

# **Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board**

Thursday, 27th June, 2024  
4.30 pm

Parkside Suite, Parkside  
Market Street, Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA



**WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS**

**MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD**

THURSDAY 27TH JUNE 2024

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  
Councillor D. Harrison, Malvern Hills District Council  
Councillor C. Palmer, Malvern Hills District Council  
Councillor M. Stringfellow, Redditch Borough Council  
Councillor M. Dormer, Redditch Borough Council  
Councillor K. Lawrance, Worcester City Council  
Councillor A. Scott, Worcester City Council  
Councillor R. Deller, Wychavon District Council  
Councillor M. Goodge, Wychavon District Council  
Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council  
Councillor C. Rogers, Wyre Forest District Council

**AGENDA**

1. Election of Chairman
2. Election of Vice-Chairman
3. Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
4. Declarations of Interest

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

5. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 29th February 2024 (Pages 5 - 22)

6. WRS Revenue Monitoring April - March 2024 and the Annual Return (Pages 23 - 36)
7. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2023/24 (Pages 37 - 82)
8. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Activity & Performance Data - Q1- 4 2023/24 (Pages 83 - 132)
9. Air Quality Update 2024 (Pages 133 - 144)
10. Progress on the Automation Project (Pages 145 - 146)
11. Report on contracted work on Safety at Sports Grounds (Pages 147 - 152)
12. 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

Parkside  
Market Street  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA

19th June 2024

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

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

**Notes:**

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

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**WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS**

**MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD**

**THURSDAY 29TH FEBRUARY 2024, AT 4.31 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors K. Taylor (in the Chair), J. Raine, C. Palmer, M. Stringfellow (substituting for Councillor J. Kane), B. Clayton (substituting for Councillor L. Harrison), M. Allcott, R. Deller, M. Goodge, T. Onslow (during Minute No's 31/23 to 37/23) and P. Harrison

Officers: Mr. P. Carpenter, Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr. M. Cox, Mrs. M. Patel and Mrs. P. Ross

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

27/23

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Riaz, Worcester City Council, H. J. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council, L. Harrison, Redditch Borough Council, with Councillor B. Clayton in attendance as the substitute Member; and J. Kane, Redditch Borough Council with M. Stringfellow in attendance as the substitute Member.

With apologies for absence being received from the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, Board Members were asked to nominate and elect a Chairman for this meeting.

On being put to the vote it was

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

28/23

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

29/23

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023, be approved as a correct record.

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**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICE REVENUE MONITORING**  
**APRIL - DEC 2023**

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources 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 19 and 20 of the main agenda pack.

The report covered the period April to December 2023.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue monitoring report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn 2023/24 surplus of £3k. It was appreciated that this was an estimation to the year-end based of the following assumptions: -

- The pay award had been agreed and included in the revenue monitoring statement. There was a reserved £120k from last year surplus to accommodate the enhanced pay award in 2023/24.
- Agency staff costs were being incurred due to backfilling of staff working on other contractual work e.g., food recovery programme, contaminated land and work for other local authorities, these costs were covered by vacant posts and income generation.
- If April to December 2023 spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £15k. WRS officers would 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 was: -

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

This income was included in the income projected outturn.

- The following was the actual bereavements costs April to December 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     £4k  
Malvern Hills District Council     £1k



Redditch Borough Council      £17k  
Worcester City Council      £10k

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

There was not a massive change from Quarter 2.

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

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

<b>Council</b>	<b>Apr – Dec 23 Actual for Bereavements £000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	4
Malvern Hills District Council	1
Redditch Borough Council	17
Worcester City Council	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

- 1.2 partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2023-24 in relation to Pest Control, as follows: -

<b>Council</b>	<b>Projected Outturn for Pest Control £000</b>
Redditch Borough Council	7
Wychavon District Council	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

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

<b>Council</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Income Generation £000</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2023/24 Gull Control £000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	5	9	
Malvern Hills District Council	5	7	
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Worcester City Council	6	3	65
Wychavon District Council	8	14	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	8	
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>65</b>

31/23

**FOOD SERVICE AND FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY ENGAGEMENT**

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Food Service and Food Standards Agency engagement report, and in doing so informed Board Members that;

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) was the main competent authority for food controls in England. The food function was devolved in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Agency was pushing local authorities recently to increase their commitments to food law enforcement and to align activities more closely with the letter of the Food Law Code of Practice.

After engagement with senior officers and lead members, the partners agreed to an uplift in the WRS budget specifically for Food Safety Act enforcement. This report explains the detail of this and how the additional expenditure would be deployed.

In line with the Systems Thinking approach taken in these functional areas by the partners since 2011, WRS had been piloting alternative approaches as financial pressures on local authorities forced the partners to make difficult decisions in relation to support for many of their services over an extended period. The FSA was made aware of WRS's experiments at the time and expressed some interest in the work being done, albeit the FSA would not endorse any changes that occurred, no matter how beneficial.

During the audit visit in 2017, WRS officers were left with the clear impression that the FSA was moving in the direction of accepting that intelligence-driven regulatory services offered the most cost effective and efficient form of control model available. This clearly seemed to be the direction of travel in the reviews of the Food Standards and then Food Hygiene codes, which were clearly labelled as seeking to build the role of intelligence into process.

Following the initial consultation on the revision to the Food Hygiene code, the FSA decided not to go forward with further change before 2027. At the same time, its performance teams had indicated an expectation that authorities that had chosen to move away from aspects of the code would be expected to re-align their activities to be more reflective of the letter of what was required. This meant relying less on intelligence and going back to increased levels of traditional inspection and alternative enforcement approaches within the Code.

The Food Hygiene Code of Practice was made under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990. Local authorities were required to have regard to it, but the FSA was empowered by the legislation to seek Ministerial direction to make local authorities comply with it. Given this power, after much discussion, officers and lead members felt that at least moving some way towards the FSA's requirements would be sensible. We would not accept that the approach taken by the service had created issues and there was no evidence of any significant problems arising from the approaches taken. Officers also hope that the FSA would engage fully with WRS when it came to revising the Food Hygiene code, as officers felt that there was much that the service could contribute in terms of our experience of working through intelligence.

The FSA had identified several areas, but the main area impacted was how the service addressed lower risk premises, those coded category D and E for the purposes of the Code. This represented over 4,000 of our approximately 5,800 registered food businesses across the county. The detailed business case indicated that, in 2009/10 there were 5123 food

registrations across the six districts compared with the current 5791, representing an increase of 13%. Many of these had been in the lower risk categories.

Currently the service used a range of intervention forms to address these including inspection for those of the highest risk. Adhering to the letter of the Code would require an intervention every 2-years to category D premises, which the FSA would allow to alternate between inspection and allowable alternative intervention. The latter were required to be deployed with category E premises every 3 years.

Two further issues were raised by the FSA, one of which related to caring premises: everything from day nurseries to residential care and nursing homes. The premises in this group that met the criterion of having 20 persons attending or resident were subject to an additional risk score in the Code, which meant that they would score as category B and should be visited annually, in line with our other B-rated premises. The others, that did not trigger the additional risk factor in this group, had been assessed as other food businesses and many had been given a D rating. Most of these were good performers, scoring 4 and 5 stars routinely on the Food Hygiene rating scheme, so producing safe food and this had led to their reduced risk rating. The FSA was, however, concerned that this did not address their inherent risk and wanted them to revert to category B. Officers had sought a compromise position on this point as they felt our approach to risk had been reasonable in this case and had asked to see risk assessment used by the FSA to reach this conclusion.

Rather than bluntly resisting, officers had offered to address those businesses that provided “full meals” as part of their service, which might be perceived to offer a greater risk than, for example, a day nursery that simply provided snacks or toast and jam to the children attending. Again, this work could be accommodated within the resource uplift and by re-purposing some current vacant capacity (where officers had reduced hours,) to be dedicated to food law activities.

The final aspect was the timeliness of interventions at category A, B and C rated premises. The letter of the Code required these to be visited within 2 weeks either side of the due date, so a 4-week window. Our fully qualified Environmental Health Officer resource was used flexibly to address all aspects undertaken by the Community Environmental Health division. This meant that the service aimed to intervene with these premises in the financial year they were due, but not necessarily in the window specified. Whilst there were some premises that did fall into

Category A (potentially hospitals and hospices,) that had to be visited every 6-months, many were usually poorly performing premises that would otherwise be rated B (annual visit,) C (18month visit interval,) or D (2-yearly visit.) With these premises, the approach taken was to work with them to bring them back to normal compliance rather than labelling them as category A and visiting them in 6-months. This was not a requirement of the Code, but officers felt that this was the right approach to take for the sake of the businesses and their customers.

Given that the increase in resourcing was mainly necessary to tackle our lower risk outlets, officers had suggested focusing recruitment on both specialist Senior Technical Officers, who could visit all premises, and Regulatory Support Officers, with the latter able to be trained to discharge interventions at category E premises and work with well performing category Ds. The intention was to recruit 3 Regulatory Support Officers and 2 Senior Technical Officers. The cost of this additional capacity, broken down following the normal partner contributions was detailed in the Appendix, on page 30 of the main agenda pack, along with an indication of how this would impact the overall spend for each partner. The Community Environmental Health Manager would also use a number of hours that had been released by several officers going part-time, to create a further Senior Technical Officer post at no additional cost to partners. This would be added to this capacity, so creating a team of 6FTE officers, dedicated to addressing mainly lower risk and newly registered premises, but also with some capacity to deal with some higher risk premises. This increase would necessitate changes to how the three Principal Officers within Community Environmental Health addressed the wider workload, but this could be achieved without compromising our approaches in other technical areas.

The resource increase had been agreed by the partners and was built into the medium-term financial plans in the recent budget-setting process, so the service could begin to move forward with this from April 2024. Whilst officers appreciated the current financial situation for the sector, these duties fell within statute and since there were powers to compel compliance, it seemed sensible to at least move toward what was required.

On 14<sup>th</sup> February, the FSA had confirmed in a letter to Chief Executives that it would de-escalate its engagement with the WRS partners and move back to the normal level of engagement between its officers and our Food Lead. The letter indicated that they would still like to see

further changes to our approach but, at this stage they would simply monitor our performance.

Members were therefore being asked to note the report and formally approve the increase in establishment as detailed in the report. The service would however continue to lobby for the intelligence-led approach to take a greater role in all forms of regulatory activity in the future as the service had demonstrated how this could succeed.

The Head of WRS further stated that officers did not want to abandon an intelligence led approach and that they would continue to lobby for this an intelligence led approach to be taken.

Some Board Members expressed their disappointment with the FSA and further stated that, WRS as an organisation visited food premises on behalf of residents and reacted and visited premises where residents had raised concerns. Members agreed that the approach being taken by WRS was the correct approach and best way forward for residents.

Members further expressed their sincere thanks to the Head of WRS and his team.

The Head of WRS responded to questions from Board Members and commented that Worcestershire authorities were not the only authorities being pushed by the FSA with regards to low level premises. Members were further reassured that the approach being adopted by WRS was included in the Risk Register and the WRS Service Plan 2024/2025. There were a significant number of low-risk retail premises offering only pre-packed drinks and snacks, small scale caterers and wet pubs, only doing beer, spirits and snacks; and that these were very different to pubs with a full food offering.

The Board had agreed to the retention of current agency staff until the successful recruitment to the new roles. The Head of Service explained that Environmental Health Officer (EHO) had formally been identified by the Local Government Association as a hard to recruit to role and that the new Technical Officer roles might also be difficult to fill. Regulatory Support Officers could be new entrants into the profession and might be suitable to develop further to fulfil higher level roles in the future. However, he did hope that the posts would be filled by the end of June 2024. Should Members be supportive of the intention to recruit, as detailed on page 29 of the main agenda pack, then the Community Environmental Health Manager would look to advertise the vacancies as soon as possible. The Head of Service explained that whilst anyone

recruited to the fully qualified roles would be able to start contributing straight away, the Regulatory Support Officers would require training, but that they should be fully up to speed with requirements by October / November 2024.

**RESOLVED that**

- a) the Food Service and Food Standards Agency engagement report, be noted, and
- b) the Board agrees to the consequent increase in establishment that flowed from the funding uplift as agreed by all partners.

32/23

**WRS ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN 2024/2025**

The Board were asked to consider the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Service Plan 2024/2025.

The Head of WRS introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations, as detailed on page 31 of the main agenda pack. .

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

Officers reported that the plan followed the same pattern of previous years and Members' attention was drawn to the Executive Summary on page 38 of the main agenda pack to highlight the main points. Last year's plan was the first which had no pandemic related activity as part of it.

This year's plan continued to consider the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by DBaT, as these provided a framework that allowed WRS to have a golden thread back to the priorities of the six partners and to link to the requirements of the various national bodies that oversaw the work of WRS.

Whilst we had retained these for this purpose, the focus of this year's plan remained on the tactical priorities identified in the service's Strategic Assessment. This piece of work reviewed the full data and intelligence picture, looked at emerging threats and made a number of recommendations as to the areas that need to be addressed, as detailed below: -

- Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy

- Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs
- Promoting safe and healthy communities
- Supporting commercial businesses to operate safely and responsibly
- Supporting industry to operate safely and responsibly

Whilst the last two were best described as business as usual for a regulatory service, the other three were cross cutting in nature and would need to be addressed by various staff within the three teams to deliver outcomes for our communities. The Strategic Assessment would be reviewed during 2024/2025 and Board Members would be updated on the outcome of this during the year.

Again, a range of high-level activities against the 5 tactical priorities were identified within the plan so that Members would be aware of the general focus of the workload. Below this would sit a number of plans, either team based or cross cutting that would be used to drive business activities.

The plan was devised in the face of on-going financial uncertainty with inflation staying high and money being tight across the public sector. Both businesses and households continued to feel the pinch, and this had led in the past to increases in work for regulatory services as businesses may take more risks to survive and households sought to reduce expenditure on what may be essential products.

Working with businesses and other partners was a key theme for both generating income to mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes were delivered that match the priorities of partners and stakeholders. Delivery for other local authorities also remained a key income generation strategy, supported by limited work for the private sector and any specific grant monies that we felt were worthwhile pursuing. We had retained most of our client-base post pandemic and we hoped we would be able to identify new ones, although over time this did get harder. We did however remain hopeful that this strategy would remain fruitful.

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

As with previous years, Members were asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This was to meet one of the recommendations of the auditors from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) who visited the service in May 2017. The FSA were keen that Members had a better understanding of the demand in this service area when they authorised the plan for this year and future years. This was particularly relevant given the information provided to Members regarding our recent engagement with the Food Standards Agency and the outcome of increasing resources.



Members were being asked to note the proposed numbers of inspections and similar activities proposed for the new financial year that would be undertaken to discharge the statutory duties of the 6 partners in relation to food control. Board Members would be updated on progress as the year progressed forward.

The Risk Register had been updated to reflect the current position in areas like IT provision and development, staffing levels, and our reliance on contractual relationships for income. The threat from cyber-attack had become more real in recent years as the devastating consequences felt by colleagues in other local authorities elsewhere in the country. WRS would work closely with their ICT host, Wyre Forest DC, to limit the risk of this.

Given the FSA intervention, although this potential issue had always been flagged in the Risk Register as a general risk of not meeting Government or central body expectations, a specific line for them, had been added to the Risk Register.

The Head of WRS agreed to add data to the food section relating to the way the FSA looks at officer numbers versus the number of food premises in the area as this might help other Members to understand the situation if looked at again in the future.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS responded to questions from Members with regards to stray dogs, microchipping stray dogs, XL Bully dogs; and the current legislation on identifying an XL Bully dog and the XL Bully dog ban; which came into effect as from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Plan for 2024/2025, as detailed in the main agenda report pack, be approved; and
- b) Members specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

33/23

### **ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA QUARTER 3 2023/4**

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 3 – 2023/2024; and in doing so drew Members' attention to the recommendation, as detailed on page 73 of the main agenda pack. The following key points were highlighted: -

#### **Activity Data**

The number of dog control cases recorded by WRS during the year to date was 37% higher than in 2021-22, but only 12% above 2022-23 levels. Approximately 89% of cases related to stray or lost dogs, with most of these cases relating to "contained strays" (dogs found and held by members of the public).

The number of food safety cases recorded by WRS during the year to date was 33% lower than in 2021-22, but only 8% lower than 2022-23. Many of the food safety cases logged were enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates.

Of the 1,120 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year to date, 37 were rated as non-compliant (0, 1 or 2).

Licensing application numbers during Quarter 3 appeared to remain on trend, whereas there was another slight increase in complaints and enquiries

## Performance

Quarter 3 was another more limited reporting period. The non-business customer measure at 60.7%, was slightly lower than at the same point in 2021/2 (62.5%,) but higher than the same point last year (57.9%). Numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues at 55.7% was slightly higher than at the same point in the previous 2 years.

Business customer satisfaction had fallen again this quarter to 92%. Team Managers had been asked to investigate this as there was no obvious reason for this beyond having a number of disputed food hygiene ratings.

Overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses were at 98.5% and 1.5% respectively. This remained good and on a par with previous years.

The ratio of compliments to complaints remains good at 77 to 19.

Staff sickness had increased from 1.42 days per FTE to 1.89 days per FTE cumulative for the year. This was less than the level at the same point in the previous 2 years.

The Head of WRS, responded to questions from Members with regards to customer satisfaction and in doing so commented that during the summer, statutory nuisance and noise nuisance complaints increase significantly and it can be difficult to deal with. Plus, public expectation does not always meet with the requirements of the law, so not everyone was happy with the outcome of noise nuisance complaints.

**RESOLVED** that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 – 2023/2024, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

34/23

### **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AUTOMATION PROJECT**

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services provided Members with an on the Automation Project.

#### **PROGRESS**

Testing and evaluation of forms continued, and officers were now content that the TENs (Temporary Event Notice) form was ready to be rolled out. Officers had nearly fully exhausted second stage testing with just some planned stakeholder testing with some Board Members and the six Chairs of Licensing Committee arranged for the end of February/early March. Officers were confident that any changes recommended at this stage would be minor amendments that should not delay the roll out.

#### **IT**

There had unfortunately been another delay by IDOX in implementing the connector, but officers continued to use a workaround for testing. This implementation was now scheduled for the end of February 2024 and would be in place prior to testing with Members, so that end to end testing could be achieved.

#### **FINANCE**

The connector issue had not interfered with any of the financial testing and officers had a high level of confidence in the process, so Members can be confident that monies were transferring correctly and to the correct district codes. This had now been in checked in both the 'test' and 'live' system.

#### **PHASE THREE**

Officers had been checking the Licensing Act forms and Animal Licensing Forms with a view to put together similar guidance for applicants as the TENs form, due to the positive feedback received. These would also now move into testing. A task and finish group had been set up consisting of officers across the different teams in WRS to scope out the 'Service Request' form. This form would enable applicants to send in enquiries to the service without having to email or telephone

the duty officers and wait on the telephone. It was probably one of our more difficult jobs to scope as it needed to address a very wide range of potential requests relating to the work of all three WRS sections.

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 had progressed with work on the dashboard implementation and now awaited the implementation of the connector from IDOX to continue through to completion.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS commented that he was hoping to bring a far more comprehensive update on the project to the next meeting of the Board.

A brief discussion took place on future updates to the Board and if they were necessary at every meeting of the Board. It was decided that updates would continue to be provided to future Board meetings.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS further responded to questions with regards to the IT system and in doing so explained that; the Victoria Forms product was an 'off the shelf' package to provide the template forms used. However, the system had to be unique to WRS, since WRS worked for 6 different partner authorities. The IT system sat on the IT host authority's IT system (Wyre Forest), but also needed to feed into the host authority (Bromsgrove District Council) payments system. This and the fact that the shared serve wanted all of the relevant details, including the relevant individual local authority area matching the application to automatically feed into the back office, meant some tweaks were required to the product forms and changes to the connecting software that linked Victoria Forms to the Uniform back-office system.

**RESOLVED** that the Progress Report on the Automation Project be noted.

35/23

**TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING**

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

36/23

**TO CONSIDER, AND IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, TO PASS THE**

**FOLLOWING RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF ITEM OF BUSINESS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION: -**

**RESOLVED:** that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of scheme 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so: -

<u>Item No</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
11	4

(exempt Appendix)

37/23

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING ENFORCEMENT BUSINESS CASE**

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) took the opportunity to thank the Technical Services Manager, WRS for all his hard work on the Environmental and Planning Enforcement Business Case.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS presented the report and drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on page 3 of the supplementary agenda pack.

The recommendation would see an increase in the WRS budget of £470,625, with Bromsgrove District Council's contribution increasing by £326,128 and Redditch Borough Council's by £144,497.

The Technical Services Officer, WRS explained that, during 2021 WRS were asked to assist Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils, planning colleagues with evidence gathering for allegations of planning breaches. On the back of this, wider support was provided for planning enforcement, enviro-crime and wider enforcement functions through training, mentoring, intelligence analysis and reporting, as well as undertaking the enforcement work.

This had increased and as such the majority of planning enforcement work in Bromsgrove and Redditch was currently being delivered by WRS under a service level agreement, fully funded by these two partners.

Wyre Forest District Council colleagues had also provided support to the Bromsgrove and Redditch Enviro-crime services during this time.

Whilst initially expressing an interest in the early stages of the review latterly, the relevant managers at Wyre Forest District Council confirmed

their intent to explore alternative in-house options of development. Hence, subsequent iterations of the business case omitted their service areas and focused on Bromsgrove and Redditch services only.

A Strategic Outline Business Case was prepared, as detailed on the exempt Appendix to the report, to explore the benefit in bringing together enforcement functions from Bromsgrove and Redditch Council services with those already within WRS to deliver a quality service to all customers. The intention was to identify where service delivery could be improved through prioritisation, standardisation, and resilience. Weaknesses were identified in the current Bromsgrove and Redditch delivery model and the business case explored possible alternatives.

## **OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

The Strategic Outline Business Case provided an overview of the enforcement activity across all services of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils, including shared services. Planning, Environmental Services and Housing Standards all had obvious enforcement functions to consider. The difficulties in maintaining a viable enforcement service for each subject area was discussed and identified that knowledge, skills, and wider supporting mechanisms were in general difficult to provide for isolated teams or individuals. WRS conversely as a larger enforcement team with relevant support functions did not suffer these issues

Four plausible scenarios were considered further: continuing with the existing arrangements; grouping the enforcement roles into one team within the two councils; or alternatively grouping them within WRS; and a fourth scenario with associated call handling also grouped together in WRS. This last option would enable full triaging, together with the ability to resolve at 'first point of contact' and was identified as the best option following the cost benefit assessment and risk analysis.

The business case relied on both Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils endorsing this approach. Both the Redditch Executive and Bromsgrove Cabinet approved the recommendation to pursue the business case during January 2024; and both full Councils further approved this approach; including the transfer of associated budget to WRS with additional investment to a total of £470,625.

Should the other 4 WRS partner authorities be happy to endorse this via approval by Board Members, then the functions can formally be added to the statement of requirements for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils.

The additional investment referred to covered the inclusion of resource not easily transferable into WRS (call handling), additional resource to meet demand in planning enforcement, and resource to tackle a backlog created during COVID, as well as enhancement of the enviro-crime resource to enable greater proactive measures to support the wider enforcement work.

The benefit to WRS would be that existing staff would be retained and encouraged to grow by learning new skills. It would also increase the scope of WRS data and intelligence.

The Members for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils commented that it had received unanimously by their Members and that with more officers looking at a range of different things, it would benefit their authority. It was the best fit for both Councils.

In response to questions from the Board, the Head of WRS further reassured Members that, the additional resources for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils would not 'eke' over into other authorities service areas. It would not distract work away from other partner authorities and that there would be no financial burden or resource issue for the other four partners. He was happy to give financial reassurance to partners.

The Head of WRS further added that other partners might look to give some thought in the future to WRS providing Environmental and Planning Enforcement.

**RESOLVED that**

- a) the proposal to progress the Strategic Outline Business Case by bringing enviro-crime and planning enforcement functions for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils into the WRS remit, be agreed;
- b) the associated budget uplift of £470,625 to be provided by Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils to facilitate the delivery of those services, which would ensure no financial impacts for the other four partners, be noted; and
- c) the associated permanent uplift to the current establishment that these additional functions required for delivery, be agreed.

(During consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matters arising between the authority of a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority).

(There is no exempt information contained in the above minute).

The meeting closed at 5.38 p.m.

Chairman





**WRS Board**  
**27th June 2024**

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL – MARCH 2024 & ANNUAL RETURN**

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – March 2024
- 1.2 Approve the 2023/24 deficit of £1,198 to be funded from the WRS general reserve.
- 1.3 Approve the additional spend of £3,325 on dog vans to be funded from the WRS general reserve.

**Contribution to Priorities**

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

**Introduction/Summary**

This report presents the final financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April – March 2024. In addition, a number of financial statements are appended to this report.

**Background**

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

**Report**

The following reports are included for Board's Attention:

- Revenue Monitoring Statement 2023/24 - Appendix 1
- Annual Statement 2023/24 - Appendix 2
- Annual Statement Analysis 2023/24 – Appendix 3
- WRS Income Analysis 2023/24 – Appendix 4
- Reserve Statement – Appendix 5



Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a final outturn deficit of £1.2k, this represents 0.03% of the actual budget and is mainly due to the slight extension of Agency staff for food law enforcement work following engagement with the Food Standards Agency. This was agreed between the Head of Service and relevant Officer Members of the Board.

Other items for members to note are:

- Agency staff costs were incurred due to backfilling of staff working on other contractual work e.g., food recovery programme, contaminated land & work for other local authorities, these costs are covered by vacant posts & income generation.
- The pest control 2023/24 outturn figure to be funded by partners is £14,795, as per below:

Redditch Borough Council	£7,215
Wychavon District Council	£7,580

This income is included in the income outturn figure.

- The bereavements 2023/24 outturn figure to be funded by partners is £44,685 as per below:

Bromsgrove District Council	£10,187
Malvern Hills District Council	£3,007
Redditch Borough Council	£17,203
Worcester City Council	£13,794
Wychavon District Council	£495

This income is included in the income outturn figure.

- The three additional Technical Officers to be funded by partners for 2023/24 is shown below:-

Technical Officer for Income Generation	
Bromsgrove District Council	£5,208
Malvern Hills District Council	£4,662
Redditch Borough Council	£6,273
Worcester City Council	£5,997
Wychavon District Council	£8,317
Wyre Forest District Council	£5,409



## Technical Officer for Animal Activity

Bromsgrove District Council	£8,864
Malvern Hills District Council	£6,745
Redditch Borough Council	£1,927
Worcester City Council	£2,891
Wychavon District Council	£14,453
Wyre Forest District Council	£8,286

## Technical Officer for Gull Control

Worcester City Council	£65,300
------------------------	---------

This income is included in the income outturn figure.

- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.
- It is requested that the final outturn deficit amount of £1,198 be funded from the WRS general reserve.
- As requested by the Board Appendix 1 details explanations relating to the variances.

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

After several years of waiting for delivery of the 3 replacement Dog Warden vans ordered using the relevant Government Procurement framework, and incurring some hire costs whilst waiting, in the absence of this system functioning, the service went directly to a local supplier and succeeded in purchasing the three vans. This cost is reflected in the out-run for 2023/24. For several years, the board agreed to reserve a portion of the service's underspend to enable the service to purchase these vans, however due to the time elapsed and the fact that the purchase was made directly, there is a small shortfall on this reserve of £3,325 still to be funded. It is requested that this shortfall is funded from the WRS general reserve.

**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



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# WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2023-24

## Total WRS Final Outturn 2023-24

Append 1

	Full Year Budget 23-24	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 24	Variance	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>Direct Expenditure</b>				
Employees				
Salary	3,524	3,400	-124	Small changes to several officer hours and short term vacancy space before filling
Agency Staff	25	328	303	To cover short term vacancies and income generation work, including work for other local authorities
Employee Insurance	25	21	-3	
<b>Sub-Total - Employees</b>	<b>3,574</b>	<b>3,749</b>	<b>176</b>	
<b>Premises</b>				
Rent / Hire of Premise	74	74	0	
Cleaning	1	0	-0	
Utilities	0	0	0	
<b>Sub-Total - Premises</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>-0</b>	
<b>Transport</b>				
Vehicle Hire	20	11	-8	
Vehicle Fuel	8	6	-2	
Road Fund Tax	1	1	-0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	4	-1	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	1	-2	
Car Allowances	56	41	-15	
<b>Sub-Total - Transport</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>-28</b>	
<b>Supplies and Services</b>				
Furniture & Equipment	39	84	44	AQ Monitoring Station £22k, Income recovered from Wychavon, Pace Recorders £9k
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	2	1	
Printing & Photocopying	17	11	-6	
Postage	11	12	1	
ICT	67	70	3	
Telephones	21	37	16	Mobile telephone refresh
Training & Seminars	22	25	3	
Insurance	20	9	-10	
Third Party Payments	194	195	1	£124k BDC hosting / £70k WFDC ICT hosting.
<b>Sub-Total - Supplies &amp; Service</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>53</b>	

**WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2023-24**

**Total WRS Final Outturn 2023-24**

	Full Year Budget 23-24	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 24	Variance	
<b>Contractors</b>				
Dog Warden	121	261	139	Additional contractors due to new contract, recovered in income This is overspend within pest control, funded by Redditch & Wychavon and shown in income
Pest Control	105	120	15	
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	70	98	28	
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	-1	
Water Safety	5	7	2	
Food Safety	1	0	-1	
Environmental Protection	12	59	47	Bereavements recovered in income £45k
Grants / Subscriptions	13	15	2	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	4	-1	
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>231</b>	
<b>Income</b>				
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-703	-1,133	-430	See append 4
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>-703</b>	<b>-1,133</b>	<b>-430</b>	
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>3,767</b>	<b>1</b>	

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**Worcestershire Regulatory Services  
Annual Return For Year Ended 31st March 2024**

**Accounting Statement For Worcester Regulatory Services**

	31st March 2023 £	31st March 2024 £
1 <b>Balances brought forward</b>	505,272	592,369
2 (+) Income from local taxation and / or levy	0	0
3 (+) Total other receipts	4,837,737	4,991,150
4 (-) Staff costs	3,827,726	3,834,695
5 (-) Loan interest / capital repayments	0	0
6 (-) All other payments	922,915	1,318,041
7 Capital - Dog Vans		86,075
8 (=) <b>Balances carried forward</b>	<b>592,369</b>	<b>344,707</b>

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**Regulatory Services Income received 23-24****Income from Partners**

	£
Budget	3,620,637
Refund of Savings	0
Pension Backfunding	35,530
Bereavement/ Public Burials	44,685
Marlpool - Redditch	4,188
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	14,795
Planning Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch	204,750
Employee for Animal Activity	43,166
Employee for Income Generation Officer	35,866
Tameside - Subs to Anti Fraud Network - Worcs City	1,700
Taxi unmet demand surveys - Worcs City	29,950
Contaminated Land Work - Worcs City	13,000
Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	65,300
Air Quality Monitoring, Worcester Road - Wychavon	23,606
Idox support - Bromsgrove & Redditch	829
Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch	108,367
	<u><u>4,246,369</u></u>

**Grant Income**

	£
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	13,986
Healthy Eating	4,627
Air Quality / Behavioural Change	237,512
	<u><u>256,125</u></u>

**Other Income**

	£
Stray Dog Income	206,522
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	59,010
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	20,000
Planning Support Work	43,255
Contaminated Land Work	31,012
PPC Work	16,173
Primary Authority work	19,678
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	10,891
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	36,144
Pest Control	30,591
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating	12,851
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	1,191
Education Work / Victorian Fayre / Transcription Work	1,337
	<u><u>488,655</u></u>

**Total Box 3 Accounting Statement**4,991,149**Regulatory Services Employees 23-24****Box 4**

	£
Employees Related Costs	3,834,695
	<u><u>3,834,695</u></u>

**Regulatory Services Other Costs 23-24****Box 6**

Premise Related Cost	74,907
Transport Related Cost	22,696
Supplies & Service	1,220,437
	<u><u>1,318,041</u></u>

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**Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income Received 23-24**

<b>Income from Partners</b>	<b>£</b>
Budget	3,620,637
Refund of Savings	0
Pension Backfunding	35,530
Bereavement/ Public Burials	44,685
Marlpool - Redditch	4,188
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	14,795
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Idox support - Bromsgrove & Redditch	829
Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch	108,367
	<u><b>4,246,369</b></u>
<b>Grant Income</b>	<b>£</b>
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	13,986
Healthy Eating	4,627
	<u><b>18,613</b></u>
<b>Other Income</b>	<b>£</b>
Stray Dog Income	206,522
County - Mgmt / Admin / Legal etc	59,010
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	20,000
Planning Support Work	43,255
Contaminated Land Work	31,012
PPC Work	16,173
Primary Authority work	19,678
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	10,891
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	36,144
Pest Control	30,591
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating	12,851
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	1,191
Education Work / Victorian Fayre / Transcription Work	1,337
	<u><b>488,655</b></u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<u><b>4,753,637</b></u>
<b>2023/24 Base Budget from Partners</b>	<b>-3,620,637</b>
<b>Total Income Excluding Budget</b>	<b>1,133,000</b>

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services 23-24

Earmarked Reserve	Balance 1st April 2023	Transfers Out 2023/24	Transfers In 2023/24	Balance 31st March 2024	
	£	£	£	£	
Worcs Works Well	64,068	-5,000		59,068	Supporting Air Quality / Behavioural Change
LEP	9,297			9,297	Held for Worcestershire Food & Drink
WRS General Reserve	130,647	-3,325		127,322	
Better Business For All	2,859			2,859	Held for Region
Stray Dog Van	82,750	-86,075	3,325	0	Stray Dog Van Total £86,075 - Diff from general reserve
Brexit	40,000			40,000	
Licensing	15,000			15,000	Digital ID Card Project
Food Inspections	25,000	-25,000		0	
Make it Worcestershire	1,808			1,808	OPSS funded project
IT Enhancement Project	100,940	-10,386		90,554	
Pay Award for 23-24	120,000	-120,000			
<b>Total Earmark Reserve</b>	<b>592,369</b>	<b>-249,786</b>	<b>3,325</b>	<b>345,908</b>	

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**WRS Board****Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024****Title: Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2023/4****Recommendation**

That the Board note the Annual Report for 2023/4 and agree that a copy be forwarded to each Chief Executive of the 6 partner authorities and to the wider elected member base in their areas.

**Contribution to Priorities**

Not applicable

**Summary**

Under the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement, the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Finance Officer for the host authority, Bromsgrove District Council, are required to submit to the Joint Board an annual report that covers the performance of the shared service and provides a summary of the finances. This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31 March 2024. If endorsed by the Joint Board, a copy will be forwarded to each Chief Executive of each member authority and the authors would request that members use their usual channels within their authorities to distribute the report to the wider elected member cohort.

**Report**

Under Clause 11 of Part 1 of the Shared Services Partnership Agreement, the Joint Board is required to receive a report at its annual meeting which will be held no later than 30 June each year. The report covers the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The annual report is co-signed by the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Lead Financial Officer for the Host Authority as required by the legal agreement.

The report covers the performance of the service for that period, both in terms of KPIs and highlights of activity, a short summary activity report appearing at Appendix 5, which we limit due to the detail that Board members will see in the Activity Data Report. Some detail of the performance indicators has also been covered by the Activity data.

Last year saw the restoration of more normal levels of activity post pandemic with 2022/3 and 2023/4 establishing what is regarded by

many as the new patterns of behaviour and activity that the service will face for the foreseeable future.

The service continued to utilise some of the staff recruited during the pandemic to support work under contract to discharge the planning enforcement pilot and the Homes 4 Ukraine support for Redditch and Bromsgrove, with support from experienced WRS managers.

Despite these additional commitments, performance has remained good in most areas. Food business compliance rates remain high. Taxi license renewals have been dealt with in a reasonable time in the main. The taxi fleet appears to be generally in good order, although the number of vehicles failing either when submitted to a garage for interim test or, to a lesser extent, whilst in-service remains higher than general rates pre-pandemic. This is almost certainly a result of the financial pressure on members of the trade due to the current cost of living pressures.

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

- Turn-around time for some licenses, despite generally good performance, and one person unhappy about the policy change that meant they had to pay for a 3-year licence as they could no longer have an annual one,
- Response to nuisance issues, especially where things don't meet the threshold for intervention.

Non-business customer satisfaction was very slightly up on last year's figure (59.2%,) at 60.4%. Whilst numbers of nuisance complaints were slightly lower last summer, other pressures in the Community Environmental Health team meant that resources were still spread very thin. Managers will continue to work to address this. The nature of the service is such that we will never be able to make everyone happy because a significant proportion of nuisance complaints will not amount to a statutory nuisance, but we know that we can improve our performance in this area. Business satisfaction was down slightly at 94.6% but still good. The situation here will be monitored.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints have been in place long enough now for us to establish good baselines. We have said previously that the former of these indicators, linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda, demonstrated that, post pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise had reduced. This appeared to be slightly less prevalent for 2022/3 in our more urban districts, but this year numbers are significantly higher again and, in some cases at the highest we have seen. It must be remembered that we are only measuring allegations here not actual confirmed breaches and the figures still show that the vast majority of



premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators. We know from interactions with Police colleagues that concerns tend to be limited to smaller numbers of premises.

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

In contrast to this, last year's figures for the rate of noise complaints against population, show low to low average numbers across the county, likely due to the poor weather during much of the year. While the proportion of noise issues relating to businesses was slightly higher than in previous years, domestic noise still represented more than half of complaints and, as we alluded to in Activity Data Reports last year, noise from dogs and from audio devices remain key drivers of this. With commercial premises it tends to be a small number of these that certain residents have concerns about, and things like a change of management in a pub and the business looking at more diverse ways of bringing in revenue can lead to friction with the local community. Overall, it still suggests however, that the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

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

### **Financial Implications**

The financial implications are contained within the Annual Report.

### **Contact Points**

Simon Wilkes, Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services  
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email: [simon.wilkes@worcsregservices.gov.uk](mailto:simon.wilkes@worcsregservices.gov.uk)

### **Background Papers**

WRS Annual Report 2022/3



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# ANNUAL REPORT

**2023/24**

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

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**Agenda Item**

## INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report has been produced for the Joint Board in accordance with clause 11.1 of Part 1 of the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement. The report covers the progress and performance of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023 up to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2024 and reports operational activity by the relevant service elements for the financial year. The report summarises key performance data for WRS and provides a summary of the financial position. The report also meets the requirement of the Regulators Code, which requires local authorities to publish a summary of their regulatory activities on an annual basis.

It was clear during 2023/4 that we had moved beyond the pandemic period into what might loosely be described as “normality.” Demand remained high, although an indifferent Summer meant that nuisance levels were slightly lower than previous years. What did not fall was the level of public expectation around how local authority activity could influence the local environment. The success of gaining grant funding for improved monitoring of air quality was converted into the reality of a small network of equipment that will soon be reporting data that the public can see on levels of pollutants in the vicinity of the monitors. We hope this will help to influence people’s behaviour and help them to either protect their own health by not going to those locations or change their transport modes to reduce levels of pollutant. Only time will tell as to whether this succeeds. We also had the intervention of the Food Standards Agency with the concern that partners needed to change the way they addressed lower risk businesses and return to a more traditional approach. Although members openly stated that they were happy with the approach being taken, they felt some move back towards the Agency’s preferred approach was politic and provided additional funding from 2024/5 onwards for further capacity.

This has not impacted our key strategic priorities, which will remain the same and, at a tactical level we will continue to shape our work around the key cross cutting issues identified in the strategic assessment. Following the service plan, these are:

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

As we embrace the “new normality”, we will continue to support legitimate businesses and residents, particularly the vulnerable, where we are able and at the same time, we will tackle those who break the law, ignore best practice, or adversely impact the environment. Central to this approach remains the availability of accurate data and intelligence sharing. Our intelligence and performance unit coordinates, and analyses intelligence obtained by WRS officers and external agencies, helping managers to target WRS resources more effectively and to forge links with other enforcement agencies and partners to share intelligence and target enforcement action. This is becoming more and more embedded at the heart of what we do.

---

Simon Wilkes  
Head of Regulatory Services

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Peter Carpenter  
Lead Financial Officer

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WRS IN 2023/4:**

These are covered in the sections below:

**PERFORMANCE**

Our ability to report performance remains underpinned by the IDOX UNiform management information system, providing Joint Board members with a clear picture of the work being undertaken by WRS. Our key performance measures continue to focus on customer satisfaction and the positive compliance of businesses. Previous year’s results appear in brackets in the relevant box providing a comparative view of performance over time. Members are reminded that the recent past is coloured by the pandemic so figures from 2020/21 to at least 2022/3 are likely to be difficult to compare with earlier years. This has probably been our first year free of pandemic influence, so going forward we hope that these and future figures may be easier to relate.

	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Figure</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
1	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to non-business customers satisfaction	<b>60.4%</b> , (59.2, 61.6, 74, 69.5, 63.0, 75.4, 78.9, 78.2, 77.4)	Based on an average score for 6 questions relating to the interaction of the service with non-business customers. 65.8% found their contact with WRS helpful, up from 63.5% last year but below the previous year’s 69.5%. 71.7% found the information and advice provided easy to use, slightly below the 72% from last year and below the previous year’s 77.4%. As with last year, 57.7% felt that the length of time to address their problem was satisfactory, up from 54.5% the previous year, and 66.9% 65.1% (1.8 and 4.5% points better than last 2-years respectively,) felt that the speed of initial response from WRS was satisfactory. Last Summer was busy for officers but quieter for nuisance work than many summers due to the poor weather. However, only in 43.8% of cases were officers able to resolve the issues of those who responded to the survey, which will always lead to worse figures. Managers will continue to look at how to improve performance in a number of these areas and continue to try to manage public expectations around what is achievable with nuisance issues as many of these will never be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. Response rates also remain low with only 161 responses

			received back this year, which is an improvement on last year's 138. Literally hundreds of requests for responses, a mix of digital and paper questionnaires were sent out, but it is very difficult to get replies.
2	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business customers satisfaction	<b>94.6%</b> , (98.1, 98.2 98.4, 97.4, 97.2, 97.7, 97.1 97.9, 97)	Based on an average score for 9 questions relating to the interaction of the service with business customers. This year even fewer than previous numbers (271 compared to 352 the previous year,) of businesses replied to our questionnaires. Of those who responded, 95% (98.3%/ 97.7% last 2-years,) felt that their business had been treated fairly and 96% (98.6/ 98.5% last 2-years,) of customers felt staff were polite in their dealings with them and informative. Some 94.1% (98.3/ 98.7% last 2-years,) of customers found the information and advice we provided easy to understand and 93.8% (97.9/ 98.1% last 2-years,) found their interaction with us helpful. 91.2.% (96/ 96.7% last 2-years,) were happy with the speed of our responses and, of those who made enquiries rather than being visited, 92.5% (96.3/ 97.3% last 2-years,) were satisfied with the response. As you can imagine, as a regulator we cannot always tell businesses what they want to hear but the overall fall here is a little puzzling as there has been no change to practice and approach, or the information provided. Managers have been asked to monitor this over the coming 12-month period to see if this is a blip, given almost 95% remains good.
3	% Food businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	<p>Bromsgrove <b>99.4%</b> (99.3, 99.3, 98.4, 97.1, 97.2, 98.7,)</p> <p>Malvern Hills <b>98.2%</b> (97.8, 98.4, 98.6, 98.1, 97.2, 97.0,)</p> <p>Redditch <b>98.2%</b> (97.1, 97.5, 97.6, 95.6, 96.0, 96.7,)</p> <p>Worcester City <b>99.2%</b> (99.0, 98.4, 98.4, 97.5, 98.0, 98.0,)</p> <p>Wychavon <b>98.2%</b> (97.6, 98.2, 99.2, 98.0, 97.4, 97.8,)</p>	<p>The figures demonstrate the high levels of compliance generally of our food businesses. They are mainly well-run and responsive to any issues in relation to hygiene and protecting the health of customers.</p> <p>The additional resource allocated for next year is focused on lower risk businesses so it will be interesting to see if wider interaction with these premises has any significant impact on these figures in 2024/5.</p>

		Wyre Forest <b>97.8%</b> (98.5, 98.6, 98.2, 98.1, 97.7, 97.2,) Worcestershire <b>98.5%</b> (98.3, 98.5, 98.5, 97.5, 97.3, 97.6,)	
4	% of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 <sup>st</sup> April each year	Bromsgrove <b>0.6%</b> (0.7, 0.7, 1.4, 2.9, 3.6, 1.3, 0.9,) Malvern Hills <b>1.8%</b> (2.2, 1.6, 1.6, 1.9, 2.8, 3.0, 2.3, 3,) Redditch <b>1.8%</b> (2.9, 2.5, 2.4, 4.4, 5.1, 3.3, 2.4,) Worcester City <b>0.8%</b> (1.0, 1.6, 1.6, 2.5, 2.2, 2.0, 1.4,) Wychavon <b>1.2%</b> (2.4, 1.8, 0.8, 2.0, 3.0, 2.2, 2, 0.8,) Wyre Forest <b>2.2%</b> (1.5, 1.4, 1.8, 1.9, 2.4, 2.8, 1.9,) Worcestershire <b>1.5%</b> (1.7, 1.5, 1.5, 2.7, 2.7, 2.4, 2.4,)	Food premises scoring 2 or below on the Food Hygiene Rating System are deemed to be at risk of not producing safe food and are subject to further intervention until such time as they meet requirements or face formal action. There are only small numbers of these in each district.
5	% of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	<b>96.8%</b> (97.5, 97.6, 96.9, 75.2, 91.4, 87.7)	This measure was introduced in 2017/18 and looks at how quickly driver licenses are renewed. This is one of the licensing processes where generally no additional paperwork is required before someone is re-licensed so generally this is one where the WRS team is in most control over timescales. This measure is similar to that achieved in previous years.
6	% of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service	<b>70 vehicles, 4.23%</b> <b>Of 1655 vehicles on the road county-wide</b>  (5.4, 4%, <b>0.39%</b> , 3.6%, 2.8%, 2.2%, 2.4%)  NB: Figure in bold is from 2020/21 when council garages and others used for testing vehicles were closed for much of the year and no	This figure is lower than last year's 84 but still higher than 59 the previous year. Focusing on the percentage is probably better as total number of vehicles can vary slightly year to year. Rates in the last 3 years do appear to be slightly higher than in previous years, and is probably a reflection of the wider impacts of the pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis. The overall result is probably a useful reminder to members that taxi vehicles travel a great deal further each year than domestic vehicles and therefore require significantly more upkeep to keep them in a good and safe condition. By definition this will create



		proactive enforcement monitoring took place.	financial pressures within the trade but the safety of the travelling public must remain paramount for the local licensing authority.
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	<b>56.6%</b> (57.0, 58.5, 58.8, 68.2, 58.1, 59, 72.5, 73.8, 76.8, 74.2)	This focuses on non-business customers. It is a specific question asked to members of the public in the questionnaire to test if the information and support provided to them by WRS is likely to help them deal with their own problems in the future. The measure has been lowered for a number of years, reflecting the lower performance overall on non-business customer satisfaction.
8	Review of register of complaints and compliments	<b>26 complaints</b> (28, 25, 42, 44, 27, 25, 31, 17, 24, 47, 70)  <b>121 compliments</b> (116, 134, 161, 163, 128, 138, 103, 51, 57, 36, 24)	This is our longest running performance indicator in this format, hence the long list of previous year's figures. This year's figures are like previous years. Complaints related to issues with responses to nuisance problems and some in relation to turnaround of licenses, with one related to a change in policy.
9	Staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	<b>3.07 days per FTE</b> (2.93, 5.2, 1.9, 4.4, 4.12, 12.45, 5.95, 2.3, 3.9, 7.7, 9.5)	Another fairly good year for sickness in the team, slightly above last year but still well below the previous year's 5.2 and below the average for the 5 years including last (3.71 days/FTE.) Winter this year resulted in several viruses doing the rounds, showing that normal behaviours are returning with more face-to-face contact. Also, one or two staff had longer term issues.
10	% of staff who are satisfied with working for WRS	<b>94%</b> 92, 97.5%, 93.5%, 98%, 88%, (NB: Annual figures for 2017/18 and before, 80%, 85%, 77%, 82%)	52 responses were received from the slightly more than 80 staff we have currently. As ever, some did not respond to all the questions. This score for this measure is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS (score is from 0 to 10.) Some 85.6% (44/52,) scored this question at 8/10 or higher. Due to current time constraints, we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments, but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service.
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	Bromsgrove <b>9.9%</b> (7.2, 5.9, 5.4, 6.8, 8.7, 6.73, 3.8,)	Linked to the Crime & Disorder agenda and introduced following discussions with elected members, this measure

		<p>Malvern Hills <b>5.8%</b> (4.1, 5.1, 3.5, 5.7, 4.8, 4.94, 3.6,)                  Redditch <b>8.7%</b> (8.1, 9.5, 8.3, 8.5, 7.1 8.65, 2.7,)                  Worcester City <b>13.8%</b> (8.5, 10.0, 5.7, 8.8, 8.1, 8.19, 5.8,)</p> <p>Wychavon <b>6.2%</b> (8.2, 6.3, 3.7, 4.2, 4.0, 4.97, 4.0,)                  Wyre Forest <b>9.1%</b> (9.4, 9.1, 5.1, 8.5, 7.0, 8.29, 5.8,)                  Worcestershire <b>8.8%</b> (7.6, 7.5, 5.0, 6.8, 6.4, 6.78, 4.4,)</p>	<p>is now in its ninth year, although only eight years results appear in the table. This year all figures are above average with both the overall figure and 3 of the six districts having the highest reported figures ever. We previously explained to members that, after pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise seemed to have reduced, so as these businesses sought other activities and uses of their outside spaces to increase revenue, this made residents living in the vicinity unhappy. This appeared to be slightly less prevalent last year, but it has clearly changed this year. It should be noted that this only records the level of accusations of breaches, and we can confirm that there has not been an increase either in abatement notices being served or in Licensing Act reviews. It still shows that 90% plus of premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators, and we know from interactions with Police colleagues that concerns tend to be limited to smaller numbers of premises.</p>
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	<p>Bromsgrove <b>2.19</b> (2.26, 2.25, 2.56, 1.96, 2.7, 2.82, 3.0, 2.7, 3.1)                  Malvern Hills <b>1.91</b> (1.93, 2.29, 2.45, 2.07, 2.2, 2.39, 3.0, 2.3, 3.9)                  Redditch <b>2.45</b> (3.09, 3.61, 3.67, 2.97, 3.2, 3.61, 4.1, 3.7, 3.5)                  Worcester City <b>2.86</b> (3.40, 3.47, 3.1, 2.78, 3.2, 3.13, 4.2, 4.0, 2.9)                  Wychavon <b>2.04</b> (2.07, 2.45, 2.08, 2.01, 2.1, 2.46, 2.7, 2.6, 2.5)                  Wyre Forest <b>2.29</b></p>	<p>The rate for all districts this year are low-average to low with Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wyre Forest reporting their lowest figures since the indicator was introduced. We know that last year saw a relatively poor Summer and the weather undoubtedly contributed to this to some extent but, a little like the reduction in business satisfaction, it is difficult to identify specific issues across the board that might account for this.</p> <p>Domestic noise represents more than half of complaints and, as we have illuded to in Activity Data Reports, noise from dogs and from audio devices remain key drivers of this. With commercial premises it tends to be a small number of these that certain residents have concerns about, and things like a change of DPS in a pub and the</p>

		(2.75, 2.65, 2.71, 2.37, 2.6, 3.23, 3.4, 3.0, 3.0) Worcestershire <b>2.33</b> (2.57, 2.9, 2.74, 2.35, 2.7, 2.93, 3.4, 3.1, 3.8)	business looking at more diverse ways of bringing in revenue can lead to friction with the local community. 1.350 noise cases were received during 2023/24 (185 fewer than the previous year), with 869 cases (or 64%) relating to noise from domestic properties.
13	Total Income	£502,641, which is 16.6% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 13.3% of the current net revenue budget of £3,766,000	This figure does not include the income for work derived from partners like the Homes 4 Ukraine work or the pilot work on planning enforcement. This is purely money raised from outside of the partners.
14	Cost of regulatory services per head of population.	Based on overrun cost of £3,767,000 against the County Council population estimate of 613680 for 2023, the service cost is:  <b>£6.14 per head</b>	This is the amount spent by the partners following the off-setting of cost with income, then divided by the mid-year estimate WCC provides on the population estimates pages of its website. It is difficult to benchmark this figure with other authorities as WRS functions are not all of those reported in the relevant part of the RO return to DLUHC. Work has been undertaken to look at this.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Strong management of performance is vital for the success of this service, ensuring that partners are reassured by the cost-effective delivery of the service on their behalf. Whilst everyone must accept responsibility for managing performance, the WRS management team is committed to driving performance forward so that a high standard of service delivery can be maintained. As can be seen from the figures above, the main challenge for the service is to improve the perception of non-business customers have of our performance, so this will be an on-going key task for managers in 2024/5 and beyond.

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

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

Continued refinement of our IT platform ensures our ability to report to Joint Board on our performance measures and that this remains accurate. The Uniform system operates well across all functions, but it is somewhat antiquated. Consideration was given to replacement but in the current financial climate this is co-prohibitive when we have a system in place that does the job, albeit is a little clunky at times. The service also subscribes to the national IDB intelligence database, enabling it to share intelligence with other local authorities in the region and nationally so that common issues and individual entities active across local authority borders can be identified and work to deal with them co-ordinated. DLUHC is looking to encourage the broader use of the system, especially at district council level, and has continued to fund access for district council Housing Standards teams to help them better engage with colleagues in Trading Standards services where enforcement responsibility for estate agency, tenant fees and energy efficiency of buildings sits.

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

A short summary of activity data is included at Appendix 5 to avoid duplication with the wider and more detailed set of activity data that is provided in the final Activity Data Report for 2023/4, which members will receive at the same meeting where this Annual Report is presented.

### **Internal Audits**

Internal Audit this year engaged with WRS to support the implementation of the automation project that utilises the Victoria Forms product to allow the submission of on-line service requests and license applications that are automatically put into the back-office Uniform database to reduce inputting. It was decided that, although the cost of implementation was relatively modest, it was important to be able to demonstrate oversight of the project by senior managers and the approach taken was acceptable to the audit team.

## **SERVICE DELIVERY HIGHLIGHTS**

There have been many highlights throughout the year that showcase the work of our teams and illustrate the breadth of their responsibilities.

### **Community Environmental Health Team**

The Community Environmental Health Team were kept incredibly busy throughout the year across the whole range of environmental health work.

## **Statutory Nuisance**

Nuisance complaints followed their long-established seasonal pattern through the year. We received over 2080 service requests with some 40 statutory notices being served in all categories. Approximately 72% of nuisance cases related to noise nuisances (up slightly on the previous year,) with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 13% of nuisance cases related to those caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites. Public Health complaints, often linked to nuisance and dealt with under the same or similar legislative provisions were also investigated. Abatement Notices were served for issues including noise nuisances from amplified music on licensed premises, barking dogs, accumulations, and insufficient drainage arrangements.

While the proportion of noise issues relating to businesses was slightly higher than in previous years, domestic noise still represented more than half of complaints. Noise from dogs and from audio devices remain key drivers of this. With commercial premises residents' concerns generally arise from a change of management and businesses looking at more diverse ways of bringing in extra revenue which can lead to friction with the local community. Overall however, the environment for Worcestershire residents remains good.

## **Food Safety**

2,300 interventions were conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year, with only 57 being rated as non-compliant (rated 0, 1 or 2). This figure includes both site visits and assessments of low-risk premises done by remote monitoring, e.g., questionnaires. Whilst the data below demonstrates that we continue to have high levels of compliance officers report they are finding more premises with major non-compliances, particularly in the independent sector. Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to hospitality businesses (such as takeaways, pubs, or restaurants) whilst a further 10% were issued to small retailers. The team received 426 food safety complaints during 2023/24. 71% related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects) while some 29% related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Members will be aware of the engagement undertaken during Q4 with the Food Standards Agency on inspections at lower risk premises. Following the support of the Board, we are in the process of recruiting five additional officers to carry out this work.

## **Exports**

We continued to provide an export certificate service throughout the year, an essential function which enables Worcestershire businesses to trade overseas. Eight of your officers have been certified by APHA to sign certificates for fish and egg related exports and 85 certificates were issued.

## **Primary Authority**

We continue with our successful Primary Authority Partnerships (PAPs) in the food sector and are very proud to have recently added the food giant Muller to the portfolio of businesses for which we provide assured advice. Existing PAPs include Alimenti, Aspens, My EChef, Servest, Venture Events Catering, Mindful Chef (online healthy meals) and Kelsius (international company offering temperature control equipment). Some of these are multiple site operators, others are SME with less than 10 employees, demonstrating the range of businesses to which WRS can offer support. Our Principal Officer (Food) Chairs a national network of PA authorities.

## **Health and Safety at Work**

The team were faced with some very complex and challenging health and safety accident investigations throughout 2023/4, some of which have involved fatalities including young persons and close liaison with West Mercia Police and The Coroner's Office. More details of these can be shared once they have progressed through the legal process.

WRS officers were also instrumental in the process of ensuring that our local football teams (Bromsgrove Sporting, Kidderminster Harriers and Worcester) and Worcester Racecourse could fulfil their home fixtures by working with the respective safety officers to maintain their General Safety Certificates. This Safety at Sports Grounds work is carried out on a contract basis by WRS on behalf of Worcestershire County Council who have the legal responsibility for issuing safety certificates. Our ongoing work also secures events being held safely at Sixways Stadium.

The team continues to monitor major events, working with organisers to ensure that they are properly managed, meet legal requirements and run smoothly, safely and without causing unnecessary disturbance. These have included numerous music festivals across the county, a Passion Play in Worcester which included checking the risk assessment for a mock crucifixion and events planned for the Three Counties Showground.

## **Technical Services Team**

### **Environmental Permitting**

The technical services team successfully completed our inspection programme for 2023-24 in January and all subsistence instructions were supplied to the partners by the agreed dates of mid-March. DEFRA have also determined that there would be no increase in subsistence fees again for 2024-25.

Officers have continued to pursue businesses in breach of the Environmental Permitting regulations. A business in Malvern Hills District is being pursued through enforcement action following a pollution incident.

Alongside the environmental permitting for petrol stations the petroleum licensing function of the County Council was delivered to maximise efficiency, minimise enforcement costs and deliver improved customer service as well as permitting for Gloucester City Council which included assisting them with a significant application for a permit on a contentious site.

### **Local Air Quality Management**

Officers successfully installed the permanent air quality monitoring station in Wychbold following borderline air quality levels being identified over successive years. This system is providing important information on PM10 pollution and greatly enhance our understanding of air quality impact around the village. Following the team's successful bid to Defra for funding of an enhanced air quality monitoring programme in the county to support behavioural change. Twenty-six monitoring stations have been installed across the county with the ability to monitor nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and other pollutants accurately in real time. The data collected will be

reported and published in real time and enable behavioural change to be encouraged. The aim is to influence those who are vulnerable to air pollutants to protect themselves when required but also to influence those who may consider whether to contribute to pollutant release (drive a polluting vehicle) on any particular day. A behavioural change specialist has been employed to assist with understanding the barriers to and encourage behaviour change to the benefit of air quality in specific locations identified.

A significant amount of support and resource has been invested in supporting Worcester City and County colleagues in drafting an air quality action plan for the City. This is part of the local reporting requirements where an air quality management area has been declared. We have assessed measures put forward by City and County colleagues in terms of impact on nitrogen dioxide and almost completed a consultation version of the action plan. The initial conversations with Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove colleagues have commenced with a view to repeating the exercise to produce Action Plans for those areas too.

### **Contaminated Land and Planning support on technical issues**

Officers continued to support the development control process has continued throughout the year with this being the largest or second largest draws on demand of all WRS service areas for every month of the entire year. Alongside the reactive work, the team have continued to work with partner colleagues in production of a supplementary planning document on Air Quality for South Worcestershire and provided updates to guidance available to consultants supporting developers when tackling environmental health issues with development. A draft revision of Redditch Borough Council's adopted Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy is nearing completion ahead of consultation and adoption by Executive.

This year we have also provided contaminated land and planning support on technical issues to Bristol City Council, East Staffordshire District Council, Gloucester City, North Warwickshire District Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Tewkesbury District Council.

### **Dog Warden Service**

It has been a very difficult year for dog wardens. Until last year we had previously reported an annual fall in stray dog numbers, with it plateauing in 2021 and a slight increase of over one hundred stray dogs reported during 2022. However, in 2023 with the announcement of a proposed and subsequently introduced ban on XL Bully type dogs, things became very difficult. We had an increase in the number of stray dogs anyway as we continued to deal with owners giving up unsocialised dogs and not claiming them when seized. With the announcement in September the number of large bull breeds turning up as strays significantly increased with owners not claiming them and not being able to claim them. As a consequence of the legislation the number of dogs euthanised increased as it became an offence to pass on or rehome an XL Bully. In 2022 we had 854 stray dogs reported with 0.7% being put to sleep due to illness, temperament or being a banned breed, 67% returned to owners and 32% rehomed. This year, the percentage of dogs put to sleep has increased to 3% (34 dogs), with an increased number of dogs rehomed at 35% (373 dogs) and a corresponding drop in the numbers of dogs claimed by their owners at 61% (634 dogs). The increased number of dogs that have been put to sleep have taken a toll on our staff and additional support measures were put in place to safeguard their wellbeing. The situation has been exacerbated by a change in police policy nationally which has reduced the support available to assist with identifying banned breeds and seizing them for action under the Dangerous Dogs Act.

The increase in numbers of dogs requiring rehoming has had a knock-on impact in costs (dogs being boarded for the full 7 days before rehoming) and capacity of kennels. Fortunately, the work the Senior Dog Warden has done in negotiating kennel space with local providers has meant we have not faced the same problems as previously and have been able to kennel and rehome additional dogs as commercial contracts. This year we have provided various aspects of dog related services for Birmingham City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, The Dogs Trust, Gloucester City Council, North Somerset Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council amongst others.

### **Subsidised Pest Control & Worcester City Gull Control**

Subsidised pest control treatment spend was up on last year's figures (except for Bromsgrove and Malvern Hills which were largely the same) but the service operated smoothly without significant issue. Two local authorities as reported required addition funds to cover the cost of treatment in their areas. As well as the domestic service, sewer baiting was undertaken in areas where issues had been reported by residents, pest controllers or Severn Trent Water.

Additional funding was approved by the City Council to enhance the gull control management this year which allowed an extensive programme of nest, egg and chick removal in the city centre, supported by deterrent hawking, disturbance tactics and gull proofing measures. All work was carried out in accordance with any conditions of the licences provided by Natural England where appropriate. The work was successful in bringing about significant local change such that some locations remained gull free. We continue to support Bath and North-East Somerset under contract with their gull control work following the successes had in Worcester.

### **Homes for Ukraine & Planning Enforcement support**

Support has continued to be provided to Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils with the provision of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This has involved host and guest checks, support and guidance as well as facilitating appropriate payments. This has been completed utilising staff formerly employed as COVID Advisors. Similarly, for Bromsgrove and Redditch, former Contact Tracing and Enforcement staff have continued to be utilised to support planning colleagues in tackling a backlog of planning enforcement issues. Most of these cases are live and going through the enforcement process.

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### **Licensing**

The theme of proactive enforcement and joint working continued throughout the year across all districts with officers working with internal and external partners including civil enforcement officers, community safety teams, West Mercia police colleagues, the County council and Worcester BID focusing on tackling issues in the Night Time Economy, taxi enforcement, street trading and animal licensing.

The other main focus has been on efficiencies and processes for not only officers but for residents, businesses and licensing applicants by firstly looking at a licensing triage process whereby officers across teams have been exploring how queries can be resolved more quickly at first point of contact so they do not always have to wait to speak to a technical officer. Secondly officers have been developing forms for the automation of data entry into our back office uniform system. This will allow



applicants to apply through an online form rather than officers inputting information manually and then this automatically inputs into the uniform database back office system.

### **Hackney Carriage and Private Hire**

Councils have responsibility of licensing both the hackney carriage and private hire drivers to protect the public. The procedures that exist, and the process for obtaining a licence, are therefore in place to ensure each applicant is 'fit and proper' to hold a licence. The safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk is vital and the Council want to strengthen safeguarding practice and raise awareness and standards within taxi licensing. License holders are the critical 'eyes and ears' of the community and often encounter people who may be vulnerable. In 2018 Licensing officers worked with partners across Worcestershire and offered a programme of child exploitation training (CSE) for all taxi drivers. The take up of training across the County was around 75% and although positive there still remains a proportion of licence holders that have not had safeguarding training at all or longer than 5 years ago.

Research by officers found that many neighbouring authorities and local authorities across the country used the implementation of the statutory standards as an opportunity to implement mandatory safeguarding training for their licence holders. The council did not do this at the time as intelligence data (including that from key partner agencies) did not indicate the presence of a live or emerging issue. Although this remains the case, the council recognises the role and responsibility that taxi drivers have in the economy and community, and it is important that the council proactively does all that it can to ensure drivers are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Officers believe this knowledge and training should be rolled out to all drivers including existing drivers that have not undertaken the competency certificate and the safeguarding module is one that all drivers should undertake. In order to address this a report rollout to all Licensing committees commenced and will continue into next year that recommends all taxi drivers receive safeguarding refresher training at each renewal of licence.

### **Non – surgical cosmetic procedures licensing regime**

In February 2022, the Government announced its intention to introduce a licensing regime for non-surgical cosmetic procedures to ensure those that were responsible for carrying out the procedures were adequately trained and competent practitioners. Principal officers have been working closely with the Institute of Licensing as part of a working group to look at how and what this will look like in the future. In late 2023 a consultation was launched and results from that are now being scrutinised.

### **Alcohol, Entertainment and Gambling**

The team have worked up a model that can be used and deployed for work in the night time economy and this has involved both partnership working and officers being proactive working out of hours and weekends during events and the warmer weather. Partnership working has influenced a lot of the teams work across this area this year with teams carrying out joint enforcement work across all six districts with partner authorities through information and data provided by the intelligence team. Officers assess intelligence from different sources prior to acting then use that intelligence to corroborate their findings.

Towards the end of the year saw a permanent regime introduced for pavement licensing. Pavement licenses are issued by the Council under the provisions of the Business and Planning Act 2020. The Business and Planning Act 2020 created a streamlined process to allow businesses to apply for a licence to place removable

furniture over certain highways adjacent to a premises in relation to which the application is made, for certain purposes. The Business and Planning Act 2020 was originally passed in summer 2020 in response to the significant adverse impacts the Covid-19 pandemic was having on businesses in the hospitality sector and was originally only intended to be in place for a short period of time. The purpose of the legislation was to make it quicker and simpler for businesses such as cafes, restaurants and bars to secure a licence to place furniture on the highway. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 made permanent the provisions set out in the Business and Planning Act 2020 and it is hoped that this will provide much needed ongoing support for businesses and protect as many hospitality jobs as possible, particularly during times of increasing living costs. The team have started to review this with a view to implement a consistent policy across all districts in the next financial year.

The Local Area Gambling Profile Refresh was produced after 5 years and officers continue to carry out inspections. The majority of the premises inspected by officers (betting shops, adult gaming centre and Bingo premises) continue to be well managed and compliant with licence conditions, staff were well informed and the required safer gambling measures all in place. The premises inspected were on the whole part of national chains so lots of internal measures and management were set out by the company/head office.

### **Animal Licenses**

WRS continue to be well represented in this area of work as we sit on both the Licensing and Animal Welfare Group and the Canine, Feline Sector Group. Both of which have strong links with DEFRA and policy change. The team have seen a drop in new applications however renewals and interims are taking longer to inspect due to problems being found by officers. Most of this has been due to expenses remaining high post covid and businesses not being able to keep up with the requirements set out in the legislation. The team sometimes also have to take two members of staff depending on the size of the premises and if any intelligence has been received about them.

## **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

### **Budget 2022/23**

Quarterly financial monitoring reports are provided to managers and finances are regularly considered by officers from the partners ahead of each Joint Board meeting. Bromsgrove DC operates a robust ordering and authorisation process to ensure the transparency and accuracy of costing. This year saw a slight overspend at year end of just under £1,200. Although the service had good income results and sensible spending programmes, it was not quite possible to bring in the amount of income necessary to cover the full costs of retaining the agency capacity undertaking food work that officer members of the Board had agreed following the Food Standards Agency intervention. Had this resource been released in February as originally planned it is likely that the service would have achieved break-even. With the additional funding and recruitment processes running into 2024/5, it is hoped to avoid a repeat of this next year.

The draft outrun budget for 2023/4 is included as Appendix 3, along with the budgets for 2024/5 onwards at Appendix 4, submitted to November 2023's Board for approval. These do not yet include the additional contributions made by Redditch and Bromsgrove to cover planning and enviro-crime enforcement, but members will

see this in the figures provided at the October 2024 meeting. The outrun position is subject to final audit, although the budget has now reduced so far that this is no longer a statutory requirement for specific audit of the WRS accounts. Hence, this will be done as part of the overall audit of Bromsgrove District Council's accounts.

Until 2020/21, the operating assumption was a cash standstill budget, with increasing income targets set to balance the budget each year. For that year and beyond, partners have recognised that the service's ability to increase income is limited and have agreed to fund the pay increases and the uplifts in pension contributions. Members recognised that the income generation progress could not deliver the increases expected, especially in the current climate with financial uncertainty and the level of inflation. This situation is unlikely to change in the immediate future with pay increases likely to be at last year's level and prices continuing to increase in some areas with alarming rapidity. Should it be necessary, the service's reserve may help partners to buffer some financial impacts were the financial model for the service to become difficult to maintain, allowing partners time to determine the way forward for the delivery of these functions. 2023/4 will be the first year that officers have had to ask members to exercise this ability.

## **WORKFORCE PLANNING AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

The WRS structure has now been in place since October 2015 with Simon Wilkes as the Head of Service with a team of four Manager posts looking after different areas of the service. David Mellors as Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager covering all the responsibilities of his Community Environmental Health team, (Food Safety, Health and Safety and Statutory Nuisance, with some other minor areas,) and the Trading Standards remit (Weights and Measures, Food and Agricultural Standards, Product Safety, Fair Trading, Animal Health) on a contractual basis since the County's departure from the partnership in 2016. Mark Cox continues to head up the Technical Services Team covering Technical Pollution (managing Planning, IPPC, Contaminated Land, Air Quality), Dog Wardens, Pest Control, Information Management & Database administration and more recently the first contact team of Duty Officers. Kiran Lahel heads up the Licensing and Support Services Team, with the Licensing team servicing all six district council Licensing committees as those decisions around policy remain devolved to the six partners, either for practical reasons or because the law (Licensing Act 2003, Gambling Act 2005,) requires it. The post of Business and Relationship Manager remains on the establishment should it be required for future activities, but currently the best vehicle for selling our services is peer-to-peer activity. The funding is currently re-deployed to roles supporting the Team Managers, enhancing our information and intelligence functions.

Staff turnover remains low, although we are starting to see older members of staff considering flexible retirement and one or two reducing their hours to allow them to commit to other activities away from the workplace. We have not seen any further losses to better paid roles with national public bodies, but as we said last year, the fact is that WRS continues to provide a solid platform for professional development shows that we retain our reputation for excellence. The new recruits from last year have settled in and their diverse backgrounds have brought a new dynamic to some of our income generation.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, the core permanent staff establishment was around 70 FTE. There is also some capacity is on fixed term contracts and some supernumerary roles remain in place providing the Homes for Ukraine and Planning Enforcement capacity, all of which is funded directly by the relevant partners. Obviously, once the final steps to build planning and envirocrime enforcement for Bromsgrove and Redditch into the "day job" of WRS occur in June 2024, those staff will become part of the core establishment.

Maintaining competence remains central to our ability to deliver income and, helpfully more training is now being delivered in bite-sized chunks via Teams, making it easier and cheaper to hold onto relevance competencies. However, there will always be a need to undertake some face-to-face training, particularly where a course has to run over an extended period to embed new knowledge within the officer's understanding. As ever, we will look to use our usual PDR approach this year with a main one and a 6-month review to help identify what individuals need.

### **Staff Survey**

52 of our staff cohort responded to the survey. As ever, some did not respond to all the questions. The satisfaction score is based on those who scored 5/10 or better for the question in the staff survey which asked, are you satisfied with working with WRS (score is from 0 to 10.) The figure obtained, of 94% is slightly higher than last year and remains excellent. Over 85% of staff who responded scored working for WRS at 8 or better out of 10, which is good news. Due to current time constraints, we have yet to do more detailed analysis of broader staff comments, but it is good to know that many are happy working for the service.

From the little review we have been able to do so far, there is still work to do on getting the teams working more closely, so we do need to make more effort with our cross-cutting activities. It is also clear that resources are stretched, and that people have limited thinking time or capacity for taking on more. This means that our work on directing resources to priority areas through intelligence will remain important going forwards.

### **Staff Sickness**

During 2023/24 staff sickness reached 3.07 days per FTE, slightly above last year's 2.93 but well below the previous year's 5.2 and below the average for the 5 years including last (3.71 days/FTE.) Some 34% of the sickness was classed as long-term (i.e., periods lasting 29 days or more,) and can be influenced by a small number of people being off, either following surgery or other health issues. Whilst an aging service is likely to have a slightly higher rate of sickness due to natural causes, managers will continue to work to maintain the figures in the normal range of 3-6 days.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

WRS remains located at Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster. The use of flexible and mobile working is generally now the norm, and has been expanded further during the pandemic, with staff frequently using home as their start and finish point for work in the field. Office based activity will remain important for team performance, identity, and morale so officers will continue to operate to a flexible pattern that facilitates this and provides face to face liaison with managers and colleagues or for meetings. The touch down points retained in each of the councils have provided an excellent venue for licensing appointments and these will be maintained on an appointment only basis, providing a useful balance between availability for the trade and efficiency of service delivery. Taxi drivers/ operators can be told what they will need over the telephone, ensuring that officer face-to-face time can be used more effectively to ensure complete applications are made and that paperwork has been completed correctly.

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

## **BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION (SERVICE DELIVERY)**

The Intelligence Operating Model is now the way we deliver our activities. The model of a Strategic Assessment for longer term priorities and Tactical Assessments for adjusting resource allocation to address emergent threats has long been the operating model in core policing and other law enforcement organisations, not only nationally but internationally too. WRS continues to lead in the wider regulatory environment, using what we learnt with our Trading Standards colleagues on how this model can support our activities.

The current Strategic Assessment recommends that the focus of activity should be around the following tactical priorities, which were in place for 2023/4 and will remain for 2024/5:

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

The Strategic Assessment will be refreshed in the Autumn to inform service planning from 2025/6 onwards.

Tactical assessments will review our data and intelligence against these, to support Team Managers and Principal Officers in determining activities to respond to the intelligence picture current at that time. Subject and problem profiles will provide a more in-depth look at issues or the entities creating them to support managers in their decision making. The top three priorities are cross cutting aspects of our work, and a Team Manager will take responsibility for each one, ensuring that work is done across the three teams that can contribute to related outcomes.

This year, our Intelligence Officer delivered training to all WRS staff on the basis of the operating model, what could be recorded via the intelligence system and how to go about it. There is often a misunderstanding that intelligence logging duplicates what is logged in our back office, which is not the case. The Intelligence Officer also wrote the training models that have been adopted as part of the IDB system, meaning it is now available to all subscribing authorities.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

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

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

The Service aims to ensure that Risk Management becomes a natural component of its management process and that when and where appropriate; risks are avoided, reduced, transferred, or retained. As part of these arrangements, a WRS risk register has been developed that can be integrated with the partners' individual risk registers. This register will be maintained and reviewed periodically to assess current risks and identify forthcoming priorities.

The current risk register at Appendix 2 was reviewed ahead of the 2024/5 service plan being produced. Many of the generic risks and mitigation have served us well during the pandemic and remain relevant. Flexible work patterns can create their own risks around feelings of isolation, lack of team identity and loss of belonging to the organisation and basic things like risk of muscular-skeletal injury because people spend long hours working at desks that are not ideal. So, whilst the service will continue to make more use of virtual meetings, they will never fully replace face to face interaction, nor will they lead to the abandonment of a physical location for the service.

Cyber-attack appears to be a growing risk and the service continues to work with our ICT host, Wyre Forest DC and Bromsgrove DC to limit this and help to ensure we have good business continuity measures in place. Updating and maintaining business continuity measures is something we need to get better at. One of the teams has undertaken an exercise that showed our staff can think quickly in event of things going wrong, but it helps if there is a ready plan and guidance for the most likely incidents. An on-going training programme of reminders for staff highlighting the preventive measures that must be followed to limit the wider risks around cyber-security is on-going. Last year's ban on XL Bully dogs showed our ability to address spikes in demand in this area, but the police's withdrawal of some support has also highlighted an area we will need to potentially reinforce.

Last year also saw us engage with the Food Standards Agency's in relation to our approach to lower risk premises. A return to a more traditional approach to inspection at low-risk premises has led to us including a specific line in the register to highlight the Agency's demand for "to the letter" compliance with the Local Authority Code of Practice on Food Law Enforcement. Whilst we will continue to shape what we do with intelligence, options around food to vary activity are somewhat more limited. The introduction of the revised version of the Local Authority Code has been delayed until at least 2027, so there are unlikely to be changes to their position in the intervening period.

Finally, there remain concerns going forward around public expectation around what is deliverable in law, particularly in relation to nuisance issues. The law is old and effectively what is a statutory nuisance is a matter of opinion rather than being based on any specific statutory levels of, for example noise. This is difficult for members of the public to accept but the service will look to improve its performance in the eyes of our non-business customers.

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

The news in recent years has frequently featured police and fire services being accused of not addressing equality and diversity. The Metropolitan Police and Greater London Fire and Rescue Service have been subject to damning headlines that many of us in the public sector would want to avoid. WRS is committed to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity. The service links in with the host Authority's adopted Equality Standard for Local Government as a framework to help embed equality and diversity into everyday aspects of its work. Equality issues have come to the fore in recent years with the Black Lives Matter movement highlighting racial inequalities but clearly there is a wider agenda for public services to address. The professional bodies for regulators are looking at how to respond and how to help make services be more reflective of communities they serve. Bodies like the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers are trying support the leaders of our regulatory services to encourage diversity. I'm sure this is something that we will take on board at WRS and do our best to move forward in an inclusive way.

## **THE NEXT STEPS**

We are now back onto a business-as-usual footing post-pandemic so, going forward we will:

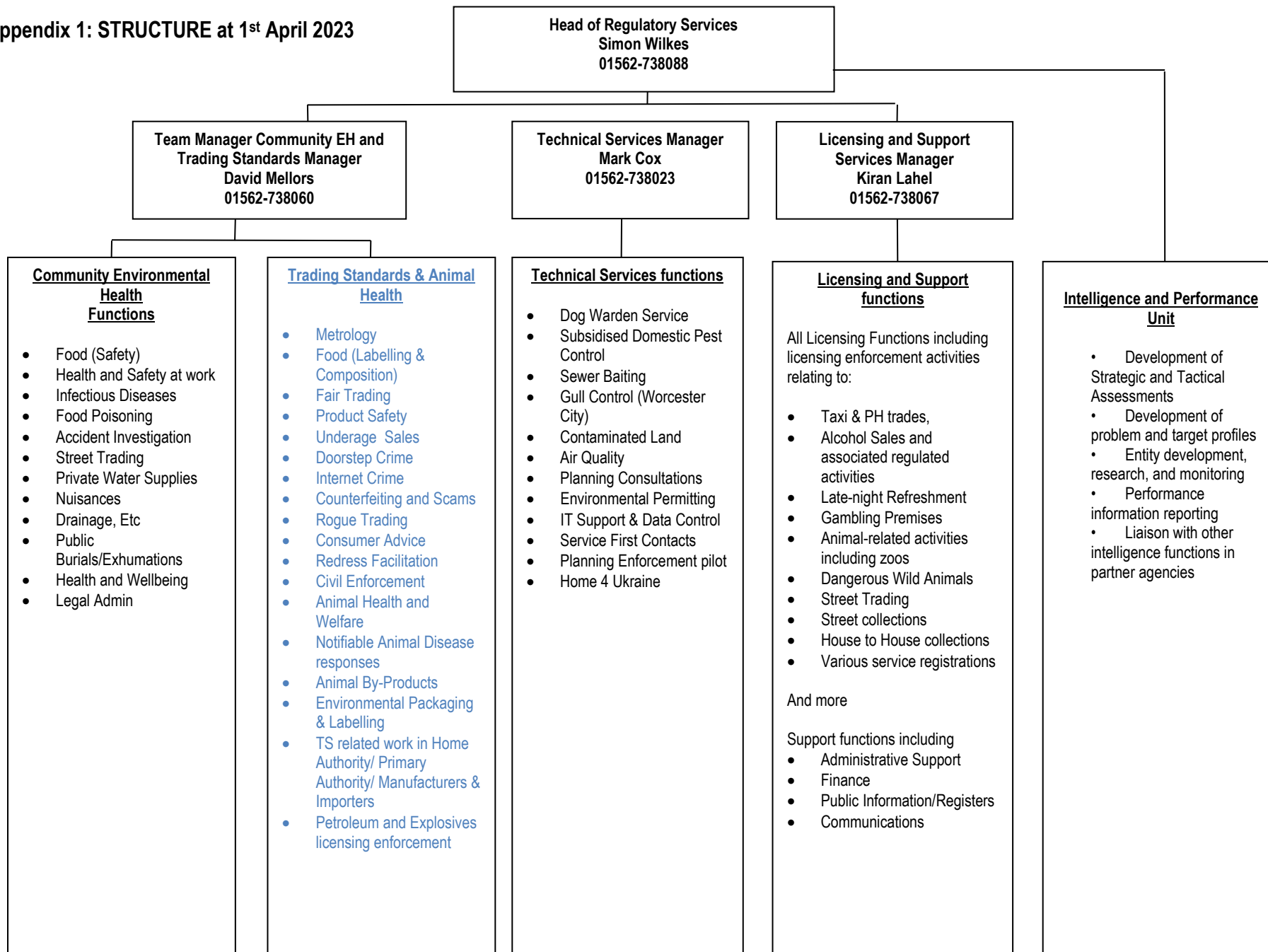
- Continue to deliver the WRS Business Plan and our annual operational service plans,
- Maintain existing income streams and looking at other ways of generating income for the service,
- Following our philosophy of continuous improvement, continue to review operations to improve marginal efficiencies,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

On this last point, by the time this report is published it is hoped that the planning work previously undertaken as a pilot for Bromsgrove and Redditch will formally be part of the business-as-usual activity of the service, with relevant member forums having passed the necessary resolutions to achieve this at the end of 2023/4. There remains the option for partners to follow suit, and as we mention in the WRS Business Plan there are likely to be other areas of enforcement that could equally find a home with WRS. Private Sector Housing enforcement is a particular area of interest for Government currently with major changes coming to local enforcement that will challenge existing resourcing arrangements and is a service area that would suite a shared service as we have seen various partner authorities requesting assistance from one another over the past couple of years. Having secured both petroleum licensing and safety at sportsgrounds work from the County Council, we will look at what other functions we might discharge for them too. There are likely to be further proposed changes to the legislative framework in the coming year as Government

continues to modernise some aspects of regulation. We will respond to consultations on behalf of the partners in relation to any proposed changes and, where we can, work with other colleagues in the region to help amplify the thinking of local authority officers across our area.



Appendix 1: STRUCTURE at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023



Appendix 2 – WRS Risk Register 2024/5

Risk Description	Consequences	When is this likely to happen	Current Position			Control measures
			Likelihood	Impact	Matrix RAG Status	
Loss of Data through IT failures	Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data.	On-going	Low	High	Green	Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC upgraded relevant systems including Windows. The service moved to Office 365 during 2021/22, which provides better access to a range of provisions including Microsoft Teams and Power BI.
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Current contract due to be re-negotiated in February 2023. Work has commenced on negotiating new contract. The cost of moving systems is prohibitive currently and, whilst the system has its faults, it provides the necessary functionality and will allow the enablement of data transfer from electronic forms.
Effective and efficient Business Continuity arrangements in place	Disruption to service if e.g., Major Power failures or other reasons that access to Wyre Forest House is not possible.	On-going	Very Low	Medium	Amber	The pandemic has shown that we were well prepared for the need to maximise working from home and now all staff, including some previously regarded as office based can do this. Touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations. WRS Managers do need to redraft contingency plans in the event of a prolonged IT failure or cyber-attack that will allow services to be maintained.
Maintain our capacity to achieve service delivery	Disruption to service e.g., Major staff sickness (e.g., flu pandemic) or Unable to recruit or retain suitably qualified staff.	On-going	Low	Medium	Amber	The pandemic response has shown that the service was well-placed to respond to what was required.. Consultants are available to provide short term cover and, whilst this worked well in peacetime to cover peak demand periods, the pandemic has revealed the limits to this type of capacity. These pressures will only be resolved in the longer term by local and central government investing in additional capacity

						<p>and additional training to bring more people into the regulatory professions.</p> <p>Having taken on contracts with additional authorities the demand has increased, and neighbouring authorities have lost the ability to assist with some technical specialisms. This is the double-edged sword of effectively operating as a centre of excellence.</p> <p>Whilst we have good resource of our own, in event of an issue, there are limits to who we can ask for help. Regional and sub-regional groups are in place so can provide shared resources for local authorities if required.</p> <p>Effective training and development processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of staff.</p> <p>There is increased training budget pressure, reduced technical knowledge in neighbouring authorities and increased importance in maintaining heightened skills for contractual obligations and commercial edge.</p> <p>Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replace may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share.</p>
Pest contractors cease operations.	Disruption to service. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	<b>Green</b>	The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This should limit or eliminate risk, although the unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues.
Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control	Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage.  Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	<b>Amber</b>	The Out of Hours and Kennelling contracts were re-tendered to enhance the existing arrangements and provide resilience however there are increases in numbers of stray dogs, dog disease and contracts are restricted by geographical location. Retendering for additional kennels remains difficult and consideration may be given to creating our own capacity.

Hosting support does not deliver necessary financial and HR support to ensure efficient management	Efficiency of management reduced; staffing issues remain unaddressed, and performance suffers	On-going	Low	High	<b>Amber</b>	Issues with the new BDC finance system have mainly been resolved, however some workarounds remain in place due to some unforeseen issues.
One or more partners continue to be under great financial pressure and may consider alternatives to the partnership to deliver their service	Creates reputational issues for remaining partners and increases the need to manage overheads. Difficulties in delivering highly varied levels of service	On-going	Medium	High	<b>Amber</b>	New legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners must move to contractual relationship but this is quite high before it kicks in (20%.) Leanness of organisation minimises overheads and focuses resource at the front line. Growth strategy should generate income to support partners in the future but there are limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Invest to save capacity has been committed by partners to see if this achieves the necessary outcomes but even this is now fully occupied.
Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes.	Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation.	On-going	Low	Medium	<b>Green</b>	Continued close working with BDC legal team and other partners who don't use BDC for advocacy. Technical and legal training days for staff. Difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments. Membership and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist.
Service provision complies with Government requirements,  New performance regimes are introduced that the service is not staffed to address	Intervention by Government bodies  Other national bodies seek to introduce similar frameworks to the FSA Code to get what they regard as suitable minimum levels of service.  We understand that Government is asking its central competent bodies to ensure that regulatory regimes are fit for purpose and do not pose a risk to UK exports post BREXIT as the UK no longer has the cover of the EU taking on this role. This may make new codes or performance	On-going	Low	High	<b>Amber</b>	Limited detail of what is required for statutory minima can make decision making difficult around what is required in law as a minimum.  The LGA is clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear Government cannot expect what it had previously. Fewer interventions/ audits by government.  The Service has developed systems that follow the principles of the requirements of bodies like FSA so can show some level of compliance, but service isn't operating to the letter of the current Code. This has been noted by the Agency and they are now seeking to drive all authorities back into line with the Code, with the threat of ministerial direction if required. The

	<p>frameworks in areas outside of food law more likely.</p> <p>NB: Food Standards Agency is addressed below.</p>					<p>major changes envisaged for the Code have been delayed until 2027. And whilst this change is likely to move closer to the WRS model of operation, it is unlikely to wholly embrace the intelligence-led approach. See below for specific risk.</p> <p>Environmental reporting for Local Air Quality Management, Pollution Prevention and Control and Private Water Supply Inspection reports to Defra and DWI have received positive responses with no issues of concern raised by these bodies.</p>
Compliance with Food Code of Practice	Adverse comments following audits. FSA, can seek ministerial direction to make LAs comply with its Code of Practice	On-going	High	High	<b>Amber/Red</b>	<p>This is a subset of the section above line as FSA is the only body currently with a statutory code that LAs must have significant regard to, plus it has the power to apply for Ministerial Orders to force LAs to comply with the letter of the Code.</p> <p>Until recently the Agency appears to have been happy to allow LAs to experiment as long as they abide by the spirit of the code and resource the function at a reasonable level. It has now changed tack and is seeking to push local authorities to operate much more closely to the letter of the code in an effort to create additional resource. A paper went to the FSA Boar at the end of 2023, expressing concern about resourcing levels in both Env Health and Trading Standards resulting in a public call for local and central government to work together to remedy this.</p> <p>The partners are looking to make a significant investment in resources to address most of the Agency's concerns, but it will not allow full compliance with the Code. Having said this, there is limited risk in the variations that will remain in place and full compliance with the code would require a full redesign of operations within Community EH and further financial investment.</p>

Failure to deliver external contract work at the level expected by the business or local authority with whom we have the contract	Damage to reputation, loss of future income streams, financial impact of paying damages	On-going	Low	High	<b>Green</b>	Ensure contract negotiations are clear on performance criteria and these are clearly recorded in the final documentation. Monthly reviews against performance criteria. Select staff to ensure competence of those undertaking work outside Worcestershire. Maintain strong links with the customer's monitoring staff. Intervene early with corrective action
Failure to successfully transition the Planning and Envirocrime Enforcement functions to WRS	Damage to reputation, or enforcement cases	April to September 2024	Medium	Medium	<b>Amber</b>	Appropriate contract negotiations will set out the service level agreement (update to the Statement of Partner Requirements) and early recruitment will assist with reducing the risk of a successful transfer of service areas.

## Appendix 3: Detailed out-turn for Regulatory Services 2022/23

	Full Year Budget 23-24	Committed Expenditure Apr - Mar 24	Variance
Direct Expenditure	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>Employees</b>			
Salary	3,524	3,400	-124
Agency Staff	25	328	303
Employee Insurance	25	21	-3
<b>Sub-Total - Employees</b>	<b>3,574</b>	<b>3,749</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Premises</b>			
Rent / Hire of Premise	74	74	0
Cleaning	1	0	-0
Utilities	0	0	0
<b>Sub-Total - Premises</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>-0</b>
<b>Transport</b>			
Vehicle Hire	20	11	-8
Vehicle Fuel	8	6	-2
Road Fund Tax	1	1	-0
Vehicle Insurance	5	4	-1
Vehicle Maintenance	3	1	-2
Car Allowances	56	41	-15

**Sub-Total - Transport****92****64****-28****Supplies and Services**

Furniture &amp; Equipment

39

84

44

Clothes, uniforms and laundry

2

2

1

Printing &amp; Photocopying

17

11

**-6**

Postage

11

12

1

ICT

67

70

3

Telephones

21

37

16

Training &amp; Seminars

22

25

3

Insurance

20

9

**-10**

Third Party Payments

194

195

1

**Sub-Total - Supplies & Service****393****446****53****Contractors**

Dog Warden

121

261

139

Pest Control

105

120

15

Taxi / Alcohol / &amp; Other Licensing

70

98

28

Other contractors/consultants

3

1

**-1**

Water Safety

5

7

2

Food Safety

1

0

**-1**

Environmental Protection

12

59

47

Grants / Subscriptions

13

15

2

Advertising, Publicity and Promotion

6

4

**-1****Sub-Total****335****566****231**



<b>Income</b>			
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-703	-1,133	-430
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>-703</b>	<b>-1,133</b>	<b>-430</b>
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>3,766</b>	<b>3,767</b>	<b>1</b>

## Appendix 4: 3-year budgets 2024/25 to 2026/27 agreed at November 2023

Account description	Budget 2024 / 2025 £000's	Budget 2025 / 2026 £000's	Budget 2026 / 2027 £000's
<b>Employees</b>			
Monthly salaries	3667	3765	3857
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	21	21	21
Employees' professional subscriptions	3	3	3
Sub-Total - Employees	3692	3790	3882
<b>Premises</b>			
Rents	77	80	83
Room hire	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1
Sub-Total - Premises	80	83	86
<b>Transport</b>			
Vehicle repairs/maintenance	3	3	3
Diesel fuel	8	8	8
Licences	1	1	1
Contract hire of vehicles	4	4	4
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5
Van Lease	9	9	9
Fares & Car Parking	5	5	5
Car allowances	50	50	50
Sub-Total - Transport	84	84	84
<b>Supplies &amp; Service</b>			

Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	29	29	29
Materials	9	9	9
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2
General insurances	16	16	16
Printing and stationery	17	17	17
Books and publications	2	2	2
Postage/packaging	11	11	11
ICT	67	67	67
Telephones	37	37	37
Taxi Tests	14	14	14
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26
Support service recharges	126	130	134
Support service recharges - ICT	74	77	80
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	452	459	466

**Contractors**

Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	246	241	241
Advertising (general)	6	6	6
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13
Sub-Total - Contractors	264	259	259

**Total Expenditure Budget** 4572 4675 4777

**Income**

Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-407	-407	-407
Funding from Bromsgrove & Redditch for Enforcement Work	-195	-201	-208
Sub-Total - Income	-602	-608	-615

**Income**

Funding from partners for Technical Officers	-117	-115	-117
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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	-359	-455	-550
Additional Income			
Agreed reduced charge to Worcester City Council	-30	-30	-30
Sub-Total - Income	-30	-30	-30
<b>Total Income Budget</b>	<b>-991</b>	<b>-1093</b>	<b>-1195</b>

Page 74 DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET 3581 3581 3581

**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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Additional costs for posts for new or additional activities will be allocated using this formula unless the work is requested by either one partner or a group of partners, where the full cost of the new function must be covered by those partners requesting the additionality.

The table below covers off the additional payments that are likely to flow from the current allocations of additional funding for the additional Technical Officer capacity required for several pieces of work and to cover the salary and pension pressures going forward.

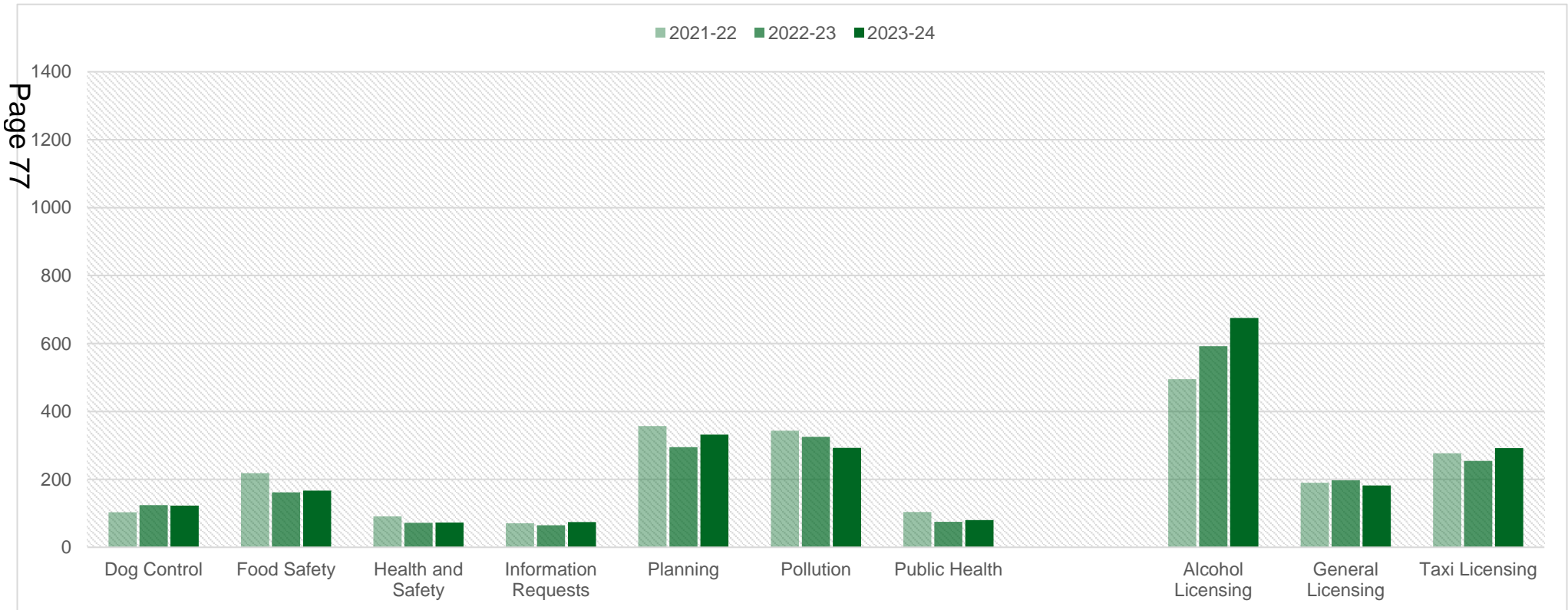
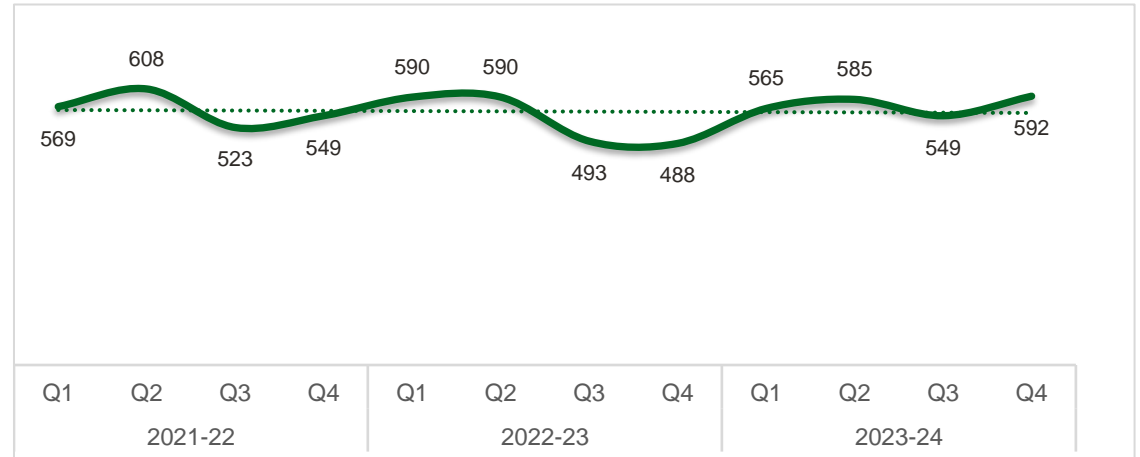
	Budget	Change in Taxi Test Policy	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	2024 / 2025	23-24 & 24-25	2024 / 2025
Budget 2024 / 25	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,621</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>-30</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>4,138</b>
	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
Budget 2025 / 26	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,621</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>-30</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>4,240</b>
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Change in Taxi Test Policy</b>	<b>Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City</b>	<b>Contribution Technical Officers</b>	<b>Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT &amp; Hosting Charges</b>	<b>Unavoidable Salary Pressures</b>	<b>Total Partner Contribution</b>
	<b>2026 / 2027</b>	<b>2026 / 2027</b>	<b>2026 / 2027</b>	<b>2026 / 2027</b>	<b>24-25, 25-26 &amp; 26-27</b>	<b>23-24, 24-25, 25-26 &amp; 26-27</b>	<b>Total Partner Contribution</b>
<b>Budget 2026 / 27</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,621</b>	<b>-8</b>	<b>-30</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>4,342</b>

## Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Bromsgrove** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

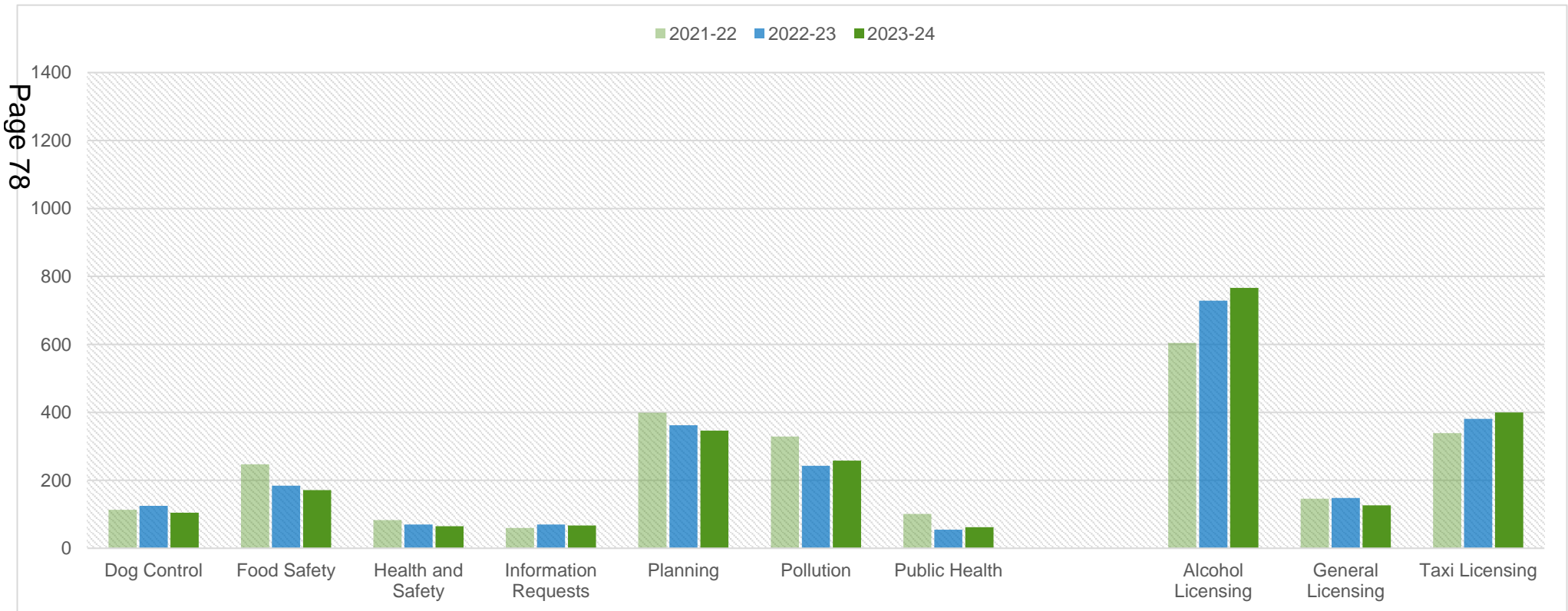
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



## Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Malvern Hills** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.

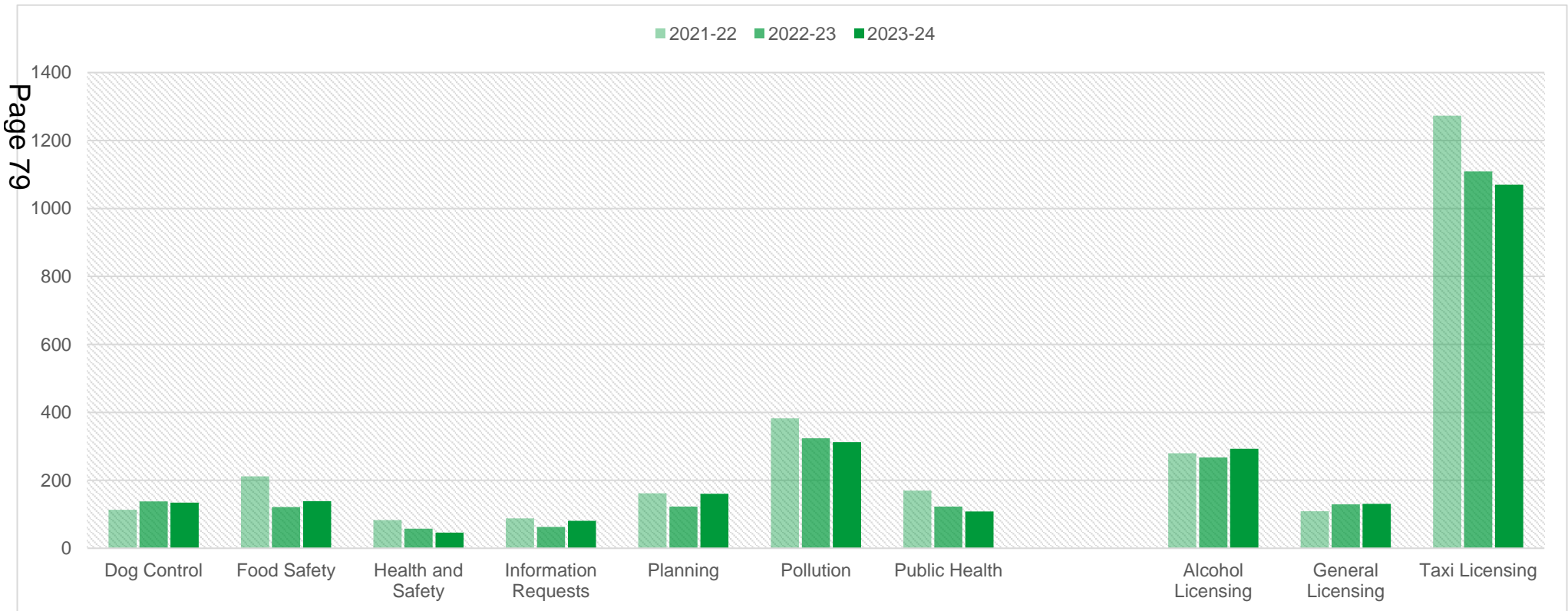
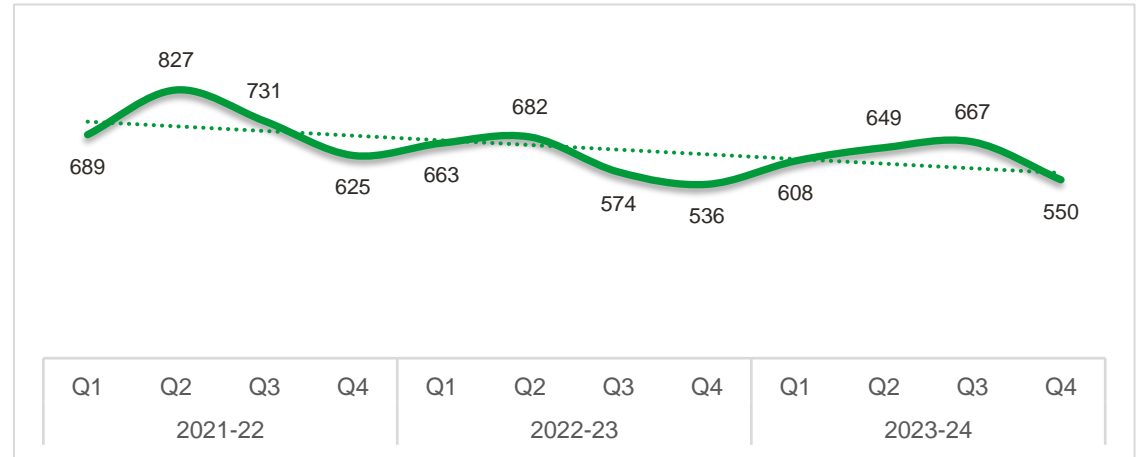




## Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Redditch** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

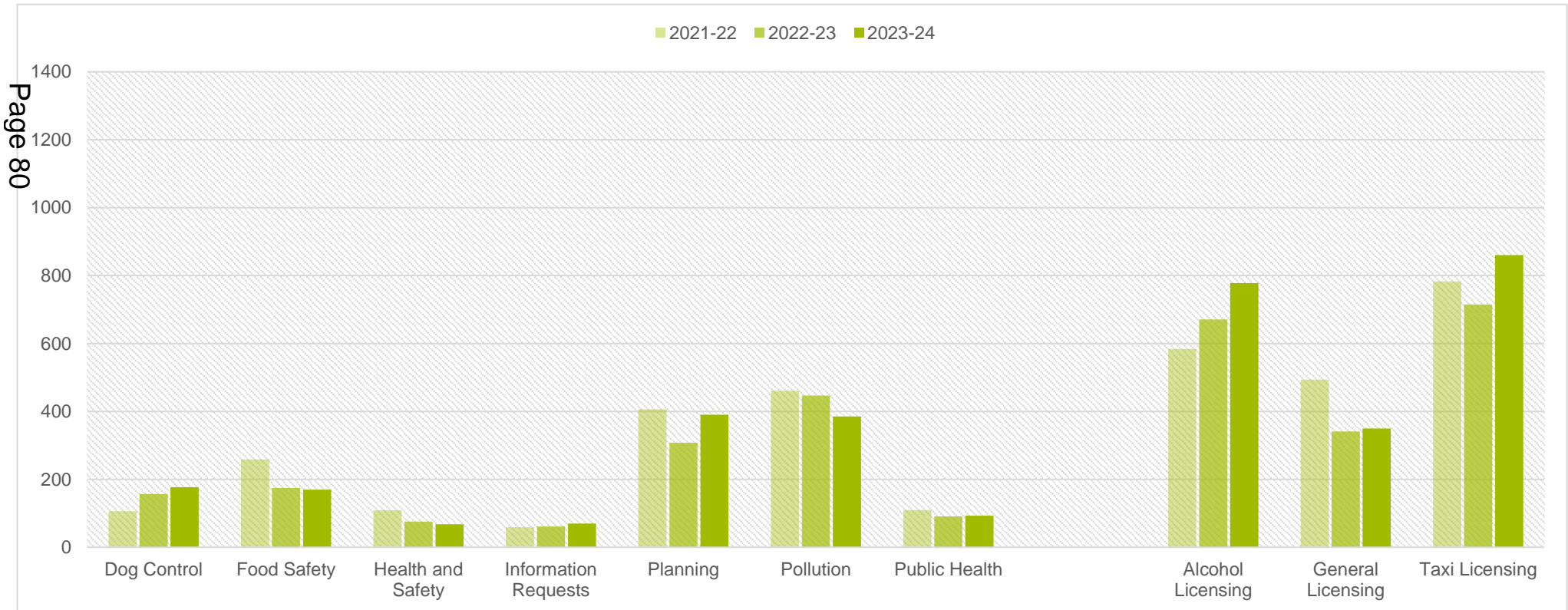
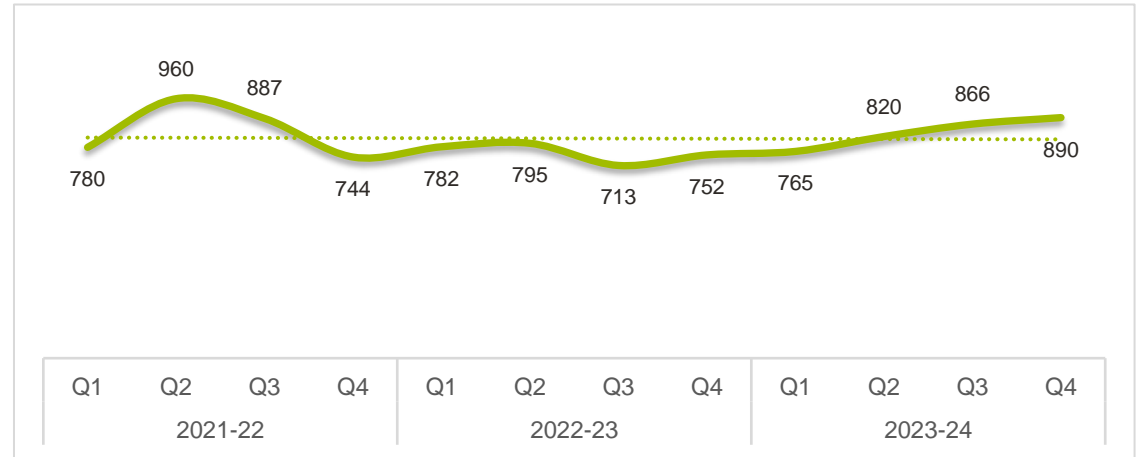
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



## Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Worcester City** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

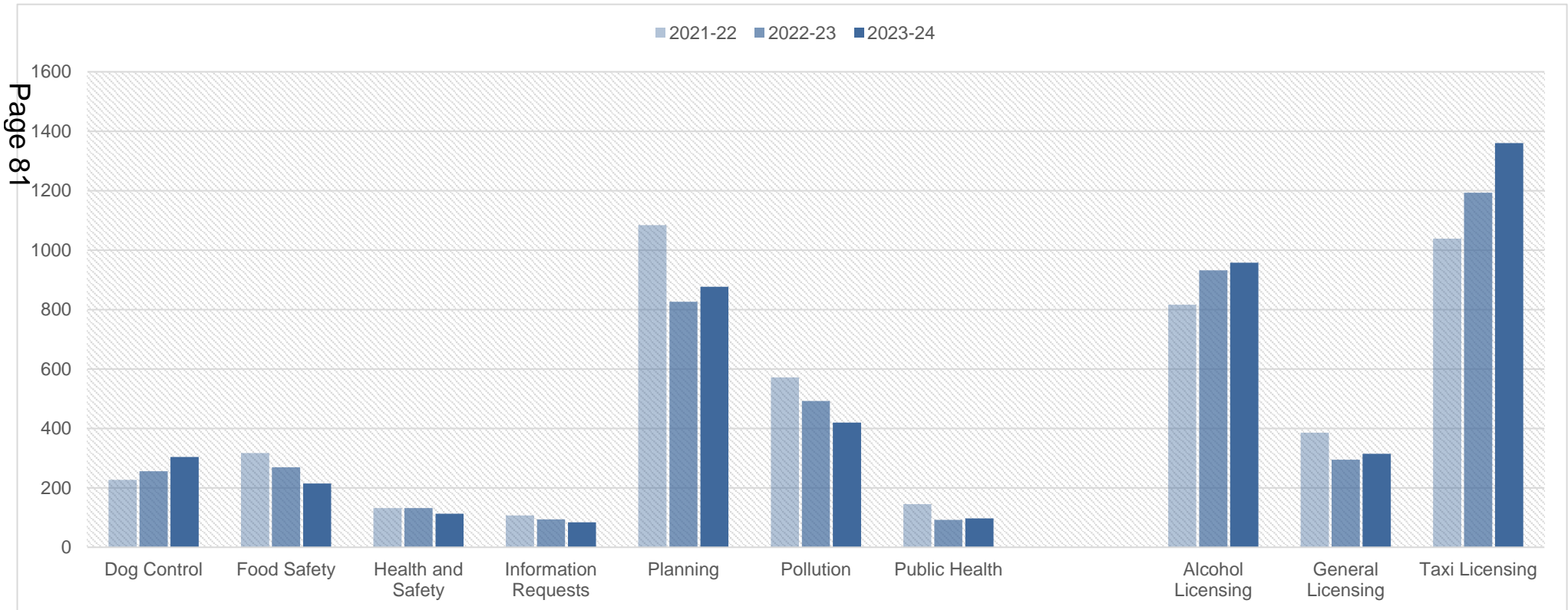
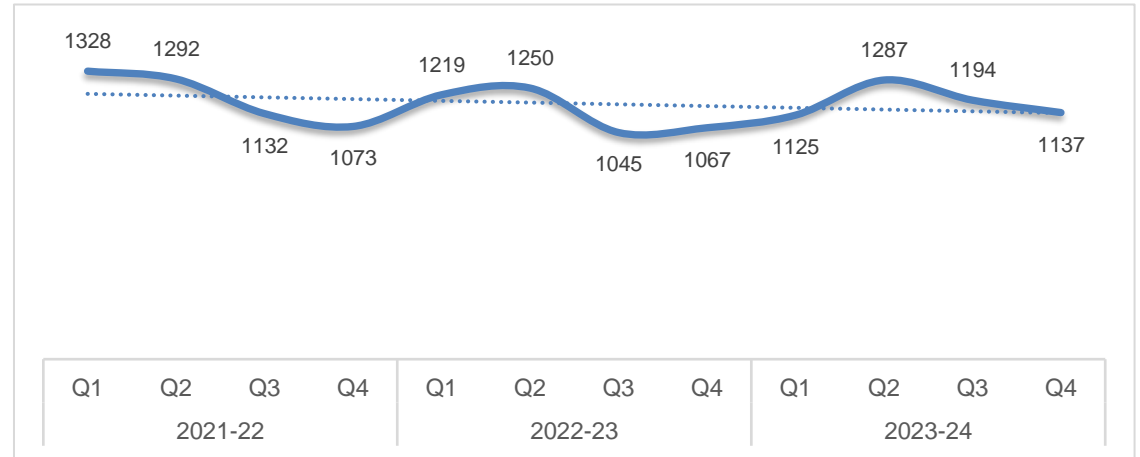
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



## Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Wychavon** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

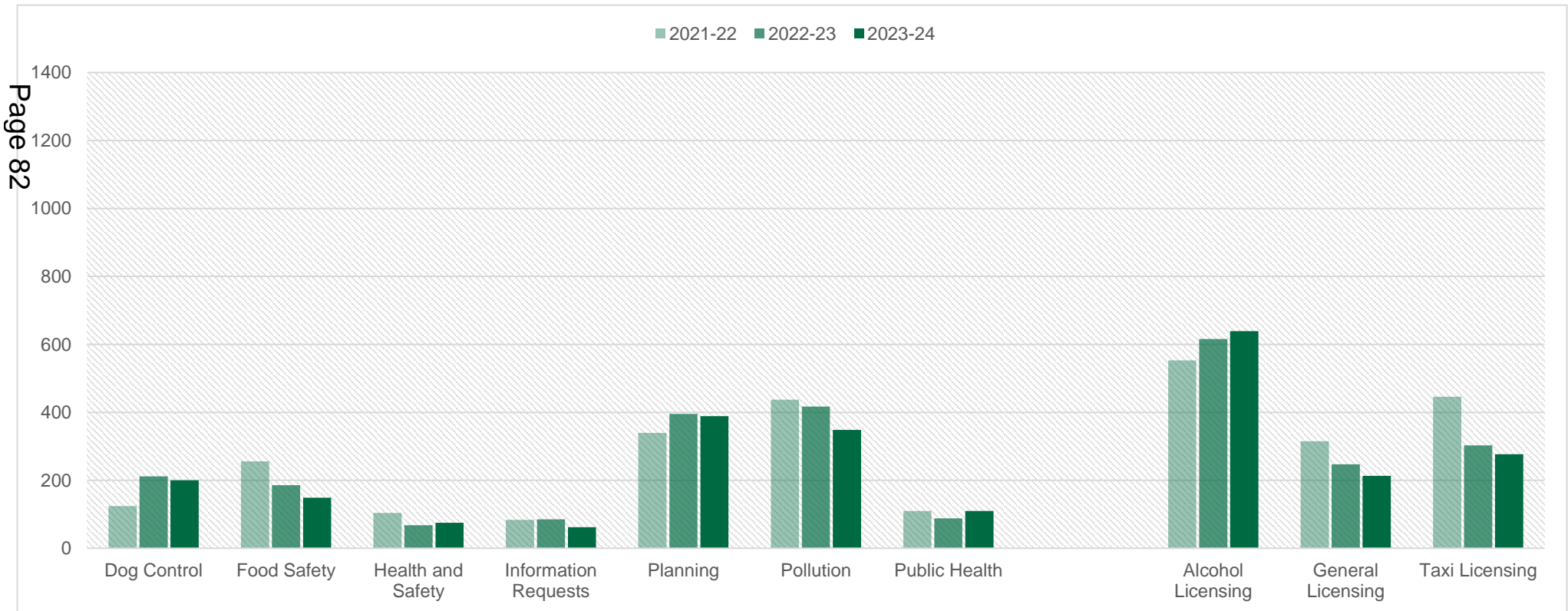
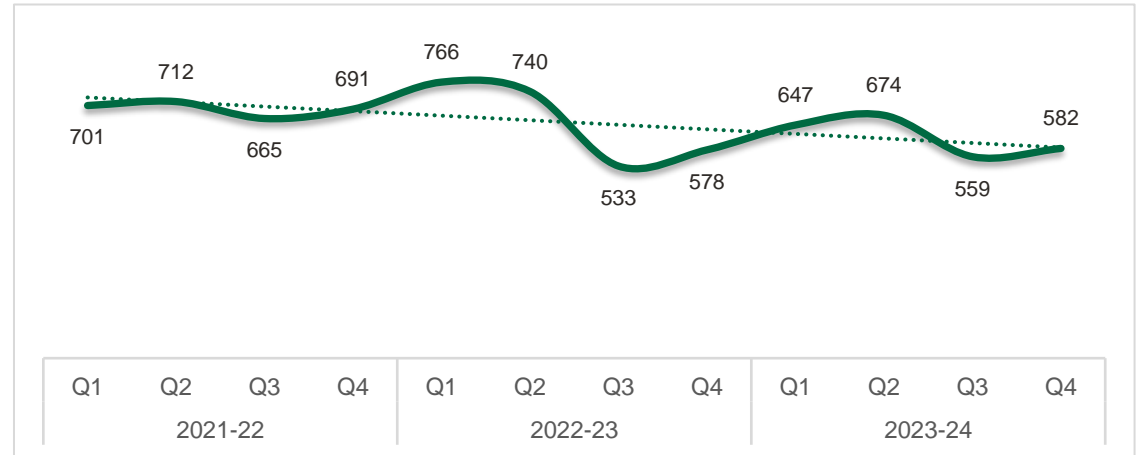
The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



## Appendix 5: District Council Summaries

The chart (right) shows the volume of Environmental Health and Licensing cases where the subject and/or enquirer were in the **Wyre Forest** district. This includes complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications.

The chart (below) shows the volume of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by the service. Please note the Y axis has been standardised to reflect the level of demand seen across each of the six districts.



# Worcestershire Regulatory Services

*Supporting and protecting you*

## WRS Board

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024

### Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1, 2 3 and 4 2023/4

#### Recommendation

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

#### Background

The detail of the report focuses on the final quarter of 2023/24, 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

Looking at the data, last year, 2022/23 and 2023/24 can probably be seen as our first truly post-pandemic period with figures for activity beginning to be more comparable with each other and those before the pandemic. In several places, the data varies by a handful of percentage points compared with 2022/3 and are significantly different from 2021/22, where there was a significant burst of activity required, linked to people's perceptions of coming out of pandemic controls. We can probably safely say we are now into a new normal of demand levels.

Members will be aware of the engagement undertaken during Q4 with the Food Standards Agency on inspections at lower risk premises. Of the 1,569 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year, only 57 were rated as non-compliant (rated 0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to hospitality businesses (such as takeaways, pubs, or restaurants) whilst a further 10% were issued to small retailers.



As members will see, food safety cases have been running below the trend line for virtually all this year. Some 32% fewer food safety cases were recorded during 2023/4 compared with 2021/ 22, and 6% below 2022/23 levels. Most food safety cases are enquiries such as requests for business advice or requests for export health certificates. Of the 426 actual complaints recorded during the year, 71% related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (e.g., poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects), while some 29% related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

While complaint/ enquiry numbers for health and safety remained stable through Q4, reported accidents showed a slight increase. Overall numbers of cases recorded during the year is a reduction of 27% compared to 2021/22, and a reduction of 8% compared to 2022-23. Some, 47% of case demand came from reports of accidents, with most 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 of from height) continue to be the most prominent cause of accidents occurring in workplaces.

Q4 demonstrated the usual drop off in stray dog numbers but this was after a busy year compared to the pre-pandemic years where numbers fell, year on year. The number of dog control cases recorded during the year was 35% higher than in 2021/22, and 7% higher than 2022/23. Some of this was likely driven by the ban on XL Bully type dogs but this did not cover all the increase. Approximately 87% of recorded dog cases related to stray or lost dogs, mainly "contained strays" where dogs have been found and held by members of the public. Overall, 59% of strays have been reunited with their owners, however, figures vary significantly between local authorities, and this is slightly lower than previous years meaning a greater burden on the public purse as the statutory seven-day kennelling fee is not paid by the owner. The increase in the number of stray dogs reported across Worcestershire has also come with a greater number of stray dogs being picked up with welfare concerns.

The actual number of complaints about dog control (excluding barking nuisance,) are relatively small. Of the 68 complaints recorded during the year, 40 related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 17 related to dangerous or out-of-control dogs, and 11 related to welfare concerns.

Overall licensing work looks like it followed the general trend, although the total volume of licensing cases recorded during 2023/24 was 6% higher than both 2021-22 and 2022-23. Approximately 64% of cases were applications and registrations; with 42% relating to the taxi trades and 24% relating to temporary events under the Licensing Act 2003. Licensing complaints and enquiries continued their upward trend during Q4. Most of these contacts are simply enquiries but, of the 597 complaints recorded during the year, 289 related to taxi licensing, 142 related to alcohol licensing, and 106 related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).



Quarter 4 saw a significant increase in information requests. Historically, this has been linked to an upturn in planning applications, but planning work appears to have remained steady during the second half of 2023/4. The anecdotal reports of increases in FOI activity may account for at least some of this. On planning, the number enquiries completed during the year was 19% lower than 2021/22, but 5% higher than 2022/23. Approximately 93% of enquiries were requests for support with consultations, with 49% related to contaminated land. Around 14% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of local authorities outside of Worcestershire.

Nuisance complaints have followed their long-established seasonal pattern through the year, and with our poor wet Winter, numbers fell slightly further during Q4. Overall, the number of pollution cases recorded during the year was 21% lower than 2021/22, and 11% below the level in 2022/23. Approximately 72% of nuisance cases related to noise nuisances (up slightly on last year,) with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 13% of nuisance cases related to those caused by smoke, fumes, and gases such as the burning of domestic waste or dust from construction sites. Public Health complaints, often linked to nuisance and dealt with under the same or similar legislative provisions were lower in the second half of the year, at levels like 2022/23 but below the levels in 2021/22.

#### **Homes for Ukraine**

Support has continued to be provided to Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils with the provision of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This has involved host and guest checks, support and guidance as well as facilitating appropriate payments. This has been completed utilising staff formerly employed as COVID Advisors.

#### **Planning Enforcement**

Steps were taken in Q4 to formally move planning enforcement for Bromsgrove and Redditch from being a contracted element to part of the WRS day job, with the associated uplift in contributions for the two partners. All Member forums approved this, and it is expected that all work will be completed by the beginning of June 2024 to make this a reality. Former Contact Tracing and Enforcement staff had been utilised to support planning colleagues in tackling a backlog of planning enforcement issues. Several significant cases remain on-going through the enforcement process and, work has, so far, been well received.

#### **Performance**

The year was mixed again from a customer satisfaction perspective with the business customers level falling to 94.6% from its usual 97/ 98% level, but the non-business customer measure improving slightly to 60.4% from 59.2% last year. However, non-business customer



satisfaction remains lower than may previous years.

More detail on these is contained in the Annual Report. The fall in business satisfaction is difficult to account for as little has changed in terms of process or support information provided. With non-business customers, resources to address nuisance complaints continue to be stretched during the Summer, although last year was quieter than some due to the relatively poor weather. Also, despite increasing the number of requests for feedback, both electronic and letters, responses from members of the public remain relatively low with 271 businesses and only 161 non-business customers responding. In better scoring years we would expect 200-250 responses. Clearer communication and officers maintaining agreed contact intervals with complainants may improve this situation. Whilst we will never achieve 100% satisfaction because of the nature of our work, we know we can do better than this. People who felt better equipped to deal with issues ended the year at 56.6%, slightly below the 57%, 58.5% and 58.1% of two of the previous three years, but well below previous figures.

The figures for licensing processing are slightly below last year's 97.5% but still good with 96.8% of taxi driver renewals completed within 5 working days of having a full application. The number of vehicles suspended is lower than last year but above the level in the previous year at 70, (compared to 84 and 59 respectively.) As members will see from the detail, much of this is driven by a single fleet. Members should also note that the testing regime in one of the partners (with no failures,) is different from the others. Failure rates may reflect the current economic climate, with cost-of-living pressures continuing to impact on members of the trade. However, members should remember that the safety of the travelling public is paramount in their role as the licensing authority.

Numbers of compliments and complaints are down on the previous 2 years, but the ratio remains good at around 4:1.

Staff sickness is up very slightly at 3.07 days per FTE, compared to 2.93 days last year. This includes all staff on our books during the year and is a significant improvement on the 2021/22 figure of 5.2 days, and below the 5-year average including 22/3 (3.71 days.)

Staff satisfaction was at 94%, slightly higher than last year and still an excellent result given the pressures. 52 of our staff cohort responded, which was a little disappointing, but two-thirds of staff who responded scoring the service as 8/10 or better to work for, which shows most staff do like working in the environment we provide. Further work will be done during the year to look at more detailed feedback for the staff.

The proportion of businesses licensed under the 2003 Act (alcohol and entertainment,) allegedly not uphold the 4 licensing objectives shows an increase in all districts this year with a number achieving the highest reported level since the introduction of this indicator. The first thing to





say is this measure looks at allegations, not at actual breaches. We previously explained to members that, after pandemic lockdowns where hospitality premises were closed for long periods, the general tolerance of noise and similar activities from this type of premise seemed to have reduced, so as these businesses sought other activities and uses of their outside spaces to increase revenue, this made residents living in the vicinity unhappy. Whilst this was less prevalent last year, it appears to have returned with more reports than ever. This year nuisance from businesses, including the hospitality sector represents a slightly greater proportion of nuisance complaints than in previous years. Anecdotally, we have also seen a reduction in some parts of the community to acceptance of locations in Worcestershire being used for events and festivals. For some people, the economic benefits that flow into an area with increased visitor numbers does not appear to outweigh the inconvenience created. The data still shows that most premises across the County are well run and controlled by their operators, and we know from interactions with Police colleagues that concerns tend to be limited to smaller numbers of premises.

Looking at figures for the rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population, these are somewhat at odds with the above measure, but we must remember that noise complaints about domestic premises far outnumber those regarding businesses. Our poor summer last year led to a low to low-average year for figures for this indicator across all partners. Although the proportion fell slightly this year, domestic noise still represents more than half of such complaints and, as we have alluded to in previous Activity Data Reports, noise from dogs and from audio devices remain key drivers of this. With commercial premises it tends to be a small number of these that certain residents have concerns about, and things like a change of management in a pub and the business looking at more diverse ways of bringing in revenue can lead to friction with the local community. Overall, it still suggests however, that the environment for Worcestershire residents is good.

Overall income was good and income from non-partner sources was over £500,000, represents over 16% of the budget from 2016/17, which we have used for comparison over the years, and over 13% of current net revenue.

Various pressures from salaries and inflation have driven up costs in recent years. Therefore, the cost per head of population is up this year at £6.14 per head of population. As we have said previously, it is difficult to compare our costs with others because of the way the service is delivered, however we are sure this spend is comparable or modest compared to similar local authorities that are discharging these functions.

## Contact Points

David Mellors  
Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager  
01562 738060  
david.mellors@worcsregservices.gov



**Background Papers**

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



Appendix B: Performance indicator table  
**Table of PIs 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	60.7	60.4
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	97	94.5	92.0	94.6
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 <b>Worcestershire 98.7</b>	98.5	Bromsgrove 99.4 Malvern Hills 98.2 Redditch 98.2 Worcester City 99.2 Wychavon 98.2 Wyre Forest 97.8 <b>Worcestershire 98.5</b>
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 <sup>st</sup> 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 <b>Worcestershire 1.3</b>	1.5	Bromsgrove 0.6 Malvern Hills 1.8 Redditch 1.8 Worcester City 0.8 Wychavon 1.8 Wyre Forest 2.2 <b>Worcestershire 1.5</b>
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	<b>93.9</b>	NA	<b>96.8</b>
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this	6-monthly	NA	34 = 2.19% of 1550 vehicles on the road county-wide  BDC 4 MHDC 2 RBC 18 WC 7	NA	70 = 4.23% of 1,655 vehicles on the road county-wide at 1 <sup>st</sup> April  BDC 6 (of 96) MHDC 3 (of 186) RBC 43 (of 444) WC 14 (of 322)



	represents of the fleet county-wide			WDC 0 WFDC 3		WDC 0 (of 486) WFDC 6 (of 121)
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	55.7	56.6
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	4/33	7/59	17/77	26/121
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	1.89 days per FTE	3.07 days per FTE
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	94%
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 <b>Worcestershire 5.0</b>	NA	Bromsgrove 9.9 Malvern Hills 5.8 Redditch 8.7 Worcester City 13.8 Wychavon 6.2 Wyre Forest 9.1 <b>Worcestershire 8.8</b>
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 <b>Worcestershire 0.79</b>	NA	Bromsgrove 2.19 Malvern Hills 1.91 Redditch 2.45 Worcester City 2.86 Wychavon 2.04 Wyre Forest 2.29 <b>Worcestershire 2.33</b>
13	Total income expressed as a % of	6-monthly	NA	£204,718, which is 6.8% as a proportion of the	NA	£502,641, which is 16.6% as a proportion of the



district base revenue budget (16/17)			2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000)		2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 13.3% of the current net revenue budget of £3,766,000
14 Cost of regulatory services per head of population (Calculation will offset income against revenue budget)	Annually	NA	NA	NA	Based on overrun cost of £3,767,000 against the County Council population estimate of 613680 for 2023, the service cost is:  <b>£6.14 per head</b>



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Worcestershire  
**Regulatory Services**

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# Activity Report | 2023-24



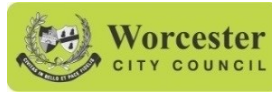
**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)



Malvern  
Hills  
District  
Council  
[www.malvernhills.gov.uk](http://www.malvernhills.gov.uk)



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL  
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**Worcester**  
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WYCHAVON  
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*good services, good value*



**Wyre Forest**  
District Council

# Foreword

Welcome to the final activity report for 2023/24, a summary of the year's activity. It follows the familiar format that long standing Board members will have seen many times. This covers the period 1st October to 31st March 2024, but the graphs and tables allow comparison with the data in previous quarters and years. Again, you will see that each quarter point has a number against the graph line to show the number of matters that this refers to, and hopefully this will help members to better understand the data presented.

Stray dog numbers followed the usual patterns and fell in Q4, but overall numbers remain well up on previous years. We are also seeing more welfare concerns associated with strays. Despite the fall in Q4, overall dog control cases are currently higher than in either of the previous two years.

Food cases (complaints and enquiries,) were around a third lower than 2021/22 but only 6% lower than last year. Of the 1569 proactive interventions at food businesses, only 57 scored between 0 and 2 on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, suggesting they are at risk of making unsafe food. The uptick in the number of accidents reported went back to the slightly increasing rate in Q4 but remained below the peak in Q4 of 2021/22. Complaints and enquiries on health and safety plateaued and overall are lower than the previous 2-years.

Information requests rose significantly during Q4, to the highest they've been for some time. This was not reflected in the level of requests for support in the planning system as these remained fairly stable during 2023/4, if slightly above the trend line. Anecdotally, managers report increased FOI activity, so this may be a contributory factor to the figures.

Licensing application work continues to follow previous trends, at levels close to what would be anticipated, but complaints and enquiries was up again. Overall numbers are exceed 2022/3 and were very slightly above the level in 2021/22.

Pollution and nuisance complaints followed their usual seasonal for the period. Overall numbers were lower last year, we assume because of the relatively poor Summer weather, but this did follow on from a good Spring, which meant an increased workload earlier in the year. We have often said that complaint levels for nuisance appear inextricably linked to the weather, and yet again this seems to be true. Public Health related complaints (accumulations, vermin, public burials, etc,) peaked in the summer and showed similar levels to 2022/23 but below levels in 2021/22. ell this quarter.

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.





# 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.

## Quarter Three

The team continues to work with businesses to limit future potential noise nuisance from music at pubs and clubs that were reported as being problematic during the summer. We are proactively seeking specific agreements aimed at limiting disturbances to residents for the coming season. As part of our intelligence gathering outside of the hectic summer period, CEH and Licensing officers worked together in carrying out a series of monitoring visits to Bewdley targeted at premises having pre-identified issues.

Officers met with the operators of a local pub that has live music in the beer garden to advise them how to avoid potential noise nuisance to neighbours and the team were also able to resolve the noise nuisance caused by dogs barking at a commercial kennels without the need for prosecution.

A bakery in Kidderminster was issued with a Simple Caution in October for contraventions of the Food Safety & Hygiene Regulations. The food business operator had failed to keep the premises clean and in good repair and had failed to provide food handlers with adequate supervision and training in food hygiene. Officers were also involved in Worcester's Victorian Fayre inspections where drops in compliance standards were found. One trader from the London area who has caused problems previously was again found unsatisfactory and will not be accepted back in 2024.

The Food Standards Agency escalated its intervention into our food safety management Covid recovery programme and a report on this is contained within your Board papers.

Whilst food businesses are continuing to close citing staffing and financial issues, we continue to receive some 70 new registrations each month. There is a noticeable swing to home based and mobile catering activities rather than high street operations. Another development on the food front is businesses registering multiple trading names at one premises address, an activity which can extend their presence on platforms such as Just Eat and Deliveroo. The approved national Food Standards Agency IT systems are yet to catch up and are not designed to cope with this approach. We are aware of this and are ahead of the game in terms of collecting and recording intelligence on such premises on our own systems.

Our health and safety investigations into two fatalities, carried out in collaboration with West Mercia Police and the Coroner's Office, continue. The team are also investigating a very serious incident involving a person who received serious injuries when a lift's safety mechanisms failed to operate.

Our Health & Safety lead presented the annual report to the Planning and regulatory Committee of Worcestershire County Council regarding the activities that WRS carries out on their behalf in respect of safety at sports grounds. An information report to advise members of this work is planned for a future Board meeting. Other activities in this area included facilitating the Safety Advisory Groups for events being planned at Worcestershire County Cricket Ground and the Christmas Charity convoy, and the issue of a new General Safety Certificate for one of our local football clubs.

## Quarter Four

In January WRS and Bromsgrove DC's legal team prosecuted a case relating to frequent and persistent dog barking at a premises in Catshill, Bromsgrove. The occupier failed to prevent their dogs barking even after having been served with an abatement notice. The court found the defendant guilty of three breaches of the abatement notice and sentenced them to a fine of £1500, a victim surcharge of £600, and costs of £250 for a total of £2350. The court cited the reasons for the level of fine as being 'Deliberate and persistent offending causing significant harm to neighbours. An excellent result on behalf of the residents who had been subjected to this persistent statutory nuisance.

Officers have been investigating a case at a Sewage Treatment Works in Wychavon where machinery (called Blowers) used to oxygenate the sewage as part of the treatment process was causing a noise nuisance to a resident, especially through the night. After monitoring and determining that a Statutory Noise Nuisance existed, an Abatement Notice was served. The operator has employed a specialist Acoustics Company and remedial works are now underway. Further monitoring is planned to ensure that the noise problem is subsequently resolved.

A branch of a well-known fast-food outlet situated directly beneath a residential flat was investigated when the occupants complained of a constant loud droning noise emanating through their floorboards due to the Extraction System used by the Company. The noise was constant while the premises were open from 11am up until midnight. After monitoring and determining that a Statutory Noise Nuisance existed, an Abatement Notice was served. Again, the company employed an acoustics engineer to resolve the problem. Subsequent monitoring demonstrated a significant reduction in noise levels and the case is resolved.

Food work was focussed on routine inspections during January to March as the final stage of The Food Standards Agency Covid recovery programme. During this period 186 new food premises registered, and 176 businesses closed. High risk catering premises and newly registered businesses were prioritised for Environmental Health Officers visits, with our Regulatory Support Officer making checks on lower risk home caterers and small retail premises. The total number of visits undertaken was 466. Most premises continue to be compliant, giving reassurance to those living in and visiting the county that their food outlets are safe. Officers also dealt with 258 reactive complaints and general enquiries related to food. We also teamed up with Worcestershire Trading Standards to deal with multiple pre-packed food labelling issues arising from Natasha's Law.

Following engagement with the Food Standards Agency, the WRS Board agreed to appoint 5 new staff to the Community Environmental Health team to conduct food safety interventions. Two Technical Officers competent in food safety interventions and three Regulatory Support Officers (internally trained in absence of FSA support programmes). The roles are currently out to advert, and this additional resource will potentially add some 2,000 interventions to the service's Food Law enforcement capacity.

Our health and safety investigations into two fatalities, carried out in collaboration with West Mercia Police and the Coroner's Office, continue. The team are also investigating a very serious incident involving a person who received serious injuries when a lift's safety mechanisms failed to operate.

# 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 a 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.

## Quarter Three

Officers always see a small decline in applications at this time of year with a small spike just before Christmas. By this time all TENs for the Christmas period have already been submitted however queries and requests for service continue to rise which is not surprising based on previous years. The team having been working collectively with the Intelligence team and Technical Services team to consider a more effective way of handling licensing queries. This being done in parallel with the implementation of Victoria Form so we hope that more queries can be directed to self help in the future.

In Animal licensing a higher focus has been on carrying out inspections that the team slipped behind on in the summer periods. After the pandemic there was a decline in businesses renewing their licence but this has slowly returned back to pre-pandemic levels with renewals and new applications being submitted. In response to this the team have had to move resource around in the team to deal with this and are looking at how to deal with this area of working moving forward. In the background work on illegal dog breeding continues with the Intelligence team and officers have been attending meetings with colleagues nationally to review the current LIAR Regulations.

Taxi Compliance checks have continued in the County and with the increase in complaints of Wolverhampton licenced vehicles coming into the county the team have conducted one operation in Redditch where a number of vehicles were stopped and warnings given and another operation is being planned in Worcester City. Alongside these operations routine night time enforcement with partners continue and where issues are found these are followed up appropriately.

Work with businesses in the Night time economy continues and officers have recently been supporting Worcester BID in their efforts to make Worcester safe in the evening particularly for the vulnerable and women and girls with their project Worcester Safe Space. Officers have also been working with partners looking at a number of complaints in the Bewdley area and have deployed a NTE model to address these. If this is successful it will be a model that will be rolled out to deal with similar situations in the NTE.

Finally officers ended the quarter assisting colleagues in CEH and Worcester City with the Victorian Fayre which was a success as previous years.

## Quarter Four

Quarter 4 saw a slight dip in applications but a upward trajectory in queries and contact from members of the public. In fact, you will see there has been a consistent upward trajectory from quarter 1 right through to quarter 4 with the main queries relating to taxis followed by temporary events (TENS).

The team have been working across the service with both the Intelligence Team and Duty Officers to enable an effective triage process to allow calls and queries to be answered quickly and efficiently. It will, in time, enable more officers to be trained to answer a variety of calls at first point of contact rather than being allocated to technical officer.

An internal review of the Taxi Standards has allowed for reflection and as a result there is now a consultation being rolled out across all districts to review safeguarding training for taxi drivers and to make safeguarding training a mandatory requirement at every licence renewal. By doing so allows drivers to be up to date with changes in legislation but also be mindful of what to watch out for when out in the community. Taxi drivers can often be the eyes and ears of the community due to the varied nature of the roles they undertake and the variety of the travelling public that they meet.

Officers have continued working jointly with partners across the districts including civil enforcement officers for taxi matters, community safety colleagues when dealing with noise and nuisance from a licenced premise but also proactive monitoring with police colleagues.

Officers have continued inspection programmes visiting gambling premises and premises under the Animal Licensing Act. The team will be looking at focussing on further proactive operations with the intelligence team focussing on illegal dog breeding activity across the county. Dog breeders must be licensed if they are in the course of business. Communications will focus on work undertaken by the team to encourage those that are not licensed to speak to officers.

Expanding forms through the automation process has been a continued focus for the team and work continues with IDOX, Victoria Forms and IT colleagues to work through the various obstacles that have been brought to the forefront. The teams have made much more progress this quarter and hope to have a live form at the start of the next financial year.



# 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

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/m<sup>2</sup>. 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

INDEX

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.

## Quarter Three

### Air Quality

Our work towards an updated Air Quality Action Plan for Worcester City continued apace with monthly meetings of the Air Quality Steering Group as well as separate technical groups for Public Health, Planning, Transport and Sustainability. Defra have agreed to extensions on the deadline for submission of Air Quality Action Plans for Worcester, Wyre Forest, Bromsgrove and Wychavon with much work still to be completed ahead of this.

Progress organising the installation of 26 real time air quality monitors continued including contract negotiations for the structural stability and electrical sockets required for installation. The monitors were agreed for installation in early January 2024 with the development of a bespoke web-portal to follow. A 3 year fixed-term air quality behaviour change post to link in with this project was also advertised and closed to applicants in mid-January 2024.

### Planning and Permitting Processes

For permitted processes, a new A2 solvent Impregnation permit was approved by Gloucester Licensing Committee on 20th November which officers from WRS attended to give technical guidance to Gloucester City Council under contract. Following the issuing of the permit, subsequent weekly meetings have taken place subsequently to discuss compliance with the outstanding BAT Conclusion compliance and a small number of noise complaints linked to the site.

A revised A2 permit for the brick manufacturing activities at Wienerberger's Hartlebury Work was issued. Applications were received and processes for Concrete Plants in Gloucester and Malvern Hills together with a new Petrol Filling Station in Gloucester.

### Contaminated Land

Whilst not Worcestershire, interesting sites that have recently been dealt with under income generation contracts include the National Brewery Centre in Burton on Trent, where an existing museum and archive is being converted into their office Headquarters. Another is the redevelopment of a former Debenhams site in Gloucester where excavation of the courtyard a crypt and 114 skeletons were unearthed at much shallower depths than expected. This now means all earthworks are being undertaken in the presence of an archaeologist. This and other restrictions on site have impacted some of the contaminated land investigations and required more input from WRS to help address outstanding issues. WRS have been consulted on some retrospective planning applications that can present issues in terms of contaminated land as it is more difficult to undertake suitable assessment on sites that have been developed. If significant risks are encountered requiring further works it would be much more challenging, if not impossible, to implement certain remediation techniques or mitigation in these cases and have significant cost implications. For this reason contaminated land conditions are pre-commencement requiring suitable assessment to be undertaken prior to development. It is understood one of the cases is with planning enforcement due to a number of different issues.

## COVID Advisors (Homes for Ukraine Support Workers)

From October, the current 2 remaining COVID Advisors continued to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme along with a Principal Officer managing the scheme in Bromsgrove and Redditch.

In early October the team began the preparation for the Delta Return ready for completion at the end of the month, 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 Q2. In November we received notice from Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) the extension of “thank you” payments into the third year for Homes for Ukraine sponsors across the UK, with the payment remaining at £500 per month. 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 36 families still with hosts, we had 8 new arrivals in Q3.

## IT Development

Work continues with several projects which cover all the teams within the service aimed to enhance service delivery. This quarter we worked with our IT host to complete the move to a new mobile phone service provider, which will produce significant savings. We also worked with our IT host to introduce a new cyber security awareness and training system, which is all part of keeping the service cyber safe. We have continued our work on the introduction of a new mapping system and a complete refresh of our gazetteer. The service gazetteer is used to enable different service elements to have sight of each other’s involvement and ensure efficiency and consideration for wider service provision.

## Dog Warden Service

During Q3 the dog warden service began to see an big impact on the service following the new government legislation that meant XL Bully’s would become a banned breed. The dog wardens have regrettably had to put to sleep 18 dogs during this 3 month period, in 2022 we only had 6 dogs we had to euthanise in the entire year. This is due to a combination of XL Bully’s being dumped and some serious welfare cases where dogs had to be put to sleep for animal welfare. In October the service picked up a dog in one of the worst conditions we have ever seen, a young Staffordshire bull terrier that was starved, could barely stand, emaciated, covered in sores, scabs and mange, with overgrown nails and suffering from anaemia. Then, at Christmas we picked up 2 puppies that had been dumped in a plastic bag in freezing conditions. The process of finding charities who will take dogs for rehoming is also taking longer and proving more difficult due to charities and rescues being overrun.

## Planning Enforcement

The team have received 61 new cases from Bromsgrove and Redditch to investigate alleged breaches of control during this period and have secured an injunction in relation to a problematic site which is a first for WRS’s planning enforcement officers and not a decision taken lightly. Cross working with other teams and outside agencies on some of the more complex cases has proved invaluable in tackling wider issues and concerns.



## Quarter Four

### Air Quality

The 27 new Air Quality Sensors (funded by a Defra Grant with contributions from all 6 District Councils) have been installed across the County to start gathering data on nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter pollution. At the time of installation the network is the second largest network installation in the UK. Facing a tight Defra deadline for completion, work on production of the Worcester City Air Quality Action Plan continued, focussed primarily around calculations to assess the effectiveness of proposed actions ('impact assessment'). Preparations also commenced on the source apportionment for the Air Quality Action Plans for Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove.

### Planning and Permitting Processes

Following the issuing a new Permit for Permalin (Gloucester), continuing complaints from local residents have necessitated significant support be provided to Gloucester City Council colleagues with resolving complaints, not all of which were related to the site. Annual inspections of all Worcestershire and Gloucester City installations were completed on schedule. Site visits continued to ensure that the environmental standards in businesses remained high.

### Contaminated Land

As part of our planning consultation service we have continued to provide advice on contaminated land issues. Several of the sites are significant including the redevelopment of Bromsgrove Fire Station where reports submitted have been reviewed to ensure contamination issues are adequately addressed. Due to staff shortages at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, we provided support to ensure their contaminated land services could be maintained.

### Sewer Baiting

Despite late notification by Severn Trent Water of budget availability, we were able to deliver the entire Sewer Baiting programme across Worcestershire successfully. The aim of sewer baiting being to limit the activity of rats above ground affecting infrastructure, food businesses and homes as well as carrying and transmitting disease.

### Information Technology, Database Management and support

As well as our normal day to day work, we have continued with our background activities to support our database and record management systems, with an emphasis on the resilience of these systems. We have maintained this with regular software updates, service packs, security patches, record retention and deletion programmes. We have also taken part in various cyber security awareness activities designed to increase the security and resilience of the computer system we use.

We have continued to provide Uniform support functions, development and training for other local authorities. We currently do this for Bromsgrove and Redditch Council's Planning department, and for Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing departments. This provides income generation together with the work we do on behalf of Worcestershire County Council's Trading Standards.

## COVID Advisors (Homes for Ukraine Support Workers)

As of January, the current 2 remaining COVID Advisors are continuing to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme along with a Principal Officer managing the scheme for Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils. As the beginning of every quarter the team begin preparation for the Delta Return due for completion at the end of the first month each quarter, for this process we needed to collate the data concerning guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme for the Home Office so that the Councils receive the correct funding for Q3.

On 19th February, The Home Office announced that existing Homes for Ukraine scheme visa holders will be able to apply for permission to remain in the UK for additional 18 months under a new Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme set to open in early 2025 (before the first Homes for Ukraine scheme visas start to expire in March 2025). Also, changes to the immigration rules for the applicates were made, these mean that people submitting Homes for Ukraine visa applications after this date will be granted 18 months permission rather than the 36. Additional changes were also made to the guidance on approved sponsors to require that new sponsors of Homes for Ukraine applications must be either British or Irish citizens or have indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in the UK and commit to a minimum 6-month sponsorship period. Throughout Q3 the team have assisted helping a considerable amount of guests move from their hosts to independent living in either Social Housing or Private Rented Accommodation, this consists of financial advice, help setting up utilities, sourcing furniture and household goods and help getting children into schools / colleges.

# Dog Control

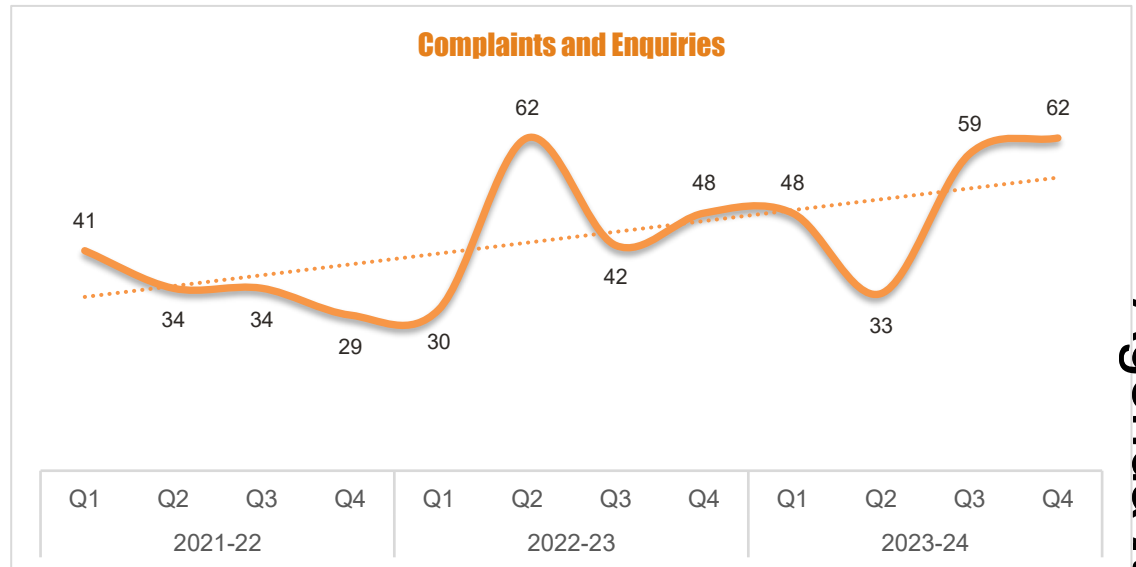
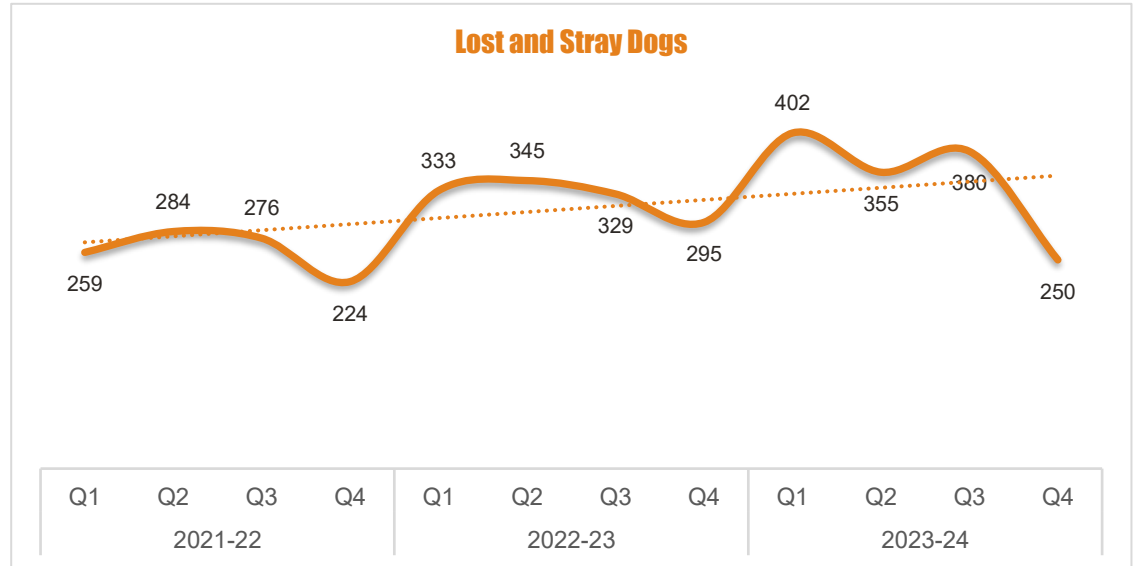
The chart (top right) shows the number of complaints and enquiries recorded by WRS over a three year period relating to dog control. Types of cases recorded under this category include fouling and persistent straying, dangerous dogs and welfare. The chart (bottom right) shows the number of dogs recorded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

## Comments

The number of dog control cases recorded during the year is an increase of 35% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 7% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 87% of cases have related to stray or lost dogs, with most of these cases relating to "contained strays" (dogs found and held by members of the public). Overall, 59% 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, whilst there continues to be a greater number of stray dogs which are picked up with welfare concerns.

In general terms, the service receives a relatively low number of dog control complaints. Based on the 68 complaints recorded during the year, 40 related to dog fouling and persistent straying, 17 related to dangerous dogs, and 11 related to welfare concerns.

The usual trend of reduced numbers of stray dogs during quarter 4 was repeated in Worcestershire (graph above), whilst that same pattern is not consistent for contract authorities (subsequent authority specific pages). In addition to the stray dog service provided to nine local authorities, with the dip in strays at this time of year, we were able to maintain our kennel capacity by boarding non-stray dogs for other authorities at commercial rates.



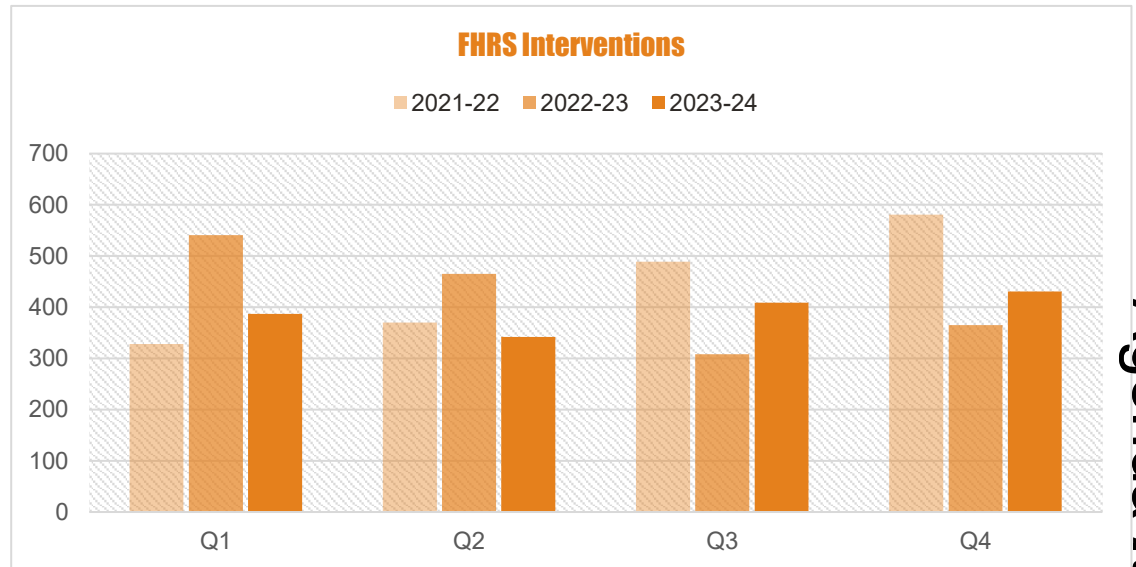
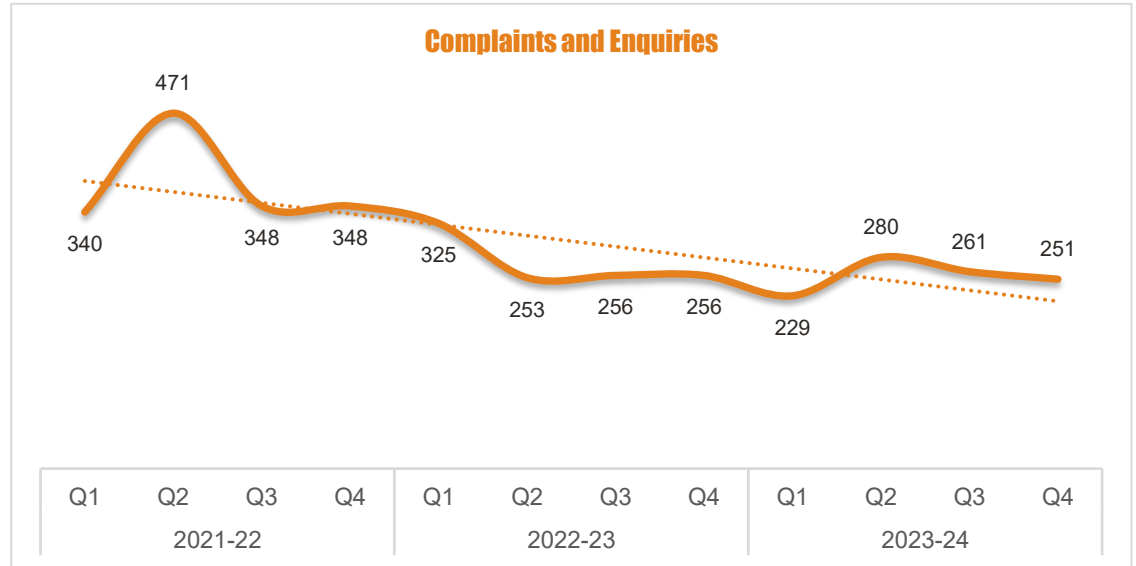
# Food Safety

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 during the year is a reduction of 32% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 6% 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 426 complaints recorded during the year, 71% related to issues with products purchased from food businesses (e.g. poor quality food or the presence of foreign objects), whilst 29% related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Of the 1,569 interventions conducted at businesses included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) during the year, 57 were rated as non-compliant (rated 0, 1 or 2). Approximately three quarters of these ratings were issued to hospitality businesses (such as takeaways, pubs, or restaurants) whilst a further 10% were issued to small retailers.



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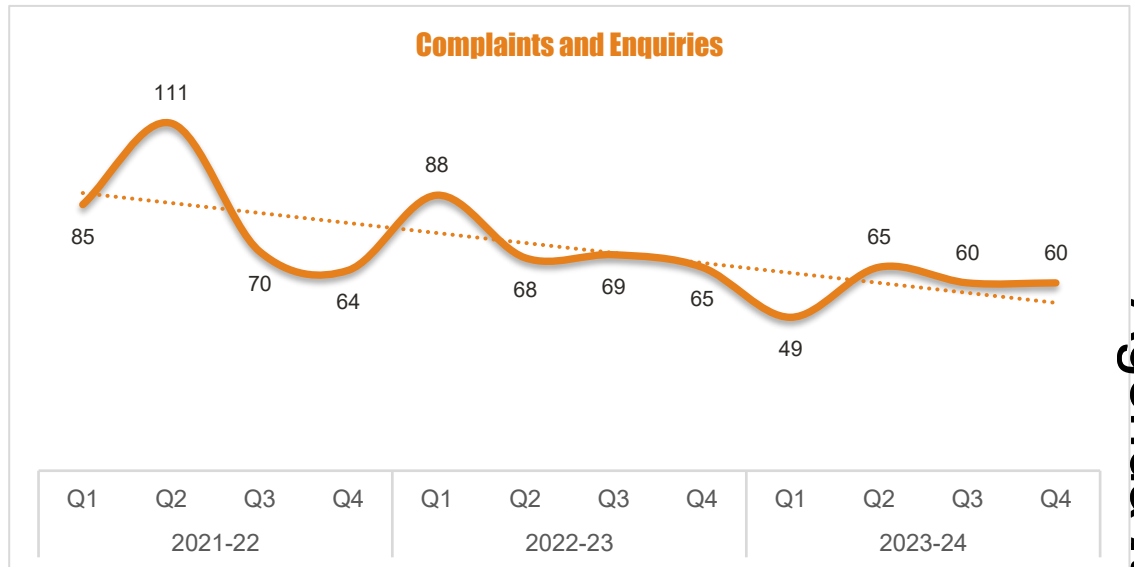
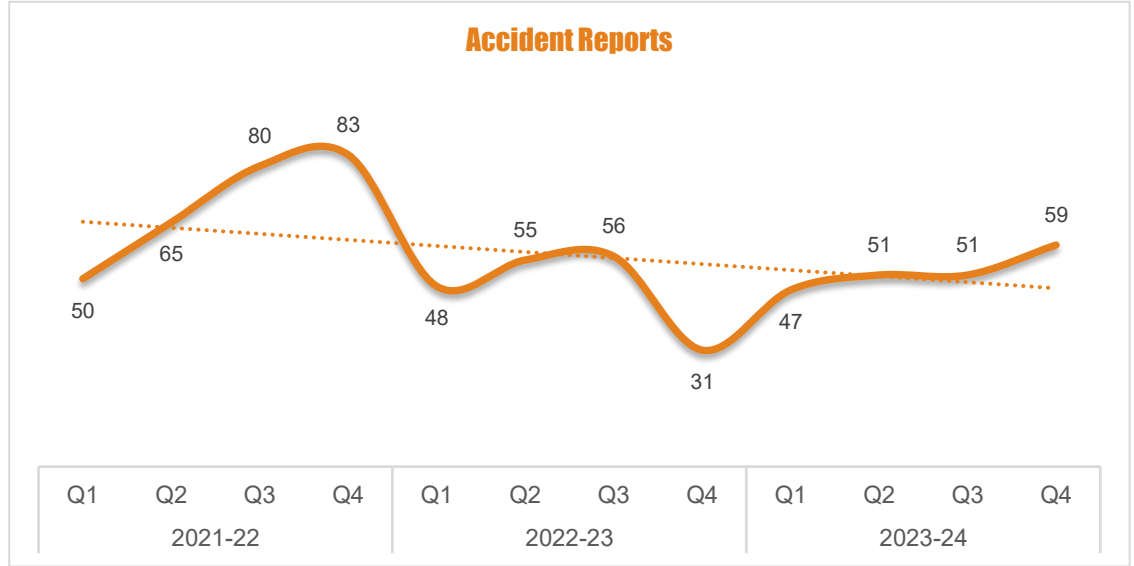
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# Health and Safety

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

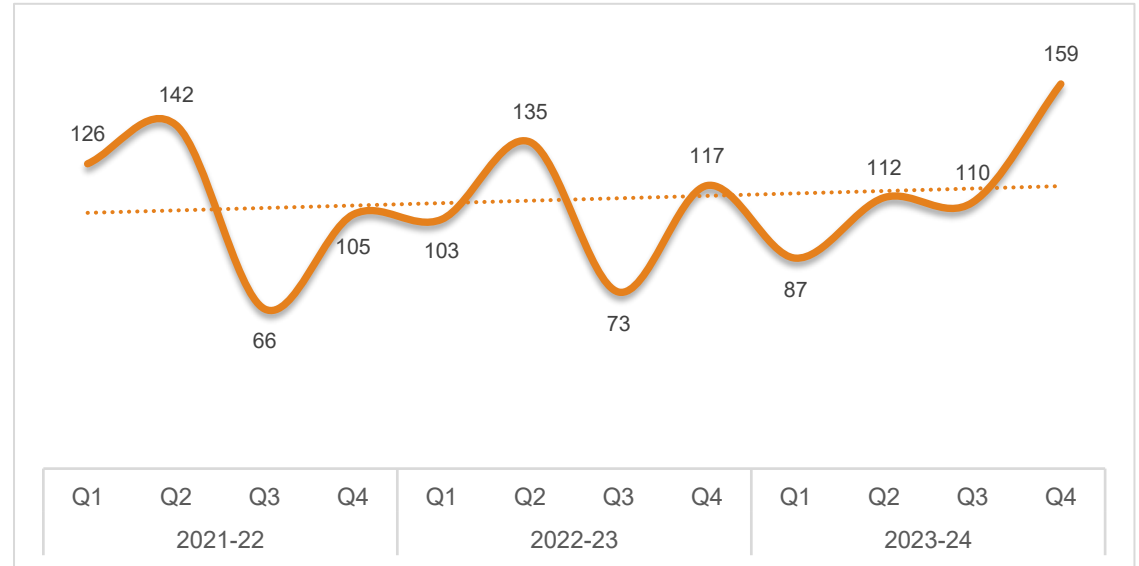
The number of health and safety at work cases recorded during the year is a reduction of 27% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 8% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 47% of cases were reports of accidents, with most of these cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. Slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level of 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.

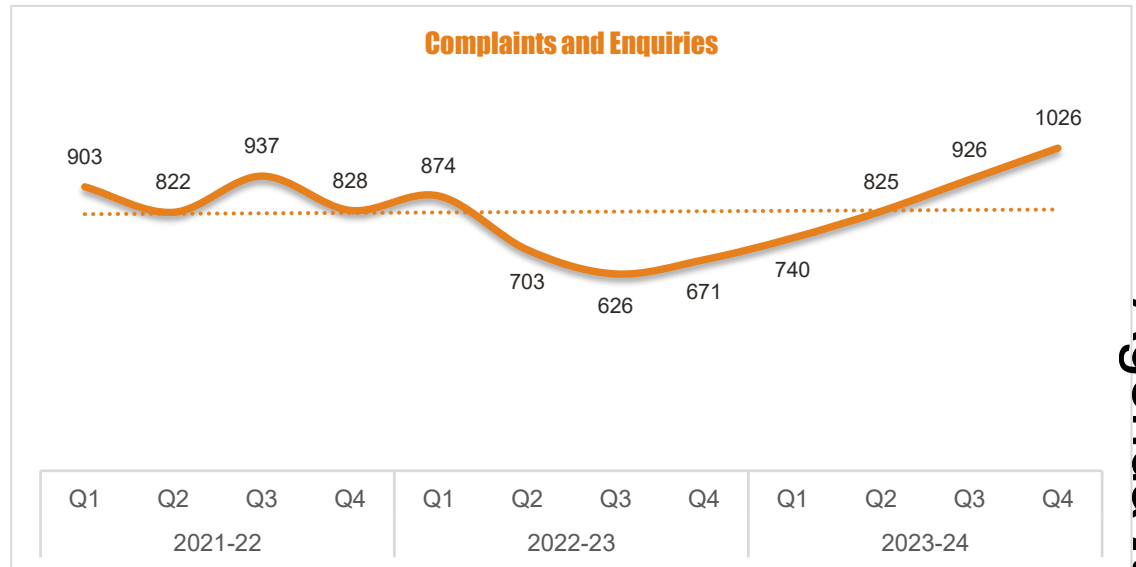
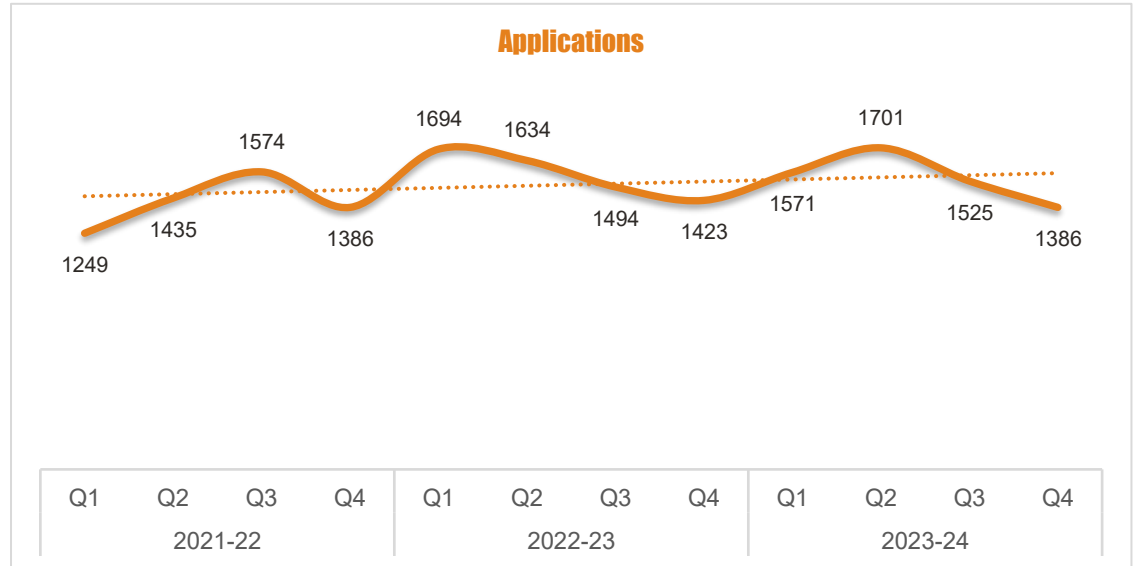
Licensing complaints, enquiries and applications relate to the following;

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

## Comments

The number of licensing cases recorded during the year is an increase of 6% compared to both 2021-22 and 2022-23. Approximately 64% of cases were applications and registrations; with 30% relating to hackney carriage or private hire vehicle licences, 24% relating to temporary events, and 12% relating to hackney carriage or private hire driver licences.

In general terms, WRS receives a higher number of enquiries about licensing matters than complaints about licensed activity or unlicensed operators. Based on the 597 complaints recorded during the year, 289 related to taxi licensing, 142 related to alcohol licensing, and 106 related to animal licensing (such as unlicensed dog breeding).

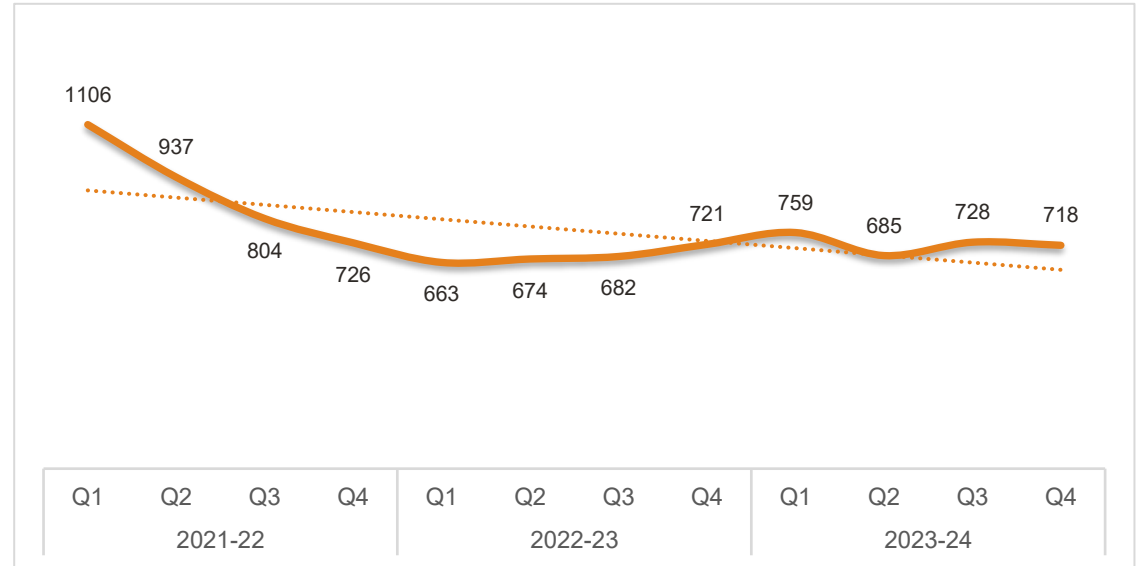


# Planning

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 during the year is a reduction of 19% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 5% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 93% of enquiries have been consultations, whilst 49% have related to contaminated land. Around 14% of enquiries were completed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

During Quarter Four, our team's advice on planning applications, consultations and discharge requests remained busy at around 50 requests per week – one of the busiest year quarters in the past 2 years. In addition to planning environmental advice to all six Worcestershire district councils (shown in the graph above), we are also continuing to provide advice to North Warwickshire, Bristol, East Staffordshire and Gloucester City Councils.

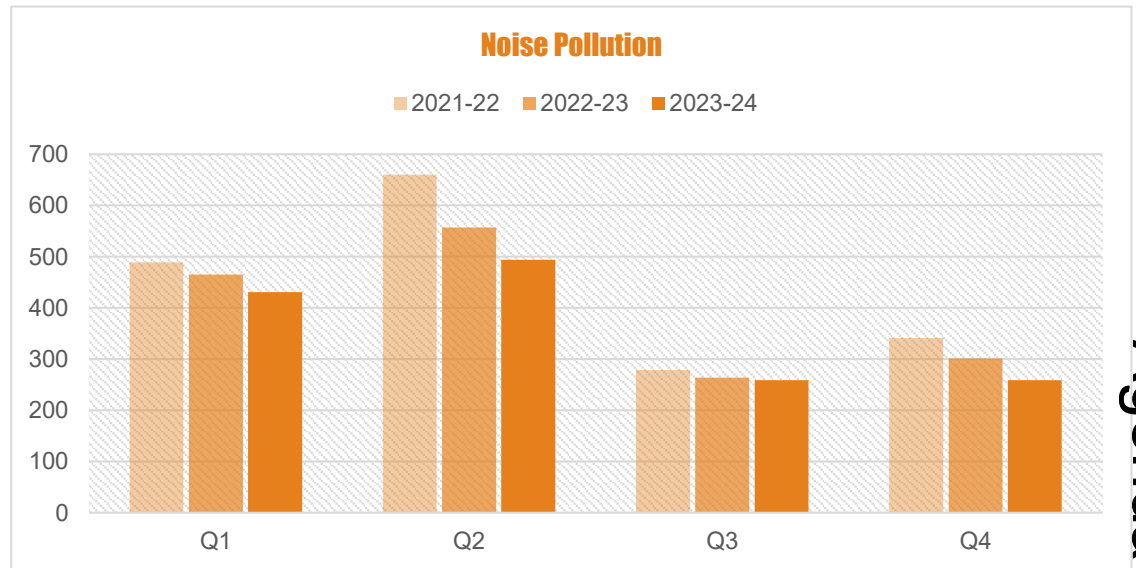
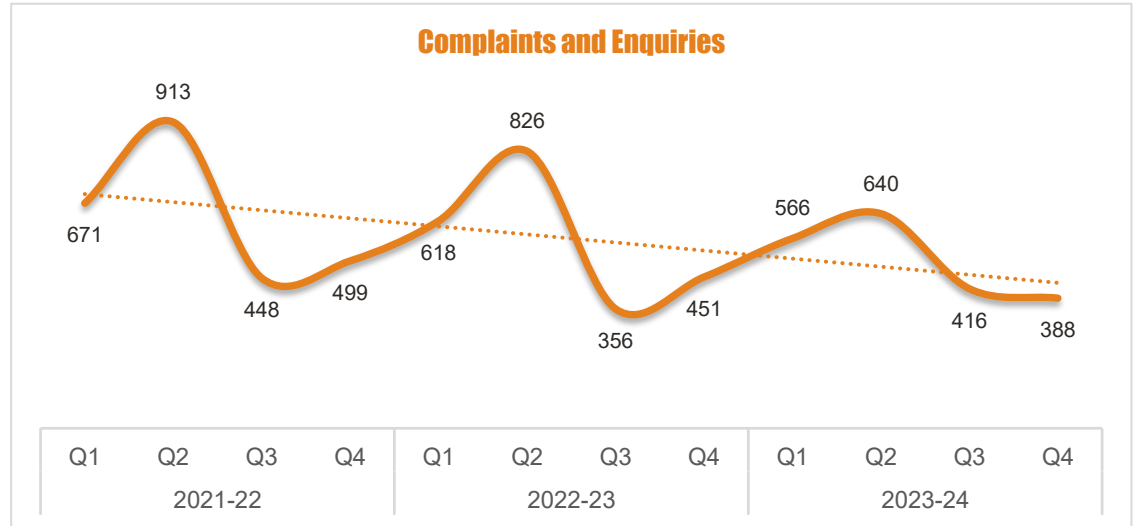


# Pollution

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

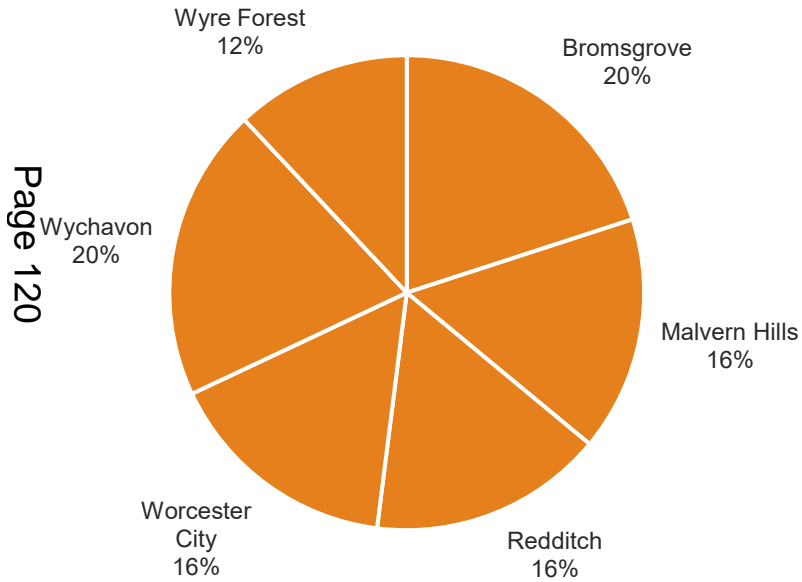
The number of pollution cases recorded during the year is a reduction of 21% compared to 2021-22, and a reduction of 11% compared to 2022-23. It should be noted, however, that case totals are broadly in line with seasonal variations. Approximately 72% of cases related to noise nuisances, with noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking or noise from audio-visual equipment) the most prominent sources. A further 13% of cases 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.

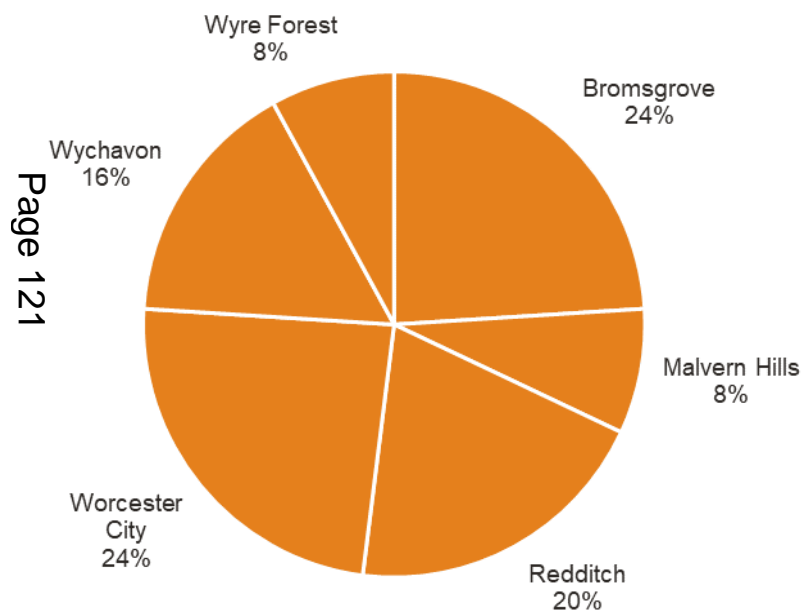


Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Ombersley	14	2,459	5.69
Honeybourne And Pebworth	14	2,844	4.92
Droitwich Central	12	2,621	4.58
Avoncroft	15	3,451	4.35
Cathedral	51	11,760	4.34
Central (Redditch)	26	6,841	3.80
Warndon	19	5,661	3.36
Priory	14	4,384	3.19
Lowes Hill	9	2,854	3.15
Hallow	6	1,941	3.09
Droitwich West	16	5,217	3.07
Saint John	25	8,736	2.86
Greenlands	27	9,462	2.85
Norton	11	3,876	2.84
Batchley And Brockhill	25	8,930	2.80
Arboretum	17	6,130	2.77
Aggborough And Spennells	23	8,774	2.62
Perryfields	4	1,557	2.57
Wells	8	3,256	2.46
Evesham North	13	5,419	2.40
Abbey	16	6,719	2.38
Mitton	24	10,110	2.37
Barnt Green And Hopwood	7	2,951	2.37
Broadwaters	22	9,381	2.35
Upton And Hanley	10	4,268	2.34

## 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

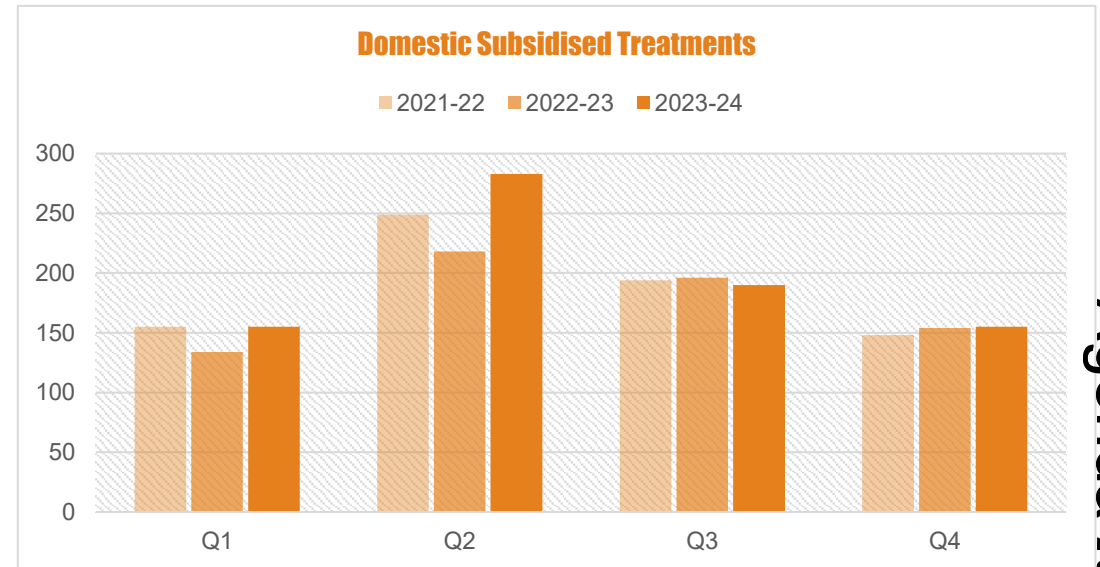
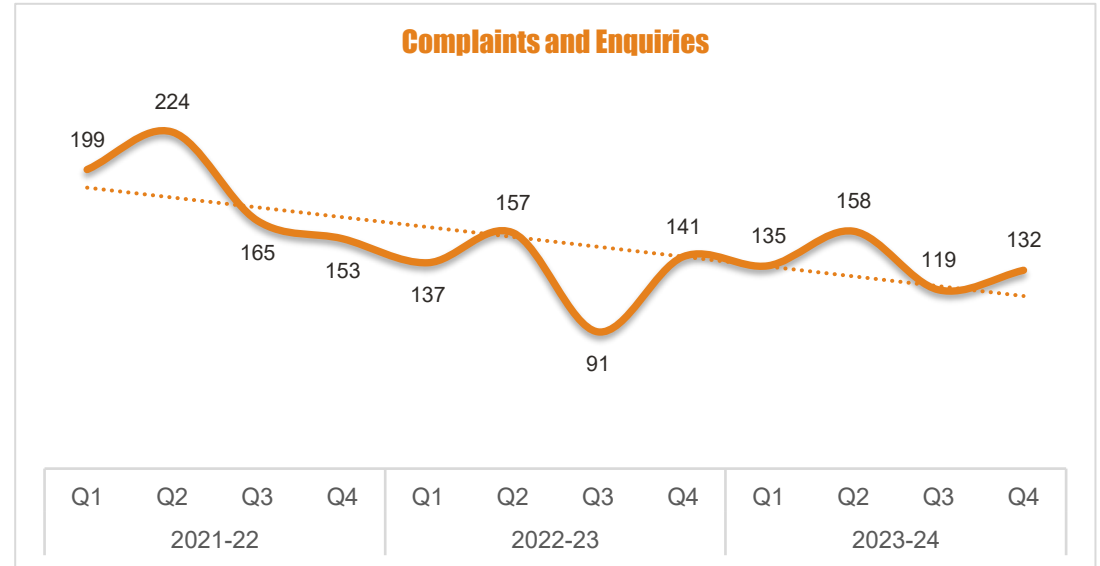
# Public Health

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 off public health cases recorded during the year is a reduction of 27% compared to 2021-22, but an increase of 3% compared to 2022-23. Approximately 61% of cases 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 23% of cases were complaints relating to accumulations at domestic properties which can also include pest control issues.

Of the 783 domestic treatments undertaken during the year, approximately 50% were due to issues with rats, 21% were due to issues with wasps, and 8% were due to issues with bed bugs. Around two thirds of treatments took place at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.



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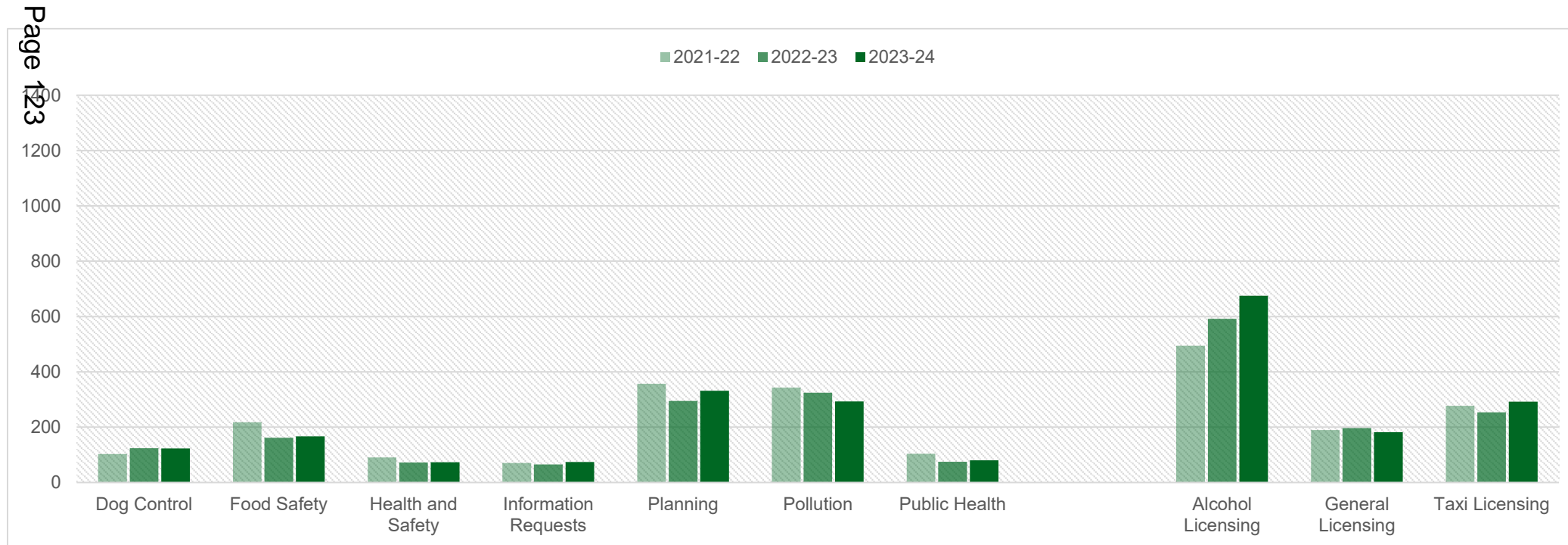
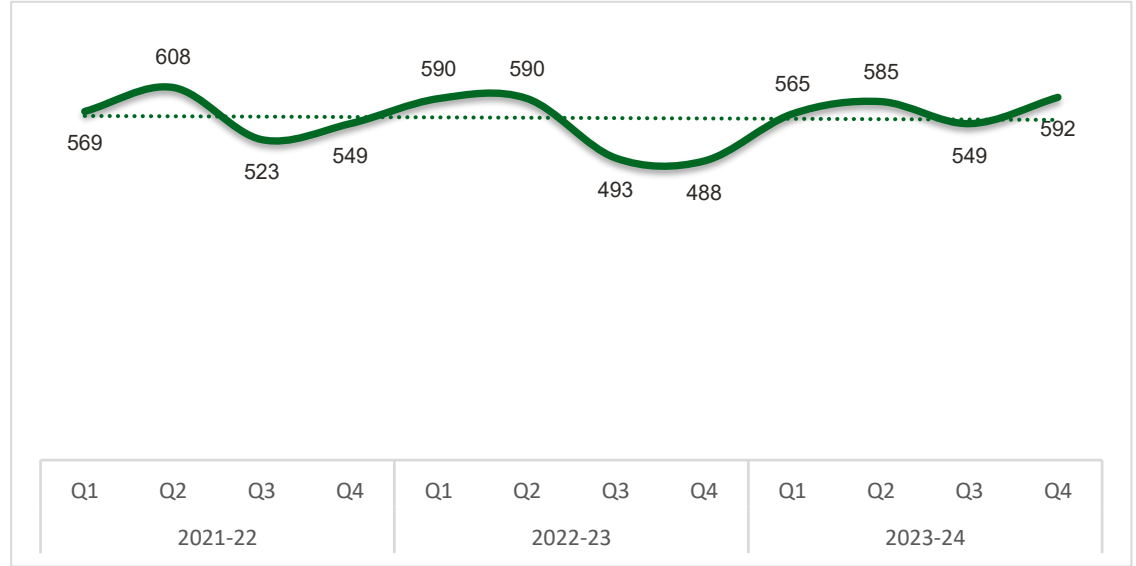
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# Bromsgrove

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.

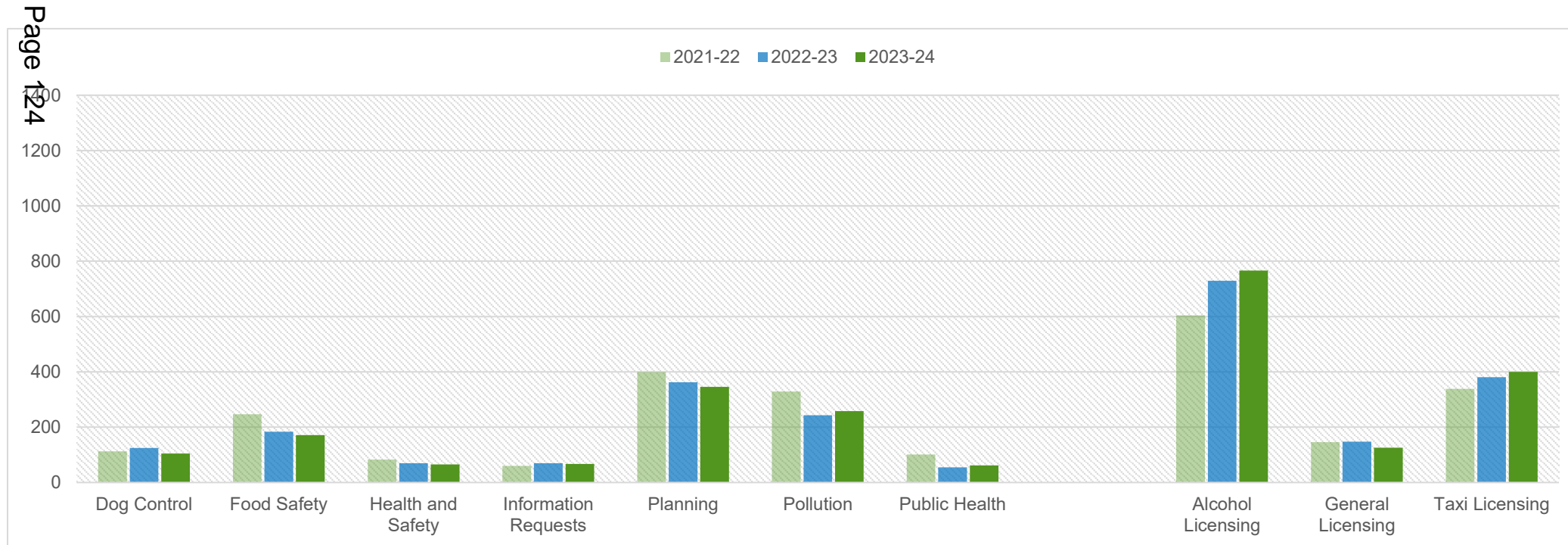
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



# 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.

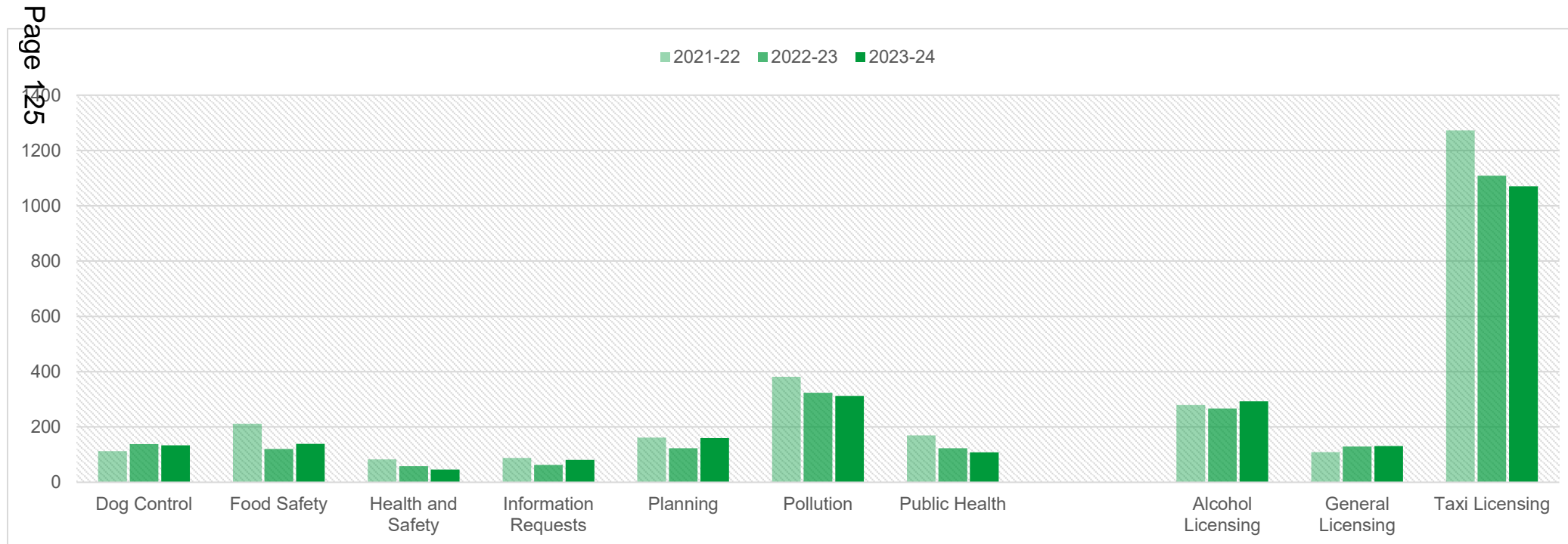
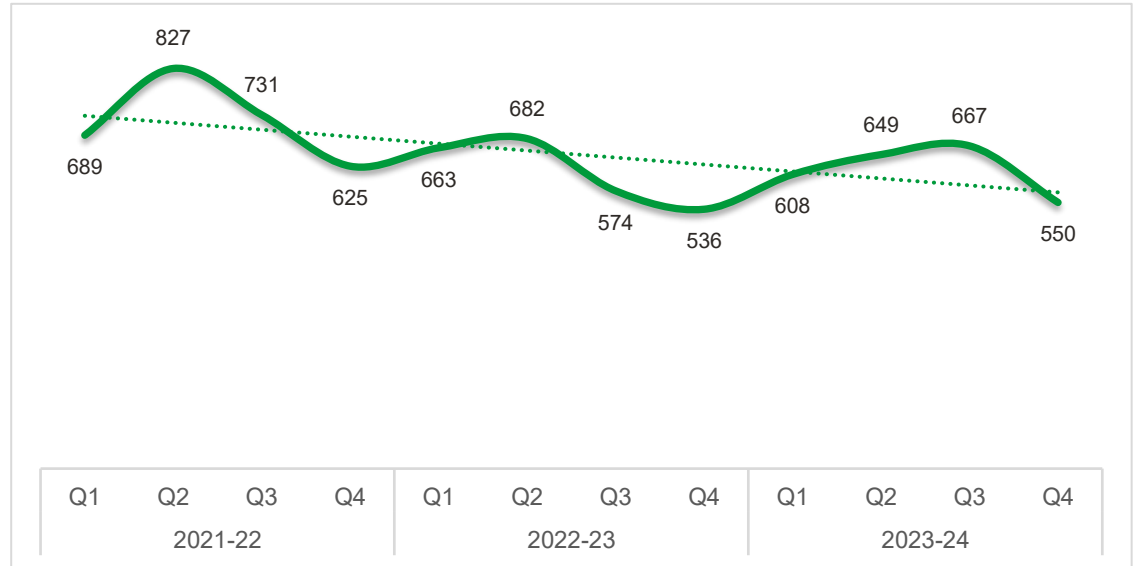
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



# 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.

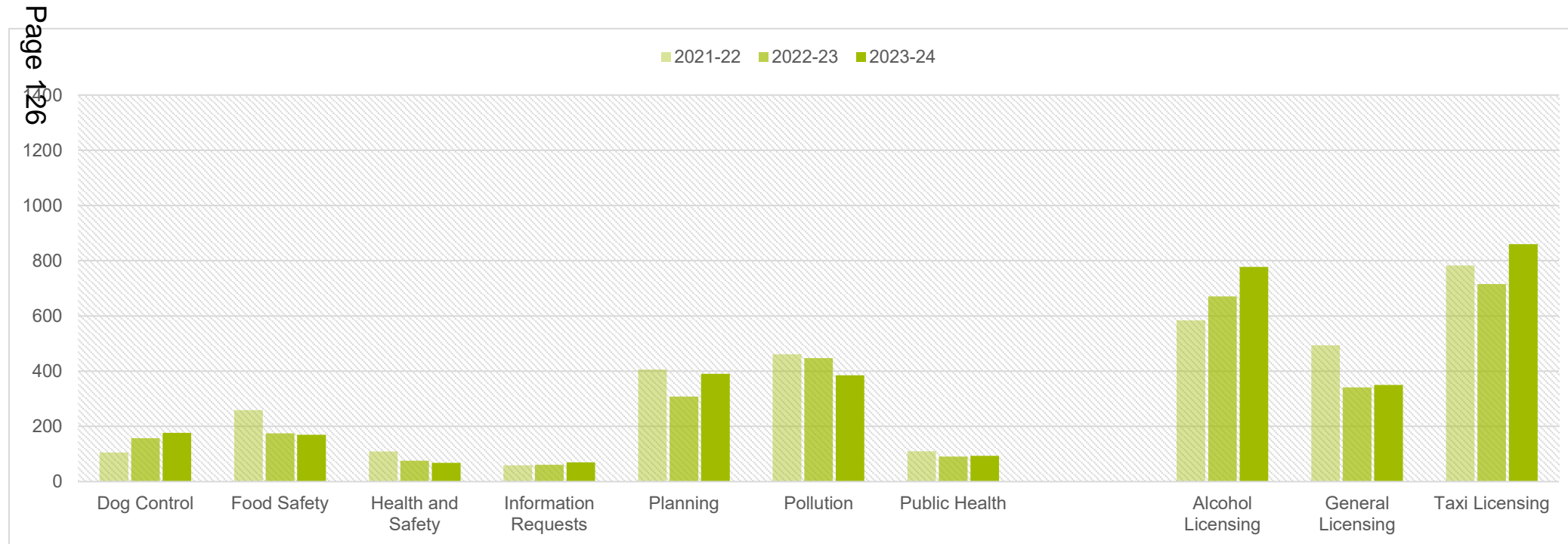
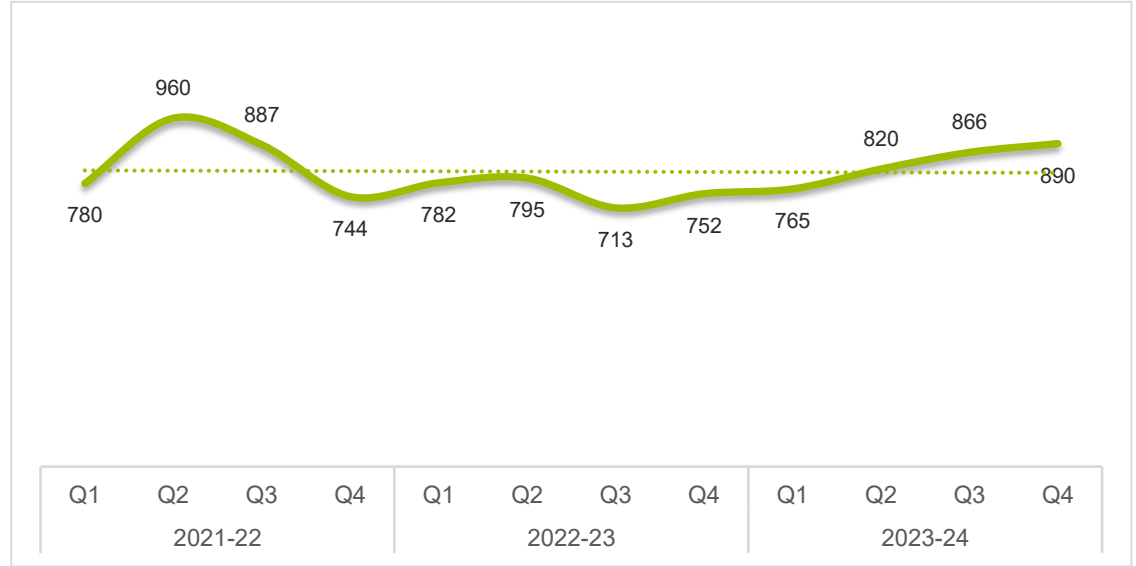
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



# 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.

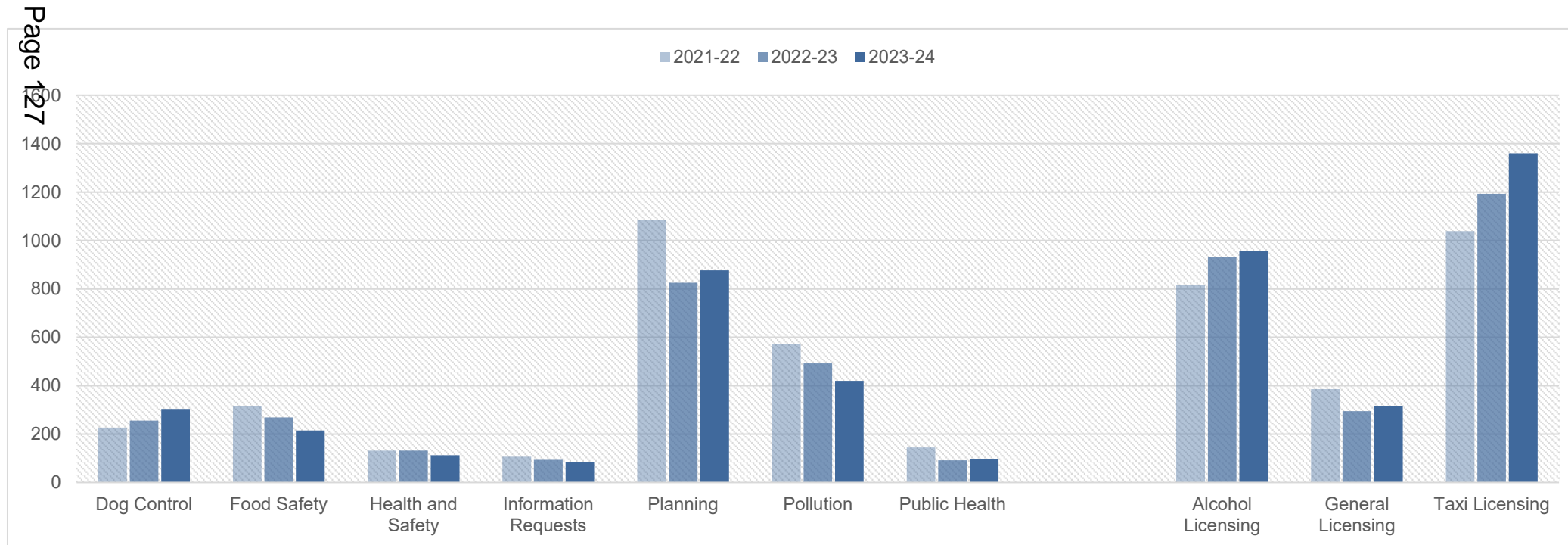
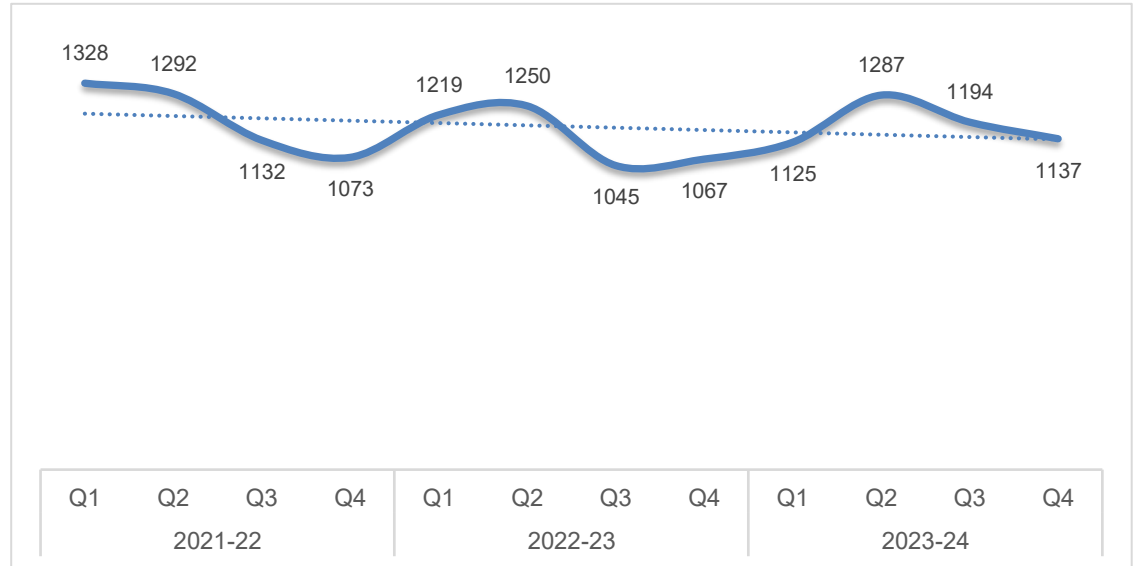




# Wychavon

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.

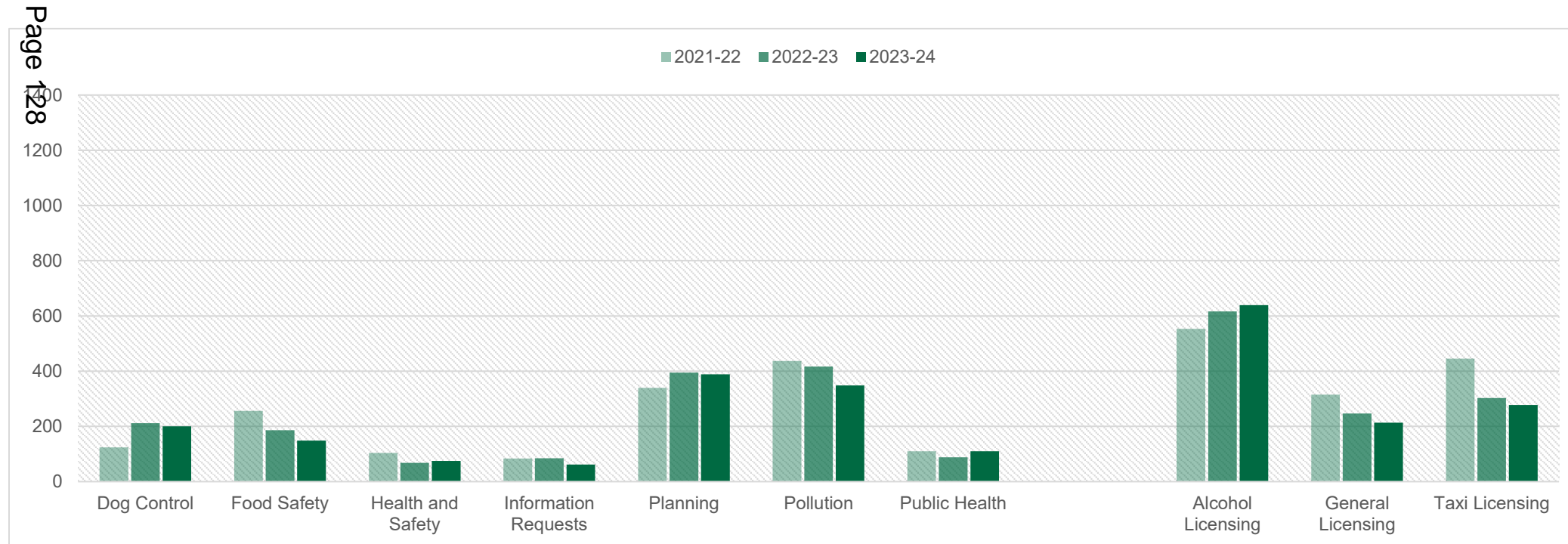
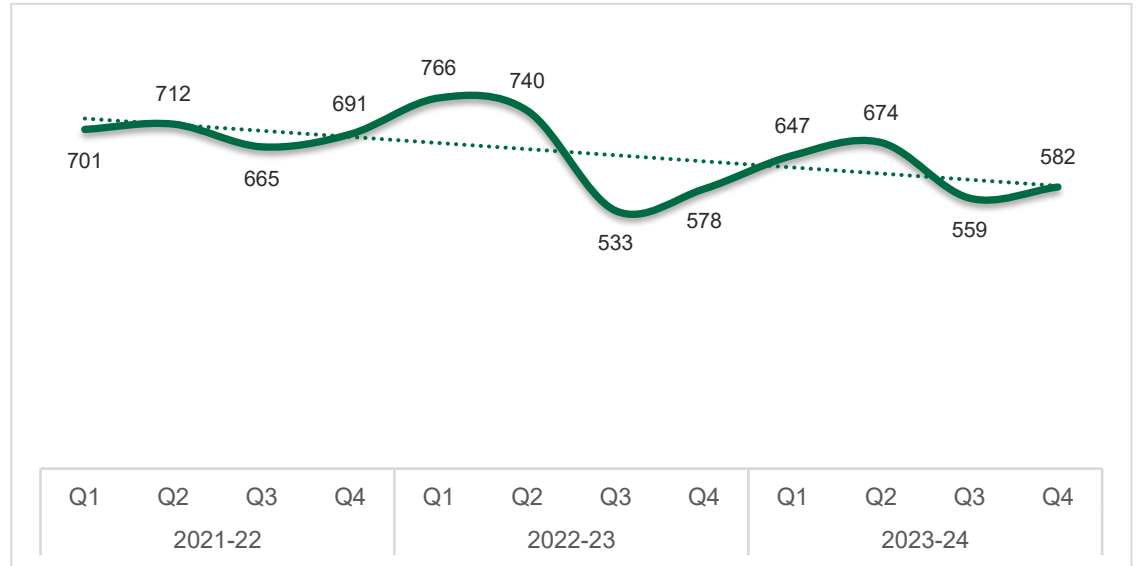
Note: The chart (below) shows the number of cases recorded against each of the main functions undertaken by WRS. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published.



# Wyre Forest

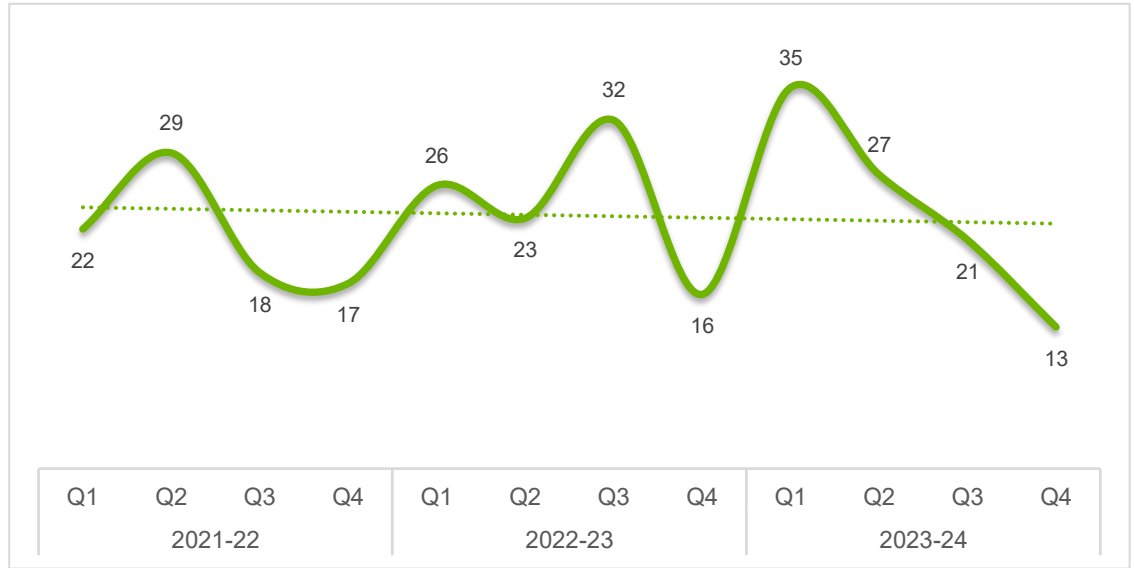
The data on this page relates to Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications and notifications) where the subject and/or enquirer were located within the Wyre Forest district.

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

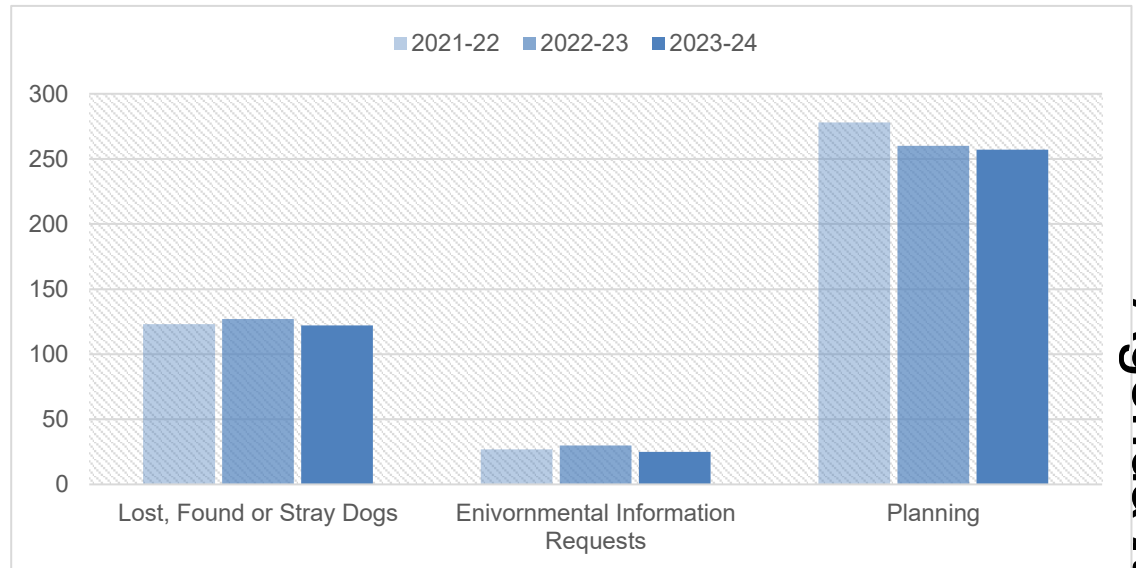
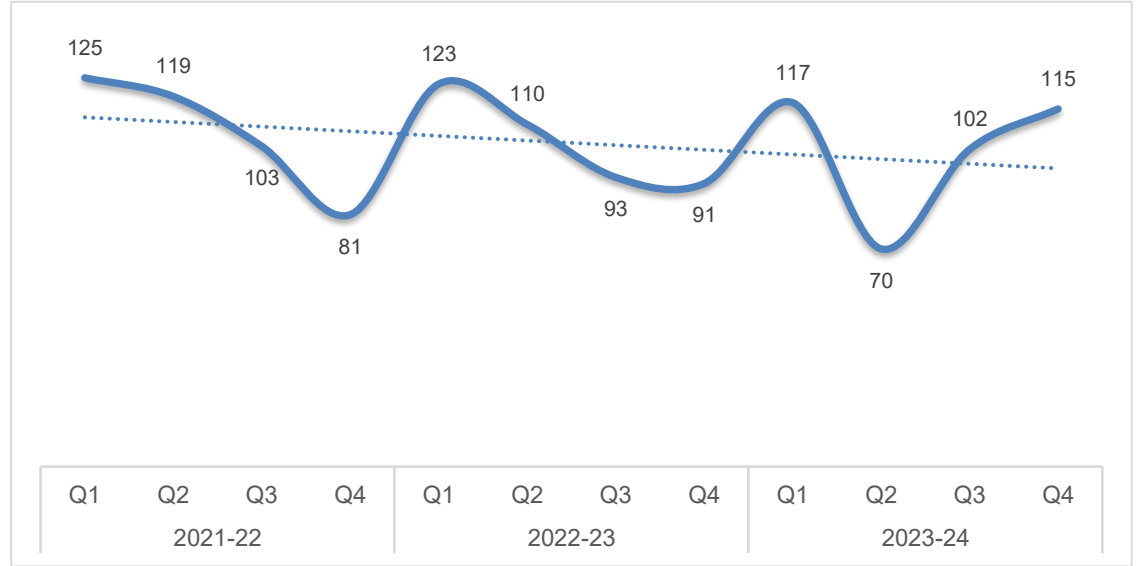
The dog control work undertaken for Cheltenham Borough Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing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



# Gloucester City

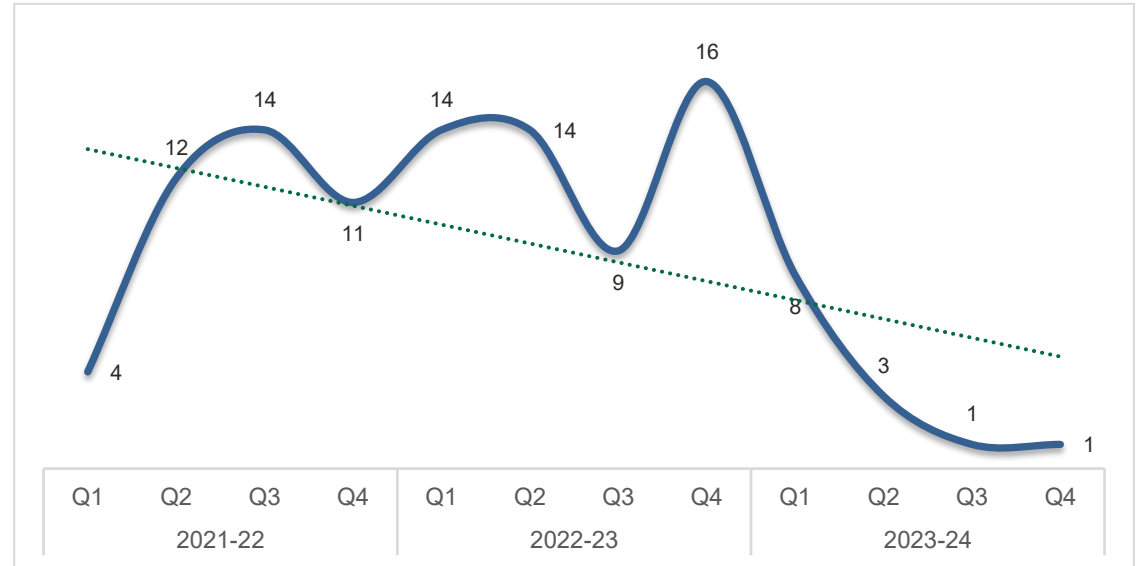
The dog control work undertaken for Gloucester City Council is part of a contract with two other Gloucestershire authorities to deliver the collection, kennelling, returning of dogs to owners and rehoming of stray dog functions. The contract was recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing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

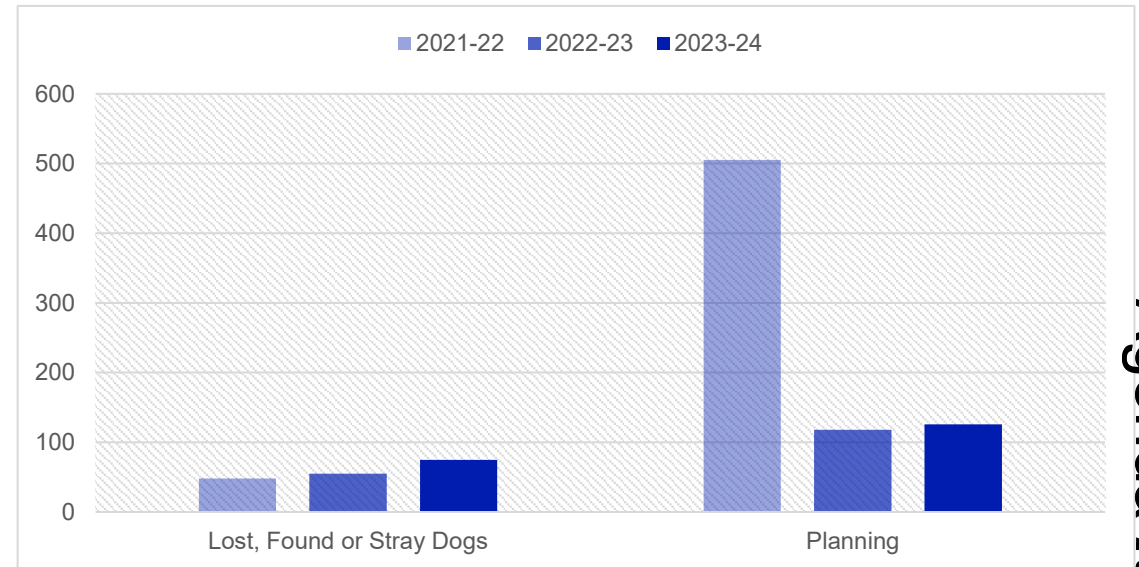
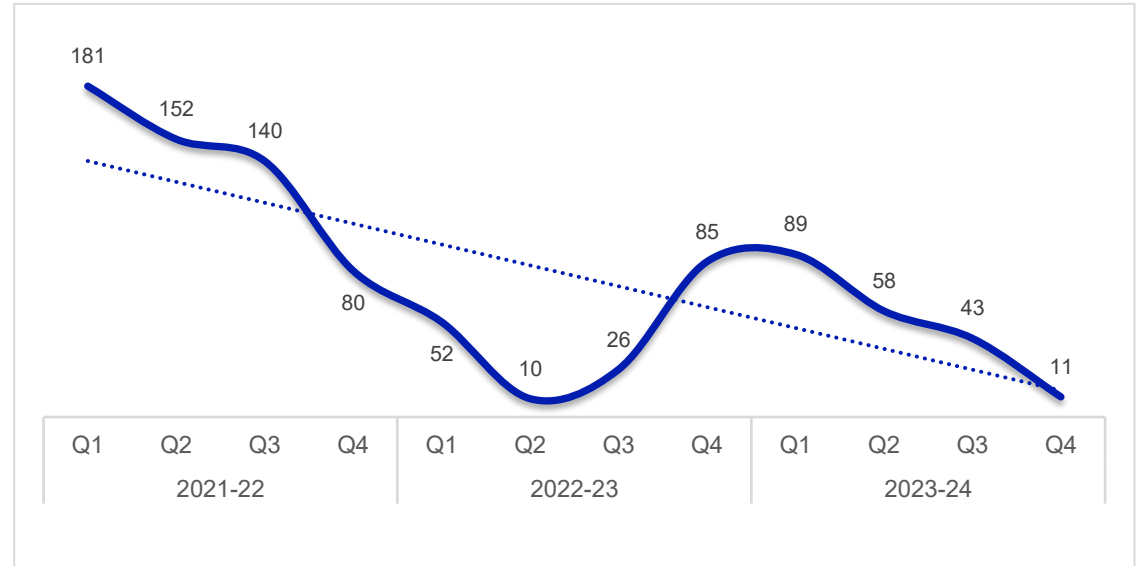
South Gloucestershire, being located on the outskirts of Bristol, was subject to significant contaminative industries and activities historically. Pressures on brownfield development recently have presented the authority with a large volume of planning applications on significantly contaminated and complex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

**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Title: Air Quality Update 2024**

### Recommendation

That members note the actions and, where they can, assist in enabling positive discussions about the improvement of air quality in Worcestershire and beyond.

### Summary

This report is to provide members with an update on the local air quality management actions taken by WRS on behalf of the partners since 2023 and future projects.

### Report

*In policy guidance, DEFRA states that,*

*“Improving air quality is a priority for Government. Poor air quality results in adverse health impacts, as well as wider costs to society for instance to the National Health Service and environmental impacts threatening habitats and biodiversity. The impact of air pollution is not always evenly spread; poor air quality can have a disproportionate impact on certain groups, including those on low incomes. Government is committed to driving improvements to air quality through national measures to reduce emissions of harmful pollutants and by empowering local leaders to act to reduce people’s exposure to air pollution.”<sup>1</sup>*

Up until the end of 2023, the assessment of air quality in Worcestershire has been based on:

- a) Palmes-type diffusion tubes for indicative measurement of ambient concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>)
- b) Information and models produced at a national level or held by the Government (e.g National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> para 1.1, <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/air-quality/featured/england-exc-london-policy-guidance/>

<sup>2</sup><https://naei.beis.gov.uk/index>

- c) Continuous Monitoring with fixed sites in the County – currently at Wyre Forest House and Wychbold.

Across Worcestershire, currently there are 172 diffusion tubes in the locations (see Appendix 1, Map 1).

In early 2024, a network of real-time Zephyr 'low-cost' air quality sensors were installed on lampposts across the county (see Appendix 1, Map 2). The purpose of the project is to provide enhanced monitoring data and inform future policy decisions and actions to improve air quality as well as future behaviour change work. The sensors each monitor 9 different parameters in real-time; compounds of Nitrogen Oxide gas pollutants (NO, NO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>), Small, Fine and Ultra Fine Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>1</sub>, respectively) as well as temperature, pressure and humidity. The locations of the monitors were selected based on several factors: locations near to schools and care homes for behaviour change opportunities, locations in areas of higher deprivation and/or fuel poverty, and proximity to locations of pollution from industrial, farming, domestic burning and traffic pollution sources. One monitor has been located close to an existing reference sensor for scientific purposes.

Appendix 2 contains line graphs to show information from some of the sensors this year so far.

### **Air Quality Objectives**

In 2021, significant updates to the enabling legislation for Air Quality (The Environment Act 1995), have resulted in several refreshed Government guidance documents:

- DEFRA Air Quality Policy (PG22)<sup>3</sup> and Technical Guidance (TG22)<sup>4</sup>
- Environmental Improvement Plan 2023<sup>5</sup>
- Air Quality Strategy (2023)<sup>6</sup>

In 2023, new national PM<sub>2.5</sub> targets were established<sup>7</sup>, each with an interim target:

<sup>3</sup> <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/air-quality/featured/england-exc-london-policy-guidance/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/air-quality/featured/uk-regions-exc-london-technical-guidance/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-air-quality-strategy-for-england/air-quality-strategy-framework-for-local-authority-delivery>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2023/96/contents/made>



- 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> annual mean concentration PM<sub>2.5</sub> nationwide by 2040, with an interim target of 12 µg/m<sup>3</sup> by January 2028
- 35% reduction in average population exposure by 2040, with an interim target of a 22% reduction by January 2028, both compared to a 2018 baseline

The aim of the annual mean target is to focus actions on the worst-polluted areas however, the population exposure reduction target requires concentrations to be driven down everywhere, even where they are already below 10µg/m<sup>3</sup>. As a regional pollutant, PM<sub>2.5</sub> travels long distances and increases background levels across a wide area. It is therefore important that local authorities collaborate accordingly. As part of this work WRS are engaged with WM-Air (a commercial-research partnership organisation at the University of Birmingham) to establish a further background air quality monitoring supersite in Worcestershire and assist with wider regional air pollution research. We have also established dialogue with colleagues in the West Midlands Combined Authority to share knowledge and understanding of regional air quality issues.

In February 2024, the EU reached a provisional agreement, for the annual limits for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> to be reduced from 25 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and from 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 20 µg/m<sup>3</sup> respectively. The deal still needs to be formally confirmed by the European Parliament and Council and then it will go through the adoption procedure.<sup>8</sup> The EU targets are thought to be a step towards the more stringent WHO Air Quality Guidelines<sup>9</sup>.

The key current UK air quality objectives<sup>10</sup> for the main pollutants are:

**Nitrogen Dioxide:** 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> annual mean

**Fine Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>):** 20 µg/m<sup>3</sup> annual mean (reducing in line with the new PM<sub>2.5</sub> target, outlined above)

### Other Activities

#### **Annual Air Quality Status Reports (ASR)**

Annual Status reports are required to be produced and sent to DEFRA annually, in June. The information in the Annual Status reports is primarily based on the NO<sub>x</sub> tube data gathered by

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/eu-strikes-deal-strengthen-air-quality-standards-2024-02-21/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health)

<sup>10</sup> [https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/Air\\_Quality\\_Objectives\\_Update\\_20230403.pdf](https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/Air_Quality_Objectives_Update_20230403.pdf)

WRS as well as information from each of the partner Authorities, including Worcestershire County Council. Each report is sent to DEFRA annually and is published on the WRS website by District<sup>11</sup>

### **Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Worcester City, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest**

#### Worcester

In February 2023, work commenced on a steering group to take this forward. Senior representatives from Worcester City and Worcestershire County Councils were appointed as co-chairpersons. The Steering Group has met monthly since then and was supported by four topic specific sub-working groups on Transport, Sustainability, Public Health, and Planning. The groups looked to determine potential measures informed by the available source apportionment work.

The draft AQAP report was considered by the Licensing and Environmental Health and Environment Committees of Worcester City Council on 22 May and 6<sup>th</sup> June, respectively and a copy will be submitted to DEFRA before the 1st July, the deadline to meet DEFRA's requirements. A summary of the AQAP plus a full draft copy will go out for public consultation in July 2024 before a final draft is submitted to Worcester City Council's committees in October and November 2024, ahead of final publication scheduled for December 2025.

#### Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove

In May 2024, work commenced to progress AQAPs required for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest Districts. This was delayed until then due to the lack of source apportionment data (information about traffic pollution sources) as representative traffic surveys could not be completed during COVID restrictions. Discussions with DEFRA mean that WRS has only until 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024 to submit a draft AQAP for each District and public consultation which, given that it has taken over 1 year to draw up the AQAP for Worcester City, is a significant undertaking by staff of both WRS and partner Authorities.

At the time of writing, AQAP workshops have taken place between each district and work has commenced to draft AQAPs for both Districts to meet the deadline.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/all-services/pollution/air-quality/local-air-quality-reporting/>

### Wychavon

In discussion with the DEFRA LAQM Team, in September 2023 it was agreed that consideration for an AQAP would be delayed until a full year's worth of continuous monitoring data had been obtained for the site. Monitoring results from May 2023 to May 2024 indicate concentrations are within 75% of the AQ objectives for NO2 and, following further discussion with Defra it has been agreed not to proceed to AQAP at this time. There is a possibility that the data may indicate the possibility of revocation of the AQMA or, failing this, if the data indicates it is still required, proceeding to AQAP will be undertaken following a further period of review to be reported in the ASR 2025.

### **Real-time Air Quality Portal**

Following a successful bid to the DEFRA Air Quality Grant in 2022, WRS were awarded a grant of over £260'000 in Feb 2023 to fund a network of real-time air quality monitoring equipment across the Districts. [EarthSense](#) were procured to supply, install and maintain a network of 26 monitors.

In January 2024 the monitors were successfully deployed across the County, making a total network of 27 monitors, the locations of which are publicly accessible via <https://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/airquality/>. At the time of writing, quarterly reporting is being finalised for the current period.

### **Air Quality - Behaviour Change**

In January 2024, utilising s106 air quality contributions and grant funding, we were able to employ a fixed-term technical officer post, focussed on Air Quality Behaviour Change. Around the same time, a 3-month Air Quality Behaviour Change survey, developed in collaboration with Worcestershire County Council Public Health team, was also published. The survey closed in May 2024, and we received an over 1300 responses. The survey responses and data are currently undergoing analysis, and a full report will be published soon. The data is also useful as a baseline study for the behaviour change work.

Responses were mainly from adults, with 50% aged 31-60 years and 46% respondents aged 61+. In terms of geographical spread, 29% were from Worcester City. 18% Wychavon, 17% Bromsgrove, 14% Wyre Forest, 12% Malvern and 9% Redditch.

Some of the most relevant findings are outlined below:

(1) travel habits: Over half of all respondents (54%) travelled 4 miles or less to their usual place of work, and 58% usually used the car to get to work;

(2) Knowledge and awareness of AQ issues: 88% of respondents told us they considered road traffic/ vehicle emissions to be the main source of outdoor air pollution, whilst almost a third (30%) told us it was burning at home (open fires/ log burners). Only around half of respondents were aware that air pollution can lead to serious ill health.

(3) Factors to improve air quality: Some 62% of the respondents consider walking as an activity to improve Air Quality, with 56% believing less car usage could do likewise in Worcestershire. Some 21% would consider using bike, 17% prefer to go to public transport and 12% would use an electric car.

(4) Barriers to change: responses included a lack of road segregation and the need to improve the cycle network, as well as a need for better public transport provision.

### **Air Quality - Supplementary Planning Document**

Since September 2023, WRS has assisted planning policy officers working on the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) to an Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document (AQ SPD) for the South Worcestershire councils. At the time of writing, the intention is to publish and consult on the draft AQ SPD at the same time as the consultation for the Worcester City Air Quality Action Plan.

### **Air Quality Strategy**

It is a requirement in DEFRA guidance that any district that does not have any Air Quality Management Area (in Worcestershire that is Malvern Hills and Redditch) must still have an Air Quality Strategy to improve local air quality, avoid exceedances and reduce the long-term health impacts associated with air pollution.

In 2023 WRS began to develop a countywide Air Quality Strategy with Public Health and sustainability colleagues alongside the AQAP work. As well as seeking to provide air quality and health and wellbeing improvements; a local strategy will contribute towards compliance with national air quality standards and policy beyond the specific focus of district AQAP's. At this time a strategy will be developed further in 2025

following completion of priority AQAP work, and consider any examples published by other authorities.

#### **Future work**

During 2024 the priority of officers is to complete the statutory duties identified in this report. However, looking forward, projects that are potentially important towards the Air Quality Strategy might include:

- source apportionment of fine particulate matter,
- integration of traffic and air quality data – something that we have begun to explore,
- potential future links with indoor air quality in houses and businesses.

The unfortunate withdrawal of the Air Quality Grant scheme for Local Authorities earlier this year by DEFRA means we currently have a limited set of options for financing some of this work. Given the recent changes in EU and WHO objectives, it is possible that a future Government might review and potentially introduce more ambitious UK targets for some air pollutants, for example a reduction in the objectives for nitrogen dioxide. Notwithstanding this, it seems likely that air quality, will remain a high-profile subject area for the foreseeable future with strong links to the health and climate change agendas.

#### **Sustainability**

Clean Air is Goal 2 in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023<sup>12</sup>. Improvements in air quality directly are directly linked to improvements in biodiversity and the national commitments in the transport decarbonisation plan.

#### **Contact Points**

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#### **Background Papers**

Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance (TG22)

Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance (PG22)

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023

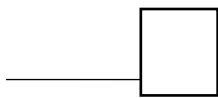
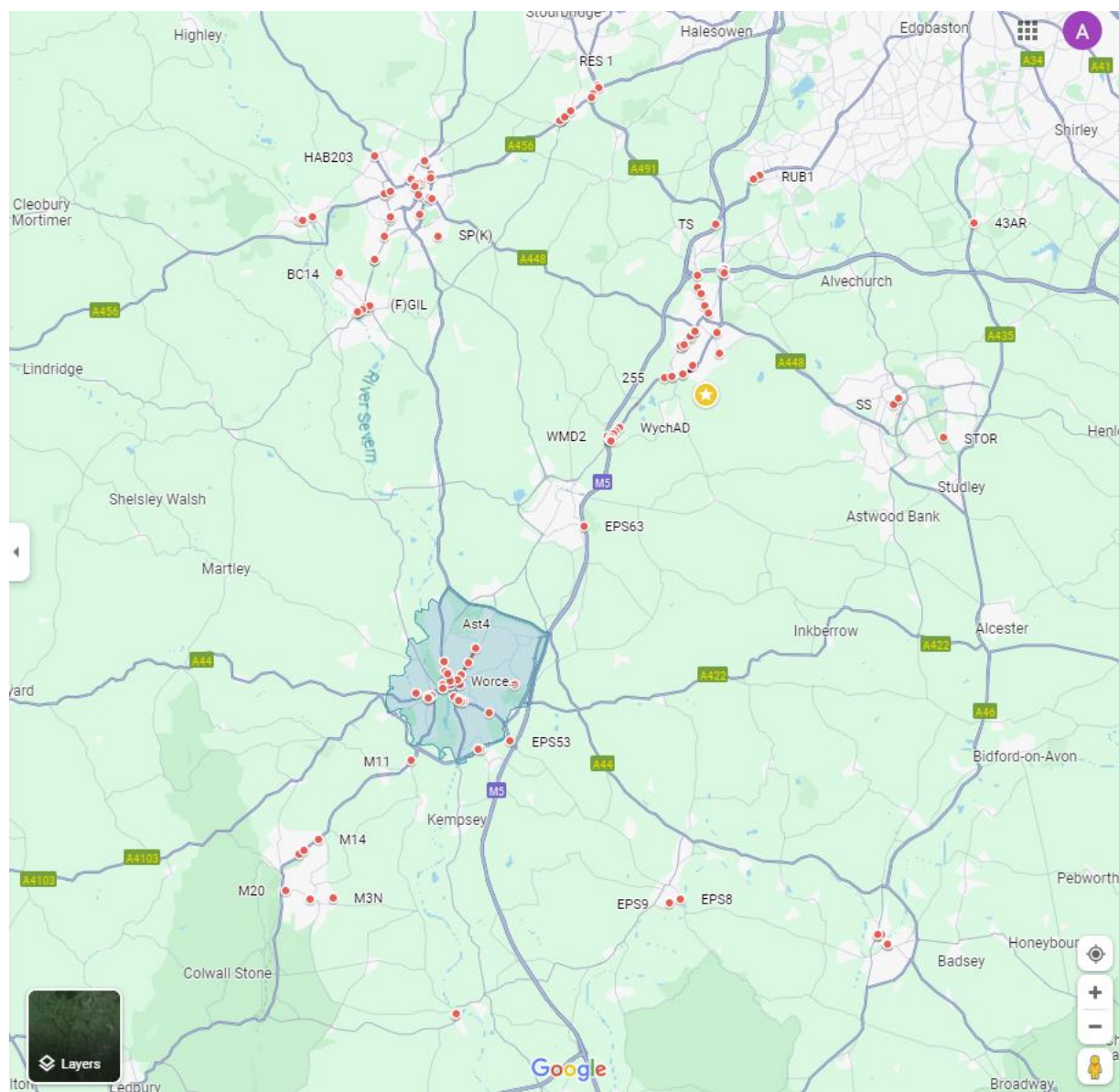
Air Quality Strategy: framework for local authority delivery (2023)

Decarbonising Transport; a better, greener Britain (2021)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan>

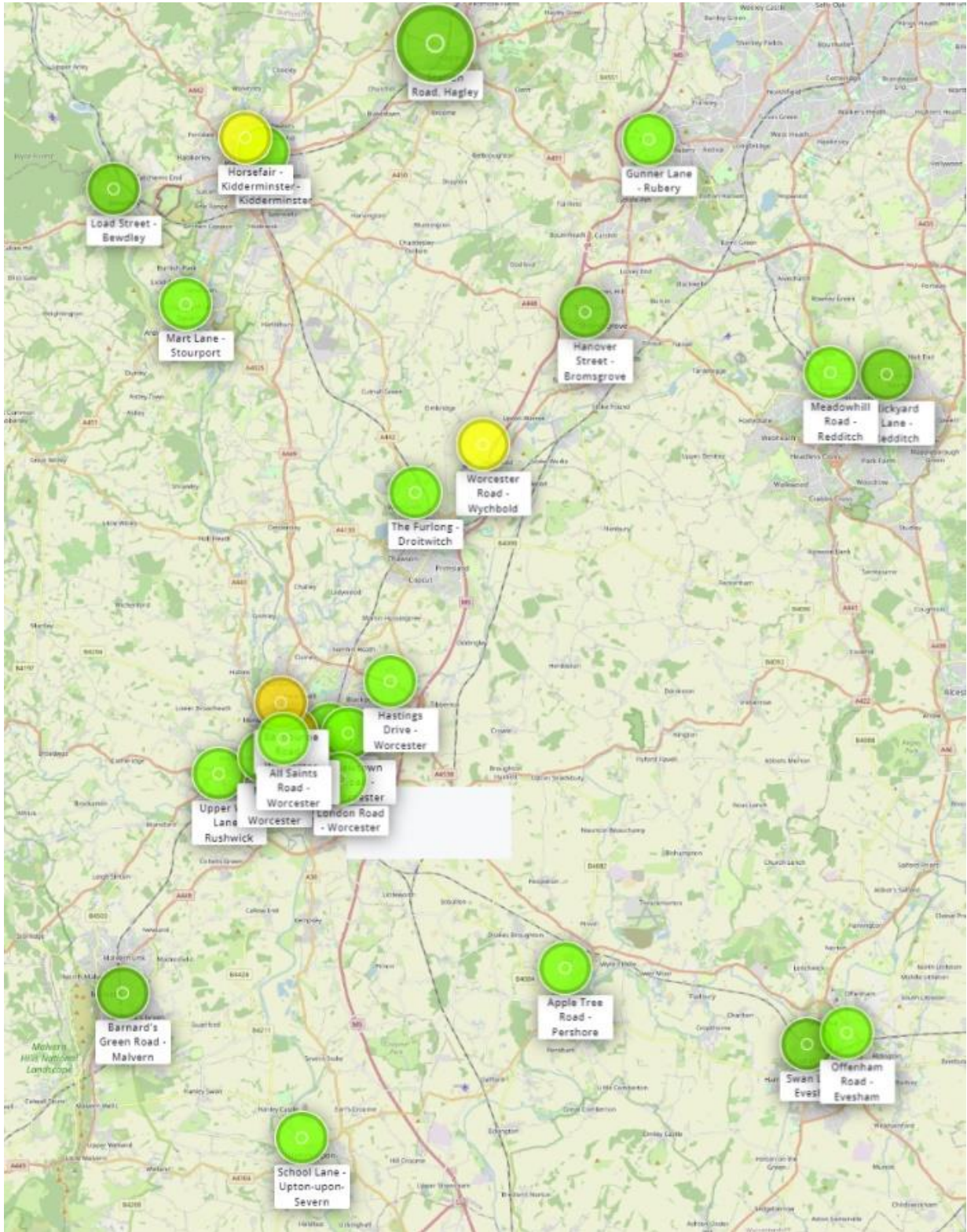
**Appendix 1**

**Map 1 – NOx Diffusion Tube Locations across Worcestershire**





Map 2 - Zephyr Air Quality Sensor locations in Worcestershire







**Appendix 2**

*Figure 1 – A line graph on two sets of axes to compare the temperature in °C of the Horsefair, Kidderminster, to the measured value of PM<sub>2.5</sub> in µg/m<sup>3</sup> over the period of February-May 2024*

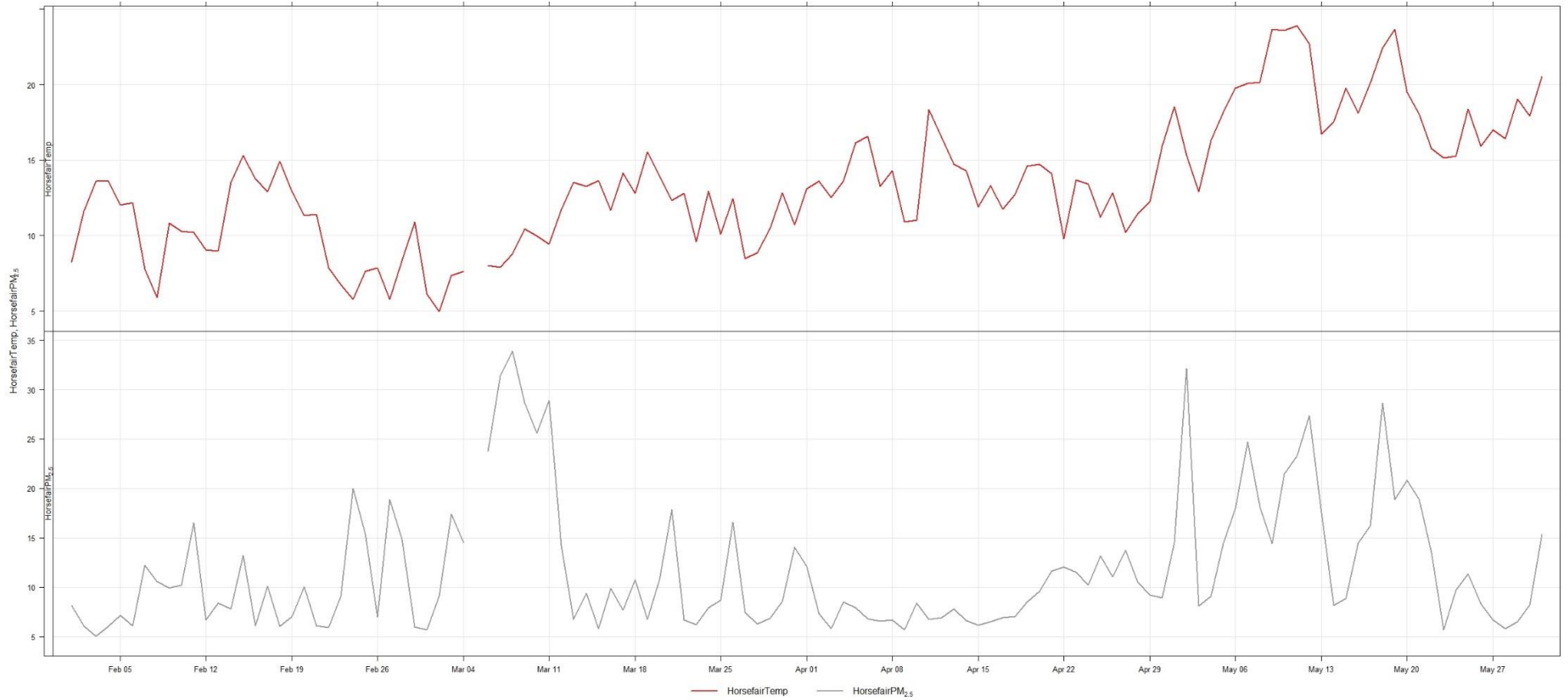
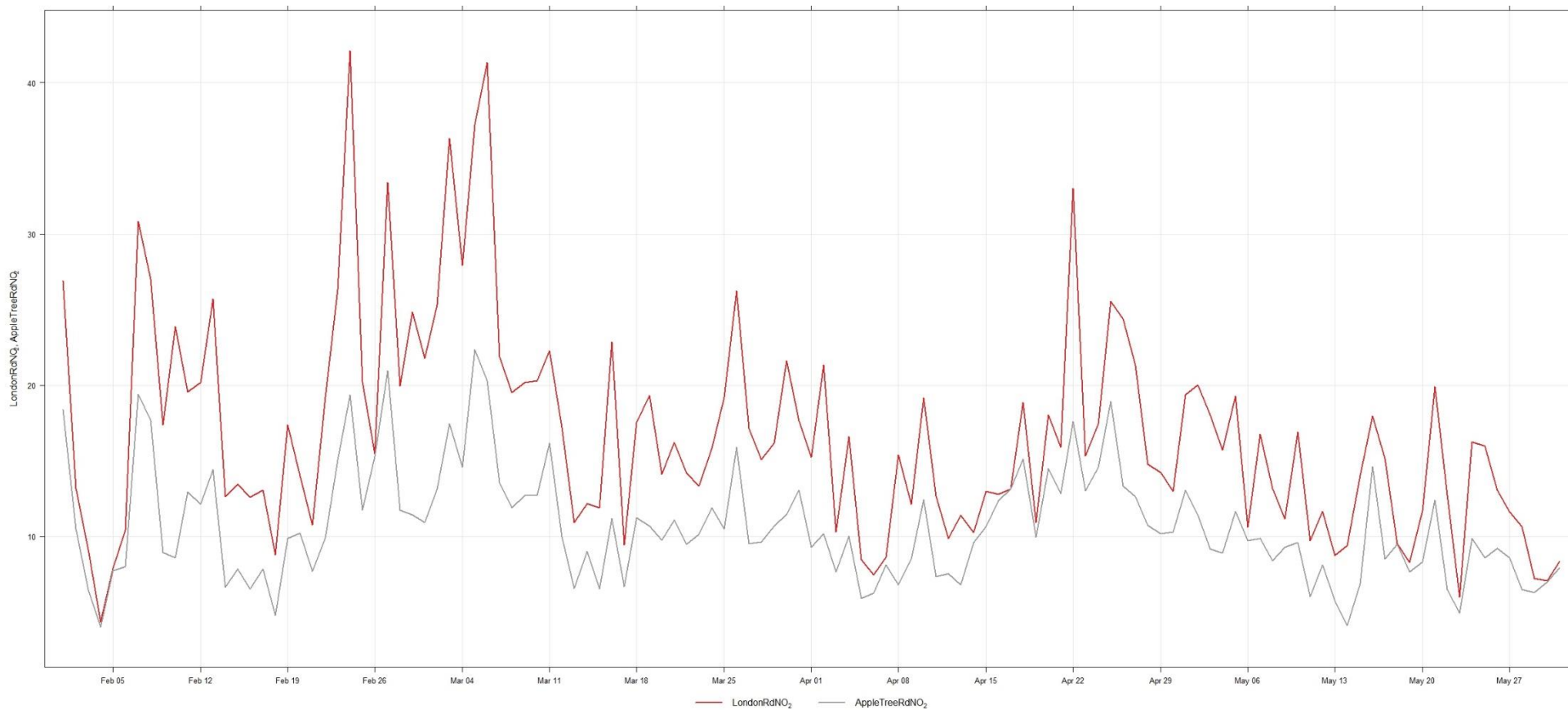


Figure 2 – A line graph to compare the measured NO<sub>2</sub> in µg/m<sup>3</sup> of London Road, Worcester (an urban location), and Apple Tree Road, Pershore (a rural location), over the period of February-May 2024





## WRS Board

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024

### Progress Report on the Automation Project

**Recommendation** | **Members are asked to note the report.**

**Background**

At the first meeting of 2023, members agreed to create a reserve of £150,000 from the previous year's 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 our IDOX Uniform back-office system. This includes the automation of payments for Licensing, so our host authority Bromsgrove District Council will collect fees for the 6 partners and pass money back to the other 5. Officers agreed to provide a short progress report at each Board meeting between then and the actual implementation of the project.

**Report**

**Progress on Forms**

There has been extensive testing of the TENS form since the last WRS Board meeting in February with a number of teams across WRS analysing the form. There have also been two Member sessions arranged so the form could be tested with different stakeholders prior to going live. Frequently asked questions have been drafted to assist applicants when completing the form and district council websites have been edited to reflect the introduction of the form online.

The below table provides an indication of the number of TENS that were received by WRS per district last year. All of these were received and manually inputted into our uniform system by the licensing team.

Temporary Event Notices for 2023 (January to December)

BDC	MHDC	RBC	WCC	WDC	WFDC	TOTAL
408	627	115	384	631	318	2,483

By choosing the TENS form to go live now before the summer will not only allow officers to see how well it is working at the busiest time but it will also relieve some of the pressure off the team to manually input so many forms so they can concentrate their efforts on other important activities.



Work has now commenced on the next set of forms which will cover applications received under the Licensing Act. These include:

- Premises Licence Applications
- Application to vary a premises license
- Application to vary a DPS
- Application form to transfer a premises licence

As concentration reverted back to the TENs form for a while the team will continue on formulating the FAQ's for the forms listed above for second stage testing. A number of these forms have required a need to upload documents by the applicant so the first stage testing populated different questions and discussion points to consider.

Progress has also continued on the 'service request' form where the task and finish group continue to work up a series of questions for different scenarios received by all the teams across WRS. It is probably one of our more difficult jobs to scope as it needs to address a very wide range of potential requests relating to the work of all three WRS sections.

Now that the IT issues have been resolved and further training provided to officers by Victoria Forms on how to create and edit forms the journey and complexity of completing the remaining forms should continue without too many problems from a technical point of view.

The finance team have been working behind the scenes to ensure the framework is in place so that monies are redirected to the correct district council.

### **Comms and Website Development**

Officers continue liaising with the communications leads to ensure district websites are easy to navigate alongside the 'help' guidance and FAQ's. These have been tested with external stakeholders and potential applicants and tweaks have been made where deemed necessary.

### **Contact Point**

In parallel to the wider automation project officers have been working with IDOX to implement the roll out of electronic ID Cards in the taxi trade for both safeguarding and enforcement measures. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest have progressed with work on the dashboard and are now working with SmartTag to ensure we have the appropriate equipment in place to roll this out.

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# Worcestershire Regulatory Services

*Supporting and protecting you*

## WRS Board

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024

### Title: Report on contracted work on Safety at Sports Grounds

#### Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report.

#### Background

The discharge of the Safety at Sportsgrounds (SatSGs) function including Safety Advisory Group (SAG) co-ordination was contracted to WRS under a legal agreement from the County Council's Public Health directorate in August 2020 following the retirement of the member of the County Council's Emergency planning team, who had led on this work. The County Council retains its statutory duty in relation to the legislation with WRS acting on its behalf to deliver the function and service.

The service is required to provide an annual review of activities to the County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee carried out by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) on behalf of the Directorate of Public Health (Emergency Planning) at Worcestershire County Council to discharge statutory duties in relation to Safety at Sports Grounds (SatSGs). Members should note that the operational detail of this information report is historical in that it reflects the activity presented to Worcestershire County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee at its last annual review meeting of November 2023. The next review is scheduled for this coming autumn. The purpose of this information report is to make District members aware of this aspect of work being delivered by WRS.

#### Report

The County Council's responsibilities under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005 are discharged by WRS and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&W F&R).



The Safety at Sportsgrounds function is about ensuring the safety of anyone in a regulated stadium, so it has aspects of health and safety and building control and is thus well suited to sit alongside similar functions that are discharged by WRS.

The legislation focuses on both “designated stadia” and “regulated stands,” which are defined in the legislation. The "Designated" stadium in Worcestershire as defined by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport under The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 is:

- Sixways Stadium –Worcester Warriors Rugby Football Club

The "Regulated Stands" in Worcestershire, that is effectively stadia with stands that provide covered accommodation for 500 or more spectators and are covered by the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005 are:

- The Grandstand – Pitchcroft, Worcester Racecourse,
- Aggborough Stadium –Kidderminster Harriers Football Club
- The Victoria Ground –Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club

Members may be surprised that the Worcestershire County Cricket Ground at New Road and the Worcester Arena do not fall into these categories but their capacities and the nature of the buildings or the individual stands mean that they are not subject to the legislation.

### **Safety Certificates**

In discharging its statutory responsibilities the County Council must consider applications for, and issue to qualified persons, Safety Certificates for designated sports grounds with the aim of securing reasonable safety and setting maximum capacity at the sports grounds. Where grounds are used for other purposes such as concerts or firework displays, there is provision for “Special Safety Certificates” to be issued where the grounds are used in ways not covered in the same way as in the general certificates.

Where there are concerns about safety, the power is available to serve a Prohibition Notice in respect of a sports ground if the Council considers that "the admission of spectators to a sports ground or any part of a sports ground involves or will involve a risk to them so serious that, until steps have been taken to reduce it to a reasonable level, admission of spectators to that part of the ground ought to be prohibited or restricted".

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005 ensures a risk-



based approach to fire safety. The County Council is the enforcing authority for the FSO to ensure that all necessary fire risk assessments have been made at all four of the regulated locations and their premises covered by the SatSGs legislation. This assessment is carried out by H&W F&R on behalf of the County Council.

### **Safety Advisory Groups**

Management and discharge of SatSGs legislation is administered through a site-specific Safety Advisory Group (SAG) based on each sports venue. SAG meetings were convened regularly throughout the year, coordinated and administered by WRS. The core Agency membership of SAG is composed of:

- Worcestershire County Council (WRS Senior Practitioner or nominated representative)
- West Mercia Police,
- Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service,
- West Midlands Ambulance Service,
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Environmental Health, Licensing, Health and Safety) and,
- the host stadium Safety Officer and Club representatives.

Where necessary this can be supplemented with other bodies including District Councils or their shared services (i.e., Parking Enforcement, Building Control) and National Highways

All SAG decisions are made on a multi-agency basis under the chairmanship of WRS as the County Council's representative. Under the terms of the Scheme of Delegation and Policy statements the Chair and Vice Chair of the County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee are made aware of any significant alterations and modifications to General and Special Safety Certificates issued.

### **Site Specific work**

#### **(i) Sixways Stadium, formerly Worcester Warriors RFC**

The club went into administration in September 2022. The SAG group were able to ensure that safety documentation and professional reports were up to date and in good order to permit the remaining home game to be played at the ground.

Collaboration between the Club and its SAG members was maintained and a Special Safety Certificate was issued for the fireworks display in



November 2022.

**(ii) Aggborough Stadium, Kidderminster Harriers FC**

Matchday safety management at KHFC Aggborough Stadium is carried out by qualified Stadium Safety Officers. The stadium safety certificate holder is the Club Chairman, with safety management being the responsibility of its Safety Officer supported by a deputy.

All four of the stadium's stands are managed as individual regulated stands. KHFC meet all current safety management criteria and collaboration with the SAG remains excellent.

During the season members of the SAG carried out inspections examining the spectator safety standards and records set and maintained by the club. These inspections were all deemed satisfactory.

KHFC were the hosts for a match night visit by members of the County Council's Committee in March 2022. The members were briefed by the Clubs Safety Officers, given a tour of the ground and the opportunity to watch a local Premiership's under 18's side play.

**(iii) The Grandstand, Worcester Racecourse**

Worcester Racecourse is owned by Worcester City Council with the Grandstand and surrounding area together with the racecourse being operated by Arena Racing Company on a long-term leasing arrangement. The Grandstand is managed as a Regulated Stand under the SatSGs legislation. The Racecourse has a designated safety certificate holder and safety officer.

Worcester Racecourse SAG operates site specific working practices that meet the special safety considerations of horse racing and its spectators recognising that crowd behaviour and dynamics at horse racing is very different to that found at football or rugby grounds.

Worcester Racecourse holds jump racing meetings during the summer between April to October. The SAG meeting for the racecourse was held virtually, however an in-person site visit was conducted during the season.

**(iv) Victoria Ground, Bromsgrove Sporting FC**

Bromsgrove Sporting leases the Victoria Ground on a long-term arrangement from Bromsgrove District Council who own the freehold. The Main and North stand are Regulated Stands under the SatSGs





legislation.

The Bromsgrove Sporting FC safety certificate holder remained the chairman and the club has a suitably qualified safety officer. The in-match inspections took place in November 2022 and identified some safety issues that the Club has worked with local police to resolve.

SAG members, in particular the Fire Safety Inspector and the Officer and West Midlands Ambulance Service, continue to work with the club to ensure the terms and conditions of their General Safety Certificate are being adhered to.

### **Non-Statutory Event Safety Management Advice**

The multi-agency members involved with the SAG's also provide safety management advice to several well-established venues and events that take place throughout the year. This process ensures that best practice is shared with organisers, safety managers and stewards, many of whom work at the designated or regulated grounds. Some of the venues and events where advice has been offered included:

- Malvern, Three Counties Showground.
- Worcestershire County Cricket Ground
- Worcester's Victorian Christmas Fayre
- Tri County SAG for the 3 Shires car rally
- Passion Play Worcester
- Hanbury Show

Festivals such as Mello and Sunshine are also engaged, and support was provided to the Tom Jones concert held on the racecourse.

This work is funded by the County Council, so the service's costs are fully recovered. Officers of WRS are engaged with many aspects of these activities as part of their normal duties, so this work is a relatively natural extension and progression of that and provides a good platform on which to engage with these business operators and of course, helps maintain our links with the County Council and Public Health colleagues.

### **Contact Points**

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### **Background Papers**

None



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