

# **Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board**

Thursday, 26th September, 2024  
4.30 pm

Parkside Suite  
Parkside  
Market Street  
Bromsgrove  
B61 8DA

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# Worcestershire REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

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Thursday, 26th September, 2024

4.30 pm

Parkside Suite - Parkside

## Agenda

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**WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS**

**MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD**

THURSDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 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. Apologies for absence and notification of substitutes
2. Declarations of Interest  
  
To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 27th June 2024 (Pages 5 - 20)
4. WRS Revenue Monitoring April - June 2024 (Pages 21 - 28)
5. Activity and Performance Data - Quarter 1 2024/25 (Pages 29 - 64)

6. Operation Lisbon 2 : Dog Breeding (Pages 65 - 72)
7. Progress Report on the Automation Project (Pages 73 - 74)
8. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.

Sue Hanley  
Chief Executive

Parkside  
Market Street  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA

18th September 2024

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

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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 27TH JUNE 2024, AT 4.32 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors K. Taylor, H. J. Jones, D. Harrison, C. Palmer, D. Munro (substituting for Councillor M. Stringfellow), A. Scott, S. Murray (substituting for Councillor K. Lawrance), M. Goodge, T. Onslow and C. Rogers

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr P. Carpenter, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox, Mr. D. Mellors, Ms. L. Elliot, Mr. A. Allman, 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

1/24

**ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor H. J. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council be elected Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

2/24

**ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor C. Rogers, Wyre Forest District Council be elected Vice-Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

3/24

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Deller, Wychavon District Council and Councillors K. Lawrance, Worcester City Council, Councillor M. Stringfellow, Redditch Borough Council, with Councillors S. Murray, Worcester City Council and D. Munro, Redditch Borough Council attending as substitute Members.

4/24

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5/24

**MINUTES**

It was noted that there was an error in Minute Number 27/23, and that the **RESOLVED** item should read as follows:-

**RESOLVED** that Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council be elected as Chairman for the meeting’.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024, be amended as detailed in the preamble above, and approved as a correct record.

6/24

**WRS REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - MARCH 2024 AND THE ANNUAL RETURN**

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 page 23 of the main agenda pack.

The report covered the period April to March 2024.

Members were informed that the detailed revenue monitoring report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report; showed a projected outturn deficit Of £1.2k, this represented 0.03% of the actual budget and was mainly due to the slight extension of agency staff for food law enforcement work following engagement with the Food Standards Agency.

Other items for Members to note were: -

- 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.
- The bereavements 2023/24 outturn figure to be funded by partners was £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

- The pest control 2023/24 outturn figure to be funded by partners was £14,795, as per below: -

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

- Appendix 4 to the report, detailed the income received 2023/2024, and included the Worcester City Council, taxi unmet demand surveys.
- Appendix 5 to the report, included the Pay Award for 2023/24 and the stray dog van total.

Members were informed that for several years, the Board had agreed to reserve a portion of the service's underspend to enable the service to purchase three replacement Dog Warden vans. However, due to the time elapsed and the fact that the purchase was made directly, there was a small shortfall on this reserve of £3,325 still to be funded. It was therefore requested that this shortfall be funded from the Worcestershire Regulatory Services general reserve, as detailed in the Recommendations on page 23 of the main agenda pack.

In response to questions from Members with regards to the costs of the Technical Officer for Gull Control, Worcester City Council, the Technical Services Manager, WRS; explained that the Technical Officer was employed part time and part of the costs included a Gull Control Strategy for the City Council's area. Gull control management included an extensive programme of nest, egg, and chick removal in the city centre, supported by deterrent hawking, disturbance tactics and gull proofing measures. This Gull Control Strategy was now a nationally renowned strategy. All work had to be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the licences issued by Natural England, who would only issue such licences where relevant evidence on issues created by these protected species could be provided.

**RESOLVED** that the Board

- 1.1 notes the final financial position for the period April – March 2024,
- 1.2 approves the 2023/24 deficit of £1,198 to be funded from the Worcestershire Regulatory Services general reserves, and
- 1.3 approves the additional spend of £3,325 on dog vans to be funded from the Worcestershire Regulatory Services general reserves.

7/24

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

The Board considered a report which detailed the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Annual Report 2023/2024.

The Head of Regulatory Services drew Members' attention to the Recommendation, as detailed on page 37 of the main agenda report. Members were informed that under the Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement (SLA) the Board was required to receive the annual report at its annual meeting.

The Head of Regulatory Services highlighted that the report covered the performance of the service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The report covered the performance of the service for this period, both in

terms of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the highlights of activity, a short summary activity report was included at Appendix 5 to the report.

Last year saw the restoration of more normal levels of activity post pandemic with 2022/3 and 2023/4 establishing what was regarded by many as the new patterns of behaviour and activity that the service would 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 had remained good in most areas. Food business compliance rates remained high.

As with previous years, complaints against the service are significantly exceeded by compliments.

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 would continue to work to address this. Business satisfaction was down slightly at 94.6% but still good, the situation here would continue to be monitored.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints had been in place long enough now to establish good baselines. With 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 were significantly higher again and, in some cases at the highest seen. However, it must be remembered that only allegations were measured not actual confirmed breaches and that the figures still showed that the vast majority of premises across the County were well run and controlled by their operators.

In contrast to this, last year's figures for the rate of noise complaints against population, showed 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 alluded to in Activity Data Reports last year, noise from dogs and from audio devices remained key drivers of this. Overall though it still suggested, however, that the environment for Worcestershire residents was good.

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

In response to questions from Board Members on certain topics covered in the Annual Report, officers explained as follows: -

### **Primary Authorities**

- That Muller, one of the largest dairy businesses in the UK, with premises locally and in Shropshire, had recently been added as a Primary Authority; and that a report on the work around this would be presented to a future meeting of the Board. For the benefit of new Members to the Board, the Head of WRS took the opportunity to briefly explain how Primary Authority Partnerships (PAPs) operated and the benefits offered to the business and local authority supporting them.

### **Safety at Sports Grounds**

- Why certain venues in Worcestershire, e.g. Worcester County Cricket Club, were not included in contracted work on Safety at Sports Grounds? It was briefly explained that certain venues did not meet the required criteria / legal definition in the legislation particularly for having covered stands. Their capacities and the nature of the buildings or the individual stands meant that they were not subject to the 'designated stadia' and 'regulated stands' definitions in the legislation. It was noted that more detailed information on safety at Sports Grounds was included on the agenda, agenda item number 9, (Minute No. 7/24), which provided more detailed information on this area. It was highlighted that Worcester County Cricket Club were very proactive in seeking advice from WRS for non-sporting events held there, e.g., music events. The club was also represented on the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

### **Dog Wardens**

- It was stated in the Annual Report that it had been a difficult year for the dog wardens, was their health and safety being considered and supported? Managers organised additional access to counselling sessions to support their well-being, as well as the offer from the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP/Care First). The Out of Hours dog warden service was only available to allow people to report that they had contained a stray. There was not an Out of Hours telephone service that allowed the public to recover dogs. Residents could report lost / stray dogs via the Council's (Bromsgrove and Redditch) 24-hour Lifeline service to which all partners subscribed. Any calls received would be notified to the dog wardens the following day, or the Out of Hours service could check with the Out of Hours Dog Warden to check if a dog had been picked up matching their description, so that the

resident could be reassured that their animal was safe. It had also been a difficult time for kennel staff, who had had to hold on banned XL Bully dogs for seven days, which was very tricky with some of the dogs. But hopefully there was enough support in place for the dog wardens and kennel staff to access.

### **Animal Licences**

- Reports on unlicensed dog breeders. Post pandemic, the service had received more reports of animals not being looked after as well as they had prior to this. Officers had therefore been carrying out more checks on licensed premises. Hence, the routine licence renewals and interim visits taking longer due to the problems being found by officers and premises being asked to carry out work to remedy the situation. With regards to unlicensed dog breeders, the law around unlicensed breeding was not easy as some might think and there would be circumstances where someone whose dog was producing only one litter a year may not require registration for a licence. The law states that anyone whose dogs produced 3 or more litters per year was deemed to be acting in the course of a business but, for anything less, the onus was on the local authority to prove that the person was acting in this way. To establish this, WRS had to make initial investigative enquiries before it could use statutory powers to, for example enter premises to inspect. Complaints received by WRS were now subject to a range of checks by the intelligence team, who would try to establish whether there was evidence to meet the business test. This could take time as one advert was likely to be insufficient to achieve this. Once processed, the intelligence team would pass a package of information to the Licensing team who would determine what could be done and inform complainants of what officers were doing and the outcome of any investigation. An operation monitoring adverts on a range of pet selling websites was completed recently working with colleagues from Shropshire Council. It was estimated that the value of advertised dogs over the two counties was more than 7 million pounds, with over 4 million being from Worcestershire based advertisers. Details of sellers potentially acting in a business had been passed to Licensing to determine action and a more detailed report would be provided to a future meeting of the Board.

The Chairman took the opportunity to give sincere thanks to the dog wardens and kennel staff. The Chairman had recently carried out an amazing piece of work with one of the dog wardens. The Head of Regulatory Services stated that he would happily feedback the positive comments and sincere thanks.

**RESOLVED** that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2023/2024, be noted; and that a copy of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2023/2024 be forwarded to the Chief Executive, Managing Director and Members of the six partner authorities.

8/24

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE DATA - Q1- 4 2023/24**

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarters 1 to 4, 2023/2024. The detail of the report focused on the final quarter of 2023/24, but the actual data allowed comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

The following key points were highlighted: -

**Activity Data**

Looking at the data, last year, 2022/23 and 2023/24 could probably be seen as the 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 varied by a handful of percentage points compared with 2022/3 and were significantly different from 2021/22, where there had been a significant burst of activity required, linked to people's perceptions of coming out of pandemic controls. It was noted that it was probably safe to say that this was now into a new normal of demand levels.

**Performance**

Staff sickness was up very slightly at 3.07 days per FTE, compared to 2.93 days last year.

Staff satisfaction was at 94%, slightly higher than last year and still an excellent result given the pressures. Two-thirds of staff who responded scored the service as 8/10 or better to work for, which showed that most staff did like working in the environment provided.

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

Various pressures from salaries and inflation had driven up costs in recent years. Therefore, the cost per head of population was up this year at £6.14 per head of population.

**RESOLVED** that the Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1 to 4, 2023/2024, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

9/24

**AIR QUALITY UPDATE 2024**

The Head of Regulatory Services took the opportunity to introduce to Members of the Board to the Principal Environmental Health Officer, Technical Pollution, and lead on Air Quality matters, Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer introduced the report and in doing so informed Board Members that the Air Quality Report 2024, was 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.

Members' attention was drawn to the policy guidance, DEFRA as detailed on page 133 of the main agenda report, which stated 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.”*

Up until the end of 2023, the assessment of air quality in Worcestershire had 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).
- c) Continuous Monitoring with fixed sites in the County – currently at Wyre Forest House and Wychbold.

Across Worcestershire, there were currently 172 diffusion tubes in the locations as detailed at Appendix 1, Map 1, to the report.

In early 2024, a network of real-time Zephyr 'low-cost' air quality sensors were installed on lampposts across the county, as detailed at Appendix 1, Map 2, to the report.

The purpose of the project was 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.



Appendix 2 to the report contained line graphs showing information from some of the sensors this year so far. All sensors were now fixed to lampposts.

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

- DEFRA Air Quality Policy (PG22) and Technical Guidance (TG22)
- Environmental Improvement Plan 2023
- Air Quality Strategy (2023)

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

- 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.

In February 2024, the EU reached a provisional agreement, for the annual limits for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub> 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 needed to be formally confirmed by the European Parliament and Council and then it would go through the adoption procedure. The EU targets were thought to be a step towards the more stringent WHO Air Quality Guidelines.

The key current UK air quality objectives for the main pollutants were: -

**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).

Air Quality Status Reports (ASR) - annual status reports were required to be produced and sent to DEFRA annually, in June. The information in the Annual Status reports was primarily based on the NO<sub>x</sub> tube data gathered by WRS as well as information from each of the partner Authorities, including Worcestershire County Council. Each report was sent to DEFRA annually and published on the WRS website by District.

**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 to be submitted to DEFRA before the 1st July, the deadline in order to meet DEFRA's requirements. A summary of the AQAP plus a full draft copy would go out for public consultation in July 2024 before a final draft was 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 meant that WRS now only had until 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024 to submit a draft AQAP for each District and public consultation which, given that it had taken over 1 year to draw up the AQAP for Worcester City, was a significant undertaking by staff of both WRS and partner authorities.

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

### 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 indicated that concentrations were within 75% of the AQ objectives for NO<sub>2</sub> and, following further discussion with Defra it had been agreed not to proceed to AQAP at this time. There was a possibility that the data may indicate the possibility of revocation of the AQMA or, failing this, if the data indicated it was still required, proceeding to AQAP would 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.

In January 2024, the 26 monitors were successfully deployed across the County, making a total network of 27 monitors. A quarterly reporting was being finalised for the current period.

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

In January 2024, utilising section 106 (s106) air quality contributions and grant funding, a fixed-term technical officer post, focussed on Air Quality Behaviour Change was established. 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 over 1300 responses were received. The survey responses and data were currently undergoing analysis, and a full report would be published soon. The data was also useful as a baseline study for the behaviour change work.

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

Since September 2023, WRS had 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.

### **Air Quality Strategy**

It was a requirement in DEFRA guidance that any district that did not have any Air Quality Management Area (in Worcestershire that was 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.

### **Future Work**

During 2024 the priority of officers was to complete the statutory duties identified in this report. However, looking forward, projects that were 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, a scheme that the six partners had previously benefitted from, meant that currently there was only a limited set of options for financing some of this work going forward. Given the recent changes in EU and WHO objectives, it was 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 seemed likely

that air quality, would remain a high-profile subject area for the foreseeable future with strong links to the health and climate change agendas.

In response to questions from Members, the Principal Environmental Health Officer explained that the EU had provisionally agreed for the annual limits in their Directives 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. Should the UK Government choose not to align with this change, the current UK air quality objectives for the main pollutants would remain and be higher than our neighbours; so, it was not all about levels, it was also about what objectives were looking to be achieved.

Air quality was about looking at the amount of pollution exposure to residents, e.g., nearby nurseries, schools, homes, not about traffic congestion or necessarily being in built-up areas. The impact of traffic pollution dropped off quickly after the edge of the carriageway, so houses set back a distance from the road may be deemed to be not subject to impact. There could be no relevant exposure from congested roads, if the above were not located nearby to such roads, so congestion itself may not be relevant for exercising the local authority's air quality duties. A lot of factors can provide mitigation, e.g., trees, heights of buildings, and winds that could help to dissipate pollutants could all help or hinder the situation where people lived close to congestion, so there were a lot of factors to consider.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer was asked about the impacts of wood burning stoves and said that early research into wood burning stoves and fine particulate matter was not yet conclusive about the impacts. However, given that wood burning stoves were perhaps more of an aesthetic addition to most homes rather than a primary source of heating, they were one of the sources of pollutants that people could do something about for themselves, and that officers were working with academic colleagues, looking at the impact of wood burners on air quality inside the home.

**RESOLVED** that the report and actions be noted, and that where they can that Members assist in enabling positive discussions about the improvement of air quality in Worcestershire and beyond.

10/24

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

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services provided Members with an update on the Automation Project.

For the benefit new Board Members, the Licensing and Support Services Manager provided brief details on the agreement to fund the

implementation of automation of data entry for customers, in order to make it more efficient, as detailed on page 145 of the main agenda report.

### **Progress on Forms**

There had been extensive testing of the TENs form since the last WRS Board meeting in February 2024 with a number of teams across WRS analysing the form. There had also been two Member sessions arranged so the form could be tested with different stakeholders prior to going live. Frequently asked questions were drafted to assist applicants when completing the form and district council websites were edited to reflect the introduction of the form online.

The below table gave 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 the Uniform system by the licensing team.

Temporary Event Notices for 2023 (January to December)

BDC	MHD C	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 it would not only allow officers to see how well it was working at the busiest time, but it would take some pressure off the team to manually input so many forms. Enabling officers to concentrate their efforts on other important activities.

Progress had also continued on the 'service request' form where the task and finish group continued to work up a series of questions for different scenarios received by all the teams across WRS. 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 had 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 had progressed with work on the dashboard and were now working with SmartTag to ensure that we had the appropriate equipment in place to roll this out.

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

11/24

**REPORT ON CONTRACTED WORK ON SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUNDS**

The Head of Regulatory Services took the opportunity to introduce to Members of the Board the Principal Environmental Health Officer, Community Environmental Health, and lead on Health and Safety at Work matters, Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer introduced the report and in doing so informed Board Members that the discharge of the Safety at Sportsgrounds (SatSGs) function including Safety Advisory Group (SAG) co-ordination which 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 retained its statutory duty in relation to the legislation with WRS acting on its behalf to deliver the function and service.

The service was required to provide an annual review of activities to the County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee carried out by 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 was historical in that it reflected the activity presented to Worcestershire County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee at its last annual review meeting of November 2023. The next review was scheduled for this coming autumn. The purpose of this information report was to make District Members aware of this aspect of work being delivered by WRS.

The legislation focused on both "designated stadia" and "regulated stands," which were 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, was as follows: -

- Sixways Stadium – Worcester Warriors Rugby Football Club

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

- 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 did not fall into these categories but their capacities and the nature of the buildings or the individual stands meant that they were 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 were used for other purposes such as concerts or firework displays, there was provision for “Special Safety Certificates” to be issued where the grounds were used in ways not covered in the same way as in the general certificates.

Where there were concerns about safety, the power was available to serve a Prohibition Notice in respect of a sports ground if the Council considered 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".

### **Safety Advisory Groups**

Management and discharge of SatSGs legislation was administered through a site-specific Safety Advisory Group (SAG) based on each sports venue. SAG meetings were convened regularly throughout the year (pre, mid and post season), and were coordinated and administered by WRS. The core Agency membership of SAG 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)
- The host stadium Safety Officer and Club representatives.

All SAG decisions were 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 were made aware of any significant alterations and modifications to General and Special Safety Certificates issued.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer stated that the work was a good fit for the skills and knowledge of WRS officers and enhanced the services collaborative work with other agencies.

**RESOLVED** that the report on contracted work on Safety at Sports Grounds, be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.52 p.m.

Chairman





**WRS Board**  
**26<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April  
– June 2024**

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – June 2024
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for Apr – June 24 in relation to Bereavements

<b>Council</b>	<b>Apr–June 24 Actual for Bereavements £000</b>
Bromsgrove District Council	1
Redditch Borough Council	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

- 1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2024-25 in relation to three additional Technical Officers

<b>Council</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000</b>	<b>Estimated Projected Outturn 2024/25 Gull Control £000</b>
Redditch Borough Council	2	
Malvern Hills District Council	7	



Worcester City Council	3	16
Bromsgrove District Council	9	
Wychavon District Council	15	
Wyre Forest District Council	9	
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>16</b>

### Contribution to Priorities

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

### Introduction/Summary

This report presents the financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April – June 2024.

### Background

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

### Report

The following reports are included for Board's Attention:

- Revenue Monitoring - April – June 24 – Appendix 1
- Income Breakdown - April – June 24 – Appendix 2

#### Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a projected outturn 2024/25 of £6k surplus. It is appreciated this is an estimation to the year-end based on following assumptions:

- A 3% pay award has been added to the projected outturn figures, as per the original budget. We are still awaiting a final agreement for the 24-25 pay award
- If April to June 24 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be no overspend to be charged to partners on this service. WRS officers will continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at quarter 2.



- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – June 24 to be funded by partners. These costs are charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge it is not possible to project a final outturn figure:

Bromsgrove District Council	£1k
Redditch Borough Council	£5k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – June 24
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.

### **Financial Implications**

None other than those stated in the report

### **Sustainability**

None as a direct result of this report

### **Contact Points**

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### **Background Papers**

Detailed financial business case

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WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2024/25

Total WRS June 24 / Period 3 - 24/25

	Revised Full Year Budget 24-25	Revised Budget Apr - June 24	Committed Expenditure Apr - June 24	Variance	Qtr 1 Projected outturn	Qtr 1 Projected Outturn Variance	Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
<b>Direct Expenditure</b>							
Employees							
Salary	4,158	1,039	866	-173	3,910	-247	Includes Ukrainian employees, offsett in income £122k
Agency Staff	0	0	130	130	344	344	Covered by salary savings & income generation work, including work for other local authorities
Employee Insurance	21	5	5	-0	21	0	
<b>Sub-Total - Employees</b>	<b>4,178</b>	<b>1,045</b>	<b>1,002</b>	<b>-43</b>	<b>4,275</b>	<b>97</b>	
<b>Premises</b>							
Rent / Hire of Premise	79	20	19	-1	78	-1	
Cleaning	1	0	0	-0	1	-0	
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Sub-Total - Premises</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>-1</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>-1</b>	
<b>Transport</b>							
Vehicle Hire	13	3	0	-3	7	-6	
Vehicle Fuel	8	2	2	-0	8	0	
Road Fund Tax	1	0	0	-0	1	0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	1	1	0	5	0	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	1	0	-0	3	0	
Car Allowances	62	16	11	-5	55	-8	
<b>Sub-Total - Transport</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>-9</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>-13</b>	
<b>Supplies and Services</b>							
Furniture & Equipment	44	11	13	2	46	2	
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	0	0	-0	2	0	
Printing & Photocopying	17	4	4	-0	17	0	
Postage	11	3	3	0	11	0	
ICT	79	20	18	-2	84	5	
Telephones	40	10	7	-3	36	-5	
Training & Seminars	34	8	0	-8	34	0	
Insurance	16	4	4	-0	16	0	
Third Party Payments	203	51	51	-0	203	-0	
<b>Sub-Total - Supplies &amp; Service</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>-12</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Contractors</b>							
Dog Warden	121	30	70	40	272	151	Additional contractors due to new contract, recovered in income
Pest Control	73	18	28	10	74	1	
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	72	18	14	-4	72	0	
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	0	-0	2	-1	
Water Safety	5	1	1	-0	5	0	
Food Safety	1	0	0	-0	1	0	
Environmental Protection	12	3	6	3	16	4	
Grants / Subscriptions	13	3	5	2	16	3	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	1	1	-1	6	0	
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>158</b>	
<b>Income</b>							
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-1,001	-250	-282	-32	-1,251	-249	See append 2
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>-1,001</b>	<b>-250</b>	<b>-282</b>	<b>-32</b>	<b>-1,251</b>	<b>-249</b>	
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>4,098</b>	<b>1,024</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>-48</b>	<b>4,091</b>	<b>-6</b>	

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## Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2024/25

Appendix 2

Income from Partners	April to June 24
	£
Budget	1,024,406
Pension Backfunding	9,275
Bereavement / Public Burials	5,731
Employee for Animal Activity	10,817
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	16,500
Tameside - Subs to Anti Fraud Network - Worcs City	2,000
Technical Pollution Work - Worcs City	7,500
Contaminated Land Work - Worcs City	3,250
Planning Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch	91,908
Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch	27,121
	<u><u>1,198,508</u></u>
<b>Grant Income</b>	
Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	3,500
	<u><u>3,500</u></u>
<b>Other Income</b>	
Stray Dog Income	56,094
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal & Admin Support	15,978
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	5,500
Planning Support Work	8,490
Contaminated Land Work	7,398
PPC Work	811
Primary Authority work	0
Pest Control - Bath & North East Somerset Council	
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	6,986
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	3,250
	<u><u>104,506</u></u>
<b>Total Income Apr - June 24</b>	<u><u>1,306,514</u></u>
<b>2024/25 Base Budget from Partners</b>	<b>-1,024,406</b>
<b>Total Income Excluding Budget</b>	<b>282,108</b>

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## WRS Board

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

### Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 1 2024/5

<b>Recommendation</b>	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.
<b>Background</b>	The detail of the report focuses on the first quarter of 2024/5, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.
<b>Contribution to Priorities</b>	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.
<b>Report</b>	<p><b>Activity Data</b></p> <p>The overall number of food related cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is 20% lower than the same period in 2022/23 but 14% higher than 2023/24. The service tends to receive a greater number of enquiries, for example requests for advice from businesses, compared with true food complaints. Of the 112 complaints handled during the year to date, 70% have related to issues with food products (such as poor-quality food or food containing a foreign object) and 30% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices at food businesses.</p> <p>Of the 366 programmed interventions undertaken during the year to date, only 2% have resulted in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). A higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continue to be issued to the takeaway sector and small retailers.</p> <p>The overall number of Health and Safety cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is 15% lower than the same period in 2022/23 but 19% higher than in 2023/24. Just over 40% of cases have been reports of accidents in workplaces with most cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the</p>



public. The most common cause of accidents continues to be slips, trips and falls (whether on the same level or from height).

Members should be aware that the duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 are divided between the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities, so WRS only undertakes investigations at premises within the local remit such as retail outlets, offices, leisure services, and hospitality premises. Other premises, such as factories, farms, and medical premises, fall with the remit of the HSE. Although local authority premises are regarded as lower risk for this function, our officers still deal with fatalities from time to time and, sadly Q1 say another one come onto our books.

The overall number of dog-related cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is a reduction of 2% compared to 2022/23 but a reduction of 22% compared to 2023/24. Complaints and enquiries for Q1 was similar to last year, but above the figure in 2022/3. At 302, stray and lost dogs is well below last year's Q1 figure and slightly below Q1 in 2022/3. Reports of lost or stray dogs make up around 85% of the total volume of dog-related cases, with categorised as "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by members of the public). There has, however, been a notable increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination, which comes at a cost to the local authority if the owner is not traced. Approximately 60% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners although this figure is known to vary between local authorities.

The service only receives a modest number of dog control complaints and enquiries each quarter. Of the 17 complaints received during the year to date, 11 cases have related to dogs which are persistently straying from residential properties. Dangerous or out-of-control dogs are generally referred to local policing colleagues.

In Licensing, the overall number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is close to the level in 2022/23 but an 11% higher than last year, 2023/24. The seasonal increase in applications occurred in Q1, as a significant number of hospitality businesses apply for Temporary Events during the summer months has appeared again. This may represent the popularity of such events and the fact that businesses see them as a good source of income. Around 60% of cases entered on the system so far this year are applications and registrations with 31% being temporary event notices and 28% relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicles.

Beyond these, the service tends to receive a higher number of enquiries (such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions) than true complaints about licensed activities. Based on the 198 actual complaints received during the year to date, 54% of cases have related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards) and 18% have related to alcohol licensing (allegation of businesses breaching the licensing objectives). A further 13% of complaints have related to animal licensing with most cases relating to allegations of the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.



Planning support work continues on an upward trend, with Q1 figures slightly exceeding those at the same point in the previous 2 years. The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is an 20% higher than 2022/23 but only 2% above the same period in 2023/24. Around 88% of cases have been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, and nuisance; whilst 1 in 5 cases have been processed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of local authorities outside of the County.

Pollution cases followed their usual trend as members will see from the graph, with increasing numbers as we moved from Spring and into Summer. However, in terms of numbers, cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 was 29% lower than the same period in 2022/23 23% lower than in 2023/24. This is almost certainly down to the poor weather during the Spring and early part of the summer this year. Reports of public health elements related to nuisance, accumulations and pest infestations, were at a similar level in Q1 to the same period in the previous 2-years.

Just under 90% of cases are allegations of potential statutory nuisances, with most relating to noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or noise from loud music). Anecdotally, officers report an increase in the levels of complaint about noise from hospitality businesses, and other sources of complaint include smoke from domestic bonfires, and dust from construction sites.

## Performance

As always, reporting against the suite of indicators is more limited for the first quarter. The non-business customer measure at 60% is lower compared with 69.3% at this time last year and around the same as the 60.4% at year-end for 2023/4. Speed of response, the time taken to deal with the issue and the overall outcome remain things to improve, although the last of these may relate to people's expectations being beyond what the law can deliver. The proportion of people who felt better equipped going forward at 50% is lower than the 68.8% at this time last year but above the 46.7% for the previous year. A lower score here is generally reflective of a lower score in overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction for business customers remains good at 98.3%, above this figure at the same point last year and above the outrun at the end of Q4. Managers said that they would keep an eye on this figure as the drop at the end of 2023/4 was difficult to explain, so hopefully this is a sign of returning to business as usual.

We report overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses at this point in the year, without the district breakdown. 98.7% of businesses subject to intervention were graded 3 stars to 5 stars on the hygiene rating scheme.

Compliments outnumber complaints significantly, with the figure currently 15 to 5.

Staff sickness is at 1.13 days per FTE, is slightly above the previous 3-year's figures for this period (0.76, 0.9, 0.87 respectively) and above the 0.85 days per FTE from the same period in 2019, pre-pandemic. It is still



close to the normal range. Almost 62% of absence for this period was classed as long-term (29+ days,) accounted for by two officers, one of whom is having treatment for cancer. The other has now returned to work now.

**Contact Points**

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Mark.Cox@worcsregservices.gov.uk

**Background Papers**

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



**Appendix B: Performance Indicators 2024/5**

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	60			
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	98.3			
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.7	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>		Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 <sup>st</sup> April each year	Annually	1.3	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>	1.5	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA		NA	
6 % of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service Number of vehicles found to be defective by district and the percentage this represents of the fleet county-wide	6-monthly	NA		NA	



7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	50			
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	5/15			
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	1.13 days per FTE			
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>	NA	Bromsgrove Malvern Hills Redditch Worcester City Wychavon Wyre Forest <b>Worcestershire</b>
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA		NA	



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



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Worcestershire  
**Regulatory Services**

*Supporting and protecting you*

# Activity Report | 2024-25



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



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



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[www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)



**Worcester**  
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
*good services, good value*



**Wyre Forest**  
District Council

# Foreword

Written by Simon Wilkes (Director of Regulatory Services)

Welcome to the first Activity Report of 2024/5. We retain the usual format that members will have seen for some years. The most obvious addition, which will include more detail as we go forward relates to the page on planning and enviro-crime enforcement, which Bromsgrove and Redditch added to their partnership requirements formally.

So far in 2024/5 planning support and health and safety at work activities are both on-trend. Stray dog complaints are down on Q4 last year but higher than the previous two Q1 figures. Stray dog numbers are slightly up on the last Q4 figures, but below the same previous last year. Food safety complaints are on trend and of the 366 food interventions in Q1, only 2% yielded a Food Hygiene Rating Scheme score of 2 or less, showing the vast majority of inspected premises continue to perform well.

Information requests remain at high levels, although currently not matched by increases in planning support related activity, which we have often suggested as a driver of these. Anecdotally, managers believe that there is an increase in FOI and subject access requests under data protection requirements.

In Licensing, we have seen a slightly above average level of applications for Q1. It is possible, with competition for custom, that businesses are trying to get their summer event offers out earlier than previous years. Complaints and enquiries for licensing were similarly a high-average compared to previous years, less than 2 years ago but higher than last year.

For pollution and nuisance related work, the year started slowly with moderate levels of complaint, most likely because of the poor spring weather, so whilst numbers were up on the previous Q4, they did not reach levels seen in the two previous Q1 periods. Public Health related complaint work, linked to nuisance, like accumulations was on trend for the period.

We hope you find the content information and, as ever please contact myself or the three Team Managers if you have any other queries.

Many Thanks



Simon

# Community Environmental Health

Written by David Mellors (Environmental Health And Trading Standards Manager)

## Quarter One

The routine food hygiene intervention programme continued with support from our contractors. The recruitment process for the 5 new food safety officers agreed by the Board commenced to support this work. This is a key priority as we not only have our 2024-2025 businesses to inspect but also some 600 existing and new premises outstanding from 2023-2024. The latter have been risk assessed to ensure that we focus resources on the highest risk businesses.

Compliance continues to be very high with over 90% of premises achieving Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS) scores for of Level 4-5. Level 3 is considered to demonstrate that premises are broadly compliant with the law, so these premises exceed the statutory requirements.

As always officers continue to find poor premises where more formal action is required. One persistently non-compliant premises (a bakery in Malvern) where the food business operator has shown reluctance over an extended period to make the serious improvements needed is currently going through the formal legal process. Officers also investigated chocolate Easter eggs at a major retailer that were found to have been nibbled by mice. Work is ongoing to bring these premises into compliance.

The aggregators (Just Eat, Deliveroo etc) now remove businesses with very poor scores from their platforms. Consequently, those poor performers wishing to partner with them tend to improve quickly and often pay for a re-rating. Getting a good FHRS score is a key driver to compliance. There are also early signs that numbers of new premises may be on an upward trend with more mobile and home-based traders registering with us. Indeed, the seemingly never-ending coffee shop openings continue, although we may now be at saturation point as several have also closed. The business closures reported appear to be mostly down to increased costs of staff, food, and energy.

We were also involved in two national initiatives in Quarter one.

- The Food Standards Agency's continuing national E Coli investigation. Worcestershire has several growers who supply the major sandwich producers and have been identified as the possible source. All the Worcestershire businesses involved have co-operated fully in providing the information requested.
- A traceability exercise on imported meat products led by the National Food Crime Unit. We worked closely with Trading Standards colleagues at the County Council on the latter as it often involved poor labelling. It is a legal requirement that food is labelled in English. In one case officers had to use an interpreter as none of the items found could be identified. The operation led to food being removed from the market.

A considerable amount of officer time was spent working with UKHSA (UK Health Security Agency) in an investigation into a Cryptosporidium outbreak at a farm in Worcestershire which received extensive media coverage. The number of reported cases ran into the hundreds and is said to be the largest known outbreak of its type. As this is also a working farm your officers had to work closely with the Health & Safety Executive on enforcement issues.

Officers also dealt with over 200 food complaints and enquiries about food premises and issued 23 Export Certificates.

In statutory nuisance work, an Abatement Notice was served on a public house in May under the Environmental Protection Act for noise from outdoor music events, and a noisy cockerel was put before the courts! Preliminary meetings were held for events including summer music festivals, and officers worked with event organisers for a previously controversial bank holiday event as well as preparation for the Christmas light switch on in Worcester.

Complex health and safety investigations continued, with your Officers attending the inquest into the death of a participant in a charity boxing event, and a dog sledging accident investigation was concluded .

# Licensing

Written by Kiran Lahel (Licensing And Support Services Manager)

## Quarter One

On the whole there was a slight downward trajectory in licensing enquiries at the start of the quarter which is not dissimilar to other years at Q1 where this tends to be the calmer period between Christmas and summer queries. The team however have continued to remain busy due to other priorities which have namely taken the shape of policy matters that have required significant input from the teams.

At the beginning of April, it was announced that the Pavement Licencing Scheme that was originally introduced during the covid pandemic under the Business and Planning Act 2020 were to be made permanent as of the 31st March 2024 by provisions made in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This has therefore involved the team putting together a new pavement licensing policy based on the new legislation for each district council and presenting the new policy to all licensing committees or similar with a recommendation to consult on each policy for implementation. In the meantime the team are continuing with the temporary scheme until such decisions are made.

A review of the Taxi Standards that were implemented by all district councils in 2022 highlighted the need to make safeguarding training for all taxi drivers mandatory. As part of the initial changes a mandatory requirement for all NEW drivers to undertake the competency certificate was introduced. This is a thorough training session looking at all aspects that are required for a taxi driver to do their role including equalities, safeguarding, communication, driver conduct and responsibilities. The feedback from drivers has remained positive and valuable but showed a uneven playing field with half of drivers now trained and others not. As a result, officers have presented reports to all district councils recommending that all drivers undertake safeguarding training and undertake refresher training every three years.

Members Training commenced across all districts in June with officers providing training to new and established members of the committee. A new interactive format has been welcomed by members and has allowed different scenarios to be played out through role play and videos which has allowed a multitude of different questions asked by councillors to get themselves ready for the role.

During the pandemic, an operation commenced to look at illegal dog breeding across Worcestershire and the results clearly brought to light the amount of people that were unlicensed and illegally selling dogs across the County. As a result, various teams across WRS including Licensing, the intelligence unit and the Dog Warden service have worked together to educate, communicate and monitor complaints in order to reduce this number in the long term. Earlier this year a second operation commenced through the intelligence team and again they identified there still to be a large number of potential illegal dog breeding cases across the County. Although it had reduced since the first operation the numbers still signified a problem and as a result licensing officers are now investigating a number of cases that will either result in licence applications being submitted, warning letters distributed, or enforcement action being taken.

Finally, the team have been working with Technical Services and the Intelligence team on introducing a new triage process for calls and queries. Licensing remains the service with the highest volume of call and queries to the duty desk. As a result, some of these queries are referred to a licensing technical officer but could be answered by the duty officer team. Both teams have been working together to establish a set of processes that the duty officers can use to enable them to efficiently navigate through the questions/queries they receive daily. The intelligence team have highlighted from information and data collected which areas of licensing form the largest numbers of queries in order to aid prioritisation.

# Technical Services

Written by Mark Cox (Technical Services Manager)

## Quarter One

Our Air Quality work continued to work at pace. As well as drafting and submission of 6 Annual Status Reports by the team for all 6 Districts, a draft Air Quality Action Plan for Worcester City successfully navigated through Worcester City Council Committees. A behaviour change survey, jointly developed with Public Health also closed and the results stated to be analysed. Initial steering group meetings with key stakeholders were held for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest District Council's in order to produce a draft Air Quality Action Plan for both by November 2024. Our AQ Behaviour Change work also has began to pick up pace starting with lots of contact with schools some of which have led to visits.

During this period the draft Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for Redditch Borough Council was finalised. This updated strategy reviews and replaces the 2001 document taking account of changes in the Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance 2012, national policy, council policy, and sets out the Council's strategic approach to review and assessment of contaminated land. The document is due to go to RBC committee in October 2024. The strategies for the other districts will follow on the back of this draft.

Although contract work for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) came to an end during April 2024 we continued to offer contracted support to Gloucester City Council (GCC), East Staffordshire (ESBC) and North Warwickshire Borough Council's (NWBC) as well as the six Worcestershire districts. This often involves reviewing complex reports provided in support of planning applications and discharge of planning condition requests. We are asked to comment on the whole range of planning applications, large and small, including residential developments, commercial, infrastructure projects, solar farms, industrial processes, extensions, change of use, conversion of buildings and any other development where contamination may be a relevant consideration.

Interesting cases to note include the demolition and redevelopment of Bromsgrove Fire Station, a fuel depot in Gloucester City and an old farm near Pinvin all for various uses including residential development.

Routine Industrial Permitting work including inspection of large industrial processes, foundries and casting through to cement processing and petrol stations all continued. No significant issues arisen apart from continuing complaints against a large manufacturing facility in the Gloucester area.

As of April 2024, the current 2 remaining COVID Advisors are continuing to assist with the Homes for Ukraine scheme along with a principal officer managing the scheme in Bromsgrove and Redditch. Throughout Q1 significant effort have been dedicated to school and college registrations, the support workers have been working with education officers and Ukrainian guest with the registration process, applications, references and have accompanied several students to college open evenings; also supported parent with worries about school documentation, attended school meeting and helped rectify any issues that arose.

In April the Homes for Ukraine team had a meeting with an external Mental Health team to discuss some complex issues and best ways to deal with them, and in May we met with the wider Redditch Council Housing Team to build a relationship and discuss the best approach on how we can work together to support our guests on the scheme. As usual team have continued to support 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. There were 2 new arrivals in Bromsgrove and 10 new arrivals in Redditch.

This first quarter of the new financial year is always busy from an IT development perspective as we prepare and submit most of our government returns. Over the quarter 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 also worked to enhance service delivery, with these activities including regular updates and patches to our main back office system, record retention and deletions. We also offered PAT testing for all electrical equipment located in our offices and for remote working equipment. We are obliged to complete this every 2 years. Work on Service-wide projects has also continued including the Automation Project and introduction of Taxi digital Identity records. We have continued income generation work with Bromsgrove and Redditch Planning, Worcestershire Trading Standards, and Tewkesbury Borough Council's Environmental Health and Licensing.



# Dog Control

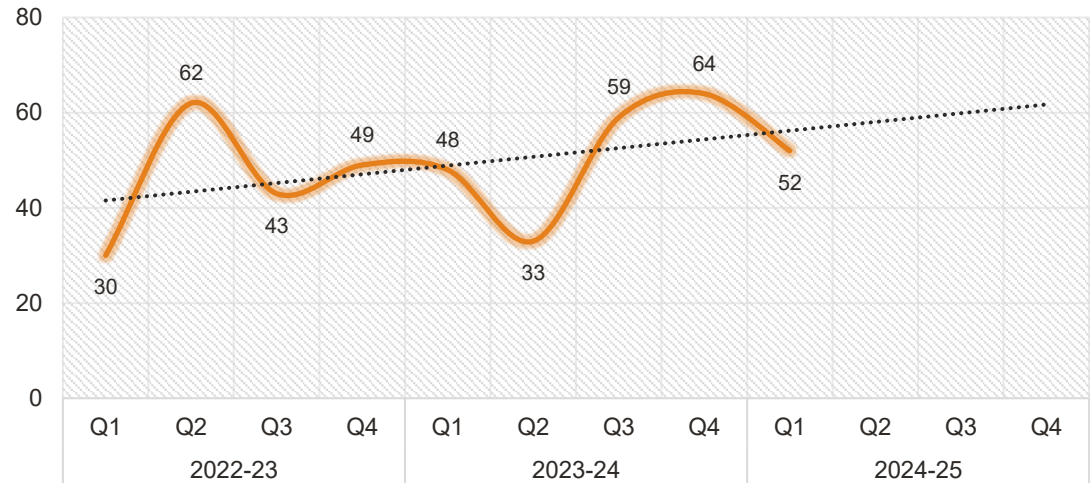
The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (complaints, enquiries, and reports of lost or stray dogs) handled by the service. Complaints received by WRS include reports of dangerous dogs, reports of dog fouling, and reports of dogs persistently straying. Complaints relating to the welfare of dogs, however, are investigated by the RSPCA and West Mercia Police unless the dog is found to be straying.

## Comments

The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is a reduction of 2% compared to 2022/23 but a reduction of 22% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 85% of cases have been reports of lost or stray dogs with most cases categorised as "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by members of the public). There has, however, been a notable increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Approximately 60% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners although this figure is known to vary between local authorities.

In general terms, the service receives a low number of dog control complaints and enquiries each quarter. Based on the 17 complaints received during the year to date, 11 cases have related to dogs which are persistently straying from residential properties.

Complaints and Enquiries



Reports of Lost or Stray Dogs



# Food Safety

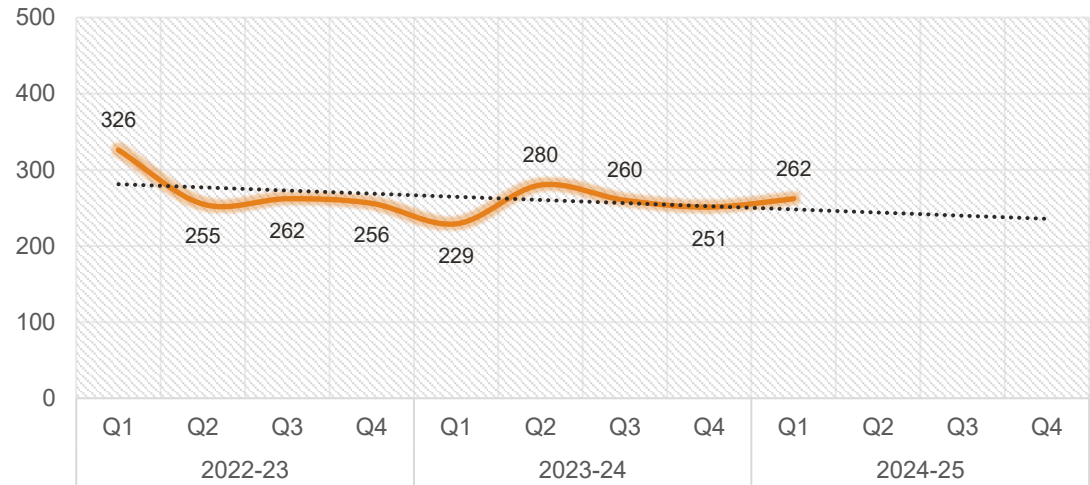
The data on this page outlines the number of food safety cases (complaints, enquiries, and notifications) received by the service and the number of food safety interventions undertaken at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Complaints handled by WRS relate to food products and premises, however, complaints regarding the composition and labelling of food (including allergen labelling) are primarily investigated by Trading Standards. Enquiries handled by the WRS include requests for business advice, requests for hygiene ratings, and requests for export health certificates which are required by businesses seeking to export food to Northern Ireland, the European Union, and non-EU countries.

## Comments

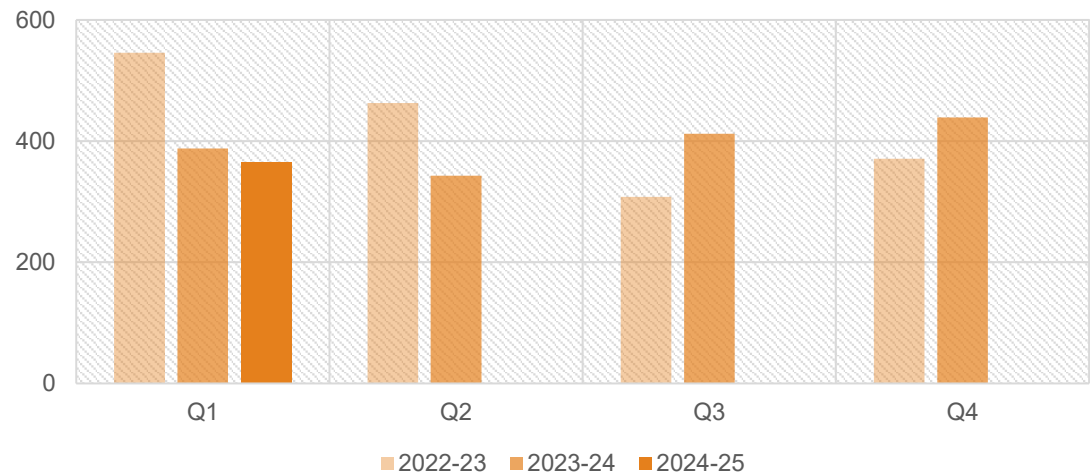
The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is a reduction of 20% compared to 2022/23 but an increase of 14% compared to 2023/24. The service tends to receive a greater number of enquiries than complaints. Based on the 112 complaints handled during the year to date, 70% have related to issues with food products (such as poor quality food or food containing a foreign object) and 30% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices at food businesses.

Based on the 366 interventions undertaken during the year to date, 2% have resulted in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). A higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continue to be issued to the takeaway sector and small retailers. To find out more about food hygiene ratings, please visit <https://ratings.food.gov.uk>.

Complaints and Enquiries



FHRS Interventions

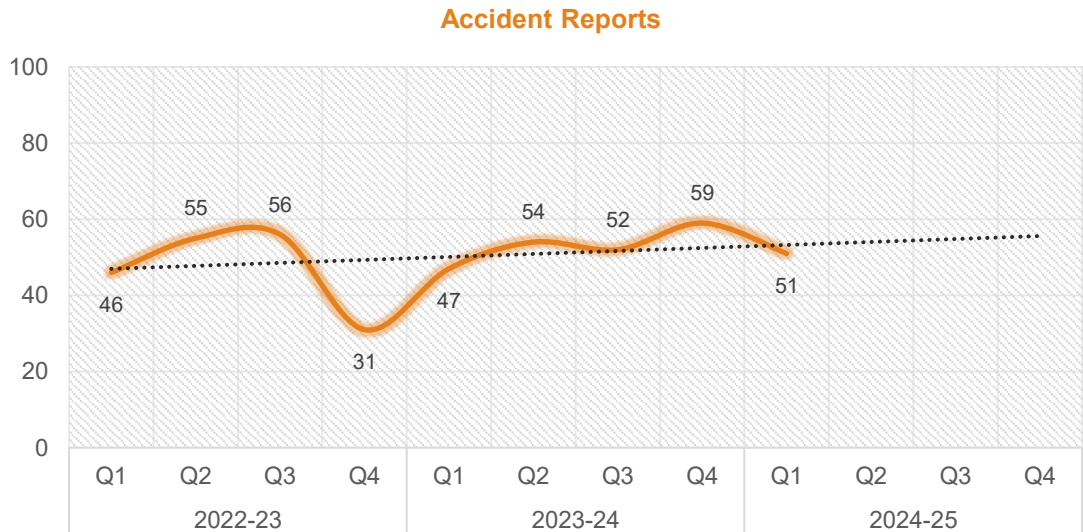
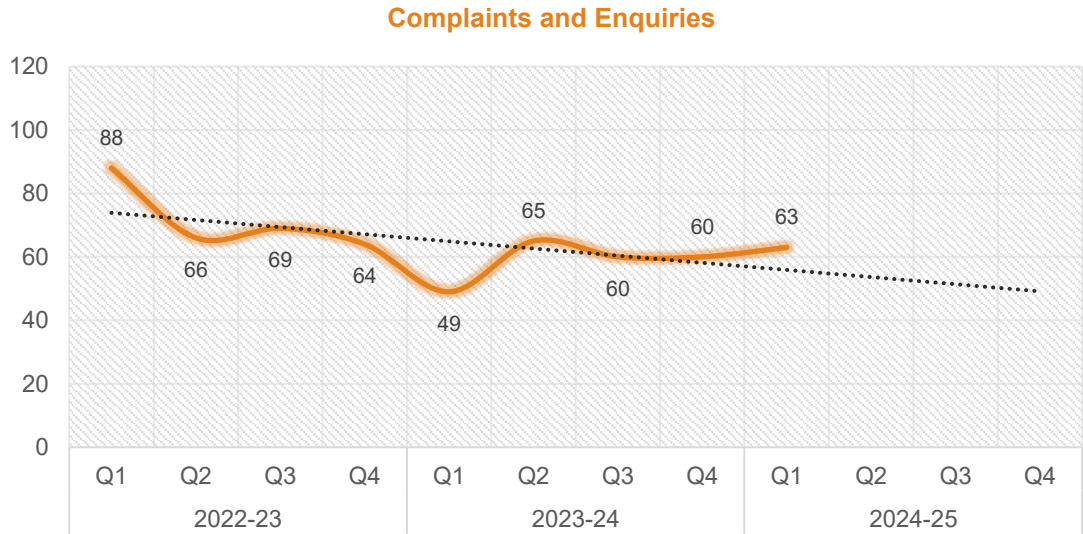


# Health & Safety

The data on this page outlines the number of health and safety cases (complaints, enquiries, and reports of accidents in the workplace) received by the service. Investigations are only undertaken by WRS where they relate to premises such as retail outlets, offices, leisure services, hospitality premises, and cosmetology premises. Other premises, such as factories and medical premises, fall with the remit of the Health and Safety Executive.

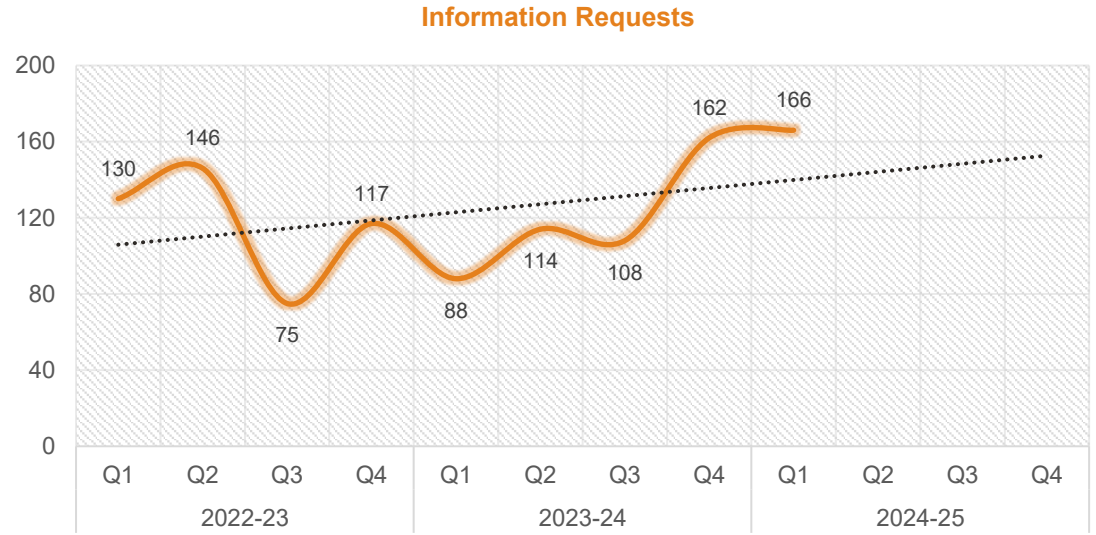
## Comments

The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is a reduction of 15% compared to 2022/23 but an increase of 19% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 41% of cases have been reports of accidents in workplaces with most cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. The most common cause of accidents continues to be slips, trips and falls (whether on the same level or from height).



# Information Requests

The data on this page outlines the number of information requests received by the service. Requests for information are generally received from the public, or private sector companies, and are made under the Environmental Information Regulations, Freedom of Information Act, or General Data Protection Regulations (commonly known as Subject Access Requests). Requests for information are also received from other local authorities or law enforcement agencies and are made under the Data Protection Act (for the prevention and detection of crime or in connection with legal proceedings).



# Licensing

The data on this page outlines the number of licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and registrations) received by the service. Complaints handled by WRS can relate to licenced and unlicensed activitiy, however, cases generally relate to the following areas:

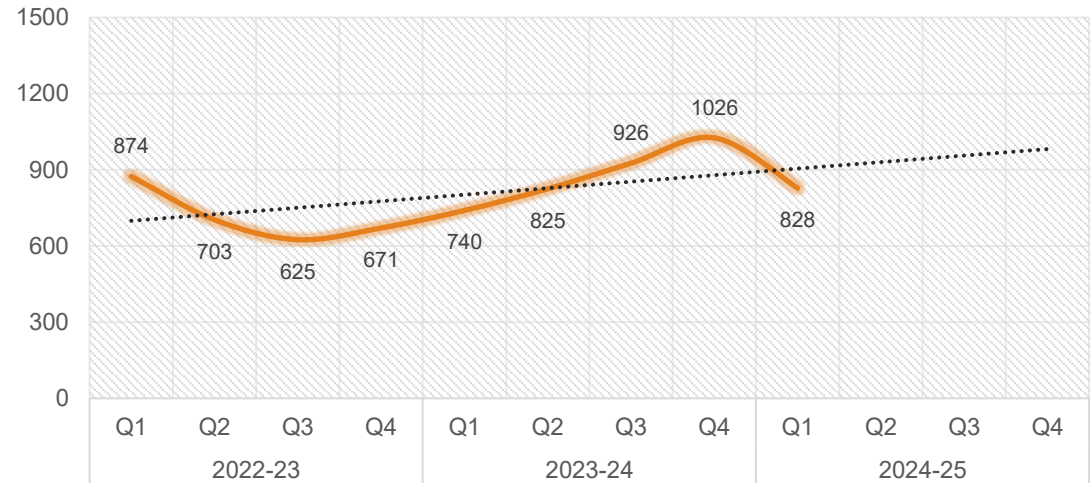
- Alcohol and Entertainment
- Animals
- Caravans
- Gambling
- Scrap Metal
- Sex Establishments
- Skin Piercing
- Street Trading, Amenities, and Collections
- Taxis

## Comments

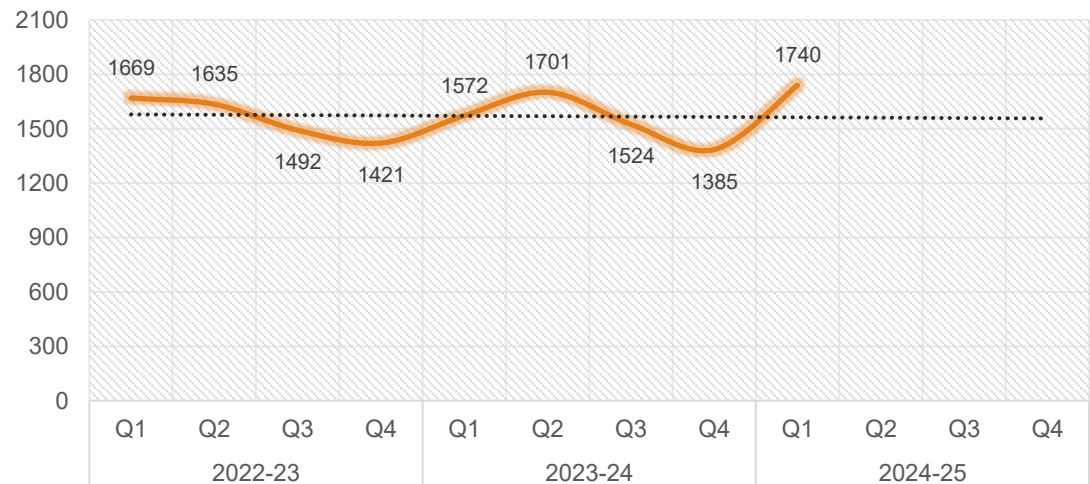
The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is an increase of 1% compared to 2022/23 but an increase of 11% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 60% of cases have been applications and registrations with 31% being temporary event notices and 28% relating to private hire or hackney carriage vehicles.

In general terms, the service receives a higher number of enquiries (such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions) compared to complaints. Based on the 198 complaints received during the year to date, 54% of cases have related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards) and 18% have related to alcohol licensing (businesss breaching the lciensing objectives). A further 13% of complaints have related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.

## Complaints and Enquiries



## Applications and Registrations



# Planning

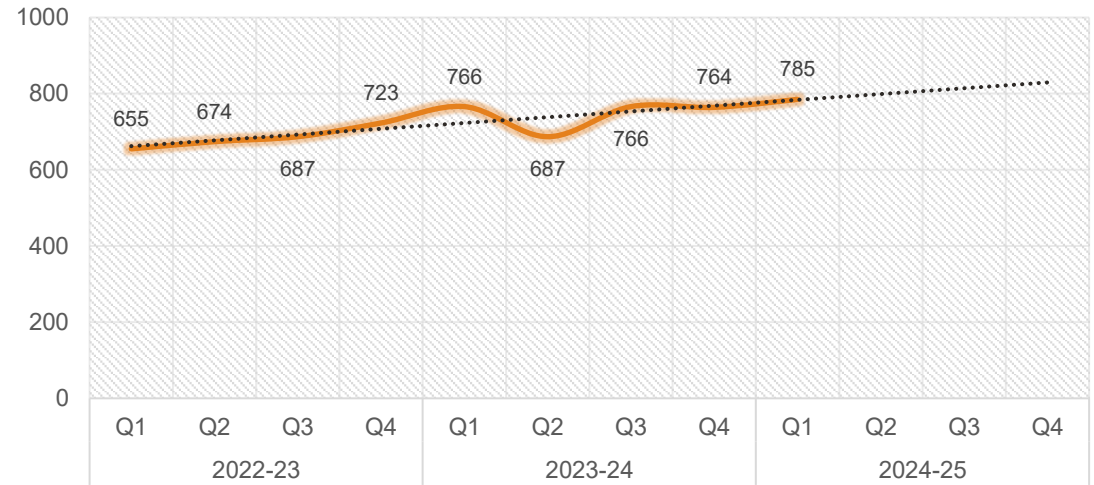
The data on this page outlines the number of planning enquiries received by the service. Planning enquiries processed by WRS are either consultations or requests to discharge planning conditions, however, enquiries only relate to the following areas:

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

## Comments

The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is an increase of 20% compared to 2022/23 and an increase of 2% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 88% of cases have been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, and nuisance; whilst 1 in 5 cases have been processed, on a contractual basis, on behalf of other local authorities.

### Planning Enquiries



PLANNING

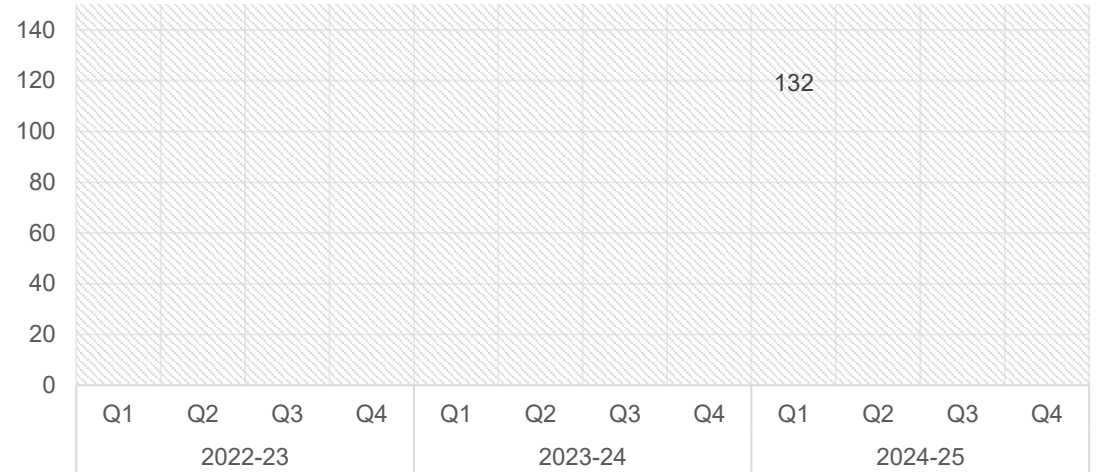
# Planning Enforcement & Enviro-Crime

The data on this page shows the number of planning enforcement and environmental crime cases (complaints and enquiries) received by the service. Complaints handled by WRS include reports of abandoned vehicles, reports of fly-tipping, reports of littering, and planning breaches at residential or commercial premises. The planning enforcement and environmental crime functions are only delivered on behalf of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and have only been within the remit of the service since June 2024.

## Comments

There is currently no comparable temporal data available for the planning enforcement and enviro-crime functions. Based on the 132 complaints recorded during the year to date, 67% have related to reports of fly-tipping and 20% have related to suspected planning breaches at residential properties.

## Complaints and Enquiries



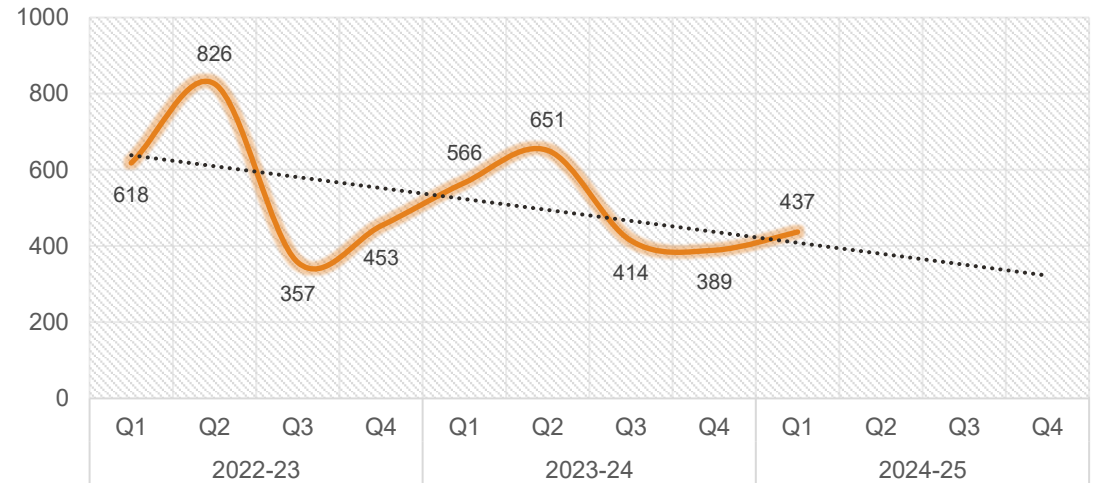
# Pollution

The data on this page outlines the number of pollution cases (complaints and enquiries) received by the service. Complaints handled by WRS include reports of nuisances (noise, light, odour, smoke) originating from domestic, commercial, or agricultural activity and notifications of contamination incidents.

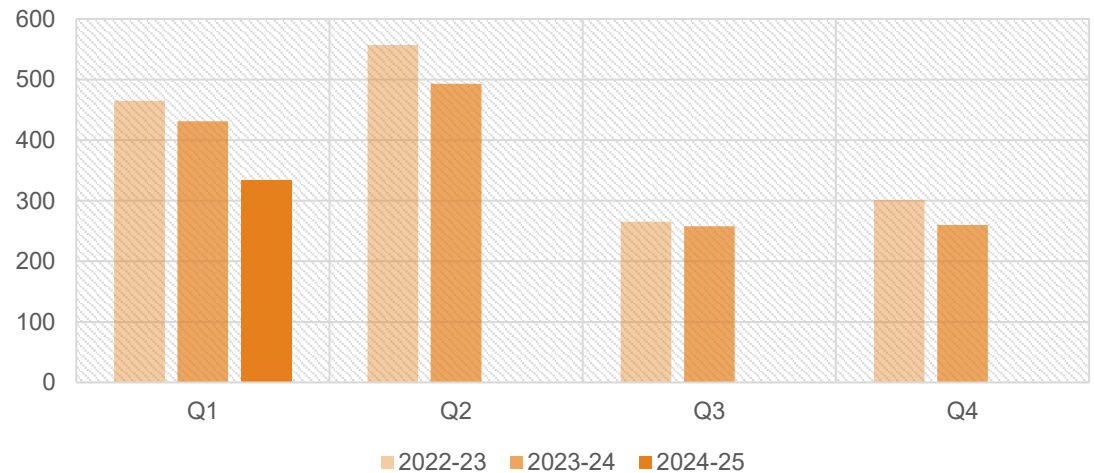
## Comments

The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is a reduction of 29% compared to 2022/23 and a reduction of 23% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 89% of cases have been reports of nuisances with most cases relating to noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or noise from loud music). Other prominent nuisances commonly include noise from hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and dust from construction sites.

### Complaints and Enquiries



### Complaints and Enquiries (Noise Only)

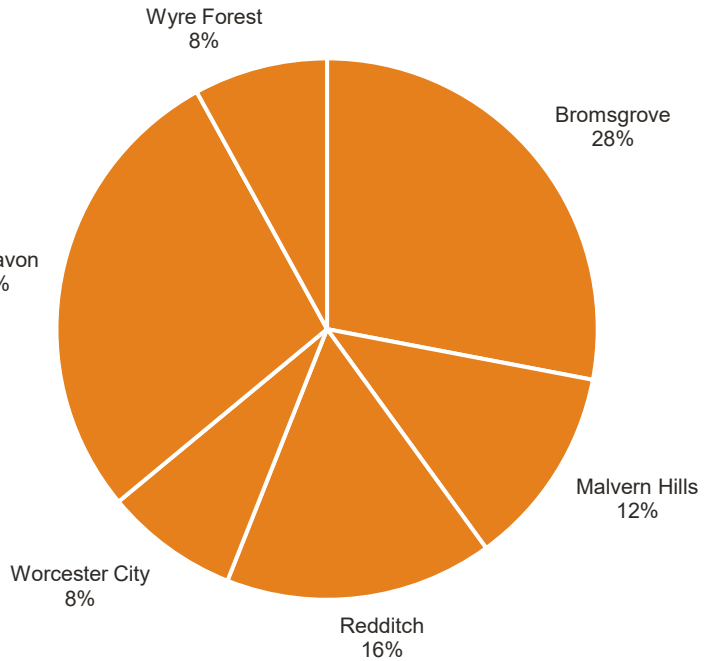




# Noise

The data on this page outlines the wards in Worcestershire which have the highest case rate in terms of noise pollution. It also shows the districts in which these wards are located.

Note: The figures in the table are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. Where a ward is highlighted, it was also one of the top 10 wards featured in the 2023/24 Activity Report.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Barnt Green And Hopwood	11	2,951	3.73
Norton	6	3,876	1.55
Hallow	3	1,941	1.55
Droitwich Central	4	2,621	1.53
Harvington And Norton	4	2,788	1.43
Rock Hill	4	2,970	1.35
Wribbenhall And Arley	7	5,381	1.30
Perryfields	2	1,557	1.28
Cathedral	15	11,760	1.28
Bredon	3	2,645	1.13
Lodge Park	6	5,619	1.07
Warndon	6	5,661	1.06
Honeybourne And Pebworth	3	2,844	1.05
Winyates	8	8,139	0.98
Alvechurch South	3	3,105	0.97
Church Hill	7	7,991	0.88
Bewdley And Rock	7	8,457	0.83
Great Hampton	3	3,677	0.82
Batchley And Brockhill	7	8,930	0.78
Dodderhill	2	2,809	0.71
Catshill North	2	2,912	0.69
Priory	3	4,384	0.68
Pinvin	2	3,168	0.63
Drakes Cross	2	3,202	0.62
Pickersleigh	4	6,447	0.62

# Public Health

The data on this page outlines the number of public health cases (complaints and enquiries) received by the service and the number of subsidised treatments carried out by contractors. Complaints handled by WRS include reports of accumulations and reports of pest due to the activities of local residents or businesses. Pest control treatments are only offered by four districts (Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, and Wychavon) as Worcester City Council and Wyre Forest District Council do not offer a subsidised pest control service.

## Comments

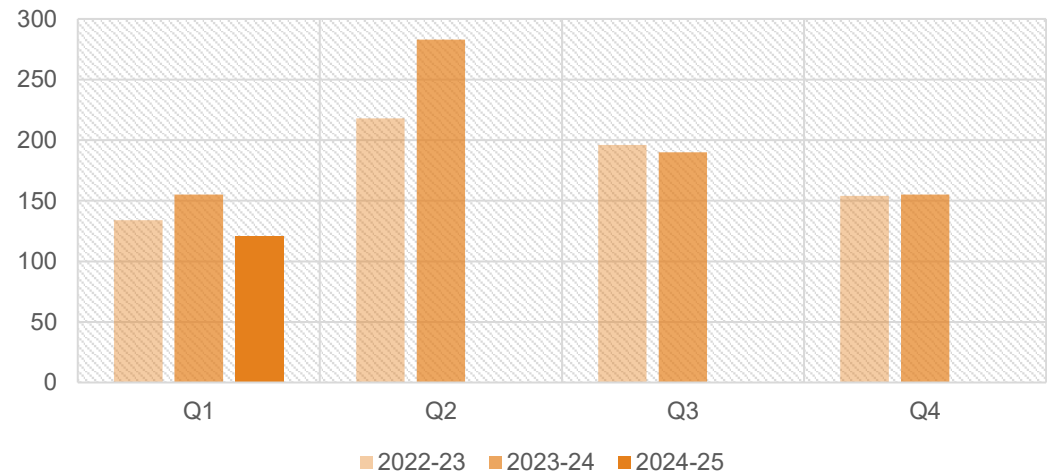
The number of cases received between 1st April 2024 and 30th June 2024 is in line with 2022/23 and a reduction of 5% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 58% of cases have related to pest control such as enquiries about domestic treatments, enquiries about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest activity caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 27% of cases related to accumulations at residential properties which can also include pest control issues.

Based on the 121 domestic treatments undertaken by contractors during the year to date, 61% were due to issues with rats and 47% took place at properties in the Wychavon district.

### Complaints and Enquiries



### Domestic Subsidised Treatments

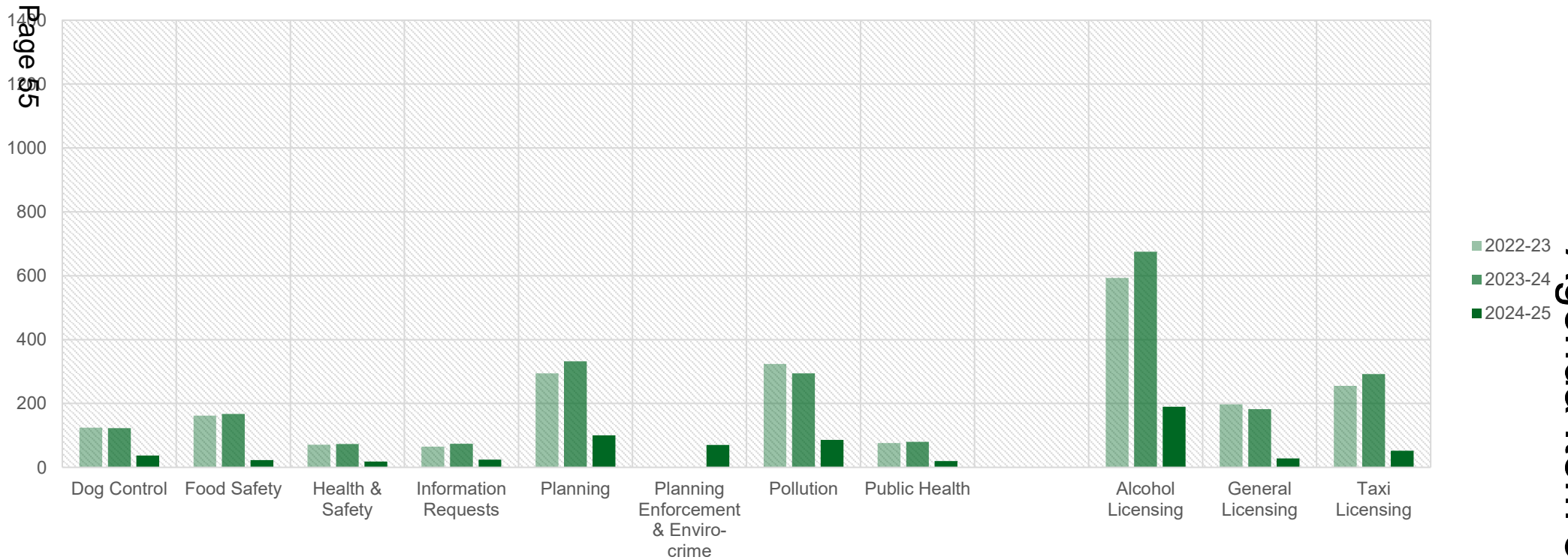
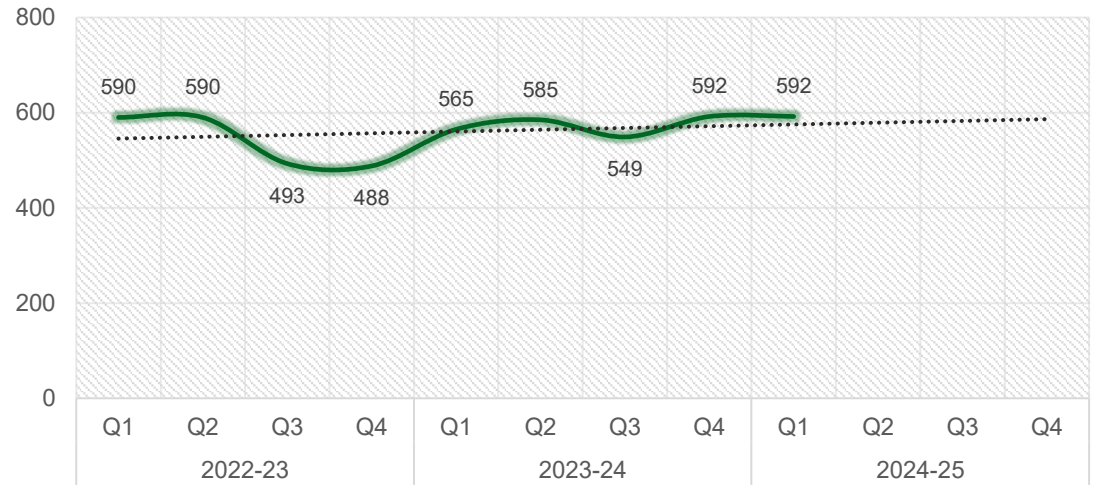


# Bromsgrove

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Bromsgrove district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Bromsgrove District Council

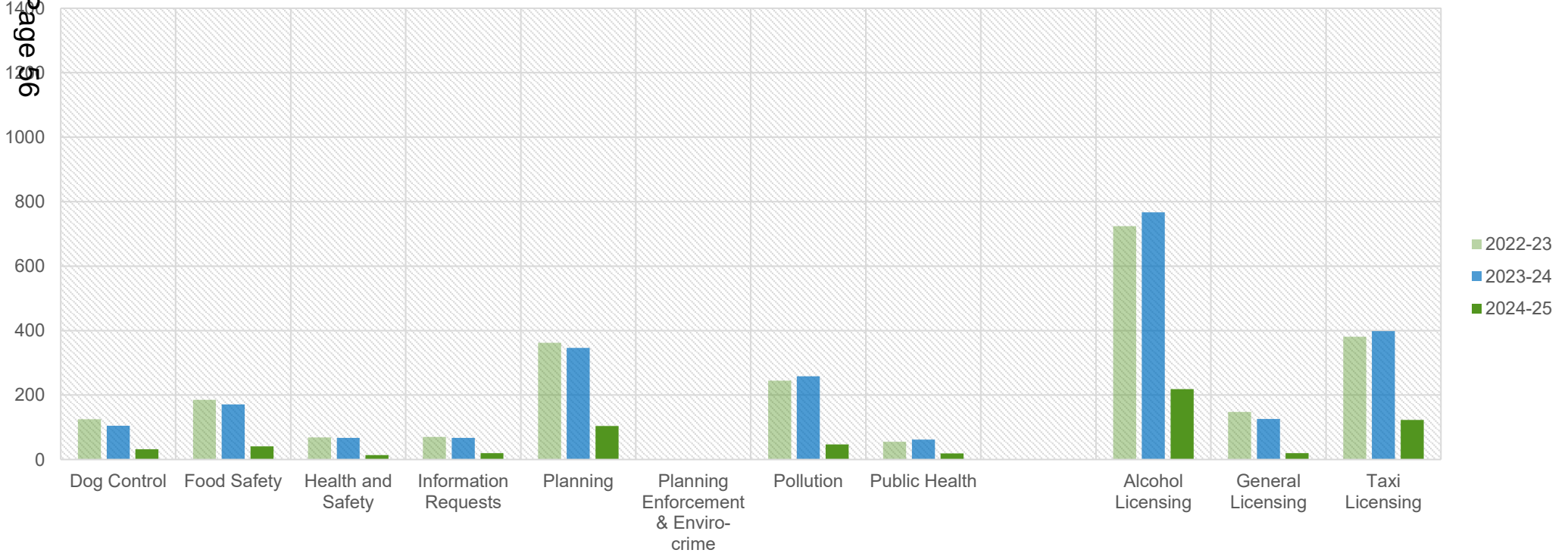
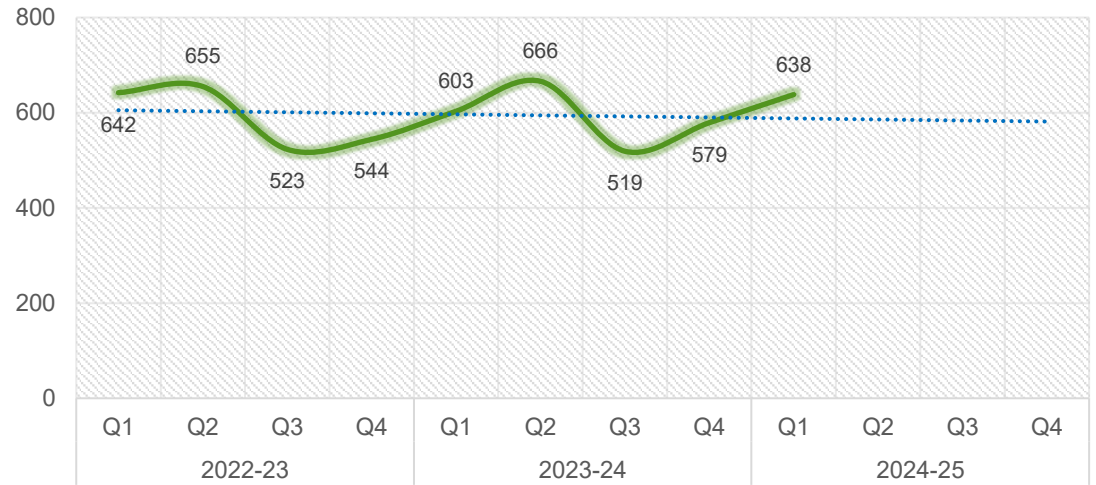


# Malvern Hills

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Malvern Hills district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Malvern Hills District Council

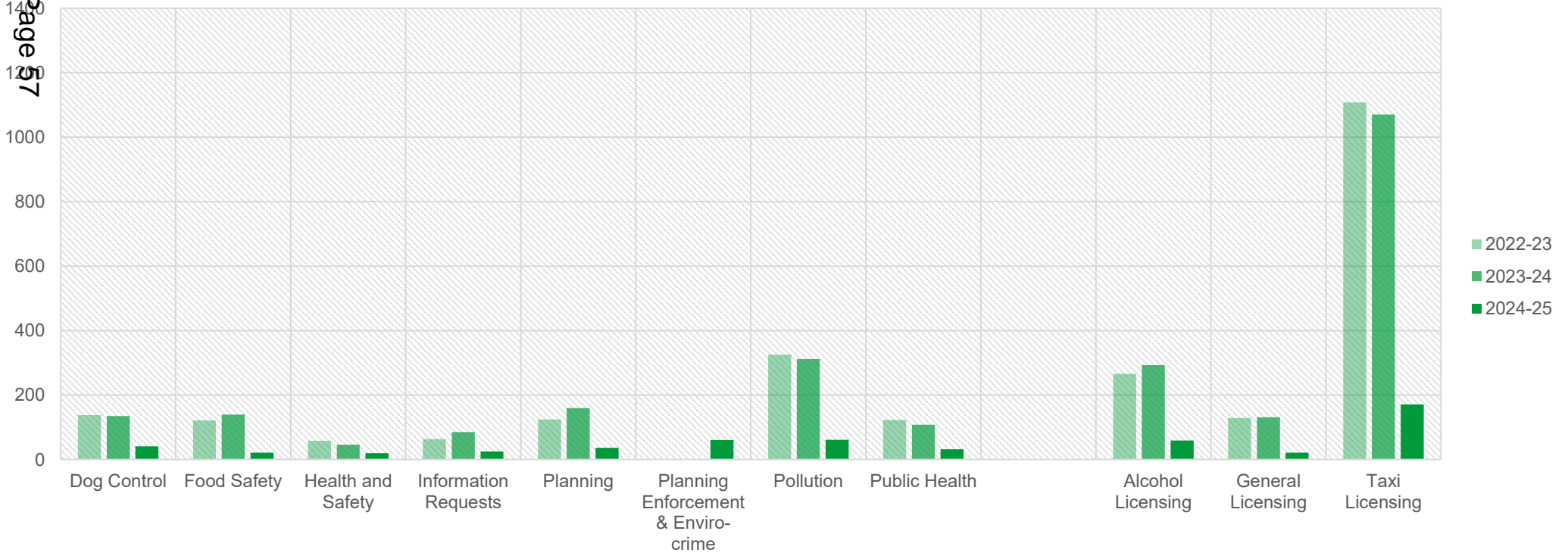


# Redditch

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Redditch district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Redditch Borough Council

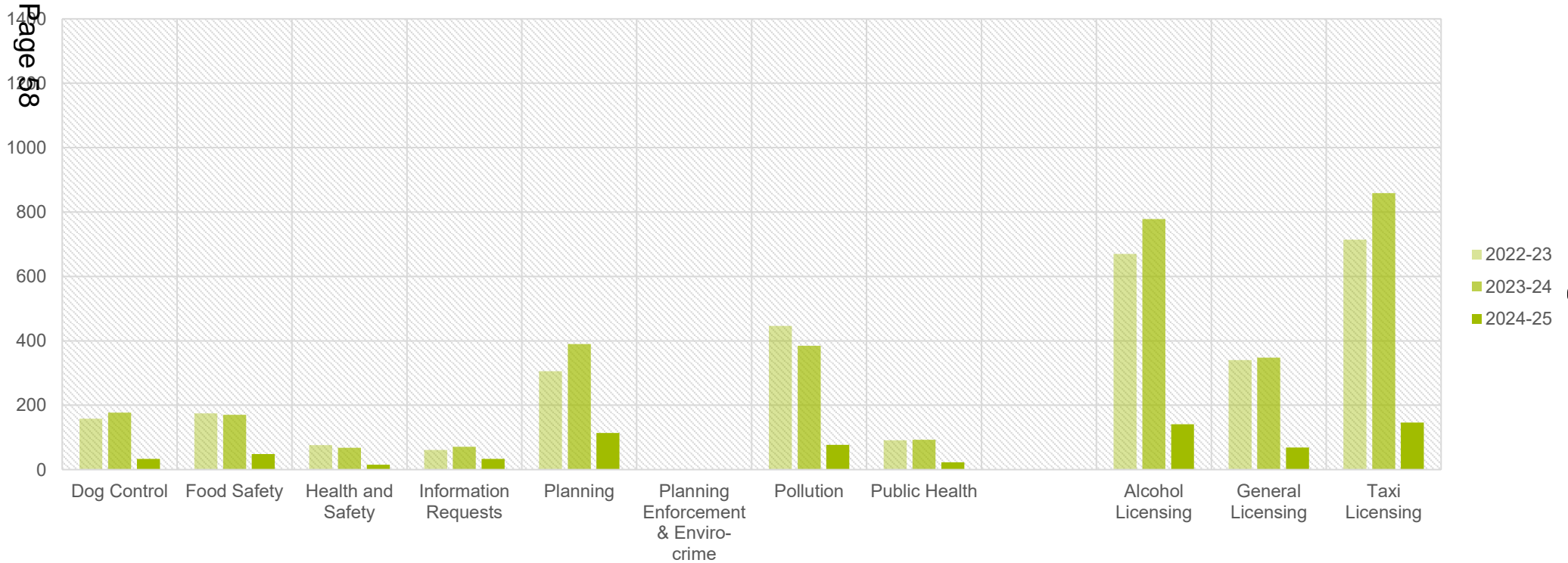


# Worcester City

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Worcester City district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

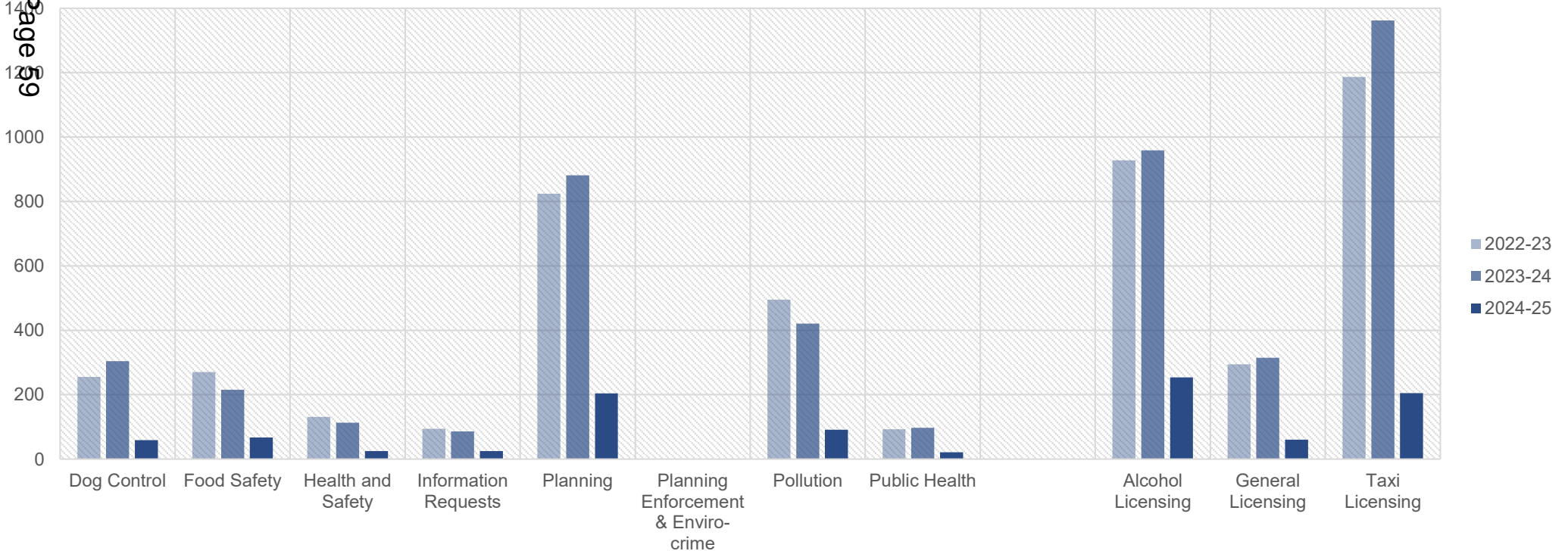
## Worcester City Council



The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Wychavon district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Wychavon District Council

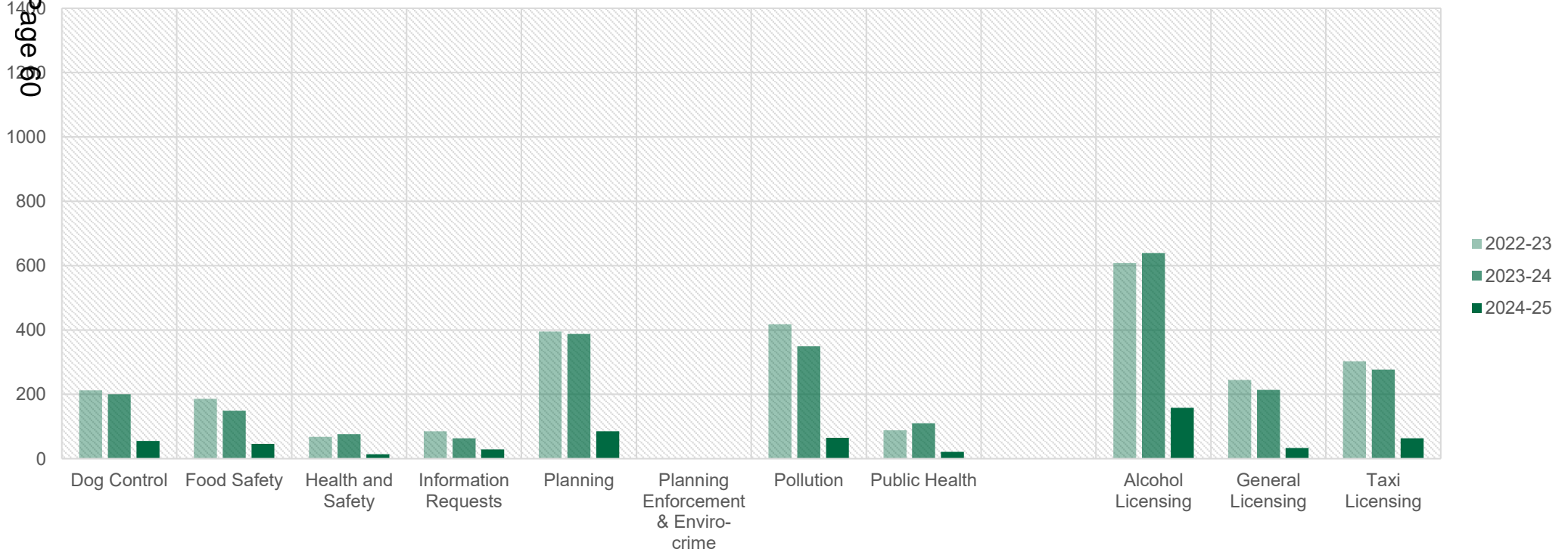
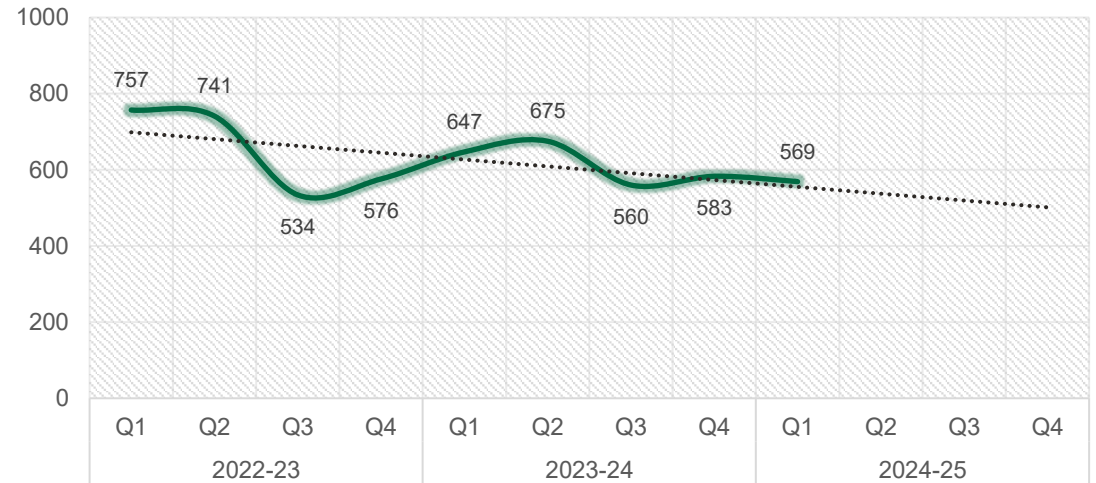


# Wyre Forest

The data on this page outlines the number of Environmental Health and Licensing cases (complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications) received by WRS where the subject or enquirer were located in the Wyre Forest district.

Note: The chart below provides a breakdown of cases by the primary functions undertaken by the service. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2025. The Y axis on this chart has also been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

## Wyre Forest District Council





# Cheltenham

The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (reports of lost or stray dogs) handled by the service on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council.

The dog control work undertaken for the authority 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 renewed in ADD DATE 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.

## Cheltenham Borough Council

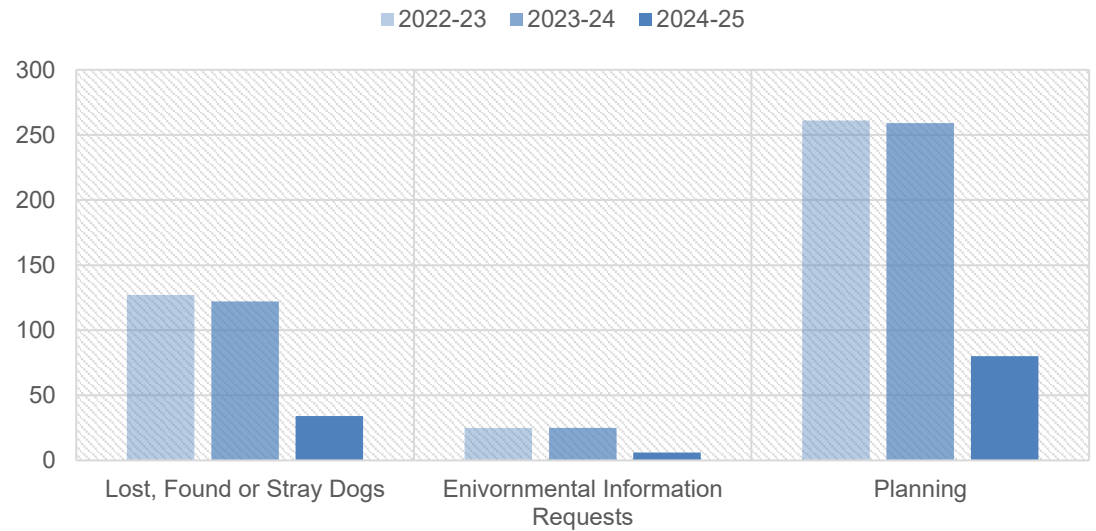
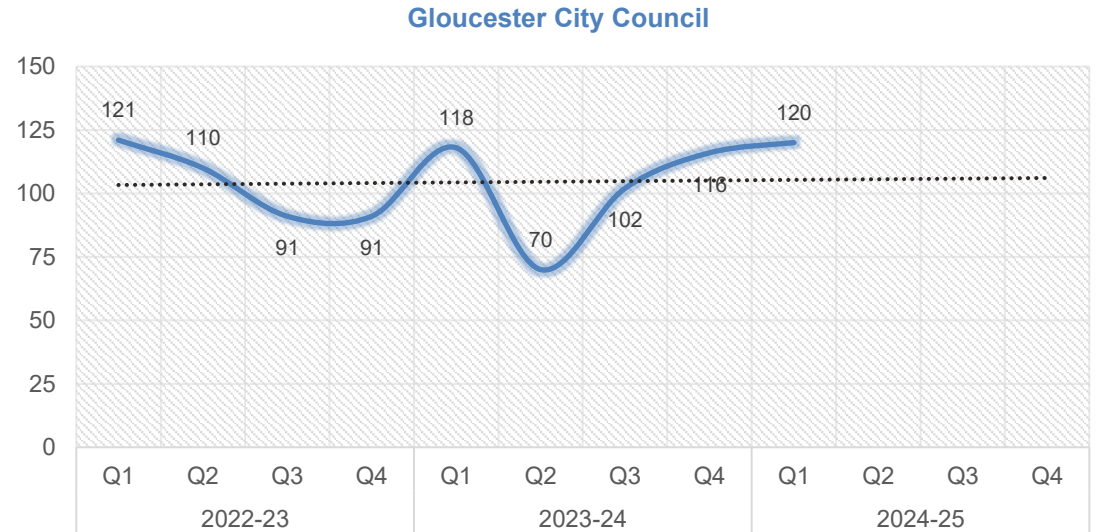


# Gloucester City

The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (reports of lost or stray dogs), environmental information requests, and planning enquiries handled by the service on behalf of Gloucester City Council.

The dog control work undertaken for the authority 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 renewed in ADD DATA 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.

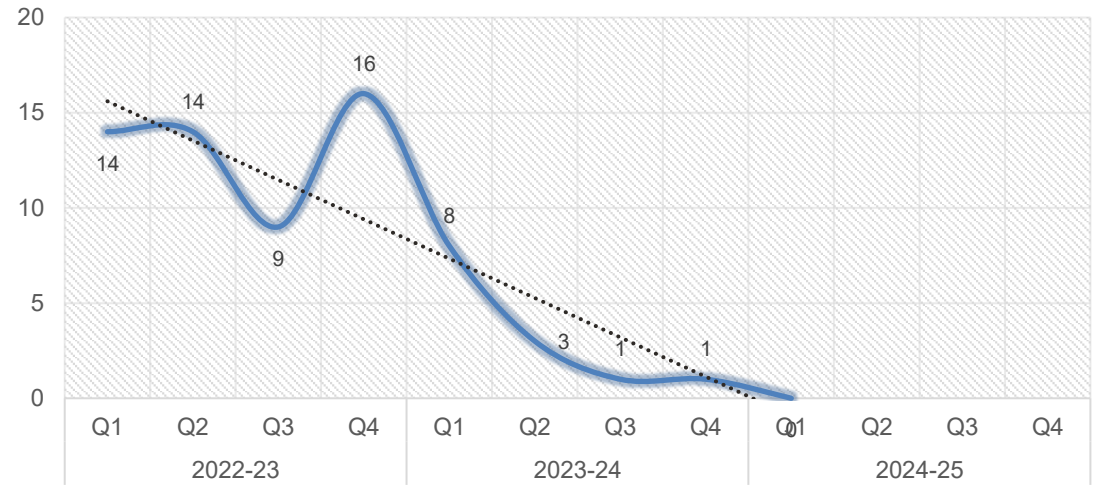


# South Gloucestershire

The data on this page outlines the number of planning enquiries processed by the service on behalf of South Gloucestershire Council.

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

### South Gloucestershire Council



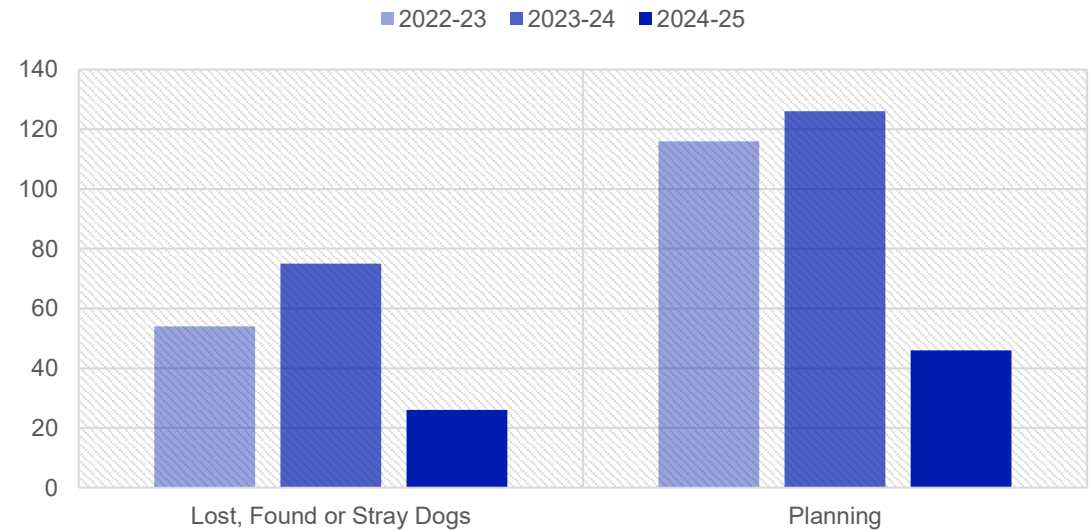
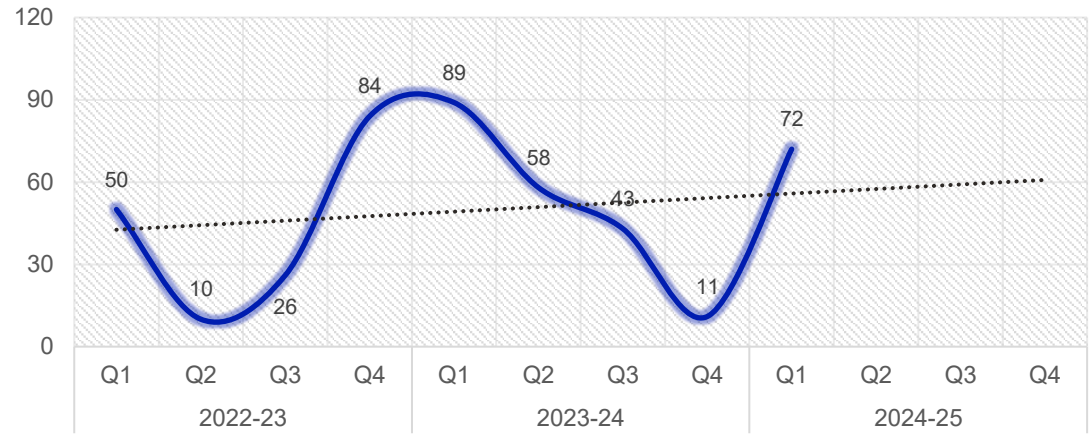
# Tewkesbury

The data on this page outlines the number of dog control cases (reports of lost or stray dogs), and planning enquiries handled by the service on behalf of Tewkesbury Borough Council.

The dog control work undertaken for the authority 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 renewed in ADD DATE 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.

Tewkesbury Borough Council





## WRS Board

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

### Title: Report on Operation Lisbon 2: Dog breeding

**Recommendation** | That the Board notes the Report.

**Background**

This report helps to demonstrate how the service's small Intelligence Unit supports the broader delivery of the service. During this operation the initial review of advertising, logging of information, data protection requests to identified selling site operators and all necessary communications data requests were undertaken by this team. This effectively led to the creation of a package of information that could then be actioned by the Licensing team.

During November 2020, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) initiated an intelligence gathering operation code-named "Lisbon". The primary purpose of the operation was to assess the people, businesses, and locations associated with unlicensed dog breeding and put in place strategies and/or interventions to reduce the level of offending. Whilst the operation had positive outcomes, several factors limited its effectiveness.

Firstly, as the operation was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it could not be stated with certainty whether the information collected during the initial stages of the operation was indicative of the "normal" trading environment. It was likely, for example, that information had been captured about certain nominals who had chosen to breed dogs whilst furloughed but did not continue this activity (at a licensable level) once restrictions had been lifted. Secondly, the prominence of general selling platforms as opposed to those dedicated to dogs or pets was underestimated or had significantly changed by the time the operation concluded. These platforms were not included in the scope of the operation, so it was also likely that several nominals operating illegally were undetected.

After Operation Lisbon concluded, the service continued to receive complaints from the public about unlicensed dog breeders. As a result, Operation Lisbon 2 was launched



**Report**

during November 2023 with a view to assessing the scale of offending in a post pandemic environment. Fortunately, WRS and Shropshire Council both had an interest in this area and opted to share intelligence resources and work together, allowing the scope of the operation to broaden to cover both counties and encompass additional sales platforms, including some generalist ones.

**1. Methodology**

The Foundation for Operation Lisbon 2 was based on four key stages:

- The collation and evaluation of complaints received since 01/11/2022.
- The proactive monitoring of online sales platforms<sup>1</sup> between 01/11/2023 and 31/03/2024
- The acquisition of account information and previous adverts
- The analysis of collected information, and generated intelligence, to identify prominent entities committing or enabling offences.

**2. Key Legislation and Considerations**

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activity Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 is the primary legislation covering the breeding of dogs. It places a requirement on individuals or businesses to obtain a licence if they are “breeding three or more litters of puppies in any twelve-month period” and/or are “breeding dogs and advertising a business of selling dogs”. The failure to obtain a licence is a criminal offence under Section 13 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

When acquiring information from online platforms, care had to be taken to only request information that can be obtained under the Data Protection Act 2018. A policy change by the Home Office in 2023 means that certain personal information (mandatory registration data) linked to online accounts must be treated as communications data and can only be obtained via the provisions of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. This also means that a formal authorisation is required from the relevant Commissioners before the information can be obtained from the relevant provider. Despite this, several platforms did disclose such data which, whilst useable for intelligence purposes, becomes subject to permission from the local authority’s Senior Responsible Officer before it can form part of the investigative process.

Whilst proactive monitoring data was assessed prior to account information being requested, the limitations of certain platforms meant it could not always be established whether certain accounts were operating at a level where a licence was likely to be required. As a result, information pertaining to these accounts was not requested and their account information was not available for analysis during the latter stages of the



operation. There were also delays from one of the platforms providing information in relation to several nominals using their site.

The requirement for someone to be “in the business of selling animals,” does mean that the local authority must be able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that this is a business-related activity. There is no specific case law relating to this under the 2018 Act, however, the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 similarly required proof of trade or business so this case law can have a role in informing thinking. Even under this legislation, the possibility exists for a person to have a “lucrative hobby,” so the business test may not necessarily be as black and white as it first appears.

### **Results**

Some 1,069 unique adverts were identified across Worcestershire over the five-month period of the operation. A significant proportion of these adverts were posted legally by licensed breeders (approximately 10%) or by private sellers who did not meet the threshold for a licence.

Each platform has its own search parameters; however, it is generally easier to search for adverts based on location (e.g. search within 20 miles of Worcester) than to search for adverts based on the breed of dog or the size of the breed. None of the platforms monitored, for example, allowed a user to search for “large breeds”. This was particularly important to note following the notice to prevent future deaths issued by the Coroner following the death of a child at the home of a dog breeder. When adverts were reviewed, only 17% related to dogs categorised by the Kennel Club and others as being large breeds, demonstrating as officers expected, that they only make up a modest proportion of the market.

The most common breeds advertised across the two counties were Cockapoos, Cocker Spaniels, Labrador Retrievers, and Dachshunds. The total value of the adverts listed was more than £7 million (£4.2 million for Worcestershire and £2.8 million for Shropshire). Although there is likely to be some double counting of adverts as a few sellers will advertise on more than one platform, this figure is still much higher than officers involved in the project would have suggested before undertaking it and it shows that, although dog prices have fallen since the pandemic, there are still large numbers of animals being supplied commercially or otherwise.

The most prominent locations mentioned in adverts were Worcester and larger towns such as Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn, and Evesham. Whilst an advert might state the location as “Worcester”, however, enquiries have established that this designation has also included sellers residing outside of the City Council boundary in the nearby villages under Wychavon’s or Malvern Hills’ jurisdiction.

Some 37 accounts were identified that were likely to have been trading without a licence. Further enquiries led to some of these being linked to single individuals or, in some



cases, small groups of people. Relationship charts were created to show connections between different entities (people, online accounts, telephone numbers, email addresses) and a package of information was shared with senior officers in the Licensing team with recommendations for action. The team have subsequently opted to write warning letters and offer guidance to 10 sellers identified by this work, whilst 6 accounts are being developed further by the Intelligence Unit as the operators are sharing contact details and advert locations. A total of 5 sellers, 2 of whom had previously been identified as part of Operation Lisbon 1, have been put under formal investigation with a view to submitting reports to the various partner legal departments. Obviously, with cases pending, we can say no more than this at this time.

#### **Other Issues Identified**

As with many areas of the internet, particularly those associated with the sales of goods and other commodities, registration requirements and the level of self-policing varies from platform to platform. For example, one platform proactively blocks accounts and/or notifies local authorities about suspicious or potentially unlicensed activity whilst another platform allows users to register using partial or generic information. In addition, as none of the platforms require identity checks during registration processes, some users have been found to list adverts using false names, locations, or telephone numbers.

#### **Conclusions**

The two Lisbon operations have revealed that there is a significant market in the selling of dogs across Worcestershire and, whilst a proportion of this is not commercial or done under license, a proportion of this activity is unlicensed and illegal. It also shows that detecting illegal activity is not completely straight-forward and requires resource to be dedicated to the activity. By utilising our Intelligence Unit to do much of the initial case building, Licensing Officers are freed from the burden of logging and recording in these initial stages and receive a completed package which has much of the evidence they will need to go forward with obtaining statements and interviewing potential defendants under PACE.

The Intelligence package produced provides managers with an overview of the situation and sufficient detail to make decisions on action. This includes directing some cases into advice and guidance, others to disruption (where the picture of trade may be borderline) and limiting formal investigations to those cases where the picture is clear, and offenders may be trading illegally with full knowledge of the statutory requirements. This ensures best use of our finite resource.

It is clear that these operations are best done at scale. Focus on a single district would likely be impossible due to the nature of descriptions in adverts. Working with Shropshire colleagues was positive and one of the groups identified was engaging in cross border activity. Officers will look to promote the Op Lisbon model to other licensing colleagues and the use of the Intelligence Operating Model as a tool for enforcement.





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**Background Papers**

Infographic presenting outcomes



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**Pets4Homes and  
Freads**

Most prominent platforms

**1,069**

Number of adverts posted to online sales  
platforms during a five-month period

**£4.2m**

Potential financial gain based on the adverts  
identified

**Wyre Forest and  
Wychavon**

Most prominent districts

## **OPERATION LISBON 2**

**17%**

Adverts relating to "large breeds"  
(as identified by The Kennel Club)

**1 in 10**

Adverts posted by licensed breeders

**Cockapoo,  
Cocker Spaniel and  
Labrador Retriever**

Most prominent breed advertised across  
Worcestershire

**37**

Number of accounts potentially enabling  
criminal offences

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## WRS Board

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

### Progress Report on the Automation Project

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Members are asked to note the report.</b>
<b>Background</b>	At a Board meeting in 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 customer entering data onto 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.
<b>Report</b>	<p><b>Progress on Forms</b></p> <p>With an immense collaborative effort from all of the teams involved in this project the Temporary Events Notice (TENs) application form went live this month and there have been extra checks taking place daily to ensure the workflow from the point of the application being submitted to the payment being taken and information landing into the IDOX back-office system correctly have been processed appropriately each step of the way.</p> <p>Ideally, we did want the TENs form to go live before the summer period however the financial update codes had not been uploaded into the Tech-one financial system and there was uncertainty on how long this process could take. The team will soon be approaching the winter events period, and the form online will now relieve some of the pressure on officers and this interim period will allow officers to see how well it is working prior to ironing out any issues if needs be.</p> <p>The decision has been taken to leave several weeks in-between before the launch of the second form which will be the licensing premises form just so that to ensure if there are any problems then these can be rectified by the teams involved and to ensure the flow of financial information is working its way back to the correct district.</p> <p>Work continues on the next set of forms and currently the order of launch remains as previously indicated and these are listed here:</p>



1. Premises Licence Applications
  - Application to vary a premises license
  - Application to vary a DPS
  - Application form to transfer a premises licence
2. Taxi Applications
3. Animal Licensing Applications
4. Pavement Licensing

Progress continues on the 'service request' form where the task and finish group have now developed a series of questions for different scenarios received by all the teams across WRS. It has been a challenge to scope out by the teams involved as it has required the need to address a very wide range of potential requests relating to the work of all three WRS service areas.

#### **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.

#### **Taxi ID Cards**

In parallel to the wider automation project officers have been working with MyTAG to implement the roll out of electronic ID Cards for the taxi trade for both safeguarding and enforcement measures. IT colleagues at Wyre Forest have progressed with work on the dashboard and SANDBOX requirement and are now working with SmartTag to ensure we have the appropriate equipment in place to roll this project out. As the Victoria forms project has taken precedent the work on this has stalled slightly but officers are confident that once all quality checks on Victoria Forms have been completed then time can be invested into getting this rolled out.

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