant that some areas of work were more limited during 2021/22, one example being the Food Standards Agency's work programme, which recommenced last September via their road-map back to a "new normal" scheduled for 1st April 2023.

Despite these additional commitments, performance has remained good in most areas. Food business compliance rates remain high. Taxi license renewals have been dealt with in a reasonable time in the main. The taxi fleet appears to be generally in good order, although the number of vehicles that failed either when submitted to a garage for interim test or, to a lesser extent, whilst in-service has increased, with one partner area standing out.

As with previous years, complaints against the service are significantly exceeded by compliments. The main issues for complainants related to people:

- Unhappy with our response to their complaint about nuisance,
- Having pest controller issues
- Unhappy with Covid Advisor advice

Last year, many people were suffering from "Covid fatigue," so it is not surprising that being reminded about some of the covid controls was not always welcome. None of these complaints were founded. Other complaints are unavoidable because of the nature of the law, being related to people's expectations of what could be delivered.

However, with non-business customer satisfaction at only 66.5%, managers do realise they need to start to move forward on improving speed of response, speed of resolution and keeping people updated on progress. The nature of the service is such that we will never be able to make everyone happy because a significant proportion of nuisance complaints will not amount to a statutory nuisance, but we know that we can improve our performance in this area.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints have been in place long enough now for us to establish good baselines. The former, linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda, demonstrates what we have previously said to members, that post pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise has reduced. This, combined with businesses seeking other activities and use of their outside spaces to increase revenue, has resulted in increased levels of complaint. It is therefore not surprising to see an increase for all districts in this measure.



It still shows that over 90% of premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators, and the increase has not led to an increase in licensing revues either by residents or responsible authorities, including the police, suggesting that, in general complaints tend to be about relatively minor issues, although we know there are one or two premises where residents have strong concerns.

The figures can now be used, along with intelligence, to focus enforcement resources proactively, to tackle any individual problem premises, although these are relatively few and most complaints relate to nuisance issues or anti-social behaviour, which is a police matter.

The rate of noise complaints indicator has some links to the licensed premises one, although most nuisance complaints relate to domestic neighbour issues, not problems with business premises. Although rates in Worcester and Redditch are up slightly, the figures are still within the range seen previously.

The Annual Report also gives a summary of the financial position, the key achievements and covers issues relating to human resources. There are also sections on risk management and equalities. The Report will be published on the WRS website and will be shared with other partners e.g., Worcestershire LEP. A press release will be sent out to accompany the publishing of the report. Putting the report into the public domain meets the requirement in the Regulators Code, made under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, which requires local authorities to publish summary information about their regulatory activities each year.

Financial Implications

The financial implications are contained within the Annual Report.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

WRS Annual Report 2021/22



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ANNUAL REPORT

2021/22

Making Worcestershire a healthy, safe and a fair place to live where businesses can thrive

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INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report has been produced for the Joint Board in accordance with clause 11.1 of Part 1 of the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement. The report covers the progress and performance of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) for the period 1st of April 2021 up to the 31st of March 2022 and reports operational activity by the relevant service elements for the financial year. The report summarises key performance data for WRS and provides a summary of the financial position. The report also meets the requirement of the Regulators Code, which requires local authorities to publish a summary of their regulatory activities on an annual basis.

The year was again dominated by Covid 19, although we did move into the final phases of control measures throughout the year. It was yet another of the busiest years that all of our long-standing staff have had to deal with. The service remained directly engaged with the pandemic response, as well as delivering the Covid Advisor and local Contact Tracing workstreams on behalf of Worcestershire County Council's Public Health team, along with other Covid related activities. As well as this, much of what we refer to as "business as usual" activities continued to be delivered. We remain very proud that our staff have continued to support the public with our normal activities, whilst others have been dedicated to pandemic controls. They have absorbed much of the pressure and carried on delivering. There was excellent work undertaken during 2021/22, with very good results across a range of service areas. WRS managers continued to work along the lines identified in the comprehensive 3-year Business Plan for the period 2020-23, adopted in February 2020. Members will receive a revised business plan for approval in February 2023.

Last year offered limited opportunities to develop new income streams, with most of our local government customers dealing with pandemic related issues. However, we have managed to retain the majority of our customers and will continue to look at where we can build on this. The end of the financial year saw us signing up two new customers (Bristol City and Solihull MBC,) for support from our Technical Services team, and at the same time Bath and North-East Somerset, have agreed to become a partner in the work on gull control that we do for Worcester City, so that valuable resource and experience can be shared. These developments make us hopefully that the focus of our income generation strategy, being "a local government solution to local government issues," will continue to bear fruit going forward. We will also continue to look at what other regulatory functions the partners may wish to add to the WRS platform, which will give us wider expertise to offer councils beyond the county border.

As members will see, the service managed a significant underspend last year, much of this being due to the lack of suitable capacity in the pool of agency staff to support regulatory activities. WRS officers had to shoulder a great burden and the underspend reflects this. Also areas like mileage claims were down due to travel being more limited and officers continuing to have more limited duties in work areas like food inspection.

Looking forward, our three strategic priorities, remain relevant for now and into the post-Covid 19 environment. They are:

- Supporting the Local Economy
- Improving Health and Well-being
- Tackling and Preventing Crime and Disorder

As we have done since WRS came into being, we continue to support legitimate businesses and residents, particularly the vulnerable, where we are able and at the same time, we tackle those who break the law, ignore best practice, or adversely impact the environment. Central to this approach was and remains the availability of accurate data and intelligence sharing. Our intelligence unit coordinates, and analyses intelligence obtained by WRS officers and external agencies, helping managers to target WRS resources more effectively and to forge links with other enforcement agencies and partners to share intelligence and target enforcement action. The revised Strategic Assessment has identified several cross-cutting themes that will require some focus from all the WRS teams, and they will be key priorities for 2022/3 and 2023/4, co-ordinated by our Team Managers:

- Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy
- Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs
- Promoting safe and clean communities

We hope this will help ensure that the service focuses on the things that can deliver the biggest difference to the public and local businesses.

During 2020/21, it has become better recognised that local authority regulation can benefit from the intelligence led approach with DLUHC even paying for local Housing Standards teams to have access to the IDB Intelligence database to which WRS already subscribes. Our intelligence team provided training to district colleagues to enable them to use this and to give them a better understanding of how to integrate the intelligence-led approach into their working. We will continue to support these teams and any others in the districts where managers want to test the use of the intelligence operating model.

Simon Wilkes
Head of Regulatory Services

James Howse
Lead Financial Officer

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WRS IN 2021/22:

These are covered in the sections below:

PERFORMANCE

Our ability to report performance remains underpinned by the IDOX UNiform management information system, providing Joint Board members with a clear picture of the work being undertaken by WRS. Our key performance measures continue to focus on customer satisfaction and the positive compliance of businesses. Previous year’s results appear in brackets in the relevant box providing a comparative view of performance over time. Members will note that some systems underpinning measures are currently slightly different currently, meaning figures for pandemic years are not comparable with earlier years (e.g. food business compliance.)

	Measure	Figure	Commentary
1	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to non-business customers satisfaction	61.6% , (74, 69.5%, 63.0%. 75.4%, 78.9%, 78.2%, 77.4%)	Based on an average score for 6 questions relating to the interaction of the service with non-business customers. 69.5% found their contact with WRS helpful, down from 81% last year. 77.4% found the information and advice provided easy to use, down from 90.4% last year. 54.5% felt that the length of time to resolve their problem was satisfactory, down from 68.3% last year, and 60.6% (16% points less than last year,) felt that the speed of initial response from WRS was satisfactory. This probably reflects the services inability to recruit to fully backfill for gaps created by the pandemic response and public expectation that, as we came out of the pandemic, things would quickly return to normal. This did not happen because the service remained engaged in pandemic response well beyond most other local authority services. Managers will look at how to improve performance in a number of these areas and continue to try to manage public expectations around what is achievable with nuisance issues as many of these will never be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.
2	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business customers satisfaction	98.2% , (98.4%, 97.4%, 97.2%, 97.7%, 97.1% 97.9%, 97%)	Based on an average score for 9 questions relating to the interaction of the service with business customers. Over 500 businesses replied to our questionnaires. Of those who responded, 97.7% (98.5% last year,) felt that

			<p>their business had been treated fairly and 98.5% (99.2% last year,) of customers felt staff were polite in their dealings with them and informative. Some 98.7% (99.2% last year,) of customers found the information and advice we provided easy to understand and 98.1% (98.2% last year,) found their interaction with us helpful. 96.7% (96.4% last year,) were happy with the speed of our responses and, of those who made enquiries rather than being visited, 97.3% (97.3% last year,) were satisfied with the response. As you can imagine, as a regulator we cannot always tell businesses what they want to hear.</p>
3	% Food businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	<p>Bromsgrove 99.3% (98.4, 97.1, 97.2, 98.7 99.1, 97.1.) Malvern Hills 98.4% (98.6, 98.1, 97.2, 97.0, 97.7, 97.) Redditch 97.5% (97.6, 95.6, 96.0, 96.7, 97.6, 95.1.) Worcester City 98.4% (98.4, 97.5, 98.0, 98.0, 98.6, 98.2.) Wychavon 98.2% (99.2, 98.0, 97.4, 97.8, 98, 99.1.) Wyre Forest 98.6% (98.2, 98.1, 97.7, 97.2, 98.1, 96.6.) Worcestershire 98.5% (98.5, 97.5, 97.3, 97.6, 98.2, 97.4.)</p>	<p>The Service has been following the Food Standards Agency's roadmap to normal processes following the moratorium on the normal food inspection programme. This will end on 31st March 2023, at which point the Agency's revised Code of Practice on Local Authority Food Law enforcement will come into play. Because of the way the roadmap is structured, which was explained to members at one of last year's Board meetings, these figures are not comparable with previous years' work.</p>
4	% of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	<p>Bromsgrove 0.7% (1.4, 2.9, 3.6, 1.3, 0.9, 2.9.) Malvern Hills 1.6% (1.6, 1.9, 2.8, 3.0, 2.3, 3, 2.4) Redditch 2.5% (2.4, 4.4, 5.1, 3.3, 2.4, 4.9.) Worcester City 1.6% (1.6, 2.5, 2.2, 2.0, 1.4, 1.8.) Wychavon 1.8% (0.8, 2.0, 3.0, 2.2, 2, 0.8.) Wyre Forest 1.4% (1.8, 1.9, 2.4, 2.8, 1.9, 3.4.)</p>	<p>Food premises scoring 2 or below on the Food Hygiene Rating System are deemed to be at risk of not producing safe food and are subject to further intervention until such time as they meet requirements or face formal action. As mentioned above, because of the roadmap and the suspension of the normal processes, these figures are not comparable with previous years.</p>

		Worcestershire 1.5% (1.5, 2.7, 2.7, 2.4, 2.4, 2.6,)	
5	% of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	97.6% (96.9, 75.2, 91.4, 87.7)	This measure was introduced in 2017/18 and looks at how quickly driver licenses are renewed. This is one of the licensing processes where generally no additional paperwork is required before someone is re-licensed so generally this is one where the WRS team is in most control over timescales. This measure is slightly improved from last year.
6	% of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service	59 = 4% Of 1457 vehicles on the road county-wide	This figure only represents 59 vehicles, but this is significantly higher than previous years and is probably a reflection of the wider impacts of the pandemic. As members will see in the activity data report, one district is particularly impacted whereas others are slightly up but not as significantly. Garages used for testing were closed for some time during the strongest of the pandemic controls and, on re-opening, many garages had to work with reduced capacity, so it took longer for drivers/operators to get their tests done. The result is probably a useful reminder to members that taxis travel a great deal further each year than domestic vehicles and therefore require significantly more upkeep to keep them in a good and safe condition.
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	58.5% (68.2, 58.1, 59, 72.5, 73.8, 76.8, 74.2)	This focuses on non-business customers. It is a specific question asked to members of the public in the questionnaire to test if the information and support provided to them by WRS is likely to help them deal with their own problems in the future. The measure has dropped back to where it was 2 years ago, reflecting the lower performance overall on non-business customer satisfaction.
8	Review of register of complaints and compliments	25 complaints (42, 44, 27, 25, 31, 17, 24, 47, 70) 134 compliments (161, 163, 128, 138, 103, 51, 57, 36, 24)	This is our longest running performance indicator in this format, hence the long list of previous year's figures. This year's figures are like previous years. Common areas for complaint were covid advice requirements, nuisance responses and pest control, with small number for other aspects of service delivery.

9	Staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	5.2 days per FTE (1.9, 4.4, 4.12, 12.45, 5.95, 2.3, 3.9, 7.7, 9.5)	Quarter 4 proved somewhat difficult with several members of staff having planned hospital admissions for surgery and a member of staff having serious long-Covid issues, which has pushed up our sickness figure at the end of the year. This was to be expected, given both the pressure of work over the past 2 years and the fact that many necessary procedures had been delayed whilst hospitals dealt with the pandemic. This figure is slightly above out average, but we can see the reasons why, so have no excessive concerns about this.
10	% of staff who are satisfied with working for WRS	97.5% 93.5%, 98%, 88%, (NB: Annual figures for 2017/18 and before, 80%, 85%, 77%, 82%)	79 of our increased staff cohort of just over 100 responded to the survey. Obviously, a lot of those people were undertaking new or different roles, but we felt it reasonable to include them. It probably means this year should be viewed slightly differently, although the same questions were asked as previous years. As ever, some did not respond to all the questions. This score is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS (score is from 0 to 10.) 77% (61/79,) scored this question at 8/10 or higher. Due to current time constraints, we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments, but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service.
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	Bromsgrove 5.9% (5.4, 6.8, 8.7, 6.73, 3.8, 7.9) Malvern Hills 5.1% (3.5, 5.7, 4.8, 4.94, 3.6, 3,) Redditch 9.5% (8.3, 8.5, 7.1 8.65, 2.7, 8.1,) Worcester City 10.0% (5.7, 8.8, 8.1, 8.19, 5.8, 9.4,) Wychavon 6.3% (3.7, 4.2, 4.0, 4.97, 4.0, 5.5,) Wyre Forest 9.1% (5.1, 8.5, 7.0, 8.29, 5.8, 9.4,) Worcestershire 7.5%	Linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda and introduced following discussions with elected members, this measure is now in its seventh year. As we have explained to members previously, post pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise has reduced, combined with businesses seeking other activities and use of their outside spaces to increase revenue. It is therefore not surprising to see an increase for all districts in this measure. It still shows that 90% plus of premises across the County are still well run and controlled by their operators, and this increase has not led to an increase in licensing revues either by

		(5.0, 6.8, 6.4, 6.78, 4.4, 6.9,)	residents or the police, suggesting that, in general complaints tend to be about relatively minor issues, although we know there are one or two premises where residents have strong concerns.
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	<p>Bromsgrove 2.25 (2.56, 1.96, 2.7, 2.82, 3.0, 2.7, 3.1)</p> <p>Malvern Hills 2.29 (2.45, 2.07, 2.2, 2.39, 3.0, 2.3, 3.9)</p> <p>Redditch 3.61 (3.67, 2.97, 3.2, 3.61, 4.1, 3.7, 3.5)</p> <p>Worcester City 3.47 (3.1, 2.78, 3.2, 3.13, 4.2, 4.0, 2.9)</p> <p>Wychavon 2.45 (2.08, 2.01, 2.1, 2.46, 2.7, 2.6, 2.5)</p> <p>Wyre Forest 2.65 (2.71, 2.37, 2.6, 3.23, 3.4, 3.0, 3.0)</p> <p>Worcestershire 2.9 (2.74, 2.35, 2.7, 2.93, 3.4, 3.1, 3.8)</p>	<p>Last year saw variations in impacts, with Bromsgrove and Malvern being slightly below average numbers and Wychavon and Worcester slightly above. As we mentioned above, although there are one or two premises that certain residents have concerns about, there is little evidence of a deterioration in standards at hospitality premises although many have had to look at more diverse ways of bringing in revenue. It should also be remembered that a significant proportion of noise complaints related to domestic issues.</p> <p>1,801 noise cases were received during 2021/22 (166 more than the previous year), with 1077 (or 60%) relating to noise from domestic properties, a slightly smaller proportion than last year, possibly reflecting the increased opening of businesses.</p>
13	Total Income	<p>14.89% Note: £449,356 as a % of previous budget of £3.017M</p> <p>Using the current budget figure (3.257M,) the figure yielded is 13.8%</p>	This includes some income for managing the Covid workstreams, but the vast majority is relating to our normal workload. Hopefully, this is a positive sign of the system returning to something nearer to normality.
14	Cost of regulatory services per head of population.	<p>Based on overrun cost of £2.860M against the current population estimate of 595,786 the service cost is:</p> <p>£4.80 per head</p>	This is the amount spent by the partners following the off-setting of cost with income, then divided by the mid-year estimate we currently use for other work. It is difficult to benchmark this figure with other authorities as WRS functions are not all of those reported in the relevant part of the RO return to the MHCLG.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Strong management of performance is vital for the success of this service, ensuring that customers are satisfied, and partners are reassured by the cost-effective delivery of the service on their behalf. Whilst everyone must accept responsibility for managing performance, the WRS management team is committed to driving performance forward so that a high standard of service delivery can be maintained. As can be seen from the figures above, the main challenge for the service is to improve the perception of non-business customers have of our performance, so this will be a key task for managers in 2022/3 and beyond.

Management team meetings are used to review performance against the service plan and to highlight any issues of concern. Principal Officers (first line managers) attend these wider management meetings to ensure a two-way flow of information between management and staff. This has been supplemented throughout the pandemic with a weekly informal meeting of the Head of Service and Team Managers to ensure everything is kept under review. Teams have their own detailed plans that sit below the service plan signed off by Joint Board. Progress against this is monitored by Team Managers and Principal Officers.

The Management team also looks to the strategic direction of the service and ensures that the operational and financial resources available to partners are used in the most efficient manner to achieve both their individual strategic aims together with WRS priorities.

Continued refinement of our IT platform ensures our ability to report to Joint Board on our performance measures and that this remains accurate. The Uniform system operates well across all functions, but it is somewhat antiquated, and consideration has been given to replacement. However, in the current financial climate this may not be affordable, and Uniform does continue to deliver on what is necessary. The service also subscribes to the national IDB intelligence database, enabling it to share intelligence with other local authorities in the region and nationally so that common issues and individuals can be identified and work to deal with them co-ordinated. DLUHC is looking to encourage the broader use of the system, especially at district council level, and has agreed to fund access for district council Housing Standards teams to help them better engage with colleagues and also Trading Standards services where enforcement responsibility for estate agency, tenant fees and energy efficiency of buildings sits.

There are a wide range of bodies to which the service must report data (e.g., Food Standards Agency, Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Health and Safety Executive, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Gambling Commission etc.). All statutory reports are submitted to ensure that WRS continues to meet its partner's statutory obligations. It was hoped that the central bodies would accept a single data return for all partners, but it now appears that all Departments except for the Health and Safety Executive continue to require individual returns for each partner. WRS provides these as necessary.

A short summary of activity data is included at Appendix 5 to avoid duplication with the wider and more detailed set of activity data that is provided in the final Activity Data Report for 2020/21, which members will receive at the same meeting where this Annual Report is presented.

Internal Audits

There was one audit for Licensing that was carried out in accordance with the Worcestershire Internal Audit Shared Service Audit Plan for Bromsgrove District Council for 2020/21 and 2021/22 as approved at the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on 5th March 2020 and 15th July 2021. The audit was a risk-based systems audit of Licensing as operated by Bromsgrove District Council.

The audit was to provide assurance on the processes surrounding the management of licenses issued by Worcestershire Regulatory Services, including the recovery of expired, revoked, or suspended licenses, The assurance was predominantly regarding Taxi Driver and Vehicle Licensing, but other licensing was considered as part of the review to provide assurance on consistency of approach and embedded practice.

Scope: The audit covered

- Processes in place to capture decisions from licensing committees regarding all changes to licensing requirements for businesses and individuals
- Comprehensive notes are held against records to ensure full case history is available and can be reported at any point in time
- Physical recovery of expired, revoked, or suspended licenses along with reconciliation
- Recording of licenses and embedded system abilities to manage licenses and actions
- Review process for licensing applicants (to identify if licenses have previously been issued)
- Reporting of position to each Authority regarding cases is clear, concise and timely.

The review covered the period from 1st April 2020 to the date of the audit and ran across two municipal years. The review was performed from April to June 2021. The review found the following areas of the system were working well:

- Attendance and provision of information for Committees and Sub-Committees
- Record keeping of license holders via a uniformed system
- Existing and additional controls for the recovery of licenses and the development of processes to improve controls.
- System abilities to manage license variations and produce reports for management purposes
- Identification of applicants who have previously had a license suspended or revoked and the introduction of the National Register of Taxi and Private Hire Licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3)

The review made one recommendation where controls could be strengthened and that was to use Authority Enforcement officers exception reporting. The licensing team have continued to engage with district officers to improve these relationships.

SERVICE DELIVERY HIGHLIGHTS

There have been many highlights throughout the year that showcase the work of our teams and illustrate the breadth of their responsibilities. We also feature the other work-streams taken on, including elements of pandemic control work.

Community Environmental Health Team

Food Safety

During the year we moved from food businesses operating under Covid restrictions to a fully open sector and a national FSA Recovery Programme to catch up on inspections missed during lockdowns. This programme runs to end of March 2023 with a series of milestones being monitored by the FSA. At the end of the year, we had carried out over 3,000 interventions across all Districts.

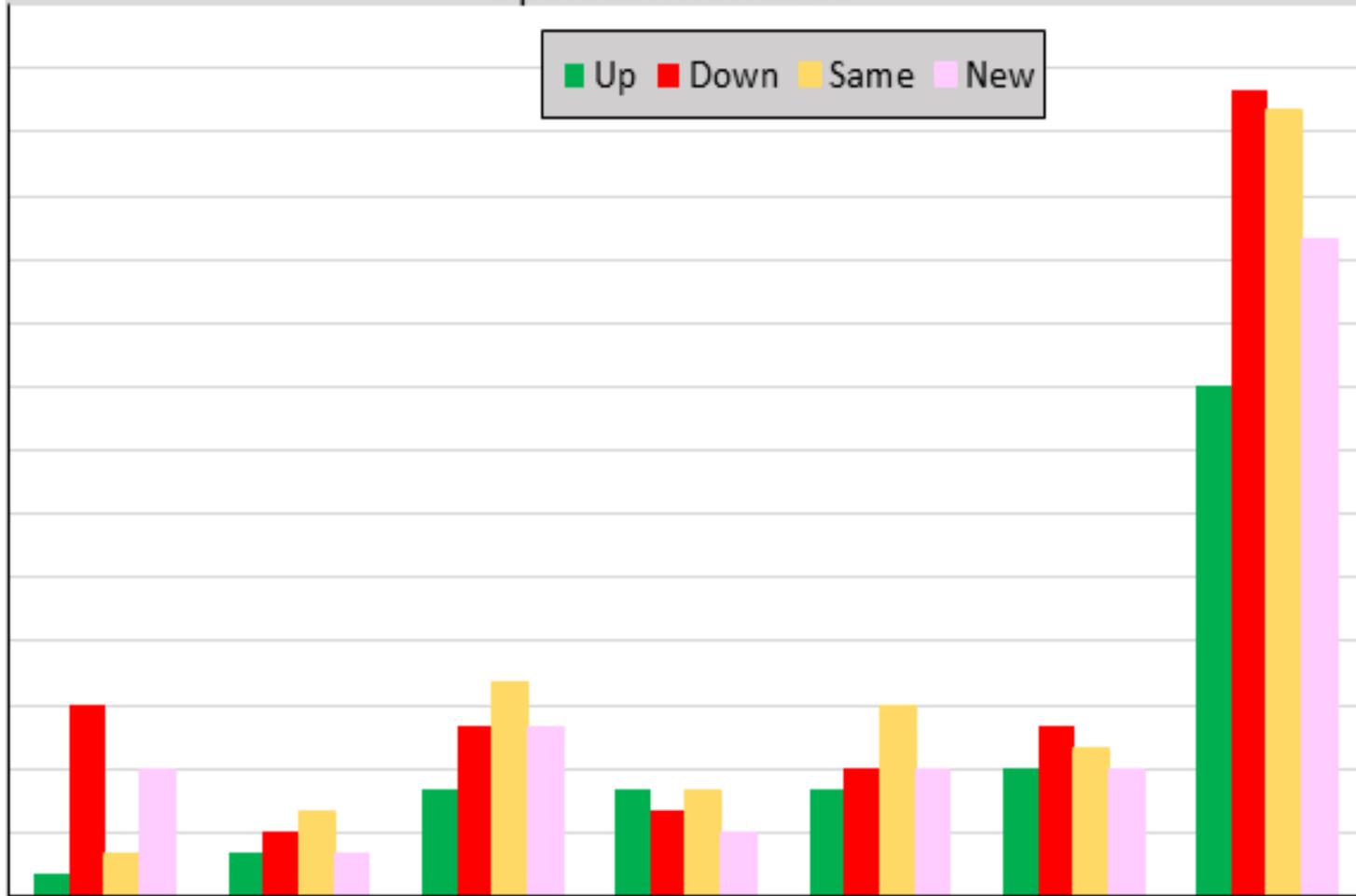
In summary:

2021/22	Interventions on existing FHRs rated premises	Interventions on new / unrated premises	Total Interventions
BDC	425	153	578
MHDC	315	184	499
RBC	244	145	389
WCC	418	210	628
WDC	360	240	600
WFDC	347	189	536
Total	2109	1121	3230

To enable us to meet FSA milestones in a period of high demand for qualified Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) we were able to recruit five consultant EHOs (four part time making 2.5 FTE) to assist with food work, enabling full time WRS officers to remain engaged in pandemic related activities.

As part of the above interventions programme between October and March, EHOs also conducted Operation Revitalise focussing on our poorly rated FHRs Level 0- Level 2 premises operating in the night-time economy. 130 inspections were carried out and 4 Hygiene Improvement Notices served.

Operation Revitalise



Green Rating Up Red Rating Down Yellow Same Purple New FBO

In the autumn we also appointed a fixed term contract Regulatory Support Officer (a former Covid Adviser) and trained up eight Covid Advisers as short-term RSOs to assist with four food projects:

Sampling – one of the tools available to check whether food safety management practices are working. Between October and March officers took over 200 samples from 57 premises. The number of unsatisfactory samples was higher than we expected. The focus of the samples was

- Environmental swabs from chopping boards and equipment handles i.e. fridges; cloths, sponges and scourers
- Food samples – salad items and cooked meats

Results are outlined in the table below:

FHRS	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

The majority of unsatisfactory results were due to Enterobacteriaceae and Escherichia coli counts, both hygiene with cloths/sponges/scourers remaining the main source of risk of contamination. Advice and revisits followed to ensure improvement in standards.

New Premises - with support funding from the FSA we prioritised for inspection some 800 new premises registered during the pandemic. Some 30% (pre Covid 15-20%) of businesses had ceased trading. This is in line with other LA data.

FHRS Sticker - the green and black stickers with which we are all familiar are updated at every inspection. For the first time an RS0 carried out a project to see if businesses which had dropped their rating in the previous 6 months had replaced the old sticker, amended websites/leaflets. We found that some 25% were not compliant and have worked with them to ensure they do not continue to mislead consumers. This is an offence prosecutable under the Trading Standards enforced Consumer Protection Act.

In total 193 premises were visited across Worcestershire. In summary the following was evidenced by officers:

Correct Sticker Displayed	No Sticker Displayed	Incorrect Sticker Displayed	Misc
15	101	60	17

Misc = Includes premises that may have changed ownership, ceased to operate, or paid for a re-rating inspection

Low Risk Premises – during Feb-March RSO focussed on wet bars, garage forecourt outlets and small retailers. 64 smaller premises due an intervention every three years received a visit. No major issues were found.

Districts	Number of Inspections completed	Number of premises ceased trading	Full EH Inspection Required	Total Number of Visits made
Bromsgrove	9	1	Nil	10
Malvern Hills	12	4	Nil	16
Redditch	4	Nil	Nil	4
Worcester City	17	1	1	19
Wychavon DC	8	2	1	11
Wyre Forest	4	Nil	Nil	4
				64

Role of Regulatory Support Officers

We believe that WRS is the only enforcing authority to have followed the RSO route which included providing an appropriate level of training approved by our Food Safety Lead Officer to meet the FSA Food Law Code of Practice requirements about competency. Led by one of our Principal Officers this team were able to carry out the projects leaving our highly qualified Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) to focus on making site visits to our high-risk premises.

A highlight of the year was briefing the Commonwealth Games safety team on how we had developed these roles along with the use of hygiene swabs as a spot check safety tool.

We also split the outstanding high risk inspection work into two key areas (FHRS Level 0-Level 3 and FHRS Level 4-Level 5) with priority being given to lower rated premises and those operating in the night-time economy. Statistics show that many premises' standards had slipped, primarily with cleaning and paperwork. This is a trend repeated nationally. Businesses had adapted remarkably quickly to normal operational procedures, although all reported staffing issues.

Our outstanding interventions list was significant, totalling over 3,000 premises, many of which had missed at least one routine intervention. In general compliance remains high at 98.5% but many businesses have dropped an FHRS level. We also found more non-compliant premises (i.e. those getting a Level 0-Level 2 FHRS) but, whilst taking up much officer time, they remain low in number. Most of the failures in compliance related to inadequate cleaning practices and lapses in documented food safety management systems.

We also continued to maintain contact with our low-risk businesses through questionnaires and, where necessary, verification visits using one of our consultants.

Operation Corona Fries

This project commenced during the first week of March 2021 and continued throughout quarter one and quarter two of 2021/22.

A team of Officers were tasked with inspecting targeted premises for food hygiene, health and safety, COVID control measures and Licensing compliance. The premises targeted were those food businesses with a food hygiene rating score of 2 and below, namely those not compliant under the Food Standard Agency's Food Hygiene Rating System. WRS Intelligence had identified a direct correlation between those poor performing food businesses and poor COVID control measures. There were approximately 35 premises at start of project, with additional premises being added as further intelligence was received.

Following the inspections various types of enforcement action have been taken, namely two red files opened for potential prosecutions, 21 Food Hygiene Improvement Notices served, and 4 Health & Safety Improvement notices served. Premises which were scored at Level zero to Level two (non-compliant businesses) were added to the Intelligence Database (IDB) for other Agencies including Trading Standards, Fire Service, and Immigration to action as they deem appropriate. The work to bring premises scoring less than Level 3 FHRS up to the standard of broadly compliant continues as a priority.

The understanding of allergen law continues to be an issue across all sectors. We also had an increase in demand for re-rating, perhaps showing the value that our food businesses now place on having a good FHRs score. This is a charge for service and the return visit can be delayed for up to three months if it is deemed necessary to provide sufficient evidence of improved compliance and confidence in management controls.

Another highlight was provided when a Malvern food business owner appeared on Gordon Ramsey's "Future Food Stars" show on BBC TV. WRS Officers were able to provide food hygiene assistance in the production of the ready meals and sauces featured, which Gordon was very enthusiastic about.

Exports

We continued to provide an export certificate service throughout the year. Eight officers have now undergone training and been re-certified by APHA to sign certificates for fish and egg related exports. In early 2022 we were involved with the FSA, DEFRA and the Chinese food authorities in a complex online inspection process for one of our cold stores to export fish products to China. The process was dominated by the Chinese requirement for Covid precautions; their belief being that Covid originated on food packaging. The business awaits the final outcome.

Local Outbreak Response Team

Three of our Environmental Health Officers continued to deliver Covid support services during further restrictions, particularly providing advice to businesses, reviewing risk assessments and event management plans. Unlike the first year of the pandemic when officers were involved in numerous outbreaks and ensuring compliance through a range of interventions, our role became more limited as we moved through 2021, with businesses better understanding what they needed to do to comply. Even so, officers dealt with over 1040 public health notifications and nationally generated local venue alerts. We gradually moved out of ensuring legal compliance to an advisory role, continuing to provide support for sporadic outbreaks and infection control planning in care settings. A positive outcome has been the further strengthening of links with the Public Health Team, on which we continue to build.

Your Officers also continued to attend Incident Management Team meetings for the Partners.

Nuisance

A large number of complaints concerning noise from licensed premises were received following the relaxation of covid-19 restrictions on them towards the end of Q1, as many premises took the opportunity to trade utilising their outdoor areas. Many residents appear to have become accustomed to the quiet of closed premises and took exception to noise from their reopening, even where in some cases it was no worse than pre-lockdown.

The surge in nuisance demand continued throughout the summer, with high numbers of complaints about noise from licensed premises remaining a notable feature. This was particularly challenging for CEH with several team members being re-assigned to cover Covid related work, leaving fewer than usual to deal with the summer peak of nuisance cases. This resulted in an unprecedented backlog of cases, peaking at over 200 nuisance cases pending allocation plus around 800 cases under

investigation. Abatement Notices were served for issues including noise nuisances from amplified music on licensed premises, barking dogs, accumulations, and insufficient drainage arrangements.

The Team have started to receive a number of complaints in relation to noise from recently installed air-source heat pumps, which is a concern given how few have currently been installed and the national push for their wider adoption.

An appeal case lodged by a licensed premises against a noise abatement notice served on them in relation to amplified music in their garden was heard in July, the outcome of which fully vindicated formal action by WRS. The District Judge dismissed the appeal on all counts, finding that the noise did amount to a statutory nuisance, and that the best practicable means had not been taken to minimise the noise. Full costs of £6,715 were awarded to the council by the court.

Officers liaised with the site manager of a construction site in Redditch to achieve a reduction in noise for residents, issued a simple caution to a resident in Worcester in respect of a long running and complex dog barking case, brought closure to a noise problem arising from a fan at a local hospital and an investigation into a noisy cockerel made the national news with coverage in The Sun newspaper. Injunction conditions at Grimley Raceway were checked for the coming season on behalf of Malvern Hills District Council and Officers ensured the implementation of an undertaking given as an alternative to prosecution for a breach of a noise abatement notice for Wychavon District Council.

Health and Safety at Work

The Community Environmental Health team undertook fatal accident investigations at retail premises in both Worcester and Kidderminster, and there is an ongoing complex health and safety investigation following an event in Worcester. Other investigations include a near miss where a six axle forty-four tonne tipper lorry overturned at a golf club and a serious accident at a tool hire/sales/repair company.

An investigation into the fatal accident of a volunteer at a fishery concluded at a hearing in April 2021 at Worcester Magistrates' Court. Birmingham Anglers Association admitted breaching the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Section 3(1). The organisation was fined £66,000 and ordered to pay costs of £17,500 together with a victim surcharge of £181.

Events and Safety at Sports Grounds

The team continue to monitor events, working with organisers to ensure that they are properly managed, meet legal requirements and run smoothly, safely and without causing unnecessary disturbance. These have included the Three Shires Car Rally, Light Night, Mello and Upton Folk Festivals, a Passion Play in Worcester which included checking the risk assessment for a mock crucifixion and events planned for the Three Counties Showground. Your Officers also provide the Safety at Sports Grounds function for Worcestershire County Council which has included working with Worcester Warriors Rugby Club, Bromsgrove Sporting and Kidderminster Harriers Football clubs (the latter during their FA Cup run and televised match at home to a Premier League club) and Worcester Racecourse.

Worcestershire Works Well

This County Council Public Health led scheme, supporting workplaces to improve workforce health and wellbeing, gradually returned to operation as the pandemic subsided and is now fully active again. The administration of the scheme continues to be contracted to Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. WRS remains part of the Steering Group with a separate contract to deliver support. We have a team of four EHOs trained as 'Reps' supporting businesses to obtain their accreditation. It is predictably proving difficult to re-engage with businesses who have had so many challenges to face during the year. How this scheme is delivered is now under review.

Primary Authority

We continue with our successful Primary Authority Partnerships (PAPs) in the food sector. Existing PAPs were Alimenti, Aspens, My EChef, Servest and Venture Events Catering, all of whom we worked closely with during the pandemic months. During the year we added Mindful Chef (online healthy meals), Kelsius (international company offering temperature control equipment) and NeoKare (processing of baby milk). Some of these are multiple site operators, others are SME with less than 10 employees, demonstrating the range of businesses to which WRS can offer support. It is worth noting that NeoKare is currently the only business of its type operating in England and the supply of commercially sold processing baby milk has generated increasing FSA interest in its operational methods. Our Principal Officer (Food) is also part of a national network of PA authorities and will be chairing this panel going forward.

After forming a Primary Authority Partnership with Halfords, officers visited numerous Halfords sites across the region and further afield to fully understand the scope of assured advice that WRS will be providing to the company in helping them to comply with health and safety requirements at a national level.

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

Working in partnership with the business community

Throughout the pandemic and into the recovery phase, WRS have been instrumental in working with businesses and partners to provide information and advice to assist them in compliance during the restrictions, and in getting them back on to a business-as-usual footing once the constraints had been lifted. This included signposting to the various financial aid packages available and providing legal advice and guidance in a fast-changing environment. The constant changes to legislation as the pandemic progressed presented significant challenges both to officers and business, and your officers were both sympathetic and supportive in ensuring that Worcestershire businesses could respond quickly as economic opportunities presented themselves through a relaxing of the rules and re-opening.

Technical Services Team

Environmental Permitting

The technical services team successfully completed our inspection programme for 2021-22 in late February and all subsistence instructions were supplied to the partners by the agreed dates of mid-March. DEFRA have also determined that there would be no increase in subsistence fees again for 2022-23.

Officers are continuing their investigation into the alloy wheel refurbishment industry. As an emerging business sector, it is largely unaware of the regulation around the chemicals they use. WRS are currently undertaking work to identify operators in this sector and to advise them on the environmental control and compliance requirements for the substances they use and where necessary recommend alternative use chemicals and processing methods. Two companies have already made changes to their processes on our recommendations and are using less harmful substances as a consequence in the Wychavon district.

Alongside the environmental permitting for petrol stations the petroleum licensing function of the County Council was delivered to maximise efficiency, minimise enforcement costs and deliver improved customer service.

Local Air Quality Management

February saw the installation of the first multi gas air monitoring station in Wyre Forest District using new electrochemical measuring technologies which is a first for the County. The system is manufactured and supplied by Northamptonshire based company Earthsense and has gained critical acclaim through the air monitoring industry for its design. The system's purchase has been facilitated by S.106 funding as part of the wider Churchfields regeneration Project. The data harvested to date is proving to be a valuable source of not only Nitrogen Dioxide data but also PM10 and PM2.5. The information will inform us over time as to whether the roadworks has made the necessary improvements to reduce air quality exceedances of the government objective in the area.

Officers drafted and finalised the Contract to install a permanent air quality monitoring station in Wychbold following borderline air quality levels being identified over successive years. This system will provide important information on PM10 pollution and greatly enhance our understanding of air quality impact around the village. It will also provide us with real-time information when poor air quality episodes take place allowing us to provide the public with local air quality information in real-time. It is anticipated that the contract will go out to bidders in Q1.

Following the City-wide declaration as an air quality management area the return to normal traffic volumes post Covid-19 has enabled officers to resume work on the City's source apportionment assessment which given the number of locations of concern in the city was a significant piece of work. This is a study that identifies the reduction level of vehicles required to bring air quality within acceptable concentrations within key hot spots across the city. The Source apportionment will also pave way for the next stage of work which is the action planning process.

Planning support on technical issues

Work to support the development control process has continued throughout the year with a three year high in requests for consultation at the beginning of 2021-22 which tailed off towards the end of the financial year. Alongside the reactive work, the team have been working on production of a supplementary planning document on Air Quality for South Worcestershire and provided updates to guidance available to consultants supporting developers when tackling environmental health issues with development.

Dog Warden Service

It has been a very unusual time for dog wardens. Whilst overall numbers of stray dogs continued to decline, a significant proportion of those that are seized as strays were not microchipped and often had welfare concerns, which made the process of reunification more complex due to proof of ownership issues and potential enforcement situations. Issues have been made worse by the national issues around dog rehoming which has stalled following the end of the pandemic with demand for 'rescue' dogs falling significantly. This has caused difficulties with kennel space particularly when some have faced infection outbreaks. Fortunately the service's kennelling contract is a framework agreement which utilises a number of kennels rather than relying on one to mitigate the risk.

Subsidised Pest Control & Worcester City Gull Control

Subsidised pest control treatments were up on last year's figures but the service operated smoothly without significant issue. Some local authorities as reported required additional funds to cover the cost of treatment in their areas. As well as the domestic service, sewer baiting was undertaken in areas where issues had been reported by residents, pest controllers or Severn Trent Water.

Additional funding was approved by the City Council to enhance the gull control management this year which allowed an extensive programme of nest, egg and chick removal in the city centre, supported by deterrent hawking, disturbance tactics and gull proofing measures. All work was carried out in accordance with any conditions of the licences provided by Natural England where appropriate. The work was successful in bringing about significant local change such that some locations were gull free for the first time in a while.

Contact Tracing & COVID Advisors

Alongside the county delivery of COVID Advisor support, because WRS was recognised as an organisation able to successfully contact trace (for other infectious disease) and provide support to the public, we were asked to deliver the contact tracing service for the county. At our peak we employed 36 in the team contact tracing. They made sure that anyone failing to engage with the national service provided contact details. Across the County we are successfully tracing around 80% of cases. For 10% of cases we have been able to reach them but for varying reasons have not been able to fully complete the tracing call, examples of why this may be is the individual refusing to engage or inability to successfully identify all contacts, this is particularly relevant in school aged children. Where contact could not be made or if isolation breaches were suspected, support with door knocking was provided by COVID Advisors to promote regulation compliance.

During the pandemic the COVID Advisors were heavily involved in supporting local businesses and protecting the public. Assistance was welcomed by most as the changes to guidance made it difficult for businesses and the public to do the right thing. The presence of the Advisors on the street and at popular locations provided confidence that rules were being followed and safety being considered. As restrictions were eased, as well as continuing to support business and the public with wider environmental health matters, assistance was provided to the vulnerable (to COVID-19) through welfare checks and providing access to support services and supported the engagement with the contact tracing process by chasing up those who failed to provide contact details or were believed to be breaching isolation rules when positive for COVID-19.

Licensing

This year 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 have continued to take applications electronically therefore the level of complete applications being received continues to increase. There has been more of a focus on proactive enforcement and the Licensing team have continued to keep the emphasis on engaging with partners, businesses, licence holders and external agencies including West Mercia and Worcester Bid to tackle issues in the Night Time Economy, taxi enforcement and street trading.

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire

The long-awaited introduction of the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles Standards has been one of the main priorities with all six districts completing the cycle of working through policy development and committee stages. All six districts have agreed an implementation date of September 2022 which should now allow the standardisation of Taxi Standards across the County. The Statutory Standards published on 21st July 2020 set-out a range of robust measures to protect taxi and private hire vehicle passengers, particularly those most vulnerable. Government advice is that licensing authorities must work together to ensure that, above all else, the taxi and private hire vehicle services the public use are safe. The Licensing team will continue to work on the implementation of these standards and ensure training and communication across all districts is planned and administered consistently.

This year also saw the review of the Hackney Carriage Fares across the County with all districts agreeing to increase fares as a result of both the current economic climate and adverse effects of the pandemic on the trade. As a result of the delay in reviewing these districts have agreed that going forward there will be a regular timed review placed on the rolling forward plan for this piece of work in future.

Electric Vehicles

District Councils continue to approach us to look at ways of implementing methods for the introduction of electric vehicles as part of their wider council carbon neutral agenda and we will continue to look at the best approach for their fleet of vehicles taking into account the make-up of their current fleet and the age criteria policy of each council.

The government has confirmed its ambition to see at least half of new cars to be ultra-low emission by 2030. The proposals are outlined in their 'Road to zero' Strategy. The desire is to reduce emissions from the vehicles already on the UK's roads, and drive the uptake of zero emission cars, vans and trucks to deliver cleaner air, a better environment and a strong clean economy.

As set out in the government's 'Air Quality Plan' the UK will end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040 so we will continue to work with each district and members to incorporate a plan that meets these objectives but not foregoing the challenges that this will involve including the trade and the infrastructure that is required to make this viable both financially and economically.

Pavement Licenses

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Business and Planning Act 2020 ("the 2020 Act") made temporary provision for a fast-track process to allow businesses selling food or drink to obtain authorisation from the local authority for the placement of furniture such as tables and chairs on highway adjacent to their premises also known as a pavement licence. This was a new temporary licensing regime that the team constructed together working collaboratively with all six districts to ensure a new end to end process was in place with all payment engines integrated before the implementation date of July 2020. There have been developments in this area of work with a bill passed through to make this a permanent piece of legislation but at the present time they have been extended again until September 2023 so officers continue to work with West Mercia police and Highways to ensure that where licences are granted they are safe to do so.

Alcohol, Entertainment and Gambling

The relaxation of Covid 19 restrictions has seen the increase in applications in this area of work and more resources have been directed towards working in the Night Time Economy. Officers have worked closely across the service and in collaboration with partners to proactively deal with issues, complaints and concerns using a wide range of intelligence products.

The team have continued to be proactive in looking at suspended licenses to ensure sales have not taken place where licenses have been suspended and at the same time have carried out further checks on basic food hygiene and ventilation of premises as part of the health and safety requirements during the phasing out of covid regulations. Some of this work has been carried out in partnership with trading standards colleagues and CEH colleagues and as the funding reduces the team are working together to see how this can be effectively achieved with the same effectiveness going forward.

Under the terms of the Gambling Act 2005, each licensing authority is required before each successive three-year period, to prepare and publish a statement of the principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under the Act during that period. Each Council's Statement of Principles were under review and all have been approved for consultation by each district and now approved for publication.

Animal Licenses

WRS continue to be well represented in this area of work as we sit on both the Licensing and Animal Welfare Group and the Canine, Feline Sector Group. Both of which have strong links with DEFRA and policy change. Unfortunately, this sector was hard hit during the pandemic with more people working from home and choosing not to go away many businesses struggled. As WRS moved into the second half of the year with more and more people returning to work and going away on holiday officers have been inundated with requests for new business applications and visits alongside re-inspections. In light of this demand the team have invested in training more officers as it is now a requirement to have a Level 3 qualification in this field of work before you can go out and inspect.

The team are now looking at streamlining some of the processes that are in place to save time for both officers and the licence holder for some elements of the application process.

Last year we reported on the increase in illegal puppy breeding, nuisance issues and the high prices that were being charged for the sale of puppies throughout various points during lockdown. In response to this the team started an intelligence operation to capture this information and act where appropriate. The operation was extended to the end of May 2021 and the team found that it had more information to target illegal breeding, but limited resources and expertise to effectively investigate recorded incidents. In addition, any actions undertaken in connection with illegal breeding risk being uncoordinated, as information was being received and assessed by several organisations and operational teams

An intelligence product was disseminated to the Licensing Team in July, The product identified two districts where illegal breeding was assessed to be most problematic, and eleven prominent targets (each connected to several different entities) who were assessed to be operating without the required licences. The product also contained several intelligence gaps which would need to be considered during formal investigations or addressed to improve the effectiveness of future analytical products. To date, Licensing have adopted several prevention, intelligence, and enforcement recommendations. Formal investigations have commenced into five targets that were 'likely' to be committing offences, whilst an additional target has been tasked back to the intelligence function for further profiling. A communications strategy is also being implemented to provide advice and guidance to consumers, and potential breeders, in problematic districts.

Caravans

The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of a site to be a fit and proper person) Regulations 2020 guidance was published this year so officers have been busy putting together an application process and fee structure so applicants can now submit applications for determination to WRS. Alongside this work WRS officers have commenced a three phase inspection programme to inspect caravan sites in both Wychavon and Worcester as per the partner officer requirements.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Budget 2020/21

Quarterly financial monitoring reports are provided to managers and finances are regularly considered by officers from the partners ahead of each Joint Board meeting. Bromsgrove DC operates a robust ordering and authorisation process to ensure the transparency and accuracy of costing. This year saw a significant surplus at year end of £397,000. This resulted from good income results but also because a proportion of this income could not be re-invested in capacity to backfill officers committed to pandemic response work. Teams had to carry the burden and were very stretched because of this. There was also a significant underspend of stray dogs for the year, likely to be related to a mix of people being at home or working from home thus limiting the risk of pet dogs straying, but also the use of social media platforms like Facebook used in localities to get pets back to owners. We have previously highlighted the risks associated with the latter, which on the face of it appears positive.

The draft outrun budget for 2020/21 is included as Appendix 3, along with the proposed budget for 2022/23 onwards at Appendix 4. The outrun position is subject to final audit, although the budget has now reduced so far that this is no longer a statutory requirement for specific audit of the WRS accounts. Hence, this will be done as part of the overall audit of Bromsgrove District Council's accounts.

Until 2020/21, the operating assumption was a cash standstill budget, with increasing income targets set to balance the budget each year. For that year and beyond, partners have recognised that the service's ability to increase income is limited and have agreed to fund the pay increases and the uplifts in pension contributions. Members recognised that the income generation progress could not deliver the increases expected, especially in the current climate with financial uncertainty and the Covid pandemic. With much talk of pay rises being comparable with current increased rates of inflation, this situation is unlikely to change in the immediate future. Should it be necessary, the service's reserve may help partners to buffer some financial impacts should the financial model for the service become difficult to achieve, whilst determining the way forward for the delivery of these functions should the local authority financial situation become significantly worse in the future.

WORKFORCE PLANNING AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The WRS structure has now been in place since October 2015 with Simon Wilkes as the Head of Service with a team of four Manager posts looking after different areas of the service. David Mellors as Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager covering all the responsibilities of his Community Environmental Health team, (Food Safety, Health and Safety and Statutory Nuisance, with some other minor areas,) and the Trading Standards remit (Weights and Measures, Food and Agricultural Standards, Product Safety, Fair Trading, Animal Health) on a contractual basis since the County's departure from the partnership in 2016. Mark Cox continues to head up the Technical Services Team covering Technical Pollution (managing Planning, IPPC, Contaminated Land, Air Quality), Dog Wardens, Pest Control, Information Management & Database administration and more recently the first contact team of Duty Officers. Kiran Lahel heads up the Licensing and Support Services Team, leaving her previous post of Business and Relationship Manager vacant. We are currently looking at how best to re-deploy this funding to new roles to better support the service's work, particularly better support for the Team Managers and enhancing some of our functions.

Staff turnover remains low, although occasionally a member of staff will decide to move onto pastures new. This has allowed us to recruit new but experienced staff either from other backgrounds to suit our income generation work or from other local authorities. All the newcomers have added value to what is being delivered. At the 1st April 2022, the core permanent staff establishment was around 68 FTE, although some of this capacity is on fixed term contract and it remains supplemented with additional staff continuing with Covid roles or redeployed into roles supporting recovery from pandemic impacts.

Last year the pandemic made it more difficult to look at training needs. Face to face training was not an option but a lot of training provision did move on-line with webinar style approaches being used with shorter durations. This helped to maintain relevant competencies and we will look to return to our usual PDR approach this year with a main one and a 6-month review.

Staff Survey

79 of our increased staff cohort of just over 100 responded to the survey. Obviously, a lot of those people were undertaking new or different roles, but we felt it reasonable to include them. It probably means this year should be viewed slightly differently, although the same questions were asked as previous years. As ever, some did not respond to all the questions. The satisfaction score is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS (score is from 0 to 10.) The figure obtained, of 97.5% is excellent. Due to current time constraints, we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments, but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service.

One area that sprang out was our WRS teams working together. Whilst the majority still felt it was ok, with 71 scoring 5 or higher, only 35 scored it 8 or above. We hope that the themed, cross-team priorities will help bring people together and improve understanding across our diverse teams. Despite the impacts of the pandemic, it was good to see that 73/79 respondents scored 5 or more in relation to receiving sufficient support from their line managers and 75/79 felt they received sufficient support from their colleagues. Hopefully, this will leave us well placed as we move fully to business-as-usual activity.

Staff Sickness

During 2021/22 staff sickness reached 5.2 days per FTE. This is at the higher end of our average and was pushed up during Q4 by planned hospital admissions and by one incident of long Covid. It was reasonable to expect to see an increase, with people finally able to get necessary operations and with the pressures that the service has been under for 2 years. Managers will monitor this over the coming months but at this stage there is limited concern. Whilst an aging service is likely to have a slightly higher rate of sickness due to natural causes, managers will continue to work to maintain the figures in the normal range of 3-6 days.

ACCOMMODATION

WRS remains located at Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster with a new 3-year deal being struck with Wyre Forest last year. The use of flexible and mobile working is generally now the norm, and has been expanded further during the pandemic, with staff frequently using home as their start and finish point for work

in the field. Office based activity will remain important for team performance, identity, and morale so officers will continue to operate to a flexible pattern that facilitates this and provides face to face liaison with managers and colleagues or for meetings. The touch down points retained in each of the councils have provided an excellent venue for licensing appointments and these will be maintained on an appointment only basis, providing a useful balance between availability for the trade and efficiency of service delivery. Taxi drivers/ operators can be told what they will need over the telephone, ensuring that officer face-to-face time can be used more effectively to ensure complete applications are made and that paperwork has been completed correctly.

These work patterns enable staff to strike a better work/life balance which is essential for good morale, whilst maintaining the team ethos, having an organisation with which the staff identify and belong to, and giving the opportunity to share ideas and issues with other team members. Despite what those who evangelise about the benefits of virtual contact say, it does not build the kinds of trusting, working relationships necessary for the work that we do, so whilst we will be making more use of systems like Teams, it will not wholly replace face to face interaction between staff members.

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION (SERVICE DELIVERY)

During the pandemic we have continued our journey on the road to becoming intelligence led and embedding the Intelligence Operating Model into the way we deliver our activities. During the pandemic, weekly reviews of the full intelligence picture using WRS data, Public Health and Public Health England data, intelligence from the Police and other sources was used to direct and task our operational capacity to the parts of the county where it had the potential to have the most impact. That's whether it related to helping businesses with queues, persuading parents to keep apart whilst waiting at the school gates or our enforcement of business restrictions. The pandemic response has helped us to see how we can better deploy the intelligence model as a business tool with our normal work and during the year we will return to our periodic tasking model based on the tactical assessments delivered by the Intelligence Officer.

The year's Strategic Assessment, the document that is created every other year to look at priorities, has recommended that the focus of activity should be around:

- Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy
- Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs.
- Promoting safe and clean communities
- Supporting commercial businesses to operate safely and responsibly
- Supporting industry to operate safely and responsibly

Tactical assessments will review our data and intelligence against these, to support Team Managers and Principal Officers in determining activities to respond to the intelligence picture current at that time. The top three are cross cutting aspects of our work and a Team Manager will take responsibility for each one, ensuring that work is done across the three teams that can contribute to the priority.

RISK MANAGEMENT

WRS recognises that the development of policy, delivery of service priorities and the management of its services for six partners attract risk. In reviewing its service risks and the effects of management strategies and policies WRS seeks to:

- Identify, assess, and manage risk
- Safeguard the services assets and equipment
- Focus on the delivery of its service to its customers

The Service aims to ensure that Risk Management becomes a natural component of its management process and that when and where appropriate; risks are avoided, reduced, transferred, or retained. As part of these arrangements, a WRS risk register has been developed that can be integrated with the partners' individual risk registers. This register will be maintained and reviewed periodically to assess current risks and identify forthcoming priorities. The service's Business Continuity Plan is going to be reviewed over the coming 12 months with the support of colleagues in North Worcestershire Emergency Planning. The restructured document should bring the service in line with the approach taken across other partner areas.

The risk register at Appendix 2 has been reviewed as we come out of the pandemic. Many of the generic risks remain as was, as they were developed for responding to pandemic influenza, which helped to inform some of the risks identified during Covid. We have seen that many of the elements of our response have served us well during the pandemic. Flexible work patterns can create their own risks around feelings of isolation, lack of team identity and loss of belonging to the organisation and basic things like risk of muscular-skeletal injury because people spend long hours working at desks that are not ideal. So, whilst the service will make more use of virtual meetings, they will not fully replace face to face interaction, nor will they lead to the abandonment of a physical location for the service.

This year will require us to meet the final period of the Food Standards Agency's road-map to the point where they introduced the revised versions of their Local Authority Code of Practice for Food Law Enforcement. The service will look to achieve these aims in the most flexible way possible. There remain concerns around public expectation around what is deliverable in law, particularly in relation to nuisance issues but the service will look to improve its performance in the eyes of our non-business customers.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

WRS is committed to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity. The service links in with the host Authority's adopted Equality Standard for Local Government as a framework to help embed equality and diversity into everyday aspects of its work. Equality issues have come to the fore in recent years with the Black Lives Matter movement highlighting racial inequalities but clearly there is a wider agenda for public services to address. The professional bodies for regulators are looking at how to respond and how to help make services be more reflective of communities they serve. I'm sure this is something that we will take on board at WRS and do our best to move forward in an inclusive way.

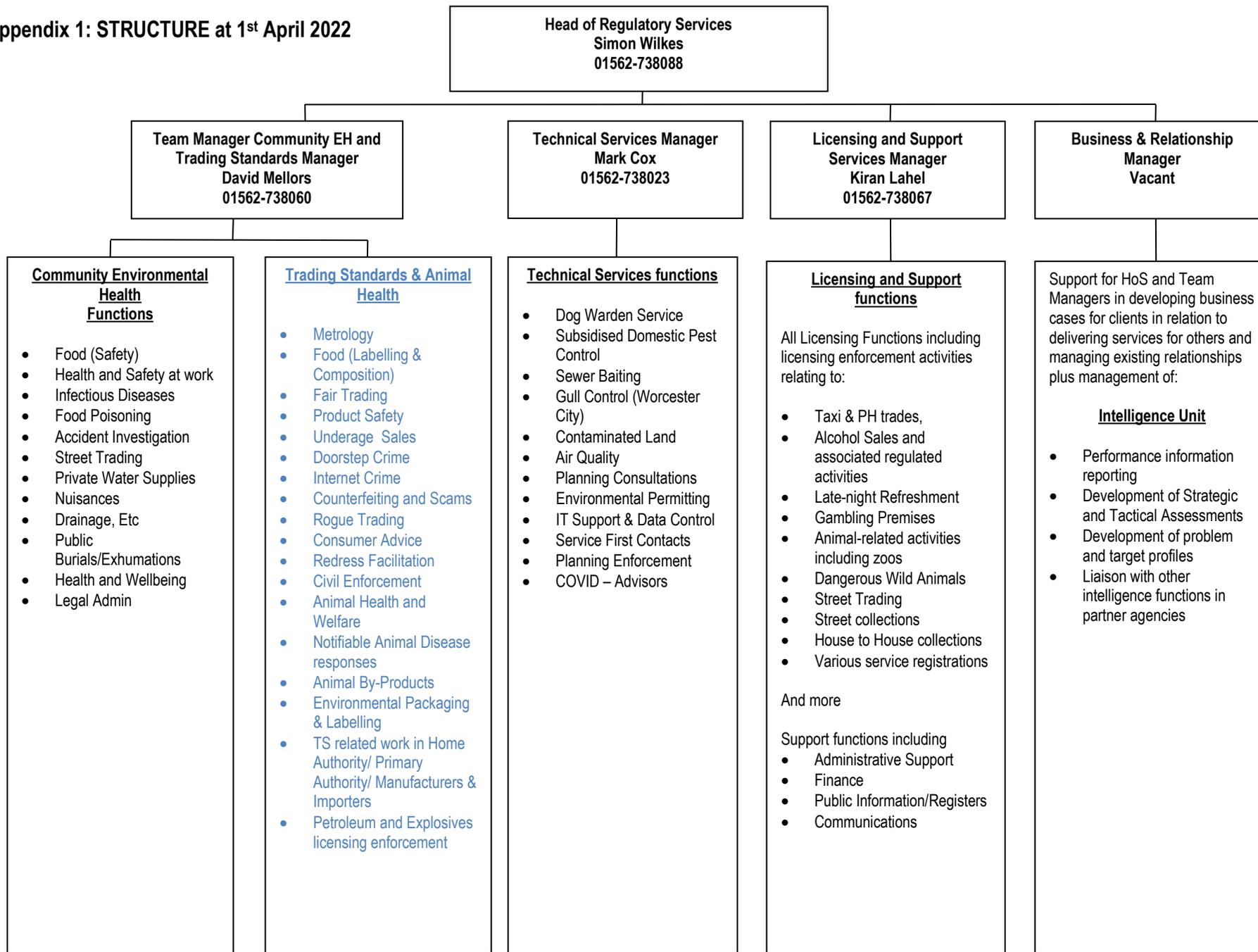
THE NEXT STEPS

As we come out of pandemic response, we will look to move back onto a business-as-usual footing, restoring our approach to engaging with issues where these had to change due to covid risks or resourcing issues due to pandemic response. We will:

- Continue to deliver the WRS Business Plan and our annual operational service plans
- Maintain existing income streams and looking at other ways of generating income for the service,
- Following our philosophy of continuous improvement, continue to review operations to improve marginal efficiencies,
- Continue the process of channel shift by increasing the customer's ability to use self-help, do transactions on-line and monitor progress of work.
- Continue to work closely with County Council Trading Standards colleagues and other partner agencies by maintaining links that help to support both WRS and other services to the benefit of local people.
- Continue to engage with partners to see if any other services could sit well on the WRS platform.

On this last point, our pilot work with some of the districts in north Worcestershire will hopefully lead to developments during 2022/3. Having secured both petroleum licensing and safety at sportsgrounds work from the County Council, we will look at what other functions we might discharge for them too. There are likely to be further proposed changes to the legislative framework in the coming year as Government continues to assess the need to move away from the current post-EU-Exit framework. We will respond to consultations on behalf of the partners and, where we can, work with other colleagues in the region to help amplify the thinking of local authority officers across our area.

Appendix 1: STRUCTURE at 1st April 2022



Appendix 2 – WRS Risk Register

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	Low	High	Green	Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC upgraded relevant systems including Windows. The service is in the process of moving to Office 365 during 2021/22, which will provide better access to a range of provisions including Microsoft Teams and Power BI.
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Current contract due to expire February 2023. Work has commenced on negotiating new contract.
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	Amber	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. WRS Managers do need to redraft contingency plans in the event of a prolonged IT failure or cyber attack that will allow services to be maintained.
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	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. 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

						<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 replace 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	The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This should limit or eliminate risk, although the unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues.
Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control	Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Amber	The Out of Hours and Kennelling contracts were re-tendered to enhance the existing arrangements and provide resilience however there are increases in numbers of stray dogs, dog disease and contracts are restricted by geographical location. Retendering for additional kennels has been fruitless.

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	Issues around access to the financial system from Wyre Forest House should have been relieved with new BDC finance system procurement, however workarounds remain in place due to some unforeseen issues.
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	New legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners must 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. Growth strategy should generate income to support partners in the future but there are limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Invest to save capacity has been committed by partners to see if this achieves the necessary outcomes.
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. Technical and legal training days for staff. Difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments. 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 what is required in law as a minimum. The LGA is clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear Government cannot expect what it had previously. Fewer interventions/ audits by government. The 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 and

						likely to move to a point where it is closer to the WRS model of operation. 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

Appendix 3: Detailed out-turn for Regulatory Services 2021/22

	Full Year Budget 21-22	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 22	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Direct Expenditure			
Employees			
Salary	2,968	2,442	-526
Agency Staff	0	249	249
Employee Insurance	25	4	-20
Sub-Total - Employees	2,993	2,695	-298
Premises			
Rent / Hire of Premise	54	52	-2
Cleaning	1	1	-0
Utilities	0	-0	-0
Sub-Total - Premises	55	52	-2
Transport			
Vehicle Hire	13	1	-12
Vehicle Fuel	8	5	-3
Road Fund Tax	1	0	-1
Vehicle Insurance	5	3	-2
Vehicle Maintenance	3	2	-1
Car Allowances	75	30	-45
Sub-Total - Transport	105	41	-64

Supplies and Services

Furniture & Equipment	32	106	75
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	1	-1
Printing & Photocopying	17	16	-1
Postage	11	18	7
ICT	40	54	14
Telephones	21	13	-8
Training & Seminars	22	29	7
Insurance	20	9	-11
Third Party Payments	144	144	0
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	309	390	82

Contractors

Dog Warden	140	71	-69
Pest Control	52	119	67
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	65	56	-9
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	-1
Water Safety	5	7	2
Food Safety	1	0	-1
Environmental Protection	12	47	35
Grants / Subscriptions	13	16	3
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	3	-2

Sub-Total	295	321	26
Income			
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-498	-659	-161
Sub-Total	-498	-659	-161
Service Total	3,257	2,840	-417
Refunded to Partners	0		
Stray Dog Van Reserve	0	20	20
IT Enhancement Reserve	0		
Sub-Total	0	20	20
Net Position	3,257	2,860	-397

Appendix 4: 3-year budgets 2022/23 to 2024/25

Account description	Budget	Budget	Budget
	2022 / 2023	2023 / 2024	2024 / 2025
	£000's	£000's	£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

Income

Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-372	-372	-372
--	------	------	------

Sub-Total - Income

-372

-372

-372

Income

From partners for Technical Officers

-141

-104

-106

Funding from MHDC for pest control

-8

-8

-8

Funding from partners for Increase in Rent

-7

-7

-7

Funding from partners for Increase in ICT

-16

-16

-16

Funding from partners for Increase in Hosting Charges

-10

-10

-10

Sub-Total - Income

-181

-144

-146

Additional Income

Income to be found due to unavoidable salary pressures

-81

-159

-230

Sub-Total - Income

-81

-159

-230

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DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET

Current Partner Percentages

Bromsgrove

14.55%

Redditch

13.03%

Wyre Forest

17.53%

Wychavon

16.54%

Malvern

23.24%

Worcs City

15.11%

Total

100.00%

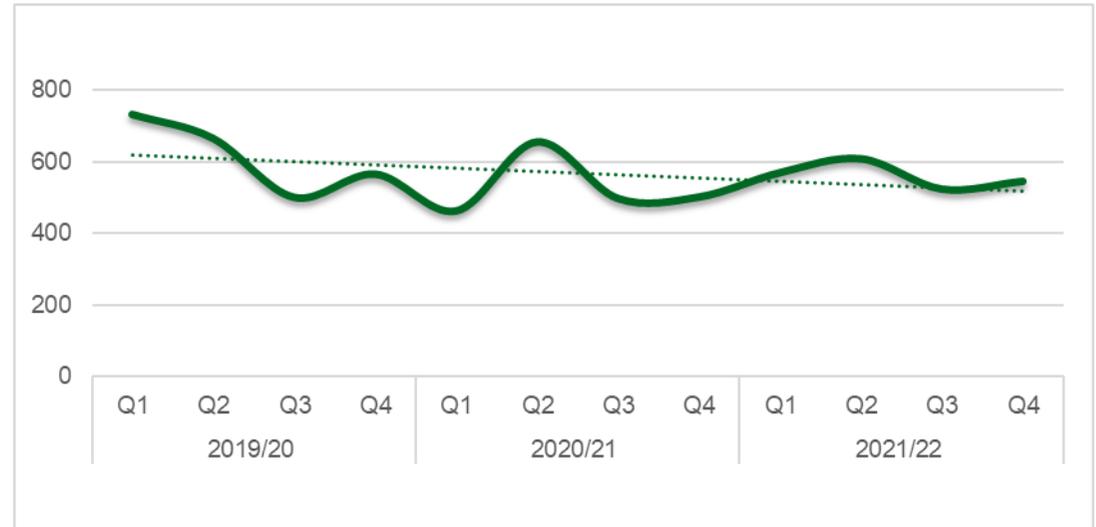
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Agenda Item 6

Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

Bromsgrove District Council

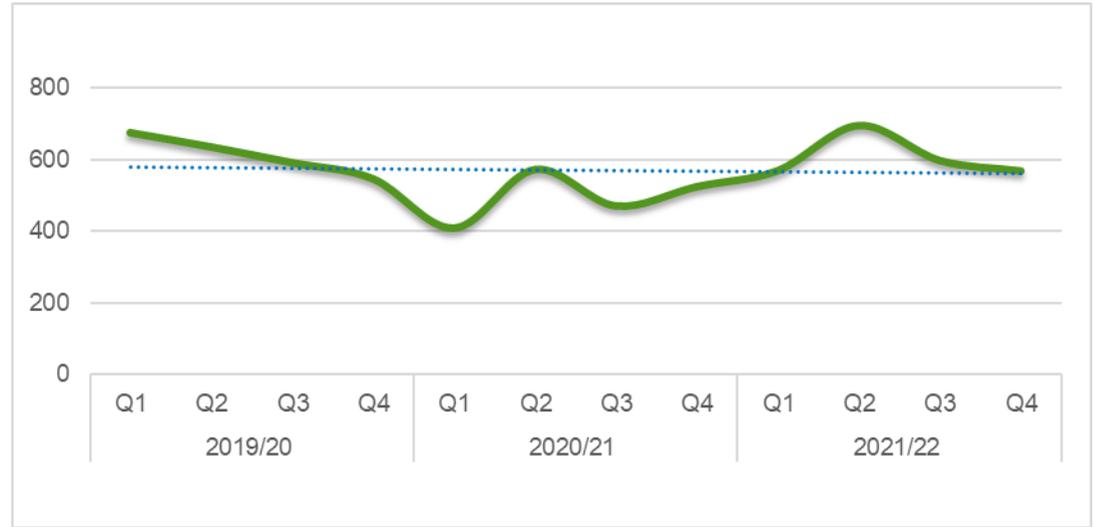
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district. The chart (right) shows the number of cases per quarter, whilst the chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the primary functions undertaken by WRS.



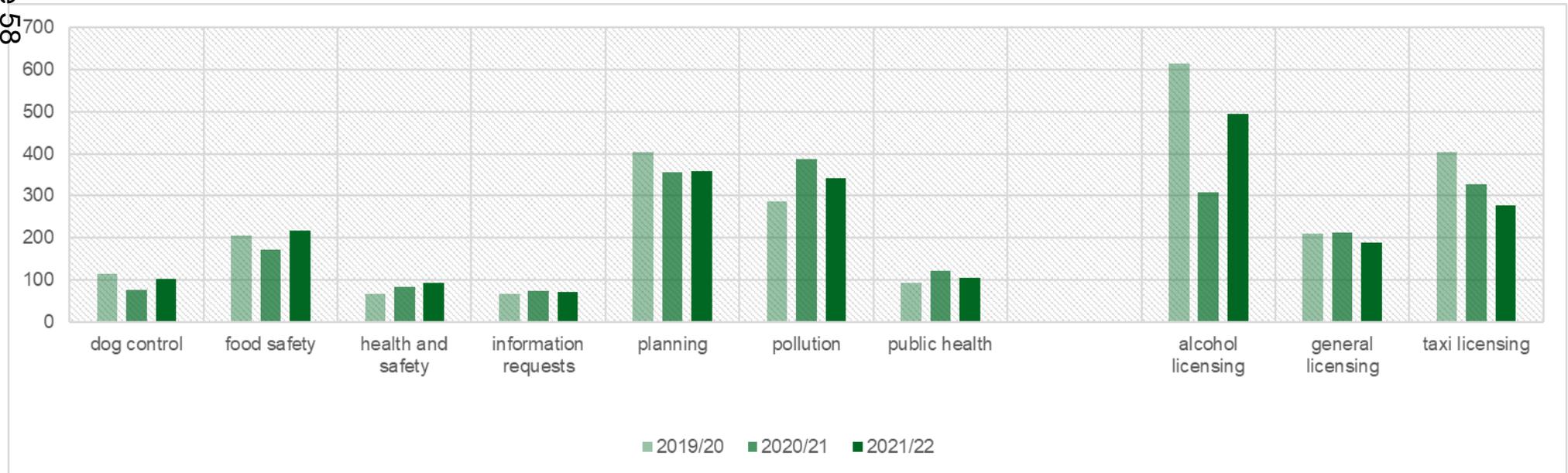
Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

Malvern Hills District Council

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. The chart (right) shows the number of cases per quarter, whilst the chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the primary functions undertaken by WRS.



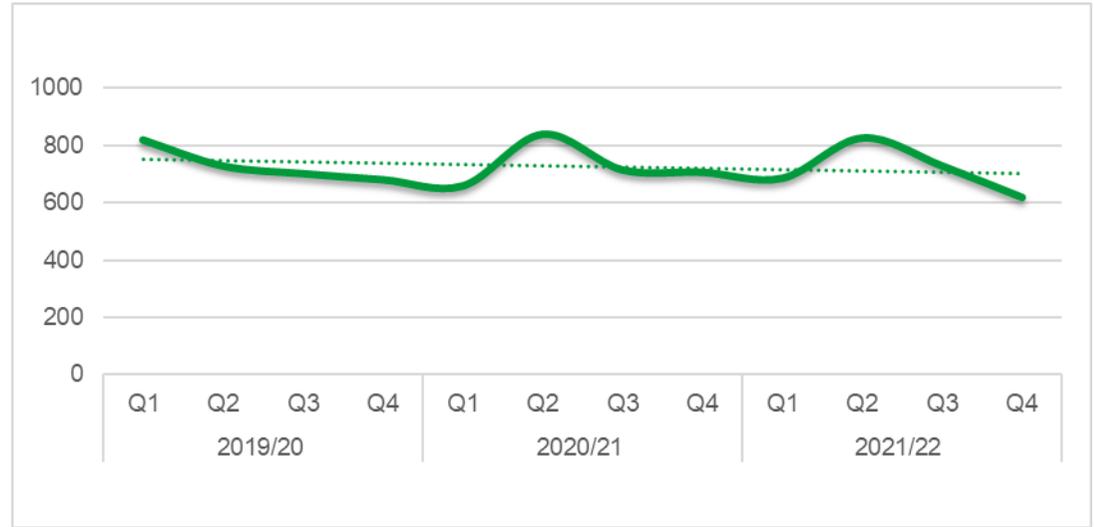
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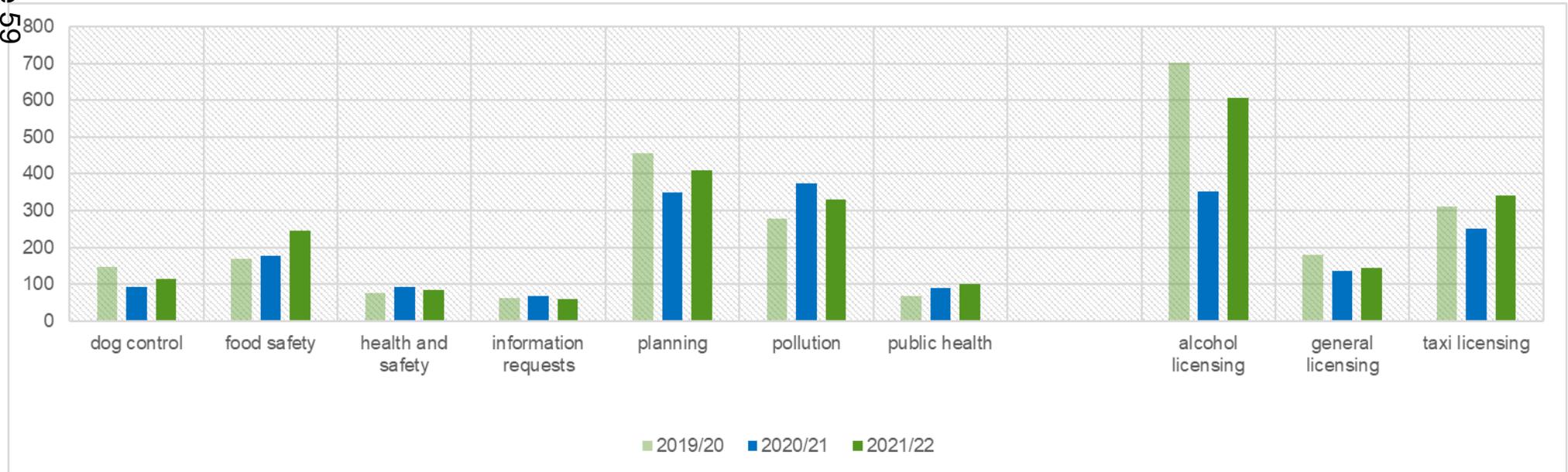
Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

Redditch Borough Council

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. The chart (right) shows the number of cases per quarter, whilst the chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the primary functions undertaken by WRS.



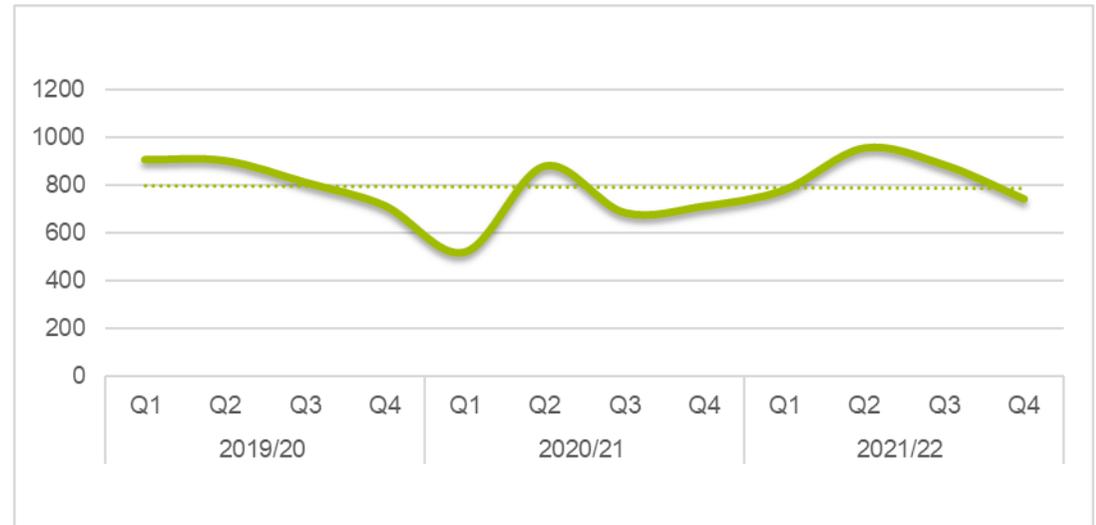
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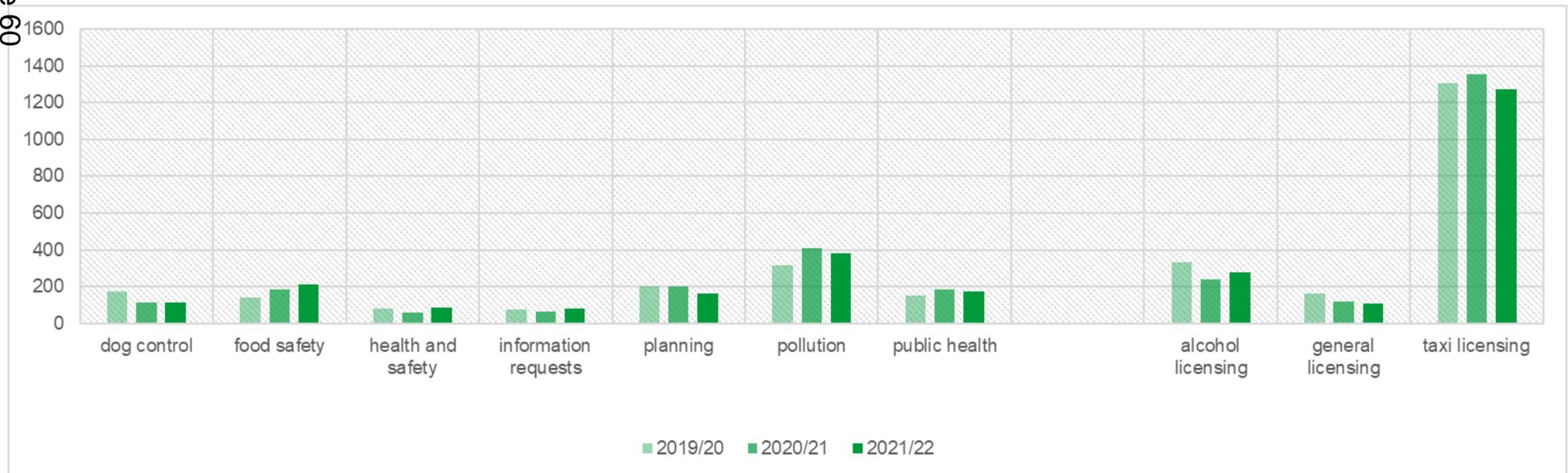
Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

Worcester City Council

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. The chart (right) shows the number of cases per quarter, whilst the chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the primary functions undertaken by WRS.



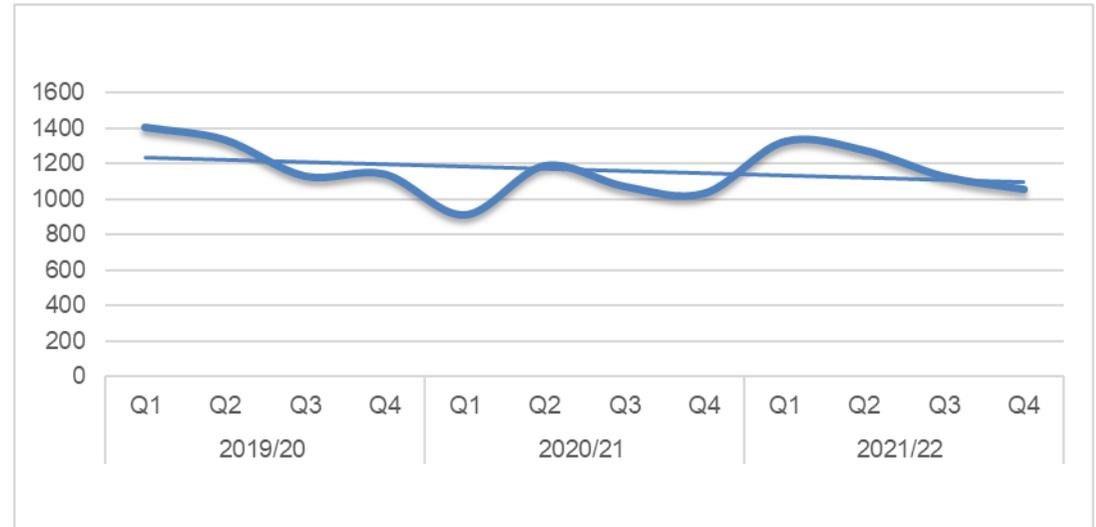
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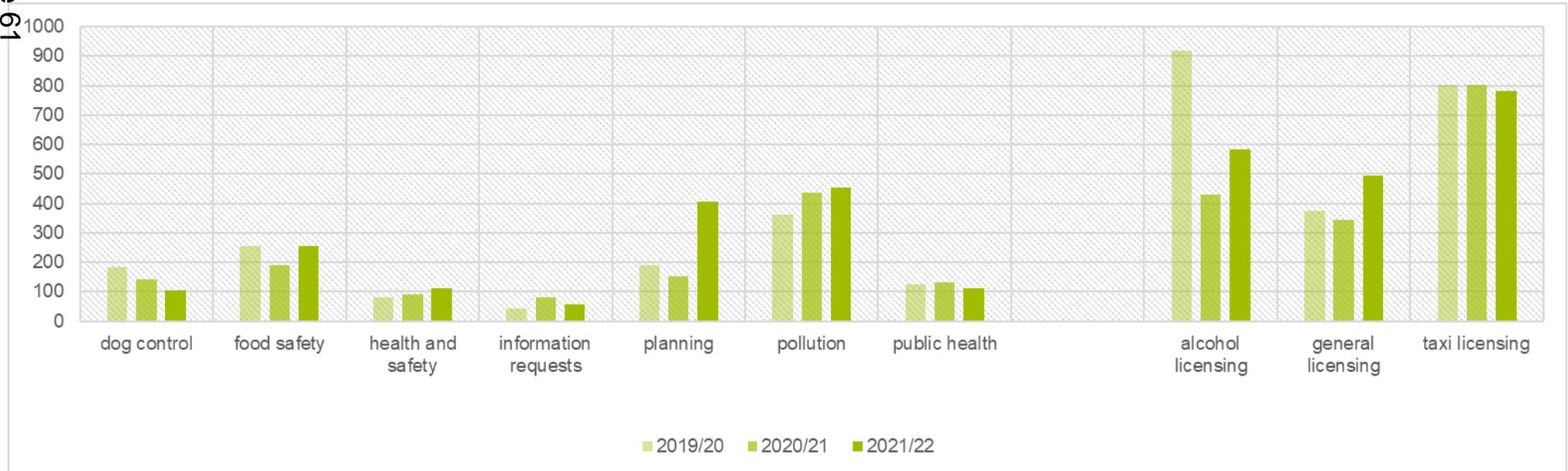
Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

Wychavon District Council

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. The chart (right) shows the number of cases per quarter, whilst the chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the primary functions undertaken by WRS.



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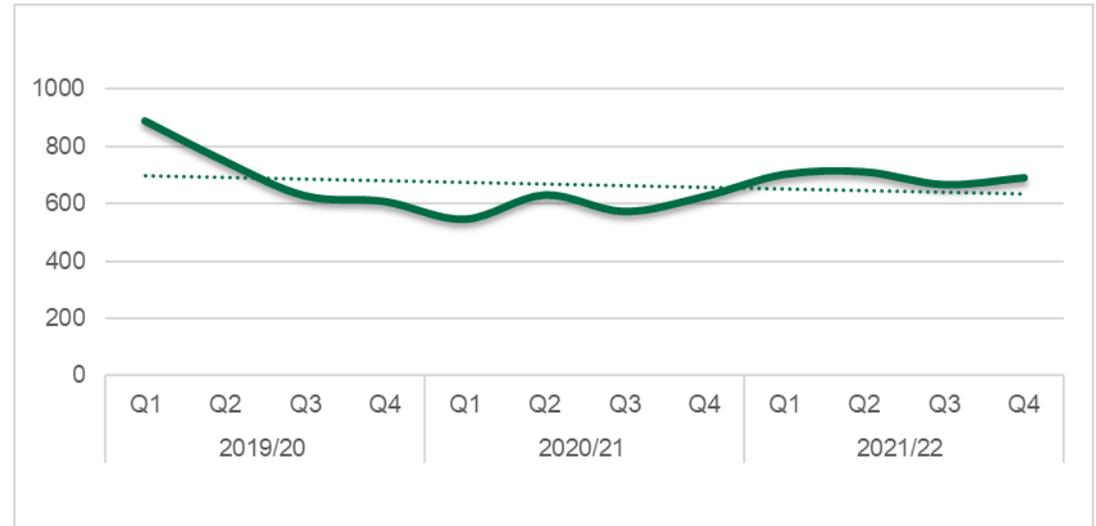
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Agenda Item 6

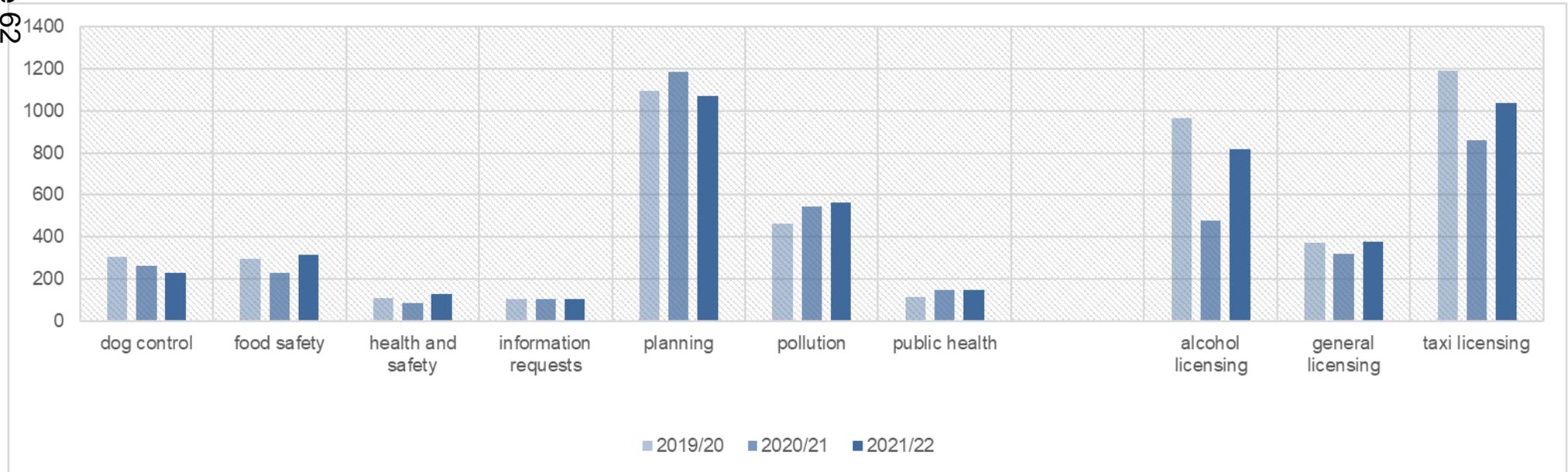
Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

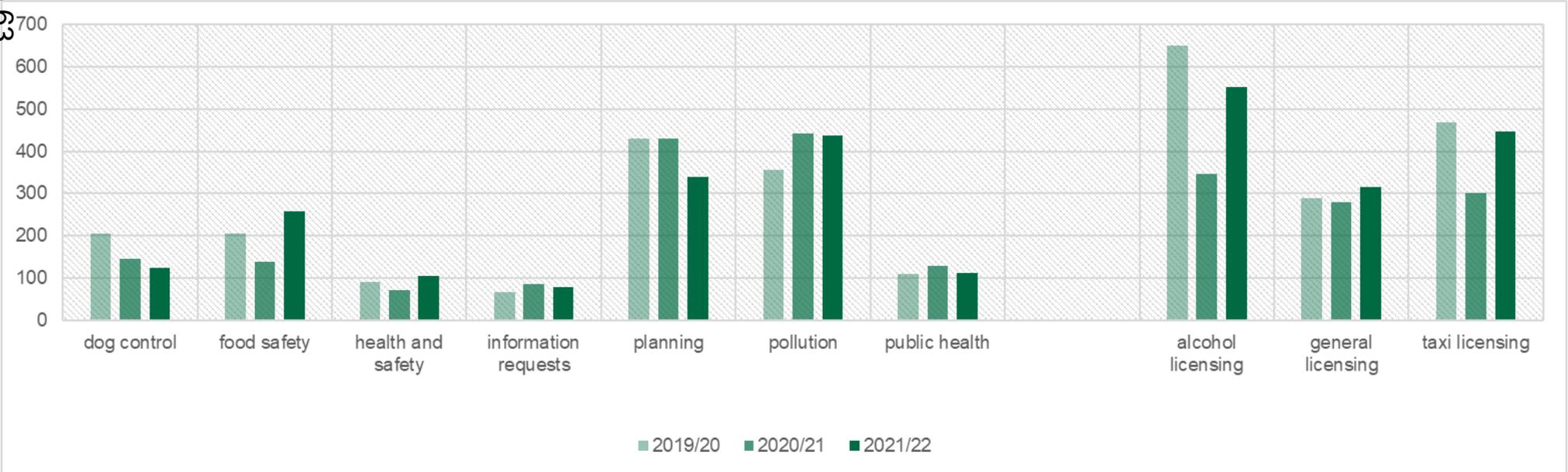
Wyre Forest District Council

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. The chart (right) shows the number of cases per quarter, whilst the chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the primary functions undertaken by WRS.



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WRS Board
23rd June 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL – MARCH 2022 & ANNUAL RETURN

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – March 2022
- 1.2 Approve the 2021/22 refund of £397k to the participating Councils.

Council	Refund from 2021/22 £'000
Bromsgrove District Council	58
Malvern Hills District Council	51
Redditch Borough Council	70
Worcester City Council	66
Wychavon District Council	92
Wyre Forest District Council	60
Total	397

Contribution to Priorities

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

Introduction/Summary

This report presents the final financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April – March 2022. In addition a number of financial statements are appended to this report.

Background

During the financial year quarterly financial reports are presented for consideration by the Partners and the Joint Board.

Report

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

- Revenue Monitoring Statement 2021/22 - Appendix 1
- Annual Statement 2021/22 - Appendix 2
- Annual Statement Analysis 2021/22 – Appendix 3
- WRS Income Analysis 2021/22 – Appendix 4
- Reserve Statement – Appendix 5

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a final outturn refund of £397k, this represents 12.2% of the actual budget and is mainly due to:-

- A significant underspend on the stray dog contracts due to the service dealing with fewer straying incidents. Likely to be related to people working from home. Officers have noted an increase in stray dog numbers, so similar underspend should not be anticipated in 22-23.
- The inability to recruit like for like numbers of employees to backfill capacity committed to pandemic response work.
- Members should note that it was agreed at the Feb 22 Board that £20k could be reserved to supplement the existing reserve for new stray dog vans.
- The outturn underspend is £160k greater than that forecasted at qtr 3. This is largely due to an additional £130k of income in relation to support for Covid Comf grant funded work.
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.
- As requested by this Board Appendix 1 details explanations relating to the variances.

- It is proposed that the £397k is allocated as follows:-

Bromsgrove District Council	£57,961
Malvern Hills District Council	£50,930
Redditch Borough Council	£69,800
Worcs City Council	£65,867
Wychavon District Council	£92,523
Wyre Forest District Council	£60,186

The refund to partners takes into account the adjustment for the overspend on Pest Control and all other charges to partners.

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

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

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WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2021-22

Total WRS Final Outturn 2021-22

Append 1

	Full Year Budget 21-22	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 22	Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Direct Expenditure				
Employees				
Salary	2,968	2,442	-526	Savings due to employees working on grant funded covid related work.
Agency Staff	0	249	249	Backfilling for employees working on covid related work
Employee Insurance	25	4	-20	
Sub-Total - Employees	2,993	2,695	-298	
Premises				
Rent / Hire of Premise	54	52	-2	
Cleaning	1	1	-0	
Utilities	0	-0	-0	
Sub-Total - Premises	55	52	-2	
Transport				
Vehicle Hire	13	1	-12	
Vehicle Fuel	8	5	-3	
Road Fund Tax	1	0	-1	
Vehicle Insurance	5	3	-2	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	2	-1	
Car Allowances	75	30	-45	Due to change in working patterns
Sub-Total - Transport	105	41	-64	
Supplies and Services				
Furniture & Equipment	32	106	75	Essential calibration & repairs on noise monitoring equipment. Purchase of Noise Monitoring equipment to replace obsolete equipment greater than 10 years old.
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	1	-1	
Printing & Photocopying	17	16	-1	
Postage	11	18	7	
ICT	40	54	14	
Telephones	21	13	-8	
Training & Seminars	22	29	7	
Insurance	20	9	-11	
Third Party Payments	144	144	0	£100k BDC hosting / £44k WFDC ICT hosting.
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	309	390	82	

WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2021-22

Total WRS Final Outturn 2021-22

	Full Year Budget 21-22	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 22	Variance	
Contractors				
Dog Warden	140	71	-69	Underspend due to number of stray dogs reducing, relating to change in working conditions, numbers of stray dogs are beginning to increase due to return to normal working patterns.
Pest Control	52	119	67	
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	65	56	-9	Additional costs relating to Gull Control & Pest Control which is charged to relevant partners and offset in the income line
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	-1	
Water Safety	5	7	2	
Food Safety	1	0	-1	
Environmental Protection	12	47	35	Bereavement / Works in Default to be charged to relevant partners, offset in Income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	16	3	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	3	-2	
Sub-Total	295	321	26	
Income				
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-498	-659	-161	See Append 4
Sub-Total	-498	-659	-161	
Service Total	3,257	2,840	-417	
Refund to Partners	0	397	397	
Stray Dog Van Reserve	0	20	20	
Sub-Total	0	417	417	
Net Position	3,257	3,257	0	

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**Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Annual Return For Year Ended 31st March 2022**

Accounting Statement For Worcester Regulatory Services

	31st March 2021	31st March 2022	
	£	£	
1 Balances brought forward	238,900	322,673	
2 (+) Income from local taxation and / or levy	0	0	
3 (+) Total other receipts	3,931,376	5,458,663	Additional Covid Comf Grant income 21-22 £1,536,794
4 (-) Staff costs	3,241,718	4,325,175	Additional Covid Comf spend in 21-22 £1,153,347
5 (-) Loan interest / capital repayments	0	0	
6 (-) All other payments	605,885	1,100,890	Additional Covid Comf spend in 21-22 £383,447
7 (=) Balances carried forward	322,673	355,271	

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Regulatory Services Income received 21-22**Income from Partners**

	£
Budget	3,257,253
Refund of Savings	-397,266
Pension Deficit	29,200
Bereavement/ Public Burials	26,391
Marlpool - Redditch	1,499
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	13,425
Pest Control - Malvern	5,078
Employee for Animal Activity	35,032
Employee for Income Generation Officer	23,021
Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	63,011
Zety Ltd - Wyre Forest	4,697
Churchfields S106 - Wyre Forest	8,590
	3,069,931

Grant Income

	£
Healthy Eating	596
Worcestershire Works Well	10,000
Make it Worcestershire	6,000
Covid Grant - Track & Trace	366,971
Covid Grant - Covid Advisors	794,254
Covid Grant - WRS Loss to Follow Up	603,138
Covid Grant - Enforcement Team	108,367
Covid Grant - Comms Officer	13,367
Covid Grant - Events	36,665
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	13,986
	1,953,344

Other Income

	£
Stray Dog Income	38,890
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	55,700
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	20,000
Planning Support Work	87,290
Contaminated Land Work	34,722
PPC Work	5,156
Primary Authority work	8,478
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	1,655
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	21,792
Pest Control	9,590
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Hospitality Content Project	16,683
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	1,569
Support for Comf Grant Funded Work	129,580
Taxi Admin Work / Taxi Database / Victorian Fayre / Trans Tapes	4,282
	435,388

Total Box 3 Accounting Statement**5,458,663****Regulatory Services Employees 21-22****Box 4**

	£
Employees Related Costs	4,325,175
	4,325,175

Regulatory Services Other Costs 21-22**Box 6**

Premise Related Cost	52,841
Transport Related Cost	11,076
Supplies & Service	1,036,973
	1,100,890

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income Received 21-22

Income from Partners	£
Budget	3,257,253
Refund of Savings	-397,266
Pension Backfunding	29,200
Bereavement/ Public Burials	26,391
Marlpool - Redditch	1,499
Pest Control Overspend - Bromsgrove, Wychavon & Redditch	13,425
Pest Control Overspend - Malvern	5,078
Employee for Animal Activity	35,032
Employee for Income Generation Officer	23,021
Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	63,011
Zety Ltd - Wyre Forest	4,697
Churchfields S106 - Wyre Forest	8,590
	<u>3,069,931</u>
Grant Income	£
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	13,986
	<u>13,986</u>
Other Income	£
Stray Dog Income	38,890
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	55,700
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	20,000
Planning Support Work	87,290
Contaminated Land Work	34,722
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Licensing - Pre-App Advice	1,569
Support for Comf Grant Funded Work	129,580
Taxi Admin Work / Taxi Database / Victorian Fayre / Trans Tapes	4,282
	<u>435,388</u>
Total Income	<u>3,519,305</u>
2021/22 Base Budget from Partners	-2,859,987
Total Income Excluding Budget	659,318

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Reserve Statement - 2021-22

Appendix 5

Worcestershire Regulatory Services 21-22

Earmarked Reserve	Balance 1st April 2021	Transfers Out 2021/22	Transfers In 2021/22	Balance 31st March 2022
	£	£	£	£
Worcs Works Well	48,170	-510	10,000	57,660
LEP	10,997	-700		10,297
WRS General Reserve	130,647			130,647
Better Business For All	2,859			2,859
Stray Dog Van	50,000		20,000	70,000
Brexit	40,000			40,000
Licensing	15,000			15,000
Food Inspections	25,000			25,000
Make it Worcestershire		-2,192	6,000	3,808
Total	322,672	-3,402	36,000	355,271
Conditional Reserve	5,223	-596		4,627
Total Earmark Reserve & Conditional Reserve	327,895	-3,997	36,000	359,898

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WRS Board

Date: 23rd June 2022

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 3 and 4 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 final quarter of 2021/22, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

Contribution to Priorities

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

Report

Activity Data

The final quarter of 2021/2 followed on from a Christmas period free of Covid controls and Government continued to move away from controls, with all restrictions removed at the end of the period

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) had announced its plan to commence its roadmap to normal operations during the Summer of 2021, and this commenced in September, increasing demands on a still stretched team that was continuing to juggle Covid controls and particularly Local Outbreak Management work. A creditable 1718 interventions were completed during the year, with over 500 in Q4. The numbers of complaints about food continued a slight up-tic from Q3 through Q4, although following the trend predicted previously.

There was a slight fall in complaints and enquiries from Q3 through Q4 on Health and Safety at work, although overall numbers for the year were up on the figures for 2020/21. Accident reports were also higher than last year and going back to 2019/20.

Q4 followed the slow downward trend we have seen this year in relation to



dog related complaints and enquiries, however, the number of strays reported over the year was up and above levels pre-pandemic in 2019/20. The latter is a slight concern as officers have predicted an increase as people who purchased dogs during lockdowns return to the workplace.

Numbers of licensing applications fell slight from Q3 to Q4, although overall numbers for the year are above the previous year but have yet to return to the level pre-pandemic. 20% of applications were for temporary events as the hospitality industry sought to recover from the impacts of pandemic controls. Of the 466 complaints received last year, 36% related to the taxi trade and 20% related to alcohol licensed premises, with 19% relating to animal establishments.

Quarter 3 into 4 saw planning application numbers fall. The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year is an increase of 4% compared to 2020/21, but a reduction of 2% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 91% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 48% related to contaminated land. Members are reminded that handling of planning enquiries is one of our areas of significant income generation and just under a quarter of planning enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of local authorities outside of the County. Information requests, often associated with the planning and development process also continued an upward trajectory throughout Q4.

Following the drop from the summer peak through Q3, Q4 saw a slight increase in numbers of nuisance complaints despite the Winter weather. The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year is a reduction of 3% compared to the very high levels of 202/21, but an increase of 22% compared to 2019/20. Case totals, however, were broadly consistent with seasonal variations. This may suggest that people are becoming more used to what one might call normal environmental background activities that may have ceased during the earlier part of the pandemic. Approximately 70% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or noise from audio visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 14% of cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as the burning of domestic or commercial waste.

For much of this year, officers continued to deliver Covid pandemic controls as well as our business-as-usual activities, but this year was effectively a transition so, by 31st March, all controls had been lifted. The service has remained engaged with the County Council Public Health team as the Local Outbreak Response team is maintained in a reduced form to respond to the continuing issues with Covid and to be prepared to re-vamp up activity should a more dangerous, novel variant emerge. There is no further financial commitment to covid control activity from Government for 2022/3 so this is very much a year where accommodating life with Covid 19 is the norm and people will continue to return to pre-pandemic behaviours or establish new ones as we move to the oft quoted “new normal.”

Covid related activities

Covid related activities continued through the final quarter of 2021/22



with WRS EHOs still being embedded within the Local Outbreak Response Team and remaining busy supporting business to deal with or prevent outbreaks. Out of hours enforcement activities continued with officers regularly undertaking pro-active work in evenings and at weekends to check on the night-time economy, looking at potential covid related issues but also much of our business-as-usual regulation around food, noise nuisance and licensing.

Covid Advisors were out daily mainly supporting the vaccination drive. Clinics occurred in most districts, with local ones being set up in many areas to provide access for those harder to reach groups. Figures consistently showed lower uptake in our more deprived communities and those with a higher proportion of residents from ethnic minorities. The Advisors delivered several roles in support of these very successful exercises. Contact tracing and lost to follow-up activity continued through the period until Government finally ended the need for this towards the end of the quarter.

Performance

The year was mixed from a customer satisfaction perspective with the business customers level continuing to be high at 98.4%, but the non-business customer measure at 61.6%. This is a significant fall on the end of last year (74%,) and below the previous two (69.5%, 63%.) This is disappointing and likely relates to how stretched the service was during the re-opening process as, at a time where there was not capacity available to backfill the on-going pandemic response, officers had to try to deal with the high levels of nuisance demand and other activities. Scores were low for initial response times and the time taken to resolve issues. This almost certainly influenced people's responses to other questions used to assess overall performance. Managers will have to return to the approach used in previous years to ensure initial response times improve and that expectations on timely resolution are set from the beginning. Clearer communication and officers maintaining agreed contact intervals with complainants may improve this situation. Whilst we will never achieve 100% satisfaction because of the nature of our work, we know we can do better than this. People who felt better equipped to deal with issues ended the year at 58.5%, well below the 68.2%, of the previous year but marginally above the 58.1% that it was the year before that.

The figures for licensing processing are good with the year ending at 97.5% of taxi driver renewals completed within 5 working days. Numbers of vehicles suspended is, however significantly higher than previous years. As members will see from the detail, much of this increase is driven by a single fleet, although most districts have slightly more vehicles being either taken of the road during stop-checks or, being failed by local garages when vehicles are presented for their routine tests. This may well simply reflect the post-covid economic climate, and it is somewhat worrying given the other financial pressures that the trade is likely to face with current cost of living pressures.



Numbers of compliments and complaints are down on the previous 2 years, but the ration remains good at above 4:1. Staff sickness is up at 5.2 days per FTE. This includes additional temporary staff taken on for pandemic response. This is at the high end of our average and has been pushed up by planned hospital admissions and long-Covid. Given the pressures under which everyone has operated for the past 2-years, one might expect to see a slight increase, and managers feel this is not a concern at this stage.

Staff satisfaction was at 97.5%, an excellent result given the pressures, with 61/79 staff who responded scoring the service as 8/10 or better to work for. Further work will be done during the year to look at more detailed feedback.

The proportion of businesses licensed under the 2003 Act (alcohol and entertainment,) allegedly not uphold the 4 licensing objectives is higher than previous years in most of the districts. As we have explained to members previously, post pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise has reduced, combined with businesses seeking other activities and use of their outside spaces to increase revenue. It is therefore not surprising to see an increase for all districts in this measure. It still shows that 90% plus of premises across the County are still well run and controlled by their operators, and this increase has not led to an increase in licensing revues either by residents or the responsible authorities, including the police.

Looking at figures for the rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population, last year saw variations in impacts, with Bromsgrove and Malvern being slightly below average numbers and Wychavon and Worcester slightly above. This will, to some extent be linked to the issues identified above with hospitality, however it should be remembered that most noise complaints are domestic, neighbour issues. It still suggests however, that overall, the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

Income is back to pre-pandemic levels at over £449,000. Although some of this is related to management support for covid functions, it is a good sign of things moving towards normality. This represents 14.89% of the budget from 2016/17, which we have used for comparison over the years and 13.8% of the current budget.

The overall cost of the service, therefore, is also slightly down on last year at £4.80 per had of population compared with over £5.00 last year, due to the improved income.

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 Pls 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	61.6
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	96.8	97.7	97.9	98.2
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	Bromsgrove 99.3% Malvern Hills 98.4% Redditch 97.5% Worcester City 98.4% Wychavon 98.2% Wyre Forest 98.6% Worcestershire 98.5%
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	Bromsgrove 0.7% Malvern Hills 1.6% Redditch 2.5% Worcester City 1.6% Wychavon 1.8% Wyre Forest 1.4% Worcestershire 1.5%
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	100%	NA	97.5%
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide	6-monthly	NA	13 = 0.91% of 1435 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 1 MHDC 0 RBC 7 WC 4 WDC 1 WFDC 0	NA	59 = 4% of 1457 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 3 MHDC 0 RBC 37 WC 8 WDC 6 WFDC 5



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	58.5
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/ 12	15/52	18/113	25/134
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	5.2 days per FTE
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	97.5%
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	Bromsgrove 5.9% Malvern Hills 5.1% Redditch 9.5% Worcester City 10.0% Wychavon 6.3% Wyre Forest 9.1% Worcestershire 7.5%
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	Bromsgrove 2.25 Malvern Hills 2.29 Redditch 3.47 Worcester City 2.47 Wychavon 2.45 Wyre Forest 2.65 Worcestershire 2.9
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	£449,356, which is 14.89% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 13.8% of the 2021/22 budget (3,257,000)



14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	£4.80
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Worcestershire
Regulatory Services
Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2021-22



Foreword

Welcome to the final activity data report for 2021/22.

As we now sit heading towards mid-Summer we can look back at another busy and difficult year, although on a positive we have come out of it seeing a virtual end to the Covid controls that were taking up so much of our capacity. This shows you the full profile of our business-as-usual activities during the year.

Food safety cases followed a slightly upward trajectory between Q3 and Q4, and a good number of interventions were completed as part of the FSA road-map work. Health and safety complaints and enquiries fell slightly during Q4 and accident reports remained at a similar level to Q3.

In Licensing, complaints and enquiries remained on or about the trend line this quarter. Applications also fell slightly, however the numbers remained above the trend line continuing to reflect licensed trades returning to more normal business operations.

In 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. Information requests, often linked to the planning process followed a similar trend. Also, work in dog control has remained steady.

Nuisance complaints showed an uptick from Q3 into Q4, following a reasonable familiar pattern as the spring was quite dry and relatively warm. Public Health complaints increased and requests for subsidised pest control treatment fell between Q3 and Q4 but numbers were higher than the same period in the previous two years.

Whilst Covid work remained on-going during this period, it was clear Government's intention was to shift policy and wind down the interventions. Our EHOs embedded in the Local Outbreak Response Team continued to focus on business support. Covid compliance in the night time economy remained one of our priorities with officers out regularly, directed by the intelligence picture. Our Covid Advisors continued 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 continued until Government ended this requirement. To ensure continuity, many of our temporary Covid staff had contracts extended until the end of June 2022, and they have been deployed on other work, linking into the Covid recovery plan.

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

Statutory Nuisance

A high level of nuisance demand was experienced by the service in Q1, apparently driven up again by covid-19 restrictions causing residents to spend more time at home. Noise issues continued to be the dominant nuisance reported, however there were also a large number of smoke complaints concerning bonfires. We believe this to have been exacerbated by ongoing restrictions on the use of public waste disposal sites and resultant large queues and long waiting times.

A large number of complaints concerning noise from licensed premises were received following the relaxation of covid-19 restrictions on them towards the end of Q1, as many premises took the opportunity to trade utilising their outdoor areas. Many residents appear to have become accustomed to the quiet of closed premises and took exception to noise from their reopening, even where in some cases it was no worse than pre-lockdown.

Barking dogs continued to feature highly in the list of noise issues reported and evidence was obtained of noise from dogs at one property continuing to cause noise nuisance despite a noise abatement notice having been served upon the owners. A prosecution file was prepared and following a not-guilty plea and several adjournments, a trial has been set for October.

An appeal case lodged by a licensed premises against a noise abatement notice served on them in relation to amplified music in their garden was heard in July, the outcome of which fully vindicated formal action by WRS. The District Judge dismissed the appeal on all counts, finding that the noise did amount to a statutory nuisance, and that the best practicable means had not been taken to minimise the noise. Full costs of £6,715 were awarded to the council by the court.

Covid Business Compliance

Seven officers and one principal officer took on the role of Business Compliance during the period to provide advice to business and enforce the various legislative requirements. The constant changes to legislation as the pandemic progressed presented significant challenges both to officers and business, moving within Q1 from enforcement to advice as Step 4 approached.

An investigation into the fatal accident of a volunteer at a fishery concluded at a hearing on April 28 2021 at Worcester Magistrates' Court. Birmingham Anglers Association admitted breaching the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Section 3(1). The organisation was fined £66,000 and ordered to pay costs of £17,500 together with a victim surcharge of £181.

After forming a Primary Authority Partnership with Halfords, officers visited numerous Halfords sites across the region and further afield in order to fully understand the scope of assured advice that WRS will be providing to the company in helping them to comply at a national level.

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

Food Safety

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

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

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

210 new premises registered during the period.

Export Certification

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

Primary Authority

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

Worcestershire Works Well

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

Licensing

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

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

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

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

Technical Services

IT Development

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

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

COVID Advisors

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

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

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

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

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

Contact Tracing

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

Dog Wardens

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

Community Environmental Health

Statutory Nuisance

The surge in nuisance demand continued throughout the summer, with high numbers of complaints about noise from licensed premises remaining a notable feature. This was particularly challenging for CEH with several team members being re-assigned to cover Covid related work, leaving fewer than usual to deal with the summer peak of nuisance cases. This resulted in an unprecedented backlog of cases, peaking at over 200 nuisance cases pending allocation plus around 800 cases under investigation. Abatement Notices were served for issues including noise nuisances from amplified music on licensed premises, barking dogs, accumulations, and insufficient drainage arrangements.

The Team have started to receive a number of complaints in relation to noise from recently installed air-source heat pumps, which is a concern given how few have currently been installed and the national push for their wider adoption. Magistrates heard an appeal against a noise abatement notice served upon licensed premises concerning noise from amplified music. The appeal was dismissed, the court finding that the notice was properly served and entirely justified. A prosecution case relating to breach of a noise abatement notice in respect of barking dogs was due to go to trial but was adjourned following application by the defence due to ill health.

A significant number of private water supply samples were undertaken in the period to catch up on those missed during lockdown. This has reduced the backlog with further steps being taken to manage the claw back.

Local Outbreak Response Team

The dedicated Local Outbreak Response Team remains in place to assist Public Health with Covid advice and outbreak investigations. Our relationship has matured over the period and the need to meet daily is no longer required. As the year progressed cases have become more random in nature and we continue to find that businesses have adapted well to the new Covid risk assessment requirement with low risk of workplace transmission.

Covid Business Enforcement

Seven officers led by a Principal took on the role of Business Compliance during the period to provide advice and enforce the various legislative requirements. The constant changes to legislation as the pandemic progressed presented challenges both to officers and business, moving from enforcement to advice as Step 4 approached.

In August, your Officers went to trial on one of the most nationally significant cases for business non-compliance of the Covid regulations. The trial took place before District Judge Strongman and involved a card and bookshop in Wychavon, Grace Cards and Books, which had continued to trade during the lockdowns despite multiple verbal and written warnings, prohibition notices and the issue of fines.

In summing up, the Judge confirmed for the court that there were seven offences falling under different regulations. He summarised briefly the events, namely that the local authority (WRS) were notified by Police that the shop was open and trading during lockdown despite being advised to close, and that subsequently the owner was served with two prohibition notices across different regulations, directing him to close. The owner chose to defy the prohibition notices and continued to open throughout the lockdowns. Considering the law, the Judge referred to the regulations as “relatively simple”. Businesses must close unless they fall into the list of businesses that could remain open. He confirmed that the only way to make sense of the legislation is to apply the “principle purpose” test to the exempted categories. The predominant offering of the business was celebrations and birthday items. Selling newspapers and food items was not the principle purpose of this business, he stated. In conclusion the Judge commented that the Council was entirely right to issue the prohibition notices and that no reasonable excuse can exist, regardless of the beliefs of the defendant at the time. The Judge continued stating that “this was a fig leaf. The proprietor was trying to pitch his shop as a newsagents or food retailer and it clearly was not that. He brought the prosecution on himself by trying to shoehorn his business into a different category”. The Judge noted that other people would be going out of business because of the regulations, but they had complied with the law. The sentence was a fine of £35,000 (5k for each offence), costs of £8986 and a victim surcharge of £190. The proprietor has subsequently appealed.

Food Safety Interventions

The summer months brought a gradual return to more ‘business as usual’ with officers able to increase their food inspection work in line with the Food Standards Agency’s recovery programme. New premises remain our priority with many food business operators making enquiries as to why they are having to wait so long for their all-important FHRs score. We prioritise this seemingly never-ending challenge as we continue to receive around 90 new registrations a month, proving that there is still an appetite out there to set up a new business. The good news is that most of the new business are highly compliant.

Members should be aware that we face the same problems as many businesses post Covid, unable to backfill dedicated public health roles with appropriately competent and skilled officers to carry out food safety (and nuisance) work, although we have been successful in retaining 3 of the 4 previously recruited. We continue to find slippage in standards in businesses following the lockdown with many dropping a Food Hygiene Rating (FHRs) level and a few receiving Level 0-2 ratings resulting in several appeals. The understanding of allergen law continues to be an issue across all sectors. We also had an increase in demand for re-rating, perhaps showing the value that our food businesses now place on having a good FHRs score. This is a charged for service and the return visit can be delayed for up to three months if it is deemed necessary to provide sufficient evidence of improved compliance and confidence in management controls

In additional work we receive a steady flow of export certificate requests from two companies, Microferm and Dawn Foods, and the CEH team also continued to deliver the Worcestershire Works Well programme which is gradually undergoing reshaping in our post Covid era.

Operation Corona Fries

This project commenced during the first week of March 2021 and continued throughout quarter one and quarter two.

A team of Officers were tasked with inspecting targeted premises for food hygiene, health and safety, COVID control measures and Licensing compliance. The premises targeted were those food businesses with a food hygiene rating score of 2 and below, namely those not compliant under the Food Standard Agency's Food Hygiene Rating System. WRS Intelligence had identified a direct correlation between those poor performing food businesses and poor COVID control measures. There were approximately 35 premises at start of project, with additional premises being added as further intelligence was received. 41 inspections have been carried out to date.

Following the inspections various types of enforcement action have been taken, namely two red files opened for potential prosecutions, 21 Food Hygiene Improvement Notices served and 4 Health & Safety Improvement notices served.

Premises which were scored at Level zero to Level two (non-compliant businesses) were added to the Intelligence Database (IDB) for other Agencies including Trading Standards, Fire Service, and Immigration to action as they deem appropriate. The work to bring premises scoring less than Level 3 FHRS up to the standard of broadly compliant continues as a priority.

Licensing

The steady increase in enquiries and applications at the end of quarter one carried through into quarter two at a much faster pace in line with previous years prior to the pandemic. The changes made to Gov (online applications portal) centrally by government has had an impact on the processes of the team as now a high number of applications are requiring manual processing which has been a challenge and the team are working with partners to look at how we workaround this.

There has been a natural increase in TENs applications, Taxi queries and premises licence queries back to normal levels expected for this time of year.

The consultations for all districts in relation to the Statutory Taxis Standards continue with the implementation on track for 2022. WRS have used a number of channels to communicate to a wide range of stakeholders and look to go through all responses before final proposals are put presented to partners.

The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of a site to be a fit and proper person) Regulations 2020 guidance was published so the team have been busy putting together an application process and fee structure so applicants can now submit applications for determination to WRS.

The Pavement Licence regulations under the Business and Planning act 2020 was extended in the summer until September 2022 and partners agreed that the process will continue to run the same as it has done previously.

Animal Activity has started to plateau with officers now caught up with the backlog of inspections. The team have also noted a reduction in dog related complaints. The operation that the team have been working on over the last 6 months has now drawn to a close on the information gathering stages with the second phase of investigations now starting to commence.

Enforcement and Compliance activity has continued throughout the quarter with officers taking weekly visits across districts both during the day and evening/night time work concentrating on suspended licences, Taxi ranks and general observations of licences holders whether they are street traders, peddlers or premisses licence holders. There were just under 300 visits conducted across the districts through Q2 by the NTE team alone with a calling in of 138 Risk Assessments.

To complement the work WRS are doing as part of Covid funding projects we welcomed a new Communications Officer to the team who will be raising the profile of WRS and working across all of the districts to further integrate WRS comms with the objectives of partners going forward.

Page 97 Technical Services

IT Development

Quarter two has continued to be a very busy period. This has been largely because of the extra demands on our support services due to the unprecedented staff levels we now have in response to the COVID pandemic (COVID Advisors and Contact tracers). We have worked closely with our staff and host IT to help meet the additional requirements of equipment, software licences, training and support.

The start of the quarter saw the culmination of much work with the release of our website that has been built on a new content management system (CMS). Going forward this modern CMS has the potential to meet the growing and changing needs of our service.

Extensive preparation work has also gone into a series of upgrades and improvements to various areas of our back-office systems. This series of work should be completed before the end of quarter 3 and are designed to increase the resilience and efficiency of our back-office systems to support all aspects of the work our service undertakes.

COVID Advisors

Early in quarter two, the Government introduced Stage 4 of its roadmap. This lifted COVID restrictions on the 19th July, with no limits on how many people can meet or attend events, and face coverings only recommended in some spaces but not required by law. This obviously changed the focus of the COVID Advisors role, so they visited businesses across the County to discuss which of the restrictions they were keeping in place (if any) and to see if they required any further advice or support. As part of this, businesses were also asked if they had COVID Risk Assessments in place.

Early August saw the Advisors kept busy with assisting vaccination centres, including the one at Brickfields (Worcester) and Kidderminster Medical Centre walk-in. The vaccination pop up clinics have been a huge success with an uptake of 1300 in Worcester and 400 in Kidderminster. Covid Advisors have received a lot of praise for this. Further assistance was provided at vaccination centres through September including Redditch, Worcester and Evesham pop-ups. With children returning to schools, and the requirement to complete lateral flow tests for pupils, Advisors assisted schools with completing this task. A total of 495 newly registered food businesses were supported by Advisors to ensure they had appropriate controls in place and 30 clinically extremely vulnerable residents have been visited to provide support as required during this period.

Contact Tracing

We have seen a steady increase in positive cases requiring tracing throughout the second quarter, although over the past week there does seem to have been a slight decrease. We continue to undertake Lost to Follow Up work for half the County with Local-4 being in place for the other half (which is where we undertake the all the calls for those Districts rather than National NHS doing it). Across the County we are successfully tracing around 80% of cases. For 10% of cases we have been able to reach them but for varying reasons have not been able to fully complete the tracing call, examples of why this may be is the individual refusing to engage or inability to successfully identify all contacts, this is particularly relevant in school aged children. The remaining 10% we have not been able to successfully reach despite phone calls, emails and visits being undertaken.

Dog Wardens

The second quarter has remained steady, with the service having received contact in relation to 320 dog related matters; including enquiries for assistance or advice and complaints. We were successful in reuniting 202 dogs with their owners, and rehoming 44 with recognised animal rehoming charities. Unfortunately 2 dogs were found deceased. In the region of 60% of dogs collected were without the correct microchip details. In addition we have looked after two client dogs for owners who have had an extended stay in hospital, we have also re-homed another client dog for an owner who agreed to handover the dog as they were struggling to provide the appropriate environment and care for their dog.

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.

Community Environmental Health

The final quarter of the year saw the Community Environmental Health team very busy across all sectors of work.

We moved from food businesses operating under Covid restrictions to a fully open sector and national FSA Recovery Programme to catch up on inspections missed during lockdowns. This programme runs to end of March 2023 with a series of milestones being monitored by the FSA. By the end of Q4 your Officers had carried out some 3,230 interventions across all Districts.

A remote food safety/Covid 19 video inspection was conducted of HSH cold store in Redditch in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency, DEFRA, and Chinese customs officials regarding the proposed export of fishery products.

A Malvern food business owner appeared on Gordon Ramsey's "Future Food Stars" show on BBC TV. WRS Officers provided food hygiene assistance in the production of the ready meals and sauces which Gordon was very enthusiastic about.

Sampling is one of the tools available to check whether food safety management practices are working, and the team completed its sampling programme which saw more than 350 food samples being taken throughout the year. The number of unsatisfactory samples was higher than we had previously experienced, so advice and revisits followed to ensure an improvement in standards.

In nuisance, Officers liaised with the site manager of a construction site in Redditch to achieve a reduction in noise for residents, issued a simple caution to a resident in Worcester in respect of a long running and complex dog barking case, brought closure to a noise problem arising from a fan at a local hospital and an investigation into a noisy cockerel made the national news with coverage in The Sun newspaper. Injunction conditions at Grimley Raceway were checked for the coming season on behalf of Malvern Hills District Council and Officers ensured the implementation of an undertaking given as an alternative to prosecution for a breach of a noise abatement notice for Wychavon District Council.

Officers undertook fatal accident investigations at retail premises in both Worcester and Kidderminster, and there is an ongoing complex health and safety investigation following an event in Worcester. Other investigations include a near miss where a six axle forty-four tonne tipper lorry overturned at a golf club and a serious accident at a tool hire/sales/repair company.

The team continue to monitor events, working with organisers to ensure that they are properly managed, meet legal requirements and run smoothly, safely and without causing unnecessary disturbance. These have included the Three Shires Car Rally, Light Night, Mello and Upton Folk Festivals, a Passion Play in Worcester which included checking the risk assessment for a mock crucifixion and events planned for the Three Counties Showground.

Your Officers also provide by contract the Safety at Sports Grounds function for Worcestershire County Council which has included working with Worcester Warriors Rugby Club, Bromsgrove Sporting and Kidderminster Harriers Football Clubs (the latter during their FA Cup run and televised match at home to a Premier League club) and Worcester Racecourse.

The Local Outbreak Response Team gradually moved out of ensuring legal compliance to an advisory role, continuing to provide support for sporadic outbreaks and infection control planning in care settings. A positive outcome has been the strengthening of links with the Public Health Team which we are continuing to build on.

Licensing

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Taxis

Implementation of the taxi standards continue with work now being moved to looking at finding a training provider for the competency certificate now all district consultations are complete. HC fare increase reports have been through all districts committee processes or equivalent with consultations and implementation underway. It has been a number of years since these were last reviewed and in future these will be reviewed more regularly. In Worcester City officers have been consulting on a new evening HC rank implementation in Cathedral square and consultation with the County Council continues on this matter.

Enforcement

The team have continued to undertake enforcement activity and to ensure driver and passenger safety, spot checks have been carried out by the team across the county. A number of checks revealed safety issues with licensed vehicles including defective tyres, leaking brakes, and fuel leaks. In some cases, licences have been suspended where vehicles have not been maintained to a safe standard. Action can also be taken against the driver of the vehicle and its proprietor. A recent case saw a taxi driver's licence being revoked when their vehicle was subject to a spot check and found to have two tyres in a dangerous condition, with one tyre worn to the extent the tyre cord was exposed.

The quick action of officers and increased presence has had a promising effect. An inspection carried out in March at the Worcester Warriors ground highlighted few faults and most drivers were complying with the high standards WRS expect. The checks will continue throughout the year to ensure drivers and passengers are travelling safely.

Another example of increased enforcement this quarter is where a business in Bromsgrove has had its licence to sell alcohol revoked by Sub-Committee due to illicit sales and failure to comply with the conditions of the licence. The business was investigated by the Worcestershire Trading Standards Team. They had uncovered, along with illegal tobacco and cigarettes, that the business was also selling age-restricted products to underage members of the public. Following this, Licensing Officers investigated the premises and uncovered that the business was not complying with the conditions of their licence to sell alcohol.

Other Licensing

Street trading enforcement has been a focus for the team this quarter with officers undertaking compliance and enforcement checks on existing and possible illegal street traders. The learning from this will move towards doing the same with the Animal Licensing work in the forthcoming months reinforcing the work from Operation Lisbon.

Expertise within the team has attracted the request for officers to present at regional meetings with Principal officers presenting at the OPSS “Meet the Regulators” event – on behalf of the West Midlands region and secondly at the Institute of Licensing Regional meeting presenting at the West Midlands regional meeting on Taxi’s and Tax conditionally. The team as a whole have been uptaking various training including investigative training and Animal Activity Inspection training.

Temporary Funded Projects

Night Time Economy (NTE) visits have continued across all districts. Officers undertaking visits have continued both evening and weekend NTE compliance and enforcement visits on Alcohol Licensed premises, late night refreshment premises and taxis. Alongside this work the officers are also working on caravan inspections for Wychavon District Council and Worcester City, looking at suspended licences and enforcement activities for street trading and Animal activity.

Communication and engagement with businesses, licensees and the public has increased through WRS communication channels with the recruitment of a communications officer and the impact of this is being assessed through internal projects.

Technical Services

Planning Enforcement

The newly established planning enforcement team are investigating suspected breaches of planning control on behalf of Redditch, Bromsgrove, Wychavon and Malvern District Councils.

Members of the team are currently undertaking training which could lead to a nationally recognised qualification upon completion. We hope the knowledge and skills developed will support the effective delivery of planning enforcement across the county.

Since mid-March the team have carried out 34 site visits. Jobs have varied in scale from evaluating householder extensions and boundary treatments to visiting larger commercial sites and assessing the extent of alleged unauthorised expansion.

The team are working in partnership with the Local Authorities to ensure appropriate enforcement tools are used to achieve successful outcomes.

Dog Wardens

The fourth quarter has remained steady, contact was received in relation to over 230 dogs of which 107 were kennelled by WRS. Sadly one dog had to be put to sleep having made every effort including an emergency operation to try and save him. 2 dogs were found deceased. There were 2 welfare dogs, one of which had to have his leg amputated but went on to charity for rehabilitation. WRS successfully reunited 57 dogs with their owners and 46 were rehomed with charities. WRS are continuing to look after one client dog who has been with us since February as well as a client cat for an owner in hospital.

In April 2021 we were looking after a dog for a client who has gone into hospital and then into a care home. Jordy was with us for the best part of a year but in March 2022 we successfully placed Jordy with a great Scotty Rescue charity, he is doing unbelievably well, and the foster family send regular photos and videos to our dog wardens. Such good news after spending such a long time in the kennels!

COVID Advisors and Contact Tracing

Early in Q4 COVID advisor activities mainly focused on assisting the Contract Tracing team with home visits and the Here 2 Help team with visits to the clinically extremely vulnerable. In January and February this was keeping the COVID advisors busy 95% of the time with a total 2,219 Lost to follow up letters delivered, and 125 Clinically extremely vulnerable persons visited. Additionally, COVID advisors assisted on 4 Vaccine pop up clinics over 6 days in Worcester, Redditch and Kidderminster.

The Contract Tracing guidance was withdrawn on 24th February which ceased all home visits, that same week there was severe floods in Bewdley and Worcester which COVID advisors assisted with door knocks to local residences and businesses providing information and guidance, this work was carried out over the course of two weeks. COVID advisor's total hours of flood engagement was 247 hours (137 hours for Wyre Forest and 110 hours for Worcester). Throughout March COVID advisors undertook re-training on Food Hygiene and Nuisance work to support the wider team to help support the wider WRS team with COVID recovery work and decrease some of the COVID related backlog.

Air Quality

The beginning of 2022 saw the implementations of the Environment Act 2021. Notwithstanding the creation of the Office of Environmental protection (OEP) the new legislation also introduced changes to the air quality management regime. These relate to the delivery of air quality action plans and the requirement for improvements to be secured by set out timescales. Other obligation now applies to 'air quality partners' who must jointly deliver such plans within set. Officers over the forthcoming year will be seeking the participation of department such as County Highways to form a team to develop all future air quality action plans.

Worcester City

Following the City-wide declaration as an air quality management area the return to normal traffic volumes post Covid-19 has enabled officers to resume work on the City's source apportionment assessment. This is a study that identifies the reduction level of vehicles required to bring air quality within acceptable concentrations within key hot spots across the city. It is anticipated that the report will be finalised in Q1 and presented to the Council for its consideration. The Source apportionment will also pave way for the next stage of work which is the action planning process.

Pychavon

Officers have been finalising the Contract to install a permanent air quality monitoring station in Wychbold following borderline air quality levels being identified over successive years. This system will provide important information on PM10 pollution and greatly enhance our understanding of air quality impact around the village. It will also provide us with real-time information when poor air quality episodes take place allowing us to provide the public with local air quality information in real-time. It is anticipated that the contact will go out to bidders in Q1.

Wyre Forest

February saw the installation of the first multi gas air monitoring station using new electrochemical measuring technologies which is a first for the County. The system is manufactured and supplied by Northamptonshire based company Earthsense and has gained critical acclaim through the air monitoring industry for its design. The system's purchase has been facilitated by S.106 funding as part of the wider Churchfields regeneration Project. The data harvested to date is proving to be a valuable source of not only Nitrogen Dioxide data but also PM10 and PM2.5. The information will inform us over time as to whether the roadworks has made the necessary improvements to reduce air quality exceedances of the government objective in the area.

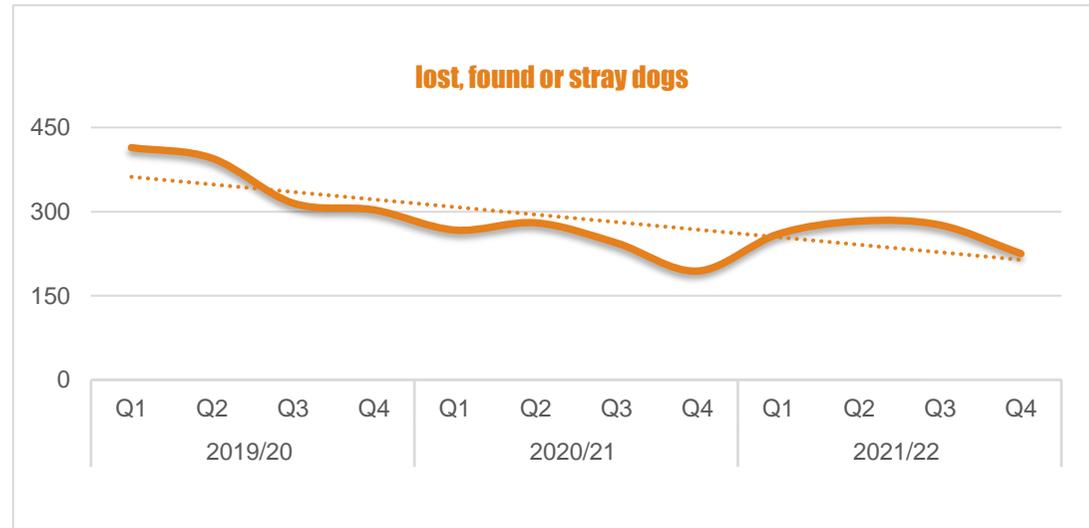
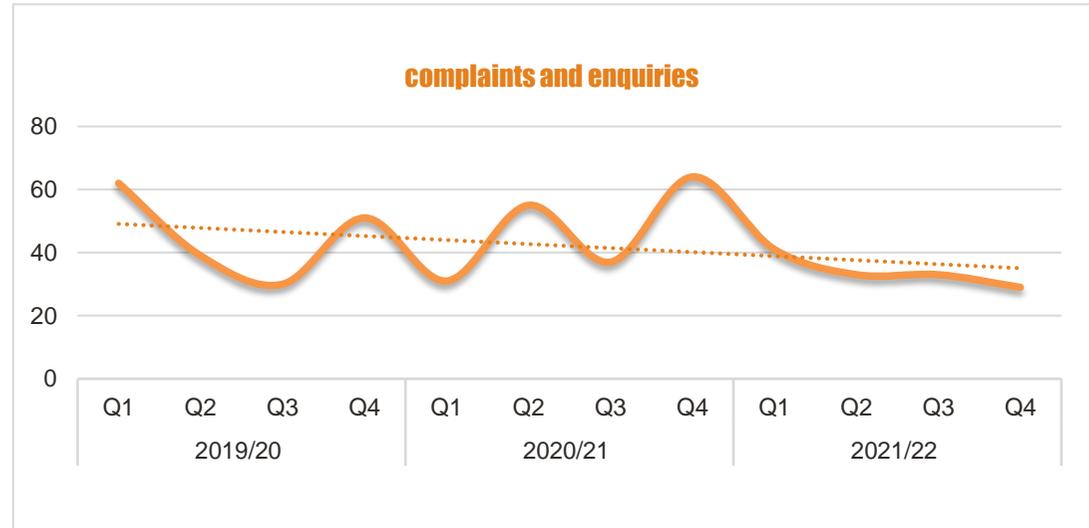
Contaminated Land

No significant updates to report.

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 the year is an increase of 6% compared to 2020/21, but a reduction of 27% compared to 2019/20. Approximately two thirds of cases related to 'contained' stray dogs; which means that a dog was found and held by, for example, a member of the public. Approximately 72% of contained strays were reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities.

In general terms, WRS receives a low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 81 complaints recorded during the year, 36 related to fouling and persistent straying, 30 related to dangerous dogs, and 15 related to welfare concerns.



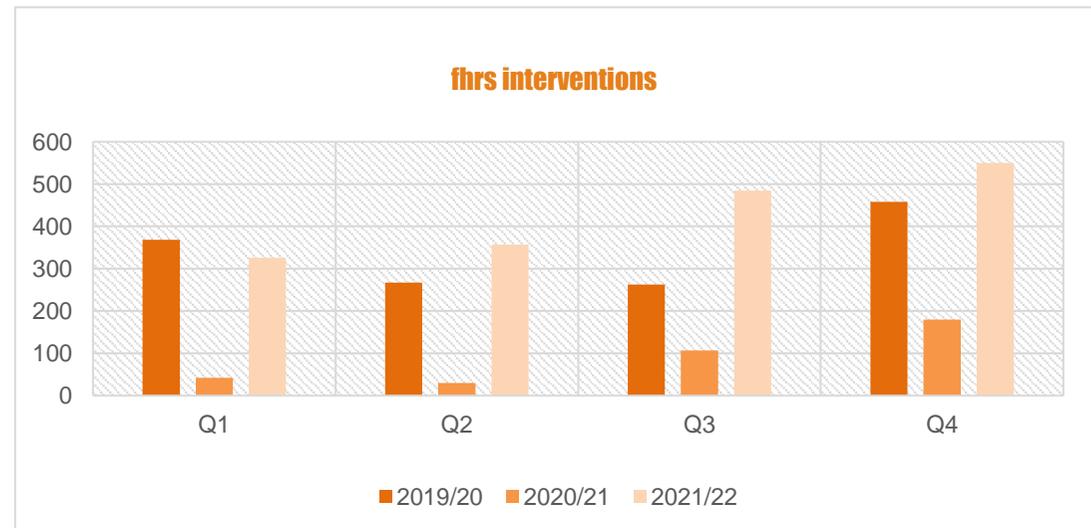
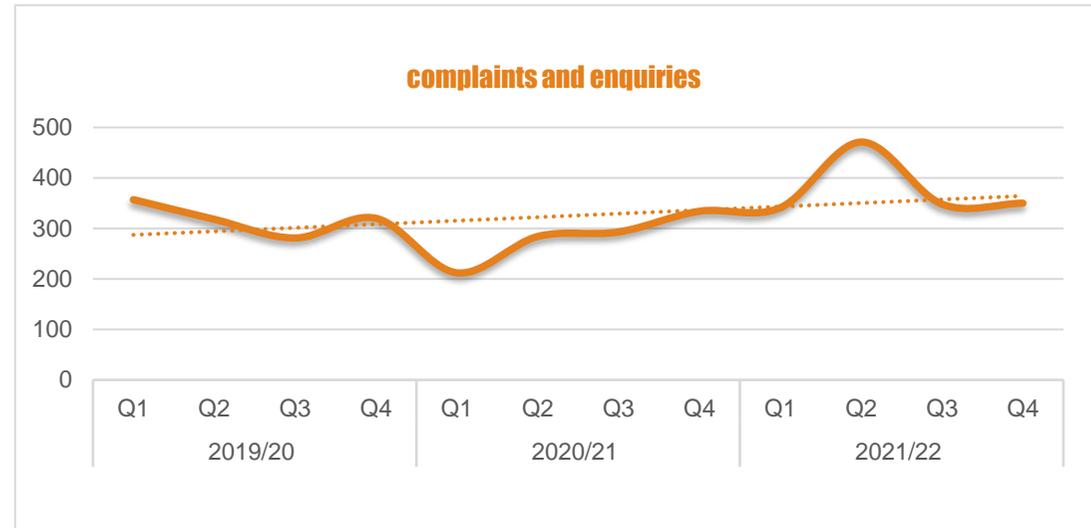
The technical services team successfully completed our inspection programme for 2021-22 in late February and all subsistence instructions were supplied to the partners by the agreed dates of mid-March. DEFRA have also determined that there would be no increase in subsistence fees again for 2022-23.

Officers are continuing their investigation into the alloy wheel refurbishment industry. As an emerging business sector, it is largely unaware of the regulation around the chemicals they use. WRS are currently undertaking work to identify operators in this sector and to advise them on the environmental control and compliance requirements for the substances they use and where necessary recommend alternative use chemicals and processing methods. Two companies have already made changes to their processes on our recommendations and are using less harmful substances as a consequence in the Wychavon district.

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 the year is an increase of 34% compared to 2020/21, and an increase of 18% compared to 2019/20. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or export health certificates. Based on the 642 complaints recorded, 83% related to issues with products purchased from food businesses, whilst 17% related to poor hygiene standards and practices.

Of the 1,718 interventions conducted businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 85 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately 82% of these ratings were issued to hospitality businesses, with a third issued specifically to takeaways.



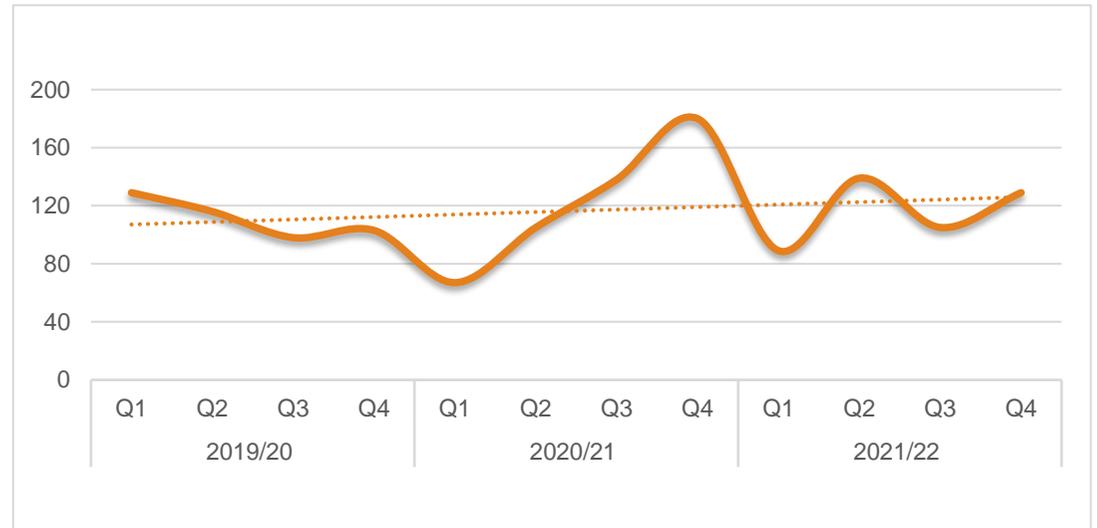
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to health and safety at work. This includes requests for business advice. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of notifications received by WRS relating to accidents.

The number of health and safety cases recorded by WRS during the year is an increase of 26% compared to 2020/21, and an increase of 20% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 46% of cases were reports of accidents, with 35% 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 small number of dangerous occurrence. Slips, trips, and falls continues to be the prominent cause of accidents.



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.

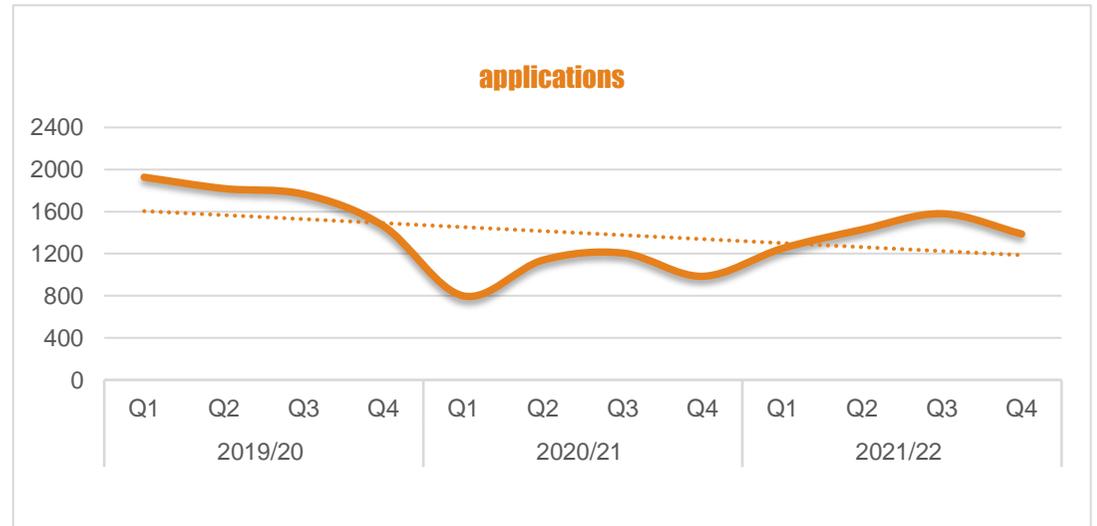
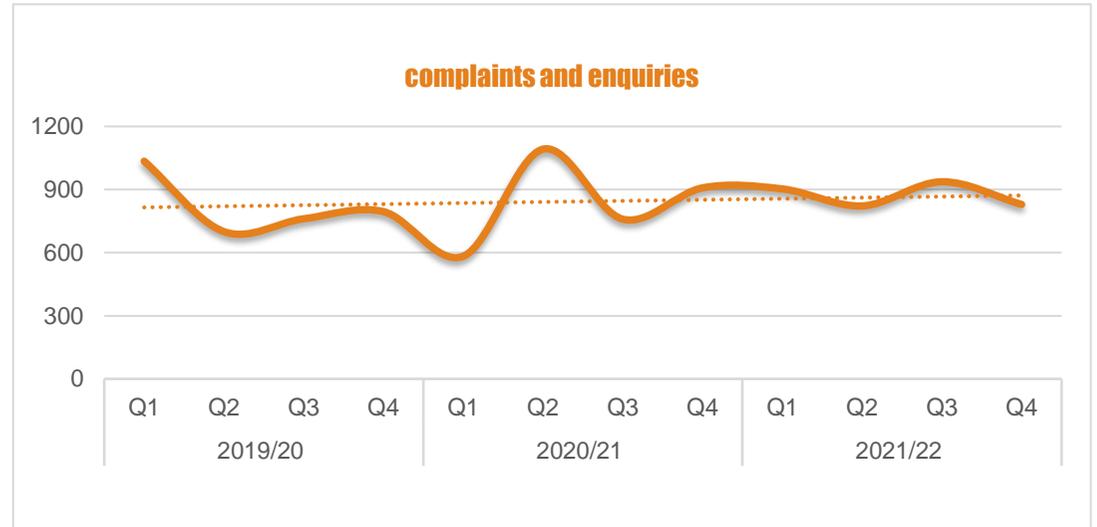
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

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

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The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year is an increase of 22% compared to 2020/21, but a reduction of 11% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 62% of cases were applications and registrations; with 29% relating to taxi vehicle licences, 20% relating to temporary events, and 19% relating to taxi driver licences.

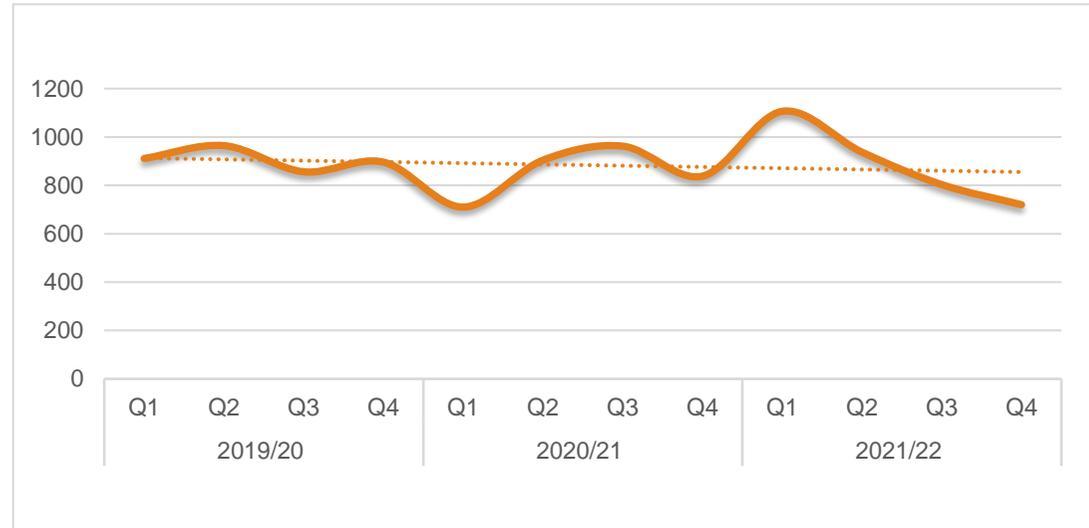
In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed or unlicensed activity. Based on the 466 complaints recorded during the year, 36% related to taxi licensing, 20% related to alcohol licensing, and 18% related to animal licensing.



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;

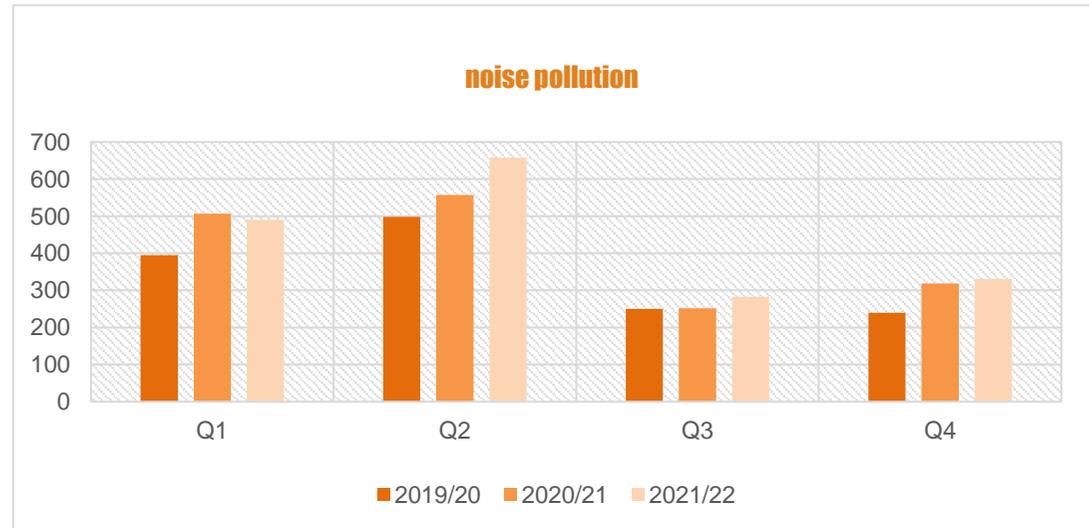
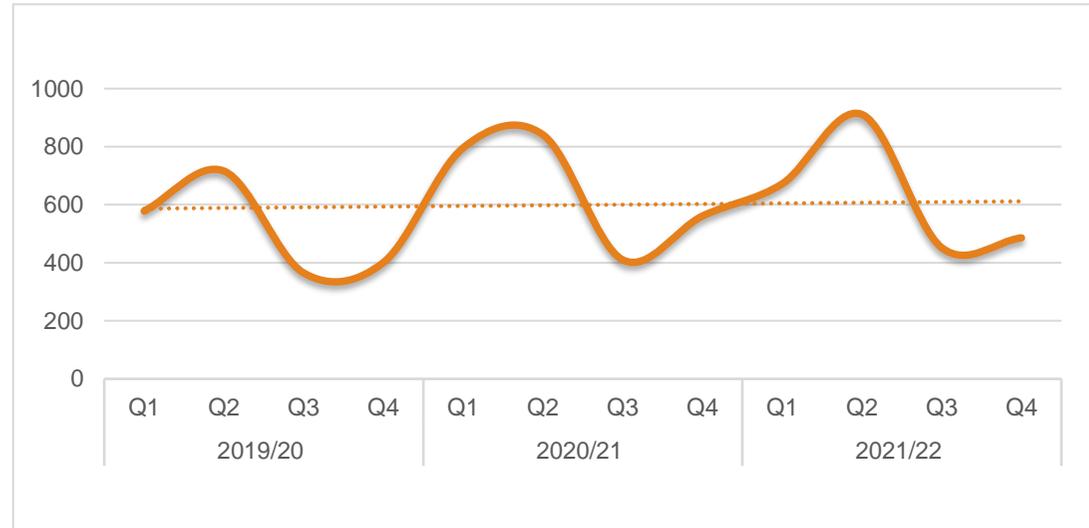
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental Permitting
- Food
- Health and Safety
- Nuisance / Noise
- Private Water Supplies



The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year is an increase of 4% compared to 2020/21, but a reduction of 2% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 91% of enquiries were consultations, whilst 48% related 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.

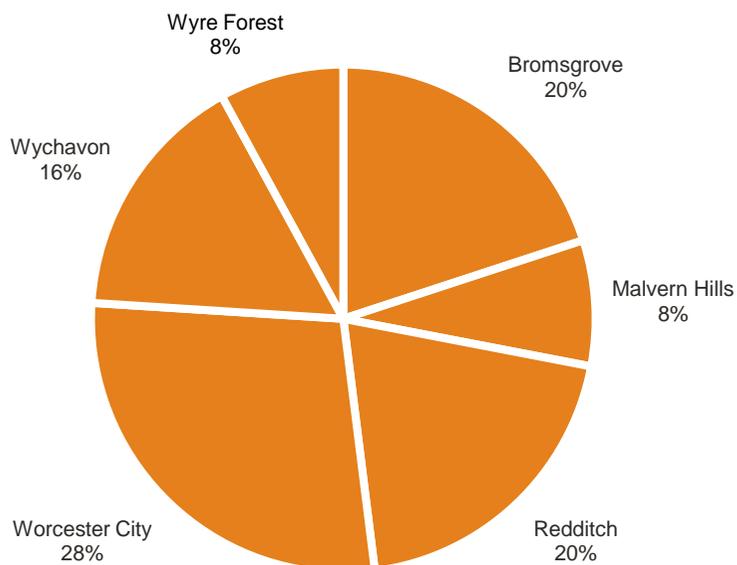
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year is a reduction of 3% compared to 202/21, but an increase of 22% compared to 2019/20. Case totals, however, were broadly consistent with seasonal variations. Approximately 70% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as from dog barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 14% of cases related to smoke nuisances and issues such as 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.

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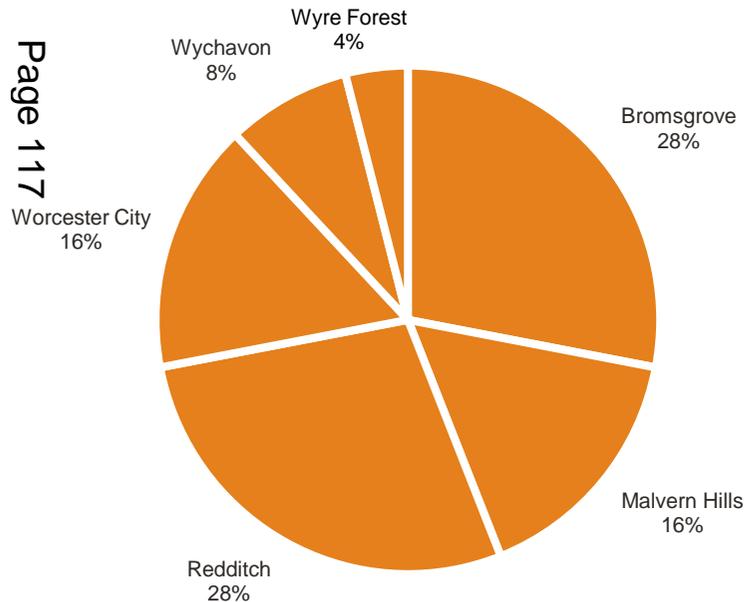
Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Eckington	22	2,669	8.24
Sanders Park	22	3,651	6.03
Norton	20	3,707	5.40
Marlbrook	14	2,890	4.84
Bedwardine	36	8,167	4.41
Harvington And Norton	12	2,756	4.35
Pinvin	13	3,105	4.19
Arboretum	25	6,233	4.01
Batchley And Brockhill	34	8,783	3.87
Rainbow Hill	21	5,511	3.81
Cathedral	43	11,763	3.66
Greenlands	33	9,329	3.54
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw	28	8,295	3.38
Perryfields	5	1,501	3.33
Winyates	27	8,184	3.30
Claines	26	8,076	3.22
Warndon	18	5,669	3.18
Link	20	6,438	3.11
Drakes Broughton	8	2,577	3.10
Church Hill	25	8,062	3.10
Avoncroft	10	3,300	3.03
Mitton	30	10,047	2.99
Gorse Hill	17	5,839	2.91
Wyre Forest Rural	26	9,106	2.86
Priory	13	4,636	2.80

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Agenda Item 8

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.

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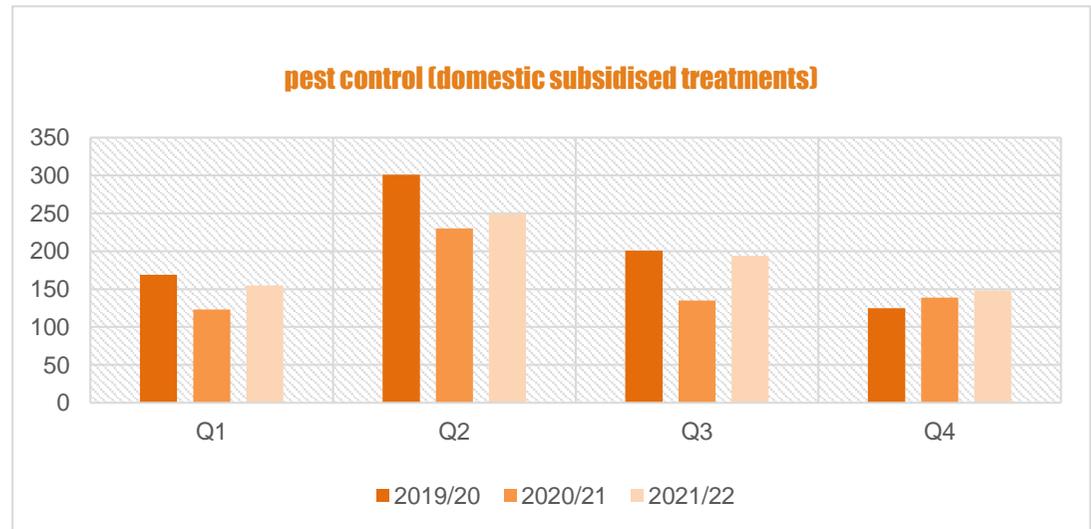
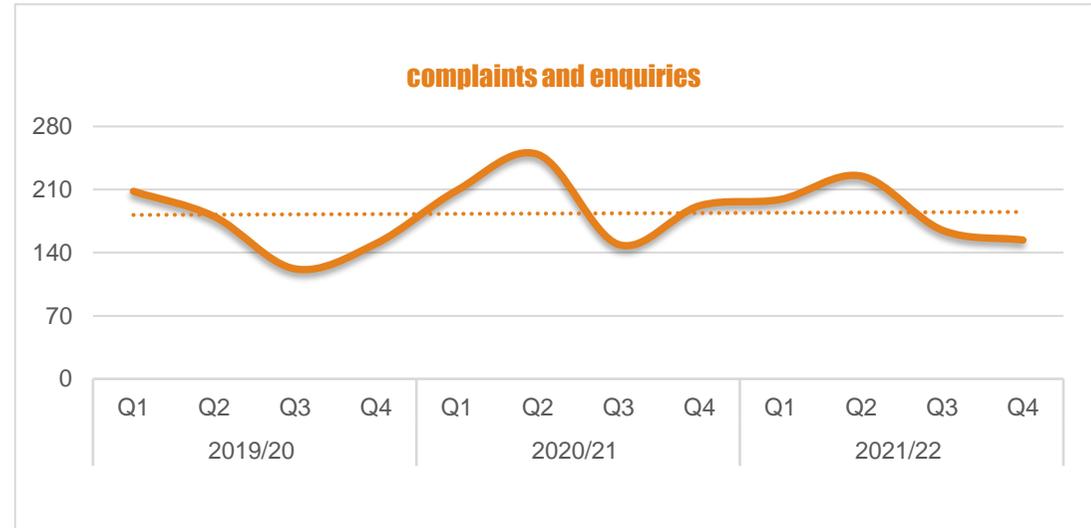


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Wribbenhall And Arley	34	5,444	6.25
Perryfields	8	1,501	5.33
Abbey	31	6,620	4.68
Norton	17	3,707	4.59
Avoncroft	15	3,300	4.55
Lowes Hill	13	2,903	4.48
Warndon	25	5,669	4.41
Sanders Park	16	3,651	4.38
Charford	15	3,665	4.09
Central (Redditch)	28	6,844	4.09
Rubery South	12	2,984	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

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.

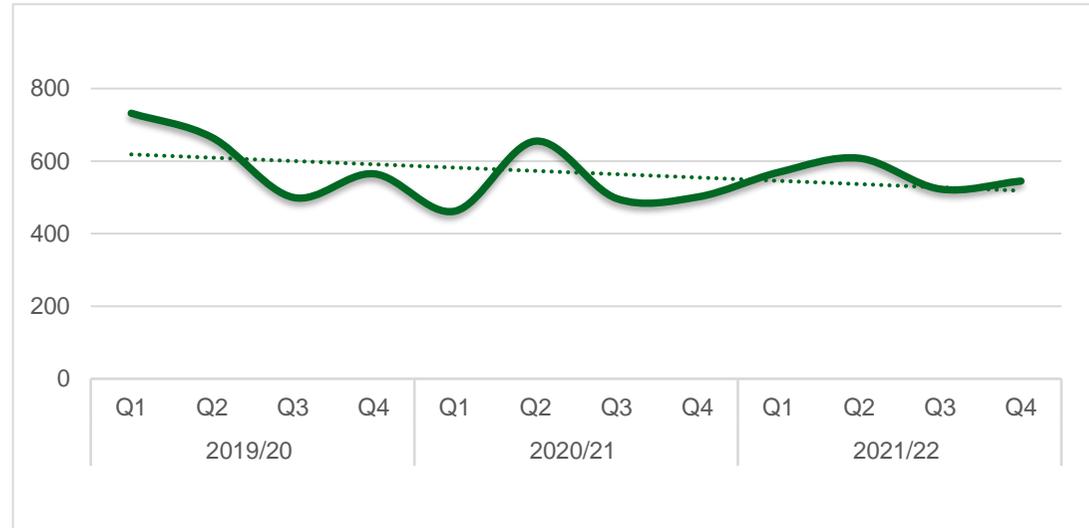
The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during the year is a reduction of 7% compared to 2020/21, but an increase of 13% compared to 2019/20. Approximately 61% of cases related to pest control; whether enquiries about domestic treatments and sewer cleaning, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the activity of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 25% of cases were complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 756 domestic treatments undertaken during the year, approximately 55% were due to issues with rats, 22% were due to issues with wasps, and 60% were due to pests at properties in the Wychavon and Redditch districts.

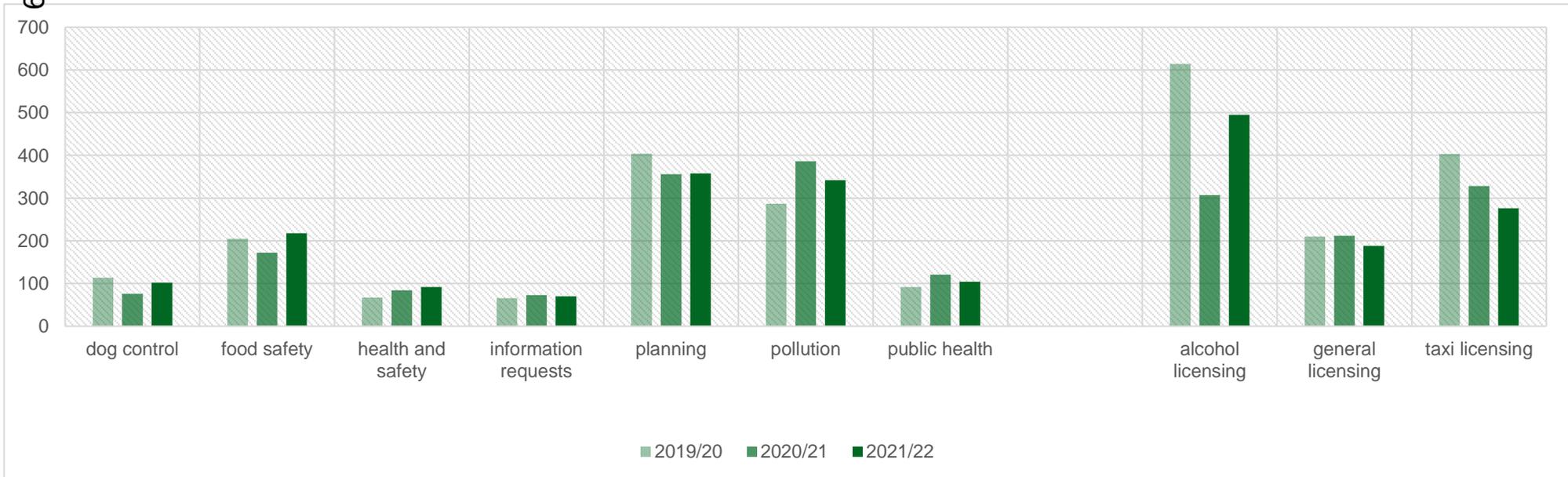


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Bromsgrove district.

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.



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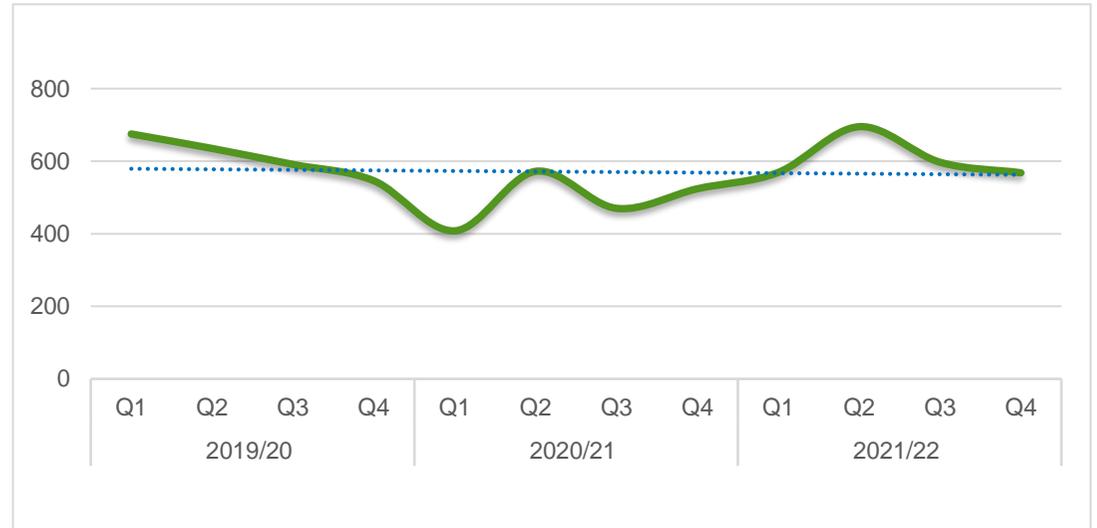


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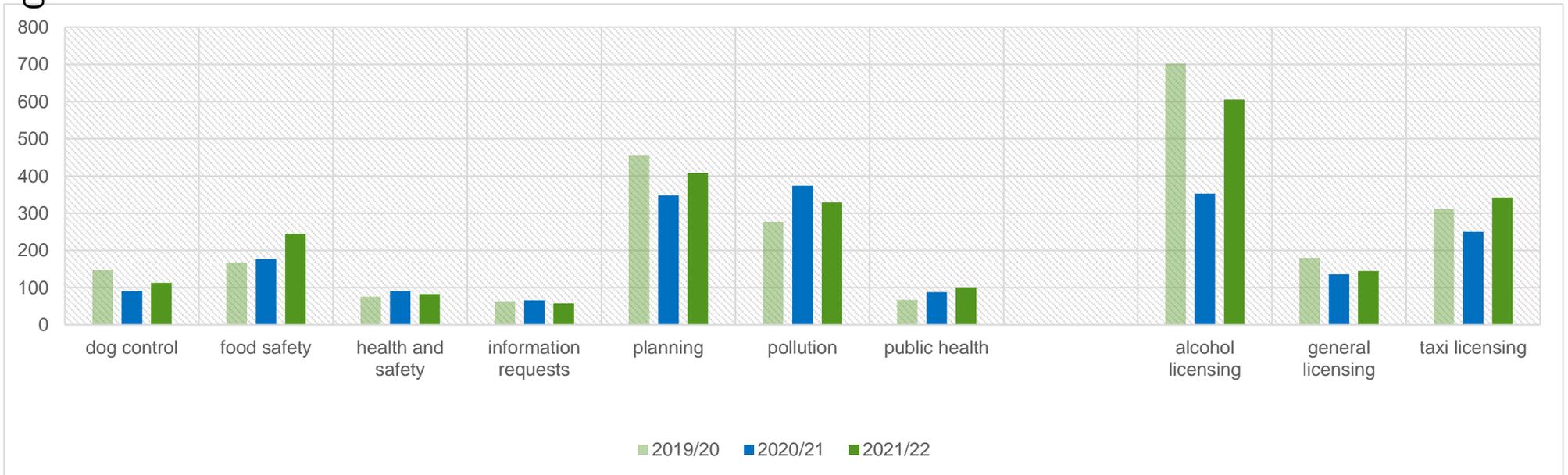
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The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Malvern Hills district.

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.



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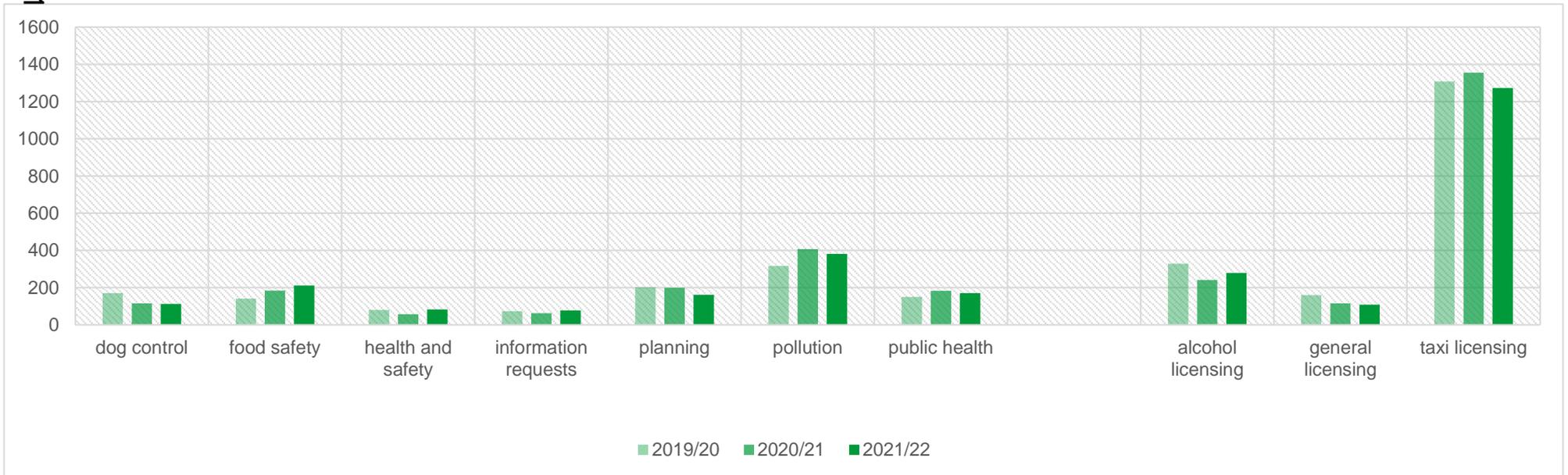
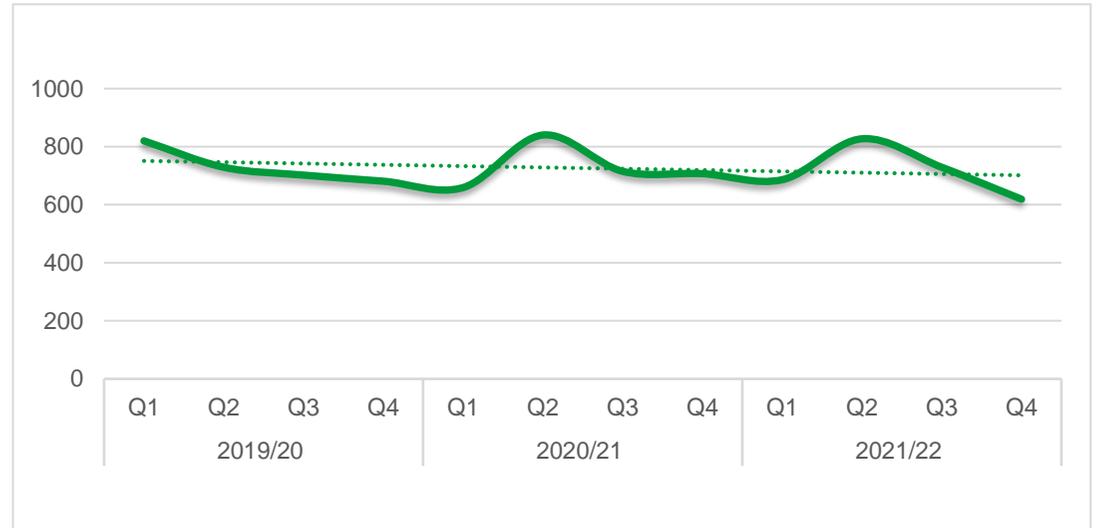


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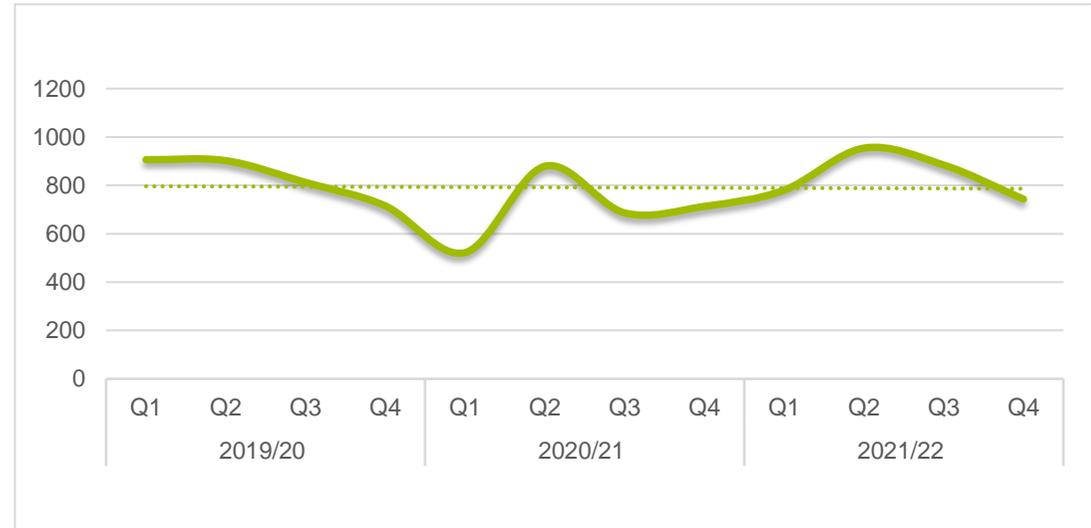
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Redditch district.

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.

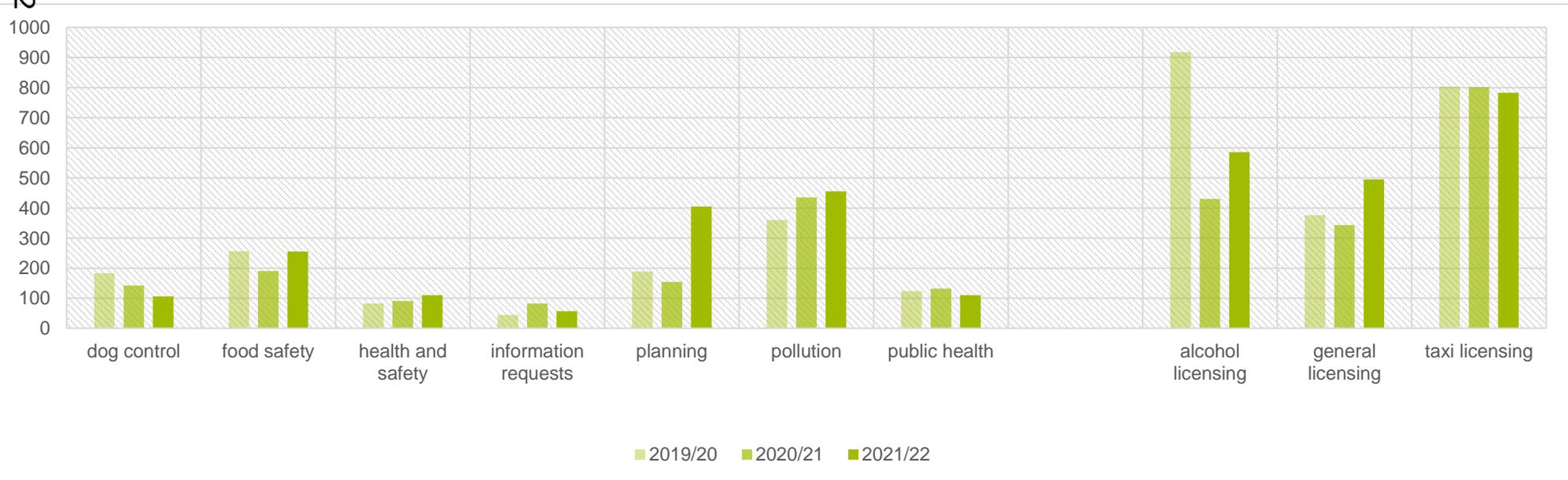


The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Worcester City district.

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.



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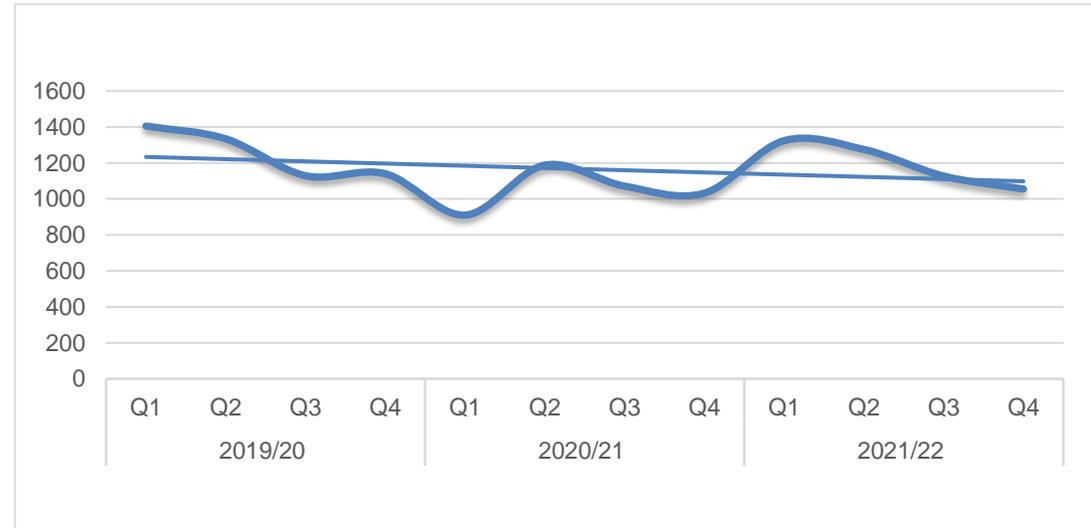


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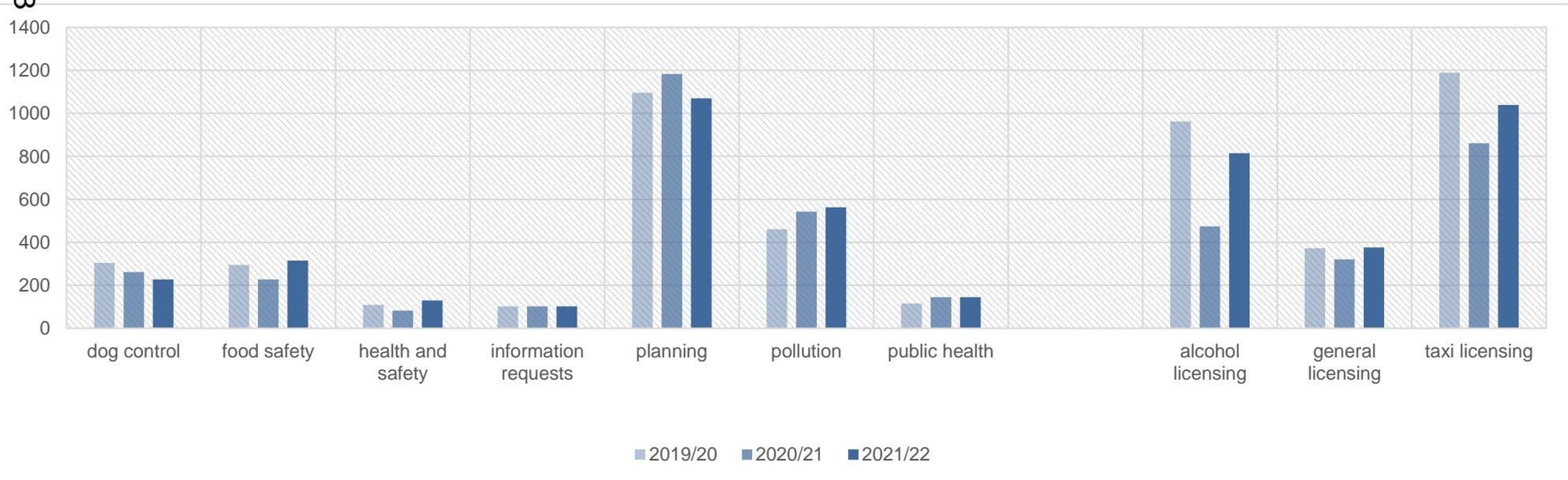
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The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wychavon district.

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.



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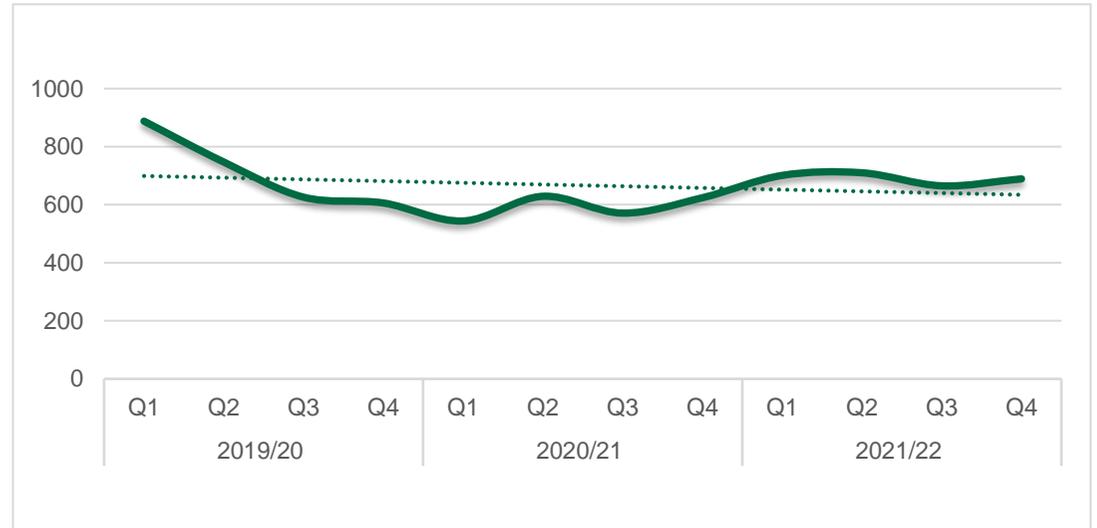


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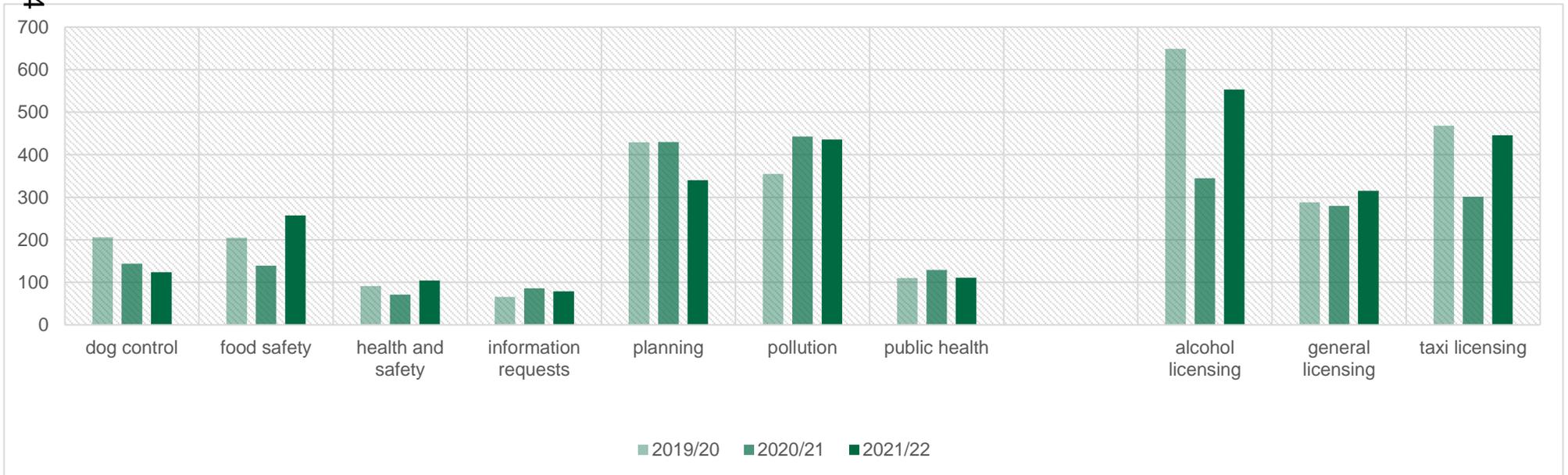
Agenda Item 8

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.



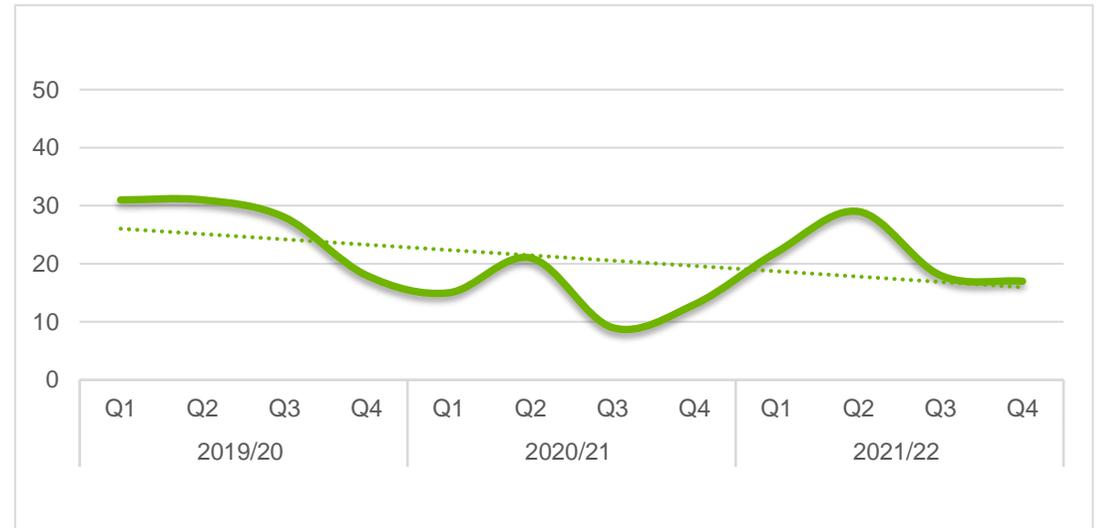
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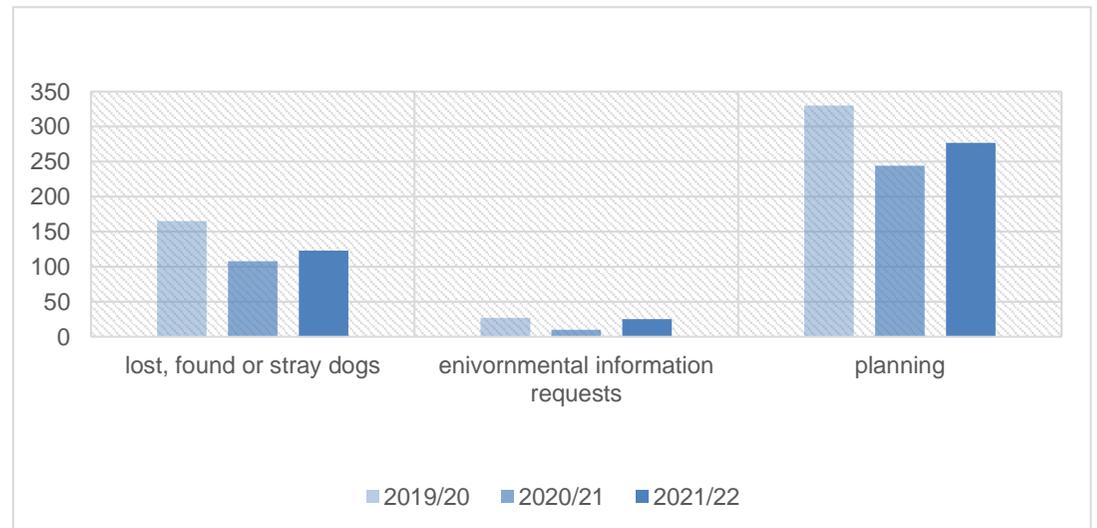
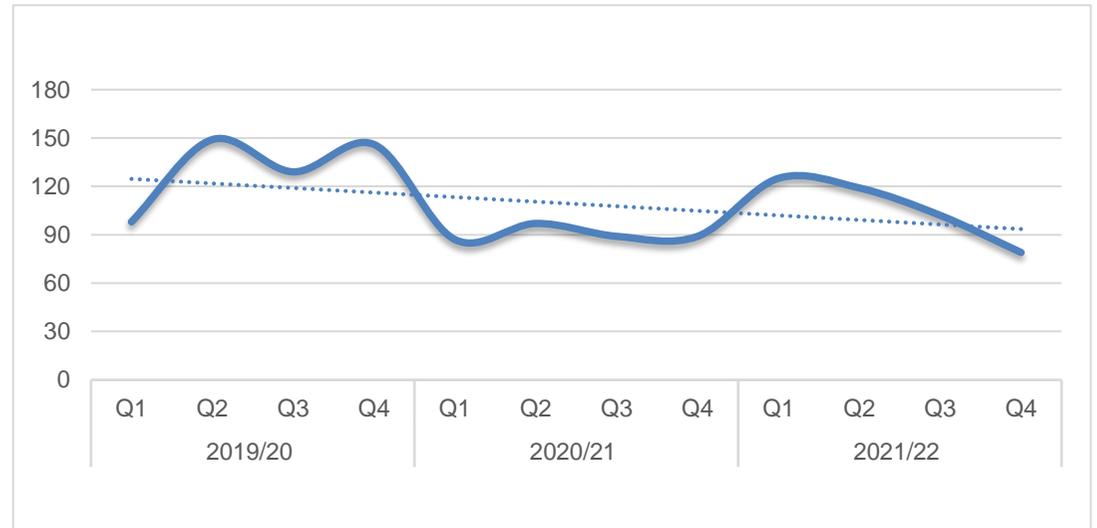
The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing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



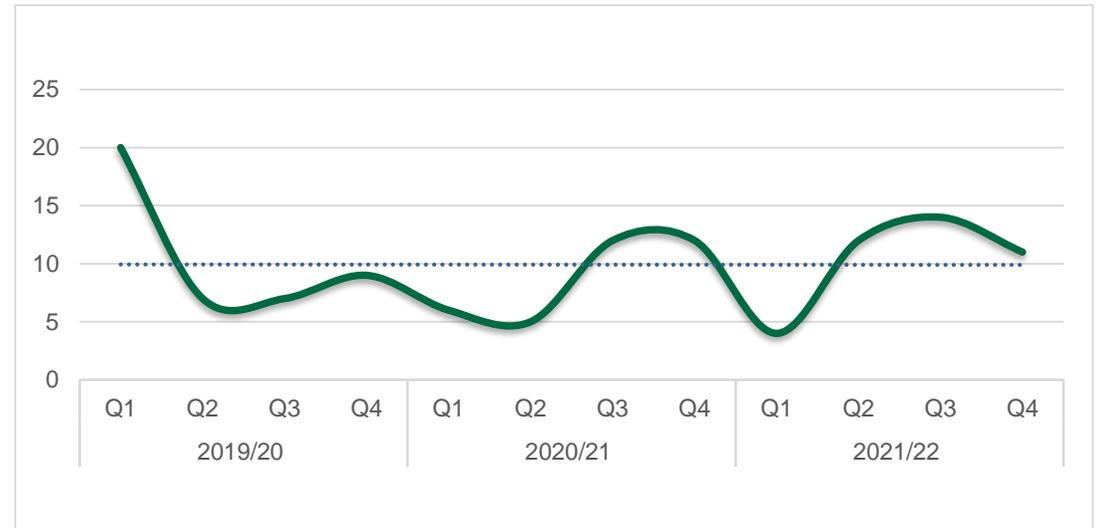
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The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently 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 new dogs available.

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

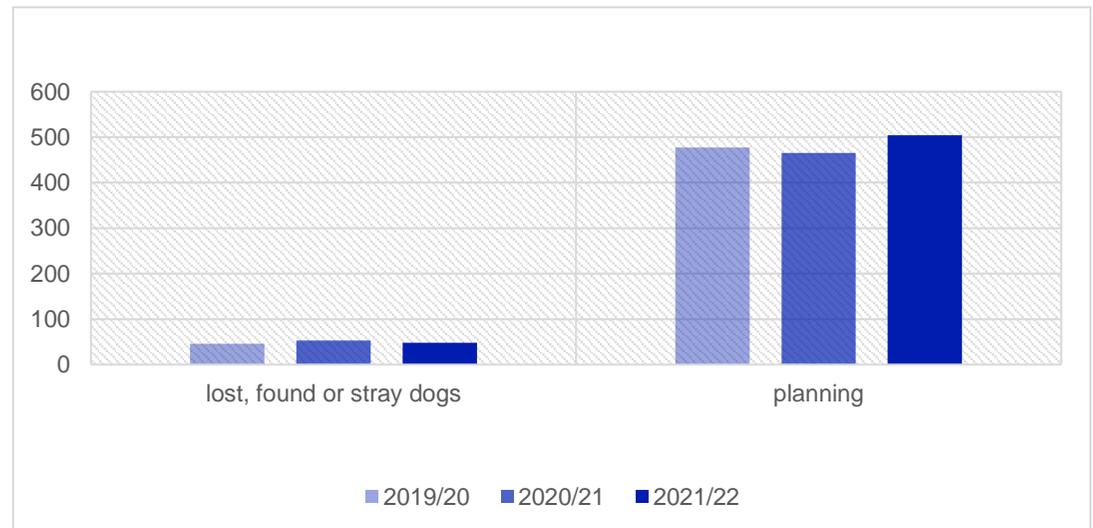
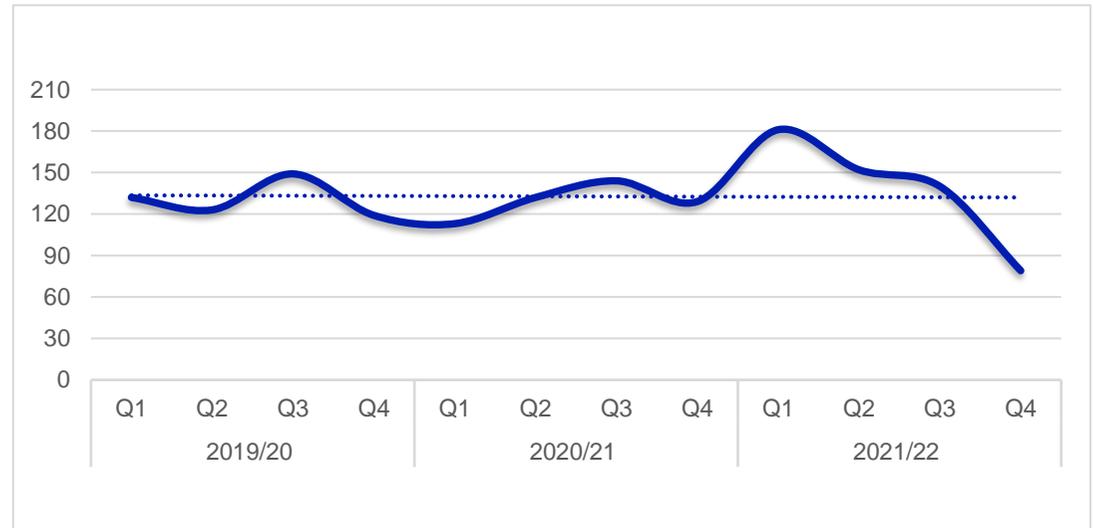


South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex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



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

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



Worcestershire
Regulatory Services
Supporting and protecting you

WRS Board: 23rd June 2022

Information Report on the work of the Night-Time Economy Team

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
Background	<p>Through the stages of the Prime Ministers Roadmap to recovery during the Covid 19 pandemic, the Night-Time Economy (NTE) has been under a great deal of scrutiny. Concerns from Public Health bodies around people's tendency to adhere less to social distancing and other behaviours that could limit the spread of disease following the consumption of alcohol meant that frequent checks were undertaken at pubs and similar premises to ensure that the various controls remained in place. Much of this work was done by dedicated officers working alongside colleagues from West Mercia Police.</p> <p>Since the lifting of all Covid 19 restrictions, with funding for work still committed, the officers originally tasked with this work have turned their hands to dealing with a range of other issues that can arise in the NTE. Whilst the approach taken can deal reactively with complaints, the main activity undertaken was proactive visits to businesses where non-compliance was suspected due to intelligence from various sources. Tasking decisions on where to deploy were informed by robust intelligence drawn from a wide variety of available sources, both internal and external, tested by our Intelligence officer and logged in our Intelligence system. This has enabled officers to focus resources and visits to the areas where the intelligence picture was indicating there may be issues. The hospitality sector is an important part of Worcestershire's economy, and this work has allowed the team to target non-compliance but also to support local businesses to achieve this in a way that limits cost, aiding in the post pandemic economic recovery.</p>
Report	<p>The NTE Teams visible presence alone, out of office hours, has been delivering a message that the district councils take their responsibilities seriously in dealing with issues that arise in the sector. The focus of the NTE team has been ensuring that licensing objectives are upheld by premises, however, the flexibility shown by the officers we have recruited has allowed us to direct them to a much broader supporting role as part of WRS,</p>

WRS Board June 2022

with the team also currently undertaking the following activities:

- **Monitoring of taxi licensing activities**

Including checking taxi ranks and providing on the spot advice. By having a presence, active monitoring of requirements like wearing of ID badges and correct display of plate, visual checks of tyres and other issues that might suggest unroadworthiness, to ensure safety for residents and visitors alike.

- **Licensing Enforcement Activities including Suspended Licences**

When licences have been suspended some businesses continue to trade so officers have been out ensuring that this is not occurring but where it does that the WRS licensing enforcement policy is deployed appropriately. Some of these visits have taken place jointly with trading standards colleagues to undertake test purchasing exercises.

- **Noise checks**

Officers have been trained and are capable of delivering basic noise checks to ensure pubs and other commercial premises are upholding the licensing objectives. They can undertake observations of domestic noise complaints to see if deploying a qualified EHO to determine a statutory nuisance may be necessary, with this being done out of hours, at the sensitive times when it is sometimes most needed. This can negate the need for other officers to visit, for example where the noise is not likely to meet the threshold for statutory nuisance, even though it may be an annoyance to some.

- **Simple food hygiene checks**

These are also undertaken at all relevant premises visited. These are treated as pre-inspection checks, with serious issues being highlighted to the Community Environmental Health (CEH) team for them to send someone out to address major problems quickly. It also saves the CEH team and the business time by ensuring that all the required paperwork is in place before the formal inspection visit occurs. Prior to their visit, the NTE team also check the correct food rating stars awarded to the business, comparing this with what is displayed at the time of their visit. This ensures that the public are not misled when making choices at the point of entry to a business.

Proactive visits to premises and investigating complaints has been the bread-and-butter work of the team and, by driving these activities via the intelligence picture, it has allowed WRS to focus its stretched resources on those key issues. To give members an idea of the volume of work undertaken, the table in appendix 1 lists the numbers of visits recently undertake in various parts of the county. Some premises will have been visited on several occasions to check compliance issues.

The NTE team's interventions have been important in raising awareness of legal

requirements with businesses and supported the consistency of behaviours within our NTE remit. They have also taken on everything from animal boarding establishment checks to addressing problematic ice cream vendors in their day-to-day duties away from the NTE.

The information gathered by the team has been fed back internally, with intelligence reports generated, and disseminated to partners where relevant. This approach has helped us to conclude that we need a cross cutting priority to focus resource on this important economic area and highlighted the need for a cross team problem-solving approach that will sometimes lead to multi-agency action being required. The work of the team has also improved communications with the Worcester Bid, the various Pubwatch arrangements across the districts and a range of colleagues involved in economic development and town centre management. It has also supported wider engagement with bodies on the ground working in the NTE such as street pastors and of course with our West Mercia colleagues, ensuring joint solutions are actioned with shared resources.

Sadly, the funding for this team comes to an end on 30th June, so the dedicated resource will no longer be available. The cross service NTE priority will however remain, and we will work to address the issues but of course without the dedicated resource that we have had available, which will mean responses will need to be planned around other activities.

Looking Forward

WRS's strategic assessment for 2022 onwards, sets out a cross team collaborative approach to tackling issues that arise in the NTE, and the adopting and strengthening of proactive intelligence-led working practices as demonstrated by our original Covid 19 Night-Time Economy team. There are many other local authority teams and partners outside of councils involved in supporting or policing the NTE and partner organisations can utilise the information gathered by WRS officers to assist in achieving their objectives. It is hoped that a more joined-up approach to issues faced will ensure that organisations can tackle issues in a more holistic manner, with the intelligence gathered providing clear and concise information to enable efficient informed decision-making.

Contact Details

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Appendix 1: Visit Table

Total visits to premises in Different parts of Worcestershire's NTE

AREA	Visits January – April 2022	Areas highlighted through visits
Worcester	106	Licensing, Policing and Noise
Bromsgrove	47	ASB, Licensing, Taxi complaints
Kidderminster	30	Licensing, Policing, Food
Bewdley	2	Councillor raised concerns regarding enforcement, Noise
Droitwich	6	Licensing, Noise, Policing
Pershore and Villages	14	Licensing, Food
Evesham	28	Food, Licensing, ASB
Malvern	22	Licensing, Policing, Noise
Redditch	25	Licensing, Food, Taxi complaints
TOTAL Number of Visits	280	