

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board

Thursday, 16th November, 2023
4.30 pm

Parkside Hall
Market Street
Bromsgrove
B61 8DA

Agenda

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

THURSDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 2023

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council
Councillor H. J. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor J. Raine, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor C. Palmer, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor L. Harrison, Redditch Borough Council
Councillor J. Kane, Redditch Borough Council
Councillor M. Allcott, Worcester City Council
Councillor J. Riaz, Worcester City Council (Chairman)
Councillor B. Hardman, Wychavon District Council
Councillor M. Goodge, Wychavon District Council
Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council
Councillor P. Harrison, Wyre Forest District Council

AGENDA

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

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 5th October 2023 (Pages 5 - 14)
4. WRS Revenue Monitoring April - September 2023 (Pages 15 - 22)

5. Activity & Performance Data - Quarter 2 2023/24 (Pages 23 - 62)
6. WRS Budgets 2024/25 - 2026/27 (Pages 63 - 76)
7. Automation Project Update (Pages 77 - 78)
8. 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.

Sue Hanley
Chief Executive (Interim)

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

8th November 2023

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

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY, 5TH OCTOBER 2023, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C. B. Taylor, H. J. Jones (Vice-Chairman), J. Raine, C. Palmer, L. Harrison, J. Kane, J. Riaz (Chairman), K. Lawrance (substituting for Councillor M. Allcott), B. Hardman, M. Goodge, T. Onslow and P. Harrison

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr. P. Carpenter, Mr. D. Mellors (via Microsoft Teams), Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox, Mrs. M. Patel and Mrs. P. Ross

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

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. Allcott, Worcester City Council with Councillor K. Lawrance in attendance as the substitute Member.

(It was noted that Mr. I. Miller, Partner Officer, Wyre Forest District Council had given apologies).

14/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15/23

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 29th June 2023 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 29th June 2023, be approved as a correct record.

16/23

WRS REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - JUNE 2023

The Interim S151 officer, Finance, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on pages 21 to 22 of the main agenda report.

The Interim S151 officer, confirmed that the report covered the period April to June 2023.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn 2023/24 of £4k overspend. It was appreciated that this was an estimation to the year-end based on the following assumptions: -

- A 2% pay award had been added to the projected outturn figures, as per the original budget. There was a reserved £120k from last year surplus to accommodate an enhanced pay award in 2023/24.
- If April to June 2023 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be no overspend to be charged to partners on this service. WRS officers would continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at quarter 2.
- The following were the actual bereavements costs April to June 2023 to be funded by partners. These costs were charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge, it was not possible to project a final outturn figure: -

Bromsgrove District Council	£2k
Redditch Borough Council	£3k

- Appendix 2 to the report, detailed the income achieved by WRS for April to June 2023.
- Any grant funded expenditure was shown separate to the core service costs as this was not funded by the participating Councils.

Fees and Charges increases were currently holding and slightly above where we needed to be.

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services responded to a question from Members and in doing so stated that the 1% increase on salaries equated to approximately £60k.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, explained that the Ukrainian Support Work – Bromsgrove & Redditch, as detailed on page 27 of the report, was to provide continued support to Bromsgrove and Redditch District Councils (BDC / RBC) Housing Teams, using the former COVID Advisors, who provided welfare checks, safeguarding and signposting for guests who came to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Marlpool – Redditch, this was an ongoing project whereby WRS on behalf of RBC had completed a Contaminated Land Investigation. A number of houses in Marlpool Drive, Redditch were situated on a former landfill site. Urgent remedial works to retrofit each building was

undertaken and costs for the additional electricity used, for the equipment installed to prevent landfill gas entering their properties.

Stray Dog Income – this was income generated by WRS providing ‘other’ dog related services to other authorities. The stray dog service continued to be incredibly busy with an ever increasing number of dogs received with welfare concerns.

The Head of WRS briefly explained that Bereavements costs were incurred where there were no relatives or no means to payment for a funeral, this was previously known as a ‘Paupers’ funeral. The number was relatively small, and the costs equated to approximately 5 burials over a three month period. Officers did their utmost to try and locate family members.

RESOLVED that the Board notes the final financial position for the period April – June 2023, and that

- 1.1 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Bereavements, as follows:-

Council	Apr – June 23 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	2
Redditch Borough Council	3
Total	5

- 1.2 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to three additional Technical Officers, as follows:-

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Malvern Hills District Council	4	7	
Worcester City Council	6	2	65

Bromsgrove District Council	5	9	
Wychavon District Council	8	14	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	8	
Total	34	42	65

17/23

ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTER 1 2023-24

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 1 – 2023/2024; and in doing so highlighted the following key points: -

Activity Data

Of the 370 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during Quarter 1, 11 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Over half of these ratings were issued to the hospitality sector (i.e. Pubs, clubs or takeaways).

Stray or lost dogs recorded by WRS during Quarter 1 showed a significant increase compared to the same periods in both 2021-22 and 2022-23 (50%/ 24% respectively). Officers had been suggesting this would happen for some time, with a combination of post-pandemic returns to work combined with the cost-of-living pressures, meant that keeping a dog was much harder for households compared with 2 years ago.

The seasonal increase in applications occurred in Quarter 1, as a significant number of hospitality businesses applied for Temporary Events during the summer months. Figures would suggest that this year's figures probably represented a balancing position, with businesses looking for fewer events than last year but still more than the year before heading out of the pandemic with an increase of 8% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 10% compared to 2022-23. Around 68% of cases logged were applications and registrations; with 30% relating specifically to temporary events, 27% relating to private hire /hackney carriage vehicles, and 14% relating to driver licences.

Performance

WRS reported overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant businesses at this point in the year, without the district breakdown. 98.4% of businesses subject to intervention were graded 3 stars to 5 stars on the hygiene rating scheme.

Compliments outnumbered complaints significantly, with the figure currently 34 to 4.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager responded to questions with regards to the recent WRS licensing enforcement night carried out for BDC with the police and the City of Wolverhampton Council. Board Members were informed that officers were liaising the police and the City of Wolverhampton Council to arrange further licensing enforcement nights for the other partner authorities.

Members commented that it was excellent news about the number of food businesses that had been graded 3 stars to 5 stars and could this be promoted.

Officers responded to further questions with regards to the noise nuisance information; and in doing so highlighted that some of the partner authorities urban centres were small with not a lot of residential properties in these urban centres. Data varied from year to year taking into account the ratio of complaints to occupation. Festivals being held could also dramatically increase the number of complaints received.

The Head of WRS further responded and explained that newsletters had been circulated on noise issues and legislation. The current framework did not meet the expectations of the public with domestic noise issues. However, residents were able to bring their own cases to court.

Members further stated that whilst they found the information, tables and graphs fascinating they did not show the officers workload or pressures being faced by the teams in WRS.

The Head of WRS stated that teams did carry out time recorded activities which provided a reasonable idea of the pressures within a team. The Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager stated that a multi skilled team worked across all areas and responded according to demand, which was reviewed via monthly tasking meetings. The following were current pressures within the team: -

- Statutory Noise Nuisance – each officer carrying 70+ cases during the summer months.
- Health & Safety – 2 fatalities and 3 major investigations.
- Food recovery programme – with well over 5,000 food premises across the County needing interventions.

The Head of WRS and the Technical Services Manager further responded to questions about sewer baiting, and that WRS carried out intelligence led sewer baiting for Severn Trent Water at locations in the vicinity of commercial businesses / residential streets, where issues were being reported. Also, a number of partner authorities provided subsidised pest control services to residents in their area who were in receipt of certain benefits.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 1 – 2023/2024, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

18/23

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AUTOMATION PROJECT

The Licensing and Support Services Manager highlighted to new Board Members that at first meeting of the Board in 2022/23, Board Members had agreed to create a reserve of £150,000 underspend to fund the implementation of automation of data entry for customers; enabling a range of services to be addressed by the client entering data in forms on the WRS website, which would then upload directly into the IDOX Uniform back-office system.

Following on from this, WRS officers agreed to provide a short progress report at future Board meetings on the implementation of the project.

Governance

At the last Board meeting held on 29th June 2023, Board Members had requested additional assurances around the governance of the project to ensure that the correct controls were in place. Members were informed that officers continued to use the Bromsgrove Project Framework as a mechanism for Project Governance and Management but had also introduced an extra level of scrutiny for sign off.

Officers had liaised with the councils' shared Audit service and had agreed that the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services, the Director of Finance and Wyre Forest District Council's ICT Manager would be responsible for sign off prior to any project go live milestones that were executed. Officers hoped that this provided Board Members with the assurance that these senior officers would be evaluating the situation independently and objectively, making any decision proportionate to the project.

In addition to this, colleagues from Audit would audit the financial elements of the project throughout to ensure that all safeguards were in place to mitigate any risks of monies being moved to the wrong place or account.

Progress

The testing and evaluation of forms continued. The project remained in the first testing phase whilst officers awaited the merchant ID number to enable on-line card payments, so progress to Stage 2 testing could

commence. Stage 1 testing had involved internal testing with different teams within WRS, using officers from across the service.

Alongside the testing phase a program of communications was being planned in conjunction with the district communications teams. It was envisaged that a soft launch strategy would be executed but stakeholder groups would need to be approached to ensure that the correct channels were used to provide information, whether this be through the district council websites or other means.

In parallel to the wider automation project, officers continued to assess the roll out of electronic ID Cards in the taxi trade for both safeguarding and enforcement measures. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest continued to work on the dashboard implementation. Once officers understood the timeframes of this in more detail, a plan would be executed for implementation across the County.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager responded to questions from Board Members with regards to ID Cards. Members were informed that every license holder would be required to carry an ID Card that was registered against their badge. These ID Cards could be scanned by officers when carrying out any enforcement activities, providing a quick method of checking the drivers' details and photo identity. Members of the public would be able to use their mobile phone to 'tap' ID Badges with the drivers details then being displayed on their mobile phone. It had been suggested that licensed drivers could display their ID Cards on the back of their headrests for ease of access for members of the public.

Members queried if the ID Cards would be suitable for members of the public who were visually impaired. The Licensing and Support Services Manager agreed to look into this.

Part 2 of the testing would take 4 to 6 weeks before going live. Officers would wait to see how the first forms worked before releasing any further forms, therefore the forms would be released in batches, starting with those where applications were more frequent.

The first stage of testing did use different internal teams within WRS, as initially this was seen as beneficial. However, Stage two testing would see external officers outside of WRS testing, with the possibility of Board Members also being involved in testing. The Licensing and Support Services Manager reiterated that the back office system needed to be live and correct, in that licensed driver's details were correct and updated live onto the system.

Members were disappointed with the length of time it had taken for officers to receive the merchant ID number. Officers highlighted that the merchant ID number had now been received and that not all of the delay had been caused by the 3 month wait for the ID number; additional governance had caused some delays.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager further responded to a query as to whether the project had had to be pushed back due to the additional governance involvement of the shared Audit service and if this had affected the original budget. Members were informed that the first stage of testing of forms had been pushed back from June/July to October; officers would now relook at the project plan.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank officers and stated that the progress made on the Automation project was also down to the great work of the previous WRS Chairman and Board Members and this should be acknowledged. The safety of the travelling public, which included women and children, was paramount. The Chairman further stated that he hoped that a good news story would be rolled out before the Christmas period on this important project.

RESOLVED that the progress on the Automation Project, be noted.

19/23

ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented a report on the WRS Enforcement Policy 2023.

Board Members were informed that in 2011, the then Joint Committee had agreed to support the adoption of a single WRS Enforcement Policy that the service would use in relation to all its activities.

This policy would be an adjunct to other enforcement policies that each partner authority had for its remaining enforcement activities. Being based on the requirements of the then Regulator's Compliance Code, the policy would not have contradicted any approach being taken by partners in other areas of enforcement such as planning.

In 2016, when the partnership became a district only arrangement, the Head of WRS had made minor amendments to the policy and had asked Members of the Joint Committee to ratify the policy and to recommend adoption by the six councils.

Local authorities were encouraged to produce Enforcement Policies for many years so that those sectors they regulated knew understood what to expect. This was originally driven by the introduction of the

Enforcement Concordat, created by LACORS, the Local Government Association's Regulatory Policy support body for member authorities, and built upon by the Regulator's Compliance Code, issued by the Better Regulation Executive, under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006.

As detailed in the report, the original Regulators Compliance Code was replaced with the Regulator's Code. The core of the new Code had changed little from the original Regulators Compliance Code, but some aspects were clarified and tidied up. Whilst this had not changed since the last review, the Head of WRS had felt that reviewing this policy every three to five years and bringing it back to Members, ensured that they were aware of the processes that the service followed during regulatory decision making and that this would provide Members with the reassurance that the service was taking a fair and equitable approach when dealing with offending. This was particularly important with the significant number of new members who had recently joined the WRS Board for 2023/2024; and probably even more relevant given the number of newly elected Members across the partners who are new to local government.

The Head of WRS further explained that before putting a case before the Courts, local authorities also needed to have regard to the Code for Crown Prosecutors, which lay down the very basic provisions in its two tests of evidential sufficiency and public interest before a case could be considered a sound candidate to be taken to Court.

Whilst WRS officers prepared the case file and evidence, with Team Managers or the Head of Service making recommendations on action, the delegation in relation to the instigation of legal proceedings meant that the final decision on whether a matter went to court sat with the relevant Head of Legal Services and their delegated officers. This separation mirrors what occurred between the Police and Crown Prosecution Service and ensured that local authorities complied with the separation of investigatory and prosecuting roles envisaged in the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.

Improved consistency was something that businesses craved, so there was a level playing field for all of those in competition. Businesses had complained on occasion about the alleged inconsistencies in enforcement between local authorities, although the LGA had always challenged this and the responses containing real evidence had been limited. By adopting a common approach to enforcing the functions discharged by WRS, partners would directly address these concerns of the business community and show that WRS remained a tool that local authorities could use to support their economies in a positive way.

In previous years, WRS had asked Members to take this back to the partner authorities for adoption locally, so that it sat alongside any other enforcement policies operated by other enforcement services within the

partners, however in the absence of any changes to the document, this was not necessary on this occasion.

Members were asked to note that the policy, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, met the criteria of both the Regulators Code and the Code for Crown Prosecutors, which should allow it to easily integrate with existing policies within the partner authorities so that the service could continue to operate in a consistent way across the County.

RESOLVED that the continued use of the Enforcement Policy 2023, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed; in order to support decision making within WRS.

The meeting closed at 5.15 p.m.

Chairman



WRS Board
16th November 2023

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – Sept 2023

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – Sept 2023
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Bereavements

Council	Apr–Sept 23 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	3
Redditch Borough Council	14
Worcester City Council	5
Total	22

- 1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Pest Control

Council	Projected Outturn for Pest Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6
Worcester City Council	8
Total	14



1.4 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to three additional Technical Officers

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Malvern Hills District Council	4	7	
Worcester City Council	6	2	65
Bromsgrove District Council	5	9	
Wychavon District Council	8	14	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	8	
Total	34	42	65

Contribution to Priorities

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

Introduction/Summary

This report presents the financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April – Sept 2023.

Background

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

Report

The following reports are included for Board's Attention:

- Revenue Monitoring - April – Sept 23 – Appendix 1
- Income Breakdown - April – Sept 23 – Appendix 2

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a projected outturn 2023/24 surplus of £24k. It is appreciated this is an estimation to the year-end based on following assumptions:

- A 2% pay award has been added to the projected outturn figures, as per the original budget. We have reserved



£120k from last year surplus to accommodate an enhanced pay award in 23-24.

- Agency staff costs are being incurred due to backfilling of staff working on other contractual work eg food recovery programme, contaminated land & work for other local authorities, these costs are covered by vacant posts & income generation.
- If April to Sept 23 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be a overspend on this service of £14k. WRS officers will continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at quarter 3. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners is:-

Redditch Borough Council	£6k
Wychavon District Council	£8k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – Sept 23 to be funded by partners. These costs are charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge it is not possible to project a final outturn figure:

Bromsgrove District Council	£3k
Redditch Borough Council	£14k
Worcester City Council	£5k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – Sept 23
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.

Financial Implications

None other than those stated in the report

Sustainability

None as a direct result of this report

Contact Points

Peter Carpenter – peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Background Papers

Detailed financial business case



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WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2023/24
Total WRS Sept 23 / Period 6 - 23/24

Appendix 1

	Revised Full Year Budget 23-24	Revised Budget - Apr - Sept 23	Committed Expenditure Apr - Sept 23	Variance	Qtr 2 Projected outturn	Qtr 2 Projected Outturn Variance	Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Direct Expenditure							
Employees							
Salary	3,404	1,702	1,572	-130	3,324	-80	Vacant posts, covered by agency staff. Anumber of these vacant posts are being filled as of 1st Nov 23
Agency Staff	25	0	157	157	271	246	Covered by income generation work, including work for other local authorities &
Employee Insurance	25	12	12	-0	25	-0	
Sub-Total - Employees	3,454	1,714	1,742	27	3,620	166	
Premises							
Rent / Hire of Premise	74	37	37	-0	75	1	
Cleaning	1	0	0	-0	1	0	
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sub-Total - Premises	75	38	37	-1	76	1	
Transport							
Vehicle Hire	20	10	11	1	17	-2	
Vehicle Fuel	8	4	2	-2	6	-2	
Road Fund Tax	1	1	0	-0	1	0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	2	2	0	5	0	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	2	0	-1	2	-1	
Car Allowances	56	28	21	-7	45	-11	
Sub-Total - Transport	92	46	36	-10	76	-17	
Supplies and Services							
Furniture & Equipment	39	20	58	38	79	40	AQ Monitoring Station, Income recovered from Wychavon
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	1	0	-1	2	0	
Printing & Photocopying	17	9	8	-1	18	0	
Postage	11	6	6	0	11	0	
ICT	67	34	33	-0	67	0	
Telephones	21	11	16	6	34	13	
Training & Seminars	22	11	10	-1	21	-1	
Insurance	20	10	10	0	20	-0	
Third Party Payments	194	97	97	0	195	1	
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	393	196	239	42	446	53	
Contractors							
Dog Warden	121	61	92	32	203	81	Success of short term contract, overspend offset in income generation
Pest Control	105	53	72	19	121	16	This is overspend within pest control, funded by Redditch & Wychavon and shown in income
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	70	35	64	29	87	17	Taxi demand survey recharged to Worcs City of £30k, offset in income.
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	1	0	3	1	
Water Safety	5	3	3	1	6	1	
Food Safety	1	1	0	-0	1	-0	
Environmental Protection	12	6	29	23	35	24	Bereavements recovered in income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	6	8	2	15	2	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	3	1	-2	5	-1	
Sub-Total	335	167	271	104	475	140	
Income							
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-703	-352	-566	-214	-1,070	-367	See append 2
Sub-Total	-703	-352	-566	-214	-1,070	-367	
Overall Total	3,646	1,810	1,758	-52	3,622	-24	

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2023/24

Income from Partners	April to Sept 23
	£
Budget	1,810,319
Pension Backfunding	17,765
Bereavement / Public Burials	21,693
Pest Control Overspend - Redditch, & Wychavon	6,878
Marlpool - Redditch	2,070
Employee for Animal Activity	20,255
Employee for Income Generation	16,531
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	36,645
Tameside - Subs to Anti Fraud Network - Worcs City	1,700
Taxi unmet demand surveys - Worcs City	29,950
Contaminated Land Work - Worcs City	6,500
Air Quality Monitoring, Worcester Road - Wychavon	23,559
S106 towards air quality monitoring - Wychavon	5,335
Itox support - Bromsgrove & Redditch	593
Planning Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch	115,093
Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch	51,691
	2,166,577
Grant Income	
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	0
	0
Other Income	
Stray Dog Income	73,088
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal & Admin Support	27,930
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	5,000
Planning Support Work	19,329
Contaminated Land Work	12,428
PPC Work	9,359
Primary Authority work	19,300
Private Water Supplies	2,989
Pest Control - Bath & North East Somerset Council / Contributions from residents	19,733
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	3,513
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	10,513
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	343
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	6,192
	209,718
Total Income Apr - Sept 23	2,376,295
2023/24 Base Budget from Partners	-1,810,319
Total Income Excluding Budget	565,976

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WRS Board

Date: 16th November 2023

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 2023/24

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 second quarter of 2023/4, 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 second quarter of 2023/4 was a relatively damp affair, which has impacted on at least one or two of our measures. Worcestershire has continued to be a draw for activities with a range of events and festivals continuing to feature and now we are beyond the pandemic, the crowds appear to be returning, but this is not to everyone's liking.

Although there was a rise in numbers of complaints and enquiries between Q1 and Q2, the overall number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 37% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 11% compared to 2022-23. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates. Based on the 233 complaints recorded during quarter one, 71% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (e.g. poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects), whilst 29% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices.



Although there were significant pressures in the Community Environmental Health team through the Summer, 350 food interventions were completed and, of the 719 interventions conducted so far this year, at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), 22 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to takeaways, restaurants, or pubs

Quarter 2 saw the rise in numbers of accidents reported slowing and the number of complaints and enquiries still increasing. Despite this, the number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is still 32% lower compared to 2021-22, and 18% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 46% of cases have been reports of accidents, with 79% of these cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. As always seems to be the case, slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level or from height) continue to be the most prominent cause of accidents occurring in workplaces.

Although applications were running more or less on trend, and complaints and enquiries were on the up, the overall number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 10% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 1% compared to 2022-23. This probably reflects the new post-pandemic normal and may be true for a number of our trends. Approximately 68% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 29% of these cases relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licences and 27% relating to temporary events.

Most of the non-application work in Licensing tends to be general enquiries about licensing rather than complaints about licensed activity or unlicensed operators. Based on the 339 complaints recorded during the year to date, 149 have related to taxi licensing, 103 have related to alcohol licensing, and 68 have related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).

Numbers of planning enquiries fell during Q2 following an increase in Q1, however, for the year to date the total still represents a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 8% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 45% have related to contaminated land. Around 16% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

Interestingly, the number of information requests, which are often linked to the planning system, grew during quarter 2, so we may see an increase in planning work to follow this. Having said that, officers continue to report feeling that the number of general FOI requests has been higher than previously experienced.



Although the number of dog control (strays, lost dogs, etc) cases recorded by WRS fell from Q1 to Q2, overall, the figure during the year to date is an increase of 35% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 9% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 90% of cases have related to stray or lost dogs, with 74% of these cases relating to "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by a member of the public). Overall, 63% of strays have been reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities. The increase in the number of stray dogs reported across Worcestershire contrasts with pre-pandemic levels which showed a long-term trend of decreasing numbers of stray dogs being reported to the Councils.

WRS receives a relatively low number of what the public might consider dog control complaints as opposed to strays. Based on the 37 complaints recorded during the year to date, 19 have related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 13 have related to dangerous dogs, and 5 have related to welfare.

The Summer is always a busy time for nuisance work, however the poor weather this year has probably led to a reduction in work volumes if not the complexity with the number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year to date representing a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, and 17% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that the better than usual Spring did lead to an earlier start in the increase in workload.

Approximately 77% of cases have related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 11% of cases have related to nuisances caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites.

Although the number off public health cases increased between Q1 and Q2, the overall number recorded by WRS during the year to date represents a reduction of 31% compared to 2021-22 but is consistent with the figures for 2022-23. Approximately 60% of cases have related to pest control, such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquires about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 25% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 413 domestic treatments undertaken during the year to date, approximately 41% have been due to issues with rats. Overall, a significant proportion of the demand arises from Redditch or Wychavon districts.



Performance

The non-business customer measure has fallen to 64.4% from 69.3% last quarter but remains above last year's out-turn figure of 59.2%. Heavy demands on resourcing in Community Environmental Health over the Summer meant we struggled to keep on top of nuisance complaints despite most officers being taken off proactive work to focus on nuisance complaints. Whilst almost 70% of people are happy with the speed of initial response, just under 60% are happy with the time it takes to reach a conclusion, but the biggest issue appears to be our inability to deliver the outcome people would like to see, which is most often down to public expectations not being met by what the law on nuisance allows for. This is probably also why the numbers reporting feeling better equipped to address issues for themselves in the future has fallen from 68.8% to 60%.

We also saw an unusual fall in business satisfaction this quarter, with the figure ending at 94.5%, two or three percentage points below where it has traditionally sat. Managers will be asked to look into this but behind the overall figure it seems likely that the main issues are with service requests from businesses rather than visits necessarily or perhaps officers have had to take more businesses to task over minor non-compliances during the Summer.

Compliments again significantly outnumber complaints.

Performance on processing complete driver license renewals was at 93.9%% for all authorities, which is lower than in previous years, although several individual authorities remained at 100%. Licensing was quite pressured during the Summer with staffing capacity so this slight downturn in performance is not unexpected.

The data on defective vehicles relates to situations where the vehicle is recorded as having been suspended either by the district garage on inspection or by an officer. This may follow a reported accident taking the vehicle outside the acceptable standards, or even when the vehicle is submitted for its routine 6-monthly check. In recent reporting periods we have seen an increase in the number of defective vehicles reported under this indicator, driven mainly by higher numbers in one of the six fleets. This has continued and, by the end of Q2 this year, 34 vehicles had been suspended in the period, with the majority belong to our one of our larger fleet areas. Even with this number, only 2.19% of the fleet county-wide are recorded as potentially problematic. More details appear in the table in appendix B at the end of the report. We will continue to re-enforce the need to ensure vehicles are always fit for use on the road with drivers and operators, and that the regular tests are not to be used



to assess what maintenance may be required.

Staff sickness has increased from 0.76 days per FTE to 1.42 days per FTE cumulative for the year. Current sickness levels are lower than the same period in the last 2 years (1.79, 1.55,) but above the year before that (0.94,) and significantly lower than the figures for 2019/20 (2.91,) and 2018/19 (2.77) at the same point in the year.

The overall rate of noise complaints against population is 0.79. This is slightly lower than the figure at Q2 in the most recent years (0.9, 1.08, 0.94 and 0.85, respectively.) Members will be aware that this measure has been significantly higher at this point in previous years, as high as 2.1 in 2017/18. It may be influenced by the slightly lower rate of complaint due to the poor summer weather.

The rate of hospitality businesses not upholding the 4 licensing objectives is 5%. This is roughly in line with 3 of the 5 previously recorded figures at this point (6.7%, 4.3%, 4.9%,) but above the 2.7% from last year and 2.8% seen in 2018/19. We know that, on occasion, one or other district can hit above 8%, but figures so far this year look like they are around the average and hopefully will continue in a similar vein.

Income brought in during the first half of 2023/24 is £204,718, which is slightly below last year (£232,520,) but still significantly up on the 2-years before this. Using the historic budget figure for 2016/17 (£3,017,000) to maintain the comparison with previous years, this comes out at 6.8% of that budget. Looking back at this point over recent years for comparison, the figures were 7.7%, 5.42%, 4.37%, 5.3% and 4.7% going back to 2018/19.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Appendix A: Activity Report (separate document), Appendix B below



Appendix B: Performance indicator table 2023/4

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	69.3	64.4		
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	97	94.5		
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.4	Bromsgrove 99.3 Malvern Hills 98.6 Redditch 98.3 Worcester City 99.5 Wychavon 98.7 Wyre Forest 97.5 Worcestershire 98.7		Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.6	Bromsgrove 0.7 Malvern Hills 1.4 Redditch 1.7 Worcester City 0.5 Wychavon 1.5 Wyre Forest 2.5 Worcestershire 1.3		Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	93.9	NA	
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide.	6-monthly	NA	34 = 2.19% of 1550 vehicles on the road county-wide BDC 4 MHDC 2 RBC 18 WC 7 WDC 0 WFDC 3	NA	



7 % of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	68.8	60		
8 Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	4/33	7/59		
9 Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	0.76 days per FTE	1.42 days per FTE		
10 % of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
11 % of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 6.8 Malvern Hills 2.3 Redditch 3.0 Worcester City 6.9 Wychavon 1.4 Wyre Forest 6.6 Worcestershire 5.0	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
12 Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.71 Malvern Hills 0.65 Redditch 0.57 Worcester City 0.97 Wychavon 0.72 Wyre Forest 0.86 Worcestershire 0.79	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest Worcestershire
13 Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£204,718, which is 6.8% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)	NA	
14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	





Worcestershire
Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2023-24



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Malvern
Hills
District
Council
www.malvernhills.gov.uk



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



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Wyre Forest
District Council

Foreword

Welcome to the second activity report for 2023/24. It follows the familiar format that long standing Board members will have seen many times. This covers the period 1st July to 30th September 2023, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous quarters and years.

Stray dog numbers fell from peak in Q1 through Q2 of this year. Dog control complaints appeared to have fallen quite significantly this quarter compared to previous years.

Food cases (complaints and enquiries,) went well above the downward trend line for the first time in a number of quaters and a good number (over 350,) food interventions under FHRS took place. The uptick in the number of accidents reported appeared to be plateauing this quater, but numbers of complaints and enquiries on health and safety was on the rise.

Information requests rose from the end of Q1 but numbers continue to oscillate around the trend so overall there is probably no real change. Requests for support in the planning system appeared to fall someone but in line with if slightly above the trend line.

Licensing application work continued to follow previous trends through the quarter, at levels close to what would be anticipated, but complaints and enquiries was up quite significantly approaching some of the levels in previous peaks.

Refuse and nuisance complaints followed their usual seasonal upward trend from Q1 throughout Q2, however at a lower level than in previous years. This is likely because of the relatively poor Summer weather, but this did follow on from a good Spring, which meant increases in workload had started earlier. This demonstrates what I said last quarter about nuisance complaint levels appearing inextricably linked to the weather. Public Health related complaints (accumulations, vermin, public burials, etc,) were up this quarter, achieving similar numbers to Q2 last year.

We hope the report demonstrates the volume of work staff are undertaking and that some of the stories behind the numbers highlight the difficulties staff sometimes face. If you have further queries, please feel free to contact myself and the Team Managers.



Simon Wilkes
Head of Regulatory Services

Community Environmental Health

Updates from David Mellors (Environmental Health And Trading Standards Manager)

Quarter One

The team continued its food recovery programme into 2023/4 and conducted 370 interventions at food businesses during the quarter. Some 97% of food premises across the county are rated compliant or better. However, where unsatisfactory standards were found, swift remedial action was taken, and a Simple Caution was issued to a non-compliant meat processing premises in Bromsgrove.

Officers have an ongoing investigation into premises in Redditch which prepared a meal for an employee who subsequently suffered an anaphylactic shock and are currently investigating a serious accident in Worcester where a member of the public fell down a lift shaft.

Sadly, the team are also investigating fatalities including the death of a member of the public involved in a white-collar boxing event and a child thrown from a vehicle involved in a sporting event.

However, prevention is better than cure and your Officers were proactively involved during the period in chairing Safety Advisory Groups [SAGs], whereby enforcement partners including the Police, Fire and Rescue and the Ambulance Service come together to provide advice to organisers to support them in ensuring the safety of their events. These included Worcester Racecourse, the Battle of Evesham, Three Counties Rally, Worcester Passion Play and the Worcester Balloon Festival.

A noise abatement notice was served in connection with a Bromsgrove property in January due to noise from barking dogs. The notice was subsequently breached this quarter and legal proceedings are now pending.

Officers contributed to Worcester City's consultation response in respect of Airbnb premises and engaged with Central Government in respect of emissions from wood burners.

Quarter Two

Worcestershire has continued to be a draw for activities with a wide range of events and festivals either taking place or being organised in this reporting period. Officers were proactively involved in chairing Safety Advisory Groups (whereby enforcement partners including the Police, Fire and Rescue and the Ambulance Service come together) to provide advice to organisers to support them in ensuring the safety of their events. In Quarter 2 these included The Upton Blues Festival, The Battle of Evesham event, the Worcester Victoria Christmas Fayre preparations and pre-season meetings for both Bromsgrove Sporting and Kidderminster Harriers football clubs.

WRS provides a contracted service to the County Council in respect of that authority's Safety at Sports Grounds responsibilities. This work resulted in General Safety Certificates being issued to Kidderminster Harriers FC, Bromsgrove Sporting FC and Sixways stadium in Q2. We shall be informing you further of our Safety at Sports Grounds and Safety Advisory Group activities by way of an information report to be presented at your February Board meeting.

The team also engaged in proactive compliance work in respect of The Sunshine, App Fest and Drunken Monkey festivals.

Despite significant demand on the team throughout the Summer, we still conducted 350 interventions at food businesses during the quarter. Some 97% of food premises across the county are rated compliant or better. However, where unsatisfactory standards were found, swift remedial action was taken. A Simple Caution was issued to a non-compliant bakery in Kidderminster for a failure to keep the premises clean and in good repair and condition, failure to store raw materials and ingredients appropriately, inadequate procedures in place to control pests and lack of training and food safety procedures.

The Food Standards Agency has shown an interest in the food safety work we carry out on your behalf, and we engaged with them during the period to provide assurance as to the interventions we have completed and those we have planned for the rest of the year. Your Officers have also been successful in attracting another major national food manufacturer into a primary authority agreement, whereby WRS provides assured advice for which we can charge as part of our income generation activities.

The investigations into a fatality in Redditch where an employee suffered an anaphylactic shock, the fatality concerning a member of the public participating in a white-collar boxing event in Worcester and the serious accident in Worcester where a member of the public fell down a lift shaft are all ongoing.

The better than usual Spring weather led to an earlier start in the increase in workload and the Summer is always a busy time for nuisance work. Notices were served in respect of a defective drainage system in Bromsgrove and an extract ventilation system to food premises causing noise and odour nuisance to residents in Worcester.

The team continues to contribute to the Serious Organised Crime Partnerships across the county through North Worcestershire MATES, MAT-G Worcester and MAT-G Malvern & Worcester.

This activity report serves to illustrate the diversity and complexity of work carried out by the team, and the depth and range of expertise required.

Licensing

Updates from Kiran Lahel (Licensing And Support Services Manager)

Quarter One

The team commenced Quarter 1 busier than the start of Quarter 4 with Licensing applications and queries up compared to this time last quarter. Officers encourage the return of fully completed applications however there still remain many where officers need to chase for information which can cause a bottleneck in the system. The introduction of payment automation will see a reduction in this and bring in long term efficiencies.

Taxi queries remain the highest area of contact and officers proceed to meet the demands of a continuously growing number of licensed drivers and vehicles across the County. The team continue with enforcement priorities in the night time economy with officers working with both the civil enforcement teams and West Mercia Police to carry out operations. Officers also carried out a Joint enforcement operation in Bromsgrove with Wolverhampton City Council due to a number of complaints regarding Wolverhampton licensed vehicles.

Officers have been out undertaking test purchase exercises across the County in regards to the requirements under the Equality Act. Taxi drivers have a legal obligation to accept assistance dogs in their vehicles unless they have medical condition which prevents them from doing so. Three out of the six districts have so far been tested with further testing planned for the remainder of the year.

Animal Licensing queries have also seen a steady increase and the team are working with the intelligence team to introduce a new process to deal with unlicensed breeders. Currently the guidance of what stipulates a licensed breeder is confusing for those that require a licence so the team continue to engage with DEFRA, the Canine Feline Sector Group and the Local Animal Welfare Group to Nationally review the guidance. There were two Zoo inspections that took place this quarter at the Falconry Centre and All things Wild and officers were happy with both visits so no immediate follow up visits are required.

Work in the Night Time Economy continues with officers engaging with West Mercia Police and district colleagues to carry out joint visits to events and premises which are of concern and where issues have been identified in previous years. Officers continue to attend pubwatch meetings, meetings with Worcester Bid and the district economic development teams to advise and keep abreast of any new developments in each district.

Finally Members training commenced towards the end of the quarter for all six districts and took a slightly different format than previous years, using roleplay in some districts and videos in others to allow more interaction than previously. Feedback has been positive and officers will continue to look at different ways to ensure engagement and momentum in these sessions.

Quarter Two

The Licensing team have continued to see an upward trajectory in both enquiries and applications as expected towards the summer months. The team actually had more queries regarding TENs applications and submissions in this period than the last two years so resources were prioritised accordingly.

Licensing Committees and sub committees across all six districts also commenced this quarter and all had quite a few new members undertaking Licensing for the first time so it was positive to see the changes made by the team to the Member's training had worked well.

There were two zoo inspections carried out by the team this quarter. One follow up at All things Wild and then the much larger annual joint inspection at West Midlands Safari Park which always involves a lot of pre-planning and takes places of a two day period. Both inspections went well with officers working with CEH colleagues and DEFRA on the West Midlands Safari Park to ensure compliance, licensing and health and safety requirements were being met accordingly.

There have been a number of joint visits taking place across the county with West Mercia Police Work to address issues identified in the Night Time economy (NTE) many of which have been resolved and not requiring further investigation. Those that have required extra monitoring have involved both the licensing and environmental health team working together with the police to conduct further monitoring of the situation.

The caravan inspections required to be undertaken in Wychavon and Worcester City were undertaken however there has been some follow up work that has been required to address non compliance. These remain ongoing with planning colleagues being consulted as and where necessary.

Animal Licensing work continues with both inspections and proactive monitoring. A result of such monitoring was a warrant being executed by the police and joint enforcement action being taken with licensing officers under both the Animal Welfare Act and the DWA (Dangerous Wild Animals Act) found a number of wild animals being kept (both dead and alive) at an address in the County. Licensing officers will now be taking formal action in this matter. Dog breeding complaints continue and are initially investigated by the Intelligence Team.

Technical Services

Updates from Mark Cox (Technical Services Manager)

Quarter One

Air Quality

Following the successful award of an Air Quality Grant from DEFRA in Q4 2023, progress to start the planning and implementation of the grant was commenced. Progress on the selection and purchase of monitors progressed as well as location planning.

To identify measures for the Worcester City section of the Air Quality Action Plan and Air Quality Strategy, the structure of the AQ Steering Group was expanded to include 3 subgroups based on Transport & Planning, Public Health and Sustainability subject areas. These groups are working together to identify measures that will bring about the necessary air quality improvements. Work has commenced on identification of air quality improvement measures in Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest areas.

Contaminated Land

Our contaminated land related work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts and Gloucester City and South Gloucestershire Councils continued, providing responses to environmental requests in relation to property sales, consultants enquiries and any other requests for info. Our work continues to involve a lot of complex sites with historical land use which are dealt with via the planning process in each of the districts. A few examples of particularly complex sites included:

The part demolition and site clearance of the former Blue Bird factory site in Bromsgrove for redevelopment to provide 116 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), consisting of both new dwellings and conversion of the Welfare and Administration buildings, along with associated landscaping; drainage; engineering; highways and access works.

The proposed development of a former Aluminium Foundry near Kidderminster into Energy and Resource Park.

The demolition of an old fuel depot in Gloucester and site remediation and associated earthworks to facilitate development for 70 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space, to include creation of development platforms, provision of flood compensation and structures for ecological mitigation.

Engineering works to remediate site of an old Gas Works site in Gloucester.

Nuisance Planning and Permitting Processes

Our environmental health planning work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts plus Gloucester City and Tewkesbury continued including many new takeaways and a notable number of solar farms with battery storage.

We received a permit application for a new precious metal recovery process in Redditch which is also jointly regulated with the Environment Agency as well as dealing with planning matters relating to the same. Further to the requirements of the Industrial Emissions Directive all permits have been published on our website as well as routine For Gloucester, work was ongoing for A2 for solvent impregnation Permitting Application (170 representations) and Granting Part B for filament winding. A successful Prosecution of Strickland Trucks resulted in a conditional discharge after operating for over ten years without the required permit to control environmental pollution.

Homes for Ukraine Support Workers

Following the cessation of the support to Malvern Hills and Wychavon Councils with their Homes for Ukraine schemes, we continue to support Redditch and Bromsgrove by managing the scheme on their behalf with three from the former COVID Advisor team who act as support workers. All guests who come to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine scheme have a 3-year visa, and the council have a duty of care of the guests for the full 3-year period. The support workers continue with the safeguarding and welfare checks, also helping with rematching / rehoming process with some host and guest coming to the end of their sponsorship and sometimes where there is a relationship breakdown and are still providing a lot of after care when the guests become independent moving into a private rental accommodation such as helping set up bills and finding local schools etc.

Across the two districts there are 45 families still with hosts, 7 families moved into social housing, 22 families moved into private renting, 12 families return to Ukraine and 18 families moved to a different county or country. There have been 19 arrivals in 2023.

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 most of our government returns. During the quarter we also collaborated closely with our host IT as they implemented a new web-based telephone system. We also had similar involvement at the start of the process of changing the mobile phone provider for all staff and our cyber security training system.

We have worked on Service-wide projects, including the Automation Project and initial work to introduce a new mapping system for our back-office database. Over the quarter we have taken part in various activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use. These activities include regular updates and patches to our main back-office system, record retention and deletions.

We have continued income generation work with IDOX database support for colleagues in Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning, Worcestershire Trading Standards, and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing teams.

Dog Warden Service

The stray dog service remains incredibly busy with an ever increasing number of dogs received with welfare concerns. Most dogs with welfare concerns are not being claimed by their owners putting pressure on the service to find homes for dogs with such complex needs as well as increased veterinary bills for the service and prospective new owners.

Quarter Two

Air quality

The contract to secure the purchase of 26 Air Quality Monitors (mainly funded by a Defra Grant) was agreed and detailed conversations on the proposed locations of the monitors have been completed.

We received notification from DEFRA that they are to commence enforcement of the Local Air Quality Management regime for the 4 areas of Worcestershire that have existing Air Quality Management areas (Worcester City, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest and Wychavon) but do not have a recently updated or reviewed Air Quality Action Plan in place. A significant amount of work towards production of the Air Quality Action Plans and a County-wide Air Quality Strategy has been undertaken already. For Worcester progress has been in conjunction with Senior Officers at Worcestershire County Council Highways and Worcester City Council who jointly chair the Air Quality Steering Group. The 3 sub-groups based on Transport & Planning, Public Health and Sustainability subject areas have developed to bring forward measures for the AQAP process.

Planning and Permitting Processes

Our environmental health planning work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts plus Gloucester City and Tewkesbury continued including for Amcor Flexibles (Evesham) who upgraded their Regenerative Thermal Oxidizer (RTO) in September to comply with the new lower Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emission limit of 20mg/m². This was undertaken over two weeks during which the RTO was off-line. Notification letters were delivered to local residents and due to the communication programme, no complaints of odour were received by Amcor nor WRS. Also in Wychavon, Modern Packaging committed to installing a RTO to replace their bio-scrubber following the service of an Enforcement Notice relating to VOC emissions. A new Environmental Permit has been granted to Kaug Refinery Services (Redditch) for their Part B precious metals recovery activity and WRS will be representing the Borough Council by attending the County Planning Committee at the end of November for this matter. Finally, an updated Environmental Permit has been issued for Doncaster Castings (Wychavon).

For Gloucester as a commercial contract, a significant amount of work has been ongoing for A2 for solvent impregnation Permitting Application including a request for further information notice, preparation for a Committee Hearing and drafting the permit to operate.

Contaminated Land

Our contaminated land related work for the 6 Worcestershire Districts, Gloucester City and South Gloucestershire Councils continued throughout this period, including responding to a wide variety of planning consultations and discharge of conditions requests, providing responses to environmental information requests in relation to property sales and development sites, consultants enquiries and other requests for service as required. Our work continues to involve a lot of complex sites with various historical land uses which are dealt with via the planning process in each of the district areas. Examples of these sites include:-

Contract Chemicals in Gloucester which has seen numerous phases of ground investigation and assessment over the years as part of the proposed residential development. The latest involvement related to finalisation of gas protection measures to be installed in a number of the residential properties.

A small residential development on a former Nursey site in Cookhill with updated and revised site assessment.

Site on Chester Road in Kidderminster being developed for residential housing – review of site assessment and remediation strategy required due to historical underground fuel storage tanks and associated infrastructure that had given rise to a number of hotspots of hydrocarbon contamination.

We also continue to review the weekly planning lists for the Worcestershire District Councils which often flags up other applications requiring comment in respect of contamination that would otherwise be missed. One example includes a 16 dwelling development on a former historic nursery site in Sedgeberrow where various unknown tanks were present, and various applications for new build developments and extensions in areas where there were former factories or in close proximity to former landfill sites or other areas of unknown filled ground.

During this time we also added an ongoing contract with East Staffordshire Borough Council to our portfolio of work to assist them with their contaminated land planning work. This came about through one of the Contaminated Land Officer Groups where we represent WRS. We continue to show a presence at West Mercia, Gloucestershire, and Staffordshire groups which proves to be a great source for networking, information sharing and training.

WRS have updated a number of documents on the website in relation to a site determined as contaminated land in Redditch following interaction with one of the homeowners. This was to help clarify the information presented on the website and demonstrate the history of the properties including remediation.

A number of national and local consultations have also been responded to during this time including National Brownfield Forum review and screening of additional sites for the Bromsgrove District Council Plan Review.

Work has also begun on drafting the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for the 6 Worcestershire Districts to update previous versions that are now somewhat out of date.

Dog Warden Service

Sadly during Q2 we had four dead dogs reported as dumped. All were different breeds and we have gone public with the details to try and identify the owners and wider circumstances of these cases, with a view to taking enforcement action where appropriate. With so many difficulties with dogs post COVID our Senior Dog Warden, Pip Griffin was invited to Parliament to provide evidence to MPs in the Pet Abuse and Welfare Committee Inquiry into the post-pandemic health and welfare concerns of companion animals, including abuse and mutilation. We were the only Local Authority representative invited to provide oral evidence and our session was alongside the RSPCA and Local Government Association. Pip was able to provide first hand experience of the failings and frustrations of the current regulatory regime. Subjects such as dog breeding, animal welfare, ear cropping and tail docking were discussed.

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Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Tuesday 5 September 2023 Meeting started at 2.31pm, ended 5.09pm

AGENDA

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14:31:17 Subject: Pet welfare and abuse

14:31:18 Witness(es): Dr Samantha Gaines, Head of Companion Animals, RSPCA; Pip Griffin, Senior Dog Warden, Worcestershire Regulatory Services; Marisa Heath, Adviser, Local Government and Animal Welfare Group

15:44:45 Witness(es): Bill Lambert, Health Welfare and Breeder Services Executive, The Kennel Club; Dr Gudrun Ravetz, Chief Veterinary Officer, Pets at Home; Alexandra Baker, Chief Operating Officer, Pet Industry Federation

Planning Enforcement

The team have received 61 new cases from Bromsgrove and Redditch to investigate alleged breaches of control in this period. Existing caseloads also keep the team busy and where negotiation and for four cases informal approaches have been exhausted and warning letters being issued. A warning letter is the last resort requesting compliance in a set period of time before consideration of the next stage which is an enforcement action. The team issued two enforcement notices at sites across the two districts for noncompliance of complex matters. On one site the issue is unauthorised deposit of hardcore and subsequent creation of hardstanding to store machinery on in the green belt. The other site related to the creation of a stable block, associated hardstanding and gates. In both these circumstances all avenues of negotiation were exhausted and all elements of the enforcement notice required planning permission which they did not have. The team continues to support the Councils with their backlog of active cases

Homes for Ukraine Support Workers

As of July, the current 3 remaining COVID Advisor team members are continuing to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme as support workers in Bromsgrove and Redditch Council areas. Early July the team began the preparation for the Delta Return ready for completion at the end of July, for this process we needed to collate the data on our guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme for the Home Office so that the Councils receive the correct funding for Q1. Also, in July we received notice from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of an additional homelessness grant for Homes for Ukraine. This means we have been able to put together more assistance to those on the scheme looking for independent accommodation in move into private rental accommodation, called “move on funding”.

All guests who come to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine scheme have a 3-year visa, and the council have a duty of care of the guests for the full 3-year period. The support workers continue with the safeguarding and welfare checks, also helping with rematching / rehoming process with some host and guest coming to the end of their sponsorship and sometimes where there is a relationship breakdown and are still providing a lot of after care when the guests become independent moving into a private rental accommodation such as helping set up bills and finding local schools etc.

Across the two districts there are currently 37 families still with hosts, 12 families who have moved into social housing and 28 families that have moved into private rental accommodation.

IT Development

As well as our normal day to day work, we have been involved in numerous projects in each of the service's teams to enhance service delivery. This quarter we did extensive preparation work with our Host IT and back-office support company with the aim of introducing a new and improved mapping system. The initial preparation stage was completed in this quarter, and most of the subsequent installation work is planned for the following quarter. This is an upgrade to the mapping used by many of the teams using geographical based information to complete tasks, such as contaminated land or planning support. We have been involved with other projects such as the Automation project and introduction of Taxi digital Identity records.

We have continued to provide Uniform support functions, development and training for others as commercial contracts. We currently do this for Bromsgrove and Redditch Council's Planning department, and for Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing departments and Worcestershire County Council's Trading Standards team.

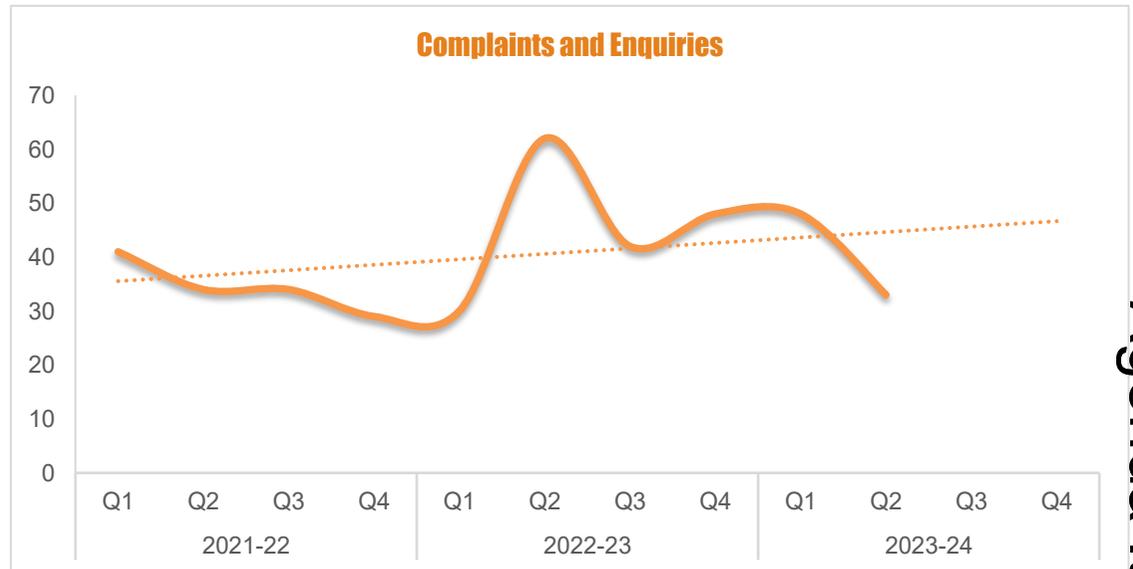
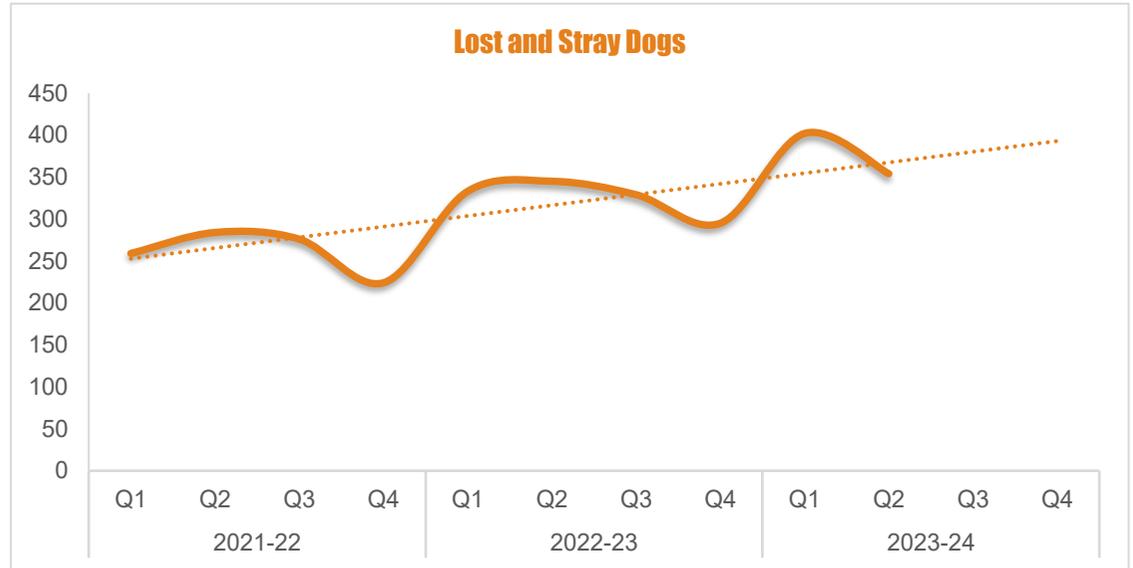
Dog Control

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.

Comments

The number of dog control cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 35% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 9% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 90% of cases have related to stray or lost dogs, with 74% of these cases relating to "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by a member of the public). Overall, 63% of strays have been reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities. The increase in the number of stray dogs reported across Worcestershire is in contrast to pre-pandemic levels which showed a long term trend of decreasing numbers of stray dogs being reported to the Council. The number of stray dogs picked up with welfare concerns during quarter two continued to be high which is a recent post COVID trend.

In general terms, WRS receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 37 complaints recorded during the year to date, 19 have related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 13 have related to dangerous dogs, and 5 have related to welfare.



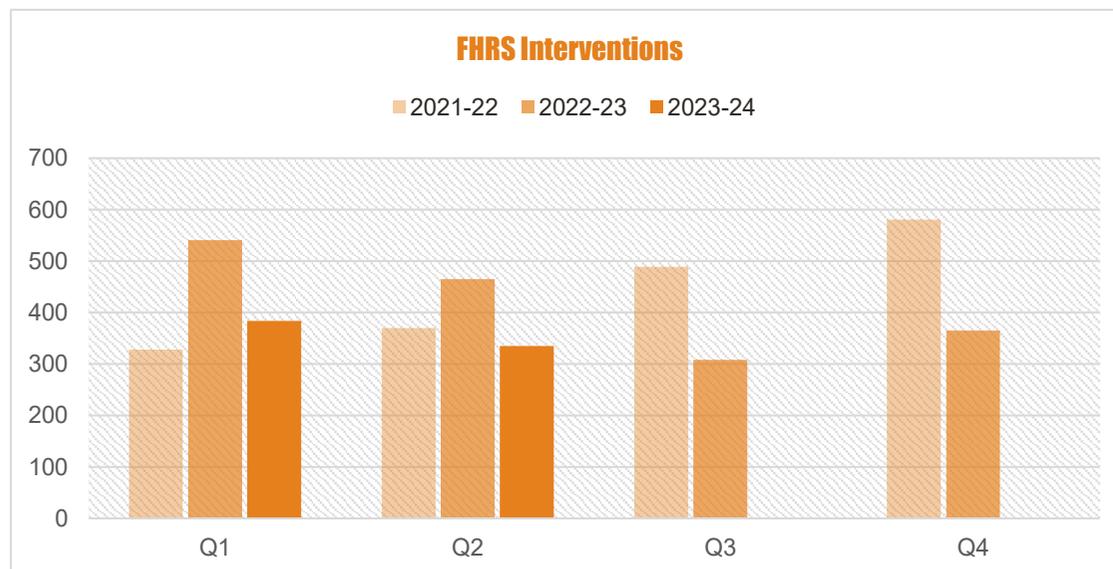
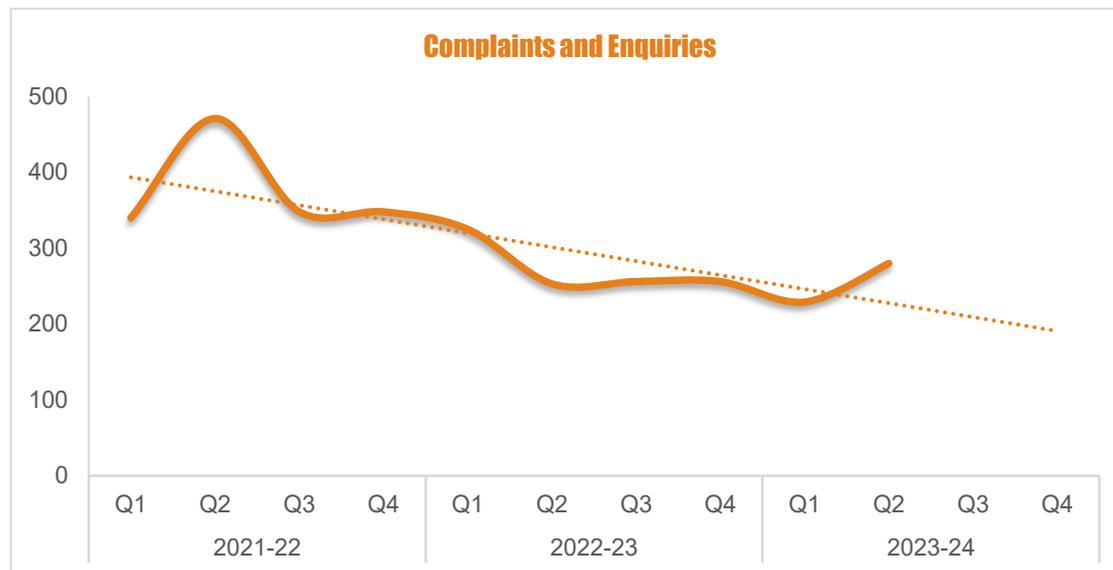
Food Safety

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.

Comments

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 37% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 11% compared to 2022-23. In general terms, a higher proportion of food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates. Based on the 233 complaints recorded during quarter one, 71% have related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (e.g. poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects), whilst 29% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Of the 719 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year to date, 22 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to takeaways, restaurants, or pubs.

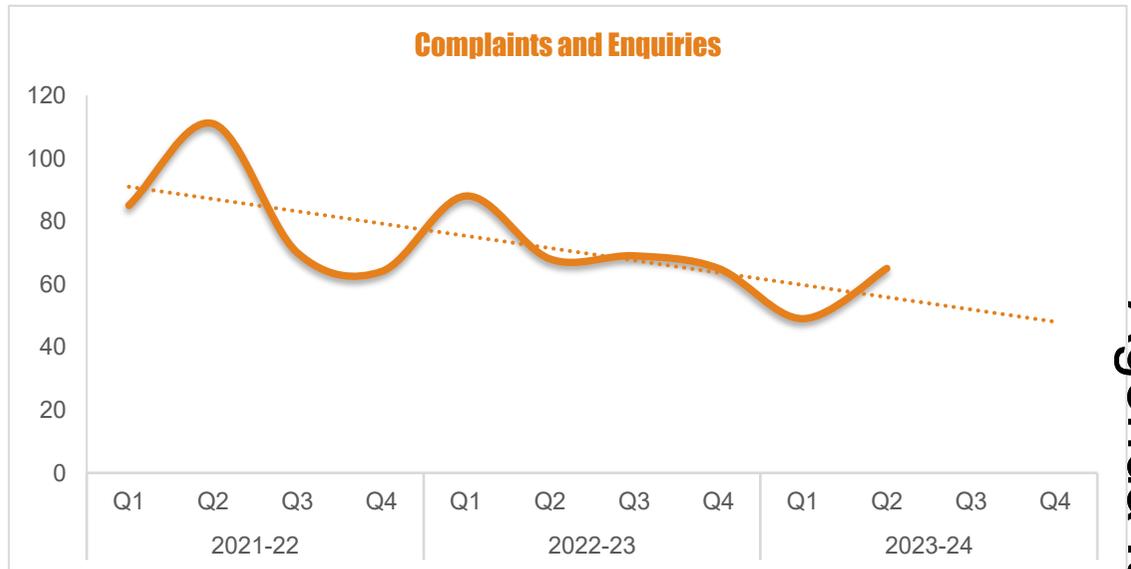


Health and Safety

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.

Comments

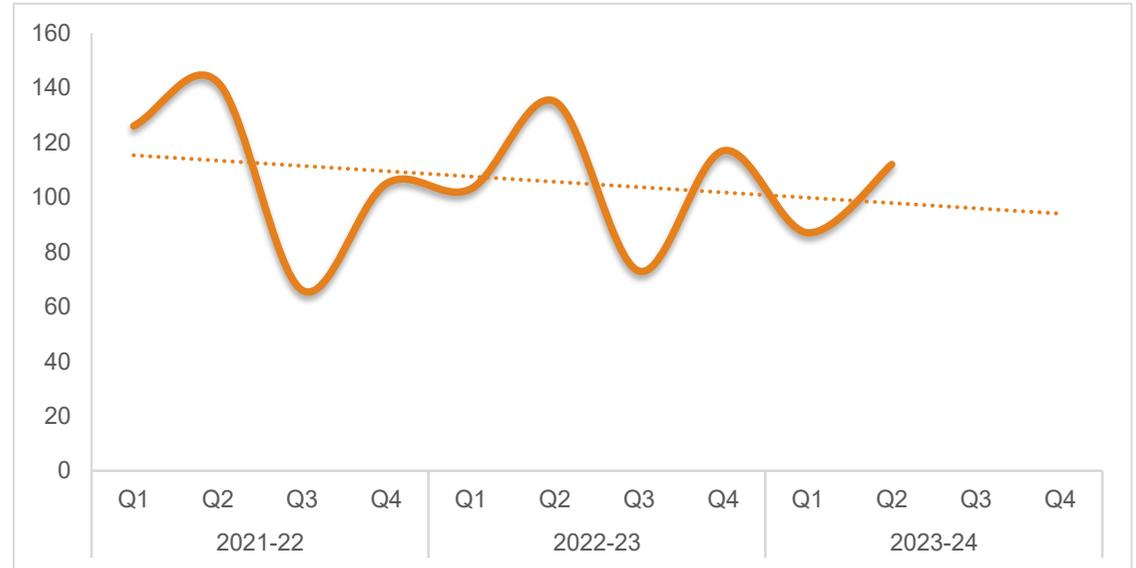
The number of health and safety at work cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 32% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 18% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 46% of cases have been reports of accidents, with 79% of these cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. Slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level or from height) continue to be the most prominent cause of accidents occurring in workplaces.



Information Requests

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

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



Licensing

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.

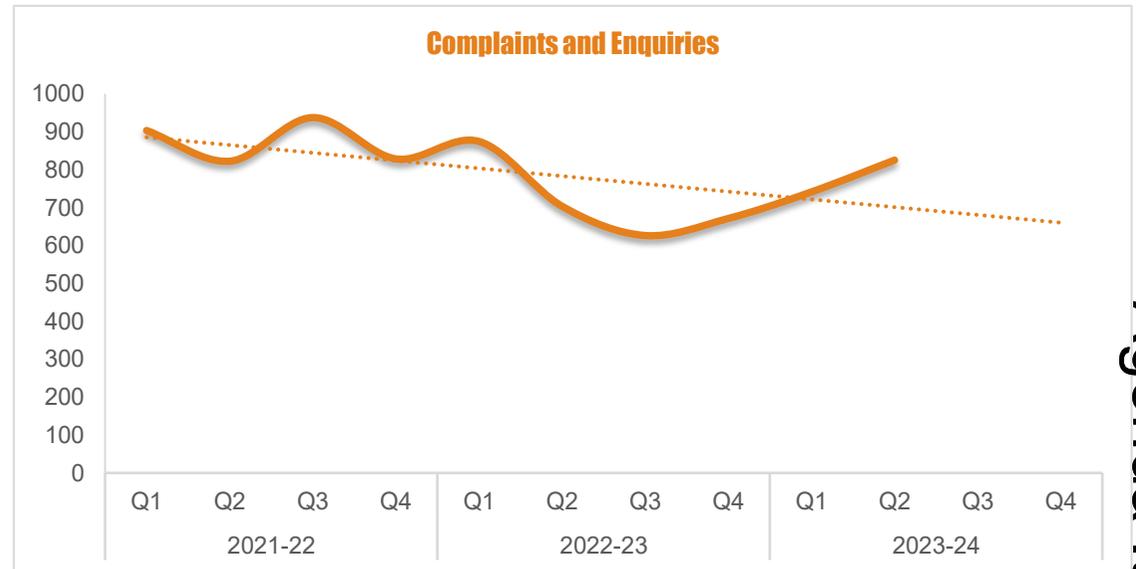
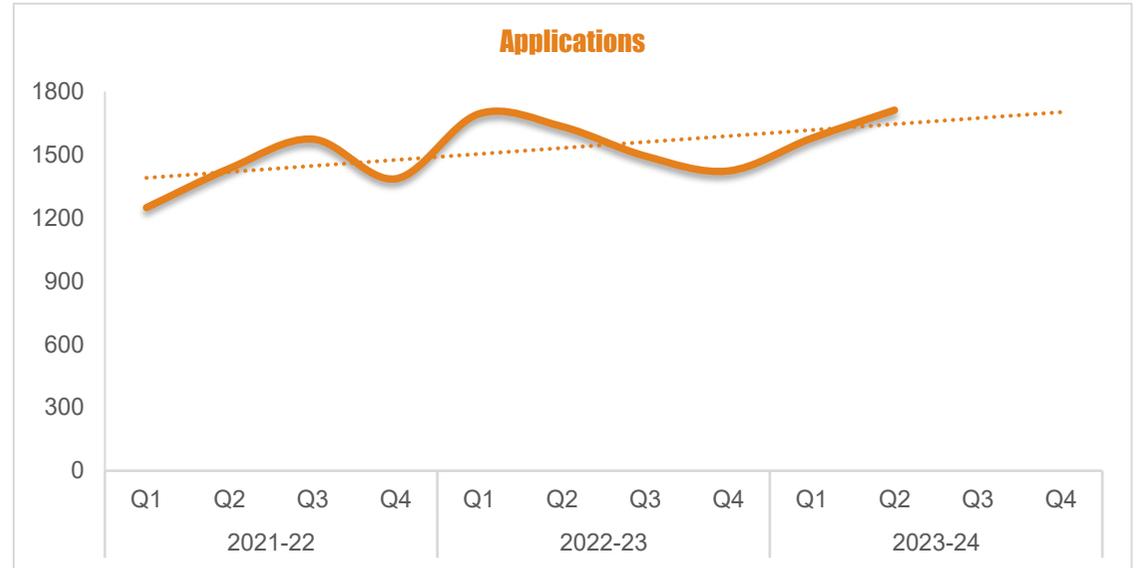
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

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

Comments

The number of licensing cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is an increase of 10% compared to 2021-22, but a reduction of 1% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 68% of cases have been applications and registrations; with 29% of these cases relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicle licences and 27% relating to temporary events.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed activity or unlicensed operators. Based on the 339 complaints recorded during the year to date, 149 have related to taxi licensing, 103 have related to alcohol licensing, and 68 have related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).

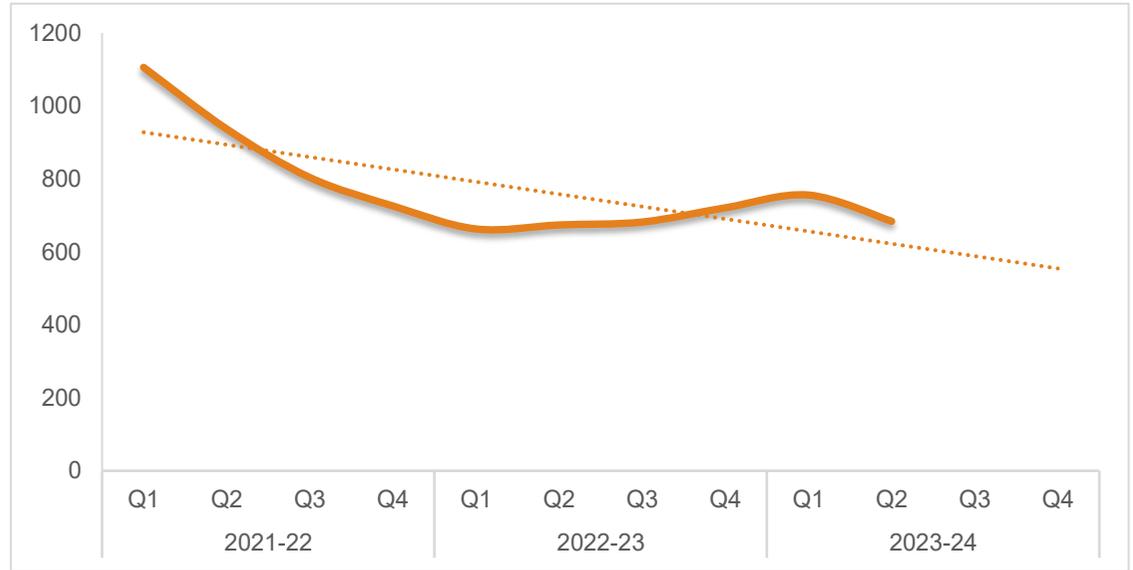


Planning

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



Comments

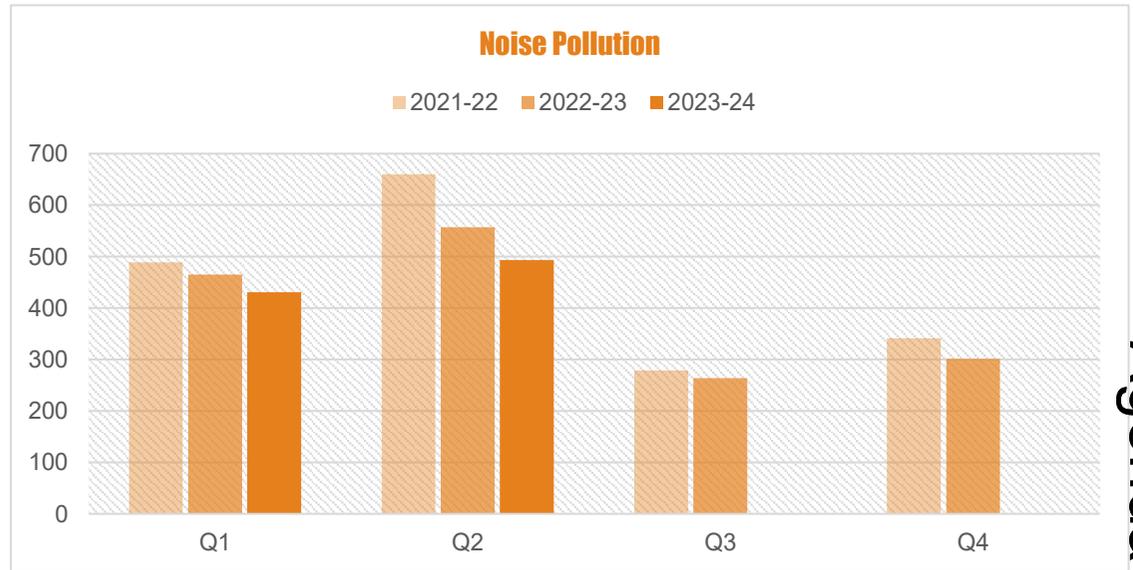
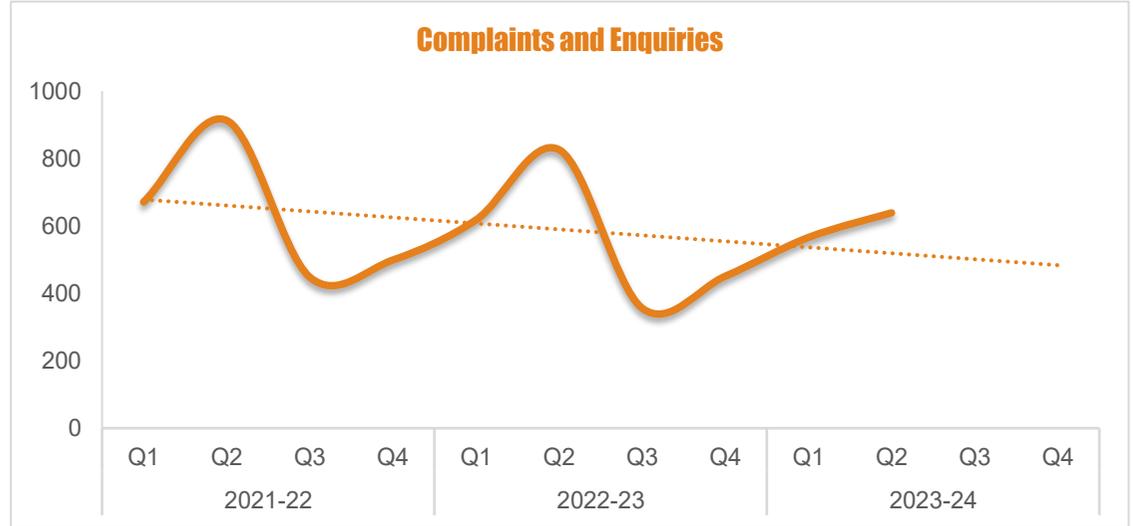
The number of planning enquiries completed by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 30% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 8% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 45% have related to contaminated land. Around 16% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

Pollution

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.

Comments

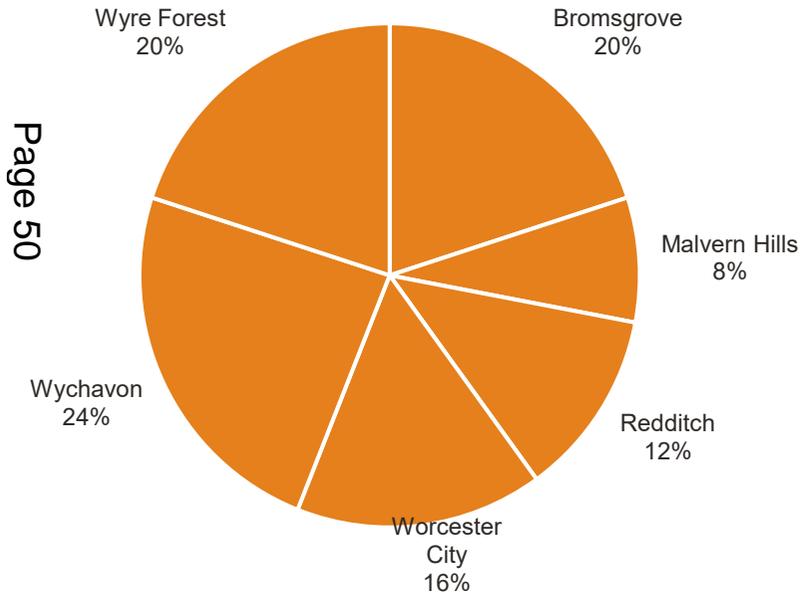
The number of pollution cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 24% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 17% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that case totals are broadly in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 77% of cases have related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 11% of cases have related to nuisances caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites.



Noise

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.

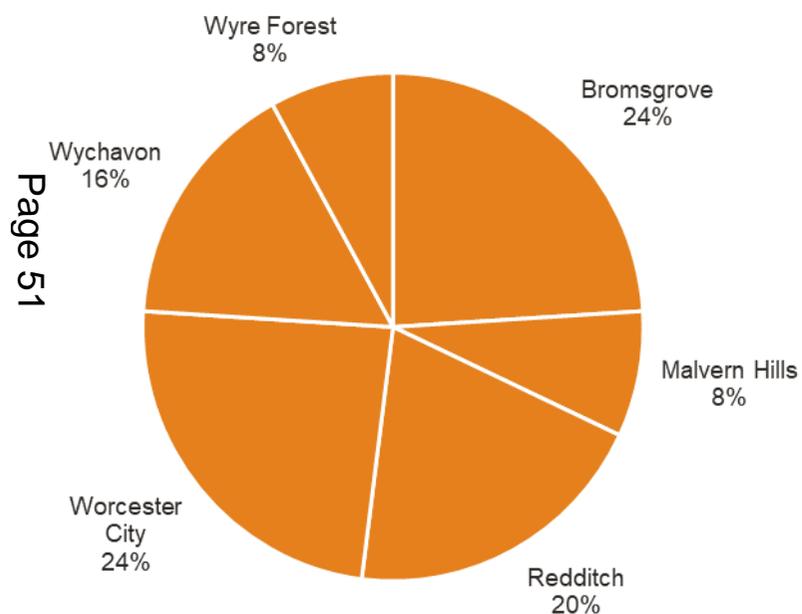


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Avoncroft	18	3,451	5.22
Ombersley	11	2,459	4.47
Honeybourne And Pebworth	12	2,844	4.22
Cathedral	44	11,760	3.74
Central (Redditch)	22	6,841	3.22
Lowes Hill	8	2,854	2.80
Alvechurch South	8	3,105	2.58
Wells	8	3,256	2.46
Priory	10	4,384	2.28
Dodderhill	6	2,809	2.14
Droitwich West	11	5,217	2.11
Saint John	18	8,736	2.06
Winyates	16	8,139	1.97
Perryfields	3	1,557	1.93
Droitwich Central	5	2,621	1.91
Bewdley And Rock	16	8,457	1.89
Mitton	19	10,110	1.88
Upton Snodsbury	5	2,705	1.85
Matchborough	11	6,029	1.82
Aggborough And Spennells	16	8,774	1.82
Blakebrook And Habberley South	17	9,350	1.82
Broadwaters	17	9,381	1.81
Arboretum	11	6,130	1.79
Warndon	10	5,661	1.77
Marlbrook	5	2,878	1.74

Noise (2022/23)

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 last financial year and has been taken from the 2022-23 Activity Report.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Marlbrook	16	2,878	5.56
Lickhill	11	2,409	4.57
Arboretum	24	6,130	3.92
Warndon	22	5,661	3.89
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw	32	8,282	3.86
Perryfields	6	1,557	3.85
Rainbow Hill	20	5,418	3.69
Cathedral	43	11,760	3.66
Teme Valley	7	2,059	3.40
Greenlands	32	9,462	3.38
Church Hill	27	7,991	3.38
Omersley	8	2,459	3.25
Honeybourne And Pebworth	9	2,844	3.16
Lowes Hill	9	2,854	3.15
Gorse Hill	18	5,764	3.12
Evesham South	16	5,429	2.95
Foley Park And Hoobrook	31	10,689	2.90
Abbey	19	6,719	2.83
Nunnery	23	8,193	2.81
Droitwich South West	14	4,994	2.80
Batchley And Brockhill	25	8,930	2.80
Priory	12	4,384	2.74
Charford	10	3,677	2.72
Barnt Green And Hopwood	8	2,951	2.71
Rock Hill	8	2,970	2.69

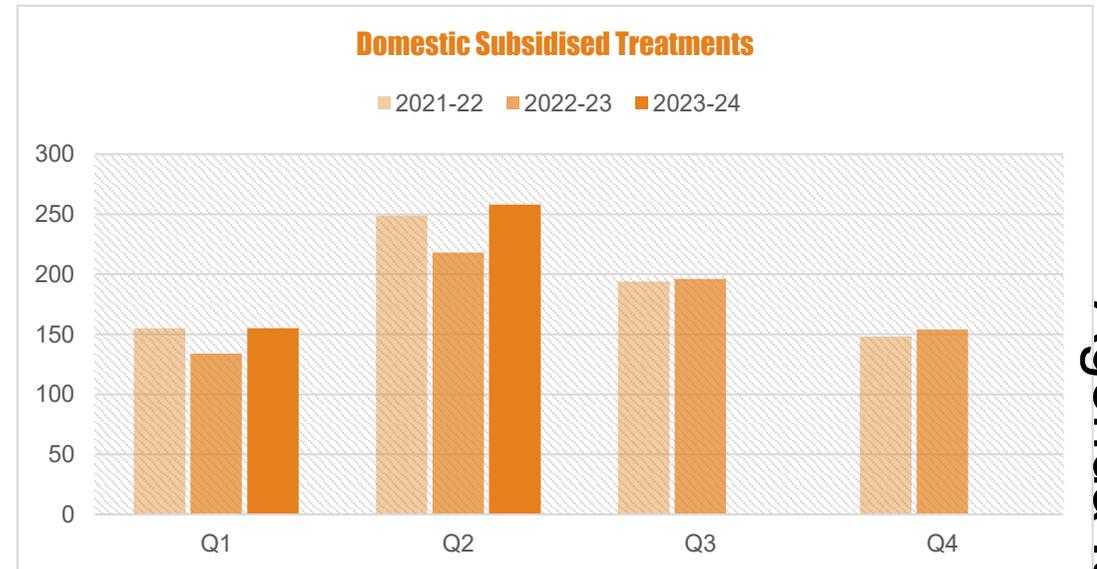
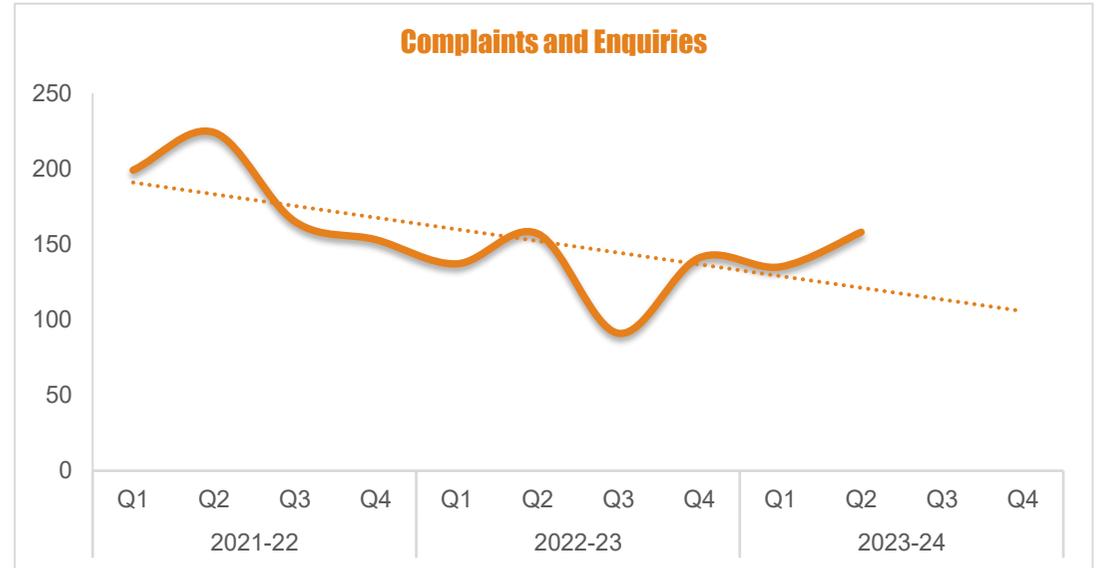
Public Health

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.

Comments

The number of public health cases recorded by WRS during the year to date is a reduction of 31% compared to 2021-22, but consistent with 2022-23. Approximately 60% of cases have related to pest control; such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquires about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest control issues caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 25% of cases have been complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 413 domestic treatments undertaken during the year to date, approximately 41% have been due to issues with rats and 62% have been due to issues with pests at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.

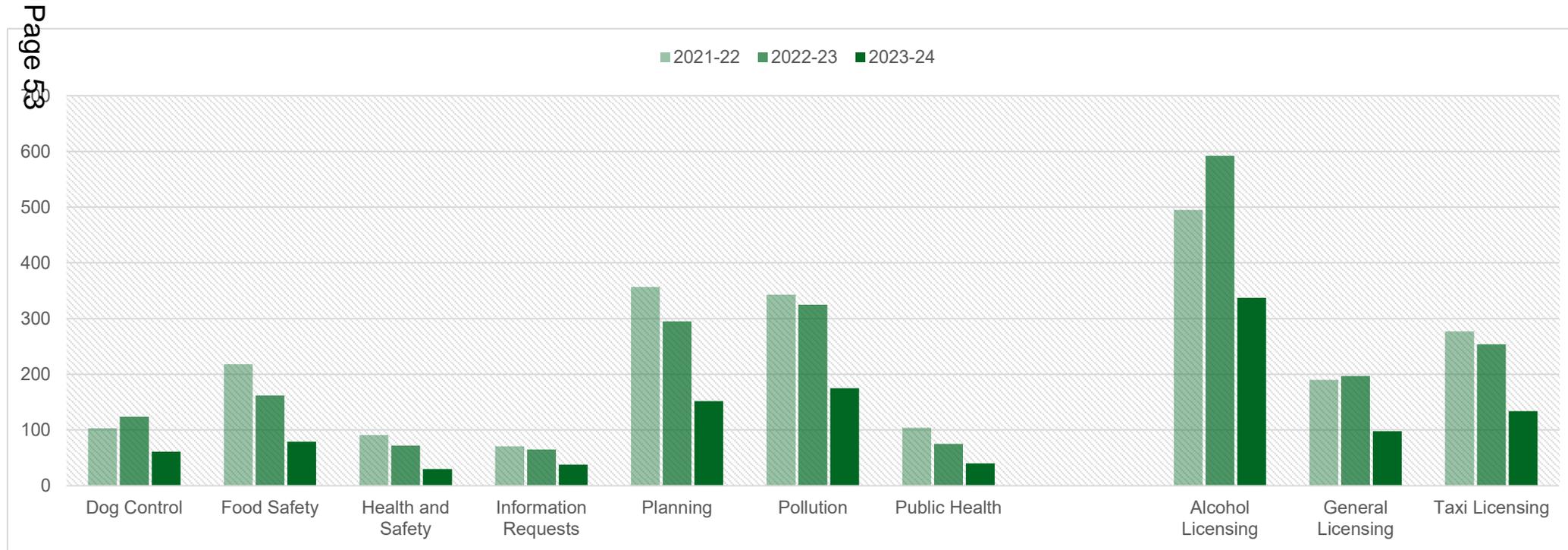
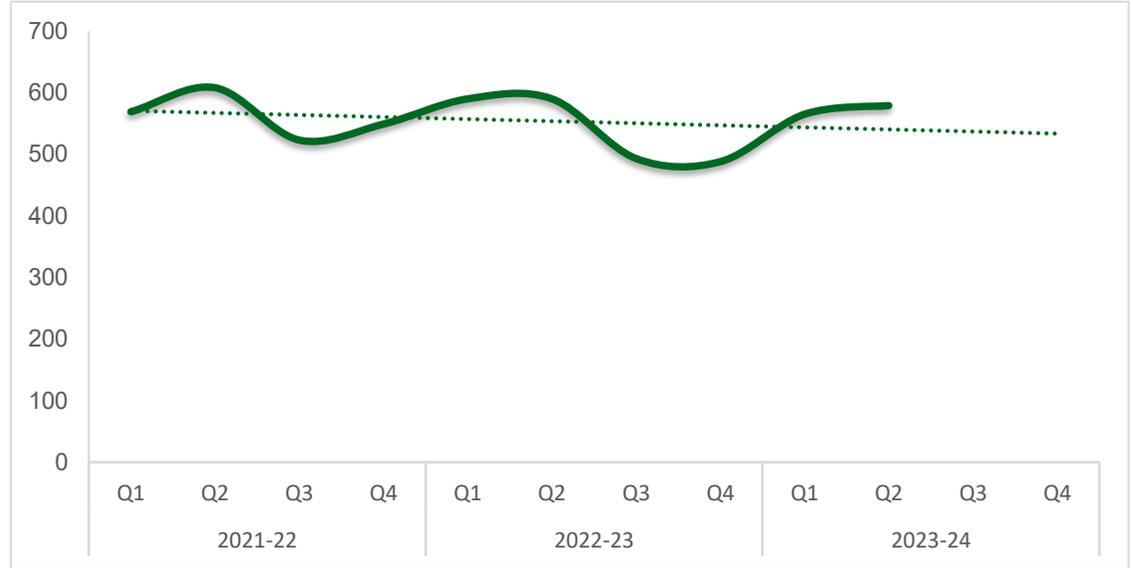


Public Health

Bromsgrove

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.

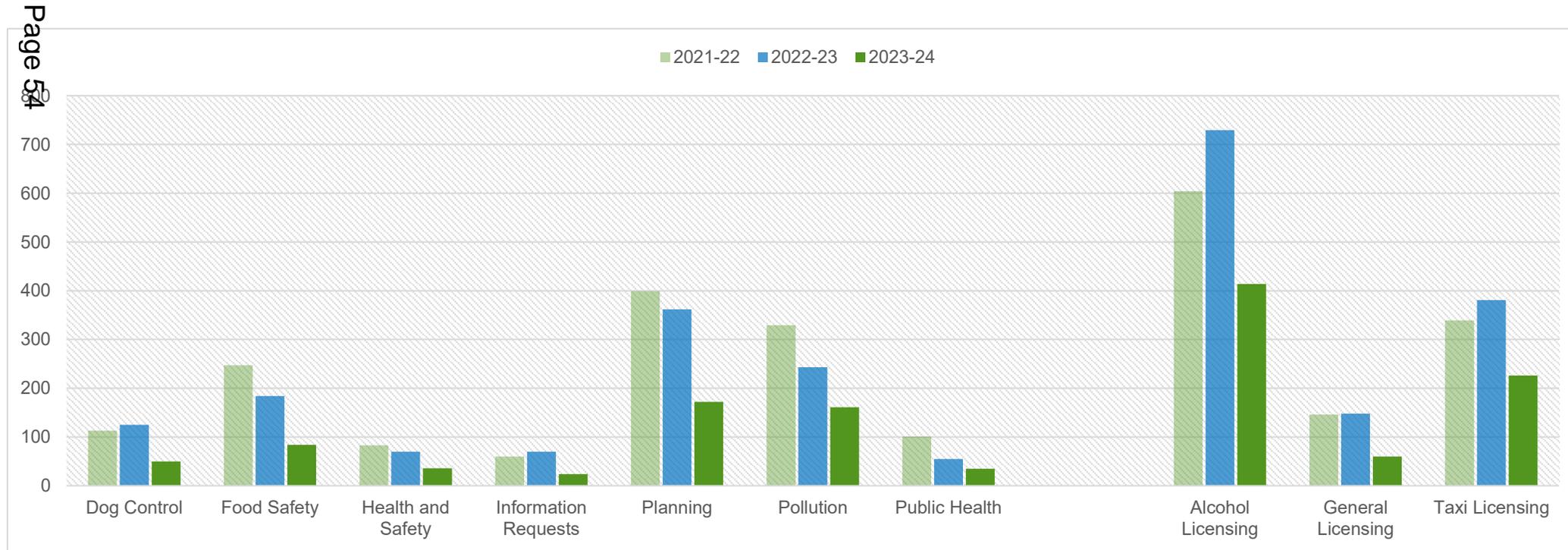
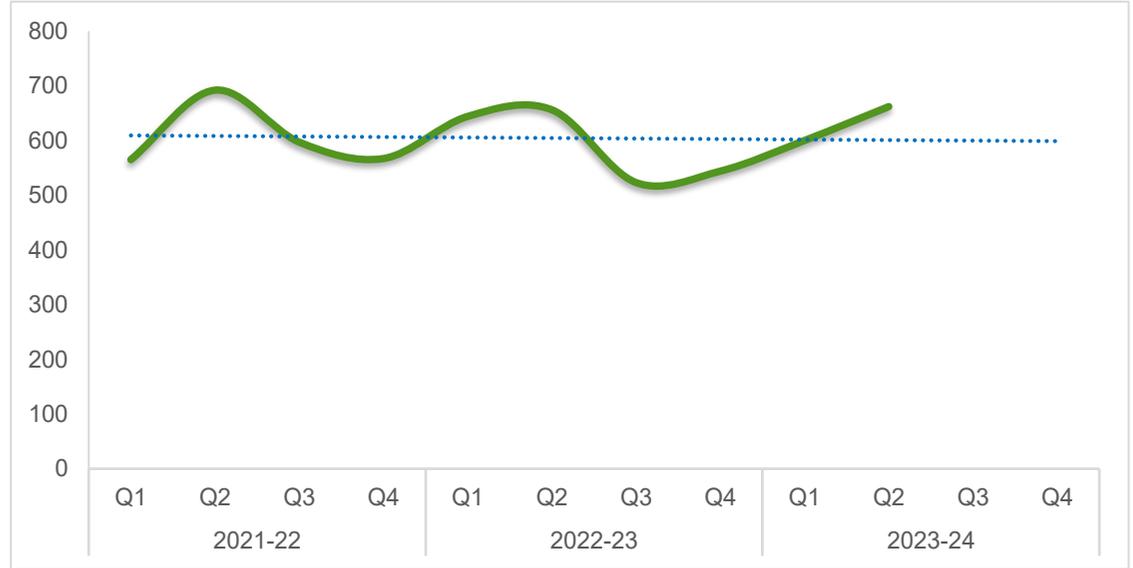
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Malvern Hills

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.

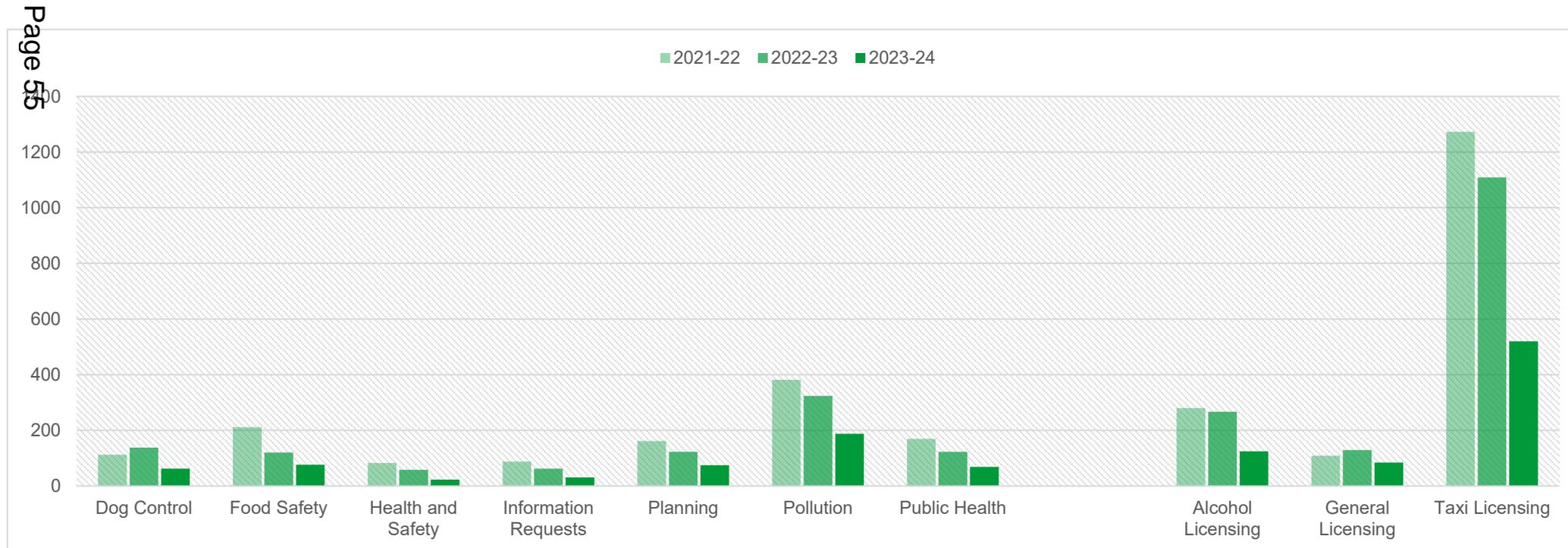
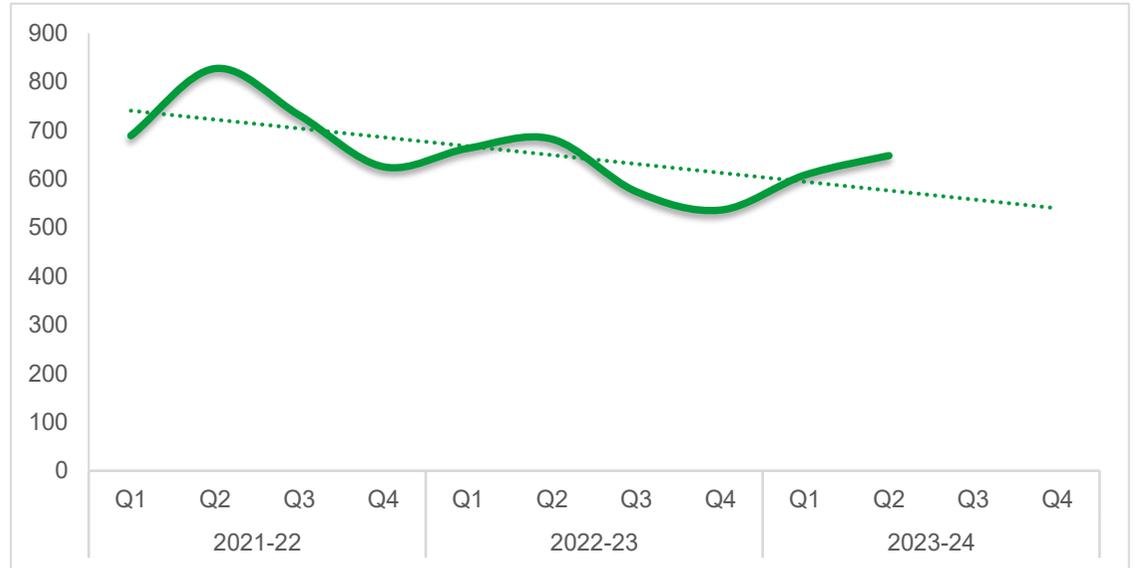
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Redditch

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.

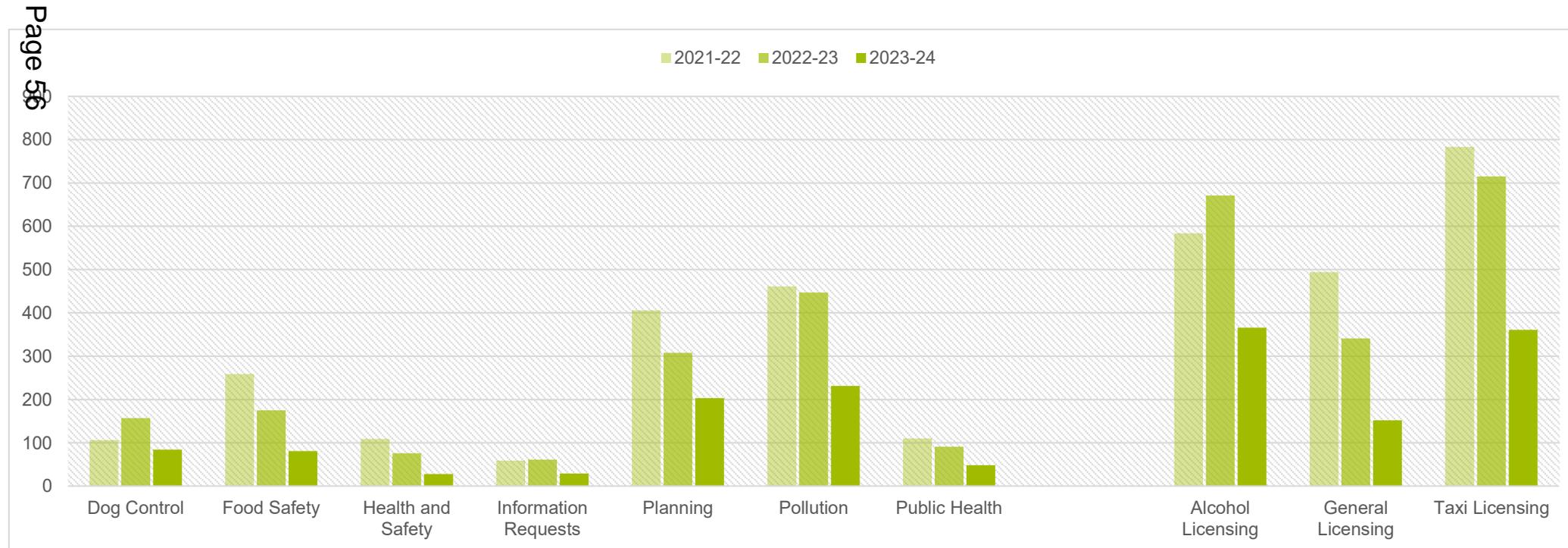
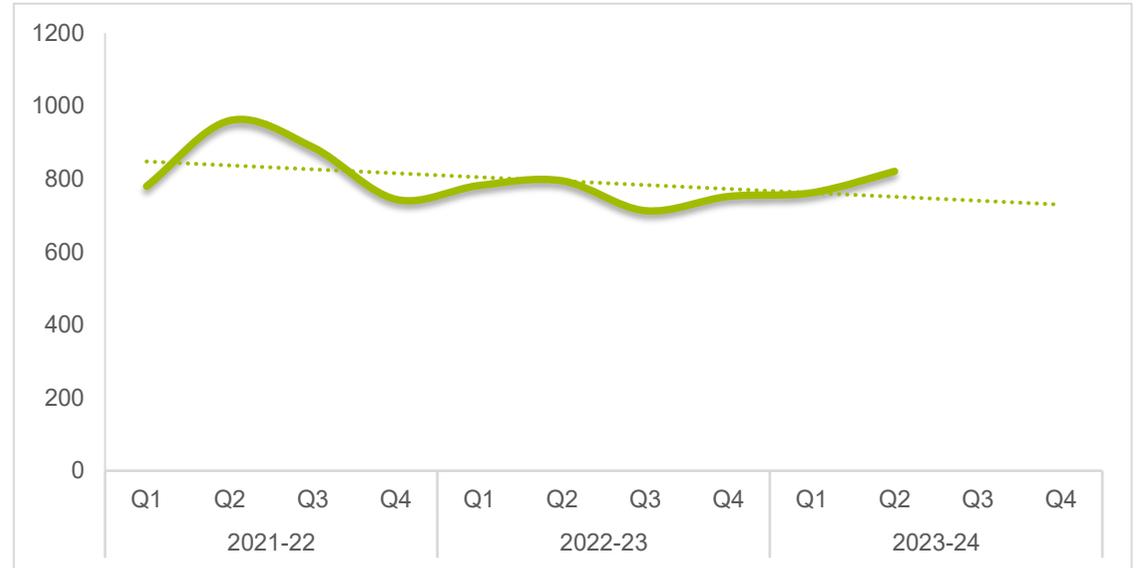
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Worcester City

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.

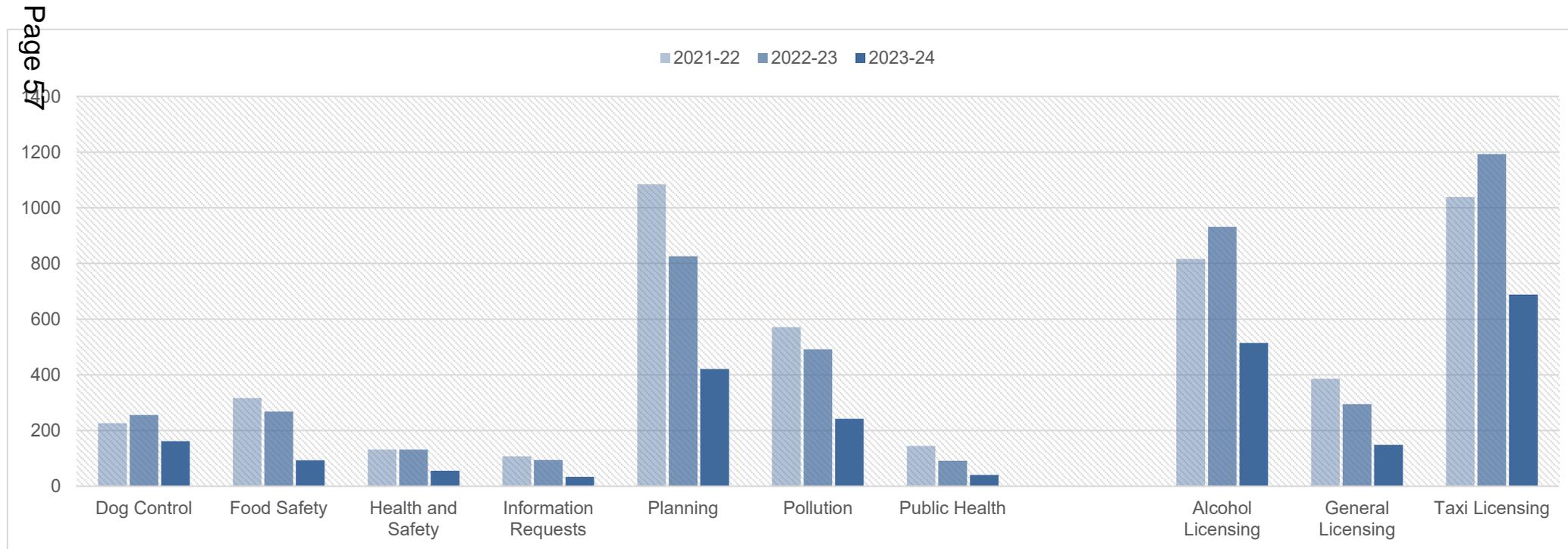
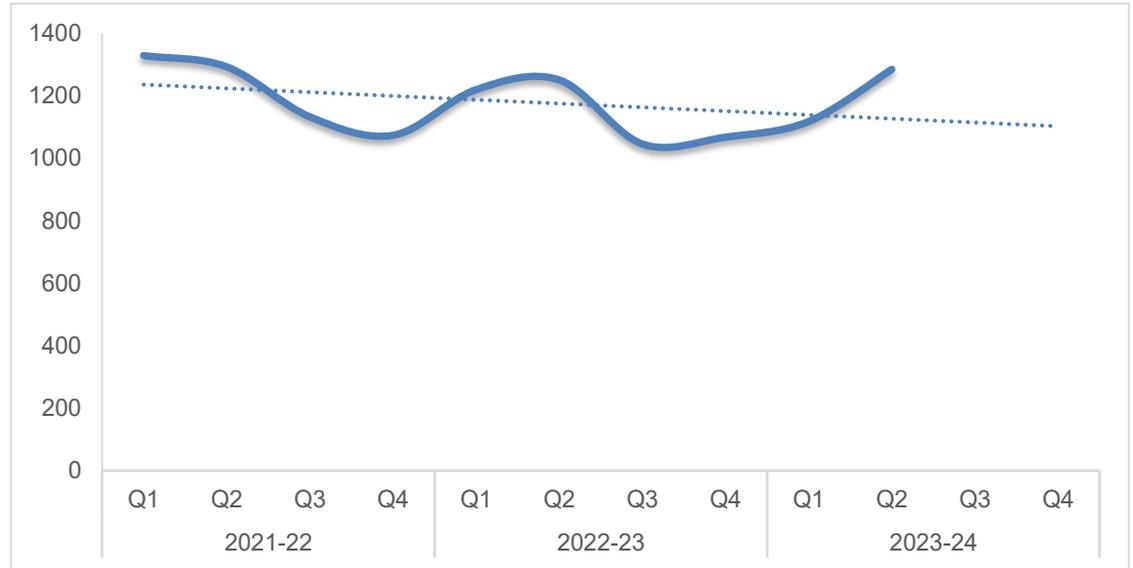
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Wychavon

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.

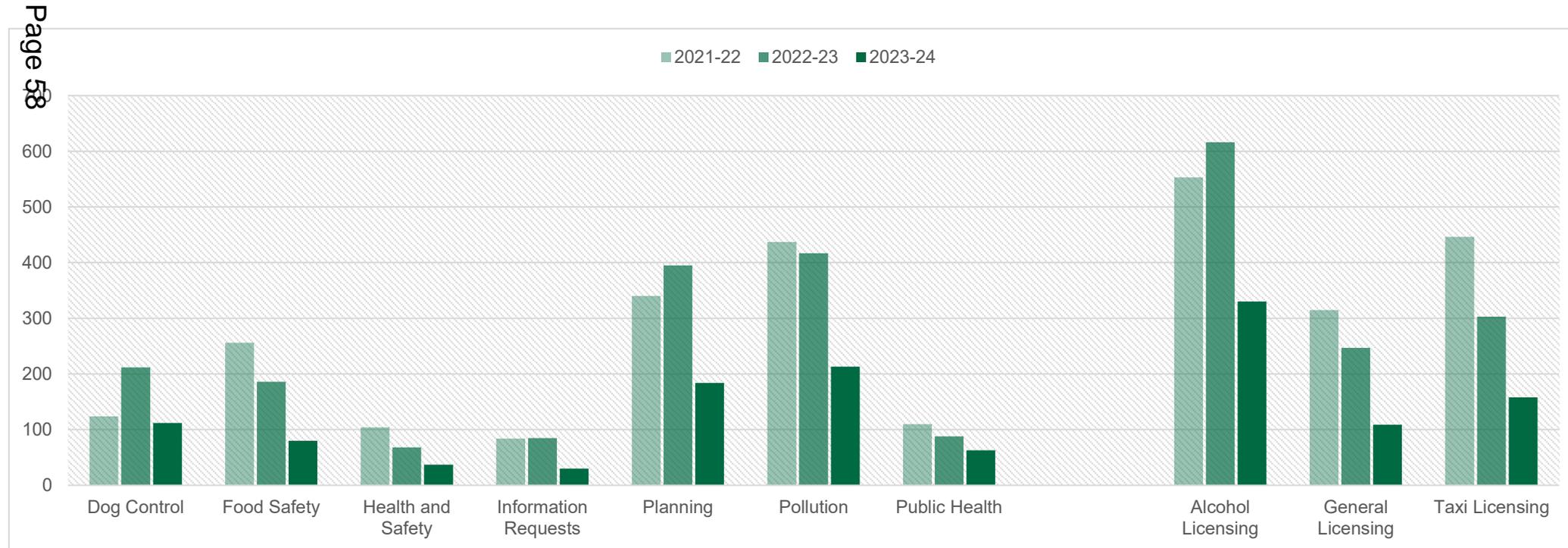
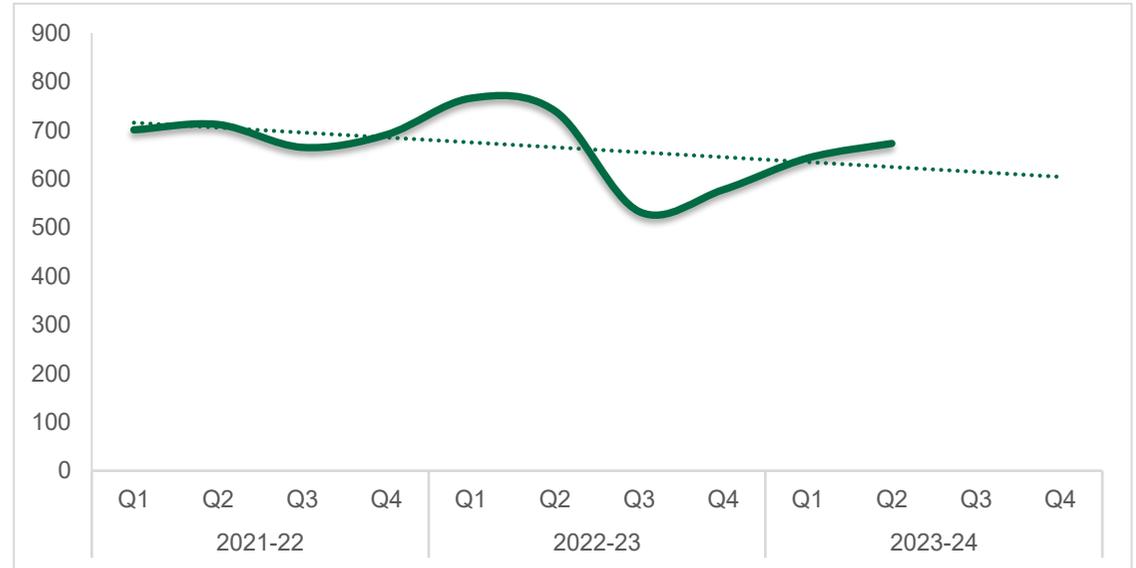
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



Wyre Forest

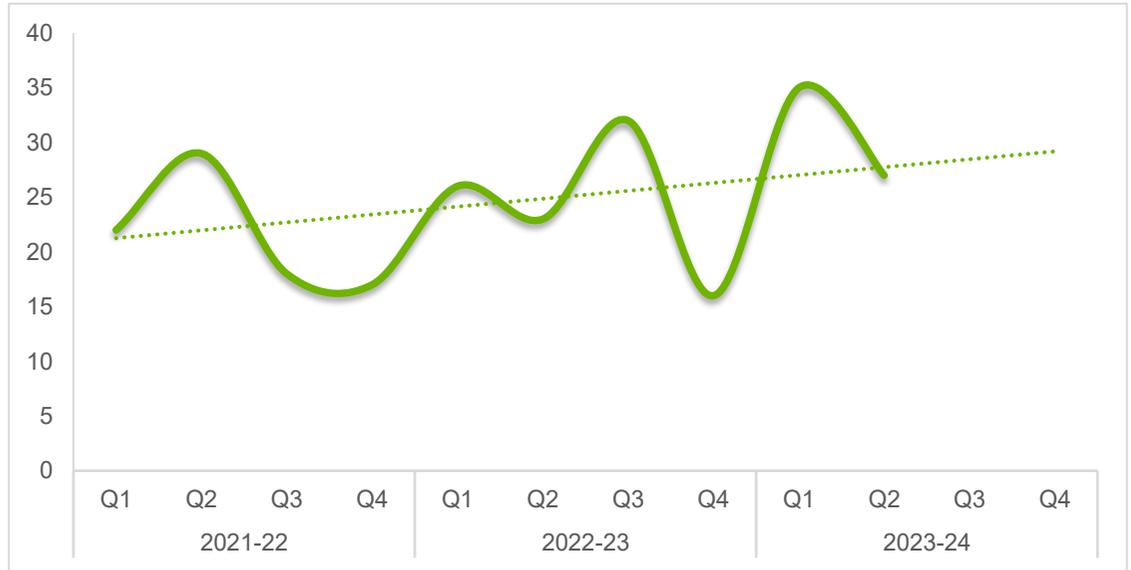
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



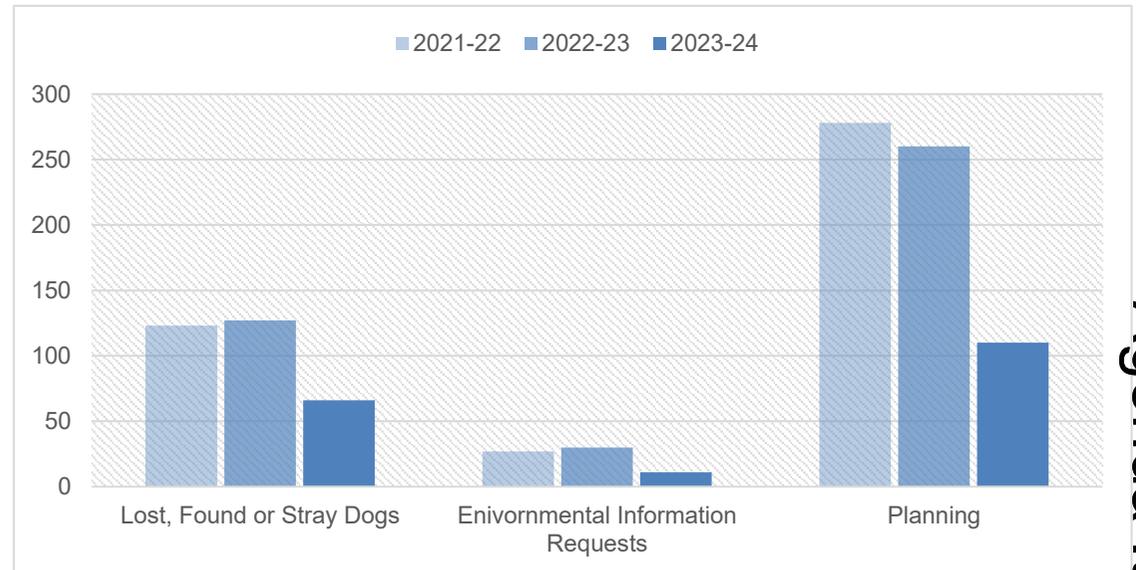
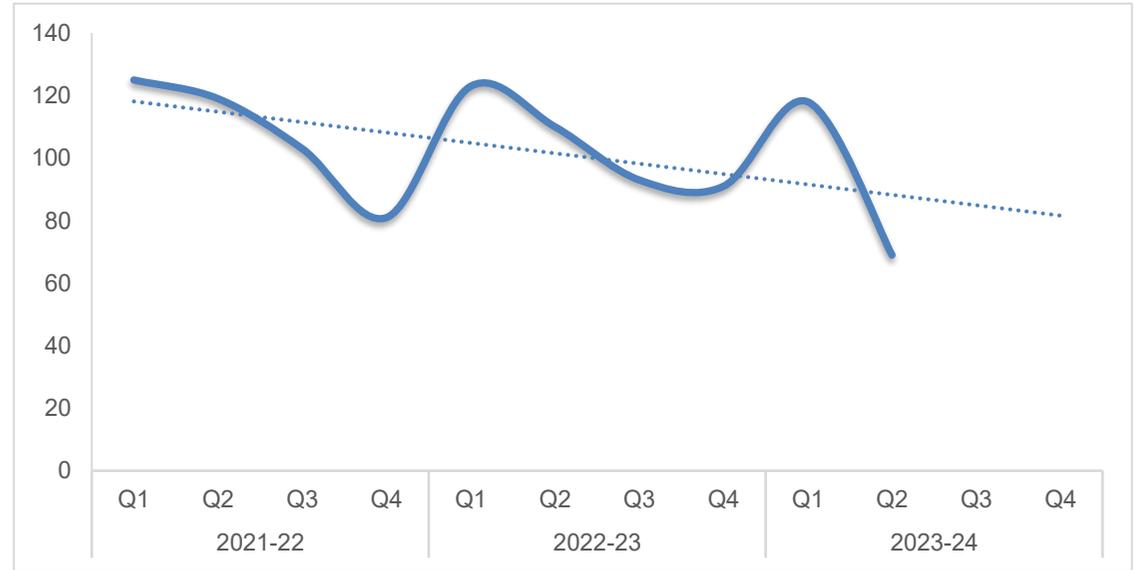
Cheltenham

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. Having said that, post-pandemic stray dog numbers have been increasing year on year following the issues widely reported about dog socialisation and anxiety since as well as the current cost of living crisis.



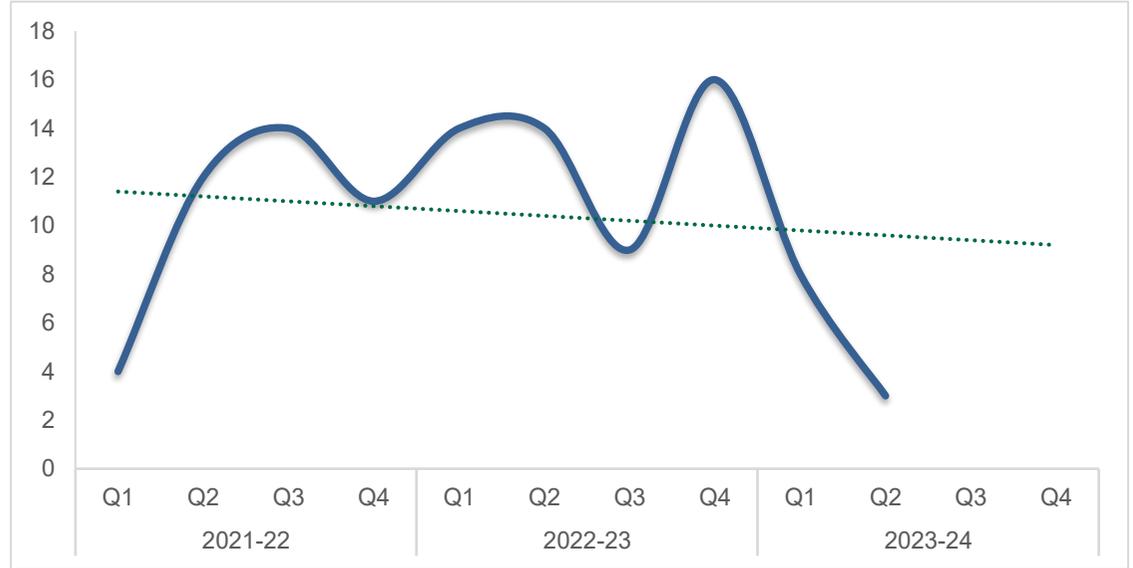
The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing 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. The numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as the numbers are plateauing and there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service continues to deal with environmental information requests and planning enquiries.



South Gloucestershire

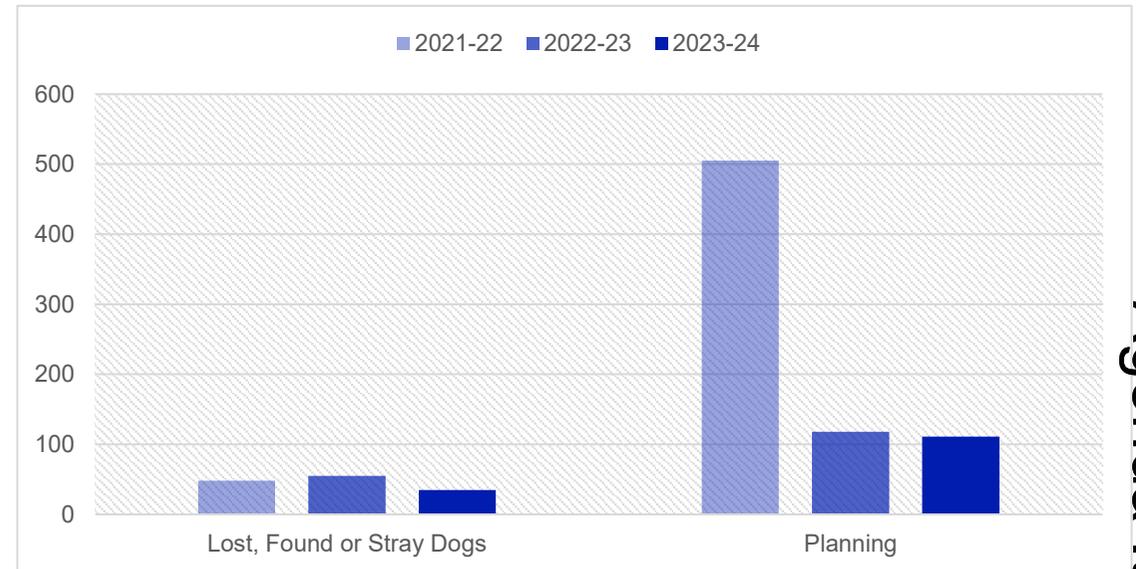
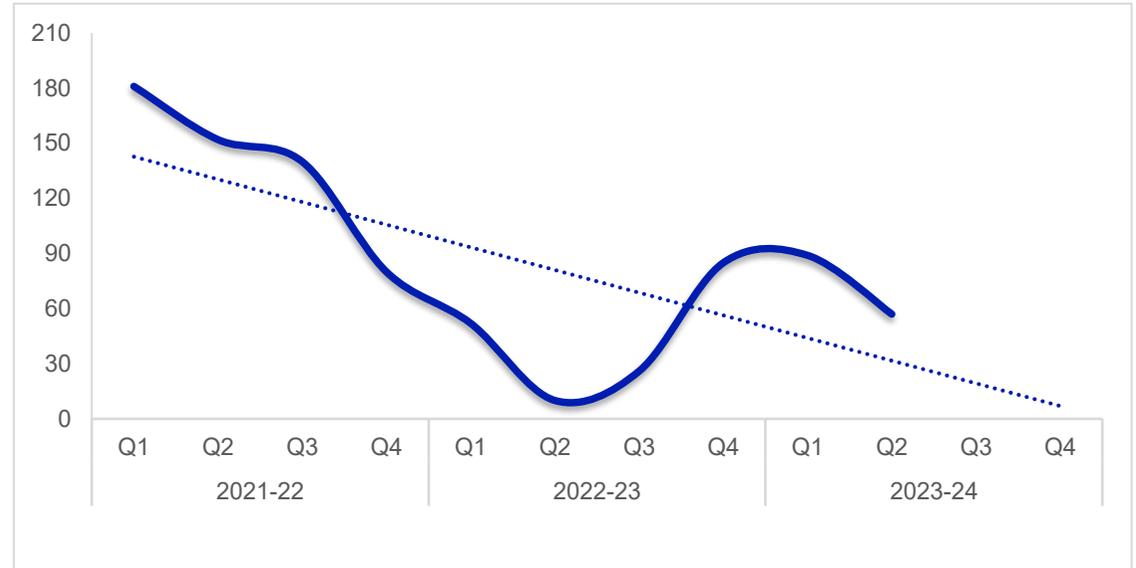
South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex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



Tewkesbury

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, however, this is being closely monitored as there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service continues to deal with planning enquiries and has recently been providing Private Water supplies sampling and managerial support to the Environmental Protection team at Tewkesbury.





WRS Board
16th November 2023

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICE BUDGETS 2024/25 – 2026/27

Recommendation

It is recommended that the WRS Board:

- 1.1 Approve the 2024/25 gross expenditure budget of £4,572k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Approve the 2024/25 income budget of £991k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Approve the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 24/25 onwards:

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	518	14.45
Malvern Hills District Council	471	13.13
Redditch Borough Council	633	17.68
Worcester City Council	575	16.07
Wychavon District	840	23.43
Wyre Forest District Council	546	15.24
Total	3,583	

1.4 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure.

Council	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000
Bromsgrove District Council	17	16
Malvern Hills District Council	15	15
Redditch Borough Council	20	20
Worcester City Council	18	18
Wychavon District Council	27	27
Wyre Forest District Council	18	17
Total	115	113

1.5 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to increase in hosting costs.

Council	Increase in Rent £000	Increase in ICT Hosting £000	Increase in Support Hosting £000
Bromsgrove District Council	0.7	0.6	0.7
Malvern Hills District Council	0.6	0.6	0.6
Redditch Borough Council	0.8	0.8	0.9
Worcester City Council	0.7	0.7	0.8
Wychavon District Council	1.1	1.1	1.1
Wyre Forest District Council	0.7	0.7	0.8
Total	4.6	4.5	4.9

1.6 Approve the additional partner liabilities for 2024/25 in relation to three Technical Officers.

Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	8	
Malvern Hills District Council	5	14	
Redditch Borough Council	7	2	
Worcester City Council	6	3	35
Wychavon District Council	8	12	
Wyre Forest District Council	6	5	
Total	37	44	35

Introduction/Summary

The production of a robust budget position enables partners and the service to manage the financial position of the organisation.

Report

This report presents the revenue budget for 2024/25 – 2026/27 in relation to Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

Following discussions, the Officer members of the Board have agreed that, to support Worcester City to achieve its budgetary requirements for 2024/5, that the starting point for their contribution before the additions for salary pressures, etc, would be £30K less than last year. Officers have identified several areas where work may be varied and detail of this will be dealt with at officer level in the coming months, ahead of the new financial year.

What these discussions have identified is how interconnected the workload has become within the WRS delivery model and how much harder it is than 10-years ago to develop bespoke savings for individual partners. Officers have now shared their own medium-term financial positions with one another, so all are now clear on the financial environment within which the service is operating.

One other minor change relates to the way Bromsgrove licenses are addressed. Some £8K was previously included in their contribution to address the cost of taxi testing at the council garage. The decision has been taken to move to the garage

charging the trade directly for the tests, so the Bromsgrove contribution figure has been reduced accordingly before additions for uplifts are made. A similar exercise was undertaken when Worcester City made similar changes as part of commissioning new garage capacity for its taxi tests, so longer standing Board members may recall this.

The following elements are included in this report for WRS Board Member's Attention:

- WRS Financial Plan 2024/25 – 2026/27 – Appendix 1
- WRS Partner Contributions Breakdown 2024/25 – 2026/27 – Appendix 2
- WRS Income Budget Breakdown 2024/25 – Appendix 3

WRS Budgets 2024/25

Appendix 1 shows the 2024-25 – 2026/27 budget breakdown for the district councils' partnership.

The following assumptions have been made in relation to the projections:

- The enhanced pay award for 2023/24 was reserved from 2022/23 surplus. This agreement was finalised on 2nd Nov 23 and has been incorporated into the 2024/25 budget figures. WRS are not able to fund this increase year on year, therefore an increase in partner funding will be required.
- 3% pay award across all staff for 2024/25, 2% for 2025/26 & 2026/27. This will be subject to the National Pay Negotiations that are ongoing and therefore the final position will reflect any formally agreed increases, the budget also includes any employee entitled to an incremental increase.
- Increase in Rent of £4.6k in 2024/25, a further 4% in 2025/2026 and 2026/2027
- Increase in ICT Hosting of £4.4k, a further 4% in 2025/26 and 2026/27
- Increase in Support Hosting of £4.9k in 2024-25, a further 3% in 2025/26 and 2026-27
- Total partner contribution as included in Appendix 2
- Income projections as included at Appendix 3.
- No inflationary increases in supplies and services or transport.
- Pension back-funding to be paid by all partners.

The unavoidable salary pressures are not able to be met by WRS making additional income, therefore, an increase to partner funding will be required of:

Council	2023/24 £000	2024/25 Cum £000	2025/26 Cum £000	2026/27 Cum £000
Bromsgrove District Council	17	33	46	58
Malvern Hills District Council	15	30	42	52
Redditch Borough Council	20	40	56	71
Worcester City Council	18	36	51	64
Wychavon District Council	27	54	74	93
Wyre Forest District Council	18	35	48	61
Total	115	228	317	399

The contract for Rent and ICT support with Wyre Forest states that the increase will be in-line with the RPI for the current year, therefore the actual increase may change in April 24. For 2025/26 and 2026/27 a further 4% has been added to both rent and ICT support. For hosting support, we have added a further 3% for 2025/26 and 2026/27.

These pressures are not able to be met by WRS, therefore, an increase to partner funding will be required of:

Council	2024/25 Increase in Rent	2024/25 Increase in ICT Hosting	2024/25 Increase in Support Hosting
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Bromsgrove District Council	0.7	0.6	0.7
Malvern Hills District Council	0.6	0.6	0.6
Redditch Borough Council	0.8	0.8	0.9
Worcester City Council	0.7	0.7	0.8
Wychavon District Council	1.1	1.1	1.1
Wyre Forest District Council	0.7	0.7	0.8
Total	4.6	4.5	4.9

In addition to the base budget there are three additional technical officers working on income generation, animal activity and gull control. We are unable to include these officers into the base budget as the income generation officer is an additional post on the establishment to bring in additional income agreed by partner councils and the animal activity and gull control officer recharge percentage basis is different to the agreed partner recharge allocations.

- Below are the Pension back-funding figures to be paid by partners for 2024/25 and 2025/26, the next actuary valuation by Worcestershire County Council will be 2026/27.

Council	Pension Back Funding 2024-25 £000	Pension Back Funding 2025-26 £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	6
Malvern Hills District Council	5	5
Redditch Borough Council	6	7
Worcester City Council	6	6
Wychavon District Council	9	9
Wyre Forest District Council	6	6
Total	37	39

Financial Implications

None other than those stated in the report

Sustainability

None as a direct result of this paper

Contact point

Peter Carpenter – peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Background Papers

Detailed financial business case

Account description	Revised Budget		Budget		Comments
	2023 / 2024		2024 / 2025		
	£000's		£000's		
Employees					
Monthly salaries	3,364	3,667	3,765	3,857	Pay award applied 3% 24/25, 2% 25/26 & 26/27
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0	0	
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2	2	
Employers' liability insurance	25	21	21	21	
Employees' professional subscriptions	2	3	3	3	
Sub-Total - Employees	3,393	3,692	3,790	3,882	
Premises					
Rents	72	77	80	83	Increase of 5% applied 24/25 & 4% 25/26 & 26/27
Room hire	2	2	2	2	
Trade Waste	1	1	1	1	
Sub-Total - Premises	75	80	83	86	
Transport					
Vehicle repairs/maint'ce	3	3	3	3	
Diesel fuel	8	8	8	8	
Licences	1	1	1	1	
Contract hire of vehicles	4	4	4	4	
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5	5	
Van Lease	9	9	9	9	
Fares & Car Parking	5	5	5	5	
Car allowances	58	50	50	50	
Sub-Total - Transport	93	84	84	84	
Supplies & Service					
Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	30	29	29	29	
Materials	9	9	9	9	
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2	2	
Training fees	23	23	23	23	
General insurances	19	16	16	16	
Printing and stationery	17	17	17	17	
Books and publications	2	2	2	2	
Postage/packaging	11	11	11	11	
ICT	67	67	67	67	
Telephones	21	37	37	37	
Taxi Tests	22	14	14	14	
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26	26	
Support service recharges	124	126	130	134	
Support service recharges - ICT	70	74	77	80	
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	441	452	459	466	

	Budget 2023 / 2024 £000's	Budget 2024 / 2025 £000's	Budget 2025 / 2026 £000's	Budget 2026 / 2027 £000's	
Contractors					
Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	269	246	241	241	Reduced due to Worcs City gull work
Advertising (general)	5	6	6	6	
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13	13	
Sub-Total - Contractors	287	264	259	259	
Total Expenditure Budget	4,288	4,572	4,675	4,777	
Income					
Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-524	-407	-407	-407	
Funding from Bromsgrove & Redditch for Enforcement Work	-195	-195	-201	-208	
Sub-Total - Income	-524	-602	-608	-615	
Income					
Funding from partners for Technical Officers	-143	-117	-115	-117	
Funding from partners for Increase in Rent		-5	-8	-11	
Funding from partners for Increase in ICT		-4	-7	-11	
Funding from partners for Increase in Hosting Charges		-5	-9	-13	
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 23-24		-115	-115	-115	
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 24-25		-113	-113	-113	
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 25-26			-88	-88	
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 26-27				-82	
Sub-Total - Income	-143	-359	-455	-550	
Additional Income					
Agreed reduced charge to Worcester City Council		-30	-30	-30	
Sub-Total - Income	0	-30	-30	-30	
Total Income Budget	-667	-991	-1,093	-1,195	See Appendix 3
DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET	3,621	3,581	3,581	3,581	
24-25 Partner Percentages	%s				
Bromsgrove District Council	14.45%				
Malvern Hills District Council	13.13%				
Redditch Borough Council	17.68%				
Worcester City Council	16.07%				
Wychavon District Council	23.43%				
Wyre Forest District Council	15.24%				
Total	100.00%				

	Budget	Change in Taxi Test Policy	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	23-24 & 24-25	2024 / 2025
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Budget 2024 / 25							
Bromsgrove District Council	526	-8		208	2	33	761
Malvern Hills District Council	471			19	2	30	522
Redditch Borough Council	633			9	2	40	685
Worcester City Council	605		-30	44	2	37	658
Wychavon District Council	840			21	3	54	918
Wyre Forest District Council	546			11	2	35	594
Total	3,621	-8	-30	312	14	229	4,138

	Budget	Change in Taxi Test Policy	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2025 / 2026	2025 / 2026	2025 / 2026	2025 / 2026	24-25 & 25-26	23-24, 24-25 & 25-26	Total Partner Contribution
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Budget 2025 / 26							
Bromsgrove District Council	526	-8		215	3	46	782
Malvern Hills District Council	471			19	3	42	535
Redditch Borough Council	633			9	4	56	703
Worcester City Council	605		-30	40	4	51	670
Wychavon District Council	840			21	6	74	941
Wyre Forest District Council	546			12	4	48	610
Total	3,621	-8	-30	316	24	317	4,240

	Budget	Change in Taxi Test Policy	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	24-25, 25-26 & 26-27	23-24, 24-25, 25-26 & 26-27	Total Partner Contribution
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Budget 2026 / 27							
Bromsgrove District Council	526	-8		222	5	58	803
Malvern Hills District Council	471			20	4	52	548
Redditch Borough Council	633			10	6	71	719
Worcester City Council	605		-30	40	6	64	685
Wychavon District Council	840			22	8	93	963
Wyre Forest District Council	546			12	5	61	624
Total	3,621	-8	-30	326	34	399	4,342

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WRS Partner Contribution Breakdown 2024-25 to 2026-27

Council	WRS Approved Budget 23-24	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Pest Control	Tech Officer Income Generation	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Enforcement Officers	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	23-24 - Increased Pay Award Funded from Reserves	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 24-25
	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Bromsgrove District Council	525,743		-8,000	5,479	7,726		194,720	670	649	715	16,665	16,389	760,755
Malvern Hills District Council	470,565			4,979	13,757			609	589	650	15,146	14,895	521,190
Redditch Borough Council	633,443			6,702	2,261			820	794	874	20,389	20,051	685,334
Worcester City Council	605,325	-30,000		6,087	3,392	34,700		745	721	794	18,518	18,212	658,493
Wychavon District Council	839,527			8,883	11,873			1,087	1,052	1,159	27,022	26,575	917,177
Wyre Forest District Council	546,035			5,777	5,465			707	684	754	17,575	17,284	594,280
Total	3,620,637	-30,000	-8,000	37,907	44,474	34,700	194,720	4,638	4,488	4,945	115,314	113,406	4,137,229

Council	WRS Approved Budget 23-24	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Pest Control	Tech Officer Income Generation	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Enforcement Officers	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	23-24 - Increased Pay Award Funded from Reserves	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 25-26
	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Bromsgrove District Council	525,743		-8,000	5,690	7,886		201,242	1,115	1,079	1,272	16,665	16,389	12,770	781,850
Malvern Hills District Council	470,565			5,172	14,040			1,013	981	1,156	15,146	14,895	11,607	534,575
Redditch Borough Council	633,443			6,963	2,308			1,364	1,320	1,556	20,389	20,051	15,624	703,019
Worcester City Council	605,325	-30,000	0	6,324	3,462	30,000		1,239	1,199	1,414	18,518	18,212	14,191	669,883
Wychavon District Council	839,527			9,228	12,117			1,808	1,750	2,063	27,022	26,575	20,707	940,796
Wyre Forest District Council	546,035			6,002	5,578			1,176	1,138	1,342	17,575	17,284	13,468	609,597
Total	3,620,637	-30,000	-8,000	39,379	45,391	30,000	201,242	7,716	7,467	8,802	115,314	113,406	88,367	4,239,721

Council	WRS Approved Budget 23-24	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Pest Control	Tech Officer Income Generation	Tech Officer Animal Activity	Tech Officer Gull Control	Enforcement Officers	Increase in Rent	Increase in ICT Support	Increase in Hosting Charges	23-24 - Increased Pay Award Funded from Reserves	24-25 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	25-26 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	26-27 Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution 26-27
	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Bromsgrove District Council	525,743		-8,000	5,913	8,048		208,344	1,578	1,527	1,846	16,665	16,389	12,770	11,804	802,626
Malvern Hills District Council	470,565			5,374	14,329			1,434	1,388	1,678	15,146	14,895	11,607	10,728	547,143
Redditch Borough Council	633,443			7,234	2,355			1,930	1,868	2,259	20,389	20,051	15,624	14,442	719,599
Worcester City Council	605,325	-30,000		6,570	3,533	30,000		1,753	1,697	2,051	18,518	18,212	14,191	13,117	684,999
Wychavon District Council	839,527			9,587	12,366			2,558	2,476	2,994	27,022	26,575	20,707	19,140	962,149
Wyre Forest District Council	546,035			6,235	5,692			1,664	1,610	1,947	17,575	17,284	13,468	12,449	623,959
Total	3,620,637	-30,000	-8,000	40,913	46,323	30,000	208,344	10,917	10,565	12,775	115,314	113,406	88,367	81,680	4,341,241

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Agenda Item 6

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budgeted Income 2024/25

Appendix 3

Grant Income

	£
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	14,000
	<u>14,000</u>

Partner Funded Income

Employee - Income Generation	37,906
Employee - Animal Activity	44,476
Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	34,700
Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch	194,720
Increase in Rent	4,639
Increase in ICT Hosting	4,488
Increase in Support Hosting	4,945
Unavoidable Salary Pressures 23-24	115,314
Unavoidable Salary Pressures 24-25	113,406
Total Partner Funded income	<u>554,594</u>

Other Income

Stray Dog Income	65,000
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	63,210
County - Petroleum Work / Safety at Sports Grounds	41,169
Education Case Work	6,000
Transcription Work	700
Contaminated Land Work / Planning Support work	100,000
Primary Authority work	48,554
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	30,000
Animal Inspections	3,000
Private Water Supplies	5,000
Health Certificates / Food Hygiene Re-Rating	23,362
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	6,000
Business - Pre-Opening Advice	1,000

Total Other income

392,995

Total Income

961,589



WRS Board

Date: 16th November 2023

Progress Report on the Automation Project

Recommendation	Members are asked to note the report.
Background	<p>At the first meeting of 2022/23, members agreed to create a reserve of £150,000 underspend to fund the implementation of automation of data entry for customers, enabling a range of services to be addressed by the applicant entering data into forms on the WRS website, which would then upload directly into our IDOX Uniform back-office system.</p> <p>Officers agreed to provide a short progress report at each Board meeting between then and the implementation of the project.</p>
Report	<p>Members will appreciate that with the limited time since the last report to Board, the amount of change that can be reported will be limited. Officers have continued to quality check additional forms whilst testing on the financial system takes place and planning for the second phase continues.</p> <p>Now officers have the merchant ID, the team have been liaising with Adelante (the financial payment platform) who are now assessing how to attach the ID to the appropriate items in the online store. This will allow the appropriate monies to get transferred to Bromsgrove District Council from whence they will be redistributed to the relevant partner.</p> <p>Sample files have already been exchanged to ensure monies received into Tech-One, the Bromsgrove DC finance system, relate to the item details that are on the interface file. The final version can then be loaded onto the Tech One system.</p> <p>Progress</p> <p>Meetings have been set up with the communications team to discuss the soft launch strategy of the plan so that this can be discussed with stakeholder groups in testing phase two. It is important that all the information that customers require to complete the forms is available at this stage. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website Update • FAQ's – Frequently asked questions • Guidance Documents <p>Some of these may require changing or editing throughout the testing stages.</p>



Sadly, several obstacles have arisen that the team continues to address by working with our external providers. Firstly, the address base gazetteer has required a software update to ensure the most current correct addresses are being used in the system. This would be normal for most address-based systems that, from time to time the associated gazetteer needs to be updated. This should ensure that newer addresses are easy for applicants to put into the system.

Secondly, there has been a delay in implementing the licensing connector from IDOX, our long-standing database supplier, which is required to ensure the correct district is paid once an applicant has selected the district from a drop-down list. We have been informed this will be available as part of a IDOX upgrade in January 2024. Clearly, we want to ensure that the process is seamless and would not consider moving to live until we know that the right monies will be identifiable and portable to the correct partner.

In parallel to the wider automation project officers continue to assess the roll out of electronic ID Cards in the taxi trade for both safeguarding and enforcement measures and this has progressed. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest continue to work on the dashboard implementation and are now starting to trial this. Once officers understand the timeframes of this in more detail, a plan will be executed for implementation across the County.

Contact Point

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