

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board

Thursday, 19th February, 2026
4.30 pm

Parkside Hall
Parkside
Bromsgrove
B61 8DA

Membership:

Cllrs: Matthew Dormer Jane Spilsbury

1. Agenda (Pages 5 - 136)	
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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 19TH FEBRUARY 2026

AT 4.30 P.M.

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

MEMBERS: Councillor H. J. Jones, Bromsgrove District Council
Councillor K. Taylor, Bromsgrove District Council
Councillor C. Palmer, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor J. Owenson, Malvern Hills District Council
Councillor J. Spilsbury, Redditch Borough Council
(Vice-Chairman)
Councillor M. Dormer, Redditch Borough Council
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 I. Hardiman, Wyre Forest District Council
(Chairman)
Councillor K. Henderson, 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 20th November 2025 (Pages 5 - 18)
4. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Revenue Monitoring April to December 2025 (Pages 19 - 26)

5. Food Service and Food Standards Agency engagement (Pages 27 - 30)
6. Worcestershire Regulatory Services Service Plan 2026/2027 (Pages 31 - 80)
7. Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 2025-2026 (Pages 81 - 124)
8. Revision of Policy for responding to Environmental Information requests (for information held by WRS) (Pages 125 - 132)
9. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Assistant Director of 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

11th February 2026

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

Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8DA

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

Notes:

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



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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

20TH NOVEMBER 2025, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors I. Hardiman (Chairman), J. Spilsbury (Vice-Chairman), H. Jones, D. Clarke, M. Dormer, K. Holmes, A. Scott, R. Deller and M. Goodge

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mrs. D. Goodall, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox, Ms. C. Avery, Mr. D. Mellors, Mrs. M. Patel and Mr. M. Sliwinski

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

20/25

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

A nomination for the position of the Chairman of the Board was received in respect of Councillor I. Hardiman. This nomination was proposed, seconded and on being put to the vote agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor I. Hardiman be appointed as Chairman of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board for the remainder of 2025/26 municipal year.

21/25

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN (THIS ITEM HAS BEEN INCLUDED, SHOULD THE CURRENT VICE-CHAIRMAN BE NOMINATED AND ELECTED AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD)

The existing Vice-Chairman, Councillor J. Spilsbury, remained as Vice-Chairman of the Board.

22/25

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. Taylor (Bromsgrove District Council), D. Harrison (Malvern Hills District Council), and C. Palmer (Malvern Hills District Council).

Councillor D. Clarke (Malvern Hills District Council attended the meeting as a substitute for Councillor D. Harrison.

23/25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D. Clarke declared an other disclosable interest in item 7 (Minute No. 26/25), Briefing on Food Standards Agency (FSA), in that he

was a food retailer. Councillor Clarke remained in the room and took part in the debate on this item.

There were no other declarations of interest.

24/25

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD HELD ON 25TH SEPTEMBER 2025

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 25th September 2025 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 25th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

25/25

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING APRIL TO SEPT 2025

The Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), Bromsgrove District (BDC) and Redditch Borough (RBC) Councils, introduced the report and in doing informed Members that at quarter 2 2025/26 there was an underspend of £47,000 and a projected outturn (year-end) underspend for Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) of £3,000.

It was highlighted that staffing costs had remained largely on target with a final agreement for the 2025/26 pay award of 3.2%. This would result in an additional salary pressure of £9,000 for WRS, which was included in the quarter 2 figures and Officers would look to manage this pressure from within the existing financial allocation.

It was noted that the report set out WRS partner councils' liabilities. The resolutions as set out on pages 15 and 16 of the main agenda pack were approved by the Board.

RESOLVED that the Board

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April–September 2025.
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for April – September 2025 in relation to Bereavements

Council	Apr–Sept 25 Actual for Bereavements £000
Bromsgrove District Council	3
Malvern Hills District Council	2

Redditch Borough Council	4
Worcester City Council	13
Total	22

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	5
Wychavon District Council	17
Total	22

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

26/25

BRIEFING ON FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY (FSA)

Briefing on the recent engagement between Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) was provided. It was recapped that following the last engagement with the Agency which took place in Autumn 2023, 5 additional posts were created for the food safety service within WRS, two Senior Technical Officers and three Regulatory Compliance Officers.

At the recent meeting, on 23rd October 2025, with the Director of WRS, the WRS Food Safety lead officer, and the Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, the Agency (FSA) identified the need for WRS to further increase resource level within the food safety service to ensure full alignment and compliance with the statutory Code of Practice under section 40 of the Food Safety Act 1990. In response, a revised action plan would be drafted to provide a detailed outline of how WRS would move towards full alignment, which would need to be submitted by mid-December. The WRS was required to comply with the Agency's advice.

The Director of WRS stated that this decision on the part of the Agency (FSA) would have implications in particular in the increased inspections regime for lower risk premises rated D and E. The WRS would reorganise the team to deal with the increased demands placed by the Agency (FSA) by recreating the split between specific teams for commercial and environmental areas of environmental health. The Director of WRS explained that prior to consolidation of WRS, in 2009-10, there were 22.3 full-time equivalent dedicated food safety officers working across the six districts in Worcestershire. Members were reassured that despite the expectation to increase resources, the WRS would not be increasing staffing resources up to that level.

Disappointment was expressed with the Agency's (FSA) decision, particularly in light of the significant improvement in food safety visit output by WRS in the last year. It was noted that variation to the budget paper would be brought to the next meeting of WRS Board in February 2026. Appendix A provided a purely illustrative indication of the additional costs which could be faced by partner authorities as a result of the need to increase staffing in food safety. A question was asked whether WRS could utilise its financial reserves to cover this additional cost. The Director of WRS responded that this would be discussed with the Section 151 Officers from each partner authority.

Inspection timescales within the Code of Practice were discussed. It was explained that the Code was prescriptive in regard to timescales within which inspections were required for each risk category of premises, with risk A premises having to be inspected at least once every 6 months, risk B every 12 months, risk C every 18 months, risk D every 2 years, risk E every 3 years.

It was noted that only around 5 per cent of registered food businesses in Worcestershire were non-compliant when inspected and required follow-up visits. Businesses generally upheld high standards of food safety and hygiene across Worcestershire with only 1 to 2 businesses being required to close each year as a result of significant levels of non-compliance that presented an imminent risk to health. It was explained that the service would direct most focus to those businesses scoring less than three out of five on the food hygiene rating.

Members queried whether WRS could train its own food safety inspectors through apprenticeships. It was explained that this was being actively looked at. The Director of WRS explained that the Government was putting forward money to help recruitment of trainee planning officers, also that there was currently Department of Health funding available to sponsor a number of apprentices within Trading Standards, and that the County Council's Trading Standards service, which WRS manages under contract, currently had one apprentice in the service.

In relation to Environmental Health apprentices, the Director highlighted the limited availability of Level 6 Environmental Health apprentice courses, which left the traditional university degree in Environmental Health as the main one, however this qualification offered a wide range of other potential career options for graduates. Finally, the Director said that there was one apprentice post currently on the WRS establishment, within the Licensing team, and that the Team Managers were considering the most appropriate route to filling this.

It was asked whether multi-agency inspections were undertaken at premises to identify issues other than food safety such as modern slavery. It was responded that there was strong multi-agency working within Worcestershire and WRS worked with the County's Trading Standards, Police, Fire Service, Immigration Service as and when required.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

27/25

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGETS 2026/27 - 2028/29

The Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), Bromsgrove District (BDC) and Redditch Borough (RBC) Councils, introduced the report and highlighted that through the legal requirement between the partner authorities, the WRS was required to set its revenue budget by 1 December each year. It was noted that the report appendices provided detail on the WRS Budget 2026/27 to 2028/29, the breakdown of Partner Contributions for 2026/27 to 2028/29, and Budgeted Income for WRS in 2026/27.

A Member expressed disappointment that partner contributions had increased again for 2026/27 and queried if the WRS maximised its commercial opportunities. The Director of WRS responded that the service had set high expectations for the performance of staff and Members were reassured that Officers worked hard to maximise income. It was noted that in 2017 the WRS Board was approached, and approved, an additional post within the Service and it was highlighted that WRS reached break-even position by mid-2018 and delivered income since. It was noted that WRS had reached capacity in terms of income generation it could achieve based on the current staffing level.

A Member queried why partner authorities did not pay equal contributions to the budget or had equal allocations from the budget but received varying levels of contributions. The Director of WRS responded that this was a historic arrangement in place since commencement of the partnership and the WRS Board in 2010, whereby the percentage paid by each partner authority was based on the revenue budget which each partner contributed to the collective budget at that time. This was reviewed in 2013/14, at the end of the initial business case period for WRS and minor changes were made, but not subsequently, although officers had discussed options.

A question was raised about the financial reserves held by WRS and in what way they could be utilised. The Director of WRS explained that the majority of the reserve originated when Worcestershire County Council (WCC) left the WRS partnership arrangement. It was noted that the major reserves in place were designed to provide a buffer for the partner authorities in case of any unanticipated overspends.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, further clarified that smaller earmarked reserves were utilised in areas such as air quality work. It was remarked that the WRS arrangement would likely not continue under if one unitary authority model was established as a result of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). As such it was commented by some Members that it might be beneficial for WRS reserves to be invested prior to LGR vesting day when the partner authorities were still in place, to limit the impact of additional costs on the partners at this time.

A Member asked whether renewal of relationship and partnership arrangements with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) was actively explored provided that either a one- or two-unitary council arrangement would be introduced into Worcestershire through the LGR. The Director of WRS explained that WRS already managed trading standards for WCC and had good working relationship with Director of Public Health at WCC, under whom the service sits. The Director added that he continued to pose the question of WCC rejoining the partnership at an appropriate point in time.

A question was asked about benchmarking financial performance against similar-sized authorities. It was responded that it was difficult to compare performance with other authorities as the WRS arrangement was unique – there were no other areas that had shared regulatory services at district level on this scale.

A typographical error was highlighted in the table on page 31 of the agenda pack in that the figure for Wyre Forest District Council in the column for 2026/27 Increase in Rent was incorrectly recorded as 0 (£'000), and it should read 0.5 (£'000).

The recommendations as printed were approved by the Board.

RECOMMENDED that:

- 1.1 The 2026/27 gross expenditure budget of £5,357,000, as shown in Appendix 1, be approved.
- 1.2 The 2026/27 income budget of £1,064,000 as shown in Appendix 1, be approved.
- 1.3 The revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2026/27 onwards, be approved, as follows:-

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	620	14.35
Malvern Hills District Council	564	13.04
Redditch Borough Council	759	17.56
Worcester City Council	690	16.64
Wychavon District Council	1,006	23.27
Wyre Forest District Council	654	15.14
Total	4,293	

- 1.4 The additional partner liabilities for 2026/27 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure, be approved as follows:-

Council	2026/27 £'000 Excluding Pension Savings	2026/27 £'000 Pension Savings
Bromsgrove District Council	17	-14
Malvern Hills District Council	15	-13
Redditch Borough Council	21	-17
Worcester City Council	20	-16
Wychavon District Council	27	-23
Wyre Forest District Council	18	-15
Total	118	-98

- 1.5 The additional partner liabilities for 2026/27 in relation to increase in hosting costs, be approved as follows:-

Council	Increase in	Increase in	Increase in
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	Rent £000	ICT Hosting £000	Support Hosting £000
Bromsgrove District Council	0.5	0.4	0.6
Malvern Hills District Council	0.4	0.4	0.5
Redditch Borough Council	0.6	0.5	0.7
Worcester City Council	0.5	0.5	0.7
Wychavon District Council	0.7	0.7	0.9
Wyre Forest District Council	0.5	0.5	0.6
Total	3.2	3.0	4.0

1.6 The additional partner liabilities for 2026/27 in relation to additional Technical Officers, be approved as follows:-

Council	Planning Enforcement / Envirocrime £000	Animal Activity Technical Officer £000	Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	328	10	
Malvern Hills District Council		8	
Redditch Borough Council	145	2	
Worcester City Council		4	30
Wychavon District Council		14	
Wyre Forest District Council		10	
Total	473	48	30

28/25

ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE REPORT DATA - QUARTER 2 2025/26

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the report which set out the Activity and Performance Data for Quarter 2 2025/26 and in doing so drew Members' attention to the following activity areas of the report:

Activity Data

There were 694 interventions undertaken during quarter the year to date (Q1 and Q2), of which only around 5% had resulted in businesses being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2 FHRS score). A significant proportion of non-compliant ratings continued to be issued within the hospitality sector (such as takeaways and restaurants) or small retailers.

In Licensing, the number of licensing cases received during the year to date showed a reduction of 11% compared to the same time period in 2024/25 and a 6% reduction compared to 2023/24. However, a large number complaints were being received with 807 complaints and enquiries received to date in 2025/26. Of these, some 505 were complaints relating to license holders, with approximately 40% of the complaints relating to taxi licensing.

Planning enquiries continued to fall during Q2, but they remained 5% above the figure for the same period in 2024/25 and 26% above the figure for 2023/24 for this period of the year.

The number of reported strays in Q2 2025/26 was the highest in the current 3-year reporting period, slightly surpassing last year's Q3 figure. The upward trend continued in this area. A Board Member expressed concern at this trend in dog stray cases and queried about communications in this area. The Marketing and Communications Manager, WRS, responded that in anticipation of the festive season WRS would be coordinating a press release and an awareness campaign across partner authorities on things to consider before buying a dog, and importance of choosing only licensed breeders.

The number of pollution cases received this year to date remained similar to 2023/24 level but 21% higher than 2024/25. Around 92% of pollution cases this year had been reports of potential nuisances with 45% of cases relating to noise from residential properties. Other prominent nuisances reports included noise from night-time economy businesses, noise from other hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and noise or dust from construction sites.

Performance

It was reported that the non-business customer satisfaction measure improved from 53.8% in quarter 1 to 61.7% at the end of this quarter 2. Number of people satisfied with the speed of initial response was at 62%. The biggest issue remained the inability in some cases to deliver

the outcome people would like to see which was most often due to public expectations not being met by what the law on nuisance allowed for.

Business satisfaction had increased this quarter (Q2) from 91.8% to 95.1% but remained below expectations. The trend in this area was being monitored to help identify reasons for this.

Performance on processing complete driver license renewals within 5 working days was lower for the first 6 months of 2025/26 at 88.4%, compared to the figures for the same timeframe over the previous two years, at 97.6% and 93.9% respectively. It was noted that the steady introduction of the online form submission process, Victoria Forms, should lead to improvement in this and other areas of the service. A Member commented that the new system operated seamlessly in his experience and thanked the service for introducing this.

WRS income during the first half of 2025/26 was £347,337, which was higher than the figures for the previous three years (at £258,989, £204,718, £232,520 respectively). A question was asked as to the reasons behind the increased income being generated by WRS. It was responded that this was primarily due to the dog control service offer, with WRS now offering this service in various areas of the country, including Birmingham and North Somerset.

A question was raised regarding the publicity of air quality data. It was explained that real time air quality data for Worcestershire was available to view on the WRS website with a link to the WRS webpage being available on each of the district councils' websites.

A Board Member raised a question regarding the Government's recent call for evidence on the licensing system. The Director of WRS explained that he responded to the Licensing Reforms Programme call for evidence on behalf of the WRS. The proposals offered included moving back to only allowing people in the vicinity of a premises to submit comments in relation to applications, and to allow further reduction of burdens on businesses in the area of licensing. One of the issues that concerned the Director was the proposal to give more flexibility for Temporary Event Notices, which already offer businesses up to three days of activity at a very low cost. The Director mentioned the example of small-scale festivals, which are frequently seen in Worcestershire and generate concerns and complaints from residents, particularly in more rural areas. It was felt that this call for evidence was more focused on issues in London and urban areas rather than those experienced across the country.

It was clarified that this was a call for evidence which sought views and evidence from stakeholders on the potential changes to the licensing system, but this was not a full formal consultation which would need to take place with any proposals for a change in legislation. There was a time period of one month for responses to the call for evidence, making

it difficult to involve large numbers of people. The Licensing Manager confirmed that information on this call for evidence was sent to all chairpersons of licensing committees across the six partner authorities.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 of 2025/26 be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

29/25

NOISE AND LICENSED PREMISES

A briefing on noise and licensed premises was provided. It was noted that WRS endeavoured to work with all parties to resolve the situation, informally where possible, to resolve noise nuisance complaints. It was highlighted that officers had noticed an increasing complexity in noise nuisance complaints with many investigations taking a prolonged period due to issues with obtaining sufficient evidence. The current backlog in the legal system caused further delays in some cases.

The WRS approach was to be proactive in relation to noise nuisance and work at a preventative stage so that issues did not arise in the first place where possible. It was reported that commercial premises were responsible for around one-third of nuisance complaints received by WRS. A large proportion of these related to issues with noise from pubs and clubs.

The proactive approach focused on premises such as pubs and clubs. A targeted advisory letter was sent to all pubs and clubs where a noise complaint was received in 2023, and the approach was further developed in 2024 to include issuing pre-season (pre-summer) noise control advice to premises where complaints had previously been reported. Officers reported that this approach received a positive response from the business community.

The guidance document for businesses was also created, attached for Members' consideration at appendix 1 to the report, which provided a look at factors for consideration within noise nuisance such as noise amplification, equipment used, structure of the building and outdoor areas, together with a basic explanation of the law of nuisance. It was reported that further to the guidance document the WRS offered to visit any premise to discuss upcoming events as a proactive method to combat any potential complaints and this approach was continued in 2025.

In terms of the levels of noise complaints, it was reported that despite the hot summer in 2025, the levels of noise complaints were held at the same level as for 2023/24 when the summer weather was considerably wetter and colder.

A Board Member asked about complaints from residents about pubs and whether residents could either submit anonymous complaints

themselves or for elected members to submit complaints on behalf of the complainant(s) to WRS.

The Community Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, WRS, responded that if a formal nuisance complaint was to be made, this required the complainant to provide their name and address as any assessment of nuisance would be made at their property, rather than the source of the potential nuisance issue itself. However, elected members could submit additional information or raise an issue with WRS officers to provide supporting evidence in respect of a case, particularly as the alleged nuisance issue may only be one of the problems created by activities at a location.

It was reiterated that in most cases the WRS used an informal approach to resolve or, in this case prevent problems, for example 130 advisory letters sent to businesses in the last year as part of the project, which were generally well-received and helped to resolve the issues before problems arose that might require formal action. Formal investigation was normally only required where businesses continued to ignore informal approaches and did not engage with WRS at an informal stage.

A question was asked with respect of the annual number of noise complaints received in respect of pubs and clubs for each of the six districts as set out on page 82 of the agenda pack. It was commented that numbers of noise complaints received about pubs appeared to be decreasing but there was a clear seasonal pattern to nuisance complaints and officers could not say if the project was the sole reason. One member asked about Redditch, which had only 9 noise complaints, and another member speculated that a reason behind this could be that a significant number of pubs had closed within Redditch over the last few years.

With respect of standard premises hours of operation and hours of live music / noise activity, it was noted that the Licensing Act 2003 does not generally allow any kind of blanket conditions beyond those that are mandatory in law, such as systems for preventing underage sales, and, whilst the licensing authority could set its own conditions, each case being considered on its individual merits.

It was commented that within the recent call for evidence/consultation on reforming the licensing system, the Government had suggested that blanket conditions might be removed, which the Director of WRS expressed surprise at, as no such conditions were present in the six district policies under this legislation. The Director indicated that the mandatory conditions currently within the Act played an important role in protecting communities and that these ought to be retained.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

30/25

TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LEGAL,

**DEMOCRATIC AND PROCUREMENT SERVICES PRIOR TO THE
COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN
CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT
WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.**

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.

Chairman

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WRS Board 19th February 2026

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE MONITORING April – Dec 2025

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1.1 Note the final financial position for the period April – Dec 2025
- 1.2 That partner councils are informed of their liabilities for Apr – Dec 25 in relation to Bereavements

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 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	4
Wychavon District Council	23
Total	27



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 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

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



Revenue Monitoring

The detailed revenue report is attached at Appendix 1. This shows a projected outturn 2025/26 of £8k surplus. It is appreciated this is an estimation to the year-end based on following assumptions:

- A final agreement for the 25-26 pay award of 3.2% has been agreed, this will give WRS an addition salary pressure of £9k, this has been included in the quarter 3 figures. Officers will look to manage this within the existing financial allocation.
- If April to Dec 25 spend on pest control continues on the same trend for the rest of year, there will be an overspend on this service of £27k. WRS officers will continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of any changes in the final outturn figures. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners is:-

Redditch Borough Council	£4k
Wychavon District Council	£23k

- The following is the actual bereavements costs Apr – Dec 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	£9k
Malvern Hills District Council	£7k
Redditch Borough Council	£6k
Worcester City Council	£14k
Wychavon District Council	£4k

This income is included in the income projected outturn.

- Appendix 2 shows the detail of the income achieved by WRS April – Dec 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) & some Personal Licences, below is the income due to partner councils for Apr – Dec 25:-



TEN's

Bromsgrove District Council	£4.2k
Malvern Hills District Council	£7.9k
Redditch Borough Council	£1.4k
Worcester City Council	£4.7k
Wychavon District Council	£9.0k
Wyre Forest District Council	£2.8k

Personal Licence

Bromsgrove District Council	£0.6k
Malvern Hills District Council	£0.1k
Redditch Borough Council	£0.1k
Worcester City Council	£0.8k
Wychavon District Council	£0.9k
Wyre Forest District Council	£0.5k

Financial Implications

None other than those stated in the report

Sustainability

None as a direct result of this report

Contact PointsJulie Lorraine – julie.lorraine@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk**Background Papers**

Detailed financial business case



WRS - Profit & Loss Report 2025/26
Total WRS Dec 25 / Period 9 - 25/26

	Revised Full Year Budget 25-26	Revised Budget - Committed Apr - Dec 25	Committed Expenditure Apr - Dec 25	Variance	Qtr 3 Projected outturn	Qtr 3 Projected Outturn Variance	Comments
	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Direct Expenditure							
Employees							
Salary	4,440	3,330	2,980	-350	4,020	-420	Includes Ukrainian employees, offset in income £160k
Agency Staff	0	0	430	430	543	543	Covered by salary savings & income generation work, including work for other local authorities
Employee Insurance	21	16	21	5	23	2	
Sub-Total - Employees	4,461	3,346	3,431	85	4,585	125	
Premises							
Rent / Hire of Premise	82	61	61	-1	81	-0	
Cleaning	1	1	0	-0	1	-0	
Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sub-Total - Premises	82	62	61	-1	82	-1	
Transport							
Vehicle Hire	13	9	4	-5	6	-7	
Vehicle Fuel	8	6	7	1	9	1	
Road Fund Tax	1	1	1	0	1	0	
Vehicle Insurance	5	4	4	0	5	0	
Vehicle Maintenance	3	2	1	-1	3	-1	
Car Allowances	53	40	33	-7	46	-7	
Sub-Total - Transport	83	62	51	-11	70	-13	
Supplies and Services							
Furniture & Equipment	46	35	26	-9	48	2	
Clothes, uniforms and laundry	2	1	1	-1	1	-1	
Printing & Photocopying	17	13	10	-3	13	-4	
Postage	11	8	12	3	14	3	
ICT	99	74	90	16	131	32	Includes £4k for special equipment, £10k for new, enhanced WFDC Cyber Security system & Victoria Forms Licence
Telephones	40	30	18	-12	26	-14	
Training & Seminars	33	25	12	-13	29	-4	
Insurance	16	12	10	-2	13	-3	
Third Party Payments	209	157	157	-0	209	-0	
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	474	355	335	-20	484	10	
Contractors							
Dog Warden	121	91	333	242	434	313	Due to increase in sucessful contracts, additional costs are offset in full and shown in income.
Pest Control	78	59	71	13	92	14	Recovered in income
Taxi / Alcohol / & Other Licensing	52	39	23	-16	29	-23	Reduction in Vet-led Inspections £20k, now doing in house, this will reflect in reduced income
Other contractors/consultants	3	2	10	8	13	11	
Water Safety	5	4	6	2	8	3	
Food Safety	0	0	27	27	28	28	Works in Default £27k, recovered from partner council & shown in income
Environmental Protection	18	14	55	41	60	42	Bereavements & Works in Default recovered in income
Grants / Subscriptions	13	9	10	1	15	2	
Advertising, Publicity and Promotion	6	4	6	2	13	7	
Sub-Total	295	222	541	320	692	397	
Income							
Training Courses / Bereavement / Works in Default / Sewer Baiting etc	-1,102	-826	-1,240	-414	-1,628	-526	See append 2
Sub-Total	-1,102	-826	-1,240	-414	-1,628	-526	
Overall Total	4,293	3,220	3,179	-41	4,285	-8	

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Worcestershire Regulatory Services Income 2025/26

Appendix 2

Income from Partners

April to Dec 25

	£
Budget	3,219,730
Pension Backfunding	29,700
Bereavement/ Public Burials	39,446
Marlpool - Redditch	1,795
Pest Control Overspend - Wychavon & Redditch	18,958
Employee for Animal Activity	35,999
Additional Gull Work - Worcs City	34,791
Tameside - Subs to Anti Fraud Network - Worcs City	2,070
Agreed Reduction - Worcs City	22,500
Contaminated Land Work - Worcs City	9,750
Planning Enforcement - Bromsgrove & Redditch	406,895
WID - Padel Courts - Bromsgrove	8,950
WID - Hillrise Billy Lane - Bromsgrove	27,480
WID - Windrush Road - Bromsgrove	2,200
Ukrainian Support Work - Bromsgrove & Redditch	119,082
	3,979,346

Grant Income

Severn Trent - Sewer Baiting	2,450
OPCC - Stray Dogs	3,568
	6,018

Other Income

Stray Dog Income	288,653
Worcester County - Mgmt, Legal, Admin, IT & Uniform Support	61,041
County - Safety at Sport Grounds	16,500
Planning Support Work	44,171
Contaminated Land Work	17,942
PPC Work	5,237
Primary Authority work	9,446
Pest Control	900
Training / Risk Assessments of Water Supplies / Burials etc	7,095
Vet Fee Inspection Costs Recovered	6,173
Licensing - Pre-App Advice	679
Food Training Courses / Certificates / Food Hygiene Rating / Pre-Opening	16,493
	474,330

Total Income Apr - Dec 25

4,459,694

2025/26 Base Budget from Partners

-3,219,730

Total Income Excluding Budget

1,239,964

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WRS Board

Date: 19th February 2026

Food Service and Food Standards Agency engagement

Recommendation	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note the report. (ii) Agree the consequent increase in establishment that flows from the funding uplift agreed by the partners.
Background	<p>The Food Standards Agency is the main competent authority for food controls in England. The food function is devolved in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Agency has 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 5FTE 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 to this at the November Board meeting where the budget was agreed with a caveat that officer may need to look at a further uplift in capacity. After engagement with senior officers and lead members, the partners have agreed to a further uplift in the WRS budget specifically for Food Safety Act enforcement. This paper explains the detail of this and how the additional expenditure will be deployed.</p>
Report	<p>Members were made aware of the on-going engagement with the Food Standards Agency at the November Board meeting. At the 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. To remind members of the process, the Agency has a 4-stage approach to engagement with local authorities who in their view are not performing in-line with the Code. The final stage of this is a referral to the relevant Minister with a request for a Ministerial Direction to require the local authority to comply.</p> <p>At November's 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 be looking at a time and motion document created by the Agency to get a clearer</p>



understanding of what resourcing may be required. Officers also agreed to look at staffing in our neighbouring county areas with those districts, to see if we were on a par with them.

The time and motion document 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 was previously explained to members, the Agency's view is that authorities with:

- 250 food premises per dedicated FTE are 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.

The current allocation in WRS with the additional posts puts the service at around 420 premises per FTE (around 13FTE being available for food hygiene work.) At the November Board meeting, the Director provided 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 into line with the collective provision in our two county neighbours.

On that basis, discussions took place with the senior Officer Members of the Board and given the relatively modest uplifts entailed agreed that this be built into the medium-term financial plans for the partners. Senior members were made aware and agreed to this course of action. This leaves the need to members to formally agree to the increase in establishment, which will allow the Community Environmental Health Manager to begin the process of recruitment to the newly created vacancies. These new posts will 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 has been dealing with us has 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 appear to now believe that we have a realistic and achievable plan with the additional resources we will have in place, and they will mainly rely on the 6-monthly reporting that all local authorities are required to provide to assess our performance, it is to be hoped that we will be allowed to proceed with the work. Members will no doubt want to be kept abreast of developments, so managers will look to further enhanced the information provided as part of the



quarterly reporting to Board to ensure that members can be confident of progress against the plan and that the additional resource is working as is anticipated. As members will no doubt recall from last time, bringing new staff into these roles is not straight-forward, so there may be a lag in getting permanent people into roles, but the service will be able to retain the services of competent Agency staff to fill the gap for this period.

Officers would therefore ask members to endorse the increase in establishment outlined. The details of the increase in budget is outlined below. Officers felt that this would be sufficient, given members received and approved a full budget paper in November and the overall value involved is modest compared to the full budget.

Contact Point

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 Director of Regulatory Services
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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

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



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WRS Board

Date: 19th February 2026

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Service Plan 2026/7

Recommendations

That members of the Board:

- (i) Approve the WRS service plan for 2026/7
- (ii) They specifically note the level of work to be undertaken by the service this year in relation to the partners' roles as local food authorities.

Report

The Board signs off the service plan for WRS each year. The process helps to make members aware of what the service is proposing for the relevant financial year and provides a sign off that some central government bodies like to see in relation to service delivery plans e.g., the Food Standards Agency.

The plan follows very much the pattern of previous years and has an Executive Summary to pick up the main points. This year's plan continues to consider the long-standing strategic priorities for local authority regulatory services provided by DBaT, as these provide a framework that allows 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 oversee our work.

Whilst we have retained these for this purpose, the focus of this year's plan remains on the tactical priorities identified in the service's Strategic Assessment that has been refreshed for the coming 3-years. This piece of work reviews the full data and intelligence picture, looks at emerging threats. The assessment recommends retaining our cross-cutting priorities but rolling more work into these:

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

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

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

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

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

Working with businesses and other partners will remain essential in the coming year or two to generate income and mitigate financial risk but also to ensure that outcomes are delivered that match the priorities of partners and stakeholders. Delivery for other local authorities also remains a key income generation strategy, supported by limited work for the private sector and any specific grant monies that we feel are worthwhile pursuing. We have built on our client-base post pandemic with new clients for dog-related support, and we hope we will be able to identify new ones, although over time this will get harder especially as the unitary decisions become public and other districts supported by WRS begin to look closer to home at future solutions. We do however remain hopeful that this strategy will 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.

We will continue to use intelligence where we can, to drive the business forward and the embedding of this approach and its associated processes will continue.

As with previous years, members are asked to pay particular attention to the provisions for food hygiene delivery in the coming year. This is to meet one of the recommendations of the 2017 audit by the Food Standards Agency who were keen that members have 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 Agency just after Christmas to help demonstrate the partners' commitment to attempting to meet the provisions of the Agency's statutory Code of Practice are included.

As was raised at the last Board meeting, the Agency has continued to challenge our resourcing levels and, by the time this plan is implemented in April, the service will be recruiting to the additional resource flagged as potentially needed and agreed earlier in this meeting. The new staff will join a re-organised Community Environmental Health division with its two Commercial teams divided East and West, servicing Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wychavon, and Worcester, Wyre Forest and Malvern Hills respectively. Members are asked to note the proposed numbers of inspections and similar activities proposed for the new financial year that will be undertaken to discharge the statutory duties of the 6 partners in relation to food control. We will keep the Board updated on progress as the year goes forward.

The Risk Register has 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 has become more real in recent years as the devastating consequences have been felt by colleagues in other local authorities elsewhere in the country. We continue to work closely with our ICT host, Wyre Forest DC, to limit the risk of this and our officers receive regular training and reminders of the threats faced. Our teams have for many years been using mobile and flexible work patterns which has yielded efficiencies but our reliance on ICT provision to deliver this does increase our vulnerability to disruption.

We added a specific line to the risk register in 2024 because of the Food Standards Agency's intervention, although this potential issue has always been flagged in the Risk Register as a general risk of not meeting Government or central body expectations. Given the Agency's further intervention, we have retained this as they remain the most likely of the central bodies to intervene with local authorities. We have also retained the line for the potential risk from the reorganisation process, although the bid process has provided some clarity and it is not expected to create any issues in the period for which the service plan will be valid.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability

NA

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Service Plan 2026/7 including Risk Register



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Service Plan 2026/27

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Vision

"That Worcestershire is a healthy, safe and fair place to live, where businesses can thrive."

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Service Plan is similar to previous years, outlining how the organisation will operate over the following year to deliver on both national and local priorities. This document will showcase the actions we will make as a team to achieve or address those priorities, and how success will be measured. Worcestershire Regulatory Services will enter 2026/27 with a total agreed budget from partners of just over £5M.

The budget includes the necessary uplift to cover the pay increases previously agreed, the cost of increased pension contributions by the employer, and increasing hosting costs reflected by the on-going inflationary pressures faced in recent years. In line with the Food Standard Agency's Food Law Code of Practice, the budget has also allocated for three new food officers to engage with local businesses and vendors. The total does not include the amount for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council for their Enviro-Crime and Planning Enforcement functions as this continues to be treated separately to avoid any impacts on broader partnership contribution calculations.

Plans for 2026/27 are based on the Strategic Assessment for the service, intelligence-led findings that identify several cross-cutting priorities that will help to inform service delivery, until Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) comes to fruition in April 2028. These priorities feature several areas that create challenges for councils across the county.

The final decision on a revised local authority structure for Worcestershire is not anticipated before June or July 2026. Although a two-authority model would see a continuation of the shared service, a single authority could also result in the service entering the new structure at a suitable level, giving staff more certainty than many. Government's indication of changes to local authority funding, with the arrival of three-year settlements, has impacted some districts more so than others. The devolution agenda also remains somewhat opaque from our perspective, so this continues to be a difficult period to predict for the sector. Financial pressures will remain including the risk of further section 114 announcements, in effect a council declaring itself bankrupt, which is an issue that is yet to be considered by local authorities. Looking further afield, with uncertainty remaining surrounding on-going issues in Ukraine and the Middle East, as an organisation we must consider how this may influence our day-to-day business.

Despite uncertainties, the service will continue to pursue work and successfully deliver results for other local authorities. We have retained work from most of our customers who recognise the benefits of outsourcing work to us than engaging internally. So far, LGR has not impacted on this, but as new models become clear, we anticipate authorities will look at how to discharge functions using collective resource from within what will become the new unitary councils. The service will continue to risk assess what it does, considering economic impacts and impacts on health and well-being that arise from the issues to be addressed. Whilst risk will remain a key criterion against which we deploy resources, intelligence will be a major contributor, especially in relation to issues which cut across our teams. This will remain at the heart of service delivery moving forward.

Simon Wilkes

Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Julie Lorraine

Interim s151 Officer Director of Resources Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the 16th formal annual service plan to be produced by Worcestershire Regulatory Services and follows a similar format to previous iterations, outlining the operational details of planned activity for the service this year. Financial information covers the two-year accounting period 2026/27 and 2027/28. Due to the anticipated changes to local authority structures on 1st April 2028, it is challenging to forecast beyond this two-year period.

In 2025/26 workloads that resembled the pre-pandemic world returned, with problems associated with Environmental Health work being at the fore. In the early part of the year, we saw a spike in nuisance work as the good weather of spring moved into early summer, and this continued with the record-breaking temperatures we experienced. Interestingly levels of nuisance work did not go beyond those in 2023/4, where the summer was good but not outstanding. Reasoning for this could be attributed to our proactive work with Licensed premises ahead of the summer period, as a preventative measure for nuisance complaints. As ever, there was plenty of other work to address including, but not limited to, several serious accidents including fatalities to investigate; Air Quality action plans; and successful behaviour change engagements with educational institutions on air quality.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) continued to engage with us and in late autumn once again challenged us over resourcing for the six partners' food hygiene related activities. This came at the time the FSA's revised Code of Practice was issued, which offered further flexibilities in approach but nothing like the intelligence-led model we have been pursuing. The continued threat of intervention led to an agreement to increase resourcing for food hygiene work, with three new posts budgeted for 2026/27. The FSA remains insistent that authorities align their activities wholly with the revised Food Law Enforcement Code of Practice. They also continue to examine national approaches to regulation including giving certain sectors like the large supermarkets more autonomy and lower inspection burdens as part of their developing broader modernisation programme. The Agency remains insistent that there will be a role for local enforcement, but there are no signs that their approach will fully embrace the intelligence-led approach. The Agency's role as the national body tasked with ensuring the food law regime operates to give confidence to countries receiving exported UK products will remain a dominant factor influencing its approach to operations.

Licensing moved on from policy around taxis and the deployment of the revised national standards into local policies to presenting alcohol and other policies for review and re-adoption by the partners. It was imperative to review some older policies that had not been looked at for some time and were up for review but also the implementation of new policies such as pavement licensing, primate keeper licensing and Mandatory Safeguarding training for drivers to enable a consistent approach across the County. As most of the previous year had been spent implementing new Policy decisions, 2026/7 will look at more partnership engagement focusing on compliance and enforcement activities focussing on the Nighttime Economy, illegal dog breeding and concentrating on ensuring town centres and events are licensed correctly through street trading and pavement licensing policies.

Work from our usual local authority customers has largely continued and we won new contracts, particularly involving the dog control functions. Income continued to grow and several of our Primary Authority relationships that had been semi-dormant during the pandemic created further opportunities. Work continued with Muller Dairies, and work with Timpsons began to develop following their acceptance of our offer of support. We will continue to build the close working relationships necessary to make a success of this during the coming twelve months.

Legal process again featured in the work of the service during 2025/6 with several cases coming to fruition, which will be reported in the Annual Report that will come to the Board in June 2026.

Hence, the coming year is likely to be dominated by:

- The decision made by the Minister of State on the unitary structure question,
- On-going engagement with the Food Standards Agency in relation to activities, and working towards delivering their expectations,
- The continued delivery of our programmes of work to tackle cross cutting issues,
- Maintaining existing income streams to help support local delivery, and where feasible taking on others,
- The further development of the WRS website to better enable public interaction, and the finalisation of the automation project allowing for wider service elements like service requests to be integrated into the on-line offer,
- Continued work with partners to scope the potential for adding functions to the WRS operational roster like planning enforcement, enviro-crime and others, especially considering the outcome of the “unitary conversation,”
- Continuing to develop and review practical procedures to maintain resilience and the benefits from service elements such as Legal Support and the Intel Unit that provide operational support to both WRS and Trading Standards functions.

We anticipate that new income streams from district councils outside of Worcestershire will be harder to come by once there is clarity on new unitary structures. The focus will be on maintaining income where possible in areas our economies of scale offer the most benefits, with the required resource intensity generating the best income rewards. We can however look more widely to other neighbours to see if there are opportunities. It will remain important that only those opportunities meriting our focus are pursued as the scoping and drafting of tender documents are time consuming and onerous.

For existing partners, managers will continue to identify any changes that can be made to service delivery to either improve marginal efficiency or improve service. This is particularly relevant for areas of high demand such as planning referrals and areas of significant officer resource, such as long-standing complaints or enforcement action. This will require close working relationships to support and assist partner colleagues to ensure that we are all working as effectively as possible together. The revised rolling agreement for the management of the Trading Standards service and the continued delivery of the Safety at Sportsgrounds function means we will continue the service's engagement with the County Council. Feedback remains positive on all aspects of this relationship.

The on-going automation project will continue to increase our website's functionality for on-line payments and submission of service requests. Our temporary Communications Officer will also be looking at the site to see what improvements might be possible to improve accessibility and customer journey.

2. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND PRIORITIES

The Priority Regulatory Outcomes for England, developed by a previous incarnation of the Office for Product Safety and Standards, still provide a useful framework to link activities back to the broader priorities of the local authorities. These are outlined below:

1. Support economic growth, especially in small businesses, by ensuring a fair, responsible, and competitive trading environment,
2. Protect the environment for future generations including tackling the threats and impacts of climate change,
3. Improve quality of life and wellbeing by ensuring clean and safe neighbourhoods,
4. Help people to live healthier lives by preventing ill health and harm and promoting public health,
5. Ensure a safe, healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefit of consumers and the rural economy.

Page 41 All our partners have priorities around supporting economic growth, protecting the environment and communities, and improving overall health and well-being. If all our work supports one or more of the above outcomes, we know we are delivering what partners want. Appendix E contains details of the current corporate priorities for the six partners, with a few words that help give context.

Our Strategic Assessment, the key document that helps us determine priorities, has been reviewed and created for three years from April 2025/6, taking us to the point of re-organisation. The document looks at a broad swathe of local, regional, and national data to help identify the key issues to be tackled over the period, and the Intelligence Unit undertakes an annual evaluation to ensure the environment has not changed significantly.

Analysis focusses on the service areas which generate a higher level of complaints and notifications and/or a higher level of proactive activity. This led to multiple analytical assessments and the recommendation for three tactical priorities to be adopted by the service for the period of the assessment's validity. These are outlined below:

- **Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy**

The night-time economy continues to be a cross-cutting theme referenced within the analysis of alcohol licensing, food safety, general licensing, nuisances, pest control, and planning enforcement. It is also an issue highlighted by partners as a priority to regulate for the overall safety and enjoyment of residents.

Pubs, clubs, restaurants and takeaways, through analysis, that were connected to breaches of crime and disorder objects were more likely to have their premises licences suspended due to the non-payment of annual fees. Further complaints from local communities for establishments include food safety and hygiene standards, noise disturbances and nuisances, and pest infestation. Busy night-time economy areas such as Worcester City centre also saw some taxi licensing issues raised (over-ranking etc.), something that is not exclusively aligned with the night-time economy, but levels of risk may increase at night. The presence of persistent offenders was also a significant factor influencing the rate of complaints in a range of neighbourhoods.

The analysis also identified a potential for an increase in offences at smaller businesses due to financial pressures, and non-compliant food businesses being able to continue trading via platforms such as Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats. The use of these delivery services has continued to grow, and these newer methods of trading continue to adapt, including the development of businesses with single kitchens offering multiple brands offers, which create their own issues from a regulatory perspective.

We will continue to conduct visits and monitor breaches of licensing objectives in businesses, particularly in areas where the night-time economy is busiest, including checks of taxi ranks. Support will also continue to be offered support at large scale events hosted by partners, such as the Victorian Christmas Fayre in Worcester.

- **Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs**

Many people enjoy keeping dogs for various reasons, with many animals becoming one of the family, but across WRS service areas, reports, often from concerned neighbours, show that people are not taking their responsibilities seriously.

Contained strays were one of the most prominent case types identified by the service and, whilst dogs were generally found to be in good condition, there has been a notable increase in the number of dogs seized in a condition which required them to be taken to a vet for examination or treatment.

Aside from stray dogs, noise from barking or howling dogs was the most prominent reason for a resident to make a nuisance complaint, and issues like dog fouling is investigated by staff on behalf of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wychavon Councils. Although less prominent, dogs were also referenced in planning enforcement cases (for Bromsgrove and Redditch) due to individuals operating boarding or walking businesses from residential properties.

Half of the general licensing cases handled by the service related to unlicensed dog breeders or the conditions at licensed establishments. Operations conducted by WRS named Lisbon 1 and 2 demonstrated the huge amounts of money involved in the supply chain for animals, which can attract those whose only interest is in making money and not the welfare of the animals they are selling or the impact on new owners.

A significant proportion of dogs seized by our warden service are either not microchipped, the details held on the microchip have not been updated or there are not contact details on the collar, making identifying owners very difficult and increases the level of fees owners face when claiming their dog.

Last year saw the South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership support the service financially with a responsible dog ownership campaign which included dog-microchipping events in the three southern districts. The campaign continues to promote responsible dog ownership but, as it moves into its third year is to be expanded, with a stronger position being taken on the enforcement of legal requirements around micro-chipping, and collar and tag.

- **Promoting safe, clean, and healthy communities**

Protecting communities and the environment is at the heart of this priority after being referenced through analysis of environmental crime, general licensing, pest control, and planning enforcement.

Whilst domestic nuisance activity is significantly influenced by dog ownership, noise from audio-visual equipment remains a significant cause for allegations of statutory nuisance, as does the issue of smoke caused by the burning of garden waste or wood-burning appliances.

Significant health and safety at work breaches and serious accidents have been a focus of the Community Environmental Health division's investigative work in recent years. Whilst the partners no longer fund proactive work in this area, our responses to intelligence reports of dangerous occurrences will help address workplace health issues.

Technical Services' broader work on Air Quality fits within this priority and the service has taken strides forward since the last assessment, with reviews of strategy, action plans and the development of real-time monitoring capacity. Likewise, Environmental Permitting work helps to control the outputs from industrial processes that are polluting and, if poorly controlled, might represent a health risk to communities.

Food safety work includes the prevention of food-borne illness for the health of our communities. Small retail food outlets were relatively prominent and more likely to be issued with 0, 1, or 2 food hygiene ratings than larger outlets. In certain areas these businesses are also known to be potentially connected to Trading Standards offences. Whilst larger food businesses, including manufacturers, importers and distributors tend to be a lesser threat from a food hygiene perspective, they are of interest to Trading Standards and may have other permits or licenses.

This priority area also encompasses the high volume of fly-tipping incidents reported by the Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and the problems residents experience due to breaches of planning laws, pest activity, accumulations, and scrap metal collections.

Towards the end of the last assessment period, capacity was taken on to help support work on influencing behaviours from adverse air quality but also reducing overall contributions to pollutants. This behaviour change project work has been incredibly well received, particularly in local schools. Environmental improvement features strongly in all the partners' priorities, so we hope this will contribute to aspirations in this area.

- **Further Priorities**

Previous plans have had additional priorities around supporting commercial and industrial businesses to operate safely and responsibly but these do fit well into the three priorities above. Routine interventions/inspections, the investigation of complaints, and the provision of advice will all be part of the work developed for each priority.

In the past, WRS has sought to address financial challenges through transformation and generating income. We will continue to support partners with this difficult situation but, in the recent years, it is difficult to find any further meaningful savings from these functions, particularly for a single partner. The intervention of the FSA and the pressure applied to increase capacity continues to re-enforce this. We will remain committed to encouraging partners to consider what other enforcement related functions they might wish to operate under the WRS banner, where economies of scale might be created to assist with delivery and reduce costs in the longer term. This may become more relevant based upon the unitary solution for Worcestershire, and the conversations begin to shape the new arrangements.

The service will continue to use the following three key criteria to assess the risk and impacts of any proposed further reductions in service provision:

1. Are vulnerable people impacted?
2. Is there health and well-being issues involved?
3. Is there a positive/negative impact on economic activity?

In a financially constrained environment, using intelligence to direct capacity in a way that addresses the most significant risks becomes more relevant. There remains a risk that demand which can no longer be met by WRS is re-directed to partners in other ways e.g., via other forms of complaint.

3. FINANCE

A summary of the budget position for 2026/7 is shown at Appendix B. More detailed breakdowns of financial activity will be available to the Joint Board in its regular financial reports.

4. AUDIT AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The internal audit shared service has continued to provide support to the automation project to ensure proportionate oversight given the level of spend. The shared audit service has always been viewed by WRS managers as a critical friend, and reviews of the service's activities are welcomed with this approach in mind.

The only other area subject to any form of audit last year was Licensing, on behalf of Wyre Forest. This work was undertaken by BDO, which WFDC uses for its internal audit function, having been unable to secure membership of the shared audit service. This audit reviewed several policies and applications dealt with by the Licensing team on behalf of Wyre Forest and uncovered a small number of minor issues which were addressed or noted. No concerns were raised by the Council's CEO. No other areas of WRS activity were audited in 2025/6.

Where any broad and in-depth scrutiny of the service maybe required, the legal agreement requests that member authorities consider the priority of requests from their individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees and that they endeavour to agree to joint scrutiny arrangements and avoid duplication of effort.

Where Scrutiny Committees have expressed an interest in understanding more about WRS' work, officers have always obliged and attended. This has led to good working relationships with several Overview and Scrutiny Committees, leading to the positive re-enforcement for what the service does in those council areas.

In 2025/6, the service met with the Wyre Forest O&S Committee and presented on the current work of the service, which the Chair and Councillors found informative. In recent years, the service has provided similar input at Malvern Hills and Wychavon, and last year officers also presented to Redditch and Bromsgrove O&S committees in relation to aspects of the Planning enforcement work and at Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Board in relation to Enviro-crime work undertaken on their behalf. During 2026, reports on wider Enviro-crime work will be taken to Bromsgrove and Redditch O&S Committees.

Being able to support the work with Ukrainian refugees has also shown the ability of the service to be flexible with resource deployment. In this case, capacity that was originally created during the pandemic, was re-directed and increased to support several of the partners with this work. However, when the various funding streams come to an end, this capacity may no longer be available.

Engaging with partners in this way and working with partners on projects like the redevelopment of town and city centres, helps to maintain relationships with colleagues and highlights the important role of regulation when looking at wider, long-term policy development.

5. ACTIVITIES & OUTCOME MEASURES

The service's IT system allows accurate reporting on activities. The service has continued to work with members to demonstrate the service's performance (current core performance indicators are listed as Appendix C). Over time, with one or two notable exceptions, we have seen improvement or maintenance of most of these indicators, which we hope will continue in 2025/6.

The non-business customer satisfaction figures improved in the run up to the pandemic, but we have struggled to maintain them at the levels we would like. At times, the sheer demand for nuisance and other complaint work has simply outstripped capacity to address it, so customers were less happy with how long it took us to resolve issues where we could. Whilst we have introduced some measures to improve first response times, it can still take some time for a suitably qualified officer to get to look at and assess potential nuisance problems.

Public expectation of what the law can deliver also continues to be an issue, particularly in relation to noise and nuisances in more rural areas. The law does not legislate to provide people with silence, which can lead to conflicts with those looking to diversify activities in the rural environment, and the subjective nature of what constitutes a statutory nuisance is equally infuriating to many. There is no red line for when something is deemed a nuisance and people find this difficult to accept in the 21st century, but unless Government looks to amend these mid-20th century legal provisions, local authorities can do little to address this. We will continue to try to better understand the issues customers present and look to improve performance during the coming year.

The need to re-shape our food interventions to meet the increasing expectations of the FSA may exacerbate pressures on nuisance work. The new structure of CEH Commercial and Environmental teams means a stronger focus on food work during busier periods for nuisance work. Managers in the CEH division will likely have to juggle some resource to meet demand, but it will be essential that we meet FSA expectations moving forward. Last summer we noted that nuisance issues did not reach the peaks they have in previous years, despite the weather, so we hope our proactive interventions are helping to control this. The additional Food Officers recruited during 2024/5 are now competent and delivering, and we hope that the further resource partners are allocating to the food service area will become available as soon as possible after April 2026.

We believe that activity data combined with the core performance indicators will give Members the confidence that WRS continues to perform well. The approach is in line with government thinking in terms of supporting local businesses whilst protecting communities, tackling rogues who would ignore their responsibilities, and criminals who use business as a model for generating criminal assets. The activities outlined below are examples of what is planned by the service, presented in a structured way that links them to a cross-cutting priority. We have also included corporate, and staff related activities as our staff is our most important resource.

	OUTCOME	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES
1	Supporting a safe and vibrant night-time economy	<p>Ensure Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers Licence applications are processed in a timely manner.</p> <p>Vehicles in use by the Taxi trades are fit whilst in service.</p> <p>Ensuring that all drivers and operators granted licenses meet the fit and proper test.</p> <p>Prevent Licensed premises from causing significant alcohol-fuelled crime/ disorder and ASB</p> <p>Ensuring that nuisance and other pollution related issues occurring within the NTE are tackled</p> <p>Monthly alcohol profile to be shared with partners, reviewed and suitable work tasked</p> <p>Respond to complaints regarding alcohol and similar licensing related issues e.g. underage sales, breach of conditions, poor conduct of licence holders, etc.</p> <p>Facilitate Consumers in being able to make informed choices on where to eat or purchase food through published food hygiene ratings.</p>	<p>% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives</p> <p>Vehicles requiring work or taken off the road following intervention (Number and % of the total fleet.)</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> <p>% food businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>% of food businesses scoring 0,1,2* as at 1st April each year</p>
2	Promoting the responsible sale, breeding, and ownership of dogs	<p>Provide dog owners and businesses with advice, assistance and support using a range of channels and through events.</p> <p>Conduct risk based/ intelligence-led interventions with dog owners and businesses, targeting resources towards areas of high non-compliance or risk.</p> <p>Ensuring that dog-related nuisance and similar issues are tackled</p>	<p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> <p>% of stray dogs seized in that are compliant with microchipping regulations</p>

3	Promoting safe, clean and healthy communities	<p>Maintain an intelligence led response to complaints and take appropriate action, building our ability to resolve issues or re-direct callers on their first contact with us.</p> <p>Support Businesses to become economically successful and compliant with the law (Pollution, H&S, Food Safety, Licensing) through risk based/ intelligence-led interventions. Ensure that nuisance and other pollution related issues are appropriately tackled.</p> <p>Respond to complaints and take appropriate action.</p> <p>Provide relevant advice and information, available through a range of channels.</p> <p>Maintain preparedness for response to emergencies, including disease outbreaks.</p> <p>Protect the environment and the public through monitoring air quality and ensuring that contaminated land is suitable for development.</p> <p>Supporting the planning system</p> <p>Provide businesses with advice and assistance.</p> <p>Ensure business controls of environmental emissions are in place leading to reduced environmental damage and better health</p> <p>Facilitate Consumers in being able to make informed choices on where to eat or purchase food through published food hygiene ratings.</p> <p>Respond to disease notifications and outbreaks.</p>	<p>% food businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>% of food businesses scoring 0,1,2* as at 1st April each year</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction.</p> <p>Delivery of the annual air quality reporting duties.</p> <p>Rate of noise complaints per 1000 head of population.</p> <p>% permitted businesses broadly compliant at first visit/ inspection</p> <p>Disease response plans maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis.</p>
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4	Addressing Corporate issues	<p>Respond to complaints and take appropriate action, building our ability to resolve issues or re-direct callers on their first contact with us.</p> <p>Maintain a register of compliments and complaints with actions taken.</p> <p>Maintain links with county-wide TCG & take part in partner exercises to test plans, as appropriate.</p>	<p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction</p> <p>% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction</p> <p>Business Continuity plans are maintained, reviewed and updated on a regular basis</p>
5	Supporting staff to perform well	<p>Ensure necessary training is identified and delivered.</p> <p>Undertake annual staff survey.</p> <p>Undertake annual staff performance reviews with regular feedback sessions from supervisors and managers.</p>	<p>Staff sickness and absence at public sector national average or better</p> <p>% of staff who enjoy working for WRS</p>

5A: FOOD SERVICE DELIVERY

Specific detail of the Food Delivery Plan is provided at Appendix F to meet the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the revised Code of Practice in providing members with a detailed brief on food work for the coming and subsequent financial years.

Recruitment to the five new food posts previously approved by the Board following FSA intervention was completed by September 2024. All have learned quickly and made a positive contribution to the food programme 2025/6.

The Food Delivery Plan 2026-2028 was created following further intervention by the FSA, requiring the shared service to fully align its activities with the revised (October 2025) Food Law Code of Practice.

An initial assessment of staffing requirements was undertaken using the time and motion tool created by the Agency. At the same time discussions were taking place with the partners regarding the allocation of additional resource to this work, which led to agreement in principle for three additional full-time equivalent Technical Officers, whose competencies would allow them to inspect all premises. This plan assumes that this additional resource is available. Depending on the capability level of the incoming staff, time may be needed to develop them to the required standard of competency, which may affect the number of interventions initially achieved.

At its heart, the plan operates through the recreation of two geographically focused Environmental Health Commercial teams within the Community Environmental Health division. Their focus will be food, but they will retain responsibility for the investigation of serious accidents incidents under health and safety at work, and infectious diseases, which are mainly food related, and the work under Primary Authority agreements, for which costs are fully recovered and can be re-invested.

Time recording estimates that this will provide for an estimated 18 FTE available for food safety work given these other responsibilities. Depending on the capability level of the incoming staff, time will be needed to develop them up to the required standard of competency, which may affect the numbers achieved initially.

The split is roughly even in terms of geographical area and workload, with the West team covering Wyre Forest, Malvern Hills and Worcester City and the East team covering Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wychavon.

5 separate workstreams have been identified to ease management of the process:

- Stream 1: Premises risk rated category A-C (highest risk)
- Stream 2: Premises risk rated category D (moderate to low risk)
- Stream 3: New Premises registrations
- Stream 4: Premises risk rated category E (lowest risk)
- Stream 5: Premises which are overdue from previous periods.

The following table provides the Number of interventions falling due in the upcoming financial year, 2026/7. All categories will be subject to intervention in adherence with the FLCoP during the year.

Risk Rating of Premises	Compliance	Number of interventions planned in the 2026/7 financial year
A	Broadly Compliant	3
A	Non-Broadly Compliant	1
B	Broadly Compliant	146
B	Non-Broadly Compliant	14
C	Broadly Compliant	470
C	Non-Broadly Compliant	23
D	Broadly Compliant	743

D	Non-Broadly Compliant	4
E	Broadly Compliant	243
E	Non-Broadly Compliant	1
Unrated	N/A	0
Estimated New Premises Registered	N/A	900
Total	N/A	2548

The Food Delivery Plan at Appendix F gives additional detail in respect of how the overdue interventions and new registrations will be recovered.

The plan further describes provisions to revise policy and process documentation to ensure efficiency and a pilot of digital inspection to reduce the administrative burden on staff associated with the inspection process. These changes will also look to exploit to the maximum some of the new flexible approaches allowed in the revised Code.

Whilst the teams will work in line with the Code, the service will remain intelligence-led and will seek to use the provisions of the intelligence operating model developed over the life of the service to maximise efficiency and ensure that information regarding activities/ issues at premises is shared both across the service and more widely with partners and other food authorities where appropriate.

6. PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Performance against outcomes will be reported to the WRS Board, quarterly, six-monthly, or annually, depending on the individual measure. The IT platform allows the Intelligence Unit to collect and analyse data, which is both accurate and robust, and recent improvements in data extraction have increased the frequency with which several measures can be reported by the team.

The service's ability to provide activity data has continued to improve as the benefits of the IT platform have been implemented. Use of time recording to give a better understanding of how much it costs to undertake specific activities is continuing to be refined. Members participated in a session in October 2019 with staff, part of which was to consider the suite of current measures, and it was agreed that no changes were required currently. These are listed as appendix C.

7. STRUCTURE

The WRS team's functions and management structure remain as follows:

- 1) The Community Environmental Health (CEH) division continues to provide Food Hygiene, Health and Safety at Work, Public Health and Nuisance functions using three teams. With the recent interventions of the FSA, it has become necessary to revise the operating model for the team, moving back towards a more traditional approach that splits what is referred to as Commercial and Environmental functions.

Going forward, two teams will discharge the functions on an East/West geographical split with the East team covering Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wychavon, whilst the West team will cover Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wyre Forest. The geographical teams are organised to reflect the balance of demand across the county for these functions. A single team will cover the Environmental Nuisance and related work county-wide. The legal support role continues to sit in this team as most of the casework emanates from here.

- 2) The Technical Services division provides all environmental health support around planning matters, delivers IPPC inspection, Air Quality and Contaminated Land regime work, manages the Pest Control contracts, and directly delivers the Dog Wardens service across Worcestershire and further afield.

The internal IT support and system management roles also sit here due to the complex technical nature of the work, and the in-house first-contact team of Duty Officers is also part of this division. Technical Services also delivers much of the income generation work for other local authorities as well as the Planning and Enviro-crime enforcement and Homes for Ukraine work for two of our partner authorities. It also commissions/ discharges gull control work for the City Council.

- 3) The Licensing and Support Services division delivers all WRS licensing administration and licensing enforcement, along with the wider in-house clerical/administrative support that is required.

The arrangement of three Team Managers and the Head of Service/ Service Director has successfully provided the necessary management cover and support in recent years, as well as promoting income generation in many areas of the service. Capacity is stretched thin at times, with incidents like the pandemic testing the resilience of those involved to breaking point.

The County Council's functional elements have been retained in the structure chart as they are numerous and wide ranging, and since October 2016 the Community EH Manager and the Head of Service/Service Director have been providing direct management support to the Trading Standards team. The review of arrangements with County Council Public Health colleagues during 2024/5 led to a rolling agreement being put in place for the partnership to supervise and support the Trading Standards function. The Service Director continues to act as informant for criminal cases and retains the position as authoriser of surveillance activities under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, where he has significant

experience and understanding. The agreement also appoints the Director to the statutory role of Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures for the County Council, to meet the County Council's obligations under section 72 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

The support of management across the Trading Standard functions by WRS provides additional benefits with cross team working and knowledge, especially in areas of income generation and business support, to the benefit of both WRS partners and the County Council. This led to the Technical Services division's continuing delivery of the County Council's statutory role on Petroleum Licensing alongside the district councils' permitting function for vapour recovery at sites, giving businesses a single point of contact for both functions. The County Council also asked the service to deliver the Safety at Sports Ground function several years ago through its health and safety expertise in Community Environmental Health. This has now also moved onto a rolling contract, so WRS will continue to discharge this until either the County Council decides to take it back or the districts chose to end this relationship.

8. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Changes to the legal framework occur reasonably frequently and the increased income generation work requires highly competent individuals. To maintain the competence of its staff, meet contractual obligations, and correctly discharge partner statutory duties, the service must maintain a training budget for its staff.

Funding for training has been massively reduced reflecting the financial realities that the service faces, and the service uses various approaches to ensure the money is spent wisely. Developing staff to ensure there are opportunities to plan succession is also essential.

In recent years, there has been a focus on enabling staff to work across the Environmental Health professional areas. Few officers only remain competent for one of their professional disciplines. This paid dividends in the pandemic response as it allowed us to move people into either directly servicing the pandemic response or to backfill that capacity in high demand areas like nuisance. The Food Standards Agency's push for more food interventions does undermine this to some extent, but the service will look to maintain some environmental enforcement competence within its fully qualified Commercial Environmental Health Officers.

In Technical Services, where traditional Environmental Health backgrounds are less helpful, officers have been recruited with a range of backgrounds to deliver more specialised activities characteristic of the functions in this division of the service. A competency framework for Technical Officers is in place and is used to identify training needs and develop the competency of officers more widely. Broader competencies will allow a wider range of people to deliver work in Technical Services and enable the service to tender for suitable contracts and/ or maintain existing contractual relationships outside of the partnership in the run-up to re-organisation.

Within Licensing, the pandemic gave the opportunity to review administrative processes and reduce the burden of several paper systems. Automating application processes and payment will further support this and several application forms are now automated via Victoria Forms.

This is a continuing process and should free up some capacity to allow officers to look proactively at enforcement across the districts and the service hopes to give this greater focus in the next 12 months.

There are some disciplines within licensing that our competent qualified technical officers require training within such as caravan licensing and the Gambling Inspections regime. Broadening officer experience will help to ensure that no officer only has experience of just a single local licensing regime. Discussions will take place about the longer-term internal structure of the Licensing team, which members will be made aware of in due course. Of course, any decision on unitary structures in 2026 will have to inform thinking on this moving forward.

The size of the officer cohort in the service makes buying in trainers to deliver technical training to our teams economically viable for the service. A lot of aspects of professional practice and process are common across the enforcement professions so we can continue to offer this as an option to colleagues within the partners, our Trading Standards colleagues and some of our neighbours where we have spaces available on the courses that we arrange.

In the last two years, officers have received training on the basic underpinnings of criminal investigation, with updates on Criminal Procedure and Investigations requirements, as well as Police and Criminal Evidence Act interviews. These were done face-to face, but on-line and virtual training is now offered on several platforms, helping to manage costs, and allowing officers to maintain competence.

9. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic tested the business continuity plans of the service, and it rose to the challenges. The decision by the six districts to have a single Environmental Health service paid dividends in terms of the service's ability to balance pandemic controls with business-as-usual activities.

Traditional issues for business continuity such as the loss of premises have been addressed by the adoption of mobile/flexible working. All WRS staff can now use home as their start and finish point for work purposes for an extended period. The smaller scale impacts of things like seasonal flu, if they were on sufficient scale to create a resource issue can be addressed by prioritisation and, if this were on a larger pandemic scale, there would be national protocols of what should and should not be done, as there were in 2020.

The threat of on-going financial constraints for the partners if not local government generally, is likely to be time limited due to the impending re-organisation, but if partners were to require reductions that are not currently envisaged, this would threaten the service's ability to maintain the full range of interventions whilst responding to large scale events and delivering contractual obligations.

As part of the Business Continuity Planning process, officers have identified priority areas for activity so the service is clear what will stop and what will continue in event of an emergency. Additional consideration is required where reductions are suggested to ensure the impact on income generation is understood and this item is included in the current Risk Register.

Cyber security is the major consideration currently with several high-profile attacks on local authorities that have caused chaos for the delivery of services and have resulted in the complete losses of data. We are working closely with Wyre Forest's IT team to ensure we limit the threat and are giving wider thought to contingency measures. This includes moving to holding important documents needed on a day-to-day basis into cloud storage to ensure continuity, but loss of systems in recent incidents still suggest that a temporary return to full paper recording may be necessary for a period before digital resource can be restored. Wyre Forest's IT team continue to invest in additional security measures, and the constant feed of reminder training should help to keep cyber issues at the forefront of people's minds. The weak link in most systems is the human one, so safe behaviours must be embedded in day-to-day practice.

We will continue to try to test the team's systems so we can identify relevant gaps. This kind of exercise, if undertaken regularly will improve the response should a genuine emergency occur. Given the prevalence of cyber-attacks, testing plans cannot be seen as a luxury anymore, it must be seen as a necessity.

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Despite Trading Standards returning to direct County Council control, Community Environmental Health staff and the Trading Standards and Animal Health staff continue to work closely together to ensure that, in event of an emergency or capacity shortage, officers can support each other when necessary. Having the teams managed by the same Manager on a day-to-day basis, together under one roof and in one office space will continue to allow both teams to utilise additional staff to tackle any incident or alteration to work demands that may require additional resource or a different workforce allocation. In event of a significant issue like an animal disease outbreak, the County Council has previously agreed that any support required from WRS staff will be paid for. The Trading Standards team has also engaged significantly more with Licensing as it has developed its work on illicit tobacco as a number of these premises are licensed.

10. PARTNERSHIPS

The service must continue to work closely with a range of partners to deliver what is required against several agendas. The importance of the six local authority partners is recognised, and WRS will continue to maintain our existing engagement with other district services. The continued co-location of WRS teams with County Council Trading Standards and Animal Health officers at Wyre Forest House ensures strong links between both groups of staff. This is particularly relevant for the Intelligence posts that are split between the two organisations.

Now that Trading Standards is part of the Public Health Directorate, WRS Managers have had the opportunity to build relationships with the Director of Public Health and her consultants, which can assist in a range of activities and has been particularly relevant in Air Quality developments in the past twelve-months.

Maintaining contacts with Economic Development colleagues at both County and District level helps ensure that we are providing relevant support to legitimate businesses and to participate in projects where regulatory involvement may be required.

Close partnership working with a range of professional and community groups is essential to ensure deliver of the outcomes required by partners. Key partners for engagement include:

- West Mercia Police
- West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
- The Environment Agency
- The Health and Safety Executive
- UKHSA
- Local Partnership bodies e.g., Community Safety Partnerships, Safer Communities Board, Health and Well-being Board
- Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards
- Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Service
- County Council Public Health team
- Regional Regulatory Partnerships and National Bodies (ACEHO Group, CECEHO Group, CIEH, OPSS/ PARG, MJAC, NCLOG, CEnTSA, CTSI, ACTSO, NTSB).

Although the re-organisation process does provide a threat to income streams going forward, given one of the proposed unitary solutions sees WRS as a continuing partnership, it will remain important that officers ensure WRS provides an attractive product for external clients.

Engagement with equivalent partners in other geographical regions will continue to be pursued, which may include the collation/interpretation and review of intelligence data in such areas. This will help us to better understand the emerging discussion around re-organisation elsewhere and may enable the service to continue to engage beyond the county borders post April 2028.

Locally, the service has made a good commitment to engaging with the agenda around organised crime. Serious Organised Crime groups are a key target for policing at regional and national level. Business activities provide a vehicle for the laundering of money as are property purchases. Modern day slavery and other forms of exploitation are now part of what officers are asked to keep an eye out for when visiting businesses. This goes beyond what Trading Standards colleagues have traditionally dealt with in doorstep crime, scams and intellectual property work, and builds on the work of licensing colleagues in relation to addressing Child Sexual Exploitation. The service has seats at both tactical and operational multi-agency groups that address organised crime and has worked with Trading Standards and the police on several recent national initiatives aimed at crime on high streets. Where relevant, this will continue going forward.

11. CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

We will usually address national consultation on legislative change through the relevant professional channels unless there is a reason why a specific district councils' response from the partners may be appropriate. We will continue to engage local members in relation to local policy issues, especially around licensing matters.

For general engagement with the wider community of elected members, we will aim to provide Member Newsletters covering the various activities that the service undertakes across the county. We will try to make this information specific to districts where relevant, to reassure members that our activities are seeking to protect residents and support businesses across the whole of Worcestershire. A proportion of articles will be generic and relevant county-wide, matching the way in which regulatory functions have changed over the years.

It is hoped that the Activity Data reports that will continue to be delivered to the WRS Board will provide elected members on the board with sufficient information to also feedback to the wider membership in their respective authorities.

We will continue to survey customers who have used the service to look at how we dealt with their issues, not only from a satisfaction point of view, but also to see if they feel better equipped to deal with future problems. We will look at ways of making this more efficient using digital channels, but previous experience showed a drastic fall in responses when this was used as the only route for getting feedback. For now, we will continue with a mixed model of paper surveys and digital feedback.

Helping people to help themselves is at the heart of the model of public service engagement we are pursuing, and it is essential we support individuals down this route and reduce the expectation that we will always do it for them. Partners are aware of the cost variance of different contact channels and the fact that digital will be cheapest, if not always the only route the public will want to be enabled. The WRS website will be maintained so that it is suitably accessible from the various digital devices. The Victoria Forms system for making service requests/complaints and applications on-line that are directly entered into our back-office system will also improve efficiency in this area.

12. RISK & GOVERNANCE

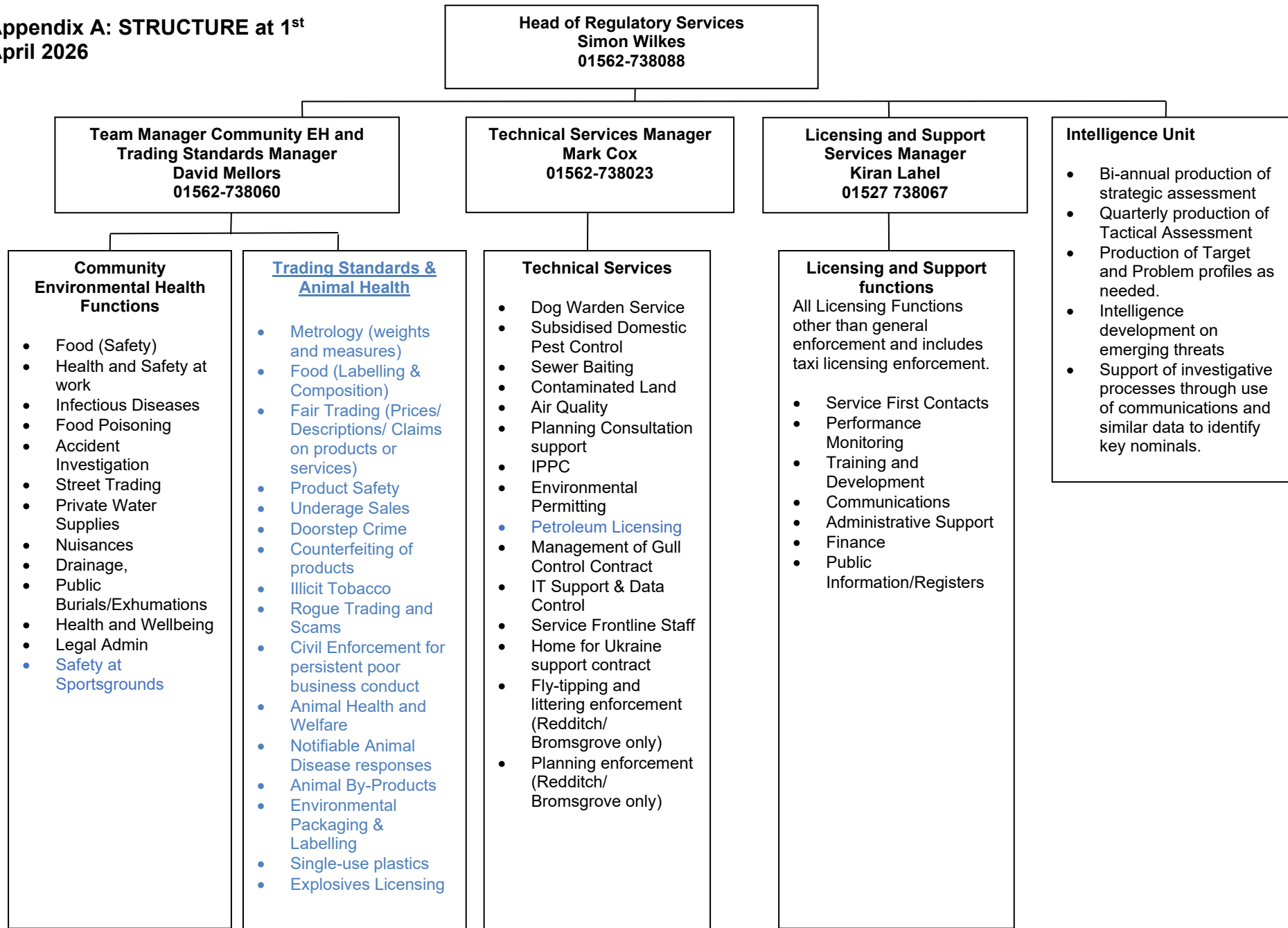
The current governance arrangements came into force on 1st April 2016 following the departure of the County Council from the formal partnership. The original legal agreement indicated that partners would pursue the shared services model for a period of at least 10 years. The 2016 agreement re-iterated this, but it contains no formal end date. The Legal Officers from the six partner councils are of the view that review is not required and that the current agreement can continue. Officer Members of the Board kept a watching brief on the service and can consider reviews to ensure the service is continuing to deliver, however it is generally accepted that any partner wishing to deliver these functions alone would need to spend significantly more to achieve the same outcomes.

A copy of the current Risk Register, which has been reviewed and updated for this plan is appended at Appendix D. A line was added to address the FSA's recent interventions in 2024/5, although there has been the possibility of central government bodies commenting since at least 2014, and specific reference to the potential for FSA intervention since 2016. The increased forcefulness of the FSA's position in relation to adherence to the Code of Practice is noted, along with the risk of other central competent bodies creating codes or performance frameworks against which local authority activity may be judged.

Re-organisation was also added last year as a reminder that the issue that will need to be addressed in the coming years. The entry reflects our current understanding of the position. The plans submitted by the partners and Worcestershire County Council indicate one of two potential futures for the service, either continuing as a shared arrangement under the two-council model or being integrated into the structure of a unitary council arrangement. We have a timetable for this and await the decision ahead of summer 2026.

The number of commercial contracts and obligations providing financial support to the service has always created some risk, particularly where sub-contractors or skilled technical staff are involved. This revised document continues to recognise the wider geographical area that the service now covers and level of technical expertise that must be maintained to facilitate this. Re-organisation does create a threat to this income, but by continuing to engage with the contracted partners, we will be best placed to ameliorate this and potentially ensure some continuity, where buying in capacity may continue to be a suitable solution for the newly created authorities.

**Appendix A: STRUCTURE at 1st
April 2026**



Appendix B: 3 years of budgets (figures in £000's)

Account description	Budget	Budget	Budget
	2026 / 2027	2027 / 2028	2028 / 2029
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Employees			
Monthly salaries	4,582	4,726	4,886
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	21	21	21
Employees' professional subscriptions	4	4	4
Sub-Total - Employees	4,609	4,753	4,913
Premises			
Rents	83	86	89
Room hire	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1
Sub-Total - Premises	86	88	92
Transport			
Vehicle repairs/maint'ce	3	3	3
Diesel fuel	8	8	8
Licences	1	1	1
Contract hire of vehicles	3	3	3
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5
Van Lease	9	9	9
Car allowances & Car Parking	51	51	51
Sub-Total - Transport	80	80	80
Supplies & Service			

Equipment - purchase / maintenance / rental	46	46	46
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2
Training fees	34	34	34
General insurances	16	16	16
Printing and stationery	17	17	17
Postage/packaging	11	11	11
ICT	114	114	114
Telephones	36	36	36
Support service recharges - Hosting	137	141	145
Support service recharges - ICT	80	82	84
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	493	499	505

	Budget 2026 / 2027 £000's	Budget 2027 / 2028 £000's	Budget 2028 / 2029 £000's
Contractors			
Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	242	242	242
Advertising (general)	5	5	5
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13
Sub-Total - Contractors	260	260	260
Total Expenditure Budget	5,528	5,681	5,850

Income			
Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-483	-483	-483
Sub-Total - Income	-483	-483	-483

Income

Funding from Bromsgrove & Redditch for Enforcement Work	-473	-479	-498
Funding from partners for Technical Officers	-79	-80	-82
Funding from partners for Increase in Rent	-3	-6	-8
Funding from partners for Increase in ICT	-3	-5	-8
Funding from partners for Increase in Hosting Charges	-4	-8	-12
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 26-27	-118	-118	-118
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 27-28		-134	-134
Funding from partners due to unavoidable salary pressures 28-29			-137
Funding from partners for Additional FSA Resource	-171	-176	-182
Savings due to change in forward pension rate	98	101	104
Sub-Total - Income	-752	-905	-1,075
Additional Income			
Add back reduced charge to Worcester City Council			0
Sub-Total - Income	0	0	0
Total Income Budget	-1,235	-1,388	-1,558
DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET	4,293	4,293	4,292

2026/7 Partner Percentages	%'s
Bromsgrove District Council	14.35%
Malvern Hills District Council	13.05%
Redditch Borough Council	17.56%
Worcester City Council	16.64%
Wychavon District Council	23.27%
Wyre Forest District Council	15.14%
Total	100.00%

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

	Base Budget	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City to be added back	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Additional FSA Resource	Savings due changes in Forward Pension Rate	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2025 / 2026	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027	2026 / 2027
Budget 2026 / 27	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	620		338	1	25	-14	17	987
Malvern Hills District Council	564		8	1	22	-13	15	597
Redditch Borough Council	759		148	2	30	-17	21	943
Worcester City Council	690	30	34	2	28	-16	20	788
Wychavon District Council	1,006		14	2	40	-23	27	1,066
Wyre Forest District Council	654		10	2	26	-15	18	695
Total	4,293	30	552	10	171	-98	118	5,076

	Base Budget	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City to be added back	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Additional FSA Resource	Savings due changes in Forward Pension Rate	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2025 / 2026	2027 / 2028	2027 / 2028	26-27 & 27-28	26-27 & 27-28	26-27 & 27-28	26-27 & 27-28	2027 / 2028
Budget 2027 / 28	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	620		343	3	25	-15	36	1,012
Malvern Hills District Council	564		8	3	23	-13	33	618
Redditch Borough Council	759		150	3	31	-18	44	969
Worcester City Council	690	30	34	3	29	-17	42	811
Wychavon District Council	1,006		15	4	41	-24	59	1,101
Wyre Forest District Council	654		10	3	27	-15	38	717
Total	4,293	30	560	19	176	-102	252	5,228
	Base Budget	Agreed reduced charge to Worcs City to be added back	Contribution Technical Officers	Contribution Increase in Rent, ICT & Hosting Charges	Additional FSA Resource	Savings due changes in Forward Pension Rate	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2025 / 2026	2028 / 2029	2028 / 2029	26-27, 27-28 & 28-29	26-27, 27-28 & 28-29	26-27, 27-28 & 28-29	26-27, 27-28 & 28-29	2028 / 2029
Budget 2028 / 29	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bromsgrove District Council	620		355	4	26	-15	56	1,046
Malvern Hills District Council	564		9	4	24	-14	51	638
Redditch Borough Council	759		155	5	32	-18	68	1,001
Worcester City Council	690	30	34	5	30	-17	65	837
Wychavon District Council	1,006		15	6	42	-24	90	1,135
Wyre Forest District Council	654		11	4	28	-16	59	740
Total	4,293	30	579	28	182	-104	389	5,397

Appendix C: Performance Measures Relating to Outcomes

	Measure	Reporting Frequency	Background
1	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to customers satisfaction	Quarterly	Based on questionnaires send out to a significant number of members of the public who use the service.
2	% of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly	Based on questionnaires send out to a significant number of businesses inspected or otherwise contacted by the service.
3	% businesses broadly compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	Based on the proportion of businesses meeting the key purpose from a regulatory perspective i.e. food businesses produce safe food.
4	% of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	Based on proportion of businesses scoring 0 1 or 2 stars on a national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme assessment (2 stars and below is deemed to be at risk of not producing safe food.)
5	% of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days.	6-monthly	Based on the proportion of drivers' licence renewals issued within 5 working days of receipt of application. Note new applicants all require DBS checks and time frames for this fall outside of WRS control, hence they are not included.
6	% of vehicles found to be defective whilst in service	6-monthly	Percentage of vehicles either found defective on routine inspection or stopped during enforcement exercises, that are required to be removed from service for remedial work before being allowed to carry on operating.
7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly	Based on questionnaires send out to a significant number of members of the public and businesses who have used the service.
8	Review of register of complaints and compliments	Quarterly	Ratio of compliments received to complaints against service

9	Staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly	Sickness recorded using host processes. The service will ask HR to provide details of the public sector average to compare against at year-end.
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	Taken from the staff survey.
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	Indicator, linked to Crime & Disorder agenda, looking at performance of premises license holders and control on their activity.
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	Place indicator, potential link to quality of life and health and well-being.
13	Total income	6-monthly	Expressed as a % of the base district contributions to the revenue budget for the year 2016/17 to provide comparison against base line but also % of the current base budget.
14	Cost of regulatory services per head of population	Annually	Will be total spend divided by the total population, based on the most recent mid-year estimate available at the time of publication. NB: Calculation will offset income against revenue budget to account for external income sources
15	% of seized stray dog non-compliance with microchipping regulations	Quarterly	Collated through stray dog service and indicator of proactive work to promote compliance and its benefits for owners, and deterrent of enforcement activity.

Appendix D: Risk Register 2026/7

Risk Description	Consequences	When is this likely to happen	Current Position			Control measures
			Likelihood	Impact	Matrix RAG Status	
Loss of Data through IT failures or Cyber Incident	Disruption to Service Provision. Inability to produce records and data.	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Cyber-attacks are a growing threat for all public bodies. Wyre Forest ICT has effective processes and business continuity plans in place. WFDC has upgraded relevant systems including Windows and Office 365, and is looking to increase security with further additions, which the service will pay for. Cyber security training is delivered regularly and risks identified are tackled.
Issues with the WRS database system	Impact on work planning. Self-help may not enable savings required	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Idox Uniform is an old system but, it provides the necessary functionality and has been capable of integrating with Victoria Forms to provide a sound on-line payment platform that updates the back-office without additional inputting. Bromsgrove & Redditch's additional functions have been integrated into the system so, it does have some flexibility for deployment directly to new enforcement functions. Complexities might arise with potential new service areas not currently catered for within the database, where existing partner databases may need to be maintained in addition.
Effective and efficient Business Continuity arrangements in place	Disruption to service if e.g., Major Power failures or other reasons that access to Wyre Forest House is not possible.	On-going	Very Low	Medium	Amber/Red	Whilst the pandemic showed that we were well prepared for the need to maximise working from home and touchdown stations remain available in partner council locations, WRS Managers continue to build their contingency plans in the event of a prolonged IT failure or cyber-attack that will allow services to be maintained. This is the greatest risk facing local authorities currently and is one we all continue to move forward with.

Maintain our capacity to achieve service delivery	Disruption to service e.g., Major staff sickness (e.g., flu pandemic) or Unable to recruit or retain suitably qualified staff.	On-going	Low	Medium	Amber	<p>Whilst the service was able to broaden its activities during the pandemic, engaging people with no formal background to cover roles, it also helped us to better understand the limited availability of competent and qualified officer capacity. This has been re-enforced by recent difficulties in recruiting, particularly into traditional Environmental Health roles. These pressures will only be resolved in the longer term by local and central government investing in additional capacity and additional training to bring more people into the regulatory professions.</p> <p>Demand has increased over the years as we have taken on contracts, effectively operating as a centre of excellence for certain activities. This does however mean that, whilst we have good resource of our own, in event of an issue, there are limited places where we could ask for help. Our service is better resourced and qualified than would be possible if we didn't provide such services for income. Which balances this. Regional and sub-regional groups are in place so can provide shared resources for local authorities if required.</p> <p>Effective training and development processes are in place to ensure recruitment and retention of staff. Maintenance of training budgets has been essential in holding onto our competitive edge for income generation.</p> <p>Regular inventory and maintenance of equipment is undertaken. In the future, budget for replacement kit may be an issue but would be a relatively small amount for partners to share. For example, we know our provider of noise monitoring equipment from Germany no longer makes the equipment we use and, while we can get it repaired by a UK-provider, longer term new forms of kit will need to be assessed to replace the traditional "Matrons."</p>
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Pest contractors cease operations.	Disruption to service. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Green	The Pest control framework contract has multiple pest control suppliers so the loss of one allows work to be moved to the others. This should limit or eliminate risk, although the unlikely loss of multiple companies might create capacity issues.
Effective and efficient contract arrangement for dog control	Disruption to service if no kennels available. Negative media coverage. Increased public health risks	On-going	Low	High	Amber	There have been significant increases in numbers of stray dogs, dog disease, breed and behavioural complexities and supplier contracts are restricted by distance. Retendering for conventional contracts in kennelling and support services remains difficult and consideration may be given to creating our own kennel capacity. Contractual obligations provide additional pressure. We procured our kennelling contracts for three years, in October 2025
Hosting support does not deliver necessary financial and HR support to ensure efficient management	Efficiency of management reduced; staffing issues remain unaddressed, and performance suffers	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Issues with the BDC finance system have mainly been resolved, however some workarounds remain in place. Roll out of reporting by managers has yet to be finalised. HR capacity remains pressured and there are some frustrations around expectations that are being addressed. We need to continue communication with our hosts to ensure the needs of the shared service do not get missed during any significant changes to systems or processes. This has been flagged to the CEO.
One or more partners continue to be under great financial pressure and may consider alternatives to the partnership to deliver their service	Creates reputational issues for remaining partners and increases the need to manage overheads. Difficulties in delivering highly varied levels of service	On-going	Medium	High	Amber	The 2016 legal agreement limits variations in contribution before partners must move to contractual relationship, but this is quite high before it kicks in (20%.) Leanness of our organisation minimises overheads and focuses resource at the front line. The growth strategy has generated income to support partners, but there are limits to this without additional capacity being added to the system. Historically, invest to save capacity has paid for itself within a relatively short period of time. The impending re-organisation may see significant changes to the way in which external partners require our services, which

						needs to be considered one we know the decision on structures from 2028 onwards.
Robust arrangements in place in relation to obtaining legal advice and monitoring legislative changes.	Loss of cases is costly and damages reputation.	On-going	Low	Medium	Green	Continued close working with BDC legal team and other partners who don't use BDC for advocacy. Technical and legal training days for staff. Difficulty in keeping informed of Case Law developments for Environmental Health in particular, and new emergent issues can leave the law at a disadvantage or not being addressed without the significant cost of establishing case law. Membership of, and attendance of Officer Technical Groups outside the County does assist with communication of emergent issues, solutions and case results.
Service provision complies with Government requirements, New performance regimes are introduced that the service is not staffed to address	Intervention by Government bodies Other national bodies seek to introduce similar frameworks to the FSA Code to get what they regard as suitable minimum levels of service. We understand that Government is asking its central competent bodies to ensure that regulatory regimes are fit for purpose and do not pose a risk to UK exports post BREXIT as the UK no longer has the cover of the EU taking on this role. This may make new codes or performance frameworks in areas outside of food law more likely. NB: Food Standards Agency is addressed below.	On-going	Low	High	Amber	Limited detail of what is required for statutory minima can make decision making difficult around what is required in law as a minimum. The LGA is clearly aware of impact of budget reductions on regulation and has made it clear Government cannot expect what it had previously. Fewer interventions/ audits by government. The Service's engagement with the Food Standards Agency in recent years has led to a significant increase in investment in relation to food law activity, to bring the service into line more with the Food Law Code of Practice. This has meant bringing back a more traditional approach to these activities rather than the innovative intelligence-led approach being previously used, which of itself did not appear to generate significant risk. Environmental reporting for Local Air Quality Management, Pollution Prevention and Control and Private Water Supply Inspection reports to Defra and DWI have received positive responses with no issues of concern raised by these bodies*.

Compliance with Food Code of Practice	Adverse comments following audits. FSA, can seek ministerial direction to make LAs comply with its Code of Practice	On-going	High	High	Amber/Red	<p>This is a subset of the section above line as FSA is the only body currently with a statutory code that LAs must have significant regard to, plus it has the power to apply for Ministerial Orders to force LAs to comply with the letter of the Code.</p> <p>Until recently the Agency appears to have been happy to allow LAs to experiment as long as they abide by the spirit of the code and resource the function at a reasonable level. It has now changed tack and is seeking to push local authorities to operate much more closely to the letter of the code in an effort to create additional resource. Papers have been submitted to the Board twice in recent years alerting members to the challenges faced to the innovative approach that the service has been taking.</p> <p>The partners made a significant investment in new resources to address many of the Agency's concerns at the end of 2023/4 and this has been fruitful in terms of improved performance, but the Agency is now insistent on full alignment with its Code, so further investment is planned. This has necessitated a re-design of operations within the Community Environmental Health division, with the creation of geographical teams for the delivery of food and other commercial functions, and a separate environmental enforcement team that will operate across the County.</p>
Failure to deliver external contract work at the level expected by the business or local authority with whom we have the contract	Damage to reputation, loss of future income streams, financial impact of paying damages	On-going	Low	High	Green	<p>Ensure contract negotiations are clear on performance criteria and these are clearly recorded in the final documentation. Monthly reviews against performance criteria. Select staff to ensure competence of those undertaking work outside Worcestershire. Maintain strong links with the customer's monitoring staff. Intervene early with corrective action. Whilst this is not an issue currently,</p>

						income may become harder to pick up as the re-organisation process gathers momentum.
Local government Re-organisation	Ensuring the statutory regulatory functions are accommodated in any new unitary arrangements to meet the requirements of the new structure	On-going	High	Medium/ Low	Green/ Amber	There is little for officers to do before any decisions on final structures and timetable are made. The structuring of the shared service means that integration of these elements into one authority would be relatively straight-forward should the decision be to establish a unitary county model. The alternative two-unitary model clearly indicates a preference for the retention of the shared service alongside a shared County-wide Public Health service. Whilst there would need to be conversations on how governance for these shared services might sit and, for regulation, what functions would remain/ be added, there does appear to be some certainty for officers looking forward.

Appendix E: Current Partner Council Priorities

Bromsgrove

Economic Development: Economic development is key for delivering our vision for the district, with the aim of cultivating a thriving and resilient local economy. We will focus on supporting businesses, enabling individuals, and developing communities.

Housing: We want to address the diverse housing needs within our District, ensuring quality homes for our residents and families.

Environment: We are committed to safeguarding the natural environment, addressing issues ranging from biodiversity conservation to climate change mitigation, supporting recycling to reducing waste production, all with the goal of enhancing the quality of life for current and future generations.

Infrastructure: Prioritising infrastructure is paramount for our District, as it serves as the bedrock of not only our communities but also growth. This priority underpins the other three, as they can only be delivered with the right infrastructure in place.

Malvern Hills

Our Health and Well-being: Continue to invest to support and enable our communities to become healthier, safer and stronger, Help residents to prevent, survive and recover from financial hardship, Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping or ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurring, Give young people the opportunity to have a say in their communities and their future, Create a vibrant culture and arts community that delivers social, economic and health benefits for our residents.

Our Economy: Enable economic growth through increased provision of suitable commercial premises, support vibrant town centres and an attractive tourism offer, Ensure Malvern Hills District is recognised as a leading location for highly productive, high growth businesses.

Our Environment: Lead Malvern Hills District Council and the wider district to become carbon neutral, Encourage low carbon development, design measures and infrastructure to improve resilience and adaptation to climate change, Reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste sent to the Energy from Waste Plant from the district's households, Reduce the incidence of Environmental Crime across the District.

Redditch

Economy & Regeneration: We want a healthy and thriving economy, building on and celebrating the existing businesses within the borough.

Green, Clean & Safe Redditch: We will support communities in reducing energy bills through exploring affordable green solutions..... We are committed to making Redditch a cleaner and safer place for our residents, whether that is by addressing litter and dog mess or the impact of fly-tipping and antisocial behaviour.

Community & Housing: We will work with partners across the county to deliver the Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2023-2040 and the Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy.

Worcester City

A city where everyone can prosper: We want prosperity for everyone, founded on secure livelihoods and an inclusive and diverse economy.

A resilient and sustainable city: We want Worcester to contribute to the global response to climate change and its impact on nature and biodiversity and have the resilience to cope with the changing climate and extreme weather.

Strong and engaged communities: Worcester will be a place where people have a sense of shared ownership and pride, alongside kindness and respect for all. They will feel that they belong to multiple and overlapping communities with varied interests and ambitions, communities that support each other and celebrate each other's differences and varied heritage.

An attractive heritage city with a vibrant modern culture: Worcester is a historic city with a remarkable built and natural environment that we want to sustain and pass on to future generations. We want to celebrate the city's natural heritage, whilst supporting Worcester as a modern vibrant city. It will be a university and cathedral city that is renowned for a broad range of modern cultural experiences and is proud of its remarkable history and the legacy that is visible in its architecture and open spaces.

A healthy and active city: We want our citizens to enjoy long, healthy and fulfilling lives, and have a choice as to how they achieve this. We want a city that promotes health and wellbeing by providing attractive open spaces, quality provision for play, leisure centres, sporting facilities, and attractive options for active travel.

Wychavon

People: Improving Health and Well-being by supporting H&WB hubs and other tailored approaches including champions in workplaces, raising awareness of issues around vaping with young people and supporting community youth projects, support best start in life and uptake of free school meals, and providing opportunities for everyone, reducing inequalities and helping people to live healthier lives, and supporting young people and raising their aspirations, look at the need for community transport in rural areas.

Place: Helping everyone to access a good place to live, delivering affordable homes and preventing homelessness, supporting businesses to thrive and growing our local economy, revitalising our town centres creating vibrant and accessible places. Encourage the development of neighbourhood plans and their use to increase the amount and quality of social housing, developing options to bring empty homes back into use, improving the response to homelessness and developing suitable facilities, especially for the younger homeless, increase investment in business units, work with tourism and hospitality to increase visitor numbers, link schools to the local business community, and revitalise town centres working with our Place Boards.

Environment: Boosting and enhancing our natural environment including the restoration of some woodlands, increasing biodiversity and enhancing natural assets, parks and green spaces to be more resilient to climate change, cutting carbon emissions including from council facilities, minimise waste, and encouraging low-carbon travel through enhanced walking and cycling routes/ bike hire pilot schemes. Continue to deliver against our Intelligently Green plan and support businesses and communities to develop their own resilience to climate change and emergencies.

Wyre Forest

Economic growth and regeneration: Working with partners to redevelop and regenerate various sites across the district, working with partners to improve skill levels, ensuring they are what employers need, and make sure business support services are available to support growth.

Securing financial sustainability for services that local communities value: increase income from commercial activities, improve access to outdoor facilities and investigate ways to allow developers to make the necessary biodiversity contributions.

A clean, safe and green place to live, work and visit: Secure housing growth and improvements in temporary accommodation, invest in tackling environmental crime, littering particularly in Summer months and tackle parking issues, improve parks and open spaces with increased cultural events, create a carbon reduction plan, supporting improvements in household energy efficiency and increased electric vehicle charging capacity in the three main towns.

Appendix F: Food Plan for Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Period: January 2026 to March 2028

Actions must be specific, measurable and time bound.

What - issue to be addressed	How - Planned action to secure improvement	By whom (name)	By when (date)	Completed
Capacity to deliver FLCoP	<p>Management to complete Time & Motion Study to assess staffing levels to meet requirements 2026/7.</p> <p>Continue the use of the advanced WRS intelligence model to inform tactical and strategic assessments.</p>	SW/DM/HC	December 2025	Completed 16-12-25
Capacity to deliver FLCoP	Report conclusions of Time & Motion Study to Member Officers of the Board	SW/DM	December 2025	Completed November 2025 Provisional approval for additional FTE for Food Safety work (In addition to the 5 agreed previously as part of Recovery Plan)

Capacity to deliver FLCoP	Report to WRS Management Board seeking additional resource of 3 FTE for Food Safety work	SW	February 2026	Briefing Report to Board completed November 2025. Provisional approval for 3 additional FTE for Food Safety work to be formally ratified at February 2026 Board
Capacity to deliver FLCoP and Focus on Food Safety Work	<p>CEH Team reorganisation from generalist capacity to provide dedicated Business Compliance Team (West) and Business Compliance Team (East)</p> <p>7 FTE Business Compliance Team (West) (Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wyre Forest districts)</p> <p>8 FTE Business Compliance Team (East) (Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wychavon districts)</p> <p>* 3 FTE to be added to these teams April 2026 with approval of Board.</p> <p><i>Note: The remit of the Business Compliance Teams is to provide food safety, health and safety, infection control and Primary Authority work on behalf of the six district councils in Worcestershire.</i></p>	DM	January 2026	

To deliver requirements of FLCoP	Work Stream 1 A-C: 571 due 2026/7 All require a qualified officer visit within one month of due date. All 2025/26 inspections allocated to team via Living List. All 2026/7 inspections to be completed within one month of due date. All 2027/28 inspections to be completed within one month of due date.	HC/LE/DM Quarterly Performance Reviews with CEH Team Manager	March 2027 March 2028	
To deliver requirements of FLCoP	Work Stream 2 D: 747 due 2026/7 80% subject to inspection by qualified Officer. 20% subject to official food hygiene controls by competent RSOs. 2025-26 inspections allocated via Living List. All 2026/7 inspections to be completed within one/three months of due date. All 2027/28 inspections to be completed within one/three months of due date.	HC/LE/DM Quarterly Performance Reviews with CEH Team Manager	March 2027 March 2028	
To deliver requirements of FLCoP	Work Stream 3 NPR: 850 Estimated 2026/7 Inherent risk assessed at point of registration FLCoP: High Risk 28 days (60%), Low Risk 3 months (40%). All 2025-26 allocated via Living List Allocate two qualified officers (One per Business Compliance Team) + RSO support to deal with NPR on rotation (approx. 65 pcm)	HC/LE/DM Quarterly Performance Reviews with CEH Team Manager	February 2026	
To deliver requirements of FLCoP	Workstream 4 E Low Risk: 244 RSO led official food hygiene controls (alternative interventions) within 3 months of due date. All 2025-26 allocated via Living List. 2026-27 allocation via Living List	HC/LE/DM Quarterly Performance Reviews with CEH Team Manager	March 2027	

To deliver requirements of FLCoP	Work stream 5 Outstanding interventions due official food hygiene controls. Current 756 pre-2025-26. Note: Assessment already carried out shows that the majority of these are low risk. AES tool to be used. Estimated 500 Cs & Ds carry over from 2025-26. Figures to be confirmed by MIS report financial year end 2025/6, with allocation to Living List to follow.	HC/LE/DM Quarterly Performance Reviews with CEH Team Manager	April 2026 to March 2028	
Improved efficiency to develop capacity to deliver FLCoP	Continue the development of the “Living List” of real-time allocations. Digital inspection pilot: (To reduce inspection paper load and significant administration demand on officer time) Dedicate 2 officers to pilot the newly developed in-house digital system. Facilitates daily monitoring of food inspections.	HC/RW/NW/NB	July-October 2026	
To deliver requirements of FLCoP	Complaints/Service Requests: Estimate 500 per year Review food complaints policy and update operational process.	HC/LE/DM	April 2026	
To deliver requirements of FLCoP	Policy documents Complete review of food management system after changes implemented.	HC	March 2026	

Performance Management of Planned Interventions	Review audit reports from MIS system to inform the monthly performance meetings	HC/SE		
	Weekly monitoring of performance by Principal Officers Business Compliance Team (West) and Business Compliance Team (East)	HC/LE/DM/SW	Weekly	
	Monthly reporting of performance against the Action Plan to CEH Team Manager at regularly monthly Performance Meetings		Monthly	
	Quarterly reporting of performance against the Action Plan to Director of Service		Quarterly	



WRS Board

Date: 19th February 2026

Title: Activity and Performance Data Quarter 3 2025/26

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 third quarter of 2025/26, but the actual data allows comparison with previous quarters and previous years.

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

Whilst the number of reported stray dogs dropped last quarter, a significant number of complaints and enquiries meant that the upward trend in the overall number of dog control cases received during the year to date continued, being 12% above the same period last year and 10% above that in 2023/24.

"Contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by members of the public) continues to represent the vast majority of demand. Around 1 in 5 dogs assessed had welfare concerns and as outlined in previous reports, there has been a concerning increase in these types of cases over the past few years. Approximately 41% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners, however, this figure varies significantly between local authorities and the average across Worcestershire is approximately 50%.

Actual "dog control" complaints are relatively small in number with the vast majority related to dog fouling and/or dogs that were persistently straying from residential properties.

Although the number of food complaints and enquiries fell during quarter 3, the overall number of food safety cases received during the year to date is 14% up compared to last year and 11% above the figure in 2023/24.



Enquiries, including requests for business advice, continue to exceed actual food complaints in terms of numbers. Of the 396 actual food complaints received during the year to date, 72% have related to issues with food products such as poor-quality food or food containing a foreign object, and 28% have related to poor hygiene standards or practices at food businesses.

Of the 1,149 interventions undertaken during the year to date, only 4% have 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 continue 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 is 4% lower than last year but is broadly comparable with 2024/25. Almost half 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. As ever, slips, trips, and falls remain the commonest sources of reported accidents. Sadly, the service has had to investigate three fatalities this year, the most recent one being an incident where a member of the public drowned in a privately run swimming pool.

Both applications/ registrations and complaints/ enquiries to Licensing fell slightly in quarter 3, so the overall number of licensing cases received during the year to date is 6% below compared to both of the previous years. Just over two-thirds of cases were applications or registrations, with the commonest types remaining temporary events (25%), private hire vehicles (18%) and hackney carriage vehicles (10%).

As with other areas of work, enquiries (i.e., queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions etc.) generally outstrip numbers of actual complaints about licensed persons or premises. Based on the 750 actual complaints received during the year to date, around 43% have related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards,) and 29% have related to alcohol licensing (reports of business failing to comply with the licensing objectives). A further 11% of complaints have related to animal licensing with most cases relating to the alleged unlicensed breeding and/or sale of dogs.

As with Quarter 2, the number of planning enquiries received in quarter 3 fell, meaning that the totals for the year to date are 2% below last year but 20% above the figure 2023/24. The vast majority of enquiries have been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, or nuisances; with approximately 1 in 5 enquiries having been processed (on a contractual basis) on behalf of other local authorities.

Members will see that the fall in nuisance complaints through quarter 3 mirrors previous seasonal patterns, usually reflecting the shift to autumnal weather. As we have said elsewhere, whilst last year's summer temperatures were record-breaking, the spike of nuisance complaints did not exceed the levels in the summer of 2023/24. Hence, the overall number of pollution cases received during the year to date is 19% higher than last year but 6% lower



than in 2023/24. The vast majority of cases have been 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.

“Public Health” cases are often included alongside nuisance as they are addressed with similar legislation. The number of complaints and enquiries received during Q3 was the lowest in the previous three-years, meaning the overall number of such cases received during the year to date is 2% lower than last year and 6% below that in 2023/24. Approximately half of cases have related to pest control, with enquiries about domestic treatments or sewer baiting, and complaints about pest activity caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses featuring strongly. A further 28% of cases were reports of accumulations of rubbish or waste at residential properties, however, such complaints often refer to the presence of rodents or other pests.

Of the 515 domestic treatments undertaken by pest control contractors during the year to date, approximately 55% were due to problems with rats whilst a further 24% were due to issues with wasps or hornets. Around two thirds of treatments have taken places at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.

Performance

Quarter 3 is another more limited reporting period. The non-business customer measure at 59.6% is slightly higher than at the same point last year (58.6%) but slightly below the previous one (60.7%). Whilst we saw a record-breaking summer for temperatures, this did not deliver the levels of demand for nuisance work and the cool, wet Autumn has likewise kept complaint numbers at a reasonable level. Response numbers also remain low with just over 100 replies received from April to December, although this is significantly better than the 80, we received this time last year. Having reviewed the data, the speed of addressing the issue and whether the overall outcome meets expectations are still the main areas that score poorly and where there is a need for improvement. However, even if clear conversations are hard at the beginning of the process to explain the potential likelihood of being able to achieve the change someone wants to see, there is a risk that if this cannot be achieved it is officers and the service who will be blamed. Numbers who felt better equipped to deal with future issues at 51.3%, is slightly below the figures at the same point in the previous 2 years.

Business customer satisfaction is marginally above the last quarter at 95.2%, slightly below the figure this time last year (96.8%) but is still well above previous year's 92% at the same point in the year. So far, 131 responses have been received. One question has 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 they hoped for seems to be the main issue.



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

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

Staff sickness has increased from 3.04 days per FTE to 4.56 days per FTE cumulative for the year. This is the highest that sickness has 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 have been worse this year than last, over 77% of sick days recorded fell into the long-term category (i.e., members of staff being off for 28 days plus.) Members will be aware that one or two members of WRS staff are yet to recover from serious illness and remain absent.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

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



Appendix B: Performance indicator table**Table of Pls 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	61.7	59.6	
2. % of service requests where resolution is achieved to business satisfaction	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	91.8	95.1	95.2	
3. % businesses broadly compliant/ made compliant at first assessment/ inspection	Annually	98.3	Bromsgrove 98.3 Malvern Hills 98.1 Redditch 97.5 Worcester City 99.2 Wychavon 98.2 Wyre Forest 98.1 Worcestershire 98.3	98.5	
4. % of food businesses scoring 0,1 or 2 at 1 st April each year	Annually	1.7	Bromsgrove 1.7 Malvern Hills 1.9 Redditch 2.5 Worcester City 0.8 Wychavon 1.8 Wyre Forest 1.9 Worcestershire 1.7	1.5	
5 % of drivers licence renewal applications issued within 5 working days of receipt of a complete application	6-monthly	NA	88.4	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	8/1551 or 0.5% of the fleet county-wide Vehicles found defective in service (suspended during the period) are: BDC 0 MHDC 0 RBC 5 WCC 1 WDC 1 WFDC 1	NA	



7	% of service requests where customer indicates they feel better equipped to deal with issues themselves in future	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	42.9	57.8	51.3	
8	Review of register of complaints/compliments	Quarterly NB: fig is cumulative	3/11	5/25	10/45	
9	Annual staff sickness absence at public sector average or better	Quarterly NB: figure is cumulative	2.17 days per FTE	3.04 days per FTE	4.56 days per FTE	
10	% of staff who enjoy working for WRS	Annually	NA	NA	NA	
11	% of licensed businesses subject to allegations of not upholding the 4 licensing objectives	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 6.8 Malvern Hills 3.5 Redditch 3.9 Worcester City 5.5 Wychavon 3.5 Wyre Forest 7.6 Worcestershire 5.1	NA	
12	Rate of noise complaint per 1000 head of population	6-monthly	NA	Bromsgrove 0.74 Malvern Hills 0.86 Redditch 0.61 Worcester City 0.86 Wychavon 0.72 Wyre Forest 0.80 Worcestershire 0.77	NA	
13	Total income expressed as a % of district base revenue budget (16/17)	6-monthly	NA	£347,337 which is 8.6% as a proportion of the 2016/17 revenue budget figure (£3,017,000) and 8.09% of current revenue budget (£4,293,000)	NA	



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

Supporting and protecting you

Activity Report | 2025-26

Published on 11th February 2026



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 third activity report for 2025/26. As ever, it follows the familiar format that Board members will have seen many times and, whilst the detail covers the period 1st October to 31st December 2025, figures in the graphs and tables will allow comparison with the data in previous periods.

Stray dog numbers actually fell in Q3, but complaints and enquiries were up, meaning that overall dog-related case numbers remain well above recent years. Actual complaints tended to relate to dog fouling or to persistent straying, sometimes both.

Similarly, food complaints and enquiries fell during Q3, but the overall number of logged cases remains higher than at the same point in either of the previous two-years. Intervention numbers have improved as the year has gone on, with over 1100 completed by the end of December. The food sector continues to show good levels of compliance. Complaints and enquiries relate to Health and Safety at Work generally followed their trend during this period but reported accident numbers fell. The investigation into the fatality at a privately run swimming pool, remained on-going through the period.

Information requests were up on last quarter, so the on-going upward trend appears to be continuing. Seldom a week goes by without more Freedom of Information or Environmental Information Regulation requests arriving for processing. Requests for support in the planning system dropped slightly again in Q3, and if this continues, we may not exceed the number of requests seen during 2024/5.

Both applications/ registrations and complaints/ enquiries to Licensing fell slightly in quarter 3, so the overall number of licensing cases received during the year to date is 6% below compared to both of the previous years.

Members will see that the fall in nuisance complaints through quarter 3 mirrors previous seasonal patterns, usually reflecting the shift to autumnal weather. As we have said elsewhere, whilst last year's summer temperatures were record-breaking, the spike of nuisance complaints did not exceed the levels in the summer of 2023/24. Public Health related complaints (accumulations, vermin, public burials, etc.) were lower in the last quarter than in the same period in the last 3 years, so overall numbers are below the previous years too.

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.

Quarter Two

The summer months saw the Team involved in some very interesting and unusual nuisance investigations. In addition to the usual barking dog complaints which included the submission of an enforcement file for breach of an abatement notice in Worcester, Officers investigated nuisance arising from extensive development works in Bromsgrove, noise nuisance from a car wash in Redditch which has subsequently closed following our involvement, and noise in Bromsgrove in respect of the fast-growing sport of Padel, the sound of which unfortunately is somewhat akin in nature to that of a shooting range. We also received a query in respect of paramotor aviators in Malvern Hills. Not a problem for which we have powers, but we were able to signpost to the appropriate regulatory body.

In Food, allergens continue to provide a cause for concern and a restaurant in Worcester, operated by a large national chain, closed voluntarily whilst it carried out much-needed improvements in food safety.

In health and safety, we continue to liaise with the Coroner's Office in respect of the fatalities under investigation. We were also able to provide safety advice in respect of the re-enactment battles of Evesham and Worcester, which sounds somewhat ironic, and in respect of an algal bloom which made an appearance in a Redditch park, presenting a safety hazard. We also assisted the new owners in their preparations for welcoming Rugby back to Sixways and carried out checks at the Sunshine Music Festival.

In our infection control role, we are also supporting the invasive mosquito surveillance efforts coordinated by the Medical Entomology and Zoonoses Ecology Team (MEZE) at UKHSA. This project has been crucial in detecting invasive mosquitoes (*Aedes albopictus*/tiger mosquito and *Aedes aegypti*) on seven occasions since 2016. This surveillance is significant given the rising number of Dengue virus cases in Europe, exemplified by the detection of three locally acquired cases in Paris last year, necessitating invasive mosquito control measures. Our role is in running and submitting mosquito traps as part of the surveillance effort. With rising temperatures, we anticipate detections to become more frequent. Early detection and control of these mosquitoes will be increasingly crucial across England to mitigate public health risks associated with mosquito-borne diseases.

Quarter Three

Much of Q3 was spent working on the Food Standards Agency (FSA) time and motion study and preparing a report providing assurance as to how we plan to move to compliance with the revised Food Law Code of Practice (October 2025). As part of this the team completed work on, and went live with, the “Living List” making food inspection allocations more efficient. Work also commenced on the first trials of an “In-house” digital inspection programme being developed in co-ordination with Wyre Forest DC’s ICT Team to reduce the burden of administration on officers to free up operational time.

In food safety, CDS (Superstores International) Limited, trading as The Range, were sentenced at Kidderminster Magistrates Court on 11th December 2025 for food safety offences and ordered to pay £400,000 and costs. This was after live rodents and droppings were found in its store in Wyre Forest. Concerns were initially raised by the public after food for human consumption, including easter eggs, had been gnawed by mice. Following the findings, the Range worked cooperatively with WRS to recall the easter eggs and voluntarily closed off areas of the store where gnawed food was found. Additional pest control measures were also put in place. Whilst the vast majority of food businesses in Worcestershire are broadly compliant with hygiene requirements, this outcome serves as a reminder to all business owners of the consequences of failing to maintain pest control and food safety standards, and of the importance of protecting the community.

Work is ongoing with a high security prison in the Wychavon DC area to secure access for monitoring food safety improvements.

Three salmonella incidents with raw chicken and processed chicken products for Aldi imported from Poland by Westbridge Foods were addressed, requiring liaison with the FSA Incidents Team and several local authorities where affected products were being stored (Malvern Hill DC). The quarter also saw three voluntary closures of food businesses due to poor food hygiene standards.

Your officers provided support to Goodmans Geese (Malvern Hills DC) with an APHA investigation when bird flu restrictions hit, with the associated threat to their essential Christmas trade, worked with an international business in Bromsgrove DC to ensure the integrity of their distressed load process after some consignment issues and supported another local company in exporting new products to Turkey.

We have noted an increase in the number of general enquiries about opening new food businesses, and new registrations continue at some 60 per month adding to the team’s workload. At a time when there is a nationally recognised shortage of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) which we ourselves have experienced during recent recruitment drives, we continue to support new entrants into the profession and during Q3 were able to provide work experience for a trainee military EHO.

In health and safety work, your officers supported the Coroner following an investigation into a fatality at Aldi which involved a scissor lift and also undertook a project through tasking whereby swimming pool operators were contacted and provided with advice following a swimming pool fatality earlier in the year.

The service supported the Victoria Fayre Safety Advisory Group and event in Worcester, with officers monitoring the food stalls.

In nuisance work, a longstanding issue with noise from a Redditch Car wash was successfully resolved and investigations continue in respect of noise nuisance from the fast-growing sport of Padel, the sound of which unfortunately is somewhat akin in nature to that of a shooting range.

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.

Quarter Two

Applications received by the team always tend to be higher in quarter 2 due to the number of Temporary Event Notices received by the team for summer events and festivals. This year has seen the first full summer using the victoria forms method for TENs and it has been not only positively received by the public but it has had a positive impact on the team from a processing perspective.

The high number of TENs received for festivals and events has come hand in hand with more out of hours compliance checks being conducted jointly with both West Mercia Police colleagues and Community Environmental Health colleagues. This year the team have seen a higher number of festivals that have caused concerns for nearby neighbours and therefore a joint up approach with colleagues has been essential and welcomed through investigations.

New Animal Licensing inspections continue to be submitted with a slight increase in applications since pre covid. This is an area of licensing that continues to pull on resources due to not only the length of time it takes officers to inspect premises but also due to the requirement to work with licence holders on their applications. The proactive work the team also continue to do has improved compliance across the County.

Compliance and multiagency work has continued throughout the summer with a number of visits taken place at caravan sites in Wychavon that have raised concerns in various partnership meetings and officers have continued to visit gambling premises across the County as part of the annual inspection programme.

On policy matters the team are working with each Licensing Committee on new Street Trading policies to incorporate changes in peoples buying habits and behaviours but also taking into consideration festivals, markets and events that sometimes require road closures. The Chairs of Licensing hope that it will bring a more flexible and up to date approach for both traders and the public.

Quarter Three

The number of licensing cases received during the quarter have been slightly down compared to the last quarter which is not dissimilar to the pattern seen in the previous two years. Approximately 68% of cases to date this year have been applications or registrations and, in parallel with previous reports, the most common types of applications submitted to the service relate to temporary events (25%), private hire vehicles (18%) and hackney carriage vehicles (10%).

The team continue to work on forms to be used online. The next set of forms to be rolled out for licensing will be pavement licensing and animal licensing forms with the next set in the process to be looked at by the team to be online taxi application. Alongside this, work continues across all teams in WRS to roll out the 'service request' form which will cover the most reported areas of the service to be submitted online.

The team welcomed an external licensing audit on behalf of Wyre Forest district council. The overall feedback was that the service has a Substantial design and effectiveness of controls for licensing. The team generally had a sound system of internal controls designed to achieve system objectives. The service have appropriate policies, procedures, legislation and guidance in place for Licensing which reflect current working practices. There were some minor recommendations that the team have been working on for Control Effectiveness.

There were Licensing Committees across all of the districts where some looked at fees and charges and others looked at street trading and the regulations surrounding the UBER taxi model were discussed. The team are working on new street trading policies for all districts and will be taking them to Licensing Committees in the next quarter for approval to go out to consultation.

The team continue inspections for new and renewal applications for animal licenses alongside carrying out the required interim inspections. This quarter the team have also carried out an interim zoo inspection at 'All things Wild' and started looking at the implementation of the new 'Primate Keeper' Licensing regime with a communication plan drawn up and liaison planned with vets across the County in readiness for its implementation in April 2026.

And finally, as always the team with colleagues across the service and Worcester City colleagues helped out at the Victorian Fayre with officers working during the day and evenings ensuring that all of those involved had the correct licenses in place to ensure it was an enjoyable event for all.

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.

Quarter Two

Following successful delivery of our **gull control** programme during the breeding season over the summer months, our Gull Control Officer has been preparing the Organisational Licence return for Natural England to demonstrate compliance with our licence as well as finishing off arrangements for the last of the proofing works for this year. We have continued to receive requests for help and have prepared a programme of control for 2026/27 to be presented at Committee next quarter including a summary of this year's activity.

During the summer the updated **Contaminated Land** Inspection Strategies for Bromsgrove and Wychavon continued to progress through the respective committee processes. In parallel, the prioritization and risk scoring of approximately 10,000 potentially contaminated sites across the area has been actively ongoing. This process is critical for determining the order of site investigations based on potential risks to human health and the environment.

The summer months also saw a high volume of Environmental Information Requests (EIRs) related to contaminated land, alongside routine **planning consultations** (which is where support is provided to planning officers on environmental health related elements of applications or requests to discharge conditions). The team also continued to support Gloucester City Council and North Warwickshire District Council and responded to ad hoc consultations from Bristol City Council.

In August and September, WRS was asked to provide a second opinion on a planning application involving a site where remediation of a public open space had not been implemented, in Bristol City Council area. The original developer had gone into administration, and WRS reviewed the submitted assessment report, offering professional recommendations to the Environmental Health Officer.

A different significant planning case in Gloucester City involved proposed development on part of a closed landfill site. The site presents risks from ground gases and residual contamination, compounded by its proximity to the River Severn, in-situ leachate systems, and protected water supply zones. The inclusion of privately owned residential properties adds complexity regarding long-term infrastructure management. WRS's Contaminated Land Team has been actively working with the Local Authority and stakeholders to ensure the site is safe and suitable for its intended sensitive use. Furthermore, support was provided in the development of the South Worcestershire Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for air quality. This work was led by the Senior Strategic Planning Officer at the County Council and culminated in the SPD being presented to committee in September, where it was formally approved by all three districts.

During this quarter, significant progress was made in **air quality** management across the region. The process of revoking several Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS) was initiated, specifically those located in Bromsgrove (Lickey End and Redditch Road) and Wychbold in Wychavon. In addition, the relocation of ten low-cost air quality sensors was successfully completed. This forms part of the ongoing effort to improve spatial coverage and data quality for local air quality monitoring. The Annual Status Reports for all Districts (ASR) were published in July and made available on the council's website, providing a comprehensive overview of air quality trends, monitoring data, and progress against local objectives.

Air Quality Behavioural Change work

The Behavioural Change Officer with support from colleagues undertook a series of community engagement activities aimed at raising awareness and promoting behavioural change around air quality issues across key locations in Worcestershire.

A number of school visits were conducted in Bromsgrove as part of the Community Awareness initiative. These sessions focused on educating pupils about the sources and impacts of air pollution, as well as practical steps individuals and families can take to reduce their exposure and contribution to poor air quality. The interactive nature of the sessions helped to foster a strong understanding of the topic among young people, encouraging them to become ambassadors for cleaner air within their schools and homes.

In September, the team participated in the 2025 Freshers' Fairs at both the Worcester and Redditch campuses of Heart of Worcestershire (HOW) College. These events provided an excellent platform to engage with new students, many of whom are new to the area and may be unaware of local air quality challenges. Through informative displays, interactive activities, and one-on-one conversations, students were introduced to the importance of sustainable travel choices, the health impacts of air pollution, and the role they can play in improving local air quality.

Further outreach was carried out through visits to community centres and businesses along Redditch Road and Lickey End Road in Bromsgrove. These visits aimed to engage residents and business owners in discussions about air quality, offering tailored advice on reducing emissions and exposure in both domestic and commercial settings. The team also gathered feedback on local concerns, which will help inform future interventions and policy development.

Additionally, a visit was made to St. Martin with St. Peter Church of England Church, where members of the congregation were engaged in a discussion about the links between environmental stewardship and air quality. This provided a valuable opportunity to connect with the community in a more reflective setting, reinforcing the shared responsibility for protecting the environment and promoting public health.

In relation to Planning and Environmental Enforcement, this quarter has seen an increase in the amount of Fixed Penalty Notices issued for fly-tipping and littering related offences at 18 with 4 Community Protection Warnings also served. The team are continuing to investigate and bring to account those responsible for such crimes in Bromsgrove and Redditch Council areas.

Our **Homes for Ukraine** work has continued in Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council areas including the following two case studies:

One of our Ukrainian guests, 'Olga' (not her real name) a young student who arrived in the UK in April 2022, was recently refused admission to several local Sixth Forms. The reason cited was that her English Language GCSE result was not high enough at a Grade 3.

However, this decision did not reflect the full context of Olga's situation. As a newly arrived child from a war zone on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, Olga had no prior knowledge of English when she arrived in the UK. Despite this, she became fluent in the language within just three years, while also performing strongly in her other GCSE subjects. In addition, she is multilingual and has demonstrated exceptional resilience and academic potential.

With her mother's consent, our Homes for Ukraine Support Workers intervened by liaising with the admissions teams directly. They assisted in setting out Olga's unique background and achievements whilst showcasing her achievements, despite the significant pressure she endured whilst taking her GCSEs, while her father was serving on the frontlines in Ukraine providing medical aid, and her mother was undergoing treatment here in the UK for a life-threatening illness.

Shortly after our intervention, Olga's mother updated the team to confirm Olga went for an interview at a sixth form that had been contacted by the team and was successful in gaining a place. She went on to say 'I will remember your help for the rest of my life. Thank you again for everything! '

In our other case study, back in August 2022, a young guest and her mother arrived in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Like many others adjusting to a new country, both mother and daughter faced significant challenges in settling into life in the UK. They struggled not only with the language barrier but also with mental health concerns, particularly for the young woman.

Recognising their need for additional support, one of our Ukrainian speaking support workers dedicated time to working closely with the family over the past three years. Her consistent involvement has been vital in helping them navigate both daily life and complex systems such as healthcare and education. We recently received the following message from a teacher highlighting the invaluable contribution of the support provided in our community:

'I just wanted to pass on my gratitude for allowing us access the support worker who interprets at our 6 weekly education progress meetings which are held between us, our pupil KP, the parent and school. These meetings are so important to ensure that school and parents are kept up to date with the pupil's progress and also of any concerns. These meetings would not be as effective without the support worker's input, not solely due to her interpreting so masterfully educational terms and pupil's mental health agencies such as CAMHS, but also helping us to understand the cultural differences. The family have started to make a positive step towards becoming more settled at home and at school and this is very much thanks to them. I think that the Homes for Ukraine scheme is fantastic and I do hope that you and your team appreciate how much you are supporting these families in so many ways.'

Air Quality

During this last quarter, we have developed a few projects with the University of Birmingham, WM Net Zero programme. This includes a source apportionment study of PM2.5 utilising the University's mobile supersite. The second project involves analysis of low cost sensor (Zephyr) particulate matter data to determine a local baseline, and correlate observed regional peaks with known national and international episodes and sources, and potentially local hospital admissions data.

The team were asked by Bromsgrove District Council to prepare an options paper for additional Particulate Matter Monitoring within their area. A draft report was presented to Cabinet Working Group in December presenting a number of options including extending the life of existing sensors for a further period beyond current contract and undertaking a source apportionment study of PM2.5 within the Bromsgrove area. The report was received favourably and will be presented to cabinet and overview and scrutiny within the next quarter.

In November we facilitated Air Quality Action Plan steering group progress meetings for Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest.

WRS have joined a newly formed customer council working with Earthsense, our air quality sensor providers, to develop enhancements to the MyAir software which is behind the public facing portal of our air quality monitoring and live data feed.

Behavioural Change Air Quality

During this quarter, extensive engagement activities were delivered across Worcestershire, including multiple school assemblies in Worcester and Bromsgrove aimed at raising awareness of local air pollution and seasonal issues such as Bonfire Night. Schools engaged included Red Hill Primary School and St George's Primary School in Worcester, as well as The Orchard School, Aston Fields Middle School, and Lickey End First School in Bromsgrove. In December, five assemblies were also delivered at Nunnery Wood High School, reaching over 1,000 students and increasing understanding of air quality, health impacts, and individual behaviour change.

In addition, the Clean Air Youth Lab project was successfully delivered at Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW College, Worcester Campus) for SEN students. The programme ran over six sessions between October and December and achieved high levels of participation and engagement. Following this positive experience, the project will be replicated in February and March 2026 for SEN students in Redditch. Preparatory work is also underway for a new four-session project planned for January 2026, aimed at business students at the HoW College Worcester campus, which include activities to support the clean Air Night Campaign.

Contaminated Land

We received the State of Contaminated Land Survey from the Environment Agency in November 2025. This is a mandatory survey under Section 78U(2) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The survey comprised 33 compulsory questions and 22 voluntary ones, all regarding work undertaken in respect of contaminated land by the LA over the years in relation to declaration of sites, CL Strategy, inspection of sites, and other related information. We were required to provide a separate response for each district council in Worcestershire.

Contaminated Land

We were also requested to complete the response on behalf of Gloucester City Council as we undertake CL contract work on their behalf. We completed the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy for Wyre Forest District Council in this period. The strategy was agreed and has been uploaded to the WRS website alongside the completed ones for Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, and Wychavon. Work then started on drafting the final outstanding strategy for Worcester City Council.

Dog Control

We have received several dogs as strays with poor skin conditions, with a number needing emergency vet treatment. One lurcher had a narcotic open wound, another had a gaping open wound the size of a melon from its stomach down its leg. This latter dog required an emergency operation. One terrier was covered in mammary tumours, a cruel case of neglect. The higher than usual number of lurchers found as strays is possibly linked to recent police activity to disrupt hare coursing crimes.

We held a successful dog microchipping event on 26th November at Worcester Country Park with plans for another in the new year. The aim of these events and previous ones is to enable reunification of dogs to owners with minimal costs being incurred by the Council by reducing the number of dogs in the community without owner's details and promotion of responsible dog ownership.

Permitting

As part of the regime requirements, WRS submitted the UK BAT evidence collection forms for two brick manufacturing sites. This work helps to support the wider permit regime development and keeps it aligned to real world conditions and technology applications.

Homes for Ukraine

Work has continued to support individuals and families under the Homes for Ukraine scheme across the Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council areas. During October and November, several complex and time-intensive cases required significant input from our support workers. These included supporting a family experiencing a difficult housing situation; assisting a gentleman who became the victim of an employment scam, which resulted in fraud being recorded against him and his bank accounts being frozen; and helping a family who encountered challenges applying for UPE visas for their two young children due to the absence of passports. This latter case involved extensive liaison with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to secure passport appointments.

In 2025, one of the WRS Homes for Ukraine Support Workers, who herself arrived in the UK under the scheme in 2022, achieved an ESOL qualification to teach English. Through her work, she identified a gap in provision for elderly Ukrainian guests who may struggle to travel to college-based ESOL courses or lack the confidence to attend them, despite having limited English language skills. In response, she organised her first English class for elderly learners in December. The sessions have been well attended and have received very positive feedback from participants.

One attendee commented:

“You have explained everything so clearly! you have made it so easy for us to understand. If everyone explained things the way you do, we would be speaking the language within six months.”

On 13th December, the team organised a “Breakfast with Santa” event for Ukrainian toddlers and young children. Sixteen children attended alongside their parents. These events are consistently well received and play an important role in bringing the Ukrainian community together, offering families a supportive and welcoming environment as they adjust to life in a new country after fleeing war.

Feedback from parents included:

“Thank you for giving us the opportunity to come together and for creating such a wonderful atmosphere for the children. Happy holidays.”

Dog Control

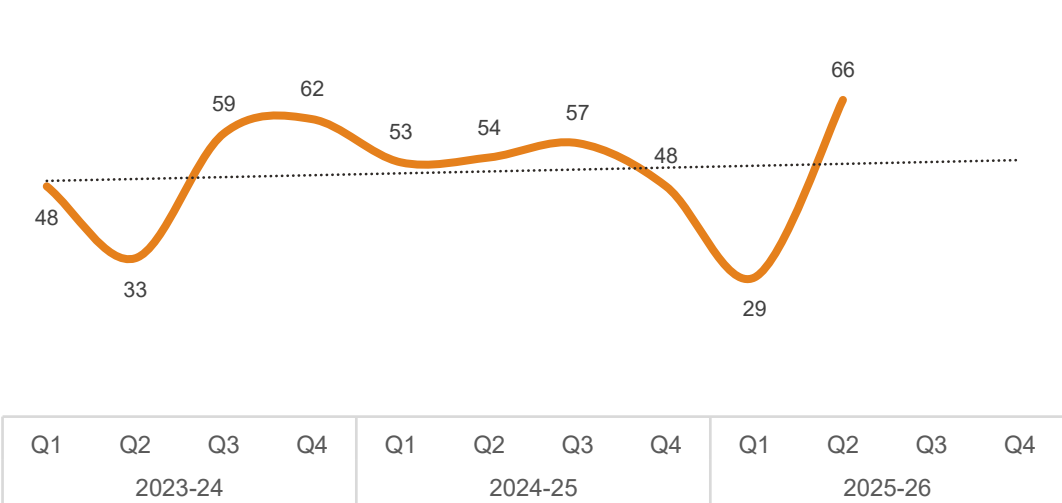
The data on this page shows the number of dog control cases (complaints, enquiries, and reports of lost or stray dogs) handled by the service over a three-year period. Complaints reported to WRS include reports of dangerous dogs, reports of dog fouling, and reports of dogs persistently straying. Complaints 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

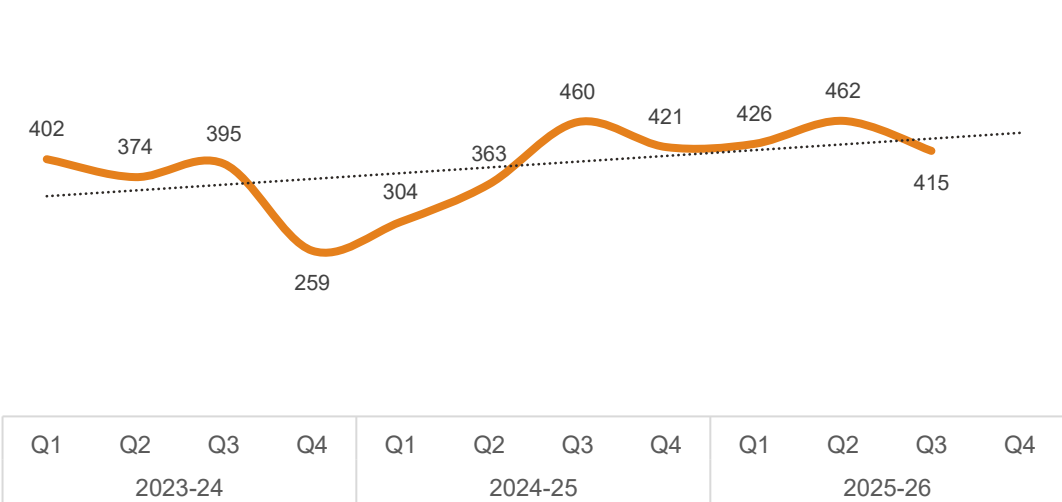
The number of dog control cases received during the year to date is an increase of 12% compared to last year and an increase of 10% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 90% of cases have been reports of lost or stray dogs with most cases categorised as "contained strays" (meaning dogs were found and held by members of the public). Around 1 in 5 dogs assessed had welfare concerns and, as outlined in previous reports, there has been a concerning increase in these types of cases over the past few years. Approximately 41% of dogs have been successfully reunited with their owners, however, this figure varies significantly between local authorities and the average across Worcestershire is approximately 50%.

In general terms, the service receives a low number of dog control complaints and enquiries each quarter. Based on the 60 complaints received during the year to date, however, 47 have related to dog fouling and/or dogs that were persistently straying from residential properties.

Complaints and Enquiries



Reports of Lost or Stray Dogs



Food Safety

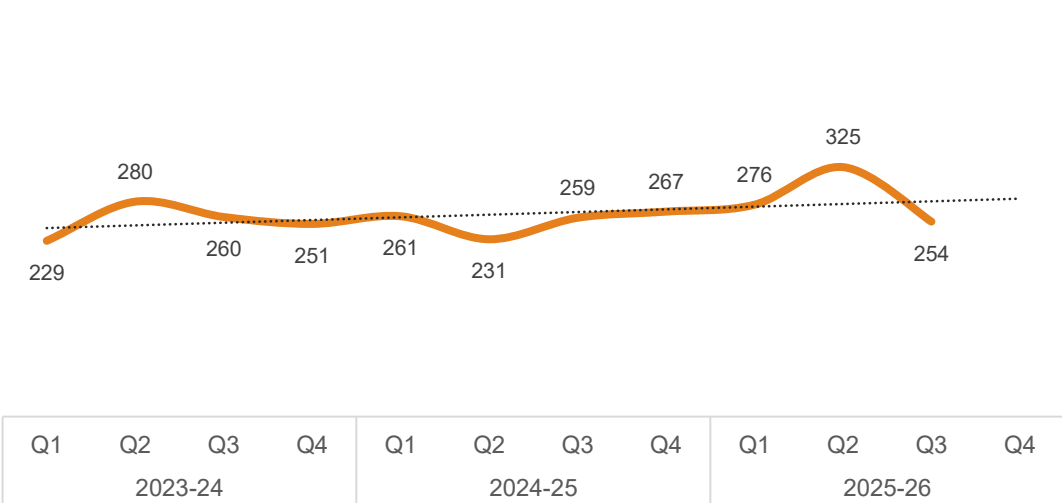
The data on this page outlines the number of food safety cases (complaints, enquiries, and notifications) handled by the service over a three year period. The data also outlines the number of food safety interventions undertaken at premises included in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Complaints reported 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

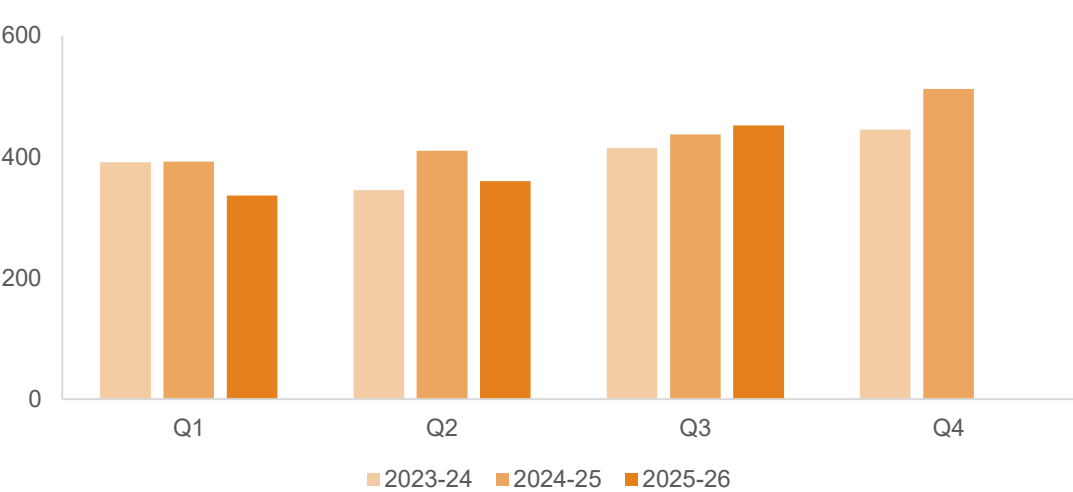
The number of food safety cases received during the year to date is an increase of 4% compared to last year and an increase of 11% compared to 2023/24. The service tends to receive a greater number of enquiries (including requests for business advice) than complaints. Based on the 396 complaints received during the year to date, 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 1,149 interventions undertaken during the year to date, 4% have resulted in businesses being rated as "non-compliant" (issued a rating of 0, 1, or 2). In parallel with previous reports, a higher proportion of non-compliant ratings continue to be 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



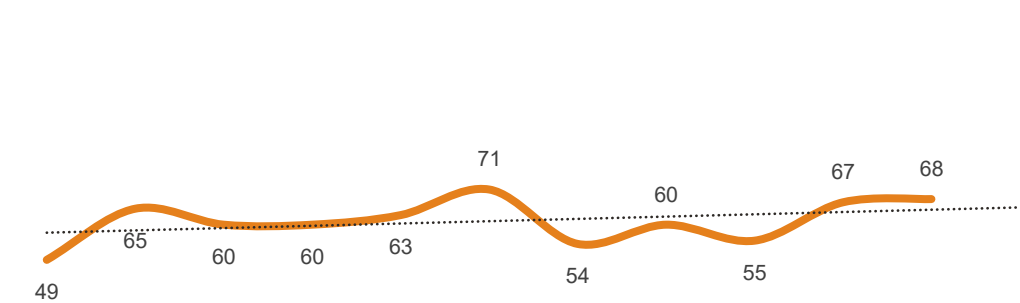
Health & Safety

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

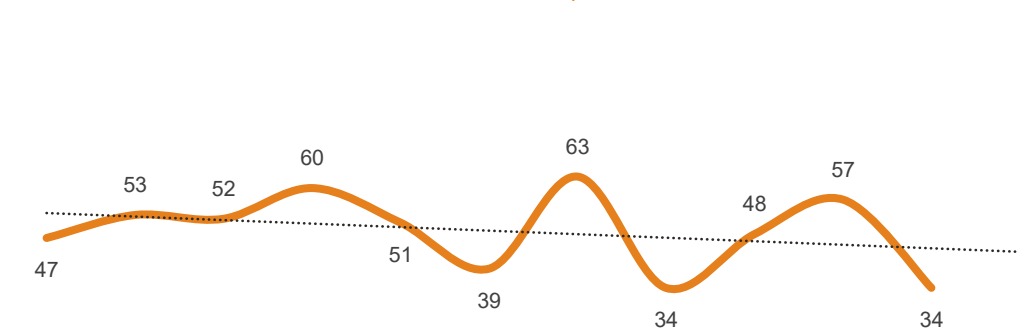
The number of health and safety cases received during the year to date is a reduction of 4% compared to last year but is broadly comparable compared to 2024/25. Approximately 42% of cases have been reports of accidents in workplaces with most cases relating to injuries where a worker was incapacitated for more than seven days or injuries to members of the public. In parallel with previous reports, most accidents have occurred due to slips, trips, and falls (whether on the same level or from height). Sadly, the service has investigated three fatalities this year including an incident where a member of the public drowned in a swimming pool.

Complaints and Enquiries



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

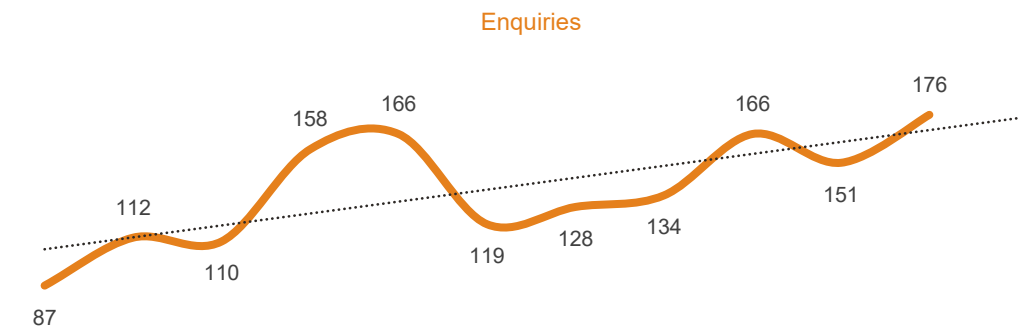
Accident Reports



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 activity, however, cases generally relate to the following areas:

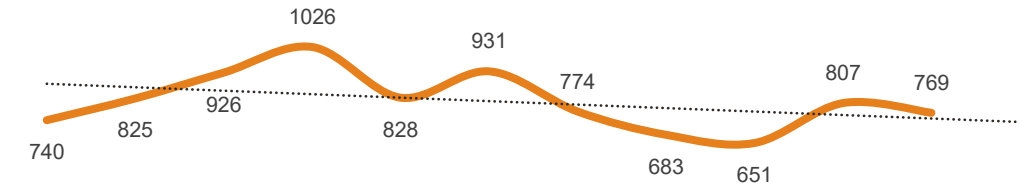
- Alcohol and Entertainment
- Animals
- Caravans
- Gambling
- Scrap Metal
- Sex Establishments
- Skin Piercing
- Street Trading, Amenities, and Collections
- Taxis

Page 108
Comments

The number of licensing cases received during the year to date is a reduction of 6% compared to last year and a reduction of 6% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 68% of cases have been applications or registrations and, in parallel with previous reports, the most common types of applications submitted to the service relate to temporary events (25%), private hire vehicles (18%) and hackney carriage vehicles (10%).

In general terms, the service receives a higher number of enquiries (queries about regulations, by-laws, and licence conditions etc.) than complaints. Based on the 750 complaints received during the year to date, however, approximately 43% have related to taxi licensing (such as reports of poor driver behaviour, unauthorised parking, or poor driving standards) whilst 29% have related to alcohol licensing (reports of business failing to comply with the licensing objectives). A further 11% 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

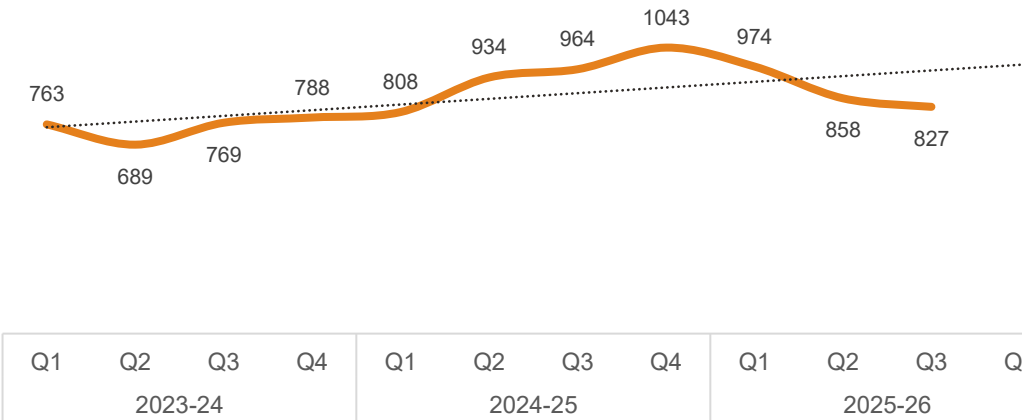
The data on this page outlines the number of planning enquiries handled by the service over a three-year period. Planning enquiries processed by WRS are either consultations or requests to discharge planning conditions, however, enquiries only relate to the following areas:

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

Comments

The number of planning enquiries received during the year to date is a reduction of 2% compared to last year but an increase of 20% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 94% of enquiries have been consultations for air quality, contaminated land, or nuisances; whilst approximately 1 in 5 enquiries have been processed (on a contractual basis) on behalf of other local authorities.

Planning Enquiries



Planning Enforcement & Environmental Crime

The data on this page outlines the number of planning enforcement and environmental crime cases (complaints and incidents) 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. These functions are only delivered on behalf of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and have only been within the remit of the service since June 2024.

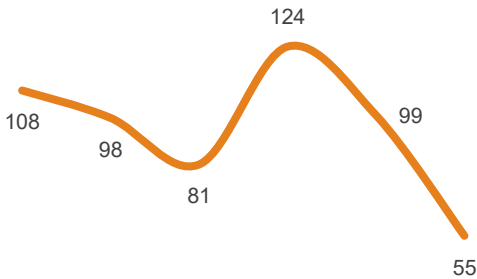
Comments

There is currently no comparable temporal data available for the planning enforcement and enviro-crime functions as the service has only been delivering these functions since June 2024. Based on the 666 cases recorded during the year to date, however, 68% have related to fly-tipping incidents whilst 32% have been complaints about suspected breaches of planning legislation at residential or commercial properties. The planning enforcement function has seen a reduction in the number of reports of breaches of planning control and this has enabled the team to focus on finding resolutions to long standing cases.

From an environmental crime perspective, it should be noted that the number of cases outlined on this page is the number of cases that have been (or are in the process of being) investigated by the service. During the year to date, approximately 1,741 fly-tipping incidents been reported to Bromsgrove District Council whilst 1,392 incidents have been reported to Redditch Borough Council. Where an incident is not investigated, this is commonly because there is no possible means for the service to identify a suspect and/or because insufficient information was supplied via the reporting form.

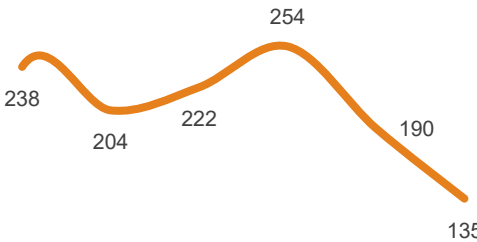
During this period, in relation to Envirocrime and Planning related matters, 22 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued in Bromsgrove and 2 in Redditch. Furthermore a 15 Warning letters were given out and 19 Statutory Notices were served in Bromsgrove with 5 warning letters and 3 Statutory Notices in Redditch. One Community Protection Warning and one Community Protection Notice were also served in Bromsgrove.

Planning Enforcement



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

Environmental Crime



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

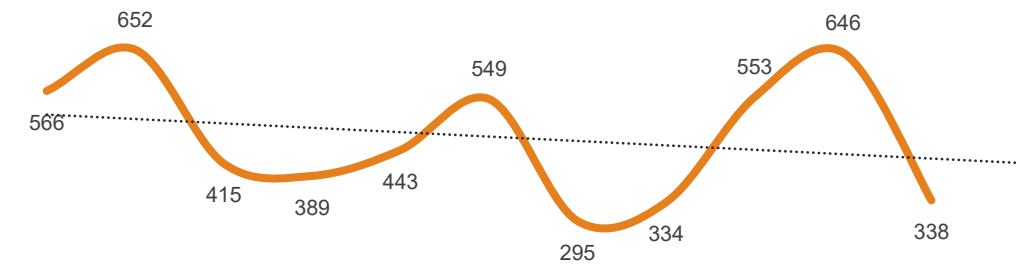
Pollution

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, commercial, or agricultural activity and notifications of contamination incidents.

Comments

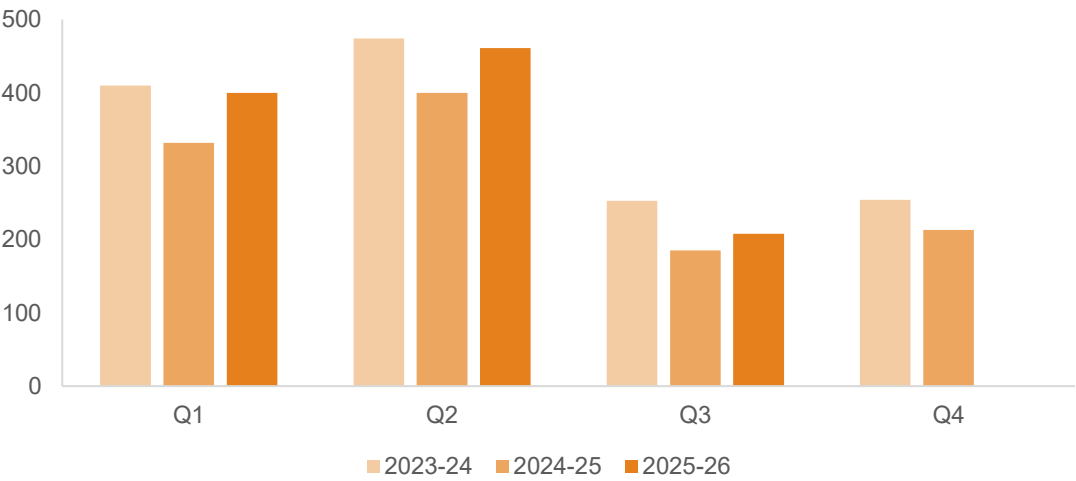
The number of pollution cases received during the year to date is an increase of 19% compared to last year but a reduction of 6% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 92% of cases have been reports of nuisances with 42% of cases relating to noise from residential properties (such as noise from barking dogs or audi-visual equipment). In parallel with previous reports, other prominent nuisances included noise from night-time economy businesses, noise from other hospitality businesses, smoke from the burning of domestic or commercial waste, and noise or dust from construction sites.

Complaints and Enquiries



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

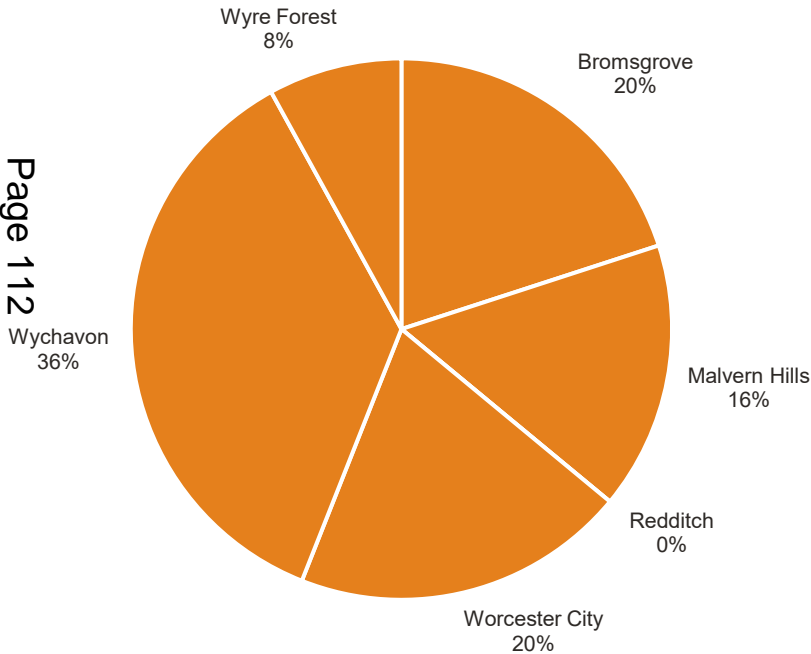
Complaints and Enquiries (Noise Only)



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
Bredon	10	2,645	3.78
South Bredon Hill	8	2,427	3.30
Barnt Green And Hopwood	9	2,951	3.05
Alvechurch Village	9	2,960	3.04
Upton And Hanley	12	4,268	2.81
Cathedral	32	11,760	2.72
Baldwin	6	2,216	2.71
Aston Fields	9	3,513	2.56
Little Hampton	14	5,899	2.37
Warndon	13	5,661	2.30
Drakes Broughton	6	2,711	2.21
Hartlebury	7	3,214	2.18
Saint Peters Parish	11	5,310	2.07
Broadway And Wickhamford	10	4,885	2.05
Wythall East	6	2,965	2.02
Morton	5	2,495	2.00
Bretforton And Offenham	6	3,010	1.99
Blakebrook And Habberley South	18	9,350	1.93
Longdon	4	2,087	1.92
Droitwich Central	5	2,621	1.91
Charford	7	3,677	1.90
Bedwardine	15	8,107	1.85
Upton Snodsbury	5	2,705	1.85
Saint John	16	8,736	1.83
Broadwaters	17	9,381	1.81

Public Health

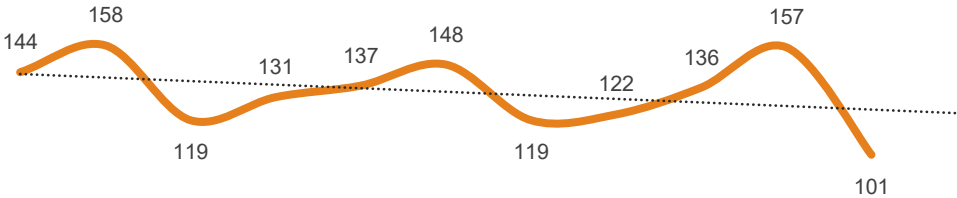
The data on this page outlines the number of public health cases (complaints and enquiries) handled by the service over a three-year period. The data also shows the number of domestic subsidised treatments carried out by contractors. Complaints reported to WRS include reports of accumulations and reports 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 public health cases received during the year to date is a reduction of 2% compared to last year and a reduction of 6% compared to 2023/24. Approximately 49% of cases have related to pest control and been enquiries about domestic treatments, enquiries about sewer baiting, or complaints about pest activity caused by the actions of neighbouring residents or businesses. A further 28% of cases have been reports of accumulations at residential properties, however, such complaints often reference the prescence of rodents or other pests.

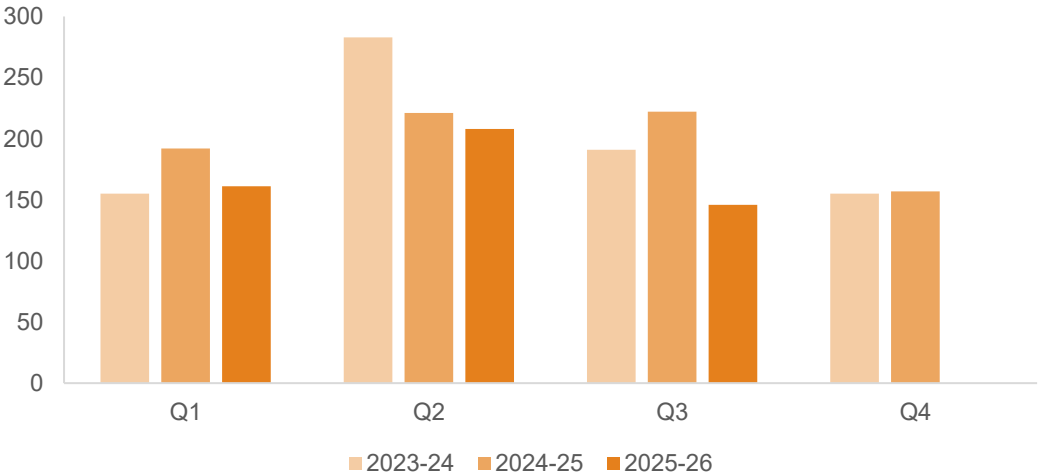
Based on the 515 domestic treatments undertaken by pest control contractors during the year to date, approximately 55% were due to problems with rats whilst 24% were due to issues with wasps or hornets. Around two thirds of treatments have taken places at properties in the Redditch or Wychavon districts.

Complaints and Enquiries



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

Domestic Subsidised Treatments

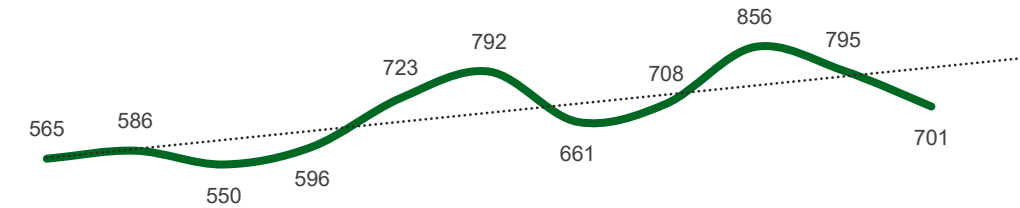


Bromsgrove

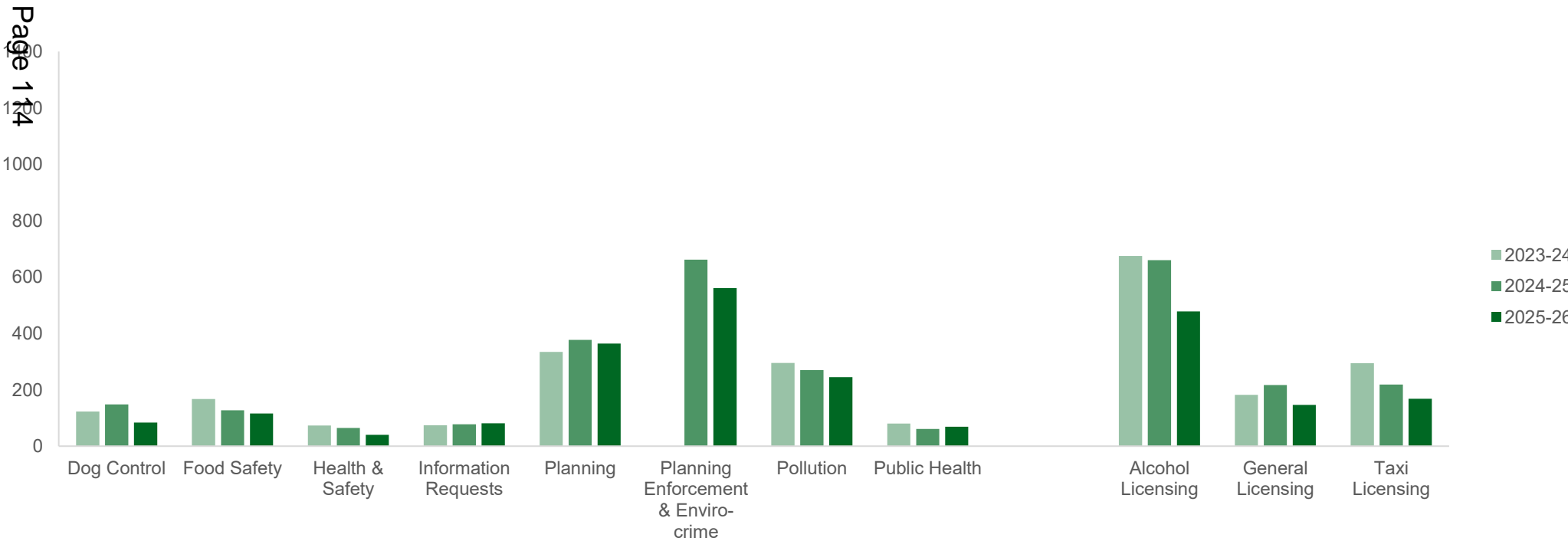
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Bromsgrove district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the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

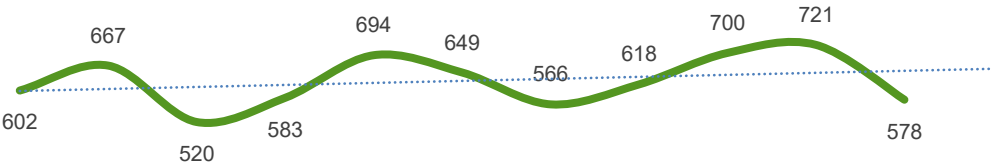


Malvern Hills

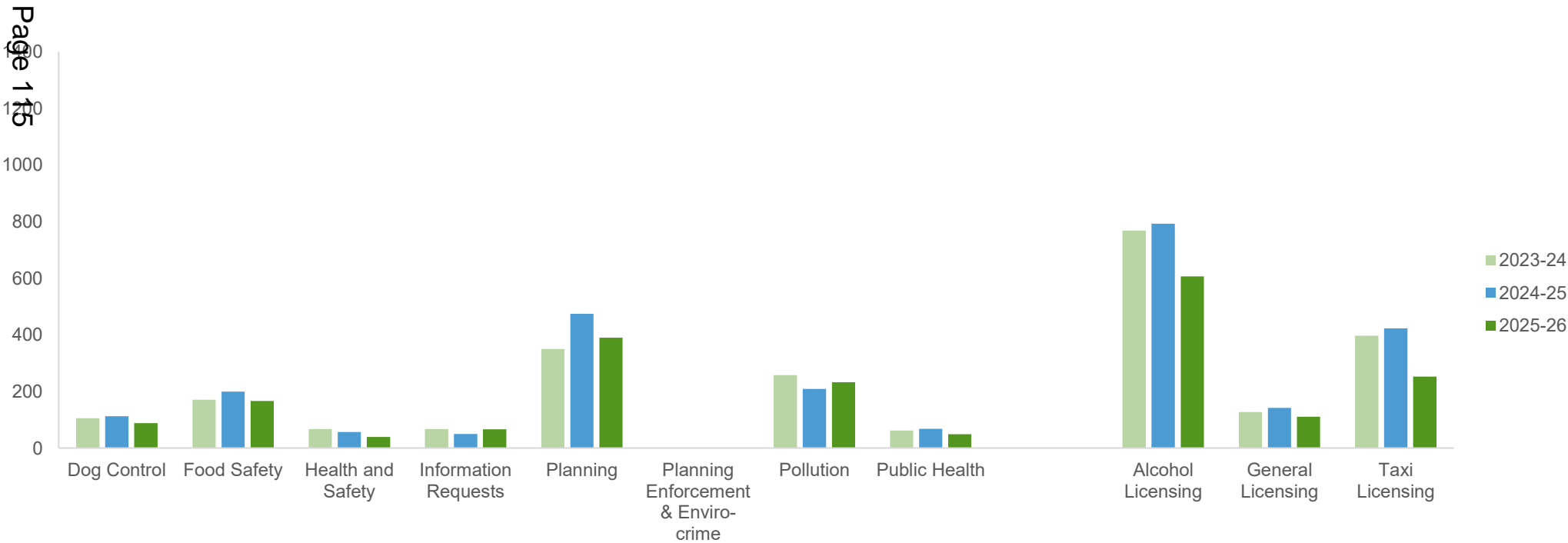
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Malvern Hills district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by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

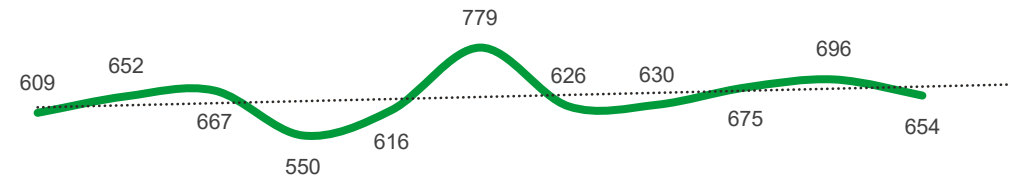


Redditch

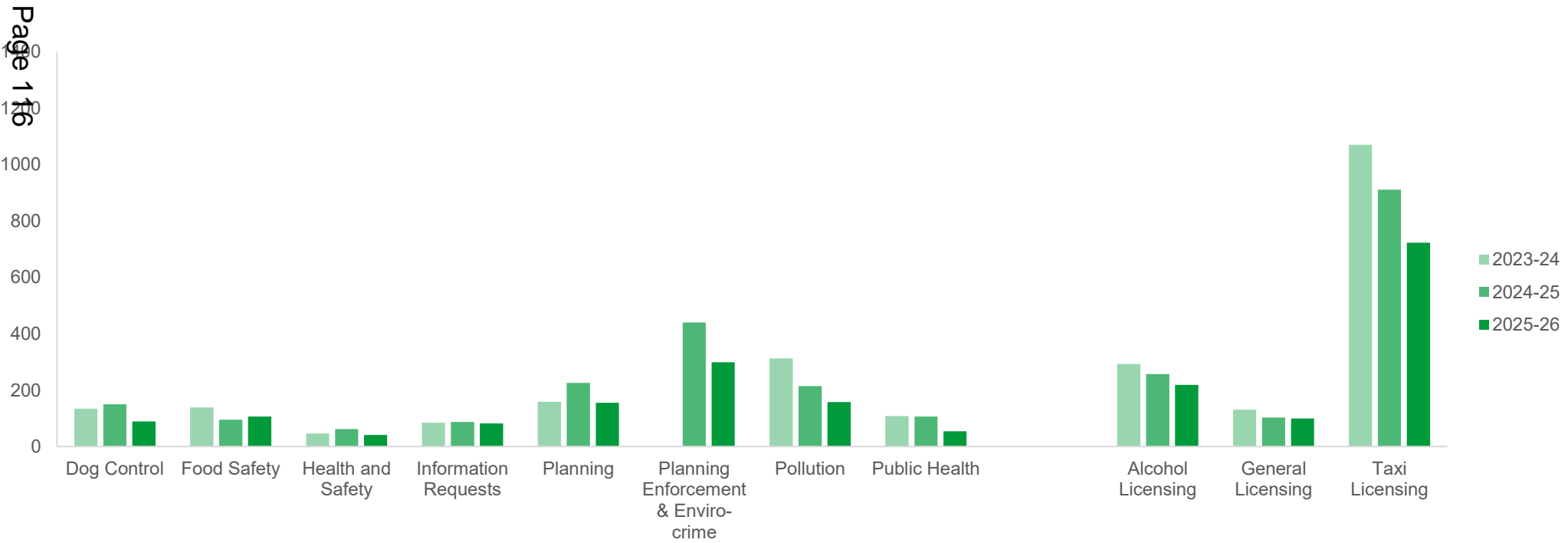
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Redditch district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the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

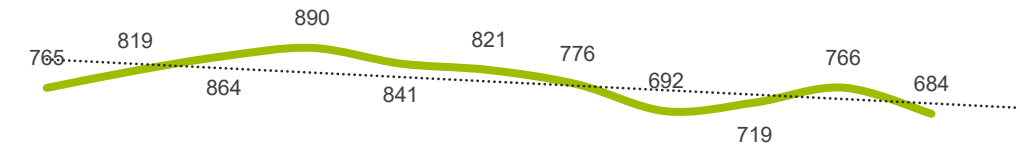


Worcester City

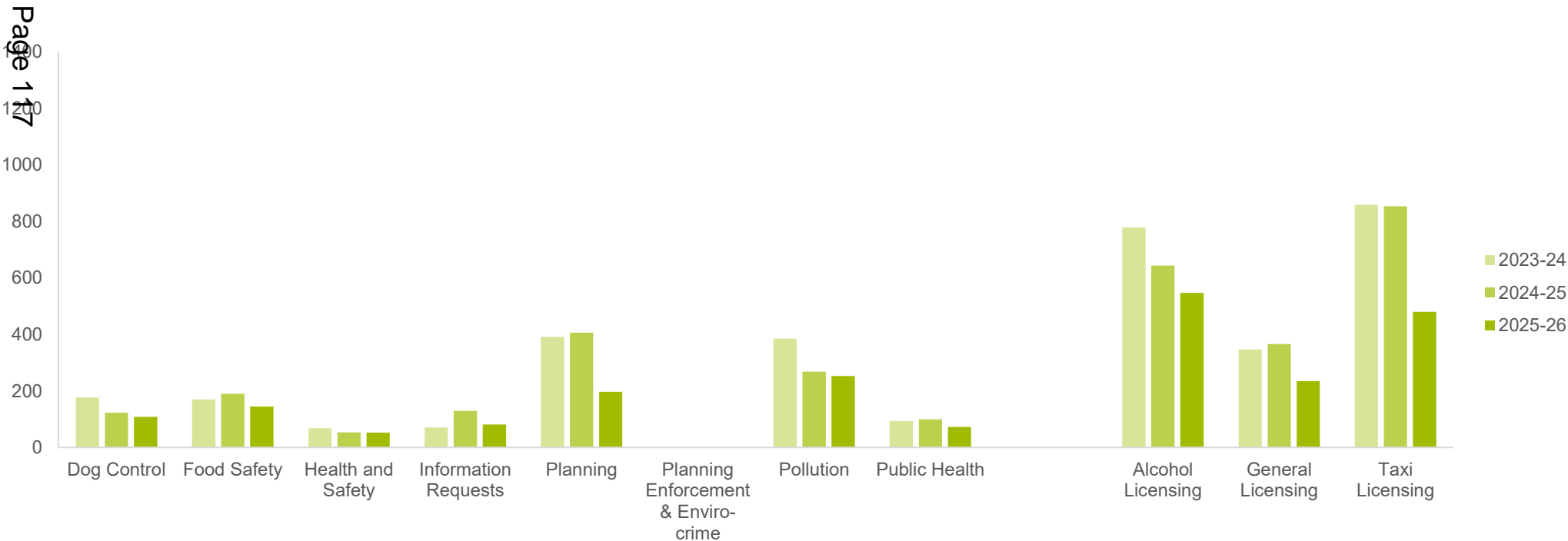
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Worcester City district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered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



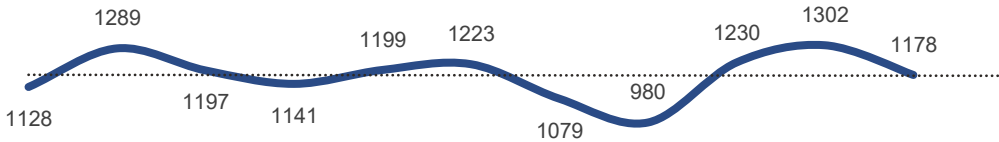
Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2023-24				2024-25				2025-26			



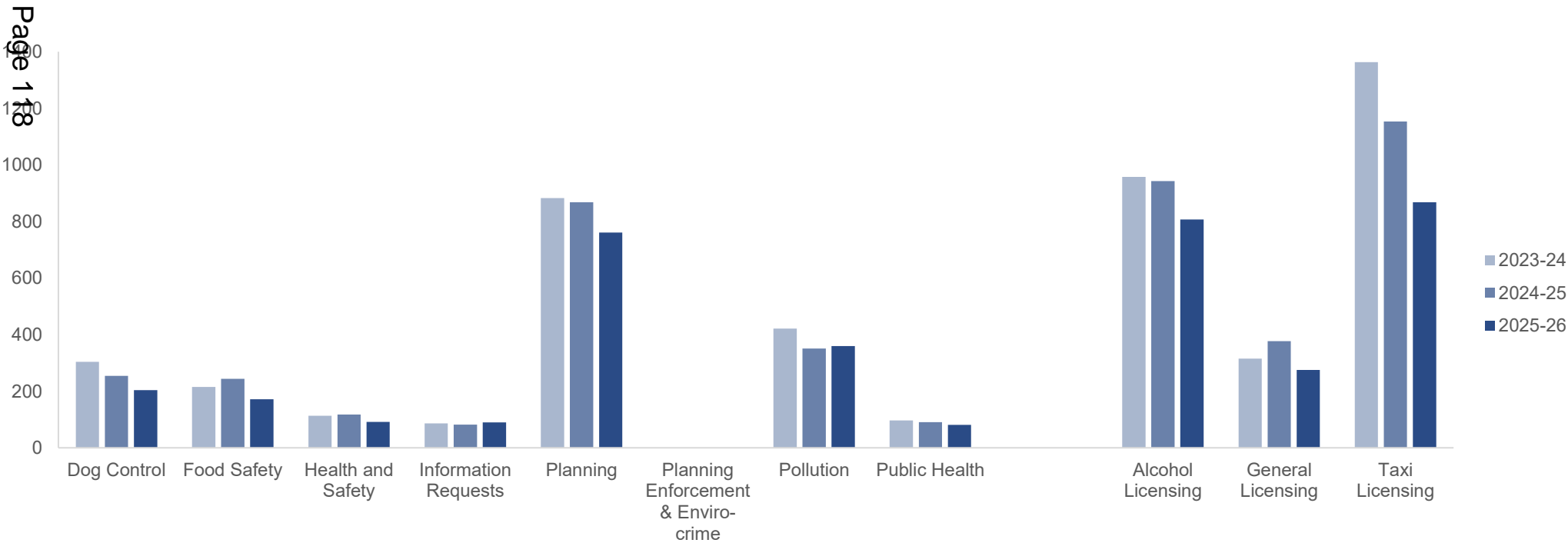
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Wychavon district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by the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



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

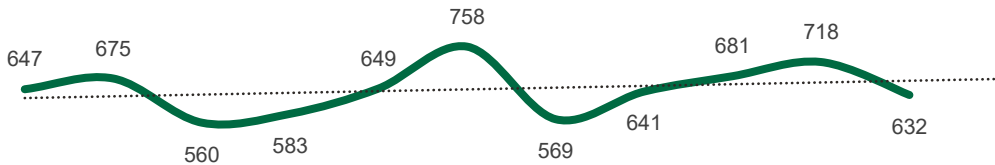


Wyre Forest

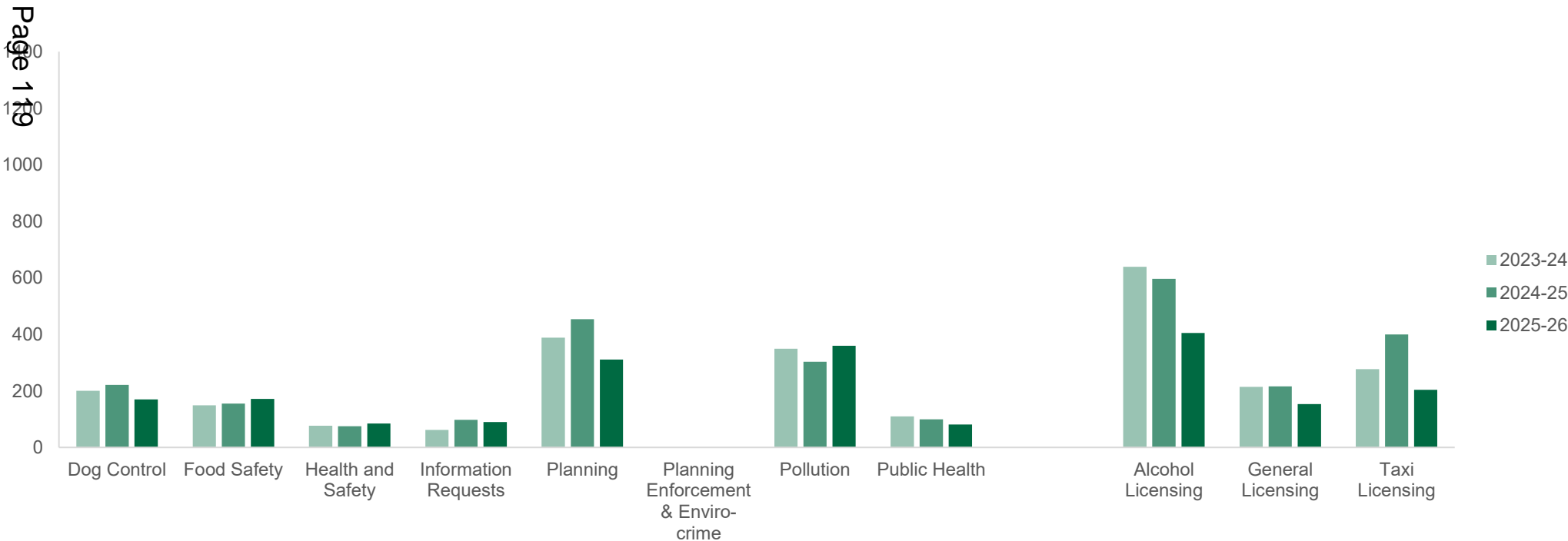
The data on this page outlines the number of complaints, enquiries, applications, and notifications handled by WRS over a three-year period where the subject and/or enquirer were located in the Wyre Forest district. The data also shows a breakdown of these cases by the primary functions delivered by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

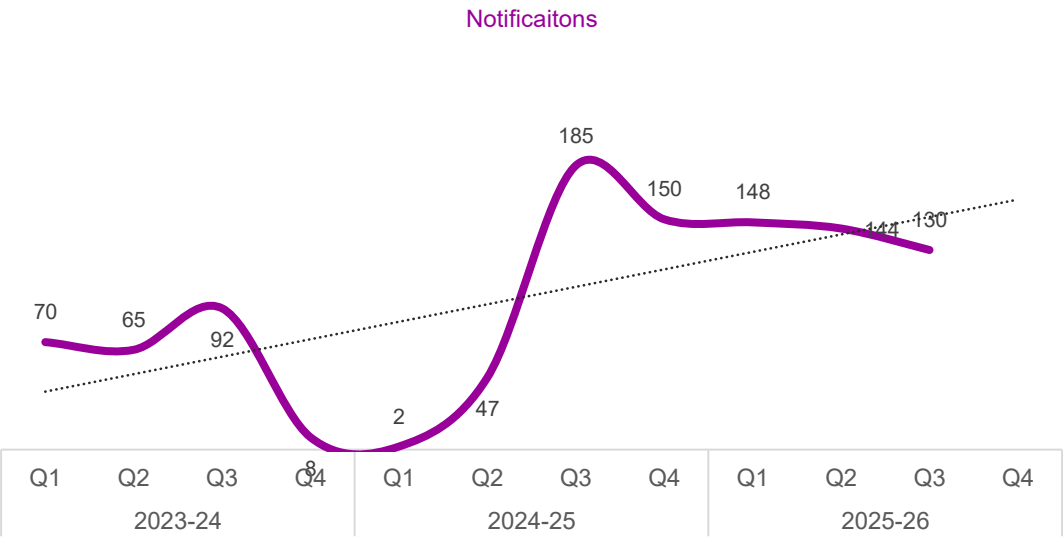


Birmingham City

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.

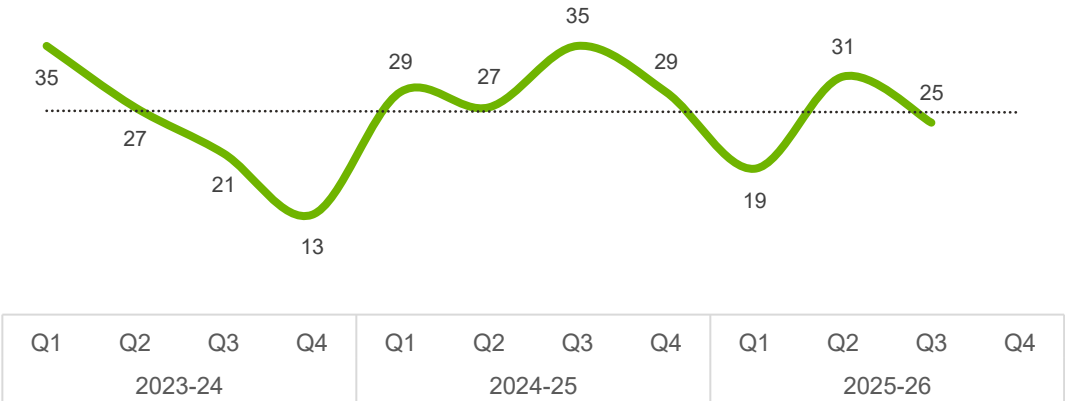


Cheltenham

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.

Notifications



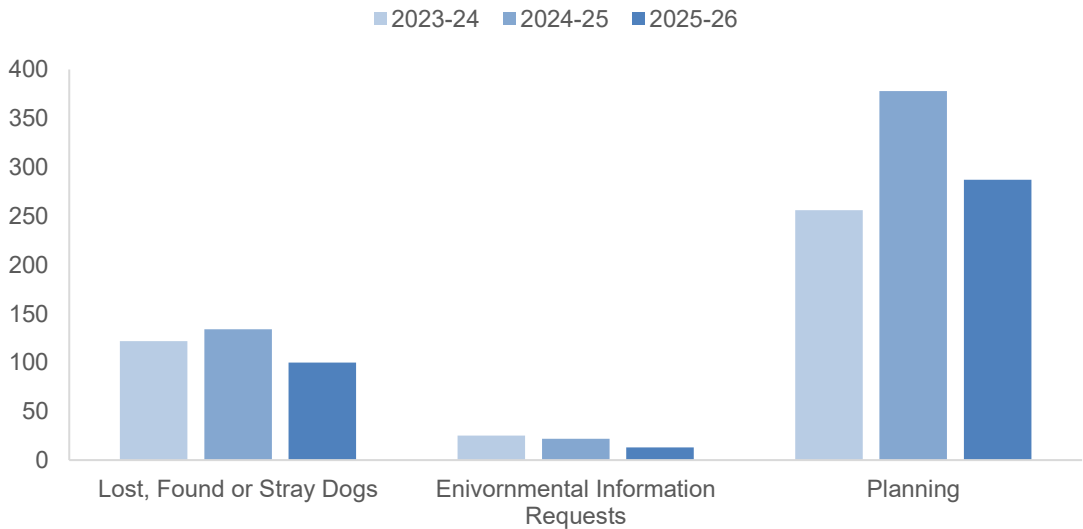
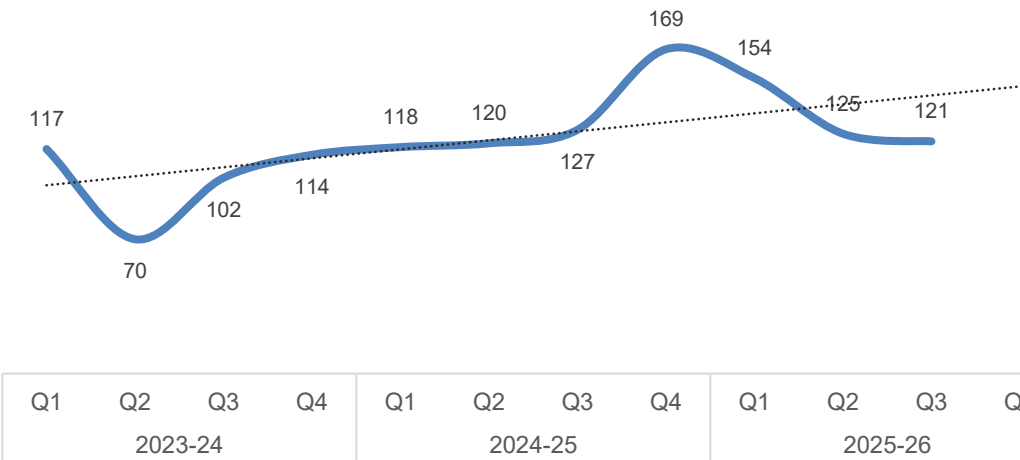
Gloucester City

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



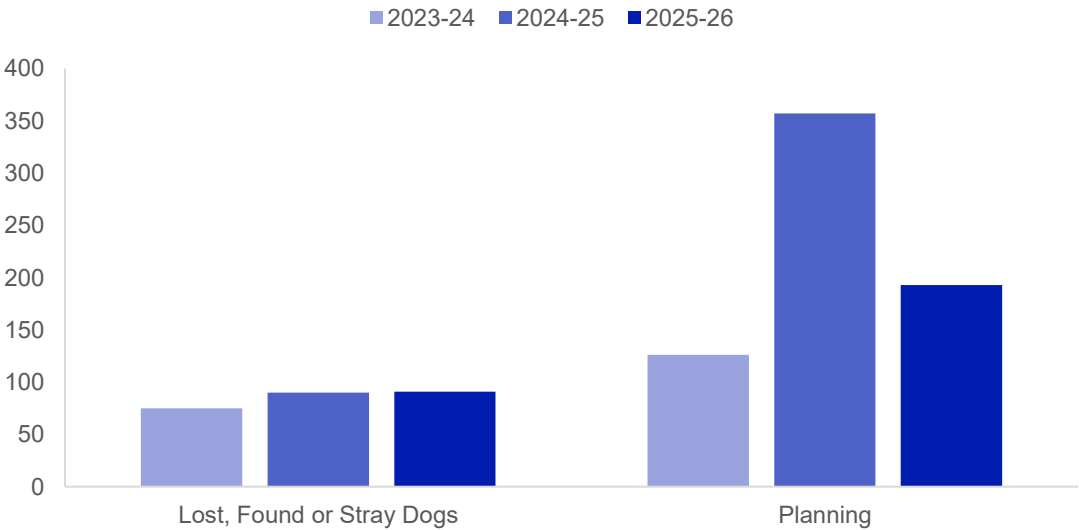
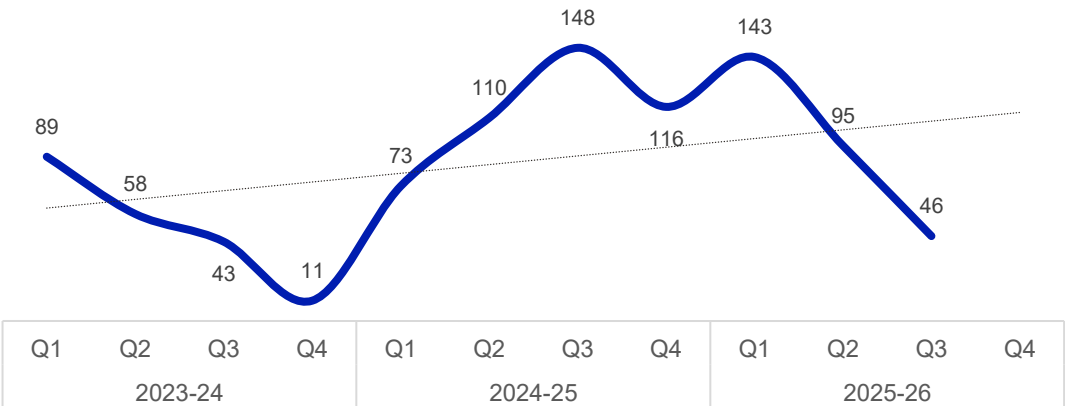
Tewkesbury

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



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WRS Board

Date: 19th February 2026

Revision of Policy for responding to Environmental Information requests (for information held by WRS)

Recommendation	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <p>(i) Agree to the service adopting the revised EIR policy for commencement on 1st April 2026.</p>
Background	<p>Environmental information Regulations 2004 (EIR) give the public a right of access to information held by public bodies relating to environmental topics, and places obligations on public bodies to release the information on request if it is not subject to an exception.</p> <p>The definition of environmental information is set out in the EIR, but as the shared Environmental Health and Licensing service for the six partner Councils in Worcestershire ("the Councils"), Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) holds much of the environmental information that is regularly requested from the Councils under EIR.</p>
Report	<p>The policy presented is a revision of that already in existence but provides greater clarity on how requests can be made and how they will be processed. The policy is in line with the EIR and Information Commissioner's Office Guidance.</p> <p>Processing includes establishing whether a charge is required to be paid prior to release of the information requested. Any charge is 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 can not be charged for and any request that is simple to respond to and the information can be collated and formatted in less than 30 minutes will be provided free of charge.</p> <p>Other exemptions to charges apply where the information is held on a public register, where it is examined at our offices, where it can be signposted to as it is publicly available or published elsewhere. Similarly no charge will 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 is easily extracted; or made by a professional body of which WRS is a direct or indirect member or where release of the data requested would be for the greater good and is easily extracted.</p> <p>This revision includes details of how to request a review of the charge applied or information given as well as how such a would be considered.</p>



Contact Point

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Technical Services Manager
Email: mark.cox@worcsregservices.gov.uk
Tel: 01562 738023



Policy for Responding to Environmental Information requests (for information held by WRS)

Environmental information Regulations 2004 (EIR) give the public a right of access to information held by public bodies relating to environmental topics, and places obligations on public bodies to release the information on request if it is not subject to an exception.

The definition of environmental information is set out in the EIRs with regulation 2(1) reproduced in Appendix 1. Where a request relates to environmental information and information that is not environmental information, the appropriate regime will be used to respond to the relevant respective elements of the request.

As the shared Environmental Health and Licensing service for the six partner Councils in Worcestershire (“the Councils”), Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) holds much of the environmental information that is regularly requested from the Councils under EIR. WRS is a data processor for the Councils under UK General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018 and the Councils remain the data controllers.

Requesting information under EIR:

Requesters can make a request to the relevant partner Council’s Freedom of Information Officer at the usual postal or Email address, or if the requester knows that the information is or may be held by Worcestershire Regulatory Services via email to enquiries@worcsregservices.gov.uk directly. Requests can also be made verbally via the WRS phone number 01905 822799 (unlike with Freedom of information requests).

Where the Councils receive a request for information that is held by WRS, they will send this request to WRS to process. If this is a charged request (outlined below), WRS will process and send out the response to the requester after quoting and obtaining the relevant fee. When sending out a response on behalf of the District Council, WRS will identify a point of contact for the requester to contact for a review of the response. Any response will also include contact details for the Information Commissioner’s Office.

Where the request is identified as a Freedom of Information request, the request will be redirected to the relevant District Council. Where a request does not qualify for a charge the information will be provided by WRS within the statutory response timeframe.

The Partner Councils and FOI Officer email addresses are:

Bromsgrove District Council – foi@bromsgrove.gov.uk

Malvern Hills District Council – foi@malvern hills.gov.uk

Redditch Borough Council – foi@redditchbc.gov.uk

Worcester City Council – foi@worcester.gov.uk

Wychavon District Council – foi@wychavon.gov.uk

Wyre Forest District Council – foi@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Charging

In dealing with requests for information under the Environmental Information Regulations, we are entitled to charge a reasonable amount towards the cost of reproducing the information in the format requested. Annually the Councils set their fees and charges in accordance with their own processes. The charge for EIRs is consistent across the partner Councils as a standard hourly rate which allows responses to be provided for individual authority areas and where appropriate as a county dataset consistently and without conflict. The charge for each request is calculated by estimating the time required to provide the response against the approved hourly rate to establish the costs therefore likely to be incurred in collating the information requested in the format requested.

The charge rate is included in Appendix 2 and published on the WRS website and where appropriate in the Committee Reports for each Council where they have been set.

Expectations

- a) Charges for information requests will be applied where it reasonably appears that the information requested is likely to be in the interests of only the individual making the request, and not the wider public.
- b) Information which can be collated and formatted within 30 minutes is free of charge.
- c) Access to any public registers of environmental information held by us or to examine (where possible) any information requested at our offices (Regulation 8(2)) will be free of charge.
- d) Requesters will be directed to information publicly available or where it information has been published elsewhere at the time of request free of charge.
- e) We will issue a 'Fees Notice' and will provide the requested information upon payment of the fee. If the fee is not paid within 60 working days, we will assume you no longer require the information and the request will be closed.
- f) In line with the regulations, the time frame for responding to EIRs will be paused from issue of the Fee Notice to payment being received, but we will endeavour to respond to your request as soon as possible.
- g) WRS will respond to requests (subject to (f) above) within 20 working days.
- h) WRS may extend the period of 20 working days referred to in (g) above if it reasonably believes that the complexity and volume of the information requested means that it is impracticable either to comply with the request within the earlier period or to make a decision to refuse to comply with the request.
- i) Where a request is made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 but wholly or significantly relates to environmental information, it shall be processed as a request

under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 without a separate request needing to be made.

- j) Environmental Information will be held in line with the WRS Retention Policy which is available on the WRS website: [About Us | Worcestershire Regulatory Services](#).
- k) WRS will take into account ICO guidance on applying the EIR

Refusing a request for Environmental Information

In rare cases, we may refuse a request in accordance with Regulation 12(4)(b) GDPR where it is considered to be manifestly unreasonable; an example may be on the basis of the time and resources that would be needed to produce a response or if producing a response would interfere with our ability to conduct our core functions. We will also take guidance from the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and consider whether the request would be considered vexatious, and whether the time taken to respond would exceed 18 hours.

Where it is determined that Article 12(4)(b) may apply, Officers will consider whether instead an extension to the deadline to respond is more appropriate than a refusal to provide information, which is permitted under Regulation 7(1). If it is considered that Article 12(4)(b) should be applied, Officers will conduct a public interest test to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exception (and refusing the information request on the grounds of being manifestly unreasonable) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Where a request is assessed as manifestly unreasonable the requester will be notified at the time of the request with reference to Information Commissioner's Office Guidance, such as assisting the requester in refining the request if appropriate.

Review

If we consider there are exceptional circumstances, we may waive the charges of producing information to ensure that we do not impose a barrier to access to environmental information. Similarly in the event that a requester considers a charge is excessive or upon receipt of the information you believe the charge to have exceeded the cost incurred by WRS, you may request a review. Any review will be undertaken by a WRS Team Manager, or District Council equivalent.

To request a review please contact: FOI@worcsregservices.gov.uk with the subject line 'EIR Review request'. Please ensure you provide full details of the reasons for review including any relevant to provide context to the environmental information request being made if appropriate.

All requester-initiated reviews will be concluded within 10 working days.

The charges made and requests responded to will be regularly reviewed, to ensure charges do not exceed actual costs.

MRC 28.01.2029

Appendix 1: Definition of environmental information

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Regulation 2(1) states:

2.-(1) In these Regulations

“environmental information” has the same meaning as in Article 2(1) of the Directive, namely any information in written, visual, aural, electronic or any other material form on—

(a) the state of the elements of the environment, such as air and atmosphere, water, soil, land, landscape and natural sites including wetlands, coastal and marine areas, biological diversity and its components, including genetically modified organisms, and the interaction among these elements;

(b) factors, such as substances, energy, noise, radiation or waste, including radioactive waste, emissions, discharges and other releases into the environment, affecting or likely to affect the elements of the environment referred to in (a);

(c) measures (including administrative measures), such as policies, legislation, plans, programmes, environmental agreements, and activities affecting or likely to affect the elements and factors referred to in (a) and (b) as well as measures or activities designed to protect those elements;

(d) reports on the implementation of environmental legislation;

(e) cost-benefit and other economic analyses and assumptions used within the framework of the measures and activities referred to in (c); and

(f) the state of human health and safety, including the contamination of the food chain, where relevant, conditions of human life, cultural sites and built structures inasmuch as they are or may be affected by the state of the elements of the environment referred to in (a) or, through those elements, by any of the matters referred to in (b) and (c);

Appendix 2: Charge rate for Environmental Information requests

Any charge for providing environmental information held by WRS is **calculated** as an estimate of time taken to provide the response requested as a charge of **£53.00 per hour** *.

The charge rate is based on the calculated costs of an Officer for one hour.

*subject to approval by each Partner Council.

The following charging rules apply:

- Charges for information requests will be applied where it reasonably appears that the information requested is likely to be in the interests of only the individual making the request, and not the wider public.
- Information which can be collated and formatted within 30 minutes is free of charge.
- Access to any public registers of environmental information held by us, or to examine (where possible) any information requested at our offices (Regulation 8(2)), will be free of charge.
- Requesters will be directed to information publicly available or where information has been published elsewhere at the time of request free of charge.