

MINUTES

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2026, AT 4.33 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors I. Hardiman (Chairman), J. Spilsbury (Vice-Chairman), K. Taylor, C. Palmer, M. Dormer, K. Holmes, A. Scott, R. Deller and M. Goodge

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

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

31/25 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. J. Jones, (Bromsgrove District Council), J. Owenson (Malvern Hills District Council), and K. Henderson (Wyre Forest District Council).

32/25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

33/25 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 20th November 2025 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 20th November 2025 be approved as a correct record.

34/25 **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL TO DECEMBER 2025**

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 (s151) officer took the opportunity to briefly introduce herself in her new role and in attending her first meeting of the Board.

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 officer commented that she was aware that Members of the Board were kept well informed of

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) budgets by their own authorities s151 senior officers.

The WRS detailed revenue monitoring quarter 3 report provided Members with the projected outturn 2025/2026 of £8k surplus. Which was an estimation to the year-end based on the assumptions as detailed on page 21 of the main agenda pack.

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 officer stated that the revenue monitoring was looking good and that she had been pleasantly surprised by the income generated by WRS. The income generation team should be pleased. It was noted that any additional costs had been offset by additional income.

The question of the service being seen as 'Value for Money' was raised by Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC).

In responding the Director, WRS acknowledged that such questions had only arisen since WRS had taken over Planning Enforcement for BDC and that this had led to questions regarding the wider value for money of the shared service. Members were reassured that the Director, WRS reviewed expenditure for the six Districts in comparison with each Council's nearest Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) nearest neighbour group. These were Councils which CIPFA felt were similar, not necessarily geographically close together. The Director, WRS further stated that he was willing to share this information after the meeting with Board Members should they so wish.

Councillor M. Dormer, Redditch Borough Council (RBC) commented that it was very early days and there was very little activity prior to the take-over for WRS to make a comparison. Councillor M. Dormer stated that he was very happy with Planning Enforcement being taken on by WRS and that he had every confidence.

The Director, WRS further added that the Technical Services Manager's team worked very closely with the relevant planning officers for both BDC / RBC and had had to pick up some very long outstanding cases.

Some Members commented that this may be a perception, and that the information as detailed in the Activity and Performance Data, Quarter 3, 2025/2026, as shown on page 110 of the main agenda pack, showed that BDC was making the very most of WRS for Planning Enforcement and Environmental Crime.

RESOLVED that the Board

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

1.2 That partner Councils be informed of their liabilities for April – December 2025 in relation to Bereavements, as follows

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board
19th February 2026

Council	Apr-Dec 25 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	9
Malvern Hills District Council	7
Redditch Borough Council	6
Worcester City Council	14
Wychavon District Council	4
Total	40

1.3 That partner Councils be informed of their liabilities for 2025-26 in relation to Pest control, as follows

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2025/25 Pest Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	4
Wychavon District Council	23
Total	27

1.4 That partner Councils be informed of their liabilities for 2025-26 in relation to additional Technical Officers, as follows

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2025/26 Planning Enforcement / Envirocrime £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2025/26 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2025/26 Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	346	9	
Malvern Hills District Council		7	
Redditch Borough Council	178	2	
Worcester City Council		3	41
Wychavon District Council		16	
Wyre Forest District Council		10	
Total	524	47	41

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor M. Goode, Wychavon District Council took the opportunity to express his sincere thanks to WRS officers for the way in which they had handled one of the public burials involving someone he had known. Councillor M. Goode stated that it was carried out extremely well and was very professionally managed, and that it showed how good the service was at ensuring someone was there to give the deceased a dignified send-off.

35/25

FOOD SERVICE AND FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

The Director Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Food Service and Food Standards Agency (FSA) engagement report, for Members consideration.

As detailed in the report, the Agency was the main competent authority for food controls in England. The Agency had been pushing local authorities in recent years to increase their commitments to food law enforcement and to align activities more closely with the letter of the Food Law Code of Practice issued under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990.

This initially led to an increase in WRS establishment from 1st April 2024 of 5 full-time equivalent (FTE) on food work. The Agency continued to monitor the levels of performance and continued to raise concerns in the autumn, with threats to escalate their engagement process. Members were alerted of this at the November Board meeting where the budget was agreed with a caveat that officers may need to look at a further uplift in capacity. After engagement with senior officers and lead Members, WRS partners agreed to a further uplift in the WRS budget specifically for Food Safety Act enforcement.

This report explained the detail of this and how the additional expenditure would be deployed.

Members were made aware of the on-going engagement with the FSA during the November Board meeting. At that time, officers explained that in their most recent engagement with the Agency, it had become very clear that anything less than wholesale compliance or evidence of attempts to operate to full compliance with the Food Standards Agency Code of Practice would not be welcomed and challenge would continue.

Also at the November Board meeting, officers explained that they would be creating a revised action plan for the Agency which would hopefully address their concerns but as part of this they would also be looking at a time and motion document created by the Agency to get a clearer understanding of what resourcing might be required. Officers also agreed to look at staffing in our neighbouring county areas with those districts, to see if WRS were on a par with them.

As detailed on page 28 of the main agenda pack, the time and motion document had indicated that there was still a shortfall in necessary resourcing to deliver fully on the Code of Practice. It also appeared that the service had fewer officers than the collective Environmental Health services in either Warwickshire or Gloucestershire for delivering these activities

As previously explained to Members, the Agency's view was that authorities with:

- 250 food premises per dedicated FTE were well resourced and likely to achieve Code requirements.
- 350 food premises per dedicated FTE would be stretched in achieving Code requirements.
- 450 premises or more per dedicated FTE would flounder and not achieve Code requirements.

Members were further informed that the current allocation in WRS with the additional posts put the service at around 420 premises per FTE (around 13FTE being available for food hygiene work.) At the November Board meeting, the Director, WRS had provided Members with an example of the approximate costs of adding 3FTE Technical Officers to the establishment for food hygiene work. Adding this to the establishment would reduce the number of premises per FTE to just below the 350 premises figure and bring the service more in line with the collective provision in our two county neighbours.

On that basis, discussions had taken with the senior Partner Officers of the Board and given the relatively modest uplifts entailed, it was agreed that this could be built into the medium-term financial plans for the six partner authorities.

Senior Members were made aware and agreed to this course of action. This now left the need for Board Members to formally agree to the increase in establishment, which would then allow the Community Environmental Health (CEH) Manager to begin the process of recruitment to the newly created vacancies.

These new posts would be integrated into the two geographically arranged CEH Commercial units covering the east and west halves of the county, with their work areas divided along district lines (Malvern Hills, Worcester City, Wyre Forest, and Redditch. Bromsgrove, Wychavon.)

In their latest response to the submission of the revised action plan, The FSA Officer who had been liaising with WRS officers, had said,

"Thank you for your email and for the additional information provided which gives clear milestones in relation to clearing your backlog of interventions alongside those that become due in the programme for 25/26 and appears to be a realistic and achievable plan with the staff

you will have in place. We will monitor your progress against the milestones using the data provided in the 6 monthly enforcement returns; I may also contact you between returns for an update. I would be grateful if you anticipate a deviation from the plan if you could let us know.”

Since the Agency appeared to now believe that WRS had a realistic and achievable plan with the additional resources we would have in place, then they would mainly rely on the 6-monthly reporting that all local authorities were required to provide to assess our performance, it was hoped that WRS would be allowed to proceed with the work.

Board Members would no doubt want to be kept abreast of developments, so managers would look to further enhance the information provided as part of the quarterly reporting to the Board to ensure that Members could be confident of the progress against the plan and that the additional resources were working as was anticipated. As Members would no doubt recall from last time, bringing new staff into these roles was not straight-forward, so there may be a lag in getting permanent people into roles, but the service would be able to retain the services of competent Agency staff to help fill the gap for this period.

Members were therefore being asked to endorse the increase in establishment as outlined in the report. The details of the increase in budget was outlined below.

Appendix: Cost and impact on Partner Contributions

Council	2026-27 agreed %s	Total Partner Contribution 26-27 including Technical Officers	- Budget for Additional Food Employees	Total Partner Budget 2026-27
	%	£	£	£
Bromsgrove District Council	14.35%	962,522	24,602	987,124
Malvern Hills District Council	13.04%	575,692	22,360	598,052
Redditch Borough Council	17.56%	912,114	30,100	942,214
Worcester City Council	16.64%	758,018	28,529	786,547
Wychavon District Council	23.27%	1,026,659	39,893	1,066,552
Wyre Forest District Council	15.14%	668,476	25,946	694,422
Total	100.00%	4,903,481	171,430	5,074,911

Officers felt that this would be sufficient, given that Members had received and approved a full budget paper at the November Board meeting, and that the overall value involved was modest compared to the full budget.

The following sums, as detailed above, would be added to the base budget to cover the cost of the additional 3 posts. The total included an allowance for car allowance, IT equipment and training requirements to maintain competence.

Members referred to the November Board meeting minutes which referred to trainees or modern apprenticeships being taken on.

In response the Director, WRS explained that officers had wanted to recruit experienced officers, however, this was not achievable, officers would look at modern apprenticeships or potential graduates. The Director, WRS explained that a number of the universities offering Environmental Health degrees had modified their courses to act as apprenticeships to allow training to be covered by Apprentice Levy funding. The University of Wolverhampton was identified as the nearest offering this approach and could be considered if necessary.

In response to questions from Members about agency staff being utilised should it take time to recruit into the roles; the Director, WRS, explained that agency staffing costs would be roughly double the cost of an officer directly employed, therefore officers would only ideally use agency staff for a period of 6 months, and no longer. It was highlighted that, as with previous agency staff, officers would look to recruit agency staff who were interested in the role and had the ability and skillset to take on a permanent role.

RESOLVED that

- 1.1 the report be noted, and
- 1.2 Members agree the consequent increase in establishment that flows from the funding uplift as agreed by the partners.

36/25

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES SERVICE PLAN 2026/2027

The Director, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the WRS Service Plan 2026/2027.

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

The plan followed the pattern of previous years and had an Executive Summary to pick up on the main points. This year's plan continued to consider the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by the Department for Business and Trade (DBaT), as these provided a framework that allowed WRS to have a golden thread back to the priorities of the six partners and to link to the

requirements of the various national bodies that oversaw the work of WRS.

Whilst WRS had retained these for this purpose, the focus of this year's plan remained on the tactical priorities identified in the service's Strategic Assessment that had been refreshed for the coming 3-years. This piece of work reviewed the full data and intelligence picture and looked at emerging threats. The assessment recommended retaining our cross-cutting priorities but rolling more work into the following:-

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

As highlighted in the report, most aspects of business-as-usual fitted into these priorities, particularly the last where things like environmental permitting and food hygiene related to businesses outside of the night-time economy.

Again, a range of high-level activities against the 3 tactical priorities were identified within the plan so that Members were aware of the general focus of the workload. Below this would sit several plans, either team based or cross cutting that would be used to drive the actual business activities.

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

Although WRS did not yet have clarity on what form of unitary local government would replace the two tier arrangements in Worcestershire, the bids put forward by the partners gave a route for either the continuance of WRS as a shared service alongside Public Health if the decision was a north: south split, or to plug into a unitary county model at a suitable level in the event of that option being the Government's choice. This should give staff the confidence to focus on what needed to be done in the intervening period.

Working with businesses and other partners would remain essential in the coming year or two to generate income and mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes were delivered that matched the priorities of partners and stakeholders. Delivery for other local authorities also remained a key income generation strategy, supported by limited work for the private sector and any specific grant monies that WRS felt were worthwhile pursuing. WRS had built on our client-base post pandemic with new clients for dog-related support, and officers hoped that they would be able to identify new ones, although over time this would get harder especially as the unitary decisions became public and other

districts supported by WRS began to look closer to home at future solutions. Officers did however remain hopeful that this strategy would remain fruitful in the immediate future and even post-vesting day, some of the newly formed authorities may see the sense in continuing to buy support for certain functions from established expert teams.

Officers would continue to use intelligence where they could, to drive the business forward and the embedding of this approach and its associated processes would continue.

As with previous years, Members were being asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This was in order to meet one of the recommendations of the 2017 audit by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) who were keen that Members had a better understanding of the demand in this service area when they authorised the plan going forward. This year, details of the improvement plan sent to the FSA just after Christmas to help demonstrate the partners' commitment to attempting to meet the provisions of the Agency's statutory Code of Practice had been included.

The Risk Register had been updated to reflect the current position in areas like IT provision and development, staffing levels, and our reliance on contractual relationships for income. The threat from cyber-attack had become more real in recent years as the devastating consequences had been felt by colleagues in other local authorities elsewhere in the country. Officers continued to work closely with the WRS ICT host, Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC), in order to limit the risk of this and WRS officers received regular training and reminders of the threats faced. Our teams had for many years been using mobile and flexible work patterns which had yielded efficiencies but our reliance on ICT provision to deliver this did increase our vulnerability to disruption.

Members raised a number of questions with regard to mitigating cyber security, what specifically were WRS doing?

In response the Director, WRS, reassured Members that the Technical Services Manager, WRS liaised regulatory with their ICT host authority, at WFDC; as WRS slotted into their wider cyber security plan. The Technical Services Manager, WRS also liaised regularly with Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils ICT teams for which WRS relied on for some services, WRS were also included in their Business Continuity Plan.

Councillor A. Scott, Worcester City Council, thank the Director, WRS for a very useful plan. He also referred to one of the three priorities, namely

—

‘Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy’

Councillor A. Scott informed officers that he was aware of enforcement issues raised by businesses and residents, specifically with pavement

licenses and furniture being left outside of premises, making it hard to access and clean areas. Could enforcement be included in the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)?

In response the Director, WRS, informed Members that such enforcement was included in the relevant teams 'Team Plan.' Officers were aware of the issues raised by Councillor A. Scott. The WRS twelve KPI's had been agreed by the Board, however, officers could include relevant enforcement information in the quarterly Activity and Performance Data, should Board Members so wish.

Councillor A. Scott expressed his thanks and agreed that it would be useful to have information for Members to consider as to how enforcement was being managed and monitored.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, further responded and in doing so drew Members' attention to page 94 of the main agenda pack, which detailed information on Pavement Licensing. The team had looked at areas of compliance and non-compliance, as this had been included in the Licensing teams, Team Plan.

The Licensing and Support Services Manager, WRS, also responded to a question on the new primate licensing and in doing so informed Members that only one person had come forward for a primate licence. The WRS Communications Officer had engaged with vets and had produced a lot of communications on primate licensing, whereby officers had taken a couple of enquires following on from the communication releases.

RESOLVED that

- 1.1 the Worcestershire Regulatory Services, Service Plan 2026/2027 be approved, and
- 1.2 Members specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

37/25

ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA QUARTER 3 2025-2026

The Community Environmental Manager, WRS present the Activity and Performance Report, Quarter 3, 2025/2026.

The detail of the report focused on the third quarter of 2025/2026, but the actual data allowed comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

As detailed in the report, although the number of food complaints and enquiries had fallen during quarter 3, the overall number of food safety cases received during the year to date was 14% up compared to last year and 11% above the figure in 2023/24.

Of the 1,149 interventions undertaken during the year to date, only 4% had resulted in businesses being rated as "non-compliant" (i.e., were issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). A higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continued to be issued to the hospitality sector (such as takeaways and restaurants) or small retailers.

Health and safety complaints and enquiries remained on trend in quarter 3 but reported accidents fell, meaning the overall number of such cases received during the year to date was 4% lower than last year but was broadly comparable with 2024/25. Almost half of cases had 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. Sadly, the service had had to investigate three fatalities this year, the most recent one being an incident where a member of the public had drowned in a privately run swimming pool.

There had been an on-going Community Environmental Health (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 entered a guilty plea and were sentenced in December 2025. The Chief Executive of the FSA had expressed their thanks to the WRS team for the way in which this had been successfully dealt with.

As detailed in the report, the fall in nuisance complaints through quarter 3 mirrored previous seasonal patterns, usually reflecting the shift to autumnal weather. As further highlighted, the vast majority of cases were reports of alleged statutory nuisances, with 42% relating to noise from residential properties (such as noise from barking dogs or audio-visual equipment). Other prominent alleged nuisances included noise from night-time economy businesses, noise from other hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and with the dryness of last summer, noise or dust from construction sites.

Business customer satisfaction was marginally above the last quarter at 95.2%, slightly below the figure this time last year (96.8%) but was still well above previous year's 92% at the same point in the year. So far, 131 responses had been received. One question had fewer responses than the others, making one or two negatives more impactful. Beyond this, speed of response and not giving the response that gave people the outcome that they had hoped for seemed to be the main issue.

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

The ratio of compliments to complaints remained good at 45 to 10.

Staff sickness had increased from 3.04 days per FTE to 4.56 days per FTE cumulative for the year. This was the highest that sickness had been for some time and above the figures for the same period in the previous 3 years (2.94, 2.44, 2.94). Whilst cold and flu viruses had been worse this year compared to last year, over 77% of sick days recorded fell into the long-term category (i.e., members of staff being off for 28 days plus.) Members had previously been made aware that one or two WRS officers were yet to recover from serious illness and remained absent.

Members raised a number of questions, as follows:-

- Stray dogs with canine parvovirus – who bears the vet costs?
- XL Bully ban – were we seeing an end to XL bullies?
- Microchipping – information on dogs reunited with their owners, dogs not chipped or information on their microchip not being kept up to date and action taken.
- Homes for Ukraine – Members expressed their thanks to the officers commitment and the level of support received. Was this level of support extended to all refugees?
- Infection control – mosquitos.
- Enforcement Information.

In response officers explained that it was not always known if a stray dog had canine parvovirus. The charity that rehomed stray dogs that were not reunited with their owners, covered any necessary vet bills prior to rehoming. The kennels used by WRS for stray dogs had a very strict cleansing routine, as did the dog wardens for the vans they used.

With regard to XL bullies, there were still areas with a high rate of XL bullies with the dog wardens taking at least one a month.

The funding secured for the Home for Ukraine scheme had been extended to 2026/2027. The funding was for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils only and for refugees from the Ukraine only. The Technical Services Manager, WRS informed Members that more hosts were needed for this scheme.

The Director, WRS, stated that there was a broad range of enforcement undertaken by WRS and collating and providing information on all aspects of enforcement would be very time consuming for officers. Therefore, he would appreciate Members contacting him to request any specific information they required with regards to enforcement matters.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS further added that planning enforcement information had been presented to both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils and that a further enforcement activity report would be presented to both Councils.

The Technical Services Officer, WRS also explained that microchipping was a priority in the WRS Service Plan 2026/2027. 30% of dogs were

found to be unchipped, with a significant proportion of unchipped dogs being found in worryingly poor health conditions. The numbers varied between Districts. On average about 50% of dogs were reunited with their owners, again this varied across the Districts. When owners came forward for their dogs, they had to complete a certain number of checks before being reunited with their dogs. Members were made aware that in the UK it was a legal requirement under the 'Control of Dogs Order' for dogs to wear a collar with an ID tag showing the owner's name and address. The WRS Communications Officer also liaised with vets and signage was placed in veterinary practices reminding dogs owners to microchip their dogs and to ensure that their information on the microchips was kept up to date.

WRS had held a number of microchipping events in South Worcestershire, with funding secured through the Community Safety Partnership. Sadly, these events were poorly attended. Members were however reassured that as from 1st April 2026 officers would be picking up on microchipping and dog tag enforcement; with officers pursuing and prosecuting where evidence was available and the public interest test was met.

In response to a question with regard to the Neighbourhood and Tenancy Team at Redditch Borough Council and microchipping, the Technical Services Manager, WRS commented that he would consider as to how WRS could engage with the Tenancy Officers about any concerns they had in respect of dogs in premises that they visited.

The Director, WRS explained that there was currently no requirement for local authorities to control invasive mosquitos. However, as detailed on page 92 of the main agenda pack, WRS Community Environmental Health, with its infection control role had volunteered to support the invasive mosquito surveillance efforts being coordinated by the Medical Entomology and Zoonoses Ecology Team (MEZE) at UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

Members thanked officers for their detailed responses to the questions and concerns raised.

Members also briefly referred to the 'Agent of Change Principle' in the newly revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Director, WRS acknowledged that this was of paramount importance and a very important principle for officers and Members involved in the planning process.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3, 2025/26 be noted and that Members used the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS presented the Revision of Policy for responding to Environmental Information requests (for information held by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS)) for Members' consideration.

Members were informed that the policy presented was a revision of the EIR policy already in existence, but the revised policy provided greater clarity on how requests could be made and how they would be processed. The policy was in line with the Environmental Information Requests (EIR) and Information Commissioner's Office Guidance.

Processing included establishing whether a charge was required to be paid prior to the release of the information requested. Any charge would be calculated based on an hourly rate set by each Partner Council and the estimated time required to collate and format the information requested.

Standard administrative processes could not be charged for and any request that was simple to respond to and information could be collated and formatted in less than 30 minutes would be provided free of charge.

Other exemptions to charges applied where the information was held on a public register, where it was examined at WRS offices, where it could be signposted to as it was publicly available or published elsewhere.

Similarly no charge would be made for requests made by students in the course of their academic studies; or journalists in the course of journalism for a news organisation where that information was easily extracted; or made by a professional body of which WRS was a direct or indirect member or where release of the data requested would be for the greater good and was easily extracted.

In response to questions from Members, the Technical Services Manager, WRS explained that with regards to possible frivolous and vexatious requests, that Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were very different to Environmental Information Requests (EIR). Officers would triage any EIR enquires received, and where relevant the information would be free of charge or a charge added. Anyone requesting an EIR would be informed if a charge were to be put in place due to the potential hours taken (this would be a flat charge as per the policy guidance). Should the information requested be extracted and collated in a shorter period of time than originally anticipated, then the charges would be reimbursed.

RESOLVED that the revised Environmental Information Requests (EIR) policy, as detailed on pages 127 to 131 of the main agenda pack, be agreed and adopted as from 1st April 2026.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.

There was no urgent business to be considered.

The meeting closed at 5.43 p.m.

Chairman

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