

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board

Thursday, 25th
September, 2025
4.30 pm

Parkside Hall
Market Street
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire
B61 8DA



www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:

Matthew Dormer

Jane Spilsbury

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2025

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Councillor H. J. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council
Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council
Councillor D. Harrison, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor C. Palmer, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor M. Dormer, Redditch Borough Council
Councillor J. Spilsbury, Redditch Borough Council – Vice-Chairman
Councillor K. Holmes, 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 - Chairman
Councillor I. Hardiman, 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 26th June 2025 (Pages 5 - 18)
4. WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING
April - June 2025 (Pages 19 - 26)

5. Report on Funeral Director Inspections in Worcestershire (Pages 27 - 32)
6. Activity and Performance Data Quarter 1 2025/6 (Pages 33 - 68)
7. Briefing on firework controls (Pages 69 - 72)
8. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Assistant Director Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.

J. Leach
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

17th September 2025

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

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

Notes:

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



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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 26TH JUNE 2025, AT 4.32 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones, K. Taylor (during Minute No's 4/25 to 11/25), C. Palmer, J. Spilsbury, M. Alcott (substituting for Councillor K. Holmes, during Minute No's part of 6/25 to 11/25), A. Scott, R. Deller, M. Goodge, T. Onslow and I. Hardiman

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr B. Watson, Mrs. M. Patel, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr M. Cox, Ms. H. Cameron and Mrs. P. Ross

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

1/25

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor T. Onslow, Wyre Forest District Council be elected Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Onslow took the opportunity to express her sincere thanks to Board Members for nominating and electing her as Chairman of the Board.

Councillor Onslow also thanked Councillor H. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council, for her work during her role as Chairman of the Board for the last municipal year.

2/25

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor J. Spilsbury, Redditch Borough Council be elected Vice-Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

At the request of the Chairman and for the benefit of Board Members, all officers present introduced themselves.

3/25

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D. Harrison, Malvern Hills District Council and Councillor K. Holmes, Worcester City Council, with Councillor M. Alcott, Worcester City Council in attendance as the substitute Member for Councillor K. Holmes.

4/25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this stage in the meeting, Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council arrived.

There were no declarations of interest.

5/25

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 21st February 2025, were submitted for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 21st February 2025, be approved as a correct record.

6/25

**WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE
MONITORING APRIL - MARCH 2025 & ANNUAL RETURN**

The Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendation as detailed on page 21 of the main agenda pack.

The report covered the period April to March 2025.

Members were informed that as detailed in the report (page 23 of the main agenda pack), that it was being requested that the final surplus amount of £54,227 be added to the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) reserves; in order to assist with any upcoming cost pressures. Should Board Members reject this request, then the surplus amount would be refunded to Partners.

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 5 to the report, WRS Reserve Statement 2024/25.

The Director of WRS highlighted that previously any underspend had been refunded to Partners, however, the Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement (SLA) also covered any underspend being added to WRS reserves.

Board Members questioned if the reserves could be summarised and where the underspend had come from.

The Director of WRS referred to Appendix 5 to the report, and in doing so explained that when Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had decided to leave the Partnership, it was agreed that they would have to cover the administration costs and also provide a contribution to the ongoing WRS service following their departure. The General Reserves

had come about in 2016. WRS however still managed the Trading Standards service for WCC.

With costs to cover additional salary increases, Officers might have to come back to Partners if they were unable to cover any additional salary costs or could look to use the reserves.

Councillor A. Scott, Worcester City Council (WCC) remarked that he welcomed the unexpected additional £54,227 surplus. However, WCC Members would be keeping an eye as to where the reserves were used / spent.

In response to further questions on Appendix 5 - WRS Reserve Statement 2024/25, the Director of WRS further explained that there had been a delay with some projects commencing but they were now moving forward slowly; there had been changes and some were 3-year projects. The Director of WRS also explained that several of the smaller elements of the reserve were held for other bodies or on behalf of the authorities in the region, so were not just available to WRS. He reassured Members that a number of the reserves would be invested over the next few years, with the General Reserve continuing to be held to provide a buffer, to limit the impact on partners should income generation not yield sufficient funds to cover service costs.

Councillor A. Scott, Worcester City Council (WCC) asked if there were any sudden pressures on the service involving one partner (e.g. Licensing or Environmental Health) could Partners request that reserves were used to support the response to these situations.

At this stage in the meeting, Councillor M. Alcott, Worcester City Council arrived.

The Director of WRS stated that if the service had to deal with a major issue in one partner's area, and additional resource was needed to support the response to this, then it would be reasonable for the partnership to use the reserve in this case. The Director recalled two previous situations where, if they were repeated today, this may be something he would ask the partners to consider.

The Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer, BDC and RBC, stated that the General Reserves would be used to address any urgent issues / pressures, and that Partners would not have to be approached for any additional funding. WRS would be able, if necessary, to draw down from reserves.

The Chairman highlighted that as detailed in the report, WRS had had another successful year and had overachieved the budgeted income, which was good news.

RESOLVED that the Board

- 1.1 notes the final financial position for the period April – March 2025,
- 1.2 approves the 2024/25 surplus of £54,227 to be added to the WRS reserve, in order to assist with addressing any upcoming cost pressures.

7/25

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Board considered a report which detailed the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Annual Report 2024/2025.

The Director of WRS drew Members' attention to the Recommendation, as detailed on page 35 of the main agenda pack.

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 Director of WRS highlighted that the report covered the performance of the service from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. The report covered the performance of the service for this period, both in terms of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and that a short summary activity report was included at Appendix 5 to the report.

Last year saw the continuation of what we might call the “post-covid normal,” levels of activity post pandemic. Previous years had seen the establishment of what might be 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 Homes 4 Ukraine support for Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils, with support from experienced WRS managers, while several other former covid staff also featured in the planning enforcement and enviro-crime enforcement team.

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

As with previous years, complaints against the service were significantly exceeded by compliments. Complaints arose across a number of service areas this year, rather than being focused in one or two areas.

Non-business customer satisfaction was down on the last 2-year's figures at 56.7% compared to 59.2% and 60.4%. Further detail on this had been provided in both the Annual Report and the Activity and Performance Data, Quarters 1 to 4, 2024/25.

The range of areas for complaint was greater this year, with licensing featuring quite strongly, particularly with animal related businesses where inspection visits revealed significant failings with requirements. Whilst numbers of nuisance complaints were 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 performance measure. The nature of the service was such that officers would never be able to make everyone happy because a significant proportion of nuisance complaints would not amount to a statutory nuisance, but we could improve our performance in this area.

Business satisfaction returned to usual levels at 97.1% compared with 94.6% last year, so unless we see otherwise, we are treating this as a blip.

The indicators for licensed premises and noise complaints had been in place long enough now to establish good baselines. This year all figures were at average or below, so significantly better than last year.

There had not been an increase in any kind of formal action, and the figures still showed that most premises across the County were well run and controlled by their operators, with issues limited to a small minority.

The rate of noise complaint against population for all districts this year were reporting their lowest figures since the indicator was introduced. We know that last year saw poor weather for a significant part of the year, which undoubtedly contributed to this. Overall, it still suggested that the environment for Worcestershire residents was good.

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

As in previous years, the WRS Annual Report would be published on the WRS website and would be shared with other partners e.g. Worcestershire LEP. With putting the report into the public domain, this met the requirement in the Regulators Code, made under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, which required local authorities to publish summary information about their regulatory activities each year.

In response to questions from Board Members, with a question raised on a recent bee issue in part of Worcester City, and business satisfaction returning to usual levels; the Director of WRS explained that:-

- The recent bee issue was a very difficult legal situation, and that Officers had now resolved the issue following the receipt of legal advice and guidance given.
- WRS had sent out over 700 requests for feedback on the service to non-business customers, with a mix of digital and paper questionnaires being sent out. Only 104 responses were received.
- Over 3,000 requests for feedback had been sent to business customers, again with a low return being received.

The Director of WRS stated that it was possible that people were fed up of being asked to respond to a variety of questionnaires from businesses. WRS were struggling to get a good response rate. Officers would however continue to look at different / better ways to address this and to get people to respond.

Members further stated that the low quantity of people responding would affect the figures. Where people's expectations higher than what was being met?

The Director of WRS explained that post pandemic expectations were often higher and Officers could not always address some issues. A lot of customer dissatisfaction related to noise nuisance, some of which were not always a statutory nuisance under legislation. The law did not always meet public expectations, so not everyone was happy with the outcome of noise nuisance complaints. This was part of the reason for negative perceptions of the service.

The Director of WRS also explained that a programme of interim animal licensing inspections had identified that some 5-star-rated businesses were not managing to maintain the high standards. So, Officers had to act on this and WRS had received negative responses to this, particularly when licenses had to be temporarily suspended for work to be done to address non-compliance.

With regards to food hygiene inspections, any business that felt it needed to improve its rating was informed of the system for getting a re-rating visit booked.

It was queried whether any of the steps to be taken to improve the service had been detailed in the Annual Report.

In response the Director of WRS informed Board Members that the suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), as agreed by the Board, were included in the Annual Report and most of the KPI's were positive for the

service. The KPI's showed that WRS was delivering what the law required of local authorities and in many cases delivering the service well. As a regulatory service and a local authority regulator, WRS were protecting honest businesses to continue to trade while tackling those who failed to maintain standards.

In response to further questions from Councillor J. Spilsbury, Redditch Borough Council with regards to:-

- Finding the public not satisfied and managing their expectations.
- Public information of WRS services.
- Where WRS could not help a member of the public and they were not happy with an outcome, was there an escalation process?
- Partner working.

The Director of WRS stated that Officers were asked to always be mindful of the limits of what the service could deliver and to explain this to complainants to help limit their expectations. The Director explained that most nuisance complaints related to domestic neighbour situations and that the partners had all agreed some time ago to require people to try to resolve these situations themselves with the service's support via information on the website. Self-help was not required of vulnerable customers or in situations where the alleged perpetrator had a history of poor behaviour or failure to engage. The Director further explained that having an Environmental Health Officer arriving at a property was like having a Police Officer arrive and this was not always well received. Hence, encouraging people to resolve things amicably with their neighbours offered a better long-term solution.

Officers did try and manage nuisance / noise complaints and having monitoring devices installed in people's properties also meant that Officers relied on their co-operation. Sometimes a noise problem was just not a statutory nuisance.

The Director of WRS agreed that WRS could improve on information made available to the public, and that with regards to noise nuisance, Officers could look at promoting 'Be a Good Neighbour' message during the summer months, when noise complaint numbers increased during the good weather.

The Technical Manager, WRS further informed the Board that there were currently three really proactive projects on the go in his priority area relating to dogs, reminding the Board that the 3 priorities were:-

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

These mini projects would proactively push things like dog microchipping through special events to help address the lack of identification of dogs when they strayed, hopefully in the longer term increasing the Council's

ability to return dogs and reducing kennelling costs. Officers always worked proactively when priority areas were identified.

The Director of WRS reassured Members that Officers worked with a number of teams within the partner authorities, as well as with colleagues in the County Council. Also, WRS were part of the Multi Agency Targeted Enforcement (MATE) network in all parts of the County. These multi-agency meetings addressed common problem issues and involved Officers from the Police, Fire and Rescue service and a range of other partners including national ones like the Immigration Service.

The Director of WRS responded to further questions on the Staff Survey and in doing so, explained that they had not as yet reviewed all of the feedback received. Senior Officers were pleased that there had been a higher response rate, 63 of the 86 staff had responded this year. Senior Officers would carry out a full review of the feedback received and would endeavour to report back to the staff on what they would do next.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor H. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council, took the opportunity to give sincere thanks to the dog wardens and kennel staff. They did amazing work. The Director of WRS stated that he would happily feedback the positive comments and sincere thanks.

RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2024/2025, be noted; and that a copy of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2024/2025 be forwarded to the Chief Executives / Managing Directors of the six partner authorities; and to the wider Elected Member base in their areas.

8/25

ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA QUARTERS 1, 2 3 AND 4 2024/5

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services, summarised the Activity and Performance Data, Quarters 1 to 4, 2024/2025 report, and in doing so drew Members' attention to the following:-

Activity Data

The number of cases received during the year was an increase of 18% compared to 2022/23 but an increase of 7% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 88% of cases were 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 had, however, been a notable increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Approximately 44% of dogs were successfully reunited with their owners although this figure varied significantly between local authorities. In general terms, the service received a low number of dog control complaints and enquiries each quarter.

Based on the 92 complaints received during the year, 40 cases related to dogs which were persistently straying from residential properties, whilst 35 cases related to dog fouling.

Based on the 1,722 interventions undertaken during the year, as had been the case for some years now, only a small proportion of businesses were rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2 FHRS score). A significant proportion of non-compliant ratings were issued to the hospitality sector (such as takeaways and pubs) or small retailers.

The number of health and safety at work cases received last year fell by 9% compared to 2022/23 but was 3% higher than last year. Just over 40% of cases were 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. Sadly, the service had begun investigating some complex cases, which included, a fatality, and several others that were still in process.

The number of licensing cases received during the year was 3% higher than 2022/23 but 4% lower than last year. Around 65% of cases recorded were applications and registrations, with private hire or hackney carriage vehicles representing 31% of the demand and 24% from temporary events notices served on the six councils under the Licensing Act 2003.

The Licensing team received a significant number of enquiries each year, such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence condition. Actual complaints about conduct of license holders and businesses were fewer in number, with approximately 49% relating to taxi licensing (i.e., poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards, etc,) and 22% related to alcohol licensing, and allegations of business failing to uphold the licensing objectives. A further 13% of complaints had related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.

The overall number of nuisance-type cases received during 2024/5 told a tale of poor weather, with the figures showing a 29% fall compared to 2022/23 and 20% compared to 2023/24. Licensing would probably see an increase in Temporary Event Notices (TENs) applied for, due to the good weather conditions.

Performance

As highlighted in the WRS Revenue Monitoring April to March 2025, WRS had had another successful year and had overachieved the budgeted income by £512k.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS responded to questions on the percentage of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service. Members were informed that although licensed drivers had been told they were still not complying, the figures had reduced but had

not reduced enough. Every time a licence was revoked, WRS issued a press release. However, officers wanted to get more information out via social media and create more awareness about licensed drivers ensuring that they regularly maintained their vehicles.

It was felt that with the cost of living crisis that some licensed drivers were using the 6 monthly test as a way of determining what repairs were required, rather than routinely checking their vehicle for defects. Licensed drivers should be maintaining their vehicles during those 6 months.

Councillor J. Spilsbury, Redditch Borough Council responded with regard to the high percentage of RBC vehicles found to be defective, and in doing so, highlighted that RBC had a very high number of licensed drivers and that Licensing Sub-Committee Members were very thorough and did revoke licenses when deemed necessary. RBC Members had also recently 'pushed back' when the trade had requested the use of other garages for their 6 monthly tests to be carried out, due to the Council's depot at Crossgates not having enough capacity. Councillor Spilsbury suggested that more communication was needed reminding licensed drivers of their responsibility to routinely maintain their vehicles.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager stated that the Council's depots did have a certain window for re-tests where there was no charge for licensed drivers.

The Director of WRS further commented that the Council's depots were very good and carried out an excellent service, but also that the private garage commissioned for Worcester City did an excellent job and kept WRS informed of any concerns they had.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS responded to further questions on the dog contracts taken on for other Districts and the expenses and costs involved with WRS delivering this service. Members were reassured that this commercial work was costed out and estimated, based on the numbers provided by the other Districts, in order to ensure that WRS covered their costs and supported the WRS budget.

With regards to dog welfare concerns, larger breeds of dogs were being purchased, with some owners then finding them difficult to manage / care for. The dog wardens carried out excellent work and would never rehome or place a dog with a charity for rehoming, that would cause any injuries / issues. The dog wardens worked with difficult dogs and retrained dogs in order to see if they could be rehomed.

There were four dog wardens, and they all worked hard to rehome dogs where possible and other authorities were now recognising their expertise.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1 to 4, 2024/25, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

9/25

**INFORMATION REPORT - FOOD SAFETY: DEVELOPMENT OF WRS
NEW FOOD OFFICER RESOURCE**

Members were provided with a report that detailed the Food Safety: Development of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) new food officer resource.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer (Food Safety Lead), WRS informed Board Members that the report was quite detailed and that she was happy to summarise the report and take any questions.

In summary –

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) was trying to achieve consistency across the Country.

All local food authorities, as defined in legislative provisions, must report their activities twice a year to the FSA. Reports covered inspections done, new premises registered, complaints handling and sampling activity plus details of the number of food officers available.

FSA Intervention

The resource reductions of recent years had led to most local authorities finding it difficult to operate in full compliance with the Food Law Code of Practice (FLCoP0), including WRS. As many Board Members would be aware, the Covid pandemic had led to the cessation of routine food safety work on order of the Agency, which when lifted left a significant backlog of work that many local authorities were struggling to catch up with.

Where the FSA had concerns regarding the performance of local authorities, it operated an escalation process through its own organisation. WRS found itself part of this escalation process at the end of 2023. And were asked by the FSA as to how WRS intended to get back on track with inspecting New Premises (some 800 per year) and D-E rated businesses, i.e. those managing their food safety risks to a very high standard or very low risk businesses such as cakemakers, small retail shops, wet bars. These three categories formed the bulk of the WRS database and estimated in the region of 75 to 80% of premises.

Recruiting Additional Officers

Data provided by the FSA indicated that WRS was towards the bottom of a list of local food authorities in terms of the number of full-time equivalent officers available for food safety work compared to the number of premises in the area. The Agency decided to commence its formal escalation process. Officers worked on what levels of capacity might be needed to build on the existing officer complement. In February

2024 the Board and Partners supported a request for additional funding to increase the establishment of the food competent officers within the Community Environmental Health team.

It was highlighted to the Board, that there was a national shortage of Environmental Health Officers, so WRS had opted to recruit three additional Regulatory Support Officers (RSO) and two Technical Officers (Food). Whilst it was difficult to recruit fully competent staff, three qualified candidates (an EHO, a graduate EHO and an individual with the National Certificate in Food Control) were found.

The two new Technical Officers had the relevant food safety qualifications as required in the FLCoP and after a competency review, were now able to inspect all categories of food premises. Their initial work focussed on reducing the backlog of interventions at D-rated premises.

Competency of Officers

The FSA required the Food Lead-Officer to ensure all that Officers were 'competent' to undertake the local food safety programme. Currently there was no specific qualification for the RSO roles. So the WRS Food Lead had developed an internal training programme combined with attendance on external courses offered by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH,) and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). Having completed their six-month probation satisfactorily all Officers were now undertaking the CIEH Level 3 Food Safety Course to supplement the initial work done with them. No RSO was currently authorised to undertake formal enforcement activity, such as serving Notices, although this might be possible after relevant training as it was the local authority that determined if they were competent to do so.

All Officers were in place by November 2024, and despite their lack of experience, they had all settled into their new roles very quickly and had really started to deliver results.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer (Food Safety Lead), WRS further drew Members' attention to the statistics of the activities undertaken by the new officers, as detailed on page 128 of the main agenda pack.

In response to questions from the Board, the Principal Environmental Health Officer (Food Safety Lead), WRS, stated that the new Officers were productive very quickly. Some skills travelled well into new roles, and they all had skills in place, such as phoning and talking with businesses.

The Director of WRS further highlighted that the Officers were really making a difference and had brought new skills into WRS. WRS were now seen as ahead of the trend and had been approached by other authorities to talk about this new approach with RSOs.

In response to Members asking if after this process, was there anything different that Officers would do?

The Principal Environmental Health Officer (Food Safety Lead), WRS stated that the posts could only be advertised under the Host Authority (Bromsgrove District Council) recruitment criteria which only covered advertising the roles in the West Midlands area. So advertising a bit wider might be something to consider in the future.

RESOLVED that the Food Safety: Development of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) new food officer resource report, be noted.

10/25

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AUTOMATION PROJECT

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), provided Members with an update on the Automation Project, and in doing so, highlighted that there were very few queries or concerns.

Members were further informed on the form's timeline, in that

Where forms were now live these were continuing to be used as a preference to paper forms or sending forms via email. Feedback had been positive, and the team continued to monitor progress closely. The shift to moving online had continued to rise with very few queries or challenges.

The next set of forms to be created and tested would be:-

1. Animal Licensing Applications
2. Pavement Licensing
3. Taxi Applications

As previously explained, while the animal licensing and pavement licensing forms were being created the team would look to form a plan of engagement with the taxi trade as we would like to do as much testing with the trade and operators in order to ensure that there were champions in each district.

The formulation of the guidance and FAQ's on the website would be critical to ensuring a smooth transition therefore engaging with this group would also be critical.

Significant progress had been made on the 'service request' form with the task and finish group now being comfortable to move onto testing.

A new bank account at the Host Authority (Bromsgrove District Council) had been set up for WRS income so it would be easier to divide out to partners moving forward. Partners would have received monies from BDC at the end of Quarter 4, which would now allow partners to see real licensing income coming out of the system.

Taxi ID Cards

The three teams involved in the project (MyTAG, IDOX and Wyre Forest IT) were working together to ensure that there was no risk to the service when data was exposed outside of the environment, when enabling remote access to the IDOX database. Wolverhampton City Council went live with this project in recent days, so the team had been asked to speak to officers at Wolverhampton City Council in order to alleviate some of their concerns.

Having received regular updates on the progress of the Automation Project, Members were in agreement that this item could be removed from the agenda for any future meetings of the Board. Members would ask the Licensing and Support Manager to only update Board Members this project going forward, when necessary or at the end of the project.

RESOLVED that the Progress Report on the Automation Project be noted and removed from the agenda for any future Board meetings, as detailed in the preamble above.

11/25

URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.09 p.m.

Chairman



WRS Board 25th September 2025

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – June 2025

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – June 2025

1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for Apr – June 25 in relation to Bereavements

Council	Apr–June 25 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	3
Redditch Borough Council	1
Worcester City Council	9
Total	13

1.3 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2025-26 in relation to Pest control

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2025/26 Pest Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	8
Wychavon District Council	10
Total	18

1.4 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for 2025-26 in relation to additional Technical Officers

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2025/26 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2025/26 Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	9	
Malvern Hills District Council	7	
Redditch Borough Council	2	
Worcester City Council	3	41
Wychavon District Council	16	
Wyre Forest District Council	10	
Total	47	41

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 2025.

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 25 – Appendix 1
- Income Breakdown - April – June 25 – Appendix 2

Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a projected outturn 2025/26 of £2k 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 have since received a final agreement for the 25-26 pay award of 3.2%, this will give WRS an addition salary pressure of £9k, this will be included in the quarter 2 figures. Officers will look to manage this within the existing financial allocation.
- If April to June 25 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be an overspend on this service of £18k. WRS officers will continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the projected outturn figure at quarter 2. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners is:-

Redditch Borough Council	£8k
Wychavon District Council	£10k

- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – June 25 to be funded by partners. These costs are charged on an as and when basis. Due to the nature of the charge, it is not possible to project a final outturn figure:

Bromsgrove District Council	£3k
Redditch Borough Council	£1k
Worcester City Council	£9k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – June 25
- Any grant funded expenditure is shown separate to the core service costs as this is not funded by the participating Councils.
- WRS are continuing to work on the Victoria Forms project & is now receiving income for all partner councils for temporary event notices licence



(TEN's), below is the income due to partner councils for Apr – June 25:-

Bromsgrove District Council	£1.9k
Malvern Hills District Council	£3.6k
Redditch Borough Council	£0.4k
Worcester City Council	£1.5k
Wychavon District Council	£3.4k
Wyre Forest District Council	£0.7k

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



WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2025/26
Total WRS June 25 / Period 3 - 25/26

	Revised Full Year Budget 25-26	Revised Budget Apr - June 25	Committed Expenditure Apr - June 25	Variance	Qtr 1 Projected outturn	Qtr 1 Projected Outturn Variance	Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Direct Expenditure							
Employees							
Salary	4,440	1,110	957	-153	4,215	-225	Includes Ukrainian employees, offsett in income £136k
Agency Staff	0	0	165	165	405	405	Covered by salary savings & income generation work, including work for other local authorities
Employee Insurance	21	5	5	0	21	0	
Sub-Total - Employees	4,461	1,115	1,127	12	4,641	180	
Premises							
Rent / Hire of Premise	82	20	20	-0	81	-0	
Cleaning	1	0	0	-0	1	0	
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sub-Total - Premises	82	21	20	-0	82	-0	
Transport							
Vehicle Hire	13	3	2	-2	12	-1	
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	1	-0	3	0	
Car Allowances	53	13	10	-3	52	-2	
Sub-Total - Transport	83	21	16	-5	80	-2	
Supplies and Services							
Furniture & Equipment	46	12	11	-1	50	4	
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	0	0	-0	2	0	
Printing & Photocopying	17	4	4	-1	17	0	
Postage	11	3	3	-0	11	0	
ICT	99	25	27	3	116	17	Includes £7k for special equipment, this is 50% grant funded & offset in income
Telephones	40	10	9	-1	39	-1	
Training & Seminars	33	8	1	-7	33	0	
Insurance	16	4	4	0	16	0	
Third Party Payments	209	52	52	-0	209	-0	
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	474	118	111	-7	493	19	
Contractors							
Dog Warden	121	30	33	2	124	3	
Pest Control	78	20	23	4	90	12	Recovered in income
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	52	13	6	-7	26	-26	Reduction in Vet Inspections £22k, now doing in-house, this will reflect in reduced income
Other contractors/consultants	3	1	1	-0	3	1	
Water Safety	5	1	1	-1	5	0	
Food Safety	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Environmental Protection	18	5	25	21	38	20	Bereavements recovered in income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	3	5	2	15	2	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	1	1	-0	7	1	
Sub-Total	295	74	94	20	308	13	
Income							
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-1,102	-275	-304	-28	-1,313	-211	See append 2
Sub-Total	-1,102	-275	-304	-28	-1,313	-211	
Overall Total	4,293	1,073	1,065	-8	4,291	-2	

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2025/26

Appendix 2

Income from Partners

April to June 25

	£
Budget	1,073,243
Pension Backfunding	9,900
Bereavement / Public Burials	12,778
Employee for Animal Activity	11,608
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	5,087
Employee for Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	13,970
Tameside - Subs to Anti Fraud Network - Worcs City	2,070
Technical Pollution Work - Worcs City	7,500
Contaminated Land Work - Worcs City	3,250
Marlpool - Redditch	1,795
Planning Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch	120,964
Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch	35,319
	1,297,484

Grant Income

Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	1,380
	1,380

Other Income

Stray Dog Income	30,543
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal & Admin Support	18,197
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	0
Planning Support Work	16,895
Contaminated Land Work	4,458
PPC Work	0
Primary Authority work	0
Pest Control	300
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	282
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	1,208
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	167
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	6,139
	78,189

Total Income Apr - June 25

1,377,053

2025/26 Base Budget from Partners

-1,073,243

Total Income Excluding Budget

303,810

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WRS Board

Date: 25th September 2025

Report on Funeral Director Inspections in Worcestershire

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

Background

1.1 The Role of Funeral Directors

Funeral directors provide an essential service to bereaved families, ensuring that the deceased are treated with dignity and respect. Their responsibilities include preparing and storing the deceased, organising funeral arrangements, and offering emotional and logistical support to families. Given the sensitive nature of their work, funeral directors must uphold high standards of care and professionalism to maintain public confidence.

However, unlike other sectors that deal with public welfare, such as healthcare or social care, the funeral industry in England and Wales remains largely unregulated. There is currently no statutory requirement for funeral directors to be licensed, registered, or inspected, meaning that businesses operate with varying levels of oversight. This lack of formal regulation has led to significant variations in standards, with some funeral directors operating to exceptionally high standards while others fall short.

1.2 Why Funeral Director Inspections Were Introduced

A key incident that triggered government action was the case involving Legacy Independent Funeral Directors in Hull and East Riding. Investigations into this business uncovered serious failings in the handling and storage of the deceased, resulting in widespread distress among affected families. The scale of the failures at Legacy Funeral Directors led to the arrest of Robert Bush, the 47-year-old owner, who was charged with 64 offences, including preventing lawful burials, fraud related to cremated remains, fraudulent trading concerning funeral plans, and theft from charities. The alleged offences spanned from May 2012 to March 2024.

During a brief hearing at Hull Crown Court, funeral director Robert Bush, 47, who faces 65 charges in total, did not enter any pleas.

Judge John Thackray KC adjourned his plea and trial preparation hearing until 15 October 2025 and released him on bail.

Report

This case has led to a national conversation about the lack of regulation in the funeral industry and the need for greater accountability.

In response to these concerns, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) issued the Local Authority Funeral Director Visits Guidance Pack in May 2024. This document provided guidance for local authorities to conduct inspections of funeral directors within their regions. The goal of these inspections was to:

- Assess whether funeral directors were operating to acceptable standards.
- Identify and address areas of concern.
- Support businesses in implementing best practices.
- Provide reassurance to the public that funeral services were being carried out with dignity and professionalism.

1.3 Implementation in Worcestershire

Following the release of the MoJ's guidance, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) on behalf of its partner authorities initiated a proactive inspection programme of funeral directors across the county. This was against the background of Environmental Health Officers having very few regulatory responsibilities or powers in this sector. The programme was proactive and designed as a preventative measure to ensure that Worcestershire's funeral directors were operating to the highest possible standards.

This report details the process of these inspections, the findings, and the actions taken to improve funeral services in Worcestershire.

2. What We Did

Between December 2024 and April 2025, a sample of 15 funeral directors in Worcestershire were inspected, from a total of 40. This included a mix of non-members/members of trade associations, chains and independents to give a broad picture. We covered all districts/boroughs in Worcestershire and followed the framework for inspections set out in the MoJ's guidance, which focussed on:

- The physical condition of funeral premises.
- The facilities used for storing and preparing the deceased.
- The maintenance of documentation and records.
- The training and competency of staff.
- Customer service standards, including pricing transparency.

Rather than being a punitive exercise, these inspections were designed to be constructive and were to advise and support our funeral directors in enhancing service standards and addressing any shortcomings.

3. How We Went About It

To ensure a consistent and thorough approach, the inspection process followed a structured methodology.

3.1 Preparation

Before conducting inspections, WRS:

1. Reviewed the MoJ's guidance document. This allowed us to follow a standardised inspection checklist to ensure all critical areas of funeral service provision were assessed.
2. Developed an inspection strategy to balance fairness and effectiveness while ensuring that findings were accurate and actionable.

3.2 Notification of Funeral Directors

All inspections were announced to ensure that no families were present at the time of our inspections. All funeral directors were also informed that visits were taking place across the UK. This ensured transparency and encouraged cooperation.

3.3 On-Site Inspections

Each inspection involved:

- A thorough examination of the funeral home's facilities, including mortuaries, storage rooms, and public areas.
- Assessment of documentation to ensure the correct handling and identification of the deceased.
- A review of customer service practices, including how pricing information was communicated to families.
- Inspections concluded with a face-to-face discussion with funeral directors, where initial feedback was provided.

3.4 Post-Inspection Reporting

- Following each visit, WRS compiled individual reports outlining:
- Commendations for best practices.
- Identifying areas of concern.
- Recommendations for improvement.
- A timeline for implementing changes (if necessary).

Funeral directors requiring improvements were advised of the actions required.

4. What We Found

4.1 General Findings

The inspections revealed that most funeral directors in Worcestershire are operating to a good standard.

- The majority of the 15 funeral directors inspected demonstrated good compliance with best practice guidelines.
- A very small number of establishments had minor compliance issues, which are being addressed through recommendations for improvement and one referral to The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF); a UK-based trade association that represents 1,000 privately owned, independent funeral homes.

4.2 Common Areas for Improvement

While no significant public health or safety concerns were identified, some recurring areas of concern were noted across a few establishments:

1. Documentation and Record-Keeping

- One funeral home lacked comprehensive records, making it difficult to track individual cases accurately.
- Improved paper records and/or digital tracking systems were recommended to enhance accountability.

2. Facility Maintenance

- A very small number of establishments required minor repairs or upgrades to their mortuary facilities, including one that had a wash hand basin which was not plumbed in, and another with minor structural issues.

3. Transparency in Pricing

- A number of the funeral directors lacked price lists on the front window, making it difficult for families to understand costs upfront.
- Greater pricing transparency was encouraged to align with consumer protection guidelines.

4. CCTV

Our findings revealed a varied approach to CCTV usage across businesses. While some had systems installed both inside and outside their premises, many had none at all, and others had CCTV only on the exterior. The presence of CCTV within mortuary areas emerged as a particularly sensitive and contentious issue. Funeral directors consistently expressed concern over this, highlighting a lack of clear guidance or consensus. This underscores the need for a broader discussion around the potential benefits and drawbacks of CCTV in such sensitive areas – especially in light of the serious issues recently brought to light at Legacy Independent Funeral Directors in Hull and East Riding.

5. Charitable Donations

Approaches to handling charitable donations varied between businesses. Some considered it a key part of their role in supporting bereaved families, viewing it as a duty carried out on their behalf. Others, however, were more reluctant to manage donations

due to perceived risks, including concerns around accountability and transparency. As a result, a small number of businesses chose not to handle charitable donations at all.

5. What We Did with This Information

5.1 Feedback to Funeral Directors

Each funeral director received feedback, including:

- Areas of excellence.
- Specific recommendations for improvement.

5.4 Reporting to the Ministry of Justice

The MoJ have been notified of our findings locally, contributing to national discussions on the future regulation of the funeral industry. Indeed, the matter of regulation of this sector was raised in The Commons during Justice Questions earlier this month.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps

The inspection programme successfully provided a comprehensive overview of the funeral services being provided in Worcestershire. Most businesses demonstrated good standards of care, with those identified as requiring areas for improvement being suitably advised. No formal action has been required.

Moving forward, WRS, if requested, would be happy to engage with government discussions on any potential funeral industry regulations.

Through this proactive inspection programme, WRS has sought to assure members and to strengthen public confidence in funeral services in Worcestershire and ensure that every bereaved family receives the compassionate and professional support they deserve.

We should like to acknowledge and express our sincere thanks to the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) county representative who kindly showed us around his premises in Kidderminster ahead of the inspection programme. This was incredibly helpful in enhancing our understanding of the process and in highlighting the key areas on which to focus during inspections.

CONTACT

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WRS Board

Date: 25th September 2025

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 1 2025/6

Recommendation	That the Board notes the Report and that members use the contents of the activity data in their own reporting back to fellow members of the partner authorities.
Background	The detail of the report focuses on the first quarter of 2025/6, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.
Contribution to Priorities	Board members have asked the service to provide data on activity levels to help reassure local members that WRS continues to address a range of issues in each partner area and more broadly across the county.
Report	Activity Data At 275, the number of complaints and enquiries to the service regarding food are around the trend line or slightly above it. The figure is not dissimilar to last year's Q1 figure of 261 but well above the 229 recorded the previous year. The majority are enquiries, including requests for business advice. Of the actual complaints received during the first quarter, 72% related to issues with food products such as poor quality food or food containing a foreign object, and 28% to poor hygiene standards or practices at businesses. Some 329 programmed interventions were undertaken during quarter 1, slightly below the 392 and 391 respectively in the previous two similar periods. Some 5% resulted in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). As with previous quarters, a higher proportion of non-compliant ratings were issued to the hospitality sector (such as takeaways and restaurants) or small retailers.



The number of Health and Safety complaints and enquiries is roughly on trend, with 56 in Q1 compared to 63 last year and 49 the previous year, in the same period. Whilst the number of reported accidents jumped from 34 in Q4 of last year to 48 in Q1, this figure is similar to the last two reported figures for the same period at 51 and 47 respectively.

Some 46% of total cases recorded 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. As ever, slips, trips, and falls remain the commonest source of accidents. A fatality was reported to the service during quarter one after a volunteer was struck by a vehicle, but investigation revealed that the incident had occurred just over the border in Herefordshire, so the matter was handed to our colleagues there for further investigation. .

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, a number are on-going.

The number of complaints and enquiries about dog control was the lowest for many quarters at only 29. It is below all the quarterly figures reported in the last 3 years, with only the 33-figure in Q2 of 2023/4 being close. The average Q1 figure for the past 2-years has been around 50 . Some 11 of these were classified as proper complaints, with 6 relating to dogs that were persistently straying from residential properties and 4 related to dog fouling.

Having said this, the number of reported strays has started the year high at 426, compared with 304 last year, and 402 the previous one. Around 94% of cases were reports of lost or stray dogs with most, as usual categorised as "contained strays", with dogs found and held by members of the public. Officers remain concerned at the notable increase in the number of dogs picked up with welfare concerns and subsequently requiring veterinary treatment or examination. Approximately 37% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners although this figure varies significantly between local authorities.

In Licensing, the number of complaints and enquiries appeared to follow the previous slightly downward trend, with 651 compared to 828 and 740 for the same period in the last two-years, and well below the peak of 1026 in the final quarter of 2023/4. Also, whilst 1603 applications and registrations is up on the end of last year, comparing this with 1739 last year and 1572 the previous year puts this at a marginally below average start to the year in terms of numbers.



Overall, the total number of recorded cases is 12% less than the same period in 2024/25 but 3% above the level in 2023/24. Some 70% of cases are represented by the applications and registrations, with 28% relating to temporary events and 27% relating to hackney carriage or private hire vehicles.

As with areas like food, Licensing tends to receive more enquiries than actual complaints about licensed activities. During the first quarter, around 38% of actual complaints related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards) and 30% related to premises with alcohol supply licenses, with allegations of failure to meet the licensing objectives. A further 9% of complaints have related to animal licensing, with most relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.

Planning support work continued an upward trend, with Q1 figures again exceeding those at the same point in the previous 2 years, with 977 requests compared to 808 and 763 respectively, roughly 21% and 28% respectively. With the previous 4 quarters all exceeding 900 requests, this represents an increase in work of around 1/3rd compared to the previous four quarters, presumably linked to the growth in development. Around 93% of enquiries were consultations for air quality, contaminated land, or nuisances; and approximately 1 in 4 enquiries were processed (on a contractual basis) on behalf of other local authorities

Information requests have started the year on a high, matching last year's Q1 figure of 166, significantly higher than the same period 2-years ago when only 87 were received. We can only wait to see if the upward trend from previous years continues.

Pollution cases started the year on the increase, with 553 cases approaching the level achieved in Q1 of 2023/4 and well above the 334 in Q4 last year. At 400, the number of noise complaints is a significant proportion of the overall total and on a par with the 410 logged in 2023/4. The previous two summers have been poor, which tends to lead to lower overall numbers. Around 91% of cases were reports of potential statutory nuisances, with around 45% of cases relating to noise from domestic properties, with disturbance created by noise from barking dogs or audio-visual equipment being most common. As with other quarters, other prominent sources of complaint were noise from hospitality businesses, domestic fires and, presumably due to the good weather, dust from construction sites.

This year's hot summer we know has led to more reports of nuisance, so we expect the level for Q2 to be significantly higher than the previous two summer periods.

Public Health complaints and enquiries, often linked to pollution control as the legislation is the same or similar, were roughly on-trend this year with 136 complaints and enquiries compared to 137 and 144 for the same period respectively in the last 2-years. Complaints reported to WRS include reports of accumulations or rubbish and reports of pest species activity, potentially due to the activities of residents or businesses. Around 49% 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 26% of cases have related to waste accumulations at residential properties, however, such complaints commonly reference the presence of rodents or other pests. Having said this, evidence of the presence of rodents in such circumstances is often limited.

Based on the 161 domestic treatments undertaken by pest control contractors during the first quarter, 55% were due to issues with rats whilst 66% have taken place at properties in the Redditch borough or Wychavon district.

Performance

As always, reporting against the suite of indicators is more limited for the first quarter. The non-business customer measure at 53.8% is lower compared to this point in the last 3 years when they were at varying figures above 60%. We began the year with a very poor response rate in that only 12 were received to the end of June. Responses in July were better and the cumulative impact of this is that the measure jumps to 66.5% at the end of that month, so we hope to see improvements in Quarter 2. The proportion of people who felt better equipped, going forward at 42.9%, was also the lowest in 3 years but, as with the overall satisfaction figures, the improvement in numbers of returns for July takes this up to 63.6%. We have begun a conversation with the Communications Team at Redditch and Bromsgrove around how we might approach this area to get increased response rates. They understand the trend we face from other work, and advise that only a very radical change, with a more immediate approach to getting feedback, is likely to improve the levels of return. We will look into this in the coming months with our temporary comms officer, but it will mean that, should this be followed, previous measures will not be comparable.

Satisfaction for business customers was on the low side at 91.8%, with no obvious indications as to why this should be the case. Early returns were relatively poor with only 25 sent back, but again, this doubled by the end of July and the figure had increased to 95.3%, so it is possible that this too reflects the low initial response level.

We report overall numbers of compliant and non-compliant food businesses at this point in the year, without the district breakdown. 98.3% 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 11 to 3.

Staff sickness is at 2.17 days per FTE, is significantly above the previous 3-year's figures for this period (1.13, 0.76, 0.9, respectively) and above the 0.85 days per FTE from the same period in 2019, pre-pandemic. Some 78.5% of absence for this period was classed as long-term (29+



days,) accounted for by a very small number of officers with either serious illness like cancer or other major health issues.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

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



Appendix B: Performance Indicators 2025/6

Indicator	Reporting period	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4/ Outrun
1. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	53.8			
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	91.8			
3. % businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.3			
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.7			
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	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	42.9%			



	indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future					
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	3/11			
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	2.17 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		NA	
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA		NA	
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	Annually	NA	NA	NA	



against revenue budget)					
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Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2025-26

Published on 4th July 2025



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Malvern Hills
District Council
www.malvernhillsgov.uk



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



Worcester
CITY COUNCIL



WYCHAVON
DISTRICT COUNCIL
good services, good value



Wyre Forest
District Council

Foreword

Written by **Simon Wilkes** (Director of Regulatory Services)

Welcome to the first activity report for 2025/26. It follows the familiar format that Board members will have seen many times and, whilst the detail covers the period 1st April to 30th June 2025. Figures in the graphs and tables will allowing comparison with the data in previous periods.

Stray dog numbers continued to be high due to new contracts with other authorities, and managing the space with kennelling partners has been taxing at times. Numbers are slightly higher than last year and well above the one previous to that.

Food cases (complaints and enquiries,) were slightly above the established trend in Q1. Interventions were slightly down on previous years, but still demonstrate a good number of interventions and again the food secotr continues to show good levels of compliance. Health and safety work also generally following trends during this period. One fatality was reported during Q1, but after some work officers realised that the location wasa ctually just over the border in Herefodshire, so handed the case across to Environmental Health colleagues there.

Information requests showed another spike in activity and, while requests for support in the planning system dropped marginally compared to Q4 last year, the overall trend remains upward and Q1 had the second highest number of requests per quarter in the past 3 years. Last year was clearly the busiest year of the last three, and Q1 suggests there is no respite in view.

Overall, Licensing work involving both applications and complaints/ enquiries remained around the trend line during quarter 1, with complaints and enquuries slightly down but applications slightly up.

Pollution cases started the year on the increase, with 553 cases approaching the level achieved in Q1 of 2023/4 and well above the 334 in Q4 last year. A relatively good spring is likely to have contributed to this and, with a hot, dry summer we anticipate this summer as having been a busy one for nuisance complaints. If so, this will demonstrate what I have always said about nuisance complaint levels appearing inextricably linked to the weather. Public Health related complaints (accumulations, vermin, public burials, etc,) appear to have started more or less on trend for the year.

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

Many thanks.



Community Environmental Health

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

Quarter One

Quarter 1 was a challenging time for your Community Environmental Health Team, with some very complex and challenging cases coinciding with the retirement of one of the Principal Officers who led on noise and pollution issues and some officers requiring extended and unforeseen periods of leave. Recruitment has proven to be very difficult due to the nationally recognised shortage of qualified environmental health officers but remains ongoing.

Following receipt of a Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 notification, an accident investigation was carried out into a Jewson DIY outlet in Redditch. A Forklift truck had reversed into and run over the right foot of a window fitter from a local company, who was collecting building materials from the branch. He was attended by a paramedic and taken directly to hospital with multiple foot fractures and dislocated toes.

The Parent Company was subsequently successfully prosecuted in Q1, found guilty of offences under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and on appeal against sentence fined £300,000 with costs to the sum of £11,029.

Sadly, investigations continued into the several fatalities notified to the team and covered in previous reports, with regular liaison and updates being made to the Coroner's Office.

There was on-going CEH involvement following the discovery of a rodent infestation and food product recall in respect of a retail warehouse in Kidderminster. Following the voluntary closure of the premises, legal proceedings were instigated for food hygiene offences. The company has entered a guilty plea, and sentencing has been set for December.

The new programme of pro-active food safety interventions commenced, and your Officers continued to work with food giant Muller as part of the Primary Authority arrangement whereby WRS provide assured advice nationally.

The investigation into continuing food offences at a Bakery in Malvern Hills DC escalated with a prosecution pre-hearing scheduled for June.

The end of season reviews were completed on the designated sports grounds and stands on behalf of the County Council, which include Worcester Warriors rugby, Worcester City football, Bromsgrove Sporting, Kidderminster Harriers and Worcester Racecourse.

Infection control investigations were undertaken into cases of norovirus and cryptosporidium across the district, and an Officer was deployed to oversee an exhumation.

Major works in default were undertaken to resolve a long-standing drainage issue in Barnt Green. An old septic tank system and soakaway at a residential property had failed, giving rise to discharges of sewage across the property and into the road. The remedial works included the installation of a modern packaged sewage treatment plant with consented discharge into the highway drainage system, avoiding the need for a new soakaway which would have been costly and disruptive and prone to future failure.

In nuisance work, Officers are working with the respective partner legal teams following appeals against abatement notices served on Padel Courts in Bromsgrove District and a noisy water tank in a block of flats in Worcester City. Both unusual and novel issues.

Licensing

Written by **Kiran Lahel** (Licensing And Support Services Manager)

Quarter One

It is apparent from the data presented that licensing applications have once again followed previous trends and numbers have again increased this quarter. Officers themselves have noted a larger increase, and this has largely been due to the number of early TEN's being submitted for events and a high number of three year licence renewals due in April this year for Wyre Forest. On a positive note, we can see that complaints and queries are reducing, and this is largely due to the triaging process and the steady introduction of Victoria Forms our online form submission process. The team have worked hard on creating detailed FAQ's and piloting the forms with key stakeholders prior to being rolled out.

A number of key areas have been noted to have increased officer input this quarter and have required either working with colleagues within the licensing team and Community Environmental Health, third parties or West Mercia Police.

Pavement Licensing

With all policies now introduced across the districts there has not only been an increase in application forms for this licence but also some non compliance visits required. Although work has commenced prior to summer there will be a requirement for another pavement licensing audit to take place prior to next spring and summer to ensure that everyone that requires a licence should have one in place. The introduction of the permanent scheme has allowed for a renewal licence which reduces the cost for businesses that already had a licence under the temporary regime.

Animal Licensing

Applications are again increasing in this area of work with more applications being received by the team for new licences. A project looking at 5* rated premises and undertaking interim visits by officers have unfortunately highlighted that not all businesses are keeping up standards and requirements as set out in the guidance long after an inspection has been carried out. As a result, a number of premises have had their licence suspended with officers providing advice and guidance to licence holders of the improvements required so that suspensions can be lifted. In this licencing regime if businesses have their star rating changed, or licence suspended or revoked they have a right of appeal to the first tier tribunal.

Taxis

Several districts have now been in touch through either Councillors, Licensing Chairs and operators or licence holders themselves to discuss the presence of 'Uber' in their areas and what can be done to prevent such a large presence. A report has been produced by the team and has started to be taken through the Licensing Committees in each district to explain the legislation and the limited amount of powers officers have. However, on a positive note the teams have also been engaging with colleagues at Wolverhampton City Council to arrange joint enforcement and compliance visits at night.

Joint Engagement

Officers have seen an increase in engagement activity on SAGs/Event Management Plans for large festivals jointly with community environmental health colleagues. There are several large recurring festivals over the summer periods where event holders are getting in touch early to ensure there are no problems however there have also been a few new festivals that are receiving increasing number of concerns due to the nature of them taking place near residential properties. If objections are received for these events not covered by a TEN then these would need to go to a licensing Sub Committee to be determined.

Technical Services

Written by **Mark Cox** (Technical Services Manager)

Quarter One

The team were focused on production of the **air quality** Annual Status Reports (ASRs) for the six Districts prior to the end of June deadline but also continued to work on the draft air quality strategy in the background. In addition, following the review of real time monitoring data with deployment of the Earthsense Zephyr monitors last year, a number have been relocated.

As well as reviewing a number of priority sites, work on **contaminated land** has largely focused on the continued digitisation of records to enhance the services ability to respond to Environmental Information Requests.

In relation to **Planning and Environmental Enforcement**, a total of 9 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for fly-tipping and littering, and four Community Protection Warnings which progressed to four Community Protection Notices have been issued. In general, most planning enforcement matters are resolved by informal means or regularisation (through granting of planning consent retrospectively).

The number of **dogs** being reported as strays remains high and for quarter one is over 100 more than last year. The poor condition that a significant proportion of the dogs are found in is a worrying trend, such as a French Bull dog with a large mammary tumour, and others with a variety of infections, mange and emaciated. We also had a number of very young puppies and very old dogs, at 17 and 18 years of age. Such cases are difficult to cater for in terms of welfare whilst looked after by the Council and often presents a difficult task in obtaining a rehoming placement when not claimed. Unfortunately we have had an outbreak of parvovirus which is a highly contagious disease for dogs.

Towards the end of 2024, the Home Office announced that current guests in the UK under the **Homes for Ukraine** (HfU) scheme are eligible to apply for the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme. As nearly half of the guests on the HfU scheme arrived between April and July 2022 in Bromsgrove and Redditch, the team experienced a particularly busy period the first quarter of this financial year, dedicating significant time to reminding guests to apply and assisting them throughout the application process.

Support was also provided in cases where application decisions were delayed beyond expected timeframes. Unfortunately, one notable case involves a guest who arrived as an unaccompanied minor and applied for her UPE in May 2025. As of the end of Q1, she has yet to receive a decision. This delay has caused considerable distress, as it prevented her from attending a planned university trip to the United States as well as a long-awaited home visit to Ukraine. Such cases are emotionally taxing for the guests and time-consuming for the support workers.

While the Homes for Ukraine scheme has generally received positive feedback, some challenges remain. In May, one host faced significant criticism from their family for their involvement in the scheme, ultimately leading to their withdrawal. As a result, the guest had to be relocated to temporary accommodation, a transition that was fully supported by the team.

During Q1 there were new arrivals across the 2 districts which WRS support with this work (4 adults and 4 children). There are currently 15 hosts in Bromsgrove (17 adults / 13 children) and 17 hosts in Redditch (20 adults / 9 children). Support Workers continue to provide assistance to all hosts and guests remaining on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, as well as to those guests who have transitioned to independent accommodation.

Dog Control

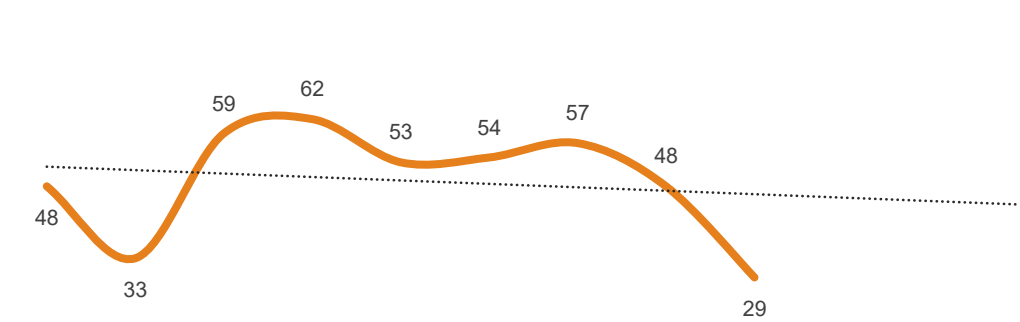
The data on this page shows the number of dog control cases (complaints, enquiries, and reports of lost or stray dogs) handled by the service over a three-year period. Complaints reported to WRS include reports of dangerous dogs, reports of dog fouling, and reports of dogs persistently straying. Complaints 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 during the first quarter is an increase of 27% compared to 2024/25 but an increase of 1% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 94% 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 37% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners although this figure varies significantly between local authorities and is around 50% across Worcestershire.

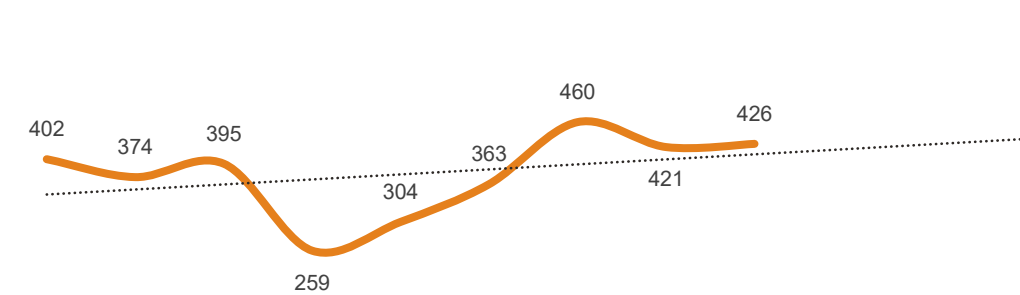
In general terms, the service receives a low number of dog control complaints and enquiries each quarter. Based on the 11 complaints received during the first quarter, 6 have related to dogs that were persistently straying from residential properties whilst 4 cases have related to dog fouling.

Complaints and Enquiries



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

Reports of Lost or Stray Dogs



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

Food Safety

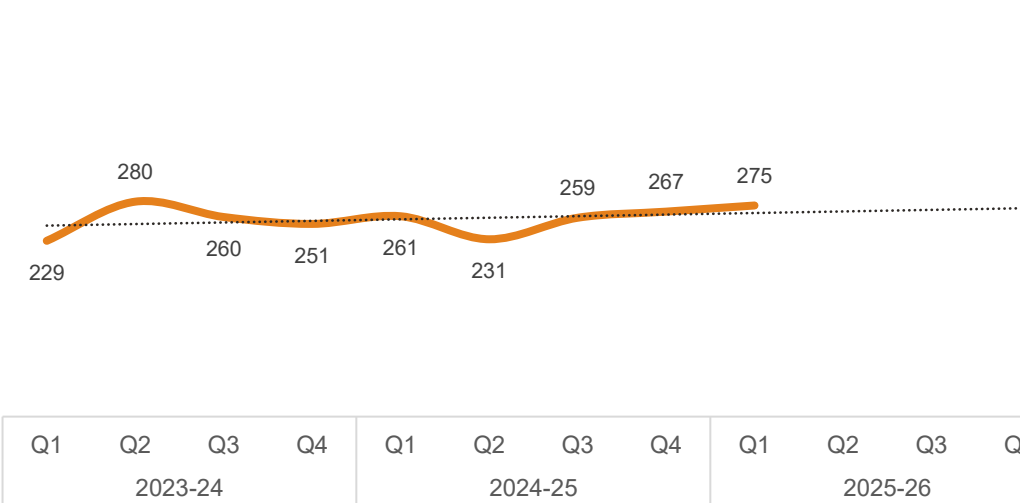
The data on this page outlines the number of food safety cases (complaints, enquiries, and notifications) handled by the service over a three year period. The data also outlines the number of food safety interventions undertaken at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Complaints reported to WRS relate to food products and premises, however, complaints regarding the composition and labelling of food (including allergen labelling) are primarily investigated by Worcestershire Trading Standards Service. 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

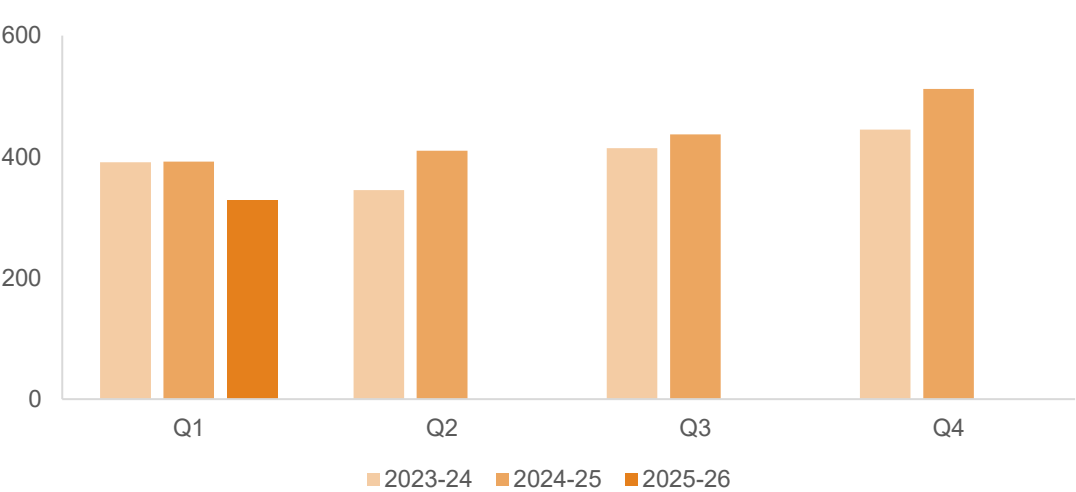
The number of cases received during the first quarter is an increase of 5% compared to 2024/25 but an increase of 20% compared to 2023/24. The service tends to receive a greater number of enquiries (including requests for business advice) than complaints. Based on the complaints received during the first quarter, however, 72% have related to issues with food products (such as poor quality food or food containing a foreign object) whilst 28% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices at food businesses.

Based on the 329 interventions undertaken during the first quarter, 5% resulted in a business being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). In parallel with previous quarters, however, a higher proportion of non-compliant ratings were issued to the hospitality sector (such as takeaways and restaurants) or small retailers. To find out more about food hygiene ratings, please visit <https://ratings.food.gov.uk>.

Complaints and Enquiries



FHRS Interventions



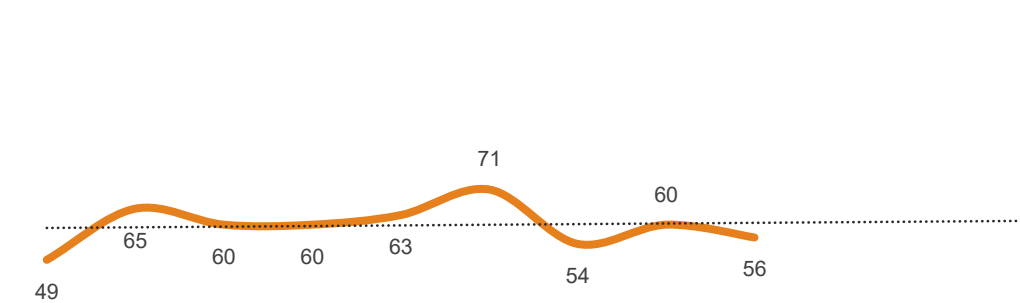
Health & Safety

The data on this page outlines the number of health and safety cases (complaints, enquiries, and reports of accidents in the workplace) handled by the service over a three-year period. 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

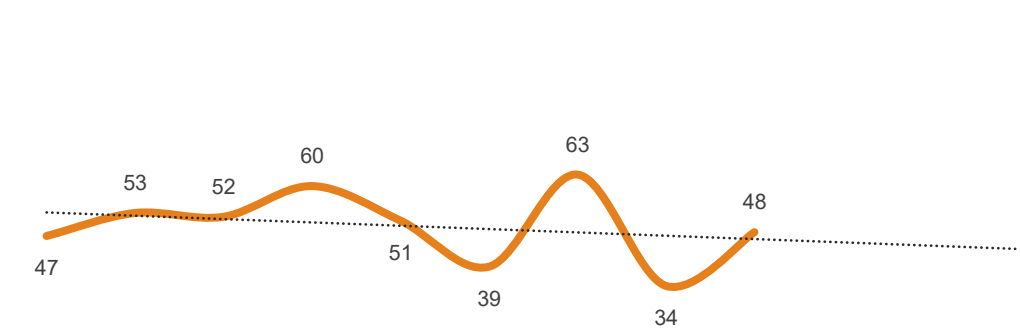
The number of cases received during the first quarter is a reduction of 9% compared to 2024/25 but an increase of 8% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 46% of cases have been reports of accidents in workplaces with most cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. In parallel with previous quarters, most accidents have occurred due to slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level or from height). Sadly, the service investigated a fatality during quarter one after a volunteer was struck by a vehicle.

Complaints and Enquiries



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2024-25			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2025-26			

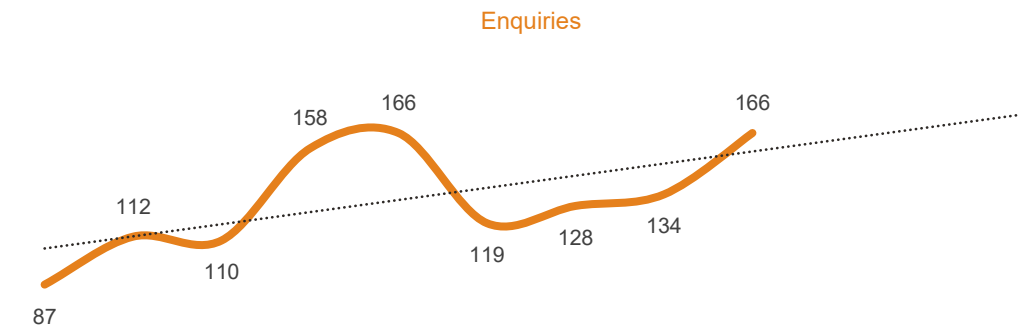
Accident Reports



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2024-25			
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2025-26			

Information Requests

The data on this page outlines the number of information requests handled by the service over a three-year period. Requests for information are generally received from the public, or private sector companies, and are made under the Environmental Information Regulations, the Freedom of Information Act, and the Data Protection Act (including Subject Access Requests). The service also handles requests for information from other local authorities, or law enforcement agencies, for the prevention and detection of crime and/or the apprehension and prosecution of offenders.



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

Licensing

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

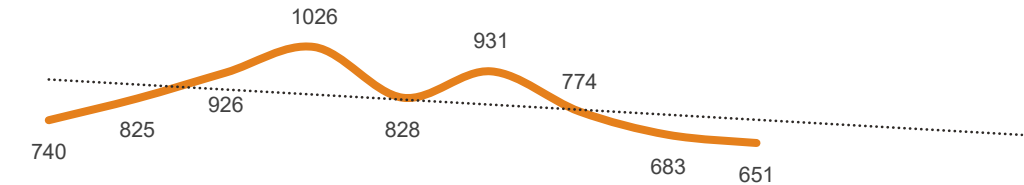
- Alcohol and Entertainment
- Animals
- Caravans
- Gambling
- Scrap Metal
- Sex Establishments
- Skin Piercing
- Street Trading, Amenities, and Collections
- Taxis

Page 57
Comments

The number of cases received during the first quarter is a reduction of 12% compared to 2024/25 but an increase of 3% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 71% of cases have been applications and registrations with 28% of cases relating to tempoary events and 27% of cases realting to hackney carriage or private hire vehicles.

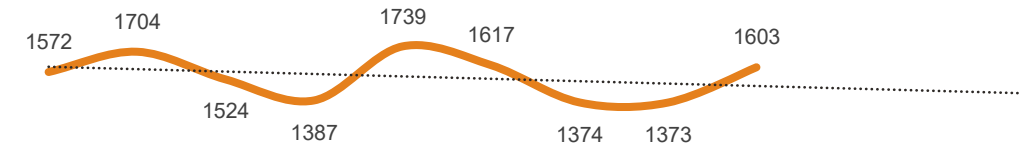
In general terms, the service receives a higher number of enquiries (such as queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions) compared to complaints. Based on the complaints received during the first quarter, however, approximately 38% have related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards) and 30% have related to alcohol licensing (businesss breaching the lciensing objectives). A further 9% of complaints have related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.

Complaints and Enquiries



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

Applications and Registrations



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

Planning

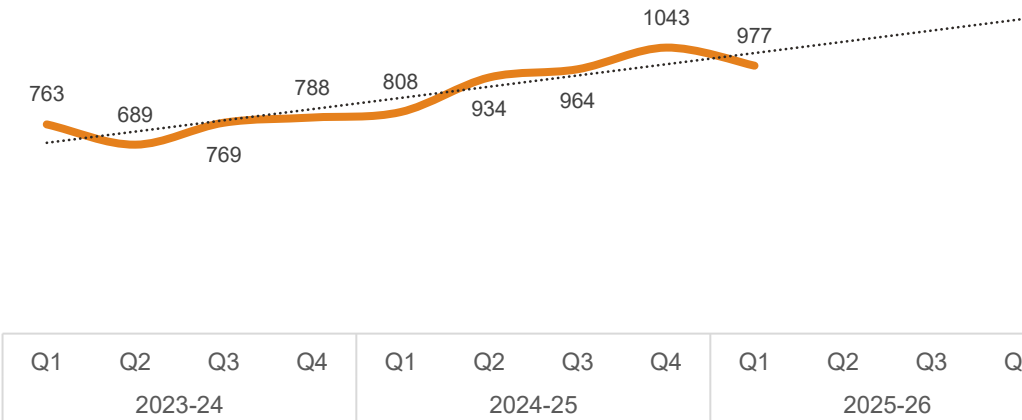
The data on this page outlines the number of planning enquiries handled by the service over a three-year period. Planning enquiries processed by WRS are either consultations or requests to discharge planning conditions, however, enquiries only relate to the following areas:

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

Comments

The number of enquiries received during the first quarter is an increase of 21% compared to 2024/25 and an increase of 28% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 93% of enquiries were consultations for air quality, contaminated land, or nuisances; whilst approximately 1 in 4 enquiries were processed (on a contractual basis) on behalf of other local authorities.

Planning Enquiries



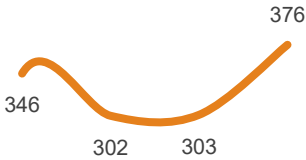
Planning Enforcement & Enviromental Crime

The data on this page outlines the number of planning enforcement and enviromental crime cases (complaints and notifications) handled by the service over a three-year period. Complaints reported to WRS include reports of fly-tipping, littering, and planning breaches at residential or commercial premises. The planning enforcement and enviromental 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 fuctions. The figures presented show a combined total of incidents and, based on the 376 cases investigated during the first quarter, approximately 65% have been reports of fly-tipping whilst 32% have related to planning breaches at residential or commercial properties.

Complaints and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

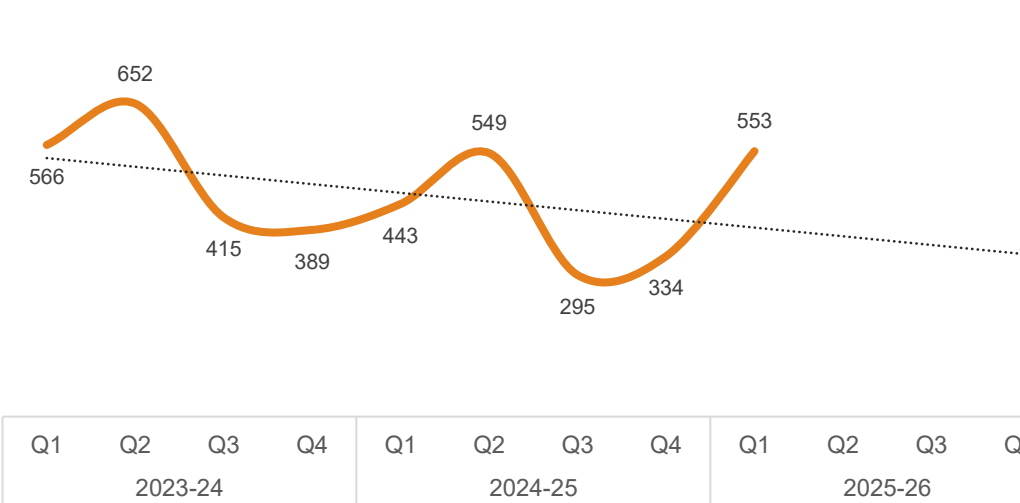
Pollution

The data on this page outlines the number of pollution cases (complaints and enquiries) handled by the service over a three-year period. Complaints reported to WRS include reports of nuisances (noise, light, odour, smoke) resulting from domestic, commerical, or agricultural activity and notifications of contamination incidents.

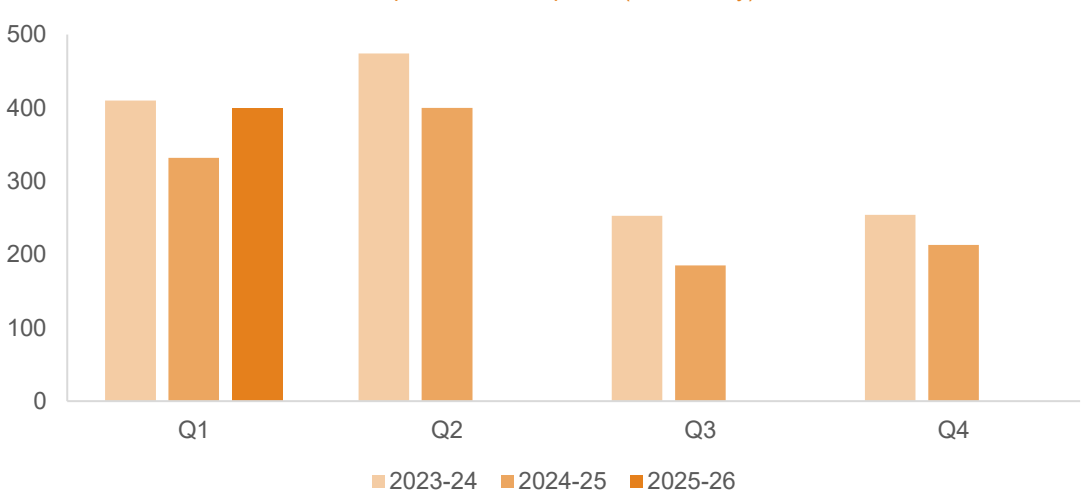
Comments

The number of cases received during the first quarter is an increase of 25% compared to 2024/25 but a reduction of 2% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 91% of cases have been reports of nuisances with around 45% of cases relating to noise from domestic properties (such as noise from barking dogs or audi-visual equipment). In parrallel with other quarters, other prominent nuisances were nosie from hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and dust from construction sites.

Complaints and Enquiries



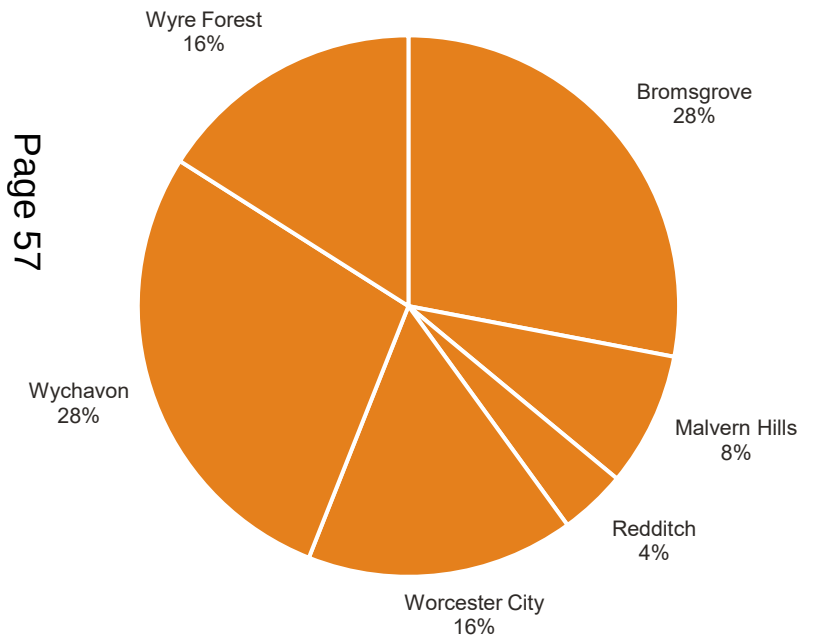
Complaints and Enquiries (Noise Only)



Noise

The data on this page outlines the wards in Worcestershire which have the highest rates of noise pollution cases. It also shows the districts where 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 2026. Where a ward is highlighted, it was also one of the top 10 wards featured in the 2024/25 Activity Report.



Ward	Total	Population	Rate
Droitwich Central	5	2,621	1.91
Little Hampton	10	5,899	1.70
Dodderhill	4	2,809	1.42
Wythall East	4	2,965	1.35
Perryfields	2	1,557	1.28
Catshill South	4	3,241	1.23
Hagley East	3	2,647	1.13
Drakes Broughton	3	2,711	1.11
Aggborough And Spennells	9	8,774	1.03
Barnt Green And Hopwood	3	2,951	1.02
Wythall West	3	2,979	1.01
Saint Peters Parish	5	5,310	0.94
Wribbenhall And Arley	5	5,381	0.93
Baldwin	2	2,216	0.90
Bedwardine	7	8,107	0.86
Woodbury	2	2,327	0.86
Headless Cross And Oakenshaw	7	8,282	0.85
Foley Park And Hoobrook	9	10,689	0.84
Great Hampton	3	3,677	0.82
Saint John	7	8,736	0.80
Norton	3	3,876	0.77
Droitwich West	4	5,217	0.77
Cathedral	9	11,760	0.77
Bredon	2	2,645	0.76
Broadwaters	7	9,381	0.75

Public Health

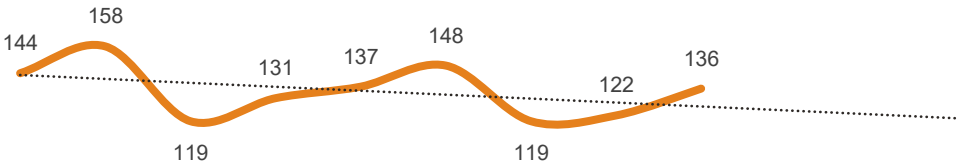
The data on this page outlines the number of public health cases (complaints and enquiries) handled by the service over a three-year period. The data also shows the number of domestic subsidised treatments carried out by contractors. Complaints reported to WRS include reports of accumulations and reports of pests due to the activities of local residents or businesses. Pest control treatments are offered by five of the districts, however, Wyre Forest District Council does not offer a subsidised pest control service.

Comments

The number of cases received during the first quarter is broadly comparable to 2024/25 but a reduction of 6% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 49% 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 26% of cases have related to accumulations at residential properties, however, such complaints commonly reference the presence of rodents or other pests.

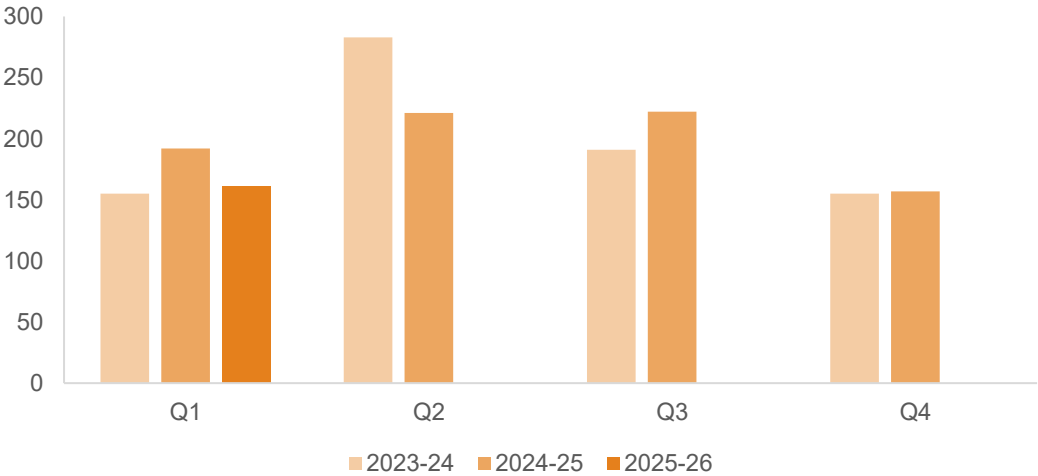
Based on the 161 domestic treatments undertaken by pest control contractors during the first quarter, 55% were due to issues with rats whilst 66% have taken place at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon district.

Complaints and Enquiries



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

Domestic Subsidised Treatments

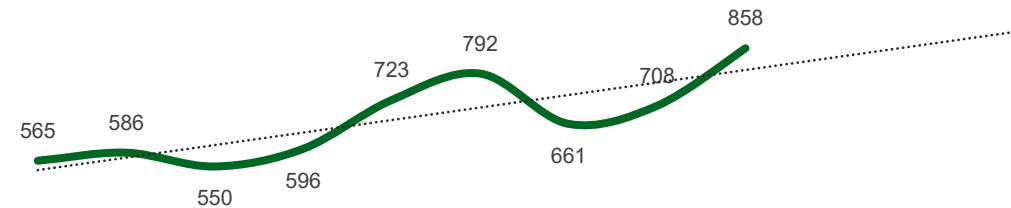


Bromsgrove

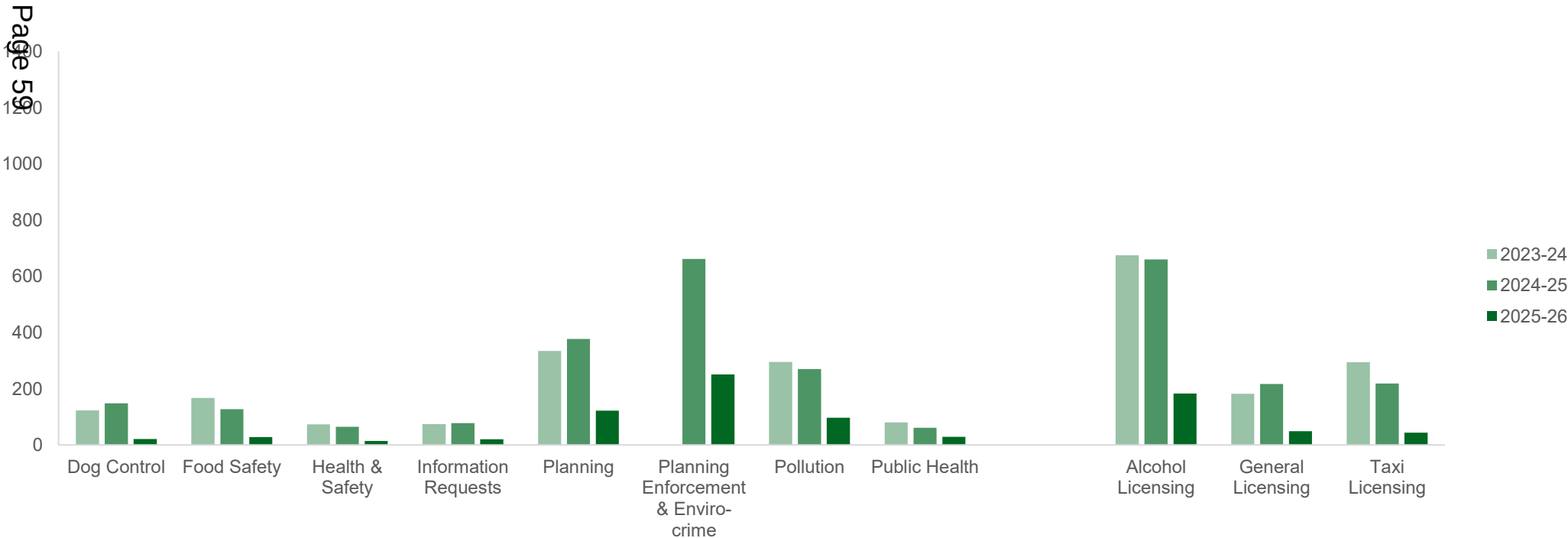
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Bromsgrove district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the service.

Note: The recent increase in cases can be attributed to the additional functions (enviro-crime and planning enforcement) now being delivered. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2026. In addition, the Y axis on the chart below has been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

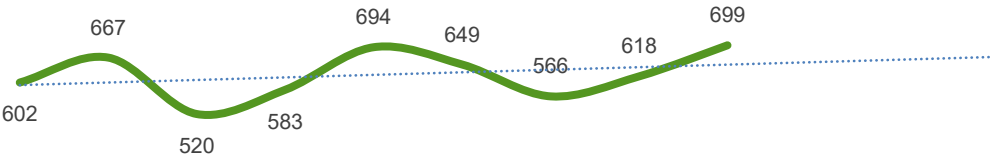


Malvern Hills

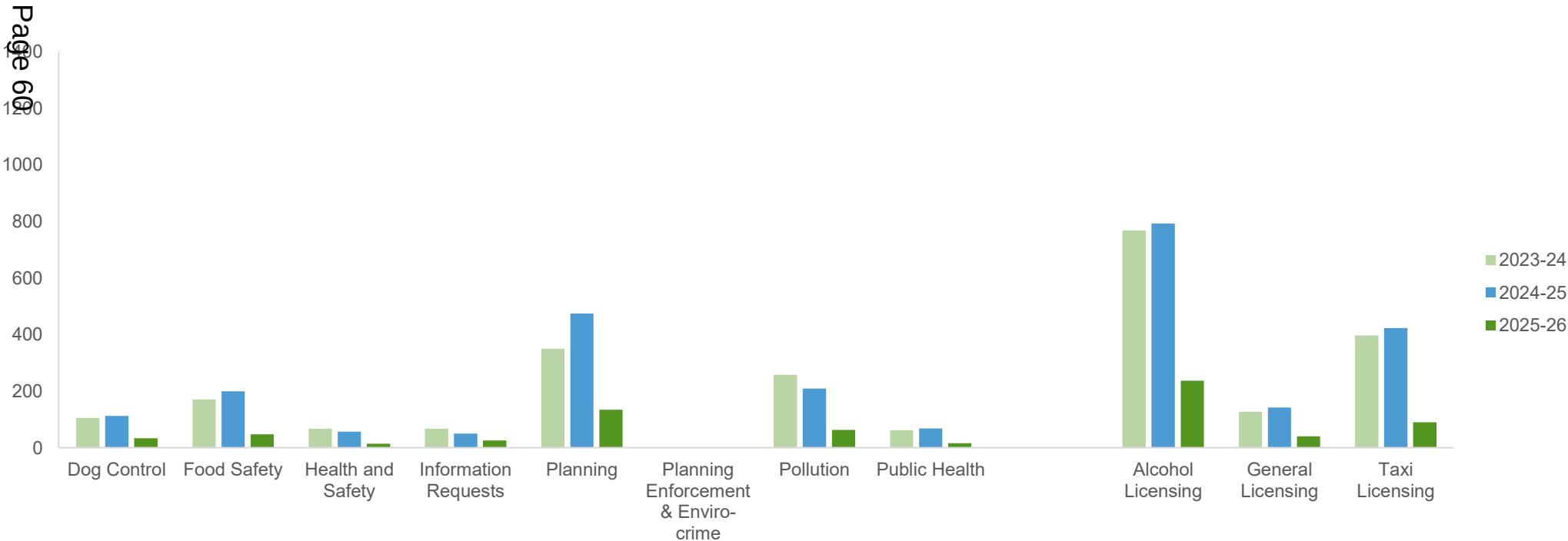
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Malvern Hills district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the service.

Note: The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2026. In addition, the Y axis on the chart below has been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notificaitons



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

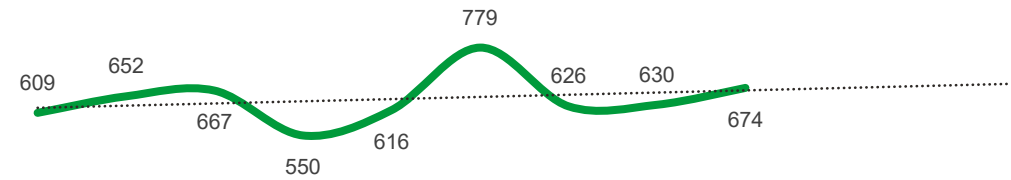


Redditch

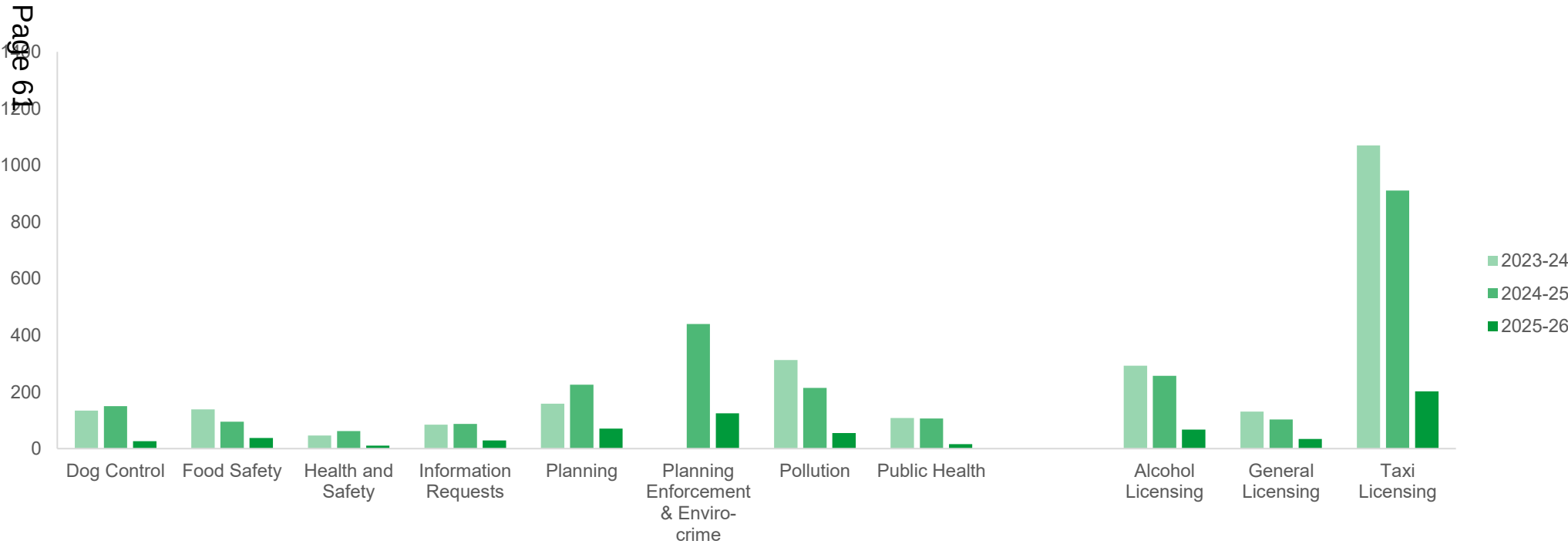
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Redditch district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the service.

Note: The recent increase in cases can be attributed to the additional functions (enviro-crime and planning enforcement) now being delivered. The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2026. In addition, the Y axis on the chart below has been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notifications



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

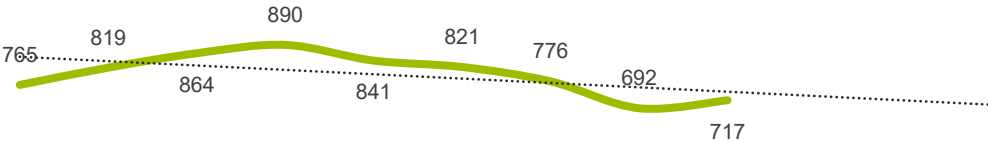


Worcester City

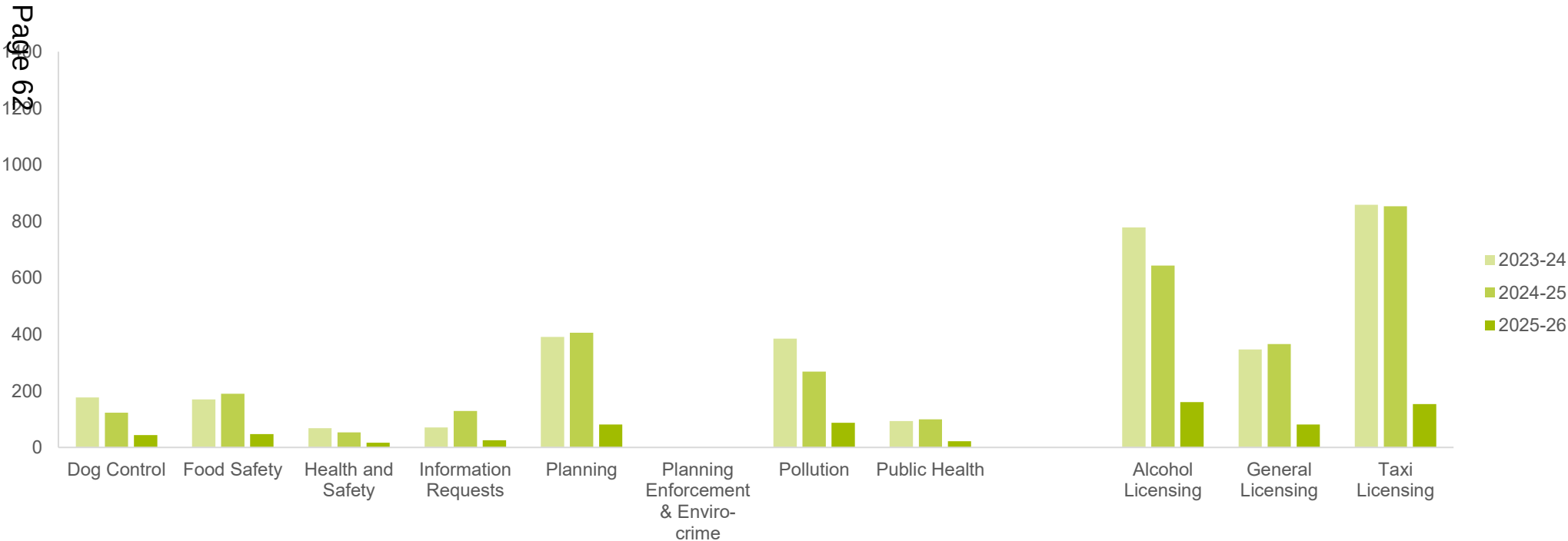
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Worcester City district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the service.

Note: The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2026. In addition, the Y axis on the chart below has been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notificaitons



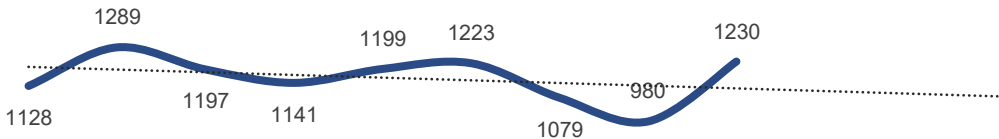
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			



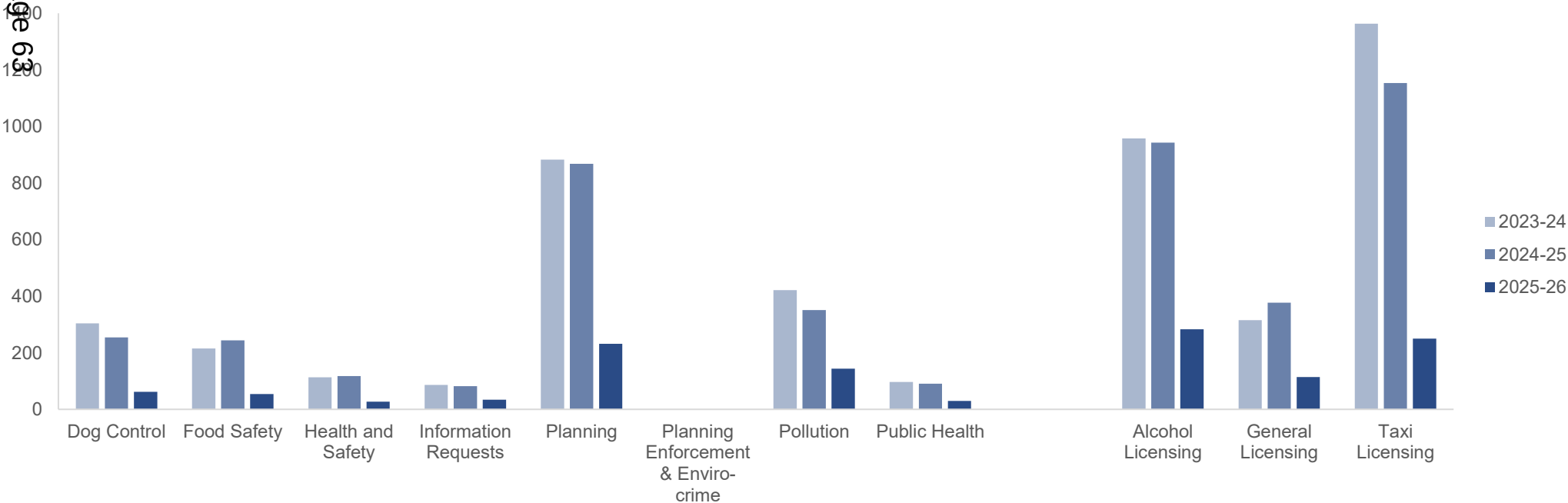
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Wychavon district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the service.

Note: The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2026. In addition, the Y axis on the chart below has been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notificaitons



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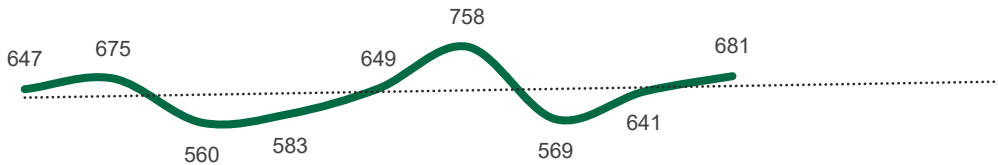
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Wyre Forest

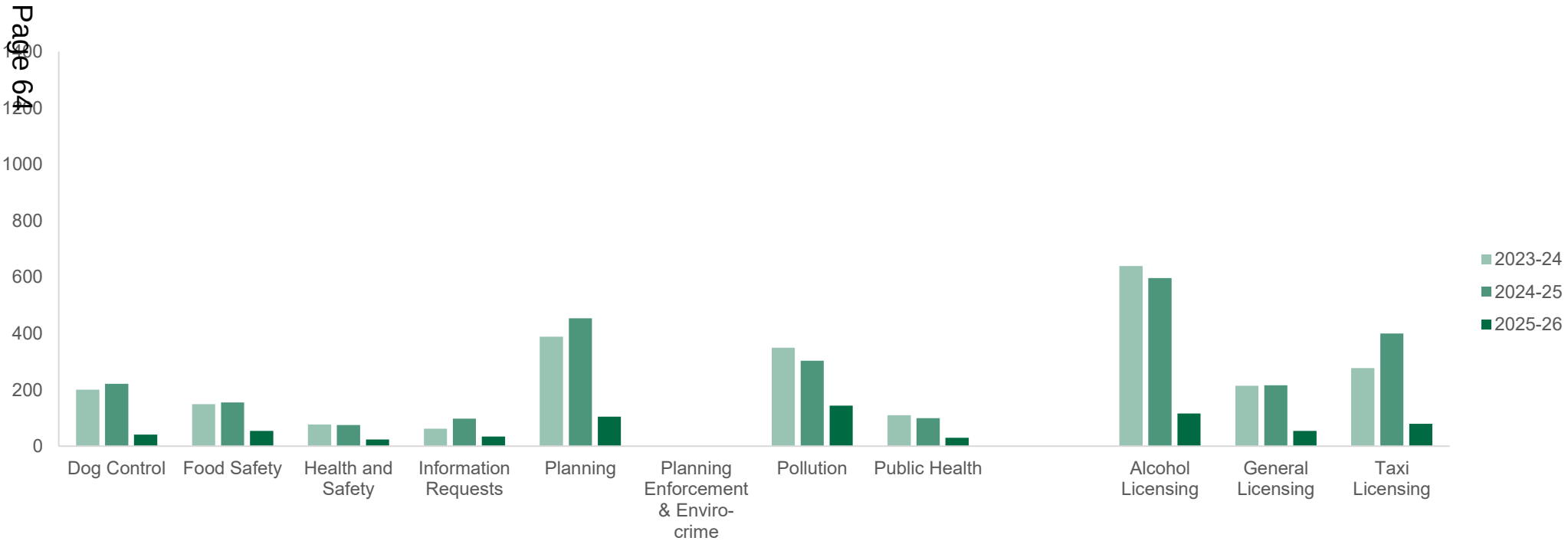
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Wyre Forest district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the service.

Note: The figures for the current year are cumulative and will continue to increase until the end of year report is published in April 2026. In addition, the Y axis on the chart below has been standardised so the level of demand received against each function can be broadly compared to other districts.

Complaints, Enquiries, Applications, and Notificaitons



Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			

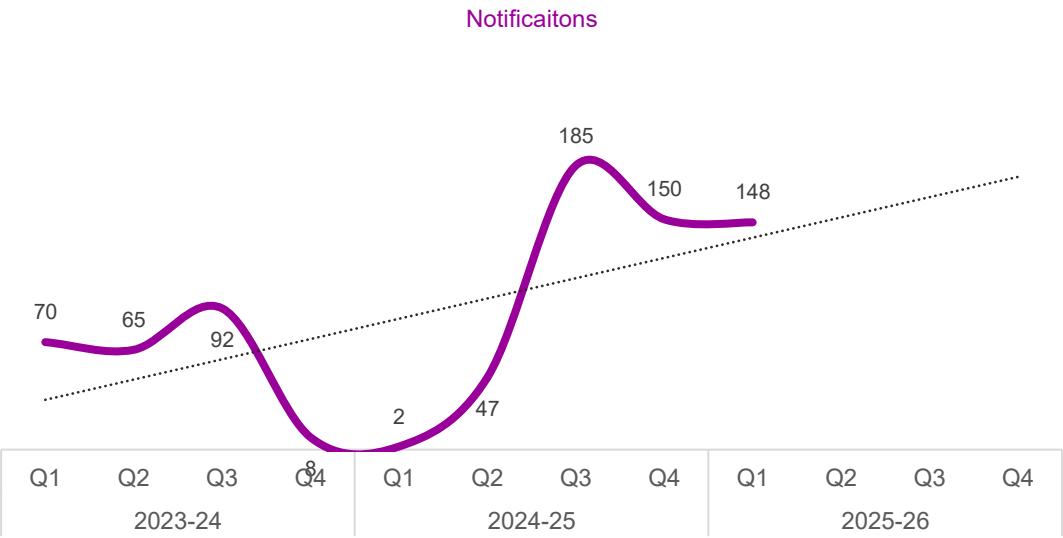


Birmingham City

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

We currently, and historically, have only ever provided services in relation to dog control. We commenced provision of an out of hours stray dog kennelling, reuniting with owners and rehoming of unwanted stray dog service which continued until Q1 2022-23 with finders dropping off dogs out of hours which they had found. Unfortunately we lost the use of the kennels we were primarily using to service this contract and, as a result, changed the contract delivery to include collection of stray dogs. This increased the number of dogs received, kennelled and rehomed, reducing the number of dogs Birmingham City might see as strays in the future. In Q4 2023-24, the out of hours contract arrangements with Birmingham ceased with assistance being provided on an ad hoc basis only until a new contract for kennelling of all Birmingham stray dogs commenced.

The new contract arrangement, which started on 1st September 2024, includes the receipt of stray dogs (deposited by Birmingham City Dog Wardens) to our kennelling facilities, where we facilitate reunification, rehoming or where a banned or dangerous dog, arrange euthanasia. We envisage there to be in excess of 1200 stray dogs a year received through this contract. Our experience since the new contract is that 50% of the XL Bully dogs we receive as strays are from Birmingham City Council area. Of the other dogs seized as strays, a significant proportion are larger bull or status breeds.



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 recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Cheltenham Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Having said that, post-pandemic stray dog numbers have been increasing year on year following the issues widely reported about dog socialisation and anxiety since as well as the current cost of living crisis.



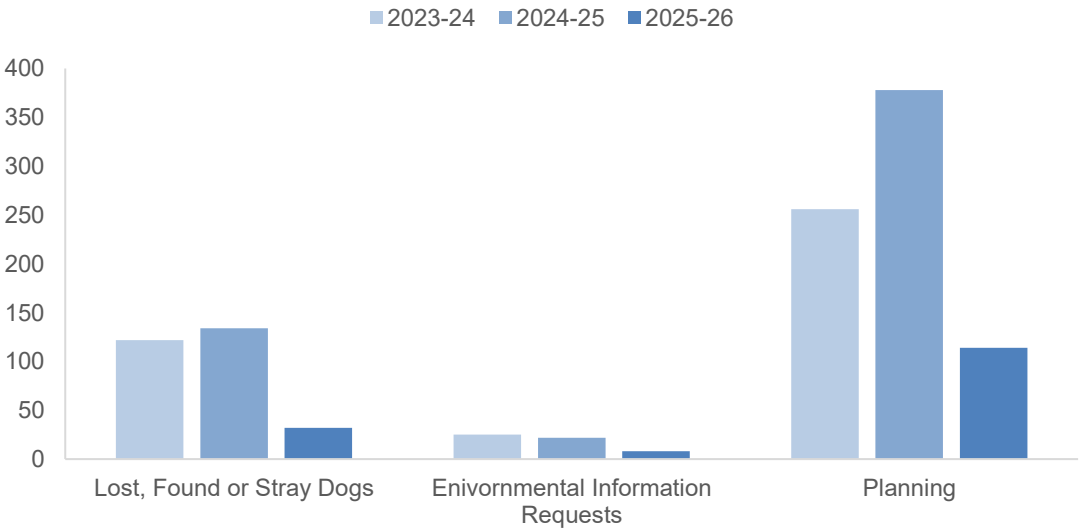
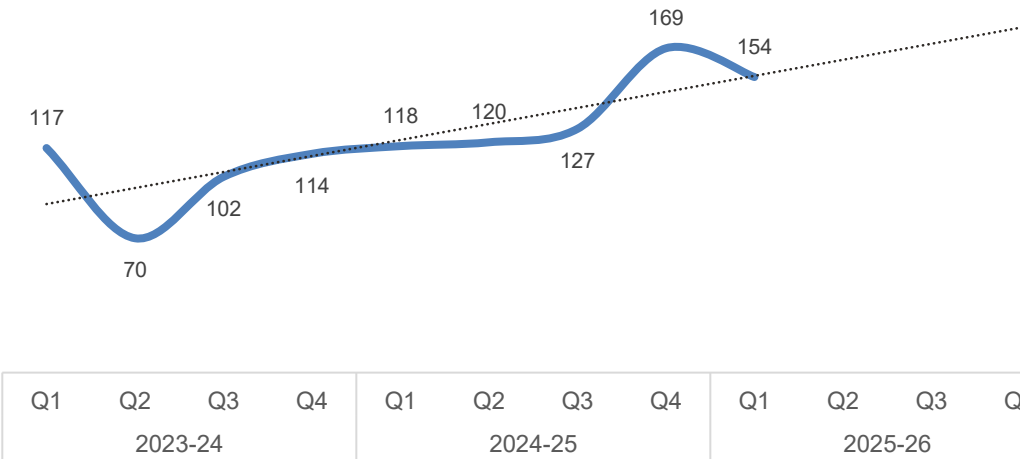
Gloucester City

The 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 recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Gloucester City Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. The numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as the numbers are plateauing and there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

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

Enquiries and Notifications



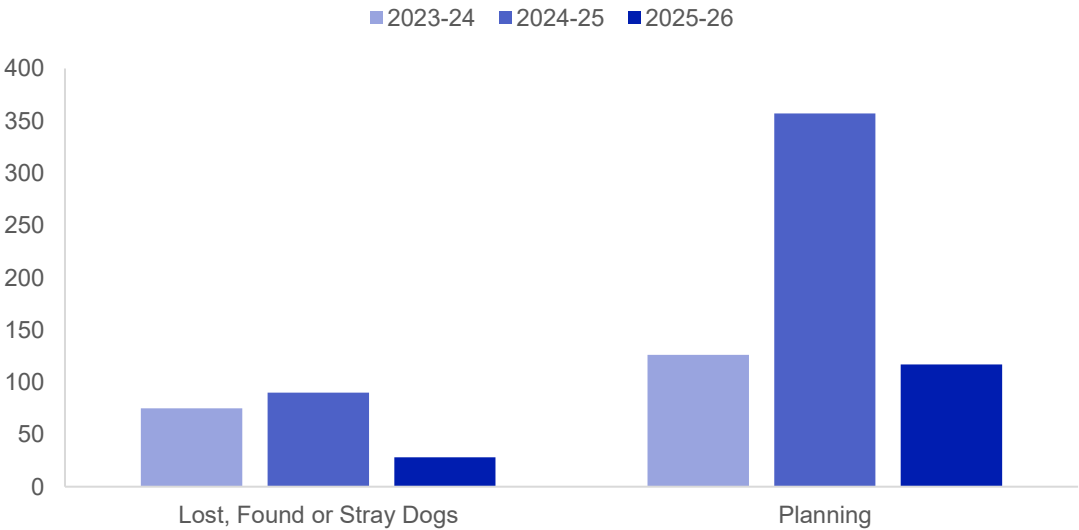
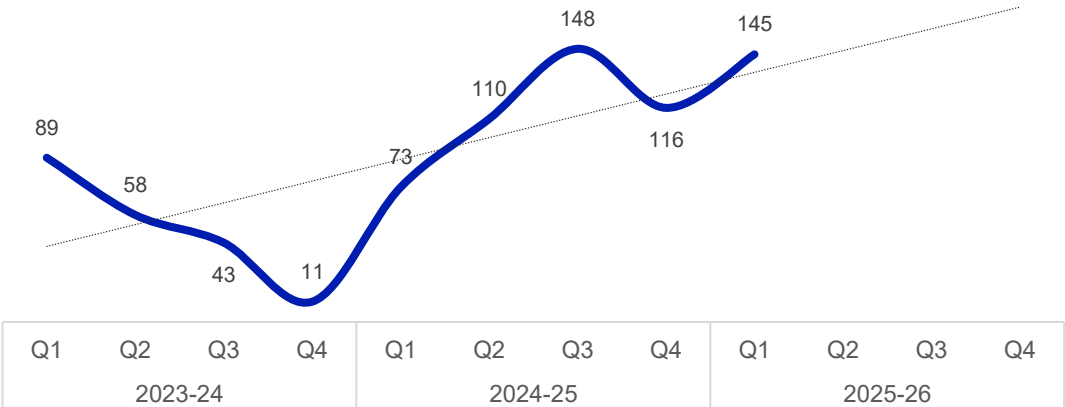
Tewkesbury

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 recently renewed and has been highly successful in reducing stray dog numbers for Tewkesbury Borough Council as well as utilising existing WRS resource and expertise. Such arrangements enable economies of scale to be realised and the continued retention of valuable assets to the benefit of Partner Authorities. As with other Gloucestershire and Worcestershire authorities, the numbers of stray dogs are reducing annually, however, this is being closely monitored as there have been recent increases in the number of abandoned strays in other areas due to the cost of living crisis and post-COVID behaviour changes.

In addition to dog control activity, the service has recommenced the provision of advice to Planning Officers on nuisance and air quality matters, following cessation of the service in Q4 2023-24 following a successful recruitment campaign.

Enquiries and Notifications





WRS Board

Date: 25th September 2025

Briefing on firework controls

Recommendation	That Members note the contents of this report.
Background	For several years, Councilors at both district and county level have had a range of issues raised with them in relation to fireworks. This paper is intended to provide support for members in dealing with these questions as the legal position gives local government very limited influence over the use of fireworks by members of the public.
Introduction	Fireworks are now used for a range of celebrations, prompted possibly by their use at the Millennium celebrations in 2000. Members of the public can legitimately use fireworks at all times of the year, although most licensed premises only offer them for limited periods. Very few premises hold a license that allows sales all year round. Worcestershire County Council is the licensing authority for the storage of explosives. Going back 10-20 years, around 100-120 premises would be licensed annually to store fireworks, but this number has been falling and only 63 have applied for this fireworks season. Most sell them for limited periods around Bonfire Night, (usually 3 weeks before and 1 week after,) and for a short time around the New Year period. Only 2 businesses in the county have a license to sell fireworks all year round. Worcestershire County Council is also responsible for enforcing the legal provisions requiring that fireworks sold in the county are manufactured to the relevant standard and that they are not sold to minors (under 18s.)
Legislation and Standards	District councils have little legal role in controlling the use of fireworks, although they can prevent their use on their land or property by using contractual terms in hire agreements. Fireworks for retail sales must be manufactured to a specific European standard (EN 15947,) and it is a criminal offence to supply fireworks that do not comply. Enforcement is the responsibility of the County Council's Trading Standards team. This team is also responsible for dealing with the supply of fireworks to minors (under 18s.) Questions have been raised in some areas as to whether such products are inherently unsafe in the hands of members of the public, however, the assumption in law is that fireworks manufactured to the relevant standard if used as per their instructions should be reasonably safe

Licensing of Premises

The use of fireworks is not a licensable activity under the Licensing Act 2003, so public firework displays are not licensed by district councils. People undertaking public displays must ensure the health and safety of those attending and observe any civil law duty of care they may have to those in the vicinity, but beyond this, controls are limited, and councils have few powers to address activities.

Most firework displays are one-off events and, because of the transitory nature of noise from such displays, it is almost certain that a single display, by itself, is not going to be statutory nuisance that could be dealt with under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, especially if the terminal hours outlined in law are observed. It is possible that persistent use of fireworks might fall into these provisions so where, for example, a wedding venue persistently used fireworks as part of its offer for celebrating, this may be subject to complaints about nuisance and could potentially fall foul of the law. Officers would need to consider, amongst other things, the duration of each fireworks event and the timing. If these were very regular and later in the evening, it might be determined as a statutory nuisance but again, for a well-managed business, the likelihood of this is limited.

Currently there is a noise limit for fireworks sold via retail of 120dB. These controls came into force in 2004. Before this date, some of the fireworks sold by retailers were louder. The 120dB limit does not apply to “display only” fireworks which may be significantly louder, although display operators tell our Trading Standards colleagues that many fireworks used in displays are of the categories where the 120dB requirement applies.

The law specifies the cut off times for the use of fireworks, which are 11pm for all nights except for bonfire night, when the cut off is midnight and 1am for New Year, Diwali and Chinese New Year celebrations. Enforcement of these curfew times is the responsibility of West Mercia Police, as are offences for letting fireworks off in a public place or other forms of misuse.

The County Council issues licenses to premises through its Trading Standards service. In line with government policy on de-regulation and limiting the burdens on business, officers will generally only visit if they have good reason. However, where a premise applies for a license, and it has not held one previously, that premise will be visited to ensure that it is suitable and appropriate conditions will be attached to the license. Following the initial visit, officers will only license the premises for 12 months and, following this, the applicant can apply for longer, but officers will undertake a risk assessment of the premises to determine whether it is suitable for between one and five years. Guidance is provided by the service as part of the application process and via the service's website.

Both Trading Standards and WRS have strong intelligence links with both West Mercia Police and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, and the organisations share intelligence from members of the public on issues such as:

- Perceived risk in storage methods
- Underage sales
- Firework misuse

Where the intelligence picture suggests an issue exists either in a particular area or with a particular outlet, multi-agency joint visits can be organised quickly to tackle any issues around storage and warnings are given regarding sales to minors. Individual complaints about poor storage practices will be responded to directly due to the potential risks to the public and neighbouring properties. Most of these are dealt with through advice and warnings. Officers have the power to remove fireworks from premises

**Complaints from
the Public and
Government
response**

if they are being stored incorrectly or are not fit to supply. The County Council can also revoke licenses if the premises or person have become unsuitable. These occurrences are rare.

The Trading Standards team has not been made aware of significant issues with the misuse of fireworks in recent years. Only one incident was raised with them during the last firework season. Many of the issues raised by members of the public relate to what is currently the legitimate use of fireworks by other residents in their gardens, or the noise from one-off organised displays.

Officers regularly receive complaints around Bonfire Night about the use of fireworks, usually from pet owners who are concerned about their animals' welfare. Animal welfare organisations continue to lobby Parliament for changes to the law.

The Parliamentary Petitions Committee looked at the issue of fireworks in 2018 with input from a range of experts from the Health and Safety Executive, Trading Standards, Environmental Health, the National Police Chiefs Council and the National Fire Chiefs Council, as well as those calling for changes to the law. The Committee felt that an outright ban on sales of fireworks to the public risked unintended consequences including a black market in the products, however it did recommend that:

- The Government and agencies collate and publish data on problems associated with fireworks in a consistent way, to facilitate local responses.
- Legislation be introduced to empower local authorities to tackle this issue head on, so permits can be introduced in communities where the irresponsible use of fireworks is a particular problem for residents.
- Many consumer fireworks are packaged in a way that will appeal to children, creating a risk that children could be tempted to play or tamper with fireworks stored in the home, so the Government should act swiftly to remove this risk through new packaging regulations.
- The Government review the decibel level limit of consumer fireworks, with animal welfare in mind, with a view to setting a workable reduced decibel limit that would diminish the risks to animals' health.
- The Government should close a loophole around the storage by retailers of up to 5kg of fireworks without a licence. It should also review online sales of fireworks, particularly over social media, establishing a strategy to tackle illegal online sales.
- The Government fund and coordinate annual major, national awareness campaigns on responsible use of fireworks to raise awareness of the dangers of fireworks for those with health conditions such as PTSD or autism spectrum disorder.

With the pandemic intervening, we are not aware that these recommendations have been taken up by administrations after this. More recently, Justin Madders MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Business held an informal meeting with various business and other stakeholders on the use of fireworks to which representatives of the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO,) were invited. Colleagues report that the MP had previously expressed an interest in promoting the safe and responsible use of fireworks to reduce harm across communities, including low-noise fireworks of 90 decibels or below to protect animals and vulnerable individuals and those with sensory sensitivities. It appears this meeting was part of his commitment to meet with businesses, consumer groups and charities to hear concerns and explore solutions but to balance celebration with community wellbeing. ACTS will continue to monitor output from the Department to see if anything comes from this conversation.

Conclusions

In conclusion, councils have a limited formal role in regulating the use of fireworks. Most complaints about fireworks relate to the legitimate use of the products and concerns most often relate to the impact on pet animals and horses.

The use of fireworks is not a licensable activity under the Licensing Act 2003, so Councils cannot restrict activities using provisions in that legislation and the transitory nature of most firework use means it is unlikely to cause a statutory nuisance.

So, whilst officers have sympathy for those who are impacted by the noise or are concerned about the impact on their pets or other companion animals, even livestock, in the absence of changes in the law at national level, councils have little power to address such concerns and members of the public should be directed to their MPs as only Parliament can address the issues being raised.

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