

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

THURSDAY 25TH JUNE 2026, AT 4.44 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. Dormer (Chairman), R. Deller (Vice- Chairman), M. Goodge, I. Hardiman, K. Holmes, T. Onslow, J. Owenson and K. Taylor.

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr. J. Walton, Mrs. M. Patel, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr M. Cox, Mr. D. Mellors, Mr. G. Day and Mr. J. Swann.

Partner Officers: Mr. J. Leach (Virtual – Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils), Mr. I. Miller (Virtual - Wyre Forest District Council), Mr. I. Edwards (Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils) and Ms. S. Green (Worcester City Council).

The meeting commenced upon achieving a quoracy of Board Members.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

As this meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board was the first held during the municipal year of 2026/ 27, Members present were required to elect a Chairman.

RESOLVED that Councillor M. Dormer (Redditch Borough Council) be elected Chairman of the Board for the municipal year of 2026/ 27.

ELECTION OF VICE- CHAIRMAN

As this meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board was the first held during the municipal year of 2026/ 27, Members present were required to elect a Vice- Chairman.

RESOLVED that Councillor R. Deller (Wychavon District Council) be elected Vice- Chairman of the Board for the municipal year of 2026/ 27.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H. Jones (Bromsgrove District Council), C. Palmer (Malvern Hills District Council), N. Pioli (Redditch Borough Council) and R. Udall (Worcester City Council).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 19th February 2026, were submitted for Members consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 19th February 2026, be approved as a correct record.

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES REVENUE **MONITORING APRIL - MARCH 2026 AND ANNUAL RETURN**

The Board received an overview of the Revenue Monitoring report for the April 2025- March 2026 period and Annual Return.

The Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC), presented the report and highlighted that the report presented the final financial position which showed a final outturn surplus of £67,487. This figure, which represented 1.6% of the annual budget, was as a result of:

- Lower salary costs than budget forecasts originally accounted for due to departmental vacancies and delayed recruitment exercises.
- Income had been higher than predicted income by £517,000.

Members were informed as detailed in the report (page 21 of the main agenda pack), that it was being requested that the final surplus amount of £67,487 be added to the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) reserves; in order to assist with any upcoming cost pressures. Should Board Members reject this request, then the surplus amount would be refunded to Partners.

It was acknowledged that cost pressures that could arise in the upcoming year included:

- Salary increases were likely to exceed the budgeted amount of 3%, as the proposed salary offer had been rejected by the trade unions.
- Expenditure related to training for Officers to ensure staff adhered to statutory training requirements as stipulated by the Code of Practice for Environmental Health Officers.
- Possible legislation changes to Hackney and Private Hire vehicle controls, as laid out in the King's Speech.

The Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer, BDC and RBC, outlined that some figures detailed in the reports were incorrect, and provided the Board with corrections, namely:

- The Board had regard to the WRS Annual Return 2025/ 26 (Appendix 3) at Page 29 of the main agenda pack:
 - Income received from partners via Technical Pollution Work (Worcester City) was £44,863.
 - The income received from all partners totalled £5,189,170.
 - Other income categorised as 'County – Management, Administration and Legal etc' was £80,033.
 - The other income totalled £638,608.
- The figures quoted in WRS Income 2025/ 26 (Appendix 4) were confirmed as accurate.
- The Board had regard to the WRS Reserves Statement 2025/ 26 (Appendix 5) at Page 33 of the main agenda pack:
 - The total earmarked reserve 'Transfers Out 2025/ 26' was -£595.
 - The total earmarked reserve 'Transfers In 2025/ 26' was £0.
 - The WRS General Reserve balance as of 31st March 2026 was £125,529.
 - The Total Earmarked Reserve balance as of 31st March 2026 was £342,860.

It was noted that the recruitment of temporary staff may be required to ensure service delivery was maintained. Board Members in attendance further noted that there had been an overspend during the municipal year of 2025/ 26 in both IT and dog warden charges service areas.

The Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services highlighted that the service had experienced a successful year in terms of service and performance outcomes.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The final financial position for the period April 2025- March 2026 be noted;
- 2) The 2025/ 26 surplus of £67,487 be approved and added to the Worcestershire Regulatory Services reserve, in order to assist with addressing any upcoming cost pressures.

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT **2025/ 26**

The Board considered the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2025/ 26.

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

Members were informed that under the Shared Services Partnership Service Level Agreement (SLA) the Board was required to receive the annual report at its annual meeting.

The Director of WRS highlighted that the report covered the performance of the service from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. The report contained details of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a summary of activities and data, which was presented to Members.

Performance had remained good in most areas:

- Food business compliance rates remained high.
- Taxi licence renewal timescales had fallen slightly, although were significantly above the target timescale of 90% in five working days.
- The taxi fleet was in good working order, with the number of vehicles failing tests whilst in service reducing for another consecutive year.

As with previous years, complaints against the service were significantly exceeded by compliments. Complaints arose across a number of service areas and the main issues related to complaints included:

- Individuals not being allowed to be involved with the re- homing of a dog.
- Dissatisfaction related to investigations related to planning matters.
- Concerns regarding the tone of the standard letter template used for dealing with nuisance cases.
- Response to nuisance issues, despite having noise equipment deployed to an individual's property.

Non-business customer satisfaction was slightly improved at 57.1%, compared to last year's figure of 56.7%, and recent figures of 59.2% and 60.4%. Further detail on this had been provided in both the Annual Report and the Activity and Performance Data, Quarters 1 to 4, 2025/ 26.

Managers would continue to work to address this performance measure. The nature of the service was such that officers would never be able to ensure that all partners were content because a significant proportion of nuisance complaints would not meet the threshold to be classified as a statutory nuisance, although performance could be improved in this area.

Business satisfaction levels fell to 92.3%, although no obvious reason for this could be identified. It was hoped that this figure would rise to above 96% in 2026/ 27.

The indicators for licenced premises and noise complaints were long established, which allowed the service to establish baselines, for which this year's figures were at average or below.

The rate of noise complaints against population figures for all Districts had risen slightly, however remained good. It was believed that the previous summer's record- breaking hot temperatures had

contributed to this modest increase. Overall, available data suggested that a good environment was in place for the residents of Worcestershire.

The service continued to utilise some of the staff recruited during the pandemic to support work under contract to discharge the Homes 4 Ukraine support for Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils, with support from experienced WRS managers, while several other former covid staff also featured in the planning enforcement and enviro-crime enforcement team.

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

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

From the comments and questions by members of the Committee, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted:

- Three full time equivalent (FTE) staff had been employed by the service to focus on areas related to food safety.
- The Food Standards Agency had required the service to produce an updated Food Safety Action Plan to reduce outstanding visits by March 2028, and to improve compliance with the Food Law Code of Practice to ensure interventions were actioned within 28 days of the due inspection date.
- The Food Standards Agency was reasonably satisfied that the service had sufficient food hygiene capacity to allow WRS to discharge its duties.
- Compliance with food safety standards was high across the County, with over 90% of businesses obtaining a Food Hygiene Rating System (FHRS) score of 4/ 5.
- Service expectations differed between businesses and the general public, whilst evidencing satisfaction amongst the general public was challenging, anecdotal evidence suggested over two- thirds of customers were satisfied with the service they had received. This satisfaction level, due to the difference between public expectations and what the law enabled, was good.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Worcestershire Regulatory Services Annual Report 2025/ 26 be noted;
- 2) A copy of the WRS Annual Report be send to each Chief Executive and the Elected Members of the six partner authorities.

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

The Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services, summarised the Activity and Performance Data, Quarters 1 to 4, 2025/ 26 report, and in doing so drew Members' attention to the following key metrics.

The number of dog control cases received over the previous year had represented an increase of 5%. Most dog control cases categorised as 'lost or stray dogs' with 18% of assessed dogs having identified welfare concerns.

The service received 84 complaints over the year about dogs which were related to dog fouling and/ or dogs that were persistently straying away from residential properties.

The overall number of food safety cases received had risen by 14% when compared to each of the previous two years. Of 522 complaints, 73% were related to issues with food products such as poor- quality food or food containing a foreign object, whilst 27% of complaints were related to poor hygiene standards or practices.

Of the 1,727 food hygiene interventions carried out by WRS, approximately 5% had received a score classified as 'non- compliant' which was a rating of 0, 1, or 2.

The overall number of health and safety cases considered was slightly higher than in the previous two years. Approximately half of these cases were reports of accidents in workplaces, with the majority of cases being injuries which resulted in a worker being incapacitated for over seven days. Slips, trips and falls remained the largest cause of accidents. The Service had also investigated three fatalities during the year.

It was noted that the overall number of licensing cases fell by over 4%. Over two- thirds of licensing cases were applications or registrations related to temporary events (23%), private hire vehicles (18%) and hackney carriage vehicles (11%). A further 11% of cases related to animal licensing, with most cases classified as unlicensed breeding, and the sale of dogs.

Data which was available indicated that the cost of providing the service per person in the County was £6.89.

In response to questions from Members, it was acknowledged that staff sickness and absence rates remained high and had increased. The Director of WRS outlined that there had been a concerted effort to encourage staff to return to the workplace via targeted support. It was also noted that staff who had been experienced a period of ill health, received return to work interviews upon their return to the workplace.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1 to 4 2025/ 26 be noted, and that Members use the contents of the report to report back to their respective partner authority.

COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS PROCESS

The Board received an overview of the refreshed Compliments, Complaints and Comments Process.

WRS had established a mechanism upon the creation of the service in 2010, for dealing with feedback and comments from service users and the general public.

The original process was a three- tiered process for managing complaints:

- Stage One: Informal involving the officer and their Line Manager.
- Stage Two: Where Stage One failed to deliver a resolution, investigation and/ or review by the relevant team manager or Head of Service.
- Stage Three: Where Stage Two did not achieve a resolution, the complaint was fed into the final stage of the complaint process for the relevant partner authority.

During the 2025/ 26 year, the Local Government Ombudsman Service had outlined that local authority formal complaint processes should contain two stages only.

In order to align with this and streamline processes, the process for managing complaints had been adapted:

- Informal Stage.
- Formal Stage One.
- Formal Stage Two.

Members noted the refreshed Compliments, Complaints and Comments Process.

RESOLVED that the report detailing the Compliments, Complaints and Comments process be noted.

TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, EQUALITIES AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.

Additional Items of Business had been received and tabled before Members for consideration.

Vote of Thanks

The Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services announced that he was retiring and that this would be his last meeting in his current role. He outlined to the Committee that he had decided to retire at this point to enable his successor to support the service during local government reorganisation.

The Chair acknowledged his long service and considerable efforts to ensure that a high- quality service was provided to the residents of Worcestershire and thanked him for his hard work and dedication.

Board Members in attendance paid tribute to his hard work and the service and wished him the best for the future.

RESOLVED that a Vote of Thanks be recorded in relation to the outgoing Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

Process for the Appointment of the new Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services

The Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils paid tribute to the outgoing Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and sought the input of Board Members for the process of appointing his successor.

It was proposed that a national advertising campaign would commence at the end of June 2026, followed by a thorough recruitment process in July 2026.

The recruitment process was to incorporate a shortlisting exercise, a multi- stage assessment, psychometric testing and interview process. It was envisaged that the candidate would be appointed late July 2026.

It was acknowledged that due to the importance of the role, a suitable candidate would have to be appointed rapidly to ensure continuous service delivery.

Board Members in attendance agreed that the proposed process and timescale was satisfactory and would ensure that the service could continue to experience good leadership.

It was agreed that the Chair, in consultation with the Chief Executive, the outgoing Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services, would work with the Vice- Chair and Councillor K. Holmes to support the arrangements for the appointment for a new Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

RESOLVED that the Chair, Vice- Chair and Councillor K. Holmes be delegated to confirm and support the arrangements for the appointment for a new Director of Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

The meeting closed at 5.20 p.m.